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Journal of Ritual Studies 1/1 1987

EDITORIAL

Ron Grimes

JRS Statement of Purpose

The **Journal of Ritual Studies** (**JRS**) publishes scholarly research on ritual. It solicits articles, reviews, correspondence, discussion, announcements and notes from scholars in any discipline that treats ritual in any of its various forms. Among these disciplines are religious studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, performance studies, history, philosophy, art, music, dance and education. The primary purpose of the **JRS** is to encourage collaboration among scholars from these and other disciplines on the topic of ritual and its allied subtopics.

Articles may be of various kinds—purely theoretical treatments, comparative ones, minutely focused descriptions and so on. They may employ quantitative and explanatory models, on the one hand, or hermeneutical and historical ones, on the other. In addition, they may be based on either texts or performances. The full range of ritual, extending from high differentiated rites to undifferentiated ritualization processes and quasi-ritualistic elements in human and animal interaction, is open for consideration, as are secular and religious rites. Articles for publication should be (1) self-conscious about their theoretical and methodological presuppositions, (2) precise in their descriptions, (3) explicit in their interpretations and criticisms, (4) cognizant of research in academic disciplines other than the writer's own, (5) not limited to denominational or sectarian interests and (6) significant in their contribution to the study of ritual.

As far as I know, no one was using the phrase "ritual studies" before 1977, so it is remarkable to witness the inaugural issue of a journal of ritual studies only ten years later. Although a small group of us began using the term at American Academy of Religion meetings, today it has wide currency in a large number of disciplines. The term itself is significant only insofar as it represents an increasing degree of self-conscious reflection about ritual and the academic study of it. Having named the beast, perhaps we become more able to ride it.

Although the **Journal of Ritual Studies** is not the organ of any institution, three deserve special mention. The lion's share of the credit goes to the University of Pittsburgh, especially Fred Clothey and others associated with the Department of Religious Studies. Fred secured the *sine qua non* of a journal: initial funding. Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, Ontario) is supplying supplementary funds. And members of the Ritual Studies Group of the A.A.R. have provided mailing lists, interested authors and other kinds of support.

Ultimately, the **JRS** must do without direct institutional support and survive on the basis of subscriptions. A crucial point will be reached in three years, at which time the journal must float without water wings or sink. The break-even point is between 300 and 400 subscriptions. We had expected to have around 50 before publishing this first issue; we in fact have over 100.

Our intention is to publish two issues per year. If finances permit and there is a sufficient supply of quality materials, we will consider publishing four. So far there is no lack of enthusiasm. We have received numerous letters and phone calls expressing encouragement and general interest. How readily this support turns into actual articles and willingness to review manuscripts and books remains to be seen. So far we have encountered very few refusals–an encouraging beginning.

Until they have been around for a while, new journals receive lots of articles that have been sitting on authors' back shelves. Often they have been written for other journals or other purposes, most often for scholarly conferences. The **JRS** is quite willing to publish papers prepared for oral delivery; not all of our articles will be of the formal 20-35 page, heavily footnoted variety (see the "Guidelines for Authors" in the Appendix of this issue). However, we are finding that our rejection rate is high for a fledgling journal: around 50%. The rate will undoubtedly increase. One reason seems to be that papers presented at conferences are either unfinished or did not take seriously the oral nature of the task to begin with. But the main one is that authors' treatments of ritual are often insular, too confined to some corner in their own field and thus not conversant with more general works and theories that provide the basis for ongoing interdisciplinary discussion.

Much of the **JRS** editorial work has been to suggest readings to prospective authors. I spend many hours as academic matchmaker, but I do not mind, because the main purpose of the journal is to get scholars from different fields to talk with one another about ritual.

I have received several inquiries wanting to know if the journal has a particular slant or emphasis, say, a Turnerian one. The answer is no–at least, not deliberately. The executive and contributing editors have their biases, to be sure, and these will undoubtedly make their way into article selection and editorial policy, but our aim in selecting the board was to maximize breadth across disciplines and culture areas. The variety of disciplines represented in this first issue will, I hope, remain typical of the journal.

The six articles in this issue well represent the interdisciplinary emphasis of the **JRS**. The first two are the most theoretical; one is by a performance theorist and theater director (Richard Schechner) and the other by a theologian (Ted Jennings). The next two articles, which read especially well as a pair, are by a person teaching in a Division of Human Studies (Thomas Peterson on initiation rites) and one who is trained in Religion and Literature Studies and employed as a Professor of Alternative Education (Dan Noel, writing on shamanic ritual). An English professor, Mary Kemp Davis, focuses on a specific literary text. The concluding essay is by anthropologists Harriet and Andrew Lyons, who concentrate on the modernizing urban context of an African ritual. The range is both impressive and frustrating–impressive because it promises real interdisciplinary research, frustrating because the vocabulary and standards for such research are not yet fully evident. Many of our authors have apologized for lack of expertise in ritual studies. But, as far as I can tell, there are no experts yet–simply some scholars writing, more or less astutely, about ritual and hoping to learn more. A genuinely interdisciplinary field and expertise are still in the future.

The **JRS** will publish occasional thematic issues. Fred Denny is already in the process of preparing one on Islamic ritual and Fred Clothey one on field study. Topics we hope someone will volunteer to pursue include healing rites and illness, quasi-ritualistic behavior, ritual and theater, mortuary rites and ritual in politics, among others. We await

proposals from our readers and we are willing to consider publishing sets of papers presented at conferences.

We encourage the readership to keep us informed of events related to ritual–not merely scholarly ones but rites themselves. The **JRS** provides a free bulletin board ("Reader Forum") and calendar on which to post dates–not only of courses, seminars and conferences but of festivals and ceremonies of all kinds. Be sure to include particulars: what, where, when and who?

For readers' information the **JRS** Constitution is appended to this issue. Note that the executive and contributing editors serve relatively brief terms both for the sake of the journal and their own sanity and research. So we keep an eye open for subscribers willing to serve as readers and eventually as editors. Creating a battery of foreign, corresponding editors is not yet a reality, though we hope to make it one within the next three years. Doing so will insure genuine international scope. As things stand presently, our contributing editors all reside in Canada and the U.S.

It is our hope that this issue does prompt growth and creative exchange among scholars interested in ritual. After all, everything between these two covers is an implicit invitation to response, critique and debate. Your response is a valuable contribution to the field of ritual studies.

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THE FUTURE OF RITUAL

Richard Schechner

I

Whatever the future of ritual, its past is pedigreed. Ethologists observe animals performing rituals. Ethologically speaking, in ritual ordinary behavior is condensed, exaggerated, repeated, made into rhythms or pulses (often faster or slower than usual) or frozen into poses. In animals, ritual behavior is accompanied by the development and display of conspicuous body parts and/or dramatic changes in color–the moose's horns, the peacock's tail, the red rump of a baboon in estrus, the brilliant colors of any number of fish species. Ethologists use the word "ritual" to describe certain kinds of animal behavior, because they detect analogies and homologies between animal behavior and human rituals. Not only is human ritual like animal ritual, having developed from animal ritual, but the evolution of the body, brain and genetic codes is also the evolution of behavior. In both animals and humans ritual arises around disruptive, turbulent and strongly ambivalent interactions. Usually these concern sexuality/mating, hierarchy and territory–an interdependent triad. Ritual gets animals through these difficult transactions/interactions with a minimum of harm.

Ritual action is similar to what happens in theater and dance. There too behavior is rearranged, condensed, exaggerated and made rhythmic, while colorful costumes, masks and face and body painting enhance the movement displays.

Both human and animal rituals arise where misunderstanding (or missignalling) can lead to catastrophe. Of course, humans delight in inventing rituals, in going out of their way to find occasions for performative and celebratory displays. Even tragedy is played out in a festival setting. In brief, animals, no matter how much they appear to be playing, are locked into their rituals while humans, no matter how

serious, delectate in their multifarious and deeply playful rituals.

In both animal and human ritual violence plays an extremely large role. It is a violence that is both present and absent–displayed and denied simultaneously–as when the vanquished wolf suddenly offers his throat to his opponent, thus guaranteeing not the savage slitting of his jugular but the immediate appeasement of his rival's rage. How similar this is to the priest raising the eucharistic bread and wine, thus offering the communicants participation in Christ's sacrificial redemptive *sparagmos*. Often in both animal and human ritual the violence is sexual. Shedding monthly blood and spurting sperm are actual and metaphorical, mysterious and frightening, celebratory and joyful, simple, yet limitlessly complicated, psychophysical necessities.

Violence, sexuality and theater converge in the two main Western traditions, the Greek and the Hebraic-Christian. These traditions emerge from the ancient mid-East as a bundle of ritual actions and narratives of sacrifice and fertility. Christ, for example, is born to die, his blood the sperm fertilizing/redeeming/resurrecting those who believe in him. Christ's three days of earthly death–analogous to the three days of the "death" of the old moon and the "birth" of the new–are spent harrowing hell. Descending like a shaman into an underworld of both darkness and fire (hell being the anti-sun, burning but giving no light), Christ searches for "seeds" worthy of redemption. These he lifts into the nourishing light of heaven.

Christ's resurrection is the rebirth not only of the eternal god but of the renewal process itself: springtime. The dates celebrating the key moment of Christ's birth-baptism-sacrifice-resurrection show how powerfully the story operates in Christianity's core European territory. For the dates of Christmas and Easter were not always what they are today. Over the centuries Christmas was brought into synchrony with Epiphany while Easter was aligned with pre-Christian spring rites. The Christian holidays were synchronized with solstice celebrations. Christ's birthday occurs nowadays on December 25 just far enough past the winter solstice to establish unequivocally the return of the sun from its steady decline southward into the dark underworld beneath the horizon. Surely by Epiphany (January 6) there can be no

doubt. Easter can never occur before March 22, just the other side of the spring solstice when lengthening days outlast ever-shortening nights, and the earth displays visible signs of re-vegetation. The whole story is very nicely tailored to temperate northern hemisphere climates. How topsy-turvy the year must feel to Australian Christians!

But what about non-Christian celebrations? Everywhere initiation rites are violent and explicitly sexual. Initiations–which are a form of participatory theater–are rife with circumcisions, subincisions, vomitings, beatings, and other terrifyingly violent acts. These initiatory ordeals are not any "gentler" when viewed from within the cultures that practice them. Nor is this violence and sexuality characteristic only of male initiation. As more information gathered by women becomes available, it is increasingly clear that girls' initiation too, in its own ways, is sexual and frequently violent. Nor are the healing arts of shamans peaceful exercises of homeopathy. They are more likely to be full-fledged perilous journeys and magical combats climaxing in a direct plunge into the guts of the sick person from which the shaman extracts the disease. Often enough the sickness thus removed is displayed for all to see. These violations are considered necessary for healing, as human and animal sacrifices are sometimes felt to be.

Why go on? The celebration of sexual violence is the chief intercultural characteristic of theater. Sexual violence is dangerous, crying for some means of control. Nothing seems to work. Today, violence has been flung outward as state policy: missiles, nuclear arms, "defense departments." But this policy has not deflected violence from also being focused on the molecules of social existence–child abuse, murder within the family, street crime, alcohol and drug addiction; or from being introjected and re-released in floods of popular entertainments ranging form horror films to such video cassettes as *Faces of Death*. According to the Associated Press, this tape "is made up of scene after graphic scene of actual human and animal killings." The killings shown in *Faces of Death* are real. "Basically it's a documentary," said Jeff Robinson, manager of Movieland, a videotape rental store in Ann Arbor. "It covers everything from the electric chair to the slaughterhouse." Sales of *Faces of Death* are described as

"phenomenal." And now clones are capitalizing on the market.

But the fascination with violence is neither a contemporary nor uniquely Western jag. Take for example the classic Sanskrit epics, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. Episodes from these epics are enacted throughout southern Asia. In these epics are tales of violent sexuality. The *Rāmāyaṇa* pivots around the disequilibrating lust of Ravana, the ten-headed demon king of Lanka. To restore world balance Vishnu incarnates himself as Rama. Ravana kidnaps and attempts to seduce/rape Rama's wife Sita, precipitating the great war that Rama and Hanuman (monkey general, simpleton saint) wage against Ravana and his demon allies. At Ramlilas all across northern India this story is enacted each autumn, just as the rainy season with its mixed blessing of nourishing waters and devastating floods melds into the glorious dry cool season.

The *Māhabhārata* turns on the Kauravas' lust and greed as they cheat Yudhisthira and his Pandava brothers of their kingdom, wealth, and joint-wife, Draupadi. Only Krishna's intervention–supplying Draupadi with an endlessly unwinding sari–keeps her from being stripped naked by Dusassana, one of her husbands' rivals. The story goes through many episodes of exile, adventure, disguise and return. Literally hundreds of side-tales are absorbed into the *Māhabhārata*. But ultimately, the narrative is resolved by the great battle at Kurukshetra in which cousins slaughter cousins, and students annihilate gurus. The climactic scene of the epic, performed so powerfully in *Kathakali*, is Bhima's revenge against Dusassana. With his great club Bhima crushes Dusassana's thighs. Then he rips open Dusassana's stomach, drinking his blood and eating his intestines. Finally, he washes Draupadi's hair in Dusassana's bloody guts. Only after his ultimate humiliation is Dusassana permitted to die.

Japanese *Noh* drama is more restrained visually speaking, but most of the plays tell stories of murder, vengeance, violent sacrifice and uneasy ghosts seeking a rest they never find.

In Africa south of the Sahara, Robert Farris Thompson insists, "action is a superior mode of thought. Movement serves long-term knowledge with sensuous uprush and spontaneity, answering to the imperatives of life" (1974:117).

Thompson details the African opposition between "the person of high moral character and equanimity of mind and body" and the "bush spirit, arbitrary, uncontrolled, not civilized" (120). "Being a person is also being mystical, being endowed with a rightful thirst for transcendence of human limitations" (125). When possessed by a "person," a dancer "changes in personality, attitude and stance. He moves in the image of the deity. If the god is strong and fiery, he becomes strong and fiery" (126). Thompson cites many different kinds of beings the dancer assumes in various African performances. A dancer can become a graceful killer like a lion and leopard; or wear a horned mask signifying divine force and power; or become full of the horizontal, sinuous magic of the python.

Among the Banyang of Cameroon the belief in witchcraft, the bush spirits, is very strong. Especially powerful and dangerous are the spirits of the male owl, the python, and the wild pig.

> These three may be said to symbolize acts of persons.... Their devouring habits limn the nature of irresponsibility on a monstrous heroic scale.

> Recovery from the fevers and other disorders which the witches bring from their secret "place" is only possible after the person owning the wicked animal familiar has confessed, either as an open statement before the people as witness, in daylight, or by confession plus ritual purification by a cultic society (209-10).

In the Basinjom rites, dances lead to a direct confrontation with the witches. Facing the accused, Basinjom raises his special "knife of vision" over his head:

> He began to speak, facing the two women and the crowd behind them. He related intimate things, divinatory insights, thoughts, dreams. He specified certain selfish acts, breaches of cooperative contracts, lapses of generosity, unkind words, and then he said, "...and with this evil familiar did you go out, when the planting was under way, and sow your filth into the earth. You planted it. You! and You! You are the ones responsible. All our crops have been affected. You went to your 'place' and all our plants have been attracted there ruined by your power."
>
> He called their names. He asked "have you done this?" They answered "Yes." They apologized and said that they did not know that their powers had been so

destructive. They begged forgiveness. They offered material amends and these were accepted. They were purified by Basinjom, who said, "from today I do not want to see any further trouble from your house." A goat was sacrificed. The women swore not to do such evil a second time. They were purified by Basinjom and forgiven. The case was closed (214-15).

Thompson emphasizes that what he saw was a drama.

The accused women were conscious actresses in a public drama meant to inculcate deep decorum, meant to warn the world of the dangers of polluting social landscapes by dark and hidden thoughts. The ritual humiliation was, in a sense, more performance than trauma, an artistically phrased combat between real or imaginary sources of evil (the witches) and metaphoric opposition to this action (Basinjom).

The point of this impassioned happening was precisely its embodiment within the assuaging genius of art and motion. There was drumming. There was dance. There was sculpture. There was dress (216).

Thompson understands, as few have, the connections between performance, ritual, meaning and what he calls "intimate things, divinatory insights, thoughts, dreams." It is a link Freud forged at the turn of the century.

II

What of all this violence? It is not part of "real life," no matter how violent ordinary experience might be. Even *Faces of Death* is one small step away from actuality–like the re-broadcasting *ad infinitum* in 1986 of the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* or, twenty-three years earlier, the Kennedy assassination. The violence of "real life" is anything but redemptive. In order to tolerate it at all humans are constantly "making something out" of quotidian violence. Re-broadcasting is a low-level ritualizing; as such it is a mild and mostly unconscious attempt to absorb and transform violence. When official violence approaches the absolute, as at Auschwitz-Birkenau, memorials and museums are erected and troupes of school children bussed in lest we (that is, they) forget. But the children, at least the ones I watched at Auschwitz in May 1985, are more interested in T-shirts imprinted with Michael Jackson's face displayed for sale at

the Auschwitz tourist kiosk than in any direct confrontation with Polish-Jewish-German history.

Perhaps this is as it should be: the ritual of going-to-Auschwitz-as-part-of-school erases the pain of seeing what was/is there. For me, part of no group, walking alone the mile or so from Auschwitz to Birkenau, standing among the wild grasses growing over the rail line terminating between the wrecked but recognizable twin gas chambers/crematoria, watching the bees work the spring flowers while a couple of Polish boys on bikes ride down the rail path, stop, talk, then casually turn and pedal out again, I felt the stunning void and heard only the wind in my ears.

No, ritual violence cannot be immobilized in history. Nor can it be put away, bottled in some "primal ritual" Sir James Frazer, Jane Ellen Harrison and Gilbert Murray cooked up to "explain" Greek theater (see Frazer, 1922; Harrison, 1912, 1913; and Murray, 1912).

And if there are similarities between animal rituals and human arts there are important differences also. The patterned steps/waggles of bees may look like a dance, but the bees are not dancing. Where everything is genetically determined there can be no learning, improvisation, error or lying. And where there is no artifice there is no art.

The horror of Oedipus' story is that he could have done differently–and yet he could not have done differently. Oedipus tries again and again to sidestep his destiny. He is pure mind working to overcome its inheritance of...what? Genetic determinism, fate, family curse, environment–all that binds him to his story even more tightly than the wires that cut his ankles deeply enough to give him his name: Oedipus, which means "swollen foot." Oedipus' "story" is interesting only as it is, but his "life" could have been different. At any given crisis or turning point Oedipus chooses: to leave Corinth, to kill the old man blocking his way, to accept the kingship of Thebes, to marry Jocasta, to solve the riddle of the sphynx, to send Creon to the Delphic oracle, to ignore Jocasta's warning and dive to the bottom of things, to blind himself. Only his final exile is unchosen by Oedipus. It is Creon and the citizens of Thebes who send their ex-king and his daughters out. Ultimately Oedipus, in *Colonus*, says that since he intended no harm he is in fact guiltless.

But what good would Oedipus' innocence do us, his audience? It is Oedipus' violence, his guilt, and the extraordinary ironies of his adventures that delight audiences. If Oedipus is to teach humans, he must exist only as his story, not as someone who "really lived" and therefore could have avoided all that befell him.

Like Oedipus' choices, ritual in animals does not occur haphazardly. It coagulates around those most troublesome encounters concerning mating, hierarchy, territory and access to food. Human rituals also cluster around the troublesome crises of birth, puberty, marriage, sickness, death, war and the predictability and/or unpredictability of natural cycles and upheavals.

Until very recently, when work on animal cognition began to be taken seriously, it was assumed that animals have no Oedipal choices to make; they act; they do not mull. Their minds entertain neither skepticism, irony nor subjunctive negativity ("Ought I do that?" "What will happen if I don't do that?"). Animals suffer no wedges driven between impulse and act. Perhaps a splinter of subjunctivity is present in the so-called "speaking" animals: chimpanzees, gorillas, dolphins. But even if there were some gorilla Oedipus, he would be a far cry from Sophocles' character. Animal ritual deals with crises on a non-ideational basis, through action not rumination. In fact, ritual might be said to short-circuit thinking, providing at-hand solutions to impossible problems.

Ironically, most humans (being neither Oedipus nor Hamlet) also deal with these crises through ritual action not thought. One of ritual's main functions is to keep people from thinking "too much." Individual and collective anxieties are relieved by performances whose qualities of repetition, rhythmicity, exaggeration, condensation, simplification and spectacle stimulate the brain into releasing opium-like endorphins directly into the bloodstream. Ritual action is the thought of the people; Marx may have been correct to link religion and opium. In short, there are more than ideological reasons to suspect that human rituals "work."

To say that ritual short-circuits thought is saying that ritual provides ready-made answers to what thinking works through. Rituals use sacrifice and other forms of direct or indirect celebratory violence to express the plea, explicitly or implicitly, for "success" in living and dying. "Rites of

Passage" (Van Gennep 1912) transport people across life's turbulent and disturbing boundary zones. These rites may be individual or collective, tragic or joyful. Ritual is also creative because, as Victor Turner showed, ritual process opens up a time/space of anti-structural playfulness, the liminoid within the liminal (1982:20-60). The ritual process as Turner interpreted it is analogous to the rehearsal process (see Schechner 1985:99-105, 287-88).

Many rituals integrate music, dance and theater. The display of masks and costumes; the processions, circumambulations, singing, dancing, story-telling, food-sharing, fire-burning, incensing, drumming and bell-ringing, the body-heat, press and active participation of the crowd create an overwhelming synaesthesic environment and experience for the audience, tribe or congregation. At the same time, rituals embody cognitive systems of values that instruct and mobilize participants. These embodied values are rhythmic and cognitive, spatial and conceptual, sensuous and ideological. In neurological terms, ritual excites both the right and left hemispheres of the cerebral cortex; it is truly total theater. People are not only susceptible to ritual of all kinds–religious, political, sportive, aesthetic–but a definite need exists demanding satisfaction that only rituals can satisfy.

But why violence? This is a particularly appropriate question for a person like me to ask, because dramatic narratives and theatrical actions are so often, and in so many diverse cultures, explicitly violent. In the Western "great" tradition we have, of course, Pentheus' dismemberment at the hands of his mother Agave in Euripides' masterpiece *The Bacchae*; Oedipus, who stabs to jelly and then rips out his own eyeballs; the slaughter that concludes *Hamlet*; the killing of Anna Fierling's three children in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage*; and the 40 victims of rape-murder in Eugene Ionesco's tragi-farce, *The Lesson*. These are but a very few examples of the violence endemic to theater.

Rene Girard in his *Violence and the Sacred* (1977) explains that violence always threatens the social life of a group.

Inevitably the moment comes when violence can only be countered by more violence. Whether we fail or succeed in our effort to subdue it, the real victor is

always the violence itself. The mimetic attributes of violence are extraordinary—sometimes direct and positive, at other times indirect and negative. The more men strive to curb their violent impulses, the more these impulses seem to prosper (31).

Girard links violence and sexuality.

Like violence, sexual desire tends to fasten upon surrogate objects if the object to which it was originally attracted remains inaccessible; it willingly accepts substitutes. And again, like violence, repressed sexual desire accumulates energy that sooner or later bursts forth, causing tremendous havoc (35).

The mimetic nature of violence and the facility with which sexual desire finds, multiplies, and substitutes work are the sources of theater's special kind of violent, erotic mimesis. As Girard reminds us:

It is also worth noting that the shift from violence to sexuality and from sexuality to violence is easily effected, even by the most "normal" of individuals, totally lacking in perversion. Thwarted sexuality leads naturally to violence, just as lovers' quarrels often end in an amorous embrace (35).

I agree with Girard's belief that ritual sublimates violence: "the function of ritual is to 'purify' violence; that is to trick violence into spending itself on victims whose death will provoke no reprisals" (36).

The way this works is reasonably simple. The "sacrificial crisis," as Girard sees it, is the dissolution of distinctions within a society–from the erasure of the reciprocal rights/responsibilities of parents to/from their children, to the elision of all hierarchy. Incest and regicide are radical attacks on differentiation. Girard, a dyed-in-the-wool advocate of caste, says: "Wherever differences are lacking, violence threatens" (57). The enactment of ritual death, whether the victim is actually or theatrically killed, alleviates the threat by restoring distinctions. A victim is selected, a surrogate, a scapegoat, a Greek *pharmakos*, and on this victim is heaped all the community's wrong-doings.

The surrogate victim plays the same role on the collective level as the objects the shamans claim to extract from their patients play on the individual level—objects that are then identified as the cause of the illness (83).

In theater the substitutions are even more complex than in shamanism, for the actor is substitute for a surrogate. The actor who plays Oedipus or Lear or Willie Loman is not the "character" who in turn is not a "real person." There may be no "real person" at all, but only the play of incorporated symbols:

[victim]–character–actor–audience–society

At the exact place where the actor meets the audience the society faces the sacrificial victim twice-removed. The audience itself is once-removed from the society it is part of; the audience represents society. In ritual performances the audience may indeed be the society and the actor may be, or suddenly become, the sacrificial victim.

In the Western tradition by the time of the emergence of Greek tragedy in the fifth century B.C.E., the whole basis of sacrifice had shifted. The audience assembled in the theater of Dionysus did not gather to participate in a *pharmakos* ritual but to enjoy performances of stories alluding to such rituals. The prizes awarded to the best actor and the best playwright were great honors. A man might be performing the role of surrogate *pharmakos* one minute and wear the laurel of victory the next. But, of course, theater is duplicitous when it comes to distinctions. Theater promotes transformations; one person stands for another, or is possessed by another. The ordinary distinctions of social life are forgotten. The actor's skill at impersonating, her/his ability to be possessed by another, is celebrated, not his/her "real self." Many actors in various cultures are unreliable in their daily lives, but this does not mean that they are bad actors or cannot play heroic and ethically stalwart characters.

The mistake of ritual theorists from Frazer, Harrison and Murray to Girard has been to confuse the enactment of a ritual with the "source event" itself. Too many theorists put ritual behind, or antecedent to, theater. Turner does not make this mistake. He shows in his work on ritual process and social drama (see especially 1969, 1974, 1982) the parallels between how ritual works to open up a liminal-liminoid time and space and how social conflicts acted out in this privileged time and space take the shape of drama. Far from insisting that ritual comes first, Turner emphasizes the on-going nature of the

ritual process. Ritual is not a primitive precursor or atavistic relic evaporating when people achieve a certain level of civilization. Ritual process permeates the social, religious and aesthetic life of all cultures.

The same may be said of theater. Theater and ritual comprise a braided twin-system (see Schechner 1977). Each is present in the other. Certain cultures, historical periods and individual genres emphasize the one or the other. The fundamental distinction between theater and ritual is functional. Ritual is efficacious; it claims a direct and measurable effect on the world. Theater is entertainment. In ritual action begets action; in theater, action begets thought. But since ritual and theater are a double system, all theatrical performances have the ambition to affect action, and all rituals seek to entertain and stimulate thought. What distinguishes the one from the other in any given performance is context, including what the audience expects, who the sponsoring agents are and what the occasion for the performance is.

There are ways other than Girard's to explain the apparently universal association of violence, sexuality, ritual and theater. In *Totem and Taboo*, (originally published in 1913) Freud proposed an analogy between the thought of animists, neurotics, children and artists.

> It is easy to perceive the motives which lead men to practice magic: they are human wishes. All we need to suppose is that primitive man had an immense belief in the power of his wishes (1962:83).

> Children are in an analogous psychical situation.... They satisfy their wishes in an hallucinatory manner, that is, they create a satisfying situation by means of centrifugal excitation of their sense organs. An adult primitive man has an alternative method open to him. His wishes are accompanied by a motor impulse, the will, which is later destined to alter the whole face of the earth in order to satisfy his wishes. This motor impulse is at first employed to give a representation of the satisfying situation in such a way that it becomes possible to experience the satisfaction by means of what might be described as motor hallucinations. This kind of representation of a satisfied wish is quite comparable to children's play, which succeeds their earlier purely sensory technique of satisfaction (83-84).

This "omnipotence of thoughts," as Freud called it, makes a world where "things become less important than ideas of things" (85). Neurotics also live in this "world apart" in which "they are only affected by what is thought with intensity and pictured with emotion, whereas agreement with external reality is a matter of no importance" (86). Freud notes that neurotics undergoing psychoanalysis are "unable to believe that thoughts are free and will constantly be afraid of expressing evil wishes, as though their expression would lead inevitably to their fulfillment." In this way neurotics reveal their "resemblance to the savages who believe they can alter the external world by mere thinking" (87).

Freud, a cultural evolutionist, detects a progression from an animist view of the world to a religious view to a scientific view.

> At the animistic stage men ascribe omnipotence to themselves. At the religious stage they transfer it to the gods but do not seriously abandon it themselves, for they reserve the power of influencing the gods in a variety of ways according to their wishes. The scientific view of the universe no longer affords any room for human omnipotence; men have acknowledged their smallness and submitted resignedly to death and to the other necessities of nature. Nonetheless some of the primitive belief in omnipotence still survives in men's faith in the power of the human mind, taking account, as it does of the laws of reality (88).

Each successive stage credits "external reality" with more autonomy. Too bad that Freud did not know that even as he was proposing his evolutionary scheme, Neils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg were developing their ideas of indeterminacy–a theory that categorically denies to "external reality" its independent existence while also denying to the human mind any claims of omnipotence.

Freud notes one mode of "civilized" thought that remains unreconstructed.

> In only a single field of our civilization has the omnipotence of thoughts been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects—thanks to artistic illusion—just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the "magic of art" and compare artists to

magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art's sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct today. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes (90).

Extinct impulses? If we look at Freud's ideas through a contemporary lens, we must throw out the notion that some humans are more "primitive" or "aboriginal" than others. Biologically and culturally speaking, all *Homo sapiens* have been on earth for the same amount of time. Although, as Freud believed, the child might be the father to the man, the so-called primitive is not the child to the so-called civilized. Nor is the neurotic an unreconstructed child/primitive. What we have is a diversity of cultures none of which is closer to the beginning of human history than any other.

Each culture embodies its own system of organizing experience. Crediting Freud with extraordinary insight, can we restate his view to suit today's view of things? Perhaps we should say that certain systems are more porous in relation to the unconscious than other systems. But the ways in which this porosity is encouraged/repressed, guarded, regulated and used differs vastly, not only from culture to culture but within every culture. Children, crazies and "technicians of the sacred" each encounter/filter what Anton Ehrenzweig (1970) calls "primary process" differently. Children are porous to the unconscious, because they have not yet learned how to control material streaming into consciousness. Theirs is not yet an ego-regulated encounter with unconscious material. Neurotics are by definition people whose defenses are dysfunctionally weak, but behavior that might be neurotic in one culture, or one setting within a given culture, might prove very effective in other contexts. Extremely neurotic people have not only been great artists, but statesmen, tycoons and war chiefs. Shamans, artists and others who incorporate and enact the "omnipotence of thought" seek out teachers and/or techniques to help them master the powerful impulses streaming into consciousness. Account after account tells the story: a shaman is "called" but resists the call. S/he cannot control the experiences "coming" to her/him in the form of dreams, visions, uncontrollable impulses. After a period of doubt and often terror, the neophyte submits, finds someone to teach her/him the tricks of the trade. Even in the West to be

an artist is not like entering other professions. In modern Western cultures it might be said that these impulses ("the call") and later, the material from which art is made, originate in the confrontation between daily life and the unconscious. In many cultures such impulses originate with gods, ancestors, demons, ghosts, etc. In any case the primary process materials manifest themselves in dreams, visions, obsessive thoughts, trance possession, speaking in tongues and half-hidden violent and erotic wishes.

Ehrenzweig's theories fit nicely those of Girard. Girard believes that lack of differentiation brings about the "sacrificial crisis" which is remedied by a mimetic violence: ritual. Ehrenzweig celebrates what he calls the child's "global vision" which

> remains undifferentiated as to its component details. This gives the younger child artist the freedom to distort color and shapes in the most imaginative and, to us, unrealistic manner. But to him—owing to his global, unanalytic view—his work is realistic (22).

Ehrenzweig sounds like Girard when he says that "the truly unconscious and potentially disruptive quality of undifferentiation" threatens to introduce "the catastrophic chaos which we are wont to associate with the primary process" (37-8). But what terrifies the neurotic, the artist seeks to play out publicly. Frequently, the artist-neurotic (or shaman-neurotic) is compelled to explore the very process that terrifies her/him. It is fashionable today to say that artists are healthy while neurotics are sick–that ten years of art are worth a psychoanalytic cure (Sartre, speaking of Genet). That is one possibility, but surely another is that art and neurosis (i.e., a porous and shifting boundary only weakly separating the unconscious from the conscious) are closely linked.

Art, especially theater because it deals in behavior, is the art of "acting out." It opens to consciousness unconscious desires/fantasies. Ritual is an analogous way of handling this material and giving violence its place at the table of human needs. These violent fantasies of omnipotence are always sexual. And when these fantasies are not "handled," not "charmed," not somehow magically transformed into "love," they explode directly into the personal, social and/or political process. The result is anything from murder to genocide, from

wife-beating to warfare, from pornography to the ecstatic martyrdom of so many Christian saints whose very existence demonstrates that ritual is not a guaranteed inoculation against the outbreak of violence. Kafka well knew how ritual operates in relation to violence:

> Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers; this is repeated over and over again; finally it can be calculated in advance, and it becomes part of the ceremony (1954:40).

III

Humans need to perform rituals. Where is this "need" "located?" Eugene d'Aquili and his associates place it in the brain (1979). As Turner put it in one of his last writings:

> What is the role of the brain as an organ for the information in the production of mental, verbal, or organic behavior?.... If ritualization, as discussed by Huxley, Lorenz, and other ethologists, has a biogenetic foundation, while meaning has neocortical learned base, does this mean that creative processes, those which generate new cultural knowledge, might result from a coadaptation perhaps in the ritual process itself, of genetic and cultural information? (1983:225,228).

Or as d'Aquili says:

> Human ceremonial ritual is not a simple institution unique to man but rather a nexus of variables shared by other species.... One may trace the evolutionary progression of ritual behavior from the emergence of formalization through the coordination of formalized communicative behavior and sequences of ritual behavior to the conceptualization of such sequences and the assignment of symbols to them by man (1979:36-37).

D'Aquili proposes what he calls a "cognitive imperative." A human being automatically, almost reflexly, confronts an unknown stimulus by the question, "What is it?" Affective responses such as fear, happiness, or sadness and motor responses are clearly secondary to the immediate cognitive response (168). If d'Aquili's thesis is true, then humans work from the top down, from the present to the past (evolutionarily speaking). Furthermore, narrativity–the need to construct a plausible story–is hard-wired into the brain.

However, it is probably more complicated. It appears to me, from conducting workshops full of intense performative experiences (Schechner 1973, 1986), that rhythmic activities, especially if movement and sound-making are carefully coordinated and extend for long periods of time, invariably lead to feelings of "identical opposites," such as wholeness/bodily disintegration of "astral projection," or invulnerability/vulnerability, or tranquillity/readiness for the most demanding physical action. In other words, the narrative-cognitive stimulus works from the forebrain down while the movement-sonic stimulus works from the lower brain up.

Barbara Lex, one of d'Aquili's associates, proposes that trance and other supremely affective states of flow result from the extreme stimulation of both the ergotropic and trophotropic systems of the brain.

> Exposure to manifold, intense, repetitive, emotion-evoking stimuli ensures uniformity of behavior in ritual participants.... Rituals properly executed promote a feeling of well-being and relief, not only because the driving techniques employed in rituals are designed to sensitize or "tune" the nervous system and thereby lessen inhibition of the [neo-cortex's] right hemisphere and permit temporary right-hemisphere dominance, as well as mixed trophotropic-ergotropic excitation, to achieve synchronization of cortical rhythms in both hemispheres and evoke a trophotropic rebound (1979:120, 144-45).

People seek the kind of experiences that provide a "rebound" or "spillover" simultaneously exciting both left and right hemispheres of the forebrain by participating in rituals, taking drugs and making performances (in addition to Lex, see Fischer 1971, Turner 1983, Schechner 1986).

These ethological and neurological theories answer some questions, but what they do not explain (because they cannot) are the creative and playful aspects of ritual. These qualities of the ritual process fascinated Turner (1968,1984,1986). Ritual is not just a conservator of evolutionary and species-specific behavior, it is–as Turner showed–important as a generator of new images, new ideas and new practices. Reviewing the theories of d'Aquili and Lex, Turner was troubled by their failure to deal with play.

As I see it play does not fit in anywhere particular; it is a transient and is recalcitrant to localization, to placement, to fixation—a joker in the neuro-anthropological act.... Playfulness is a volatile, sometimes dangerously explosive essence, which cultural institutions seek to bottle or contain in the vials of games of competition, chance, and strength, in modes of simulation such as theater, and in controlled disorientation, from roller coasters to dervish dancing.... Play could be termed dangerous because it may subvert the left-right hemispheric regular switching involved in maintaining the social order.... The neuronic energies of play, as it were, lightly skim over the cerebral cortices, sampling rather than partaking of the capacities and functions of the various areas of the brain. As Don Handleman (1977) and Gregory Bateson (1972) have written that is possibly why play can provide a metalanguage (since to be "meta" is to be both beyond and between) and emit metamessages about so many and varied human propensities and thus provide, as Handelman has said, "a very wide range of commentary on the social order" (189). Play can be everywhere and nowhere, imitate anything, yet be identified with nothing.... You may have guessed that play is, for me, a liminal or liminoid mode, essentially interstitial, betwixt-and-between all standard taxonomic nodes, essentially "elusive" (1983:233-34).

For Turner, play is unlocatable because it is quintessentially relational. It is not anywhere "in" the brain (or "in" culture) but everywhere "between."

Turner revealed the anti-structural–the playful, creative artistic–dimension of ritual. In the anti-structural, I suspect, we will find the answer to why ritual and theater are so violent. Turner located the creative dimension of ritual in the creases, knee-joints, margins and cracks of social structure: the elusive betwixt and between.

As Turner himself notes, there is a contradiction between his theories and the ethological-neurological propositions. To the ethologists and neurologists ritual is central to behavior and to brain structure/function. But Turner places ritual "betwixt and between" making it more like play than anything else. The ritual process is liminal-liminoid; its operations are (un)authorized, (anti)structural, subjunctive and subversive. Is this contradiction due only to the difference between Turner's social perspective as contrasted to the ethologist's-neurologist's biological one? Or is it another statement of the old, insoluble argument between those who assert that "humans are free" and those who are determinists?

The problem is similar to Oedipus'. Where you place the ritual process depends on where you place yourself. The ethologists see ritual from the perspective of destiny while Turner takes the often confused and contradictory position of Oedipus himself. I am speaking of the Oedipus of the first play: the man who made all those fateful decisions (mistakes?). By the time Oedipus reaches *Colonus*, he is indeed apotheosized, already seeing with the eyes of a god, blind though he is. The Turner I knew sought no god-eyed vision, preferring to rise no higher than what Yeats called "an old man's eagle mind."

Turner delighted in the "not-yetness" of human experience, its categorical unfinishedness: the actuality (even if illusory) of choosing. Whether it was performing ethnography in Manhattan, or climbing a mountain in Israel; observing Yaqui deer and pascola dances in Arizona, or celebrating Carneval in Rio; conferring with colleagues in Japan or on his back porch in Charlottesville, Turner sought experience with incredible heart-bursting energy.

The ritual process that Turner mined was a living magma upwelling in all human societies: a periodic, temporary, but hot and molten creativity. This ritual process is strictly analogous to the training-workshop-rehearsal process in which the "givens" or "ready-mades" (accepted texts, accepted ways of using the body, accepted feelings) are deconstructed, broken down into malleable bits of behavior, feeling, thought and text and then reconstructed into public performances.

In traditional genres such as *Kathakali*, ballet, or Noh neophytes begin their training early in life. This training involves learning new ways of speaking, gesturing, moving–maybe even new ways of thinking and feeling. New for the trainee, that is, but traditional for *Kathakali*, ballet, and Noh. As in initiation rites the mind and body of each performer is made into a *tabula rasa* (to use Turner's Lockean image) ready to be written on in the language of the form being learned. When finished with training, the performer can "speak" Noh, *Kathakali*, or ballet; s/he is "incorporated " into the tradition as an initiated member. The violence of scarification or circumcision is absent, but deep, permanent psychophysical changes are wrought. A *Kathakali* performer, ballet dancer, Noh *shite* each have their genre-specific ways of

moving, sounding and, I would say, being; they are marked people.

Turner went far beyond Van Gennep when he said that the artworks and leisure activities of industrial and post-industrial societies were like the rituals of tribal, agrarian and traditional societies. He called the arts and leisure activities "liminoid." Liminal rites are obligatory while liminoid activities are voluntary: that Oedipal choice again.

The workshops of experimental theatre and dance are liminoid laboratories of psychophysical initiation. Some of the transformation accomplished by workshops are temporary, used in the performance at hand only. But sometimes workshops effect permanent transformations. An aesthetic-ritual initiation can be as consequential and permanent as anything wrought on an Aborigine. The "parashamans" (Grimes 1982:255-66) of experimental theatre and dance–Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Anna Halprin–(to name three of many) practice aesthetics to yield initiatory permanence. It is this explicit intention to transform people that has led these and other parashamans to investigate in a most rigorous way the techniques of shamans and other ritual specialists among non-Western cultures.

The practice of parashamans turns orthodox ritual on its head. Ethological procedures are mimicked, neurological response elicited–but in the service of ideas that are anything but conservative. In non-human animals, ritual is a way of mediating crisis. It often performs this role for humans too, but it is also something else: a means of conserving traditional, cultural and individual patterns of behavior. Turner knew this, but did not emphasize it. He focused instead on how ritual introduces new behaviors or undermines established systems. It is precisely when this creative and/or subversive function of ritual dominates, spills over its usually well-defined boundaries, that art separates from, and sometimes opposes, religion. The maskers of Carneval, Hopi mudhead clowns, and Yaqui *pascolas* are anti-structural but almost always endeavoring ultimately to reinforce tradition. A period of license is permitted, even demanded. Things are done backwards, excesses are celebrated, promiscuous sexuality and drunkenness flourish. But then Ash Wednesday falls like lead, and the radioactive, subversive shenaningans of Mardis Gras are put back in the box for another year. In art

things are different; the subversion is continuous. The avant-garde in fact is art's permanent revolution.

IV

The violence acted out in performance is no mere symbol, sapped of its ability to wound, frighten and astonish. It is rather a mortgaged actuality, awaiting and yet indefinitely postponing the payoff: its transformation into what it merely imitates.

The ancient Greeks always sent a messenger onto stage to report the violent acts performed out of sight of the spectators. Actually, of course, these acts were never performed; they existed as reports only. But did the fictitious atrocities inflicted on Pentheus or Oedipus reflect an historical time when such actions were performed? I think not. Rites come and go, but there is no unilinear pattern leading from ritual to theater or away from violence to mimesis. No, the fictive violence of the stage refers to the future, to what threatens if the aesthetic-ritual enterprise crashes.

But what about theatrical genres that specialize in showing violence? The Elizabethan-Jacobean stage, like today's horror or vengeance movies, delighted in blood-and-guts. In the sado-masochistic theaters of New York, minor violence–spanking, whipping, pinching, dripping hot wax on naked flesh–is not only performed on actors but on eager spectator-volunteers who pay high ticket prices for the privilege. Is *King Lear* less effective than *Oedipus* because Gloucester has his eyes put out on stage? Semiotically considered, there is scant difference between reported and pretended actions. Spectators at *King Lear* know they are seeing tricks. Skillfully staged actions, like the messenger's words in Greek tragedy, refer to a violence deferred. The violence of the sado-masochistic theater is very carefully regulated. As Belle de Jour, the proprietess of one such theater told me, "a good sadist or masochist wants to experience giving-getting pain every night. To do that you have to be careful not to injure yourself or your partner." The violence imagined at Belle's theater is many times more intense than the pain inflicted or experienced.

But actual violence is all around. "Living room wars" and the daily scenes of terror, murder, and fire shown on TV news

arouse appetites that cannot be satisfied by more of the same. This much was known at least since the days of the Roman gladiatorial games. Actual violence framed as aesthetics or sport, like the eroticism of pornography, transforms bits of actuality into fantasy. The omnipotence of thoughts is given free rein.

What about the long list of violence in ritual: human and animal sacrifice, cannibalism, flesh-piercing, initiatory ordeals? Are these practices able to tame the violence they actualize and represent simultaneously? Girard believes they are homeopathic–that a little such violence inoculates a society against more general and destructive, haphazard, anarchic violence. Or, if they are exemplary vestiges of the "primal ritual," can anyone identify the process transforming them into make-believe, into theater? In Papua, New Guinea, the government has outlawed warfare, head-hunting and other forms of ritual violence. Missionaries have long campaigned against initiations. Some of the dancing and masking continues at the Mt. Hagen and other "shows." Tribespeople gather to perform for each other and tourists. But this transformation into theater by means of interdiction hardly seems a general model.

V

It is no accident that in Asian all-night performances the demons appear in the hours just before dawn. These demons, like the devils of the great medieval European cycle plays, are both horrific and farcical. Appearing as they do at the "witching hour," they participate in both performative and dream worlds. Children awaken to the roars of the demons and stare wide-eyed not really knowing if they are seeking or dreaming. Parents too watch the performances from a hypnogogic twilight zone. This is not only a matter of clock-time. Japanese say that the proper way to watch Noh is in a state between waking and sleeping. Among the Noh audience are many whose eyes are closed or heavy-lidded. These experts are paying attention by relaxing their consciousness, allowing material to stream upward from their unconscious to meet the images/sounds streaming outward from the Noh stage. In this state of porous, receptive inattention the spectator is carried along in Noh's dreamlike rhythms (see

Schechner 1977). Often images and sounds are shared by *shite*, chorus and musicians so that the principle character is constructed by and distributed among a number of participants, including the spectators whose reveries blend in with what is coming from the stage. As Kunio Komparu notes:

> The viewer participates in the creation of the play by individual free association and brings to life internally a drama based on individual experience filtered through the emotions of the protagonist. The shared dramatic experience, in other words, is not the viewer's adjustment of himself to the protagonist on stage but rather his creation of a separate personal drama by sharing the play with the performer. Indeed, he becomes that protagonist (1983:18).

Ehrenzweig sensed the similarity between this liminal state of half-sleep and artistic creativity. He termed this state "poemagogic" and recognized that it assimilates violence to creativity:

> Poemagogic images...of suffering, destruction, and death...in their enormous variety, reflect the various phases and aspects of creativity in a very direct manner, though the central theme of death and rebirth, or trapping and liberation, seems to overshadow the others. Death and rebirth mirror the ego's dedifferentiation and redifferentiation (1970:189-90).

In the life of the imagination dreams are the paradigm of liminality, existing in an "as if" world totally between the clarity of reasoned thought and the confusion of events forced on the dreamer.

It is at the deepest level of dreaming–a level cultural as much as it is individual–that the strongest connections exist between tragedy, violence, sexuality and farce. Look at the cartoons little children watch on Saturday morning TV. Compare these to the classics of silent film: Chaplin, the Keystone Cops, Laurel and Hardy. Connect this tradition of slapstick clowning to the circus, *commedia dell' arte*, Punch and Judy shows and back to medieval, Roman and Greek mimes. In the triadic relation of laughter to violence and sex, one corner of the triangle often is hidden. Slapstick connects laughter to violence, romantic comedy connects laughter to sex, sado-masochism connects violence to sex. But also all

three can be visibly operating simultaneously as in Aristophanic comedy or the antics of Hopi mudhead clowns, who are obscene, cruel and funny. The Hopi example could be multiplied the world over.

Milan Kundera nicely puts the inevitable progression from laughter to excitement to violence:

> There they stood in front of the mirror (they always stood in front of the mirror while she undressed), watching themselves. She stripped to her underwear, but still had the [bowler] hat on her head. And all at once she realized they were both excited by what they saw in the mirror.
>
> What could have excited them so? A moment before, the hat on her head had seemed nothing but a joke. Was excitement really a mere step away from laughter?
>
> Yes. When they looked at each other in the mirror that time, all she saw for the first few seconds was a comic situation. But suddenly the comic became veiled by excitement: the bowler hat no longer signified a joke; it signified violence (1985:86).

The progression can originate anywhere and proceed in any direction–from violence to sex, from sex to laughter, etc.

The dreaming I am talking about is not limited to fantasies of the night. Dreaming is a technique of mind that dissolves boundaries between unconsciousness, consciousness and representation. What is there is seen and what is seen is made present to others. In art these representations are relatively harmless. But in other modes of human expression the representations may be very destructive. A work of art is harmless, even homeopathic, because it consists of a formalized representation of a representation. A military action, on the other hand, is direct acting out of desirous, violent, tragi-farcical dreaming: a life-and-death representation of a desire.

Tragi-farce is possible because in the unconscious–that is, as dreams–the genres collapse. Genres are differentiations constructed to divide and conquer otherwise uncontrollably powerful wishes. Girard is right in fearing undifferentiation. Yet the lure of undifferentiation is extremely compelling, and not only to artists and shamans. The less differentiated fantasies are, the more powerfully they operate on humans.

That is why rituals, like TV commercials, obsessively repeat a few basic themes: jingles, tunes, rhythms, catch lines. Through such repetitions a dialectic develops between the apparently idiosyncratic dream-images/actions of individuals and the apparently stereotyped/archetypal images/actions of "cultures" (culture here represents just one more heuristic image/action). In the system I am sketching, there are no givens or primaries, not even the mind itself. Even a little study shows how easily the differences between individual dreaming and collective images/actions evaporate. The illusion of difference is what keeps individualism afloat.

Do not underestimate either the power or the actuality of illusion. For animals, illusions may not exist on a par with getting through another day of hunting, mating and guarding the turf. But for human illusion–what the Hindu philosophers call *maya/lila*–is, as Shakespeare also knew, the very stuff life is made of.

What is it that makes a person human? A nexus of circumstances: speech, bipedal locomotion, brain size and complexity, social organization. Let me suggest another quality. When dreams are actualized–not only dreamed and remembered but danced, sung and acted out–a definite threshold is crossed. A performance of a nightmare or of a vision of paradise (whose violence is the suddenness of loss upon awakening) is the acting out of a "second actuality." This second actuality, to use Jacques Derrida's phrase, is the "presence of an absence." The dream can never actually be shown–it is forever offstage, reported, an object of mimesis. Dreams are desires, unobtainable and erotic. Even what the dreamer remembers of the dream is involuntary, filtered through unconscious censorship. Shamans and artists are dream-trained–skilled in having retaining, remembering and retelling their dreams. This retelling may be in words, actions, pictures, sounds–any medium. Dream-trained people are also able to combine freely their dream images with items from ordinary life and tradition.

Once a dream is performed, it changes its character entirely. It can now be taught by the dreamer to others. It enters the social realm, the ritual and aesthetic sphere. It is revised, combined and transformed to accord with, or radically break from, tradition. It can be based on what is as easily as on what was; the recalled or restored dream may be the

fantasy of a dream not dreamt at all. The great dreamers are those people who can tolerate the most porosity–the greatest ambiguity about what was dreamt and what is combined from other realms–while being able to call on a strict discipline when it is time to perform the dream.

Thus three classes of events become performatively possible: what was, what is imaginary (dream, fantasies, fiction) and events between history and imagination. This third class of events, sharing the authority of recollection with the creativity of imagination, is very powerful. Once a single realm of virtual actuality is given concrete existence, then there can be a third, and so on. Human liminality exists betwixt and between the ethological, the neurological, and the social. In this way people elaborate their conceptual-artistic possibilities. These artful elaborations have been decisive in human history since paleolithic times. They appear always to have been fundamentally erotic and violent.

The future of ritual is actually the future of the encounter between imagination and memory translated into doable acts of the body. Ritual's conservatism may restrain humans sufficiently to prevent nuclear and/or ecological extermination. And its molten, creative core demands that human life–social, individual, maybe even biological–keep changing.

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RITUAL STUDIES AND LITURGICAL THEOLOGY: AN INVITATION TO DIALOGUE

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Abstract

Ritual studies is a new discipline within the field of the study of religion. Liturgical theology is, in the West, a recent development within the field of systematic theology. The article describes each and indicates ways in which they may contribute to the work of the other while retaining their separate identities. The development of methods for describing and analyzing ritual action may enable liturgical theology to construct its own analyses upon a more broadly phenomenological base. At the same time theology's insight into the history of liturgical action may enable ritual studies to overcome an excessively synchronic perspective and to attend to the normative character of ritual gesture.

Independent but parallel development in the spheres of religious studies and of systematic theology has resulted in the emergence of ritual studies in the former and liturgical theology in the latter. Both disciplines may be described fairly as nascent–as not yet fully formed or consolidated. One may suppose that such a consolidation must precede meaningful dialogue, but I believe this to be a serious error. Instead I will contend that such a dialogue will make significant contributions to each discipline as it seeks more clearly to articulate and define itself. Accordingly I will first introduce each discipline, identifying it by means of a "family tree" and principal characteristics. Then I will seek to commend each to the other suggesting the benefits each may expect from the other's company. The essay will conclude with observations on the way such a dialogue may assist each discipline to discover its own particularity.

A Liturgical Theology

Liturgics has too often been characterized by preoccupation with arcane lore and a musty odor of nostalgia for a time which, perhaps, never was. The research of its

specialists has been directed toward the recovery of ancient practices with which to embellish the putatively 'humdrum' worship of contemporary communities of faith.

Until recently in Western Christendom the questions of liturgics and those of theology have intersected only at the point of the definition of sacrament. As Alexander Schmemann has accurately pointed out, this discussion has discounted the liturgical or ritual context itself in favor of the arbitrary isolation of the sacramental moment, and concentration upon the categories of form and matter.[1] This has rendered theological reflection upon liturgy itself abstract and barren.

Yet it is now becoming possible to speak of a liturgical theology. Of course, a theological reflection generated by, and founded in, liturgical practice has always been characteristic of Eastern or Orthodox Christianity[2] but only recently has this comprehensive and critical reflection upon Christian faith and practice drawn much attention in Western, and especially Protestant, Christianity. Among the many developments which might be cited here I will point to only four.

The work of Karl Barth has had a fundamental impact upon many areas of Protestant and Catholic theology, especially in Europe. Among the many decisive innovations proposed in his *Church Dogmatics*, the suggestion that Christian ethics be formulated as a commentary upon baptism, prayer and the eucharist is of particular importance for the development of a liturgical theology.[3] While Barth only partially accomplished this intended reformulation of Christian ethics, it has had a galvanizing effect upon a number of other European theologians including Karl Rahner (1977), Hans Kung (1967:203-223) and Jurgen Moltmann (1977:199-205). It is especially noteworthy that in every case this move toward a liturgical theology has been characterized by a critique of the traditional foundation of sacramental theory.

A second factor in the emergence of a liturgical theology has been the growing accessibility of contemporary and classical Orthodox theology. In the North American context this development must be attributed to the remarkable achievements of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary and Press. Of particular importance has been the systematic work of Alexander Schmemann[4] and the more historically oriented

research of John Meyendorf.[5] This work has demonstrated the vitality and challenge of a theological perspective generated by reflection upon liturgical action.

A third factor is the transformation within the field of liturgics itself in the direction of an ecumenical liturgical theology. The Protestant-Catholic dialogue fostered by the journal *Worship* and the work of Geoffrey Wainwright in producing a system of theology which is, as well, a liturgical theology[6] have had significant impact in North American discussion.

Finally, the growing awareness of liberation theologians that it is essential to bridge the apparent chasm between a theology of liberating praxis and the shared life of the worshiping community has resulted in a new appreciation of the latter as a paradigm for action outside the walls of ecclesial piety.[7] As a consequence attention to liturgical action acquires a new degree of pertinence for broader ethical and theological reflection.

Although other forces and figures could be mentioned in this connection, this should suffice to suggest that a transformation is under way in both theology and liturgics in the direction of a liturgical theology. Certainly it is by no means possible to speak of a consensus or a single movement or a school of thought. Nor is it by any means clear that such a consensus is a desirable goal. It is clear that liturgical theology is still (at least in the West) in very early stages of its development. Despite this it is possible to formulate some of the basic features of a liturgical theology.

Liturgical theology is not concerned in the first instance with the reform or the regulation of the liturgy or worship of Christian communities. Instead, it is concerned with the reform of theology from the standpoint of liturgy. It is in this way that the matrix of liturgical action acquires significance for theology generally and so escapes the confines of a mere technical or historical specialization.

The matrix of liturgical action can acquire this significance only if it is supposed that the common and patterned action of the community is a source for the understanding of that community. Liturgical action is not a secondary dramatization of a set of meanings whose primary location is to be found in proclamation or doctrine. If liturgy is understood as a secondary elaboration of meanings whose

primary location is to be discovered elsewhere then liturgy could by no means be a significant or autonomous source of theological reflection.

Liturgical actions must be understood to generate meanings which form or pattern action and meaning outside liturgical space and time (Jennings 1982b). Failure to do so would render such actions insignificant for any other sphere of the community's life and thought. Thus it is characteristic of liturgical theology that it takes these liturgical actions as paradigms for the understanding of such diverse fields of reflection and action as pastoral care and moral theology or ethics (Jennings 1982a).

Further it must be maintained that liturgical action not only permits but provokes reflection: "the gesture gives rise to thought" to paraphrase Ricoeur. It cannot be supposed that liturgical or sacramental actions just are what they are, sealed off from the work of reflection and discursive exposition and inquiry. Rather they are meaningful actions which point beyond themselves in such a way as to provoke reflection.

Liturgical action must be intelligible to those who do not participate in the action itself. Only then can it be generative of doctrinal discourse, whose function is to give a publicly intelligible account of Christian life, faith and action.

Finally liturgical action must be understood in such a way that it opens up the questions of truth and so provokes a *critical* reflection. If the question of truth only comes from outside the liturgical action, then we have not a liturgical theology but a theology of liturgy. Thus liturgical action must be understood as itself inviting the question of its truthfulness (Jennings 1982b).

These features of a liturgical theology require considerable elaboration, and it may be that the last two are somewhat controversial. Yet I believe that the propositions I have just sketched constitute the basis for a liturgical theology and suggest the direction in which this nascent discipline is moving.

Ritual Studies

As the field of liturgical theology has begun to take shape within the arena of systematic or constructive theology, the corresponding, but until now quite distinct, field of ritual

studies, has begun to take shape in the discipline of religious studies. Until recently, the study of religion concentrated upon comparative doctrine, world view and narrative (e.g., myth, legend). In this preoccupation it has mirrored in its own sphere the concentration of theology upon doctrinal, philosophical and narrative forms of the articulation of religious meaning. Until recently religious studies has been characterized by dialogue with the philosophical and narrative theories of meaning which has also predominated in theology. This parallelism is scarcely surprising since many of those who teach religious studies have been trained in systematic theology and philosophy of religion. However, with the move toward an investigation of the ritual performance of religious communities the development of religious studies enters a new phase and acquires an entire range of objects of study previously concealed from view by the privileged status of discursive modes of religious self-articulation. As this range of ritual action comes into view, religious studies acquires a new set of dialogical partners, resulting in the emergence of new and helpful theories of meaning.

In order for this turn toward the ritual action to occur, it has been necessary to surmount the widespread discrediting of religious practices. This discounting of ritual action has had more than one source. It may be influenced by the "protestant" cast of mind which subordinates ritual or liturgical meanings to move familiar discursive and quasi-logical formulation, that is, a more or less extreme preference of word over sacrament. Accordingly, students of religion have found it possible to make some sense of narrative and cosmological aspects of religion by supposing these to be pre-literary or pre-philosophical modes of expression. Thus, the significance of mythical articulation was assured by assigning them the status of a more or less "primitive" anticipation of more familiar cultural phenomena. But ritual could not readily acquire even this patronized status. Technical rationalism, associated with the emergence of a dominant commercial and managerial ethos, could only result in the relegation of ritual forms to the domain of the long superceded infancy of the race. The feature of ritual action most apparent to many nineteenth century investigators was the absence of a real causal efficacy,[8] but no meaning could be assigned to an

action by technical rationalism apart from efficient causation. Thus ritual was understood as either pseudo-technology (magic) or as merely illustrative of the oddity of primitive mentality.

Only with the emergence of a functionalist view of meaning did ritual action begin to emerge as a possibly fruitful object of study. A social theory of religious meaning propounded initially by Durkheim and a later psychological theory of religious meaning derived from psychoanalysis made it possible to suppose that rituals might indeed have a meaning if only as a function of a deeper social or psychological reality. Ritual activity could be understood as reflecting or reinforcing the roles, relationship and responsibilities apart from which no social existence (and thus no specifically human existence) is imaginable. Similarly, ritual action could be understood as providing release from conflicted contexts, as compensatory mechanisms, or (in the case of rites of initiation) as facilitating the assumption of a new identity. Psychologically, rituals could be understood as therapeutic or neurotic; sociologically, as ideological, or as effecting reciprocity. What was revolutionary in all this was that rituals could be *understood*, they could become an object of intelligible inquiry. However much we may have become aware of the limits of a functionalist view of meaning (and Jonathan Smith[9] has rightly warned us about this) we must credit functionalism with having made an inquiry into ritual meaning possible.

But functionalism of the sort I have described may also be termed "reductionism." It is in any case a displacement of the question of meaning transferring the meaning of ritual from the religious sphere to some other, presumably more basic, region of human activity and meaning. For the study of ritual to find an abode within religious studies it is necessary to raise the question of the *religious* meaning of ritual performance. Such a question is notoriously difficult to resolve even in the case of the somewhat better known sphere of myth. Instead of attempting to impose an *a priori* definition of the religious sphere on the study of ritual it is best to attend to ritual performance itself and to inquire about its basic features.

This broadly phenomenological approach to the study of ritual marks the beginning of ritual studies as a sub-discipline of religious studies. This approach by no means entails the

abrogation of the insights gained by sociological and psychological interpretations of ritual action but their supplementation by a phenomenological inquiry. A phenomenological approach entails making ritual action itself the object of study. This requires the development of tools for careful recording of ritual performance, e.g., the adaptation of ethnographic procedures, the development of cinematographic techniques, and the employment of kinesthetic and choreographic notation. The development and discussion of these techniques have the virtue of directing our gaze steadily and acutely to the ritual performance itself instead of substituting the narrative elaboration or discursive "explanations" as the real meaning of ritual.

Careful observation of ritual action is but the first step in the development of an understanding of such action. A further contribution has been made by Victor Turner's (1969) development of categories of ritual meaning. By means of such categories as "liminality" and *communitas*, the internal working of ritual performance has been more clearly articulated than was previously possible. As the study of ritual proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that we are in need of additional categories by which to discriminate ritual actions from actions which are simply customary, traditional, extravagant or entertaining as well as ways of distinguishing different types of ritual performance. Hence, the development of a typology of ritual action has emerged as an important theme in the development of ritual studies.

As we have learned from structural linguistics, and the subsequent applications of structural categories to the human sciences, the smaller and larger units of ritual must be analyzed as relationships of identity and opposition (Levi-Strauss 1963). Such a structural analysis provides us with the possibility of disclosing the internal operation of any system of signs. A structuralist analysis of ritual performance will make an important contribution to the study of ritual.

Even the brief and partial listing of approaches to the study of ritual which I have provided should suggest the amount of potentially fruitful work that has been opened up by the turn toward a more broadly phenomenological approach to the study of ritual. This openness is one of the chief marks of the potential significance of this new discipline. Another is the emergence of a series of new intersections with

other disciplines which allows us to surpass the monological stage of a mere functionalism. The focus upon the character of ritual performance opens a dialogue that attempts to gain a practical and theoretical understanding of the performing arts: drama, dance, mime, music, etc. For example, Ron Grimes' (1982:161-266) exploration of the boundary region of ritual theater has opened up a host of fruitful questions and hypotheses concerning the character of both dramatic and ritual performance.

Clearly, much remains to be done if the study of ritual is to acquire methodological clarity and theoretical sophistication. Yet an impressive beginning has been made in the development of a coherent and promising agenda for further work in the field. Hopefully the study of ritual will open upon new approaches to the question of the nature of religion and its place within the domain of human self-understanding.

The Contribution of Ritual Studies to Liturgical Theology

It is the duty of any host who seeks to introduce two guests to one another not only to identify but to commend each to the other. So in this invitation to a dialogue I commend ritual studies to liturgical theology as a field of study which may make many useful contributions to the task of a theological reflection upon the corporate liturgical action of the Christian community.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle facing liturgical theology derives from its propensity for being confused with the technical and arcane specialization of liturgics. I have already suggested some of the ways in which liturgical theology must distinguish itself from what has come to be known as liturgics. In this task of differentiation a dialogue with ritual studies may be of decisive assistance at three points.

First, a dialogue with ritual studies will provide a decisive impetus for liturgical theology to rethink the question of normative *vs.* actual liturgical practice. It has often been assumed in the study of liturgy that the normative paradigms for liturgical practice are to be located at some privileged moment of the tradition. Movements of reform and purification of liturgy often take as their point of departure the liturgical practice of certain churches in the sixth century

C.E. We are, of course, quite familiar with popular movements for a return to Cranmer, Zwingli, Wesley, pre-Vatican II or the pristine camp meeting. While liturgists are immune to some of these appeals, they frequently concede the principle which motivates them: namely that there is to be found somewhere the true, pure or paradigmatic liturgical practice.

In discussion with ritual studies this principle cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, students of ritual are far more likely to be embarrassingly attentive to instances of popular religious practice that more fastidious liturgists would prefer either to ignore or to abolish. We are likely to find the practices of snakehandlers in Appalachia, voodooists in Haiti and suburbanites in Hackensack placed in discordant proximity to the sonorous poetry and stately cadences of our most cherished liturgical paradigms. Liturgical theologians are not likely to accept a great phenomenological leveling of liturgical practice. As a theological discipline, liturgical theology cannot abdicate its normative and critical function. But conversation with ritual studies will certainly force upon us the necessity of acquiring a critical awareness of the problem of normativity and prevent the adoption of arbitrary or ill considered standards. In any case, we may be induced to learn far more than we now know about the actual liturgical practice of our own community and tradition.

Second, from dialogue with ritual studies, liturgical theology may acquire significant new tools for the critical analysis of its object. For example, the development of the genre of the ethnographic report may be of use to liturgical theologians in providing clues to a more detailed and accurate description of actual liturgical practices. The development of methods for obtaining an accurate description of a complex action is indeed one of the most difficult problems facing ritual studies as well as liturgical theology. Without means for such a description ritual action is easily effaced in favor of a narrative or quasi-theoretical "explanation." Moreover, without a detailed report of action it is easy to overlook or suppress important elements of variation and adaptation in ritual practice. This is a problem with which the field of ritual studies is familiar both in its use of older ethnographic methods and in the use of newer kinesthetic and photographic methods of recording action. Liturgical theology may profit

from the development and appropriation of these methods just as biblical theology has profited from the development and appropriation of form-critical and text-critical methods.

In addition to the development of more precise methods of identifying its object of study, liturgical theology may find collaboration with ritual studies useful for developing appropriate methods for the analysis of this object. We know far too little about how elements of ritual performance are related to one another or how particular rituals interact with one another to provide a ritual complex or tradition of action. The development of a taxonomy of ritual action is the subject of serious discussion in ritual studies, and it may be of help here to liturgical theologians and religionists in general. It may be possible to develop ways of classifying ritual actions to permit clearer identification of their religious significance, and their social or communal function as well as to distinguish primary from secondary or tertiary complexes.

Ritual actions must be accurately described and appropriately distributed in accordance with taxonomic principles. But, ritual must also be seen as a system or structure of actional meanings articulated into a complex and interrelated tradition. Western liturgical theology has long been content to focus upon the development of a sacramental theory oriented, in Aristotelian fashion, toward the formal description of the moment of transformative efficacy. In avoiding this abstraction, Eastern or "Orthodox" liturgical theology has from time to time fallen into the opposite error of according to every action an eternal and ideal significance. What is necessary, I believe, is a way of discovering the precise interrelatedness of liturgical action. To this end two approaches from ritual studies may be of considerable assistance. One is the appropriation of the tools of structural linguistics modified by the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss and the structuralist literary and social analysis of Roland Bathes. This structuralist analysis provides tools for the analysis of complex systems of signifiers into the reciprocal and oppositional relationships which govern them and constitute them as a structure. The judicious use of such a methodology helps to display the "depth grammar" that governs the apparent anarchic profusion of meanings at the surface of such a structure.

If such an analysis helps us to identify the most basic principles governing the articulation of a system of meanings it may by itself produce the illusion of a timeless or synchronic structure devoid of sequence. Surely the pattern of ritual meaning is not unrelated to the *sequence* of actions. Help in understanding the role of sequence, the unfolding of action through time, is provided by a dramatistic understanding of ritual action which explores the formal and material relationships between ritual and dramatic performance.

Third, the dialogue with ritual studies is likely to break open the otherwise self-evident distinction between Christian liturgy and the ritual performances of quite disparate religious communities. The very distinction between liturgy and ritual is erased or at least subjected to intense critical scrutiny by a dialogical confrontation between the two disciplines. Of course, the overcoming of this separation is fraught with hazard as well as opportunity. We may, for example, come to think of baptism as a rite of initiation for no better reason than that we have acquired a "prestigious" vocabulary for designating that sacrament. In making this identification we may be led to ignore or suppress elements of this liturgical practice that stand in fundamental opposition to important features of initiatory rites. Nevertheless by acquiring greater familiarity with ritual practices, we may be led to demystify liturgy, to acquire a more acute sense of its function and foundation. We may learn to look below the surface articulation of liturgy with its innumerable adaptations and appropriations to inquire into a depth grammar, by which adaptations are motivated, limited, revised. Thus we may be led to see not only surface identities and differences but more fundamental unities or distinctions. In short, we may acquire a more secure grasp on the specificity of liturgical action itself.

Even at the level of a functionalist approach to ritual the liturgical theologian may gain important insight and expanded capacity for critical reflection upon liturgical practice. For example, as we learn that ritual performance may serve to legitimate roles and status within a social structure or to provide a vent for tensions, which threaten a given social order, we are able to inquire more precisely into the appropriateness of this function for liturgical practice. We may, for example, suppose that such a regularizing and

legitimating function constitutes an argument for the social importance of liturgical action. Conversely, we may conclude that the socializing elements of liturgy must be regarded as foreign accretions violating the fundamental movement of liturgical practice. Through dialogue with ritual studies we may become clearer about what is at stake in this dispute.

The Contribution of Liturgical Theology to the Study of Ritual

It is by no means obvious that ritual studies would benefit from a dialogue with liturgical theology. Religious studies has sought to distinguish itself from the theological disciplines in an attempt to overcome its earlier identity as a pre-theological or pre-seminary major. The decided ambivalence of the relationship between departments of religion and schools of theology is bound to infect, if it does not entirely deflect, dialogue between any of their respective sub-fields. Yet despite the temptations toward a mutual misunderstanding or even incomprehension implicit in such a dialogue, it is one which I believe will benefit not only liturgical theology but also the study of ritual.

First, in the study of Christian liturgy religionists (or "ritologists" as Grimes[10] has half-jokingly suggested) will discover a living liturgical tradition of enormous cultural diversity and historical depth. The importance of this for ritual studies cannot be overestimated. The sub-field of liturgics has documented the development of a set of rituals over a period of many centuries. The study of ritual which ignores this material in order to focus upon the performance of an isolated community in the process of cultural disintegration (one possible definition of "primitive") condemns itself to a synchronic and archivalist perspective–synchronic because any alteration of ritual performance is dismissed as deterioration from the pristine state in which one has "surprised" the members of a previously isolated culture; archivalistic since that performance must ever recede into a past putatively identical with its origin. This arbitrary perspective has defined ritual action as unvarying repetition.[11] But such a definition of ritual performance is seriously challenged by any diachronic perspective that takes into account a process of historical

development. This process of transformation is especially well documented in the cases of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (although there are many gaps in our knowledge) but can by no means be excluded in the case of peoples of whose history we are largely ignorant. A diachronic perspective will mean that we must be open to understanding ritual performance as in process of developing, elaborating, revising or declining. Just as ritual is an act rather than a state so the object of ritual studies is not unchanging but in motion.

To begin to take seriously this view of ritual is to question the basis for the transformation, adaptation or development of ritual. Liturgics presents a remarkably fertile field of exploration. In it we are able to study the transformation of a particular rite (the Mass, for example) in a variety of cultural settings. We are able to see how a rite is adapted in settings as diverse as New Guinea, Brazil and New York and how it adapts elements of its circumambient culture to its own uses. This mutual appropriation and adaptation should teach us a good deal about ritual behavior, enabling us to ask questions about an underlying grammar that permits and perhaps partially controls the variations in surface articulations as well as to inquire about the correlation of ritual performance to other aspects of religious or cultural life.

Thus simply at the level of data ritual studies may be enhanced by acquaintance with the subject matter of liturgical theology. But there is more to liturgical theology than data–there is also a tradition of reflection. Over the centuries–and now increasingly with the emergence of a liturgical theology–there has been a history of reflecting upon the meaning of liturgical action, upon *how* as well as *what* it means. The very possibility of such a reflection already suggests something about ritual, namely that it may itself provoke reflection and engender thought. This last has implications for ritual studies concerning the relation between participation and observation and concerning the noetic dimensions of ritual praxis (Jennings 1982b:111-16).

But beyond these implications, the emergence of a specifically liturgical theology suggests that at least certain rituals may be especially important clues to the character of the religious tradition within which they are embedded supplying fundamental or transcendental significance for their practitioners. The performance of a ritual may not only

seek to perpetuate traditional or familiar practice but to open the way for engagement with that which is taken to be of ultimate importance. Ritual activity, far from being an isolated or anomalous phenomenon, may actually be correlated to the most basic features of a community's self-understanding. Ritual performance may be paradigmatic. If so, this fact would make possible a fuller appreciation of the element of truth in a functionalist approach to ritual meaning.

Also, ritual action may be understood as entailing certain claims about "the way things are." That is, ritual may point to reality as deed rather than intention; rhythm or movement rather than state; interactional rather than monadic. Liturgical theology will assist ritual studies in focusing more clearly upon the question of the "truth" of ritual performance.

This question of truth is a critical one both for ritual studies and liturgical theology. Rituals are not reducible to propositions or equations. Ritual action may intend to be truthful in ways quite different from propositions or promises, narratives or world views. If ritual performance may be understood as a noetic activity that engages and transforms what it knows, its study may offer important clues to an understanding of praxological truth claims. For example, in the hunting rituals of paleo-Siberian peoples which have been so fruitfully pondered by Jonathan Z. Smith[12] there is a pattern of behaviors and interaction exhibited at considerable variance to the actual practice of the hunt. Clearly, the ritual does not simply describe, anticipate or remember the hunt. Rather, it presents an ideal or a utopian hunt–what hunt would be if the interaction between tribe and nature, hunter and hunted were fully appropriate. But how are we to understand the implicit claims of such a ritually enacted interactional pattern? How is it like and unlike more familiar illustrations of praxological dissonance, such as laws of the Sabbath or Jubilee or the eschatological "descriptions" in prophetic or apocalyptic texts? We may even inquire how these are related to Vedic rituals (see Staal 1979:1-22) which have textual descriptions so elaborate that any actual ritual performance could only be termed an imperfect condensation.

The question of the truth of ritual/liturgical action is one provoked by a careful attention to the action itself. The question of the truthfulness or normativity of praxis is just the sort of question long pondered by theologians; and it is one

theologians have particular reason to ponder anew. Ritual studies may very well profit from a renewed consideration of this question as it seeks to take the full measure of its own object of study. In this direction lies the path which ritual studies must travel if it is not only to acquire an understanding of ritual but also to enrich our understanding of religion in particular and human action in general.

Identity and Difference

We have been considering the potential fruit of a lively dialogue between ritual studies and liturgical theology. To propose a dialogue is not to commend a merger. An essential condition for the fruitfulness of any dialogue is that there continue to be at least two distinct parties to the discussion. Only in the tensions and differences between these disciplines is any significant dialogue possible.

In this concluding section I wish to emphasize the irreducible distinction between liturgical theology and ritual studies. I do this not to set a limit to the development of the dialogue but to foster that dialogue.

Too often when theologians undertake to engage another discipline in dialogue, they either relinquish their identity as theologians and become a mere echo of their discussion partner, or they succeed only in constituting a third discipline of the conjunctive sort: theology *and* literary criticism theology *and* philosophy, theology *and* psychotherapy. In the first case the dialogue is reduced to an echo; in the second what begins as a bridge ends up as an island. In either case the aim of dialogue has not been realized.

In the case of the two disciplines introduced to one another in this essay, we have the opportunity of a fresh start. If we are successful in properly exploiting this, it may become a model for other attempts at dialogue between the disciplines of theology and those of academy. In order to realize this goal it will be necessary to attend to the question of the irreducible differences between these disciplines.

As a theologian, I may be forgiven a somewhat solicitous regard for the distinctiveness of theological inquiry and formulation. It is precisely as a theologian concerned with the critical reformulation of Christian doctrine, that I have found it important to turn my attention to the liturgical action of the

Christian community and to regard this action as the stimulus for, and call toward, an ecclesial and liturgical theology. In order to understand this liturgical praxis it has proven essential to attempt to gain some theoretical and practical acquaintance with the field of ritual action. Without such an acquaintance it would be impossible accurately to define the specific character of liturgical action within the larger horizon of ritual action. In this way I have come to participate both in the project of a liturgical theology and in the project of the theoretical comprehension of ritual action.

The Identity of Ritual Studies

Ritual studies must beware of importing without criticism the understanding of ritual action generated from within a theological or specifically Christian discourse. Those who engage in ritual studies may believe this danger to be slight since the field of relevant data includes all religious phenomena as well as the nearer or more distant analogues to religious phenomena (civil religion, ideology, etc.). Also, one may suppose one's own involvement in the study of religion to be more objective or disinterested than the characteristic involvement of the theologian in Christian liturgy, yet this does not lessen the danger of importing unexamined assumptions concerning ritual action. The field of religious studies has for many years supposed itself to be immune in just this way from the surreptitious application of theological or Christian norms to the field of religion. Yet those of us who are interested in ritual studies know that the field of religious studies in America has accorded a privileged status to narrative and discursive modes of religious articulation at the expense of attention to ritual modes. This imbalance in the field of religious studies may be directly traced to a Judeo-Christian bias toward the word as narrative, commentary and doctrine. We may even discern here the intrusion of a Protestant valuation of proclamation and scripture instead of cult and icon.

It would be ironic indeed if in redressing this imbalance the discipline of ritual studies were to simply re-import specifically Christian ways of reflecting upon or valuing ritual action. There is no entirely neutral theory of ritual action. We are children of our culture and not likely to shrug off our

cultural and linguistic identities in order to assume the robes of disincarnate abstraction. Yet we are capable of ceaseless vigilance, a continuing critical appraisal of both theoretical formulations and pre-theoretical assumptions concerning ritual action. We must attend to differences as well as to analogues. The field of ritual studies is likely to take on a different contour if its central exemplar is not the Christian sacrament but the posture of the Zen master or the hypothetical rubrics of Vedic ritual. Corresponding differences in the theoretical definition of ritual are not only to be expected but welcomed.

It is precisely this "passing over" from one ritual field to another and this energetic contention of theoretical formulation that may define the specific difference of ritual studies from liturgical theology. Ritual studies will correspond to the liminality of its object not by abandonment of theoretical formulation but by the juxtaposing and passing between such formulations.

In distinguishing itself from liturgical theology, ritual studies may both be aided by and contribute to liturgical theology. As the specific character of Christian liturgical action comes more clearly into focus, it will be possible to acquire the necessary critical distance upon this action as one, but only one, paradigm of ritual action. Attention to liturgical theology may assist ritual studies in exposing to critical scrutiny presuppositions concerning ritual action which it otherwise unconsciously appropriates from its own cultural matrix. Conversely, by distinguishing itself from liturgical theology and in proposing alternative conceptions, ritual studies may facilitate theology's own self-understanding.

The Identity of Liturgical Theology

In dialogue with ritual studies, liturgical theology will do well to avoid the uncritical importation of notions, categories and theoretical formulations generated by attention to ritual and cultic phenomena generally.

It will always be necessary to test these categories and models against the specificity of Christian liturgical action. Of course, this specificity and difference cannot be formulated in advance of this dialogue, but the question of this specificity is ineradicable from theological reflection.

From an external point of view one cannot help being struck by the fact that humanity's most widespread liturgical apparatus was and continues to be assembled in the full light of historical self-consciousness. Its origins are not shrouded in pre-history, although many of the elements it has appropriated, transformed and assembled do derive from pre-history. It is thus well to be suspicious of categories and models that assign a privileged status to some aspect of ritual action which appears as a timeless, eternal recurrence. Inscribed in Christian liturgical action is the knowledge that it has *not* always been done. This doing, this assemblage of actions, has a beginning which is not "primitive" or "original" but historical and so actual. And if we discover in liturgy and the reflection which it provokes an entirely ahistorical sensibility then we must be prepared to inquire whether we do not have an erasure of this most obvious difference.

The suspicion of the cultic permeates early Christianity. The rending of the temple veil abolishes the separation of sacred and profane, a transgression which receives dogmatic formulation in Chalcedon. Other examples are the abolition of the distinctions between clean and unclean in Acts, and between godly and godless in the words of Jesus and Paul–which provoke a repudiation of the ritualizing of time and seasons in Galatians. The declericalizing of the priesthood in Hebrews and the abolition of the Temple in Revelation all appear to point in the same direction.

These traces of a critique of cult and ritual must serve as warnings to the liturgical theologian against the misappropriation of categories and models derived from the study of ritual and cult. Liturgical action is generated within and "over against" the field of ritual and cultic action. This is not a process which occurred once and for all to produce a distinctly Christian liturgical action (the liturgy of the fourth or sixth century, for example) but is one that continues until the present day in Zaire, Brazil, New Guinea and New York. The specificity of liturgical action cannot be understood apart from the field of ritual action nor can it simply be understood from this field.

In dialogue with the field of ritual studies, liturgical theology will have to pose for itself this question of the difference and specificity of its object and also of its mode of

reflection, its specifically theological mode of reflection by which it corresponds to the object of its meditations.

In its dialogue with ritual studies, liturgical theology will become better able to identify itself both with respect to the object and the mode of its reflection. This differentiation by no means entails a suspension of the dialogue but only renders this dialogue more fruitful for both parties.

The dialogue between ritual studies and liturgical theology for which I have been calling in this essay does not diminish but heightens the individuality of these partners, while the clarification of difference enhances the fruitfulness of exchange. In the dance-like movement of dialogue and differentiation both fields may make significant contributions to an understanding of the ways in which humanity seeks to position itself *vis-à-vis* what it takes to be final and saving truth.

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NOTES

[1]See, for example, Schmemann's discussion of the eucharist in *For the Life of the World,* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1973: 25-46).

[2]Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* is, in essence, a defense of a liturgical innovation which results in the first major delineation of pneumatology. The dependence of theological discourse upon liturgical praxis is exemplified by the work of the 14th century theologian Nicholas Cabasilas. His *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* (St. Vladimir's Seminary

Press:1977) and *The Life in Christ* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: 1974) are invaluable sources.

[3]Karl Barth's proposal is made and partially carried out in *Church Dogmatics* IV, 4 Fragment, (T and T Clark:1969) and in *The Christian Life* (Eerdmans:1981). The former deals with baptism while the latter begins Barth's reflections on the Lord's Prayer as the basis of a Christian ethic.

[4]Among Alexander Schmemann's most important contributions to liturgical theology I draw attention to: *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press:1966); *Great Lent* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press:1969); *Liturgy and Life* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press:1974); *Of Water and the Spirit* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press:1974).

[5]Meyendorff's work includes *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (Fordham Univ. Press:1974) and *A Study of Gregory of Palamas* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press:1974).

[6]Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (Oxford Univ. Press:1980). Other contributions to this theme include Norman Pittenger, *Life as Eucharist* (Eerdmans:1973) and Jan Lochman's *A Theology of Praise* (John Knox:1982).

[7]Among the earlier works calling for this correlation we may notice Gerhard Martin's *Fest: The Transformation of Everyday* (Fortress:1976), Moltmann's *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* and the collection of essays edited by Herman Schmidt and David Power, *Politics and Liturgy* (Herder and Herder:1974).

[8]This view of ritual is still standard. See the article on "Ritual" by Edmund R. Leach in *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (Eds., J. Gould and W.L. Kolb 1964:607-8).

[9]Jonathan Z. Smith's reflections on the limits of functionalism are to be found in "I am a Parrot (Red)" in *History of Religions*, 11:321-413. A critical appraisal of psychoanalytic

functionalism is proposed by Volney P. Gay in *Freud on Ritual: Reconstruction and Critique* (Scholars Press:1979).

[10]Ronald L. Grimes "Methodological Problems in Ritual Studies" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, 1977). The term still appears, albeit infrequently, in *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Univ. Press of America:1982).

[11]The notion of unvarying repetition is widespread in theories of ritual but plays an especially important role in the work of Roy H. Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* (North Atlantic Books 1979:173-222). Despite my disagreement with him at this point I believe his work on ritual and religion deserves a much wider hearing than it has thus far received.

[12]Jonathan Z. Smith "The Bare Facts of Ritual" *History of Religions* 20:117-127. The correlation of this cognitive dissonance with eschatological themes is already proposed in his "A Pearl of Great Price" *History of Religions* 16/1:1-19.

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SHAMANIC RITUAL AS POETIC MODEL: THE CASE OF MARÍA SABINA AND ANNE WALDMAN

Daniel C. Noel

Abstract

This essay is written from the perspective of someone trained in religion and literature studies who is interested in the status of myth and ritual in the modern/postmodern world. More particularly, it seeks to raise questions as to whether a traditional mythic ritual is secularized beyond retrieving or, alternatively, given new life when "re-cycled" in the chant-poem of an urban educated American poet (thus instancing a "remythologizing of poetry" through ritual). The case examined is the use in Anne Waldman's 1975 "Fast Speaking Woman" of a mushroom-induced curing ritual, a vigil or *velada* involving prolonged chanting, performed in 1956 by María Sabina, a non-literate Mazatec Indian shaman from Oaxaca, Mexico.

I approach the following discussion not from the area of ritual studies, where I am an unlettered, if interested onlooker, but from the perspective of religion and literature studies, where I have pursued the topic of myth to its suggestive intersection with the matter of ritual. In a recent essay (1983), I made the case that myth effects its most significant reappearance in recent poetry not so much by way of archaic themes recycled in private visions as through the oral or performance emphasis of poets such as Charles Olson, Gary Snyder, David Antin and Jerome Rothenberg. The work of Allen Ginsberg and Robert Bly could support the same thesis. This public, waking enactment, or active telling, recaptures the etymological sense of *muthos* as "anything told by word of mouth" and necessarily inclines us toward the ritual, rather than the written and read, aspects of myth.

My survey of a possible remythologizing of poetry by means of ritual–part of an even more general preoccupation with understanding the "postmodern" elements of contemporary religion and culture–thus forms the background of the particular instance I want to present here: the use by the American poet Anne Waldman[1] of a traditional ritual performed by María Sabina, a Mazatec shaman or "wise one"

from Oaxaca, Mexico. Waldman acknowledges that her own long chant-poem "Fast Speaking Woman" (1975) is indebted to a curing vigil, or *velada*, held by Sabina in 1956 and recorded by a team under the direction of R. Gordon Wasson and Valentina P. Wasson (Waldman 1975:i; 1979:315; Rothenberg 1979:279; 1981:8). In order to explore the questions raised by Waldman's employment of Sabina's ritual as a model, we need to examine the major factors involved in the latter.

On the night of July 21, 1956, at the age of 62, María Sabina held her mushroom vigil in the village of Huautla de Jiminez for Gordon Wasson and several non-Indian colleagues (Wasson 1957:2). Also present were Cayetano and Guadalupe Garcia, whose home was used for the ceremony. Cayetano, a *síndico*, or town official, had originally led Wasson to Sabina the previous year (Estrada 1981:71,90). The recorded session in 1956 has been called "unsuccessful" by Wasson in comparison with earlier ones which were not recorded and two later ones–in 1958 and 1970–which were also unrecorded but for which we have published transcriptions in English (Wasson 1957:2; 1981:13-20).

What Wasson means, as he says in the descriptive notes accompanying the recording, is that in previous vigils "the Divine Spirit has descended among us and spoken with us through the mushroom, which means of course through the mouth of María Sabina under the influence of the mushroom." This did not happen, he goes on, in the 1956 session, perhaps because of the preponderance of non-Indians attending (1957:2). In her autobiographical testimony some 20 years later Sabina offers her own ideas on this lack of success, ideas which I shall be treating below. First we need to know more about what goes on when one of these *veladas* does succeed.

With María Sabina as with other Mazatec "wise ones," the mushrooms are used primarily for curing. The shaman ingests them and, during an all-night ceremony lasting four to six hours, chants a diagnosis and a prescription for the ailing person's sickness. Usually, the patient and other participants have also eaten the mushrooms, which are hallucinogens from the *psylocibe* family. According to one commentator, Mazatecs believe that the sacred mushrooms, which they call "saint children" or "little ones that spring forth," are the blood of Christ–who is thought to have walked their mountains carrying his cross *in illo tempore*–and that it is Christ who

sometimes talks to them in their visions (Estrada 1981:47; Munn 1981:226). Certainly Christian symbolism often comes into play in these vigils, but much pre-Conquest material survives as well, and the mythic notion of a Mexican Christ, the drops of whose blood produce the mushrooms, is a clear adaptation of earlier Quetzalcoatl legends. Indeed, in the *Códice Vindobonensis* Quetzalcoatl is depicted as giving the divine mushroom to Piltzin-techutli, the noble infant (see Wasson 1981:17). It is evident, in other words, that the Mazatec *velada* is deeply imbedded in a centuries-long tradition and has strong parallels with similar ceremonies of other Indian groups in the Sierras of southern Mexico.

But what is seen by the "wise ones" and their patients during these vigils? One prevalent conviction among the Mazatecs is that they are seeing into heaven itself, although sometimes the expanse of the ocean–an exciting prospect to mountain-dwellers–appears (Munn 1981:216). Above all it is the words of the shaman which direct the visions, and these words refer to many things: mythical figures like Chicon Tocosho, lord of the sacred mountain, and his wife or daughter-in-law the woman of the flowing water, Christian saints, local officials, revered locations in the area, natural phenomena, animals, plants and so forth (Munn 1981:221-237). All of these occur in Sabina's mushroom chants, religious rituals repeated in times of crisis or illness within a sacred context, relating to a transcendent power and transforming the lives of those who participate. At least these are the categories of Richard Pilgrim's (70-71) theory of religious ritual which seems to be more or less fulfilled by Sabina's vigils.

At any rate she shares with her audience the experience of transcendent being which speaks through the mushrooms she has ingested. In addition to the idea that Christ or the Holy Spirit is present there is the frequent appearance in her chanting of the Mazatec word *tso*, which means "says"–an impersonal "says" interpreted by commentators as referring to language itself (Estrada 1981:201; Munn 1981:210). Or, as Henry Munn puts it, this *tso* pertains to "the mushrooms of language" (1973:88-89). Whether Sabina herself (who cannot read or write) would agree is less clear; she might go only as far as saying it is the mushrooms themselves who "say" in this fashion. On the other hand, she does describe how "the

Principal Ones" in her initiatory vision gave her a huge, white, person-sized "Book of Wisdom" which she calls the "Book of Language." "Everything that is written in it," the Principal Ones had told her, "is for you. The book is yours, take it so that you can work" i.e., cure through mushroom-induced visions (Estrada 1981:47). Gordon Wasson points out that in Ruize de Alarcón's treatise of 1629 on Nahautl religion there is like mention of how the shaman "stresses the *amoxtli*, 'book,' as the means of arriving at the secret language he uses" (Wasson 1981:16-17).

The language of Sabina's chants is not a fully memorized formula, as one might expect in the domain of ritual; in fact, it is almost the opposite: a kind of improvisation which often links short enunciations by means of similar sound-qualities. Nevertheless, there is a common fund of figures of speech and allusions, shared with other Mazatec "wise ones" which she draws upon in her "self-presentation" and other components of her chant (Munn 1981:218; Wasson 1981:16). As with her fellow shamans' vigils, many of Sabina's inspired words are thought to have magical power, and according to Munn, "When you ask the Mazatecs what they mean they don't define them, they free associate around them." In sum, ritual here focuses on an elevated *poiesis* which occurs within traditional and communal bounds. Munn goes further claiming "María Sabina becomes what she names and at the same time her listeners are led by her words to feel their own egos extended beyond themselves to become all things" (1981:213).

But as indicated earlier, María Sabina's 1956 *velada* "failed," a failure which turns out to be a general pattern for recent Mazatec shamanism, a failure with implications for the "curious and distant transmission" (Rothenberg 1981:9) between the Mazatec ritual and Anne Waldman's poem.

In her autobiographical account taken down by Álvara Estrada during 1975-76, two decades after the Wasson recording of her vigil chant, Sabina declares that:

> ...from the moment the foreigners arrive to search for God, the *saint children* lost their purity. They lost their force; the foreigners spoiled them. For now on they won't be any good. There's no remedy for it.

Before Wasson, I felt that the *saint children* elevated me. I don't feel like that anymore. The force has diminished. If Cayetano hadn't brought the foreigners...the *saint children* would have kept their power (90-91).

Estrada (205) cites Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's *Medicine and Magic* to the effect that "in order for this power to remain in the plant a complicated ritual is indispensable as much in its harvest as in its preparation and use; *if this is not done, its employment is completely inefficacious*, since it is not the pharmacological properties of the herbs that cure but their mystical properties."

Estrada recounts his 1969 interview with Apolonia Terán, a 97 year old "wise one." Estrada asks him if he can still hold a *velada*, and Terán says no, and not only because of his waning physical strength. He reflects, "What is terrible, listen, is that the divine mushroom no longer belongs to us. Its sacred language has been profaned. The language has been spoiled and it is indecipherable for us." Estrada asks him what the new, spoiled "language" is like and Terán answers that "now mushrooms speak *nqui*^{3} *le*^{2} ["English"]! Yes, it's the tongue that the foreigners speak" (206). This irony of the profanisation of the sacred mushroom language is obvious from the fact that "in the display devoted to the Mazatecs of Oaxaca [at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City], the Folkways record of her singing is played over and over again (205). One of the essential qualities of ritual, repetition, is here manifested under totally secular auspices.

In view of the statements just quoted it would seem that Anne Waldman's poem, which draws exclusively on Wasson's 1956 recording, is possible only at the cost of María Sabina's access to sacred power. Wasson (1981:20) has attempted to respond to Sabina's lament by saying that:

> the sacred mushrooms and the religious feeling concentrated in them through the Sierras of Southern Mexico had to be made known to the world, and worthily so, at whatever cost to me personally. If I did not do this, "consulting the mushroom" would go on for a few years longer, but its extinction was and is inevitable. The world would know vaguely that such a thing had existed but not the importance of its role. On the other hand, worthily presented, its prestige, María Sabina's prestige, would endure.

Waldman's use of Sabina's material may represent a remythologizing of poetry through ritual. Furthermore, it may also suggest, despite the undeniable loss, a redemptive possibility of reconnection with what the Mazatecs have been forced to relinquish. This view goes beyond Wasson's claim of a somewhat suspect "prestige."

When Gordon Wasson and his colleagues recorded Sabina's *velada* in 1956, Anne Waldman was 11 years old. By the time she was 30, she had heard the recording, read the descriptive notes and published her *Fast Speaking Woman & other chants* (1975) with City Lights Books. She had written several other books of poetry, edited anthologies, directed the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery in New York and joined the faculty of Naropa Institute, a Tibetan Buddhist school in Boulder, Colorado. Michael Brownstein, a fellow poet in Naropa's School of Poetics, had told her about the Sabina recording. Waldman's acknowledgments preceding the poem are as follows:

> "Fast Speaking Woman" is indebted to the Mazatec Indian Shamaness in Mexico guiding persons in magic mushroom ceremony and is a reworking & co-incidence of the same for all wandering spirits. Reading aloud as intended I can be more playful improvising new words & sound thus expanding the territory I'm in. The piece began as a travel meditation during a trip to South America, continued back in NYC, then later in India. It keeps growing. Thanks to Michael Brownstein for bringing the ritual to my attention (1975:i).

Several points are noteworthy in this statement. First, Waldman does not mention María Sabina by name, thus introducing the impersonality of "reworking & co-incidence" in the mushroom ceremony. The phrase, "for all wandering spirits" implies an audience for which her poem is chanted, but we shall want to inquire later whether a more specific community is implicated in Waldman's reworked ritual. Next is the idea that what Waldman is doing in her chant is playful or improvisatory. While Sabina may have improvised word-choices within traditional Mazatec boundaries, it is difficult to feel that she was being playful in so doing. At all events the willful ego-control implied by Waldman seems to contradict the impersonality of Sabina's rite, which allows the mushrooms and whatever realities they mediate to hold sway over language.

The notion of expanded territory in Waldman's statement recalls the rhetoric of mind-expansion so prevalent in the 1960's and early '70's, and it is evident from some of her other poems as well as from her essay "My Life A List" (1979:303) that she has experimented with hallucinogenic substances. Finally, her prefatory remarks indicate the Sabina recording was not entirely responsible for the genesis of the poem.

She touches on these other factors, and brings in still additional considerations, in "My Life A List," where she stresses that the poem

> began as a journal work, a list, fill in the blanks around the word "woman" piece, but constantly playing with the sound of other words in my head. It began in South America and later Michael Brownstein gave me a copy of the María Sabina recording, which was completely relevant. The piece is a re-working of how this Mazatec Shamaness handles language. I feel close to shaman energy, but anyway, I was writing this poem on airplanes, in hotels, at home, and so on (315).

This passage seems to suggest that the poem began as a quite secular travel meditation–although the possibility is left open that the mind-travel of "wandering spirits" (with or without hallucinogens) is also involved. The mention of a list is important, because listing is a mode she refers to several times in the essay and uses frequently in her own poetry. She even calls her life a list in the essay's title. Certainly "Fast Speaking Woman" lists a multitude of kinds of women, or a multitude of characteristics of one woman, playing with the sounds of all sorts of words to describe her. Although Waldman includes María Sabina's name in this passage, the impersonality implied earlier continues.

The theme of being close to shaman energy is picked up elsewhere in the essay when Waldman discusses her experience at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference. Watching Charles Olson read she decided she "could really see the poet as a tribal shaman, speaking and moving and being embarrassing not just for himself or herself, but for you, the audience" (179). The impersonality or group-serving sensibility of the shamanic role may strike us as a bit removed from contemporary poets performing in their idiosyncratic ways, but we now need to challenge our assumptions by looking more directly at "Fast Speaking Woman" and

exploring the extent to which Sabina's ritual truly informs Waldman's chant and provides an instance of the remythologization of recent poetry.

The version of the poem transcribed in the City Lights Books edition contains an epigraph and then 427 lines, most of them short and most of them beginning with "I'm." Here is a sample:

I'm the gadget woman
I'm the druid woman
I'm the Ibo woman
I'm the Yoruba woman
I'm the vibrato woman
I'm the rippling woman
I'm the gutted woman
I'm the woman with wounds
I'm the woman with shins
I'm the eroding woman
I'm the suspended woman
I'm the woman alluring
I'm the architect woman
I'm the tungsten woman
I'm the woman with the keys
I'm the woman with the glue
I'm a fast speaking woman (1975:4-5)

Several things can be inferred from this example. First, of course, is the centrality of repetition, not only of the word "I'm" but also of "woman." Then there is the way the lines follow one another, sometimes on the basis of sound linkages, as in "Ibo," "Yoruba" and "vibrato" and sometimes by way of connected ideas like "gutted," "wounds" and "shins." These connections are similar to the kind Sabina makes in her tradition-supported improvisations, though the *content* of the words characterizing Waldman's "fast speaking woman" is often quite different, reflecting the poet's urban, educated sensiblity.

Another, more general observation about the passage is that is constitutes what commentators on Sabina have called an *autopresentación*. That is, the speaker is "presenting her credentials." This formula is evident as far back as the ritual of the Nahautl shaman transcribed by Ruiz de Alarcón in

1629. Such shamans are seen by Wasson as both presenting credentials *to* the deity and speaking *for* the deity (Halifax 1979:196-7; Wasson 1957:2; 1981:16). In Sabina's case the repeated word *tso*, "says," indicates that the "mushrooms of language," rather than Sabina in her own secular identity, do this divine speaking, so there is no sacrilegious self-inflation on her part.

Whether the same can be said for Anne Waldman's woman is not clear. There is, to be sure, a self-presentation–indeed, the entire poem seems largely devoted to this element of Sabina's more varied discourse–but it does not appear to be presented primarily to a deity, and there are none of Sabina's many references to Jesus, Mary or assorted saints. Perhaps the presentation in the poem is for a deity, at least to the extent that it involves inspired speaking. Although Waldman uses none of Sabina's impersonal "says," the focus on "fast speaking" in the very title of the poem may perform the same function.

Aside from the ritual listing of the fast speaking woman's array of attributes–almost none of which is repeated–there are a few other formulations to examine in the poem. It contains seven quantitatively subsidiary formulations. Three are used only once each: one at the beginning, one in the middle and one at the end. Of the other four, one is employed twice, two three times and one eight times. Six of these seven formulas are taken almost verbatim from the translation of Sabina's chant accompanying the 1956 recording.

The first lines of the poem are a kind of testimony of ritual purity borrowed from Sabina:

> because I don't have spit
> because I don't have rubbish
> because I don't have dust
> because I don't have that which is in air
> because I am air
> let me try you with my magic power: (1)

The second of Sabina's formulas that Waldman uses is the one she repeats eight times, punctuating the poem with it every few pages:

water that cleans
flowers that clean
water that cleans as I go (5)

This refrain appears to function as a stopping point where the chanting can achieve a climax, re-gather itself, and begin again.

The third traditional enunciation, used three times as another kind of stopping point, suggests that to a limited degree Waldman does have an equivalent to Sabina's Mazatec *tso*. Waldman's lines are:

that's how it looks when you go to heaven
they say it's like softness there
they say it's like day
they say it's like dew (8)

The words "they say" actually translate the term *tso* (Sabina:5).

Toward the end of the first half of "Fast Speaking Woman" is the twice-stated and enigmatic two-line saying

it's not sadness
no, it's not a lie (9)

which may be a renewed proclamation of the speaker's purity. And in the middle of the poem is an unrepeated formulation which conceivably does address the deity, albeit not very reverently:

hey you there
hey you there, boss
I'm talking (17)

The original version from Sabina in 1956 had a different tone:

you there
you there boss
you there Christ
I am talking (Sabina:6)[2]

The last three lines of the poem comprise the sixth borrowing from Sabina. What she says in her 1956 session, according to the translator, is:

> I know how to lay down
> I know how to speak (Sabina:7)

In ending her own chant, Waldman–with capital letters presumably indicating a raised voice–says

> I KNOW HOW TO SHOUT
> I KNOW HOW TO SING
> I KNOW HOW TO LIE DOWN (36)

There is a seventh formula not taken from Sabina and for comparative purposes it is perhaps the most significant one. It occurs with slight variations three times. Each time it comes at the end of a stanza of self-characterizations (i.e., "I'm the...woman).

First:

> the artist dreaming inside her house (4)

Next:

> the woman dancing inside her house (21)

And third:

> THE WOMAN INSPIRED INSIDE HER HOUSE!(34)

In all three occasions the word "I'm" is understood at the beginning of the phrase, so that we have the speaker describing herself as an artist dreaming, dancing and (emphatically) being inspired "inside her house." While María Sabina's *veladas* are carried on inside a house, it is usually not her own, and the presence of "the artist" implies that this formula points to Anne Waldman, the poet herself.

And yet she says she is inspired, so that something beyond her ego, either deity or sacred mushroom or muse, is behind her fast speaking. The poem's epigraph–Rimbaud's dictum, "I is another"–adds to the important theme that the woman describing herself is not merely the poet in her own proper character. As it happens, the same saying appears in a note to Henry Munn's essay on Mazatec shamanism, "The Mushrooms of Language" (1973). Munn is commenting on the

central thrust of his essay, the relation between the sacred mushroom and the inspired speaking of the "wise ones," when he is moved to observe in a footnote:

> since the statement of Rimbaud, "I is another," spontaneous language, speaking or writing as if from dictation (to use the common expression for an activity difficult to describe in its truth) has been of paramount interest to philosophers and poets. Says the Mexican, Octavio Paz, in an essay on Breton, "The inspired one, the man who in truth speaks, does not say anything that is his: from his mouth speaks language" (1973/2:89). Munn's piece appeared in 1973, and it is possible that Waldman saw it while working on "Fast Speaking Woman," but I have no direct evidence of such borrowing.

The community to which Waldman's possible ritual is addressed may be the community of poets, of artists. She says her chant is "for all wandering spirits" and yet we know how active she is among the poets of New York and Colorado, at Naropa Institute. We also know that her acquaintance with Sabina's ritual came by way of a fellow poet, Michael Brownstein.

Brownstein, writing in the *Talking Poetics* anthology co-edited with Waldman, insists on the crucial significance of the social context of visionary experience. He compares the account of a traditional ritual ingestion of the hallucinogen *yagé* (*Banisteriopsis caapi)* by members of a tribe in the Amazon jungle with contemporary novelist William Burrough's description of taking the same plant in *The Yagé Letters*. "What Burroughs experienced," says Brownstein, "however revelatory, took place devoid of meaningful context. There was no way that what he saw could be integrated into the cultural reality preceding and following his trip" (227-36). Brownstein also quotes at length Rimbaud's poem "Illuminations," which, while sharing certain features with an Icelandic saga cited earlier, again points to the social isolation of the modern poet (233-36).

But Waldman knows about this problem–if not from her own reflections then from her friend Brownstein. Perhaps she intends to strengthen the solidarity of proverbially alienated modern artists while also attempting to salve their estrangement from the larger society. If so, this would be the parallel to the healing function of Sabina's vigil. It would surely mean that "Fast Speaking Woman" is more

authentically a religious ritual were it demonstrably directed to a community rather than exemplifying only another private vision. As an oral poem, of course, it has present hearers, a built-in social setting of sorts and perhaps this is sufficient.

Finally, the "wandering spirits" to whom Waldman says her poem is dedicated extend beyond the poets and those who attend their readings to the contemporary woman, or the archetypal woman, for whom the fast speaking woman most especially speaks. How much this more idealized audience counts in determining whether the poem evidences a remythologization of poetry through ritual–and with it some possible vindication of foreign incursions into Mazatec religious life–I cannot say conclusively. Although my investigations thus far have yielded some tentative criteria and the suspicion that, on balance, a poem like "Fast Speaking Woman" does constitute a "curious and distant transmission" of shamanic ritual, this entire inquiry is one requiring further study. Nevertheless, I believe that most of the elements needed to continue such study have been introduced here. I hope that those who know the permutations of religious ritual more intimately than I do can now enter the discussion.

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NOTES

[1]The author wishes to express his thanks to Anne Waldman for helpful personal correspondence.

[2]The line following Waldman's "I'm talking" is "I'm a jive ass woman."

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INITIATION RITE AS RIDDLE

Thomas V. Peterson

Abstract

The liminal stage of an initiation rite is not only a threshold for an initiate's change in status, but it also provides a spiritual threshold for transcendence. Lame Deer's recounting of his experiences in a Lakota vision pit both emphasizes his initiation from boyhood to manhood and his intense relationship with a religious symbol–the sacred pipe–that became the medium for his transcendence. The pipe could provide this transcendence because it operated as a riddle (an interrogative metaphor) that actively engaged Lame Deer in the process of unifying his experiences within a religious framework of meaning. The initiation rite, however, only begins the process of transcendence that will remain a life-long activity. Initiation rites therefore become occasions when the community also renews its metaphorical quest for meaning. During the Christian baptismal ceremony for infants, for example, the child focuses the community's attention on the central Christian riddle of how to live in a sinful world without being wholly of it. Infant baptism most obviously emphasizes the threshold of transcendence for the whole community, since no visible change in the initiate's status occurs.

Initiation rites focus attention on the central religious riddles of a culture.[1] Riddles, as interrogative metaphors, are important to the religious quest because they encourage people to experience transcendence, even while they frame the cosmological boundaries within which transcendence takes place. While religious riddles are important in many different rituals, they are posed most intensely during the liminal stage of a rite of passage. In this liminal stage of seclusion from culture, initiates are at the threshold of change (*limen* means "threshold" in Latin). Interpreters of initiation rites most frequently emphasize the threshold that marks a change in status from childhood to adulthood. The initiate, however, is also at a spiritual threshold of transcendence.[2]

Transcendence as a significant aspect of liminality has probably been neglected because scholars of religion have emphasized Van Gennep's three stages of change in rites of

passage–separation, liminality, and reintegration–in their interpretations. When Van Gennep's theory became joined to Victor Turner's sense of ritual as theatre, these stages became scenes in a dramatic act that portrayed a person's change from childhood to adulthood (Turner 1977, 1982). This script has become so powerful that it has colored the study of ritual activity beyond initiation rites themselves. Almost all rituals can be described as liminoid, if not strictly speaking liminal, activity; they have frequently been interpreted as special moments that break the everyday flow of life (cf. Turner 1982:20-60). Deep bonding among people takes place at this time because of a heightened sense of *communitas*.

The importance of Van Gennep's three stages of initiation for the study of religion is evidenced not only by its usage but more significantly by its usefulness in raising important questions about rituals and rites of passage. Scholarship has focused on questions about psychological change (cf. Young), about the relationship between ritual and everyday social activity (cf. Turner 1977) and about the transmission of meaning and value during ritual (cf. Turner 1982:61-88). Like all good and useful theories it has not exhausted its interpretive power. Like all theories, however, it has focused attention on certain questions and neglected others. Because the three stages are so obviously important in all initiation rites, that framework guides our deepest interpretations. We tend to focus on the change of the initiate's status, for example, rather than on the importance and meaning of the symbols that are conveyed during the rite.

The Lakota vision quest, as described by Lame Deer, shows the persuasiveness of Van Gennep's three stages for interpreting rites of passage but also illustrates the neglect of other equally fundamental questions. At sixteen, Lame Deer was in a vision pit without food or water for four days and nights. He describes the terror of separation: "Indian children are never alone.... But here I was, crouched in my vision pit, left alone by myself for the first time in my life" (1). He was left without any clothes and was wrapped only in a blanket made by his grandmother. The separation itself was marked by his grandmother's cutting forty little pieces of skin from her arm and by a particularly intense sweat bath. The bath, he tells us, seemed to make "my brains empty: I thought the heat would kill me, burn the eyelids off my face!" (4).

In the pit, Lame Deer "lost all sense of time;" he "did not know whether it was day or night," or whether he was sleeping or awake (6). In his vision he was chosen to become a shaman with the spirits saying, "You are sacrificing yourself to be a medicine man" (5). As is typical of the initiation quest of a shaman, *communitas* was not so much a social phenomenon as it was a spiritual one: Lame Deer felt unity with "so many people–living and dead"–and with "the fowl people, the winged ones, the eagles and the owls" (5). As is also typical of a shaman's initiation, the old medicine man would help reintegrate Lame Deer into society:

> He would interpret my visions for me. He told me that the vision pit has changed me in a way that I would not be able to understand at the time. He told me also that I was no longer a boy, that I was a man now. I was Lame Deer (6).

If one is interested in the psychology of change from boyhood to manhood, the above description emphasizes those parts of Lame Deer's experience that outline his dramatic change. Act one tells about his terror in being separated from his family and acquaintances. The pain of separation is expressed symbolically by his grandmother's sacrifice and the pain that he endures in the sweat lodge. His separation in act two becomes symbolized through stripping away his personal clothing, his "burial" in the vision pit, and the four-day period of fasting. During this time dramatic visions take place and Lame Deer is called to be a shaman. The third act begins with the old shaman's validating Lame Deer's visions and beginning the process of teaching him the ways of the shaman, which would eventually lead to his reintegration into the life of the tribe as a respected adult with spiritual healing powers. Lame Deer writes, "When it was all over, I would no longer be a boy, but a man. I would have my vision. I would be given a man's name" (1).

While organizing the narrative according to Van Gennep's three stages is fair to Lame Deer's account and does give a persuasive framework for answering a particular range of questions, it obscures the important issue of transcendence. If we consider as central the symbolic objects that Lame Deer takes into the vision pit and try to understand why they are so important to the initiation process, then a different focus of

interpretation emerges. How do symbolic images help focus the world of meaning for the initiate? Only three objects accompanied Lame Deer into the vision pit–the sacred pipe, a small gourd that contained forty squares of his grandmother's flesh and a star blanket that was made by his grandmother. All of these emphasized a matrix of meaning that unified him with his ancestors, his tribe, the world of nature, and the spiritual world. If he became a shaman, the blanket, made by his grandmother, would become central to his healing activities and he would eventually be buried in it. The pieces of his grandmother's skin bound him to his family and his people. In Lame Deer's words:

> Someone dear to me had undergone pain, given me something of herself, part of her body, to help me pray and make me stronghearted. How could I be afraid with so many people–living and dead–helping me? (3).

It was the pipe, however, that "re-presented" the Lakota cosmos.

The red pipestone represented the blood of his people. The pipe embodied the Lakota nation itself. The smoke infused meaning from the spiritual world into the everyday life of the tribe. These and other basic identifications between the pipe and the Lakota cosmos were widely known by all the people; they were not suddenly communicated to Lame Deer during his initiation. It was, rather, Lame Deer's experience with the ancestral pipe that is notable. He writes that while holding the pipe in the vision pit, "I sensed that my forefathers who had once smoked this pipe were with me on the hill, right in the vision pit. I was no longer alone." (2-3). Liminality in this interpretation becomes important because it provides occasion for Lame Deer to begin personally appropriating the tribe's most important symbol for his own use. The sacred object collapses past and future into the present by gathering together a world of meaning and thereby becomes the threshold for transcendence.

Lame Deer's experience in the vision pit, then, became the beginning of a personal odyssey to understand the deep mysteries of life–his relationship with the spirits, with nature and with his tribe. The sacred pipe framed the boundaries of this quest and became the teacher of truth and the unifier of life. Lame Deer's recounting of an experience he later had

with two very special pipes of his people is a classic account in the history of religions of the human encounter with the sacred:

> I held the pipes. Their bowls were my flesh. The stem stood for all the generations. I felt my blood going into the pipe, I felt it coming back, I felt it circling in my mind like some spirit. I felt a power surging from them into my body, filling all of me. Tears were streaming down my face. And in my mind I got a glimpse of what the pipe meant.... I knew that when I smoked the pipe I was at the center of all things, giving myself to the Great Spirit, and that every other Indian praying with his pipe would, at one time or other, feel the same (251-2).

Such a powerful revelation, however, only deepened Lame Deer's certainty that there was much more to experience and understand.

> The thought came to me that if I ever learned to understand all that the pipe meant, understand all the symbols hidden within it, only then would I fully know what it meant to be an Indian, what it meant to be me. Well, I still don't know it. I am still learning. Maybe I'll be getting near to it one day (252).

The pipe, then, was an enigma, a riddle to be solved. It is that riddle which framed Lame Deer's life and indeed his autobiography. His experience in the vision pit in chapter one posed the riddle; his attempts to solve it form the many chapters in the book; the last chapter narrates Lame Deer's deepest and most moving encounter with spiritual reality through the medium of the pipe. The book ends with his hope that the pipe will one day unify all human beings, native and non-Native Americans alike, on the red road of life.

A riddle is an interrogative metaphor that demands active engagement in creating a link between two domains. One of the oldest known riddles, for example, is this Babylonian one: "Who becomes pregnant without conceiving? Who becomes fat without eating?" (Bryant:11). This riddle attends to two human bodily functions, conceiving and eating. The metaphoric process really begins with conflating eating and intercourse as well as fatness and pregnancy. But this metaphorical connection of bodily functions only primes the hearer to stretch imaginatively beyond bodily functions to other domains. As any riddler knows, the most common leaps are

between the realms of the human body and either culture or nature. Static descriptive images usually suggest the link between the human body and culture; organic images, between the body and nature. So who or what in nature becomes fat without eating and pregnant without conceiving? If you yourself had discovered that the answer was clouds, your discovery would have been accompanied by a flash of intellectual pleasure–a pleasure that punsters who find artificial, linguistic unities also understand. It is a very elementary form of what James Fernandez (1982:494-573; cf. 1980) calls the pleasure of "returning to the whole," which is central to most profound religious experiences.

If the study of religion is to make somewhat alien experiences comprehensible by linking them with understandable human phenomena, as Jonathan Z. Smith (1982:109-12) suggests, then Fernandez's work in interpreting a Fang revitalization movement in terms of metaphoric unity becomes very important for understanding Lame Deer's spiritual encounter with the pipe of his ancestors, both spirit and human. Fernandez writes:

> Though part of the pleasure in metaphor rests in its suggestion of a relation between things thought to be separate if not opposite, at the same time the metaphor or the riddle-metaphor builds a bridge across the abyss of separated, discriminated experience (1980:51).

Fernandez calls this process "edification by puzzlement" and suggests that the religious experience of "transcendence" can be understood as a metaphoric process of "returning to the whole" (1980:50; cf. 1982:494-573).

Of course, solutions to religious riddles are never simple answers. They are necessarily incomplete because ritual symbols themselves must bridge domains of ever-changing human experiences. Transcendence is a process whereby the religious person goes beyond purely literal levels of meaning to feel ever deeper metaphorical unities. Religious symbols that become deep riddles during initiation rites are partially or momentarily solved only to become more profoundly puzzling as they gather together increasingly greater parts of human experiences. They inevitably, however, leave out something that will continue to haunt the religious man or woman, especially during periods of crisis. The sacred pipe,

for example, helped Lame Deer discover his personal identity as a native American; later when he experienced his role as healer, the pipe provided a cosmic link between everyday life and the sacred. In the end, Lame Deer was still struggling with how the pipe might eventually contribute to harmony between the red and white races (254-255). Initiation rituals, I am arguing, pose the central riddle or riddles of a society, and as such they initiate or begin the process of spiritual growth for individuals in particular cultures. Sam Gill (6 and passim) has argued that some initiation rites mark the beginnings of "a vital religious life" by destroying simplistic and literal interpretations of religion. The Australian aborigines, for example, stage an elaborate hoax. With bullroarers whirling and the initiates under a blanket, the elders take a hammer and chisel and knock out a tooth from each; the initiates think that the spirit, Dhuramoolan, is taking their teeth and sparing their lives. A highpoint of the initiation is when the boys are told that the bullroarer is a humanly contrived noisemaker. Dorothy Eggan's work with the Hopi shows how traumatic such hoaxes can be for the initiates, causing severe disorientation and anger at the elders who perpetuated them (see Gill:7-10). Gill concludes that:

> the children can either accept the world as bereft of meaning, with Hopi religion a sham, or find some deeper sense in the ceremonies and objects which had come to mean so much to them. Necessarily, they begin their religious life in a state of serious reflection and in quest of an understanding of the sacred profound enough to sustain their new life (9).

All initiation rites, of course, do not include such dramatic deceptions, which in the words of Gill, explode "the naive realism of the uninitiated perspective... [and the] one-dimensional literalism [of] a childish faith" (10). But Gill's main point can, I believe, be universalized. All initiation rituals have the potential, at least, to sweep aside simplistic analogies of static correspondences between sacred objects and spiritual reality. Breaking the literal meaning of symbols does not and should not minimize sacred objects as mediums of epiphanies. They become important focal points for gathering together worlds of meaning. They can do this because a community of people accept them as having the potential for revealing the true cosmos, even while they themselves are in

doubt that they will ever understand the completeness of that revelation. Lame Deer's initiation, for example, brought him into a profound relationship with his ancestors, his community, and the worlds of animals and spirits. The pipe as microcosm of this unified cosmos became the medium for exploring his personal relationship with the world. While the literal correspondences between the parts of the pipe and the world were never shattered, simple analogy gave way to metaphor. The pipe as symbol opened up possibilities and potentialities for integrating Lame Deer's experience into a greater whole. In that sense it became a life-long riddle.

Liminality was important in setting up this life-long riddle because it effectively heightened Lame Deer's expectations and emotional involvement with his culture's central religious symbol. The sweat bath that emptied his mind, the removal of his ordinary clothing, his burial in the dark vision pit and the four-day fast all helped focus attention on a koan, another sort of enigmatic religious riddle whose solution also leads to edification and perhaps even transcendence (cf. Zug).

Recent work on riddles has emphasized the serious character of riddling, both historically and philosophically. Mark Bryant (18) points out the life and death context of many famous riddles such as the well-known one in the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx. He recounts another story from the *Mahābhārata* in which Yudhisthira and his four dehydrated brothers come to the enchanted pool of Yaksha, a servant of the gods who is usually friendly to people. His four brothers rush headlong to drink from the pool only to fall dead at the bottom of its toxic waters. If Yudhisthira can solve a series of riddles that show he knows the ultimate meaning of life, he will be able to drink from the pool and choose to have one brother resuscitated. He solves the riddles, of course. When he chooses to save the stepbrother from his father's previous marriage "so that both mothers might rejoice," his answer so impresses Yaksha that all of the brothers are returned to life (28-29). There are two points to all of this: solving religious riddles is a matter of life and death and the riddle solving process is directly linked to transcendence.

Transcendence here is the process through which the riddle puzzles initiates and pushes them to seek deeper unities for their experiences. Wittgenstein wrote: "The riddle does

not exist. If a question can be framed at all, it is possible to answer it" (Bryant:12). If "riddle" is defined as "unsolvable puzzle," then Wittgenstein's insight fits well into the argument here. Since language creates the boundaries of human experience, if those boundaries can be linguistically framed, then it is possible through the metaphorical process that humans will experience a "whole" that is within those boundaries. Those who have solved Zen koans assure others that the koans have answers, even if those answers cannot be expressed verbally. Religious symbols that are experienced in the initiation rite, however, encompass a very broad range of human meaning and even include experiences that have not yet happened. The riddle keeps subtly changing as a religious person brings new experiences into relationship with the symbols of initiation. While defying any ultimate "return to the whole," these religious symbols provide stability and grounding for a life-long quest that contains moments of transcendence. It is the process of "returning," rather than the final act of "return," that is emphasized by initiation rite as riddle.

Emphasis on an initiate's change in status during a rite of passage tends to obscure another fundamental aspect of initiation rites: the renewal of the religious quest for all the people in the community who are also participating in the rite. The father who gives the family pipe to the Lakota boy and the grandmother who cuts her skin for the boy each renew their own past encounters with the sacred symbols. Perhaps no initiation rite so obviously emphasizes a community's renewal of its religious quest as does Christian baptism, especially infant baptism, since the small child cannot possibly know what is happening. Infant baptism has not been a prime example for the theoretical formulation of initiation rites because there is no visible change in status that accompanies it. It does, of course, fit Van Gennep's formal three-stage process, but the initiate's change in the community is one that occurs on a purely spiritual level; the taint of original sin is removed from the child who spiritually becomes Adam or Eve before the Fall.

When we shift the question, however, from that of the individual's change in status to how symbols define the community's spiritual quest, infant baptism becomes much more interesting. The words of the ceremony emphasize the

infant's redemption from the slavery of sin to become a child of God. The godparents, on behalf of the child, renounce Satan and his works. The child is now in the world, but not wholly of it. He or she escapes from the Prince of the Underworld. Interestingly, during Easter services in many Christian churches, the whole congregation renews its baptismal vows. What are the distinctly Christian metaphorical parameters of the religious quest that are being defined? Most obviously it is the Christian relationship with the world. On one level, sin has been overcome through the baptismal ceremony; yet on another level, Christians continue to live in a world of sin. *What does it mean to be a Christian in a world of sin?* That is the central riddle that is posed in the baptismal rite. Christians have never definitively answered this central riddle, though there have been many theological responses to it. Some, for example, have been coupled with apocalyptic hopes for the second coming of Christ, others with utopian visions for transforming the world. H. Richard Niebuhr has noted in *Christ and Culture* some of the broad answers that Christians have given to this riddle.[3]

To some degree, at least, each Christian has to struggle personally with the issue of how to live in a sinful world. This issue is reformulated for the community when each child is born. And, of course, that is the fundamental Christian riddle, posed at the manger in Bethlehem during the Christmas season. How can this humble savior be the one to overturn the world of sin? How can one so removed from the world of power relations defeat the prince of evil who goes "through the world seeking the ruin of souls," as one medieval prayer phrases it? At baptism, the infant is joined to the savior and becomes a new light shining in the world of darkness. This is symbolized by a lighted candle held by the godparents. Of course, all of this only deepens the riddle. There is no simple or final answer. But insofar as the riddle becomes an important part of the Christian quest, it also becomes a means for transcendence, even as the sacred pipe became a medium for Lame Deer's deep encounters with the holy.

In conclusion, during the liminal stage of a rite of passage both the initiates and the community focus on religious symbols that provide a means for transcendence. They are able to do this because these symbols function as riddles that engage the people in a quest to orient themselves within a

cosmos of meaning. As riddles they frame the metaphorical boundaries within which transcendence occurs. By looking closely at the religious objects, scholars of religion may gain an intimate glimpse into the parameters of meaning in a particular culture; by focusing on an individual's engagement with those objects we may begin to understand the process of transcendence as a metaphorical quest for meaning.

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NOTES

[1]Some of the work on this paper was done during an NEH Summer Seminar, directed by James Fernandez in 1985. I am grateful for the financial support of the NEH and for James Fernandez's encouragement and shared ideas.

[2]Although not fully developed, Victor Turner presaged this interpretation (1982:41-44 and passim).

[3]Obviously, I am only suggesting the Christian "riddle" that is central to baptism in the broadest outline. Much more careful attention to the symbolic details of this ritual would be needed to flesh out the depth of Christian meaning.

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FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE: THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF FUNERAL RITES IN ARNA BONTEMPS' BLACK THUNDER

Mary Kemp Davis

Abstract

The funeral rites of the slave Bundy provide the central metaphor for Arna Bontemps' treatment of the Gabriel Prosser Conspiracy of 1800. In an inversion of the usual pattern of death as a transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead, Bontemps presents the conspirators' thwarted transition from the world of the dead to the world of the living. Bundy's rite of passage is artfully linked to three additional rites of passage. Three major conspirators–Gabriel Prosser, Ben Woolfolk and Criddle–undergo the transition from boyhood to manhood, a necessary prerequisite for the slave revolt. Moreover, Bontemps uses ritualized actions to differentiate these three rites of passage and to add complexity to his analysis of the conspiracy: Gabriel's wrestling match, Ben's swearing-in ceremony and a symbolic rebirth analogized to baptism and Criddle's metaphorical rape. Of the three conspirators, only Ben Woolfolk fails to complete his passage to manhood; only he moves from death to life and back to death again. By contrast, Gabriel and Criddle complete their passage even though the conspiracy itself fails.

Black corpses litter the pages of Arna Bontemps' novel about an aborted slave revolt in Virginia, the famed Gabriel Prosser Conspiracy of 1800.[1] In the second chapter of *Black Thunder* (1936), for instance, a tyrannical young master named Thomas Prosser administers what turns out to be a fatal whipping to his decrepit slave Bundy, an outrage that augments his fellow slaves' discontent. Then, in the penultimate chapter, the State of Virginia executes Gabriel Prosser, the leader of the rebels. Preceding this climactic event is the execution of scores of nameless slaves–some guilty, some innocent. Succeeding it, we are to assume, will be the execution of still other incarcerated leaders.

A sailor from San Domingo (now Haiti) provides one plausible explanation for these countless casualties and the intimations of more to come when he muses, "words like *freedom* and *liberty* drip blood–always, everywhere, there is blood on such words" (260).[2] However, even this trenchant

analysis does not fully explain the sanguinary atmosphere of the novel. Rather, in an inversion of the usual pattern of death as a transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead–to borrow phrasing from Arnold Van Gennep (1960:147)–Bontemps presents the conspirators' thwarted transition from the world of the dead to the world of the living. Therefore, although Bundy is merely the first of many casualties in the novel, his funeral rites provide the central metaphor for the conspiracy and the unifying link between the portraits of several key conspirators.

Black Thunder is divided into five books which contain a total of sixty-three sections or chapters, many of which are quite brief. In Book I, "Jacobins," Bontemps reveals the many forces which influenced the conspiracy. The title refers to a specific group of presumed agitators, the French Jacobins, that Virginians accused of planting the damnable seeds of revolt. In this long section, fully one-third of the novel, the conspirators finish coordinating their plans and prepare to strike. In Book II, "Hand Me Down My Silver Trumpet," the leader, Gabriel Prosser, sounds what Frederick Douglass referred to as "the silver trump of freedom" (1982:84). Nearly four hundred of the eleven hundred conspirators meet, but a phenomenal downpour prevents them from attacking Richmond. Before they can meet again, two of their comrades betray them. Richmond and the rest of the nation react to the news of the barely averted disaster in Book III, "Mad Dogs." Several "rabid" conspirators are caught, imprisoned and hanged immediately. Others remain at large for a while. In Book IV, "A Breathing of the Common Wind" (whose title alludes to William Wordsworth's sonnet, "To Toussaint L'Ouverture"), Gabriel Prosser, having eluded capture for several weeks, surrenders in Norfolk, Virginia. He is returned to Richmond in Book V, "Pale Evening...A Tall Slim Tree," where he is tried and executed. The title of this last book alludes to Langston Hughes' haunting lyric, "Dream Variations." Taken together, Books IV and V create an elegiac yet triumphant mood (see Davis 1984).

The murder of old Bundy is a crucial event in *Black Thunder*, although its precise role in the genesis of the conspiracy has sometimes been misunderstood. Hugh Bloster, for example, sees this even as the immediate cause of the slave insurrection. He explains, "Bundy's devotion to liberty strikes

a sympathetic chord in the heart of Gabriel, who determines to seek deliverance for himself and his fellow bondmen" (1948:213). Robert A. Bone holds a similar view. He writes, "In Bontemps' version the uprising is touched off by the unusually cruel punishment of a mischievous slave" (1965:121). The views of Dorothy Weil and Roger Whitlow are less problematical. Weil maintains that the fatal whipping of Bundy "hastens the rebellion that has been on the minds of the blacks of Henrico county for some time (1971:1), while Roger Whitlow, finally, lists the murder with several other "conditions that spawned the plans for the revolt..." (1973:102).

Basically, Bontemps implies that although Gabriel Prosser admired and tried to imitate Toussaint L'Ouverture, who had led the San Domingo slaves to freedom and although he resolved to spare sympathetic Frenchmen then living in Richmond, neither the Haitian Revolution nor the French Revolution actually caused the slaves to revolt. He also deflates the theory that white agitators–whether Jeffersonians, United Irishmen or other abandoned wretches–planted the seeds of revolt. Bundy had been talking about freedom since he was a young man (*Black Thunder*: 33) and at unspecified times before his death he and Gabriel had shared their yearnings and discussed duplicating the mass uprisings in San Domingo (35-36). Yet despite all of these influences, Bontemps suggests that it was the primal urge to freedom which ultimately motivated the slaves–that and "the end of patience" (Bontemps 1968:ix).

Even though Bundy's death is not the ultimate cause of the rebellion, at least one critic has noticed that his funeral rites serve an important thematic and structural function within the novel. For example, in an article which discusses the authenticity of a number of folk beliefs in the novel, Dorothy Weil isolates several features of Bundy's funeral rites, gives the rationale for them and shows how certain motifs from the burial scene are further elaborated within the novel. For one thing, the slaves handle the coffin gingerly so that Bundy's spirit will not avenge itself on the pall bearers. They also put his favorite food and drink on the grave (a roasted hog and a jug of rum) to please and appease his spirit. Implicit in both customs, of course, are the notions that the spirit survives the demise of the body and that, for good or ill,

the deceased continues to be involved in the life of the living (1-4). Both ideas are explicitly presented through the consciousness of the mourners (*Black Thunder*: 59-60).

Another important belief is that the spirit can take multifarious forms. This is apparent when the mourners claim that Bundy has become "a *real* smoke man," invincible himself but capable of irritating the eyes and throats of his enemies. In another place they see him benignly "squatting there beside that pile of dirt, squatting like an old grinning bullfrog on a bank." Even after his burial, the mourners continue to see Bundy in his harmless aspect: "Dead and gone, old Bundy. Something–something no denser than smoke–squatting by the hole, grinning pleasantly with one eye on the jug of rum" (Weil:3-5; *Black Thunder*:60-61).

As Dorothy Weil makes clear, these beliefs about meddlesome spirits are significant from a structural standpoint, because they provide a realistic motive for the initial association of Ben Woolfolk with the conspirators. This house slave belonging to a rich planter named Moseley Sheppard is important because he (and a Sheppard field slave named Pharaoh) will betray the rebellion. In addition, it is Ben who supplies Bundy with the jug of rum that on the very next morning leads to his fatal whipping. More important, while visiting the Sheppard plantation, Bundy is so tickled by Ben's subterfuge he asks him to talk with Gabriel about joining the "Masons," meaning the conspiracy. Ben refuses this first invitation, but after Bundy's death he becomes fearful of the consequences of not honoring Bundy's last wish, afraid that he will be "pestered" forevermore by one of those "devilish haunts" from the supernatural world. This fear of Bundy's vengeful ghost persists at the burials (*Black Thunder*: 6-7:62-63). In the end, as Weil explains, even though Ben is "torn between fear of Bundy's spirit, cowardice, and loyalty to his master," his fear of Bundy's spirit proves more compelling. Conversely, after the conspirators' first thrust fails, Ben's cowardice and loyalty are ascendant and he freely confesses his role in the endeavor (4-5).

Weil's documentation of the folkloric sources of Bundy's funeral rites and her explanation of how the communal beliefs presented here give Ben Woolfolk (and others) a believable psychology are informative. Yet there is another dimension to Bontemps' use of these rites that is more fundamental. It

should be remembered that funeral rites are one of many rites of passage, as Arnold Van Gennep demonstrated in his seminal study, *Les rites de passage*, first published in 1909. According to Van Gennep, funeral rites are actually double-edged. They separate the dead from the world of the living and incorporate the living into the world of the dead. And they detach mourners from normal social life and eventually reintegrate them into the world of the living. This means, as Van Gennep notes, that "During mourning the living mourners and the deceased constitute a special group situated between the world of the living and the world of the dead..." (1960:147).

Bontemps refers explicitly to this twofold liminal or transition state when he writes, "Ben knelt down and joined the song, moaning with the others where the two worlds meet" (612). He particularly focused on the rites which incorporate Bundy into the world of the dead when he shows the mourners providing Bundy with his favorite food and drink to enjoy in the afterlife. Bundy's assumption of protean shapes at the graveside is more than a verisimiliar description of the slaves' animistic beliefs. Rather, by showing that the old slave who had craved freedom and who had resolved to fight for it still lives among them–indeed, that he still lives *within* them–Bontemps provides a thematic and structural link between Bundy's rite of passage and the slaves' rite of passage, the slave revolt.

Whereas Bundy is incorporated into the world of the dead, the slaves seek to join the community of "men." As animate chattel, the slaveholders consider them coequal with brutes, especially draft animals. This concept is made vivid when old Bundy receives his fatal whipping. Seeing Bundy tottering home with his jug of rum enrages Thomas Prosser, who feels that he is merely subsidizing "a worthless scavenger" that is "no bettern' a lame mule" (8). His rage intensifies when Bundy tries feebly to resist punishment, a grave offense under any circumstances. For these offenses, Bundy is literally murdered, just as the slaves as a group have been figuratively murdered. At the graveside, however, the slaves confirm that Prosser's destructive power is illusory. They muse:

> Marse Prosser thunk it was cheaper to kill a wo'-out mule than to feed him. But they's plenty things Marse Prosser don't know. He don't even know a tree

got a soul, same as a man, and he don't know you ain't in that there hole, Bundy. We know, though. We can see you...(60).

Bundy's spirit–his resistance of the dehumanizing effects of slavery and his determination to be free–is not interred with his bones. Similarly, most of the slaves have resisted and continue to resist their enslavement. Bundy's spirit survives in all of the slaves who join the conspiracy; however, it is especially resurrected in three major characters–Gabriel Prosser, Ben Woolfolk and Criddle–who had a special relationship to Bundy and who undergo their own versions of passage rites. Moreover, Criddle, like the conspiracy in general, is linked imagistically to Bundy through the repetition of motifs used in the funeral scene. These interlocking rites of passage are a subtle feature of the novel's narrative design.

Gabriel, Ben and Criddle undergo a rite of passage that is a necessary cause of the slave revolt: the transition from boyhood to manhood. Bontemps does not show the slaves' transition from unthinking brutes to sensitive human beings, because such a transformation was never required, despite the assumption of their master. At Bundy's funeral the slaves' affection and reverence for Bundy imply that, whatever else he was, he was a human being; he was not a scavenger and he was certainly not a mule. And even if Bundy had been what his master deemed him, he would still have desired (as he did desire) to be free. Gray squirrels, groundhogs, wild birds–all want to be free, the trio of the conspirators note on several occasions (82, 93, 116). What we should expect to see, then, is an extended treatment of their transition from emasculated slaves to virile, "free" men.

On the surface Gabriel Prosser seems to have fewer reasons to chafe under slavery than his fellows. As Prosser's coachman he has more physical freedom and he is less burdened with onerous chores than either the field slaves or the slave artisans. Furthermore, as "the biggest and the baddest nigger in Henrico County" he is universally admired by the slaves (14). But Gabriel is unhappy; he is unhappy because he has an acute awareness of the fraud foisted upon him. Bontemps explains:

Being massive and strong didn't make one happy. Being a great slave made Marse Prosser richer, perhaps, but it didn't put any pennies in Gabriel's pocket. Of course there was some compensation in the fine clothes of a coachman, and it was a pleasure to drive to town occasionally and to sport around in the tall hat instead of working in the fields or in the shop. These were compensations, but they were brief, very brief(14-15).

These remarks show that Gabriel has inwardly rejected the bribes offered to the privileged slave. More important, at "just under twenty-four," he stands on the threshold of possibility: "He was too old for joy, as a slave's life went in Henrico County, Virginia, too young for despair as black men despaired in 1800" (12). Perceiving the revolutionary ferment of his milieu and intuiting the creative potential of his chronological age, he somehow concludes that the time is ripe to strike for freedom.

Bontemps does not detail Gabriel's development into an insurgent. However, he does foreshadow his ultimate clash with the slavocracy through a flashback recounting a rite of passage Gabriel underwent in his early manhood. This event involved a wrestling match with a "powerful barrel-chested black" named Ditcher. Ditcher was a slave driver from a nearby plantation whose physical prowess was astounding. When Gabriel was fifteen-years old, Ditcher subdued Solomon, the oldest of Gabriel's "uncommonly tall brothers." Three years later, the second brother, Martin, fell to this "roaring beast" in even less time than Solomon. "Two or three years passed, and it was Gabriel's turn, the third of the Prosser giants." The tide turned, and Ditcher met an ignominious defeat; he, not Gabriel, was carried home unconscious.

Ditcher, who "ruled the Bowler slaves in the place of the usual white" represents the slavocracy. Significantly, when he came to the appointed place to fight Gabriel, he was "naked to the waist" like Thomas Prosser in the aforementioned scene with Bundy. Like Prosser, also, he carried a whip, a symbol of oppressive authority. The fight with Gabriel was no ordinary display of physical prowess. When the "two giants" locked "mighty grips," the struggle was elevated to mythic dimensions. A score of blacks encircled the two. "For them the earth rocked. The stars shook like lamps swinging in the storm." As a representative of the slavocracy, Ditcher is also a

demonic force: "Ditcher ain't no man; he's a demon," one slave exclaimed. And another, "Yet and still Gabriel ain't scairt of devils or nothing else, he ain't." The fight over and Gabriel triumphant, the children took "the whip for a plaything" (13-14).

Gabriel's victory over Ditcher occupies the same symbolic plane as Frederick Douglass' famous victory over the slave-breaker Edward Covey. Douglass' comments on this fight are worth recounting:

> This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free.... He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact (1982:113).

Ditcher's successive defeats of Solomon and Martin are synecdoches for the repeated emasculation and subjugation of the slaves in general. When Gabriel brings this ritual to an end, he simultaneously defends his manhood and transcends the annihilating powers of slavery.

In contrast to Gabriel, Ben Woolfolk chooses eternal boyhood over manhood and death over life. He is about the same age as Bundy (6), but he is actually Bundy's ironic *döppelganger*. Images of death accompany his first and last appearances in the novel. They signal both his negation, whether self-induced or culturally mandated and his unwitting status as a "transitional-being" or "liminal *persona*" as described by Victor Turner (1970:95-96). We first see him in early June, 1800, rattling around in the pantry of his master's great house. Enveloped in silence, the "cavernous" rooms of the sleeping house are "as dark as death." In a symbolic description which anticipates a later reference to the "ghostly insurrectionaries" who meet at Brook Swamp on August 31 (103), Ben is even less substantial than a ghost as he patiently winds the Sheppard's clock. Specifically, the candle he carries throws "on his shoulders a dull blue

radiance weaker than the light a ghost carries" (4). In addition, two omens of death in this opening chapter metaphorically link Ben to Bundy. For instance, early the next morning and just before Bundy comes for his rum, Ben hears the call of a brown thrasher which he assumes has called his name. Later, when Bundy starts home, he too hears the call of the thrasher which he correctly interprets as an omen of his own approaching death (6-9). This omen reappears in the final chapter as Ben carries his master home after Gabriel's execution. Having already barely escaped a previous attempt on his life, Ben can almost hear "the sweet brown thrashers" that await him "in every hedge and clump" (298). This final omen balances the one which appeared in the first chapter and underscores the nihilism of Ben's decision to side once again with the slavocracy.

Bontemps uses two radically different rites of incorporation to portray Ben's forward and retrograde movement: a syncretic rite composed of Christian and pagan elements through which Ben supposedly severs his ties to his master and is incorporated into the rebel group; and an allusion to the Christian rite of baptism when Ben rejoices over his rebirth and reincorporation into his master's household. Ironically, Ben feels newborn after he confesses his role in the conspiracy and receives absolution from his master and the court. Nevertheless, Bontemps implies that what could have been a rite of passage from death unto life becomes, to borrow a phrase from Eugene O'Neill, a "long day's journey into night."

The first rite, the swearing-in ceremony, occurs immediately following Bundy's funeral. All of the key conspirators are present, including the shade of Bundy. Bontemps writes, "Something imaginary, perhaps the smoke of old Bundy, squatted beside that hole that the black boys had covered, squatted and grinned humorously, one eye on the jug of rum" (62). Ben (among others) is sworn to secrecy before the meeting begins with these ritual objects: "Here's the book, and here's the blood, and here's the black-cat bone." Gabriel's brother Martin, the preacher, who is officiating, then instructs Ben, "you won't tell none of what you's apt to hear in this meeting. You'll take a curse and die slow death if you tells. On'erstand?" Not surprisingly, all of this solemnity terrifies Ben but he soon takes the oath (61).

This ritual can be approached from several angles. Dorothy Weil mentions the black-cat bone in her discussion of the references to conjure in the novel. Appearing frequently in folklore material, the black-cat bone is a "powerful charm" used to ward off evil or give the user special powers (11-12). In the above scene, the slaves apparently hold this object in the same reverence as Christians hold the Bible. The container of blood may have the same significance or some deeper meaning that is lost to us. In any event, the ritual is designed to have Ben renounce his old allegiance to his master and form a new bond with his fellow initiates (cf. Turner 1977:95).

This formal swearing-in ceremony is subtly contrasted with an earlier scene in which Ben vows to keep a secret for his master's son. In this aforementioned scene, the first chapter in the novel, young Robin Sheppard sneaks in after spending much of the night with a free mulatto woman. When he enjoins Ben to keep silent about the hour he came home and his whereabouts, Ben eagerly consents. Furthermore, Ben decides to put Robin's horse in the stable himself so that Pharaoh, who usually handles this job, will not be privy to the secret. Robin praises Ben's solicitude in these words: "You're a good boy." Then, in biting sarcasm Bontemps comments, "His heart fluttered with pleasure; he was a good boy" (4-5).

In swearing allegiance to the conspirators, Ben undergoes the first stage of his passage from perpetual adolescence to manhood. The next stage involves his accepting the role Gabriel assigns to him and maintaining silence throughout the summer. Throughout this intervening period Ben is ambivalent, but he still remains loyal to the conspirators. Only when the rain precludes his going to Caroline County to organize the slaves does he summon up the courage to defy Gabriel and old Bundy.

From the very beginning, Ben's Christian background causes him to have two conflicting images of the conspirators: they are Christ-types who have been crucified on the rack of slavery (70) and they are savage antichrists bent on desecrating the sacred homes of the planters (71-72). Hence, it comes as no surprise that, after a circle of men conduct an "inquisition" in Henrico County (169), Ben, the examinee or star witness, repents his heretical disloyalty to his master of fifty years. Of Ben on his return trip home Bontemps writes, "The old Negro felt like a child new-born. His heart was a

leaf" (173). His absolution and rebirth were dependent upon his recanting his previous allegiance to the conspirators:

> Ben moistened his lips and began telling the impromptu court how it had been that old Bundy's invitation to be a 'mason' had led to his reluctant interview with Gabriel and Blue and how the long net, against his will, had seemed to involve him without actually taking him in (170).

Now he recalls his master's praise and advice: "He says I's clear, that what he say. You's a good boy, Ben. Don't you let none of these evil niggers tangle you up in nara another mess, though" (173). Despite his secret admiration of the others' courage, Ben resolves to suppress forever his desire for freedom: "He wasn't even studying about freedom any more." Being free of this yearning and of Gabriel's influence is comparable to being free of sin. Thus, Bontemps comments, "It was a burden lifted; yes, it was like a new day for Ben" (173).

Bontemps continues with an explicit allusion to the Christian rite of baptism, which, as Arnold Van Gennep notes, is both a rite of purification or separation from the previous world and a rite of incorporation into a body of believers (1960:63). Ben's elation over his regeneration is captured in these lines:

> New-born, Lordy. New-borned, new-borned, thanks Jesus. I heard tell about a woman come walking up out of the ocean, a brand-new woman come up dripping clean out of that there green water and them white waves and all. I heard tell about such a woman plenty times, but I just now knows how she felt. The man say's I's clear's the day I's borned. Marse Sheppard he say...(173-74).

This joy is short-lived, followed as it is by an overwhelming guilt. Ever resilient, though, Ben immediately recovers and concludes, "This here freedom and all ain't nothing to me. There's blood in it, Lordy, and the sight of blood makes me sick as I-don't-know-what" (174).

A final passage which refers to a period some weeks after Ben's confession underscores Ben's regression from incipient manhood to eternal boyhood. Many conspirators have already been executed by this time and others are awaiting execution. Once again, young Robin Sheppard praises Ben for being a good boy and once again Ben's heart swells with pride and

overflows with thanksgiving that he has resisted the lures of Bundy and Gabriel:

> Yes, suh, young Marse Robin; thank you, suh. It do pleasure me a heap to hear you talk that a-way. I's aiming to be good, befo' God I is. You and yo' pappy is two mo' sure 'nough quality white mens. God bless me, I was about ready to turn my back on y'alls once, but I bound you I won't do it nara 'nother time. That old dead Bundy—him squatting side of that hole in the low field. Jesus! he the one what was the cause of it—him and Gabriel. But God beingst my helper, I'm standing by you from here on, suh. I ain't strong for no such cutting up as Gabriel and them was talking. I been a good nigger, suh, and I's too old to change now (233).

If Ben Woolfolk is Bundy's ironic *döppelganger* because he chooses to self-destruct, to remain a "boy" forever rather than to become a "man," Criddle, the last of these important initiates, is Bundy's youthful reincarnation. It should be remembered that Bundy's spirit was not only indestructible, but his presence was also palpable both at the graveside and at Ben's swearing-in ceremony immediately after the funeral. Just as the mourners affirmed that they could see Bundy "squatting like an old grinning bullfrog on a bank" (60), so Criddle on the night of the revolt is described as being "drenched and slick as a frog" and he "squatted silently beneath a bush" outside a white family's house (113). This image glances all the way back to that tranquil night in early June when Ben Woolfolk wound his master's clock: "A tall clock, ticking hoarsely on a landing, changed its tone occasionally and suggested the croaking of a bullfrog" (3). Hence, this amphibian symbolizes the fruition of the conspiracy in the fullness of time and the fulfillment of Bundy's dream in Criddle.

Criddle's rite of passage is a bizarre parallel to Robin Sheppard's passage from adolescence to manhood. It was Robin, it will be remembered, who in the opening chapter exacted a promise from Ben Woolfolk that he would not tell his father about his late night rendezvous with Melody, the mulatto beloved by the white men of Richmond. During the summer preceding the aborted revolt, this student home on vacation from the College of William and Mary spent a great deal of time with Melody, not because he loved her, but because she was, shall we say, skilled in the art of lovemaking

and generous with her favors. Just as in initiation rites neophytes are instructed in arcane knowledge (Turner 1970:102), so Robin Sheppard, as one male character explains, was "Just getting his education, I reckon." On the one hand, his liaison is a preparation for and transition to marriage: "They say he's sparking somebody he can marry now," the same informant adds (291). On the other hand, it is a transitional period between the asexuality of childhood and the mature sexuality of marriage.

The link between sexuality and manhood is more complex in Criddle's case. For one thing, although male slaves were often used as "bulls" to impregnate their masters' "stock" (cf. 266-67), they were, paradoxically, made "impotent" or "castrated" by turns. Self-assertion and aggression, the traditional prerogatives of males, were denied to them. Consequently, when Juba, Gabriel's wife, gives the conspirators the signal that it is time for them to assemble, she links the idea of revolt to genuine black manhood. Specifically, she notes that these sexually potent men can prove their manhood by implementing the plans for the revolt:

> Y'-all see me every lasting one of you.... Get a move on.... Always big-talking about what booming bed-men you is. Always trying to turn the gals' heads like that. Well, let's see what you is good for sure 'nough. Let's see if you knows how to go free; let's see if you knows how to die...(98-99).

Another factor which makes Criddle's rite of passage more complex than Robin Sheppard's is that Criddle belongs to an inferior caste that is discouraged from having–when not absolutely forbidden to have–sexual relations with white women (cf. Jordan 1968:137; Cash 1941:84). This proscription contrasts, of course, with the unrestricted access of white men to free black women and the unbridled license they take with slave women. Therefore, Criddle's coming of age necessarily involves the toppling of barriers to his sexual liberty (cf. Hernton 1965:8) and an inversion of the sexual dominance of the white male (cf. Jordan 1968:141,153).

Whereas Ben Woolfolk is appalled by his vision of virile black men, phallic weapons in hand, despoiling the Sheppard plantation (71-72; 87), Criddle serenely contemplates the literal rape of Grisselda and the figurative rape of her father. Violence per se is conveyed through rape imagery as when,

visualizing "a small, ineffectual old man squirming on the end of his sword," Criddle silently warns him: "Don't you come out here, Mistah Man. If you does, you ain't going nowheres" (114). A succeeding passage describing Criddle's preparation for this violent encounter is laden with phallic images. Specifically, Bontemps continues, "He held his sword arm tense; the scythe blade rose, stiffened, stiffened and remained erect" (114).

Like the references to her father, the initial references to the rape of Grisselda are also figurative. Soon, however, they become literal, because Criddle truly desires to rape her. After Criddle notices her face beside a lamp, for example, Bontemps writes this passage:

> He passed a thumb meditatively down the edge of his scythe-sword and derived an unaccountable pleasure from the thought of thrusting it through the pale young female that stood looking into the darkness with such a disturbed face. Yet she looked flower-like and beautiful to him there, and Criddle though he didn't know his own mind, was sure he meant the girl no harm. She reminded him of a certain indentured white girl in town, a girl who made free with the black slaves of the same master and woke up one morning with a chocolate baby. That wasn't the kind of cutting up he was up against tonight, though. Yet and still, there *were* similarities. The domino spots [his eyes] brightened (113).

Later, when the conspirators have marched past the house, Criddle's mounting excitement reaches a new pitch. Again, the tension is conveyed in sexual images, although the referent this time is generalized:

> It was like hog-killing day to Criddle. He knew the feel of warm blood, and he knew his own mind. He knew, as well, that his scythe-sword was ready to drink. He could feel the thing getting stiffer and stiffer in his hand (133).

When Grisselda's father comes outside, he is "impaled on Criddle's scythe-sword," although this fact is not reported until later (222). Meanwhile, the hysterical Grisselda poses a serious problem. Once again, Criddle's thoughts glide easily from merely doing his job (preventing her escape) to rape:

> And that there gal in the long night-gown and the lamp in her hand. Humph! She don't know nothing. Squealing and a-hollering round here like something

another on fire. She need a big buck nigger to—no, not that. Gabriel done say too many times don't touch no womens. This here is all business this night. What that they calls it? Freedom? Yes, that's the ticket, and I reckon it feel mighty good too (134).

Grisselda is not raped, nor is she murdered. Instead, maddened by her terrifying experience, she "hungrily" watches the ritualistic executions of sundry insurgents that autumn (222). Criddle, by contrast, is fatally injured while fleeing the militia (153-54), poetic justice for this "stable boy" (12) who committed two heinous crimes: the murder of a white man and the (mental) rape of a white woman (cf. Stampp 1956:210).

Criddle, Ben, Gabriel–these three major conspirators undergo rites of passage that are artfully linked to the central rite of passage, the funeral rites of old Bundy. Bundy's literal passage from the world of the living to the world of the dead deepens the significance of their metaphorical transition from chattelhood to authentic personhood, from boyhood to manhood. On the surface, the torrential rainfall seems to freeze the conspirators in an unbearable liminal state. This idea is effectively presented when a weary Gen'l John (a foil to Ben Woolfolk) gives up his errand "halfway 'twixt town and home" and when the buckwagon of the soon-to-be traitors, Ben and Pharaoh, comes "to a standstill midway the [swollen] creek" (*Black Thunder* 131-32; cf. Turner 1977:95). But for the novel's heroes, this liminality is not really tragic; if anything, its prolongation is only an illusion. Gabriel and Gen'l John *feel* free despite their reenslavement (263-64; 295). Having made a bold thrust for freedom, they feel that they have fulfilled a central component of Bundy's dream: "I don't mind dying, but I hates to die not free" (35). Gen'l John invites us to focus on the meaning of Gabriel's life rather than the fact of his death: "No need crying about a nigger what's about to die free" (295). He leaves Ben to mourn, Ben to fear life as much as he fears death (298). Death-in-life–permanent liminality, if you will–is perhaps a fitting retribution for this slave who profited so little from the meaning of Bundy's life and death.

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NOTES

[1]Portions of this article originally appeared in the author's Ph.D. dissertation entitled "The Historical Slave Revolt and the Literary Imagination" (Univ. of North Carolina:1984) and in her paper "Rape as a Rite of Passage in Arna Bontemps's *Black Thunder* and *Drums at Dusk*," delivered at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association in December, 1985.

[2]Unless otherwise specified, subsequent page numbers refer to the 1936 edition of the novel.

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MAGICAL MEDICINE ON TELEVISION: BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

Andrew P. Lyons and Harriet D. Lyons

Abstract

This paper is an account of a Nigerian fundamentalist sect with strong American connections; the sect makes extensive use of television as a medium in order to propagate its message. In order to explain the rise of Bishop Idahosa's church which practices faith healing, the authors utilize Max Weber's notion of enchantment and emphasize the particular political and economic circumstances in southern Nigeria which are conducive to the development of such movements. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is utilized in order to explain the appeal of the TV preachers' message, and the effect of television on the message, audience and ritual is duly considered.

Sub-Saharan Africa was the site of some of the pioneering work in the contemporary study of ritual, e.g., the research of E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Victor W. Turner and Mary Douglas. Since the time when these scholars studied traditional symbolic forms, Africa, like the rest of the world, has participated in an enormous proliferation of mass media and media messages and products. In addition to traditional symbolic and cosmological systems and a vigorous contemporary–largely secular–expressive culture, Africa has experienced a long history of Christian missionization and growth of indigenous Christian churches and sects. This paper deals with a phenomenon in which all of these traditions meet: the rise of television evangelism specifically in Benin City, Nigeria, where the authors carried out a study of the effects of mass communications during a six-month period from November, 1983 to April, 1984.[1]

Benin City is the center of the first, largest and most successful project in television evangelism in Africa. The Church of God Mission, led by Bishop Benson Idahosa, produces two programs locally, one of which, "Redemption Hour," is broadcast all over Nigeria. On superficial observation the style and "packaging" of these programs bears a close resemblance to that of American religious

broadcasting, the so-called "electronic church." A closer examination, however, reveals that the symbolic reality constructed and promulgated by the program's producers and by the leaders and members of the Church has firm roots in the healing cults of traditional Africa and in an indigenous Christian tradition which itself owes much to West African religious praxis.

In recent years there has been a growing literature on the interface between television and ritual. This trend is represented in a broad sense by the work of Goethals (1981) and others who have studied the key, albeit secular, symbols (e.g., the "American family," "nature," the flag) which television manipulates before its vast audiences.

If we use a narrower meaning of ritual, one perhaps more directly relevant to the project at hand, we may note the increasing volume of work on television evangelism, which, among other things, examines the relationship between that phenomenon and more traditional forms of religious expression (see Armstrong 1979; Goethals 1985; Owens 1980; Oberhorfer 1982).

Our work in Nigeria, of which the study of the Nigerian "electronic church" forms part, taught us that many of the conclusions of these latter studies are rooted in specifically American conditions: the changing role of church and family in American life, patterns of social class in the United States and the links between fundamentalist religion and neo-conservative politics. The antipathy of many of the researchers to the content of both the secular and religious messages transmitted on American television has colored many of their conclusions, especially in the vital area of the relationship between television ritual and "real" religious experience.

Nigerian social conditions are very different from those pertaining to the US, yet television evangelism flourishes there, as does a symbolic universe increasingly mediated by television broadcasting, both religious and secular. What we hope to do in this paper is to examine the content of that symbolic universe to discover how modern means of symbol-making help generate and sustain a world view grounded both in current preoccupations and traditional values. By such examination perhaps we can rescue the discussion of the ritual

potential of television from the specific social and political concerns of Western investigators.

Benin: A City, Its People and Their Religion

The city of Benin was once the center of an empire which, at its peak prior to the nineteenth century, stretched as far as Lagos, one hundred and fifty miles to the west, and the Niger River, eighty miles to the east. The Oba, or divine king, ruled his patrimony through the aid of various officials who administered his trade monopolies, collected tribute and supervised the workings of his palace. Hundreds of subject villages, gerontocratic in their own local structure, owed allegiance to the Oba. The politically dominant population of the Empire spoke Edo and most of the subject populations spoke languages such as Ishan, Urhobo and Isoko–all members of the Edo language family. Members of the two ethnic groups which are numerically dominant in southern Nigeria, the Igbo and Yoruba, were also to be found within the confines of the empire.

According to tradition and apparent historical fact Benin owed much to intercourse with other peoples. From the eastern Yoruba came the institution of divine kingship, sculpting in bronze and brass and many elements of traditional religion. The Portuguese, who established friendly contact with Benin in the late fifteenth century brought guns and trade goods. Benin's art styles and sculpture began to portray Portuguese influence and Catholicism made fitful and slight inroads.

During the years of the slave trade the Benin empire flourished. In the nineteenth century Benin was in decline. Attempts by the ruling elite to preserve their trade monopolies led to a dispute with the British, who occupied the city in 1897, ending its political independence. Benin became part of the Royal Niger Company's protectorate and subsequently, of the Crown Colony of Nigeria. It is now the capital of Bendel State, one of the nineteen main administrative divisions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Bendel State has a population of over three million and is an important producer of oil, rubber and lumber. Benin City itself now has a population of about half a million. In many ways, traditions still flourish. The Oba still reigns, although

he can no longer be said to rule. Some of his subjects still worship him. The family structure remains strong and the Oba is the custodian of family law. Traditional arts and crafts are still practiced by hereditary guilds. Much, of course has changed. The State Governor is now the chief secular authority in Bendel. Although the city is predominantly Edo, its vastly expanded population now includes members of all the former subject peoples of the empire (whose ancestors would have lived outside Benin City) as well as expatriates and Nigerians from other regions of the country. English is now the official language of communication, and pidgin English is much used as a *lingua franca* among the polyglot population. There are many petty traders and artisans who manage a meager existence within the city. Some are migrants; others are permanent residents. There are many new elites, who now share power and social influence with the traditional aristocracy: businessmen, professionals and senior civil servants. A new social structure based on new class divisions is being consolidated.

Religious beliefs and practices in Benin are every bit as diverse and variegated as its ethnic composition and social and linguistic structure. The traditional Edo religion still exists. Descent of title and property in Benin was "patrilineal." Each male household head had to perform acts of worship at the ancestral shrine; it was the eldest son's duty to bury ("plant") and worship his father, although the relationship between the two in life was often quite ambivalent (Bradbury 1973: 213-250). Those of the dead who did not receive proper burial were believed to haunt the living. The gods of the Edo pantheon are still worshiped; there is much overlap with the beliefs of the neighboring Yoruba, from whom many elements have been imported. Osanobua is a somewhat remote High God in traditional religion; by many he is now equated with God the Father. Ogun is the God of fire. The Oba is King; he presides over dry land and is associated with redness. Olokun is associated with the waters. Shango is the thunder god. Eshu is the somewhat amoral trickster. These beliefs are manifested in a number of practices, which include worship at the "Catholicized" Holy Aruosa Church and the annual Ugie Erhoba and Igwe ceremonies, at which the Oba sacrifices to his ancestors and receives the blessings and gifts of his people. Such events

constitute "official" religion. On a more popular level, the *juju* priests and priestesses of Ogun and Olokun offer healing to the sick and protection against the ravages of witches, wizards and sorcerers, in whose dread efficacy most Southern Nigerians still believe. A number of male cults, masquerades, oracles, etc., are associated with particular local places and events.

The traditional religions of the Edo's former subject peoples and neighbors resemble theirs in substance, if not in detail. All of these are to be found in contemporary Benin City.

Christianity and Islam have both made their mark in Benin. Mainline churches, particularly the Roman Catholic ones, are strong. There are some Baptist congregations and a variety of Pentecostal and Full-Gospel churches, including the one we shall discuss in detail. A number of African churches which practice forms of Christian-pagan syncretic religion, like the Yoruba-based Aladura movement (Churches of the Cherubim and Seraphim), are to be found in Benin. A small number of Hausa and Fulani migrants, some Yoruba and some Northern Edo make up the bulk of those practicing Islam. As Rosalind Hackett (1985) has observed of Calabar, there is a growing interest in various minor manifestations of Western and Oriental mysticism, such as Eckankar and astrology (often manifested in the columns of local and national newspapers).

Underlying all these diverse manifestations there is a core of belief concerned with sickness and healing, which may be said to be shared among the majority of Benin's inhabitants. As Horton (1967) remarked of African religions in general, there is a prevailing tendency to ascribe personal misfortune to personal rather than impersonal causes. Thus illness or loss of job may be attributed to either witchcraft or ancestors and deities. This attitude is certainly present in Benin. Belief in witchcraft, sorcery and similar modes of personal or quasi-personal action are pervasive in Benin. While the study of such beliefs was not the focus of our work, the remarks of numerous informants continually focused our attention on them. Those who claim the power to diagnose and heal sickness–whether as diviners, Olokun priestesses, herbalists or Christian ministers–have a widespread following. Furthermore, that following may not be exclusive. A person may acknowledge the power of a Pentecostal healer and an

Olokun priest while being a devotee of neither. The same person in a situation of illness might consult an herbalist, a native doctor, an Olokun priestess, a Christian charismatic, a medical doctor and a pharmacist as well (for similar observations on the Yoruba, see Maclean 1971; for the Philippines see Lieban 1967).

Peel has remarked that the Yoruba, confronted by a situation of misfortune, may resort to "adhoccery" in the search for a remedy. Peel also noted that members of the Aladura sects were forbidden to resort to native healers. What we noted in Benin was that a minority expressed a belief in the exclusive and unique power of this or that agency, but a majority, in practice, adhered to a scale of preferences which was implemented when occasion like illness demanded it. Until recently, religious beliefs were communicated by old oral and newer written traditions by socialization in the extended family, missionary or state school. They were communicated by word of mouth or through witnessed events within local communities. The potential of the electronic media for disseminating religious beliefs was quickly realized.

The growth of the radio and television audiences in the last decade has been enormous. Our survey results demonstrated that over 80% of the households in Benin possess a television and a sizeable minority of those who come from households where there is no television regularly view programs at a friend's or relative's house. Radio is mainly used as a background to work or driving and as a source of news and musical entertainment. Television is–and is very much felt to be–the more powerful medium.

There are two television stations in Benin. NTA Benin is a branch of the National Television Authority of Nigeria. It shows network programs originating in Lagos, programs produced by NTA Benin and other local NTA stations, and a few privately produced programs. Approximately 30% of the NTA programs are foreign-produced television series. NTA Benin uses the premises of the former Mid-West Television, the local station which first developed television in Benin between 1973 and 1976. In 1981 a new station, Bendel Television, began broadcasting on UHF frequencies. It represented the interests of the new state government (Bendel) which were politically opposed to Shegari, the man who was then president and whose party effectively controlled

NTA. When we first visited Benin in 1976, televisions were owned only by members of the elite, hotel proprietors and local authorities (for use in schools and some seventy or so public viewing centers). We viewed television in a hotel bar with a dozen or so people, many of whom were relatives of the hotel manager. During these early years viewing television was a public event. That is much less the case now. A Benin household (typically ten to fourteen people) may indeed share a single set, but the presence of a set can no longer be construed as bait for an entire neighborhood. The situation in the countryside is vastly different. In many, but not all, villages, television reception is poor and televisions must run on expensive generators because there is no main supply. These conditions define the audience for all programming, including religious broadcasts. Within the city only the illiterate, the unemployed and the most overworked of female petty traders tend to have no or infrequent access to TV.

Insofar as the mass media in Benin City seek both to reflect and to guide the thoughts and feelings of Bendelites, as TV programs are the product of the "collective representations" of the groups which are the media's gatekeepers, artists and audience and as there is a remarkable degree of religious tolerance in Southern Nigeria, we might naively expect that TV programming would reflect religious diversity as well as an underlying commonality of belief. That it does not do so fully is an interesting finding.

Benin's two TV stations devote no regularly scheduled air time to traditional religion. The Igwe ceremony, the annual ritual at which the Oba's godhead is reaffirmed, was the third item on many radio and TV bulletins during the days in late December in which it took place. Given that the Oba is still worshiped by many Edo and respected by many who no longer worship him, it is indeed surprising that the ceremony is given so little air time. There was no live coverage of Igwe, although NTA Benin did screen "Festival in Africa," an hour-long documentary directed by the Oba's brother, Prince Edun Akenzua. There were frequent complaints by informants that both NTA Benin and BTV tended to present traditional rituals, dances and folklore as museum pieces rather than as living cultural expressions. The lack of official programming space does not, however, imply that the opinions of traditional believers are not represented. There are a number of news

and discussion programs on which they may appear. One of them is NTA's Saturday afternoon program, "Many Faces of Religion." This is a somewhat highbrow discussion program chaired by the ebullient Dr. Frank Nwabuoku, an Igbo clinical psychologist and a Roman Catholic. On a typical program he may have such guests as an Islamic mullah, an American Bahai, an existentialist philosophy don who is also a member of the Oba's family and perhaps Osemwegie Ebohon, who has created a unique niche for himself as the "TV witchdoctor." On BTV's "Woman," Ebohon was asked to air his opinions on the status of women in Edo culture; he also appeared on the local news to give his New Year's predictions. He too noted that traditional religions are not allocated any fixed time in programming schedules.

There are varying opinions regarding the reasons for the relative lack of attention given to traditional religion on NTA and Bendel television, and none of them is entirely convincing. When it comes to religion, the medium is the message in Benin. TV is unashamedly "modern." For tradition to be given time on the screen it must either appear in modern dress or be presented as an artifact. Such artifacts may be looked at from a distance by those who, through the very act of viewing, define themselves as members of the modern world. This fact does not mean that the fundamental structure of traditional belief finds no expression in Nigerian media culture. Quite the reverse is the case; traditional belief is in many ways represented in the broadcasts of the electronic church.

During the second half of the period covered by our study, NTA Benin presented Archbishop Benson Idahosa's "Redemption Hour" at a peak viewing time (around 9:30 p.m.) every Sunday and a gospel choir from God's Kingdom Society in 'Warri on Saturday afternoons. BTV aired Idahosa's program on Saturday afternoons and placed the Rev. Ayo Oritsejafor's "Hour of Deliverance" at the Sunday peak hour. Earlier, Oritsejafor's program had been aired opposite a not very popular local discussion program. In format these programs are very Americanized. "Hour of Deliverance" and "Redemption Hour" are both products of the Church of God Mission, a Pentecostal sect headed by its founder, Archbishop Benson Idahosa, who over the past fifteen years has secured financial backing and support from a number of American

evangelical concerns, including the Christ for the Nations Institute of Dallas, Texas, the Rev. Oral Roberts and his son, the Rev. Richard Roberts and the PTL Club (otherwise known as Prayer Television or Praise the Lord Club). For some years the Club provided financial support, equipment and technical know-how for Idahosa's "Redemption Hour" program.

The Rev. Oritsejafor is a member of the Itsekiri group, a small Bendel population whose language is similar to Yoruba. His program is televised from a church in Warri in the Delta region. Idahosa is an Edo and his program comes from his Miracle Center in Benin. Tapes are broadcast on other NTA stations in Nigeria; the program is also seen in Ghana. Idahosa and his supporters pay for air time, but the relatively small fees to NTA stations and BTV do not explain the persistence of these programs in network schedules in the face of opposition from rival sects and other hostile groups. The stations, in fact, are subsidizing Idahosa. In his authorized biography, *Fire in his Bones*, it is noted that on several occasions when it was proposed to charge the Church of God Mission a commercial rate for its programs, the "spirit of the Lord" intervened and reduced the charges. His television programs, financial backing and his charismatic personality have led to the growth of Idahosa's sect. His assistant told us that there are 31 churches in Benin City alone and approximately 1,000 in Nigeria as well as churches in Ghana, Zaire and Kenya. If Idahosa is a significant presence on the Bendel and Nigerian air waves, there is also a significant absence. The mainline churches have no regularly scheduled programs and the Islamic minority is served by thirty-minute programs on both Benin channels, even though in Bendel it is doubtless larger than Idahosa's sect.

The success of the charismatic leader of Africa's first and foremost electronic church raises a number of questions for anthropologists of religion, students of the mass media and political scientists. Is it correct to treat Idahosa's church as a truly American import? If so, how would one explain his success in the light of rising cultural nationalism? What can we say of Idahosa's audience? What political and social message is conveyed by the preachers of the Church of God Mission?[2] How useful is the body of anthropological theory concerning charismatic movements for understanding this

contemporary Nigerian phenomenon? What was the reaction of our informants in Benin City to Idahosa and his message?

With respect to the last question one informant whom we saw on a daily basis remarked that Idahosa, the Oba and Ebohon all had power, although as an Isham villager, he preferred his traditional religion to any of them. It is incumbent on us to analyze the source and meaning of that power.

The Charismatic Leader

Many explanations have been offered for the rise of charismatic sects in the developing world. They have been seen as a stage in the development of political consciousness among the oppressed (Worsley 1968), as a means of harnessing new cultural elements to resolve long-standing social grievances and contradictions (Burridge 1968) and as an expression of the recurrent need to experience the liminal (Turner 1967). This last theory was influenced by Max Weber's ideal type of charismatic leadership. Charismatic authority is rooted neither in tradition nor in state power but rather in the personal qualities of the leader, whose messages, miracles and deeds are recognized and embraced by a body of disciples. Benson Idahosa and his movement fit all these characterizations but in other respects they diverge sharply from them. Where the Church of God diverges from these anticipated paths it is most representative of the contemporary Nigerian *zeitgeist*. We argue that its compatibility with the hegemonic structures of that *zeitgeist* accounts for the success of the Church of God's TV broadcasts.

The account of Benson Idahosa's early life in *Fire in his Bones* was written by an American, a professional writer of inspirational biographies aimed at a market of Christian bookstores in the US and Canada (Garlock 1980). It is reminiscent of the hagiographies of many charismatic leaders insofar as it encompasses elements of both the miraculous and the liminal. Benson Idahosa was born in 1937 into a traditional Edo family in colonial Nigeria. A sickly baby given to fainting spells, Benson was despised by his father, who ordered his wife to cast the child on a garbage dump. She complied but a rain shower awakened the infant, whose cries drew his mother back to reclaim him. Benson's childhood

thereafter is described as a series of successfully negotiated trials. After a brief and happy sojourn in his mother's village Benson is taken back by his mother to his father's household only to be sent away to learn farming from his paternal uncle, who works him hard and denies him the schooling and material comforts provided for his cousins. Despite his suffering, Benson emerges as an exemplary farm worker and a more able student than his cousins who attend school regularly. He is popular and much missed when he rejoins his father.

The despised, mistreated infant, marked by God for great things, is an anti-structural archetype. Like Benson Idahosa, such figures are frequently of noble birth (Idahosa is descended from an important line of Edo chiefs), though they reject or are denied their heritage. Benson, however, is not destined to become either a trickster or a St. Francis. Upon leaving his parents and moving to Benin City, he embarks on a highly successful career as a manager for the Bata Shoe Company, a career in which he remains until he is well launched in his career as a minister with a church that is beginning to prosper.

As his biographer describes it, Benson Idahosa's early life appears to give some support to the notion that charismatic movements address long-standing cultural contradictions. Tension between fathers and sons is an enduring theme in the literature on West African patriliny; Bradbury (1973:229-250) has remarked on it with regard to the Edo. Moreover, this social constellation is often characterized by strained relationships between husbands and wives and frequently aggravated by polygyny, a situation in which intense attachments may be formed between mothers and sons to compensate for whatever is lacking in their mutual relationship with the father. Largely because of his business success, Idahosa, according to his biography, eventually won his father's respect. Idahosa was unable to convert his father to Christianity, although his mother, after much debate, finally made a deathbed conversion, much to her son's relief. Osemwegie Ebohon, the "TV witchdoctor," seems to have trodden the same path as Benson Idahosa, albeit in the opposite direction. Ebohon's father was a Christian and not on good terms with his son. When the young Ebohon grew up, he returned to traditional Edo religion and took his mother with

him; she now assists him in many ritual performances. The choice of religion made possible by new cultural alternatives rather than any particular set of beliefs, offers a possible route of escape from traditional family conflict. Such a choice would not have been available in the old culture. Converts to Christianity with such family tensions in their backgrounds are familiar figures in West African literature (e.g., Okonkwo's son in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and the hero of Ferdinand Oyono's *Boy*). This element in his biography makes Idahosa an easy figure for his potential audience to identify with.

Idahosa's career as an evangelist started even before his career as an employee of the Bata Shoe Company. According to Garlock an accident which occurred during an act of minor delinquency while he was playing with a soccer team led him to become a devotee of a pentecostal Igbo pastor who came to his aid. Subsequently, Idahosa started his own storefront church in the Forestry Road section of Benin. He began to preach not only in the city but in the surrounding countryside, demanding that his audience give up pagan practices (*juju*) and accept Christianity. During the period of the Nigerian Civil War, in which his father was captured and perhaps killed by the Biafrans, Idahosa began to perform miraculous healings and had his first major vision. In it he stood in front of a bare tree which gradually burst into leaf as hundreds of wearied travelers unburdened their loads beside him. In the period after the war Idahosa persuaded some of his congregation to support a move to a new site in the Iyaro district of Benin. His supporters gave funds to buy the land, and through the assistance of an American missionary, whose existence was revealed to him in a vision, Idahosa received substantial financial help from the Rev. Gordon Lindsay of the Christ for the Nations Institute, a Pentecostal church actively involved in Third World evangelism. In the latter half of 1971, Idahosa, who had been recently married, left his bride briefly in order to spend some months at Lindsay's college in Dallas. He was deeply grateful for this educational experience, though, as the only black student in the college, he was required to act as a groundsman rather than an office worker in order to pay for his keep.

After he returned to Nigeria, Idahosa's church continued to prosper. Soon he conceived plans for his huge Miracle

Center, modeled after similar temples in the US. When his church work became a full-time obligation, he resigned from Bata Shoes. In 1974 Idahosa's television broadcasts on Mid-West Television began. In 1976, while visiting the US, Idahosa was asked to appear on Jim Bakker's PTL Club, an encounter which led to that organization's subsequent assistance in the production of "Redemption Hour." Since then, Idahosa has traveled widely in the US, Canada and Africa and his church has moved from strength to strength at home. He continues to perform miraculous acts of healing: the deaf begin to hear, the lame begin to walk and the infertile conceive. Idahosa points to the growth of his church and the material success of its members as signs of God's power. When the foundation of the Miracle center was laid, only one member of the congregation possessed a car, a Volkswagon "Beetle." Today the huge parking lot accommodates many cars and Archbishop Idahosa possesses a Mercedes-Benz. According to Garlock, Idahosa's rivals within the church and enemies outside it have met with an unpleasant end after they have threatened him. Idahosa now heads a vast organization and still occasionally meets with opposition. While we were in Nigeria, his self-elevation from bishop to archbishop was received somewhat coldly by a few members of his own hierarchy.

Given that Weber's conception of the charismatic leader was ideal-typical, it is not surprising that Idahosa's career should accord in some ways with the type while diverging from it in others, but the divergences are significant. Idahosa rebels against the traditional Edo religion and accepts Christianity from an Igbo, a member of a group despised by many in Benin. His Christianity is not linked either to the Roman Catholic or Anglican hierarchies, and he quickly became a leader of his own group. By the early seventies he had earned the jealousy of other local evangelists. He thus emerges as an outsider, neither appointed to nor inheriting a role in a traditional religious structure. At this stage there is nothing remarkable in his message. It is the Christian message well preached and although he claims an extraordinary childhood escape from death, Idahosa does not claim a miraculous birth or the status of messiah, nor do his followers claim it for him. Insofar as he concentrates much attention on the evils of traditional Edo religion and

witchcraft, he is reminiscent of earlier African charismatics such as William Weade Harris and Simon Kimbangu (see Lanternari 1965; Andersson 1958; Haliburton 1973). Like a true charismatic he performs miracles (or, as he would say, God performs miracles though him) and these are proof of his power to his followers. His church proselytizes all ethnic groups in a country where ethnic divisions have caused much bitterness. After his first trip to the US, Idahosa's career took some unpredictable, non-charismatic turns. In 1981 he was ordained a bishop by Christian evangelicals in the US. He now presides over a veritable bureaucracy.

No anchorite, he remembers with pride his career at Bata Shoes and regards the material wealth of his church as a sign of divine favor. A degree of routinization has thus occurred within the lifetime of the charismatic leader. In Turnerian terms, one might say that Idahosa emerged out of anti-structure, but it is uncertain that he is part of it now.

Today, Idahosa's message is a simple one which greatly moves his audience: the many ills of Nigeria are due to corruption, greed and lack of faith and the effects of individual sin.

Although the masses are oppressed, or at any rate, suffering, there is no longer a colonial master to blame, nor does Idahosa wish to direct his converts' zeal against any indigenous oppressor class or to encourage any recognition of class solidarity among his members. Indeed, Church of God membership transcends class lines, and the church is particularly concerned to encourage those now in power to relinquish their evil ways. Thus, Worsley's characterization is the least useful of the theories considered for understanding this post-colonial charismatic movement.

The Crisis, the Message and the Audience

Most of the televised sermons of Bishop Idahosa and the Rev. Oritsejafor in the period between December, 1983 and April, 1984, dealt with the serious economic and political crisis in Nigeria. The drop in world oil prices during 1981-82 destabilized the Nigerian economy. The resulting crisis in public morale was made worse by the perception of widespread corruption in high places. The elections which took place in August to October of 1983 were expected to result in

widespread violence. In fact, the degree of violence was less than had been anticipated, but the victory of President Shagari's National Party of Nigeria was believed by many to be fraudulent and his proclamation of an "ethical revolution" was regarded as an act of hypocrisy. The overthrow of the NPN government by General Buhari and the military forces on December 31, 1983 was applauded by the majority of ordinary southern Nigerians, although some members of the elite were saddened by the failure of Nigeria's second democratic experiment. General Buhari's government immediately embarked on a "war against indiscipline," a propaganda campaign directed against idleness, careless driving, disorderly queues, bad hygiene and corruption. The economic situation did not improve and by April 1984, it was quite apparent that the changing of the guards had effected no miracles.

Bishop Idahosa's aide, Jerry Childs, informed us that, beginning in December, 1982, the congregation at Miracle Center began praying for peaceful elections in 1983. Bishop Idahosa personally prayed every day at 5:30 a.m. and at 6 p.m. In December, 1983, he predicted on TV that troubled times lay ahead but said true Christians would be spared and self-servers would be beating their chests. The fact that the coup of December 31st had not been a bloody one was proof that God had answered the prayers of the Bishop and his congregation.

The new military government, former President Shagari in his public speeches, the ordinary people whom we met on a daily basis, many broadcasters, academics and members of the traditional elite all tended to share Idahosa's and Oritsejafor's perception that individual corruption, i.e., sins, had undermined Nigeria. (The foreign anthropologist may have other perceptions). The rise of a powerful bourgeoise, whose wealth is based on the management of government contracts and the supply of imported goods, has much to do with Nigeria's problems, but one could argue that a class analysis would provide a better understanding than any attempt at a moral judgment of individuals. Given the lack of an efficient bureaucracy and the conservatism of the elite, it was evident that disaster would result when the halving of oil revenues and the lack of an equitable taxation system led to an underfunding of programs in health, education and economic development. In effect, the new military leaders

constituted just another faction of the very elite which had supposedly been deposed in the December coup. They were doubtless sincere in promoting their idea that corruption was mainly responsible for the crisis. The sharing of that assumption by most of the population constitutes a social fact, a "hegemonic discourse," to use the phrase of Gramsci, the twentieth century Italian revolutionary.

Through the work of Stuart Hall (1977) and others the notion of hegemony has become quite influential in English media studies. Hegemony in effect mediates such familiar anthropological notions as "collective representation" or "culture" and the Marxist notion of "false consciousness." It assumes neither a classless set of beliefs spontaneously generated by a uniform social body, nor a deliberate attempt by the elite to deceive the masses. Rather, it refers to a tendency within pluralistic societies (e.g., the US or Nigeria) for "truths" generally accepted by most members of all classes to originate among those with access to power and property and hence, to serve their interests. Hegemony assures that critics do not single out specific classes for undue praise or blame but focus on abstract values or on individuals (as heroes or malefactors) as the sources of good and evil. The sermons of Idahosa and Oritsejafor are hegemonic insofar as they promote national unity and eschew "tribalism," condemn corruption, but never specifically attack a certain class or a government in power.

Television Sermons and Magical Medicine

A typical presentation of "Hour of Deliverance" involves the following sequence of events. The opening hymn, "Hour of Deliverance" is sung by the Living Praise Choir. Their attire, which includes colorful gowns and mortarboards, is reminiscent of Southern black fundamentalist services in the US. Next, Pastor Dave, the Rev. Oritsejafor's assistant, who wears a loud, American-style sport jacket and appears to possess a Nigerian version of a mid-Atlantic accent, welcomes viewers to the program. The choir then sings another gospel hymn, "This Little Light of Mine" after which Pastor Dave introduces Oritsejafor who greets and blesses the congregation and encourages viewers to correspond with him. He calls on

the choir, congregation and the viewers to join in the singing of two more hymns, like "Rock of Ages."

After the hymns, Oritsejafor delivers a sermon that lasts fifteen to twenty minutes. The tone is emotional and the sermon is punctuated with frequent cries of "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord." The sermon is recognizably Pentecostal both in emotional tone and much of its ideological content. The preacher is eloquent and his address is impassioned, carefully structured and attentive to biblical scholarship. The sermon is followed by the closing hymn during which station identification and credits appear; they are likely to be interrupted if the program is running overtime.

The packaging of Oritsejafor's program and its professionalism clearly betray American assistance, American training and American influence. However, the content of much of the sermon is very Nigerian.

Most of the services we saw on "Redemption Hour" took place on the grounds of Miracle Center and were filmed by two cameras (courtesy of PTL) operated by the church's own production team. (NTA Benin has only two cameras for all outside broadcasting). The format is more varied than Oritsejefor's. Typically, it involves an opening hymn or two, a very long sermon and a closing hymn. Here, one is seeing a segment of a regular church service rather than a service designed for the television viewing hour. On a couple of occasions we witnessed special events, a Christmas sermon and the visit of the American evangelist Richard Roberts.

A sermon delivered by Oritsejafor on December 11 nicely links a number of the themes we have noted in the teachings of the two TV preachers: the power of God through the agency of his servants to perform magical healing, the omnipresence of sin and corruption and an apparent assault on materialism. Oritsejafor claimed that God was the healer of two kinds of sickness, physical and spiritual. In his view Nigeria was afflicted by spiritual sickness. For instance, he said good contractors were passed over in favor of bad ones who paid bribes. Thus roads and public buildings were not completed; the electrical power supply constantly failed; the phones did not work. If people would only turn to God he would remove this spiritual sickness as surely as he removed physical illness.

On "Redemption Hour" shown shortly after the coup, Idahosa tackled the problem of moral decadence. He quoted, or to be more accurate, reworded Exodus 3:7, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Nigeria and have heard them cry by reason of their taskmaster, for I know their sorrows." Referring with some sarcasm to the pronouncements of former President Shagari, he announced that the first "ethical revolution" had taken place in Benin on December 31 by 7 p.m. The new government was to be welcomed, but it could not succeed if corruption and hunger for Naira (the Nigerian currency) continued. The government would indeed fail if people–whether soldiers, police or ordinary citizens–did not turn to God.

In a sermon broadcast the very day after the coup, but presumably recorded before it, Oritsejafor inveighed against, "that power of sin, that tempter womb of sin, that leprosy of sin, that fanfare of sin, that is destroying this nation." He then went on to equate witchcraft beliefs, Olokun healers and pagans with bank robbery and corruption, thus linking the modern crusade against graft with the time-honored concerns of the missionary and African religious charismatic:

> I command it [sin], by the authority of the name of Jesus. I command this, the spirit and the power of badness, that spirit of money, that power of money that make people not care how they have money. I command the spirit of Baal in the name of Jesus: leave this nation in peace. I pray for that boy, that girl, that man, that woman. I take authority over sickness and disease. I take authority over death. I take authority over the spirit of sin and everything that haunts us in this new year. In the name of Jesus I claim victory. I command Lucifer Baal. I take authority over witchcraft spirits, over the spirit of the water. Over every false spirit of the universe I command you, hear the voice of God. By this you lose your fatal hold in Jesus' name.

No white missionary would any longer dare to speak so disparagingly of traditional religious practice. To do so effectively in the modern world, one must be in a position to establish a claim as a credible rival for witches, *juju* practitioners, etc. There is little doubt from both the content of their sermons and other evidence (e.g., Idahosa's claim that many of his opponents have died untimely deaths) that this is precisely the case.

There is one person in Benin whose position makes him a logical rival of Idahosa's and yet he is the person whom a loyal Edo–and that the Bishop claims to be–should be the least willing to attack. On New Year's Day Idahosa was seen presiding over a prerecorded open-air church service and Church of God Mission conference to which ministers brought Christmas thanksgiving offerings of plantains and the Christian Women's Fellowship International presented hampers of food, bread, rice, live chickens and goats. He used the occasion to launch an attack on the Oba of Benin, Erediauwa II.

The current Oba is still worshiped as a divine king by many of his subjects and as magistrate, religious leader and head of what is still the dominant ethnic group in Bendel State. By virtue of his office, he exercises much political influence. By virtue of his personal ability, Erediauwa II, a Cambridge graduate who has had a distinguished career in the civil service, has extended that influence. In many ways a traditionalist, he has revived the traditional December festivals that coincide with Christmas. Ugie Erhoba is a four-day feast in honor of the Oba's ancestors and Igwe is a four-day celebration of his own divinity. In his sermon Idahosa condemned Igwe as "sacrifices and idolatry" and deplored the reversal of a healthy trend, namely, that the previous Oba, Akenzua II, had allowed Igwe to go uncelebrated for a decade. Idahosa claimed that enough Igwe had been performed in the past and that the Oba had allowed Idahosa to conduct private services in the palace during which he (the Oba) went down on his knees and prayed to Jesus.

If Idahosa dares to criticize local sources of spiritual power, he is not above aiding and abetting the importation of foreign ones. In February, 1984, he helped organize a three-day crusade at Air Force Field, Benin, at which Richard Roberts, the son of Oral Roberts, preached and performed acts of healing. The crusade was advertised for weeks beforehand by posters and on Church of God broadcasts. Media releases later claimed it had attracted 16,000 people. We monitored a segment of the crusade which was televised as part of "Redemption Hour." This segment consisted of a prayer by Richard Roberts for the cure of the sick in the audience and a series of testimonies by those who believed themselves healed.

When TV transmission picked up the crusade, Roberts was uttering prayers for healing: "Everyone who is blind or having trouble with his eyes should be feeling them getting stronger right now.... Everyone with pains in his stomach should feel them getting better." After going through the body organ by organ, Roberts asked those who had been healed to come up and testify. About twenty such were shown. Most testified to minor cures: "trouble" with eyes, ears, chest, legs, got better during prayer. No case of total blindness was cured. One twelve year old girl was brought on stage uttering incomprehensible sounds. It was claimed that she had been deaf and dumb until that night. She was suddenly blessed with hearing and was beginning to learn to talk. One small boy was shown limping slowly across the platform. Roberts claimed he was a cripple taking his first steps that night. Stories of various testifiers seemed a bit too fluent and smooth for people overcome by emotion and not used to speaking in public. One suspects that some were rehearsed. An alternative interpretation is that this impression could reflect the ability of videotape editors to cut out the speeches of the less "telegenic" testifiers. Roberts' responses seemed pat and once one accepted his frame of reference, matter of fact: "Jesus did that; let's have a handclap for Jesus! Let's have a big handclap for God! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" He showed little emotion, considering the context.

We recognized one of the healed. A woman who appeared to be crippled with arthritis claimed in front of the cameras to have been cured. We had seen her the night before the crusade when she had attended a showing of a film by the Nigerian director Hubert Ogunde; she had looked no worse on that occasion.

Of the sermons we heard there is one that most clearly expresses its points (and our own), an address given by the Rev. Ayo Oritsejafor early in March, 1984. It overtly links many of the themes we have discussed: the condemnation of bribery, witchcraft, drunkenness, pre-marital sex, adultery, prostitution and the doctrine of evolution.

...some people say that they come from monkey. I'm not from monkey.... Even my forefathers were better than some scientists today who say they come from monkey. My forefathers knew that they did not come from monkey..... Monkey, I don't look like monkey. [Genesis tells us of Adam and Eve's

nakedness in the Garden of Eden, but] they were not naked because the glory of God covered Adam and Eve. Hallelujah!

...I declare to you as a servant of Almighty God that any man or woman, any boy or girl living in sin today is naked.... What is sin? Sin is rebellion against God. Sin is trying to do your own thing. Sin is trying to go your own way. Sin is trying to please yourself. Sin is trying to do it your own way. Sin is saying, "God says 'Do it this way,' but I want to do it this way." You know, you may be listening to me and then you say, "But what is wrong with a young man and a young girl becoming boyfriend and girlfriend–I mean just holding hands and strolling around, but they just go to bed once in a while? They only go to bed once in a while. What is wrong with that in this modern age?" Yes, it may not be wrong in your sight, but it is wrong in the sight of almighty God. But you say, "But what is really wrong if I as a married woman–my husband can't buy dress for me, and I have to sleep with another man to buy it? But what is really wrong, as far as I have not left my husband, in this modern age?" It may not look wrong to you, but it is wrong in the sight of God.

But you say, "What is really wrong with taking bribe?" There is nothing wrong in just taking bribe." Yet you have paid three houses with the bribe and you tell me nothing is wrong. It is wrong in the sight of God.... You don't have to bribe anybody. Tell the truth! The truth will set you free! If you commit an offense, it is better to face the music than to bribe somebody who is trying to take money by the wayside. It is wrong in the sight of God, because bribery and corruption is destroying this nation, and I declare to you that any man, any woman, any boy, any girl that is living in sin is naked.... You cannot cover up your nakedness with a nice car.... You cannot cover up your nakedness with money.... You cannot cover up your nakedness with education and big grammar. You begin to quote to us big grammar from morning to night. Going to church and praying is no good unless your heart goes to church. Only the glory of God can cover your nakedness.

...The reason why we have lots of accidents on the way. Many people tie *juju* under the steering, and then they run like mad and think that the *juju* will protect them, and they finally die like rats on the road [organ music]. Jesus can come and protect you [organ]. When the glory of God is around you, you are protected by almighty God. Don't go to witches and wizards. Don't listen to them. They tell us that they want to do good to Nigeria. Witch cannot do us any good [organ]. The other day witch was on television [organ] cutting the head of fowl with his mouth and sucking the blood *on television*. My God, my God, oh my God. How have we tolerated evil in this nation.... It is the will of

God for you to be healthy.... If you have Christ, you are loaded. You are dynamite. You are a packet of power.

We have said much about two of the guiding spirits of the Church of God Mission and about the TV programs which are regularly shown in Benin, but what of their audience? We investigated audience reaction to all TV programs in Benin, rather than to any program specifically, by conducting some 350 informal semi-structured interviews in streets, homes, business places and three markets. We also conducted forty longer interviews with a variety of people, including ordinary Bendelites, civil servants, TV personalities and producers and members of the traditional elite. We also had a number of friends and acquaintances with whom we interacted frequently. Our most interesting findings were based on participant observation.

In our semi-structured interviews and on other occasions we asked informants to name their favorite TV programs. We adopted this procedure, rather than naming programs ourselves and asking respondents to evaluate them, because we wished to retain a degree of spontaneity and above all, to be guided by our informants' preferences. 288 specific preferences were named by informants (category I), and 207 responses (category II) were of a generic kind, e.g., "sports," "news," "football" and "religious programs." Five specific programs were named a total of 201 times and the remainder, therefore, accounted for 87 preferences. "Redemption Hour" was named five times (ranking 11 out of about 60 possible programs); "Hour of Deliverance" was one of 18 programs named just once. It should be noted that Idahosa, unlike Oritsejafor, is a native son of Benin. 13 of the 207 category II preferences were for religious programs. These informants were referring to either or both "Hour of Deliverance" and "Redemption Hour." A first or second preference figure of 3.85% may not seem very impressive, but one doubts whether Jimmy Swaggart, PTL Club, or Jerry Falwell would achieve as high a rating in North America, even among some of their followers.

One needs to have a more subtle measure of the impact of such programs as well as an appreciation of certain obvious facts of audience behavior in Benin. There are only two channels in Benin and we noted that homes with televisions

usually had the set switched on all the time someone was home and stations were on the air. Sometimes people watched intently; on other occasions the TV was a kind of "moving wallpaper." There are very few inhabitants of Benin who have not heard of Idahosa and Oritsejafor.

In our survey we noted that a significant minority of viewers objected to the immoral and sometimes violent content of "foreign" films, thriller and situation comedies from the US and Britain. This minority included media gatekeepers, highly traditional Edo and a small group (about 5% of our sample) who strongly proclaimed their Christianity. Many members of these three groups (which partially overlapped) were cultural nationalists who deprecated the threat TV represented to Nigerian cultures and family values. Despite the American packaging of the Church of God Mission's programs, it is not perceived as a foreign, invading force. One assumes that this view is due to the content of the sermons and the clear perception that Idahosa and his church are a local product.

For obvious reasons traditional pagan Edo sometimes have the same distaste for Idahosa that he has for them. Some Roman Catholic and Anglican informants said they watched the programs and appreciated much in them but were disturbed by the claims of miraculous healing. We do not know precisely how many of our interviewees regularly form part of Idahosa's congregation, but half a dozen street interviewees–including two Igbo peddlers who informed us that they were interested in nothing else on TV and one person who told us at length how he had been converted to Christianity by Idahosa and Oritsejafor through the medium of television–identified themselves as part of Idahosa's congregation.

Participant observation revealed a more complex picture. We have mentioned the tendency of our informants to acknowledge several loci of power and to seek multiple consultations in times of illness or misfortune. Many of those who watch the electronic church are in no strict sense converted by it but are persuaded that Idahosa and Oritsejafor participate in this generalized mystical power.

Osemwegie Ebohon showed us two videotapes of a television debate he had had with Idahosa on BTV's program "Point Counterpoint." Idahosa vocally opposed Ebohon's

announcement that he was convening a World Council of Witches in Benin. He was somewhat inconsistent, claiming on the one hand that witches committed *maleficia* and suggesting on the other that there were nine kinds of witches, that many of them were harmless and that those who inflicted physical injury on people were often acting in pursuit of the common good. Surely Idahosa should not condemn witchcraft when he himself was a witch. Idahosa, who claims that his miracles are performed only through the power of God, was utterly outraged by this sardonic suggestion.

To an anthropologist Ebohon's remarks are suggestive. Idahosa's faith healing and his stated belief that God inflicts injury on his opponents seem to many in his audience to be the same thing as witchcraft. In Benin stories abound concerning this or that Catholic, Baptist or Fundamentalist preacher who goes to an Olokun priestess on the sly or carries *juju* charms in an attache case. Whether they are true is not entirely relevant. People enjoy telling such stories.

We have suggested that it is simplistic to regard the electronic church in Benin as simply an American phenomenon. Its basis is in the collective representations of southern Nigerian cultures, an underlying substratum of belief which may and does manifest itself in many epiphenomenal forms. The emotionality of the service and the gospel hymns sung represent the re-export of African expressive culture to Africa.

Although some might argue that the overt individualism and materialism of the Church of God Mission is an aspect of the erosion of Nigerian values by Western corruption, a degree of individualism and materialism has for some time been part of the very sophisticated cultures of southern Nigeria. These trends have been noted among the Igbo by Uchendu and Achebe among others. If adherence to a fundamentalist church constitutes generational rebellion, as it did in Idahosa's own case, this too is not a new phenomenon.

We need explicitly to connect our observations about the nature of hegemonic messages with our earlier observations about the salience of magico-religious thought in the culture. In the minds of Idahosa and his followers the explanations for political and personal misfortune are indeed linked. Members of the Church of God, like most modern, urban Nigerians, value the benefits of modern technology. The products of

science are accommodated to a religious world view by the assertion that they require God's aid to function properly and that God will not smile upon the efforts of individuals in a state of sin. Since one of the major components of Nigeria's current crisis is a notoriously unreliable urban infrastructure, and since it is known that many of those responsible for operating that infrastructure are corrupt, the interpretation of current events offered by the Church of God is highly plausible to people already conditioned to a world view in which the most mundane physical realities have supernatural ramifications. This state of affairs Max Weber (1946) called "enchantment." In a fully enchanted universe there would be only "spiritual" sickness; in a disenchanted one, only physical. The world of modern Nigeria is somewhere between; hence, it is a world in which it is appropriate to remind television viewers that their country is suffering from both physical and spiritual sickness. Semiotically considered, there is not, for many Nigerians, much difference between a corrupt politician and a witch. The Church of God denies the existence of witches but is at pains to establish itself (and God) as the enemy of whatever range of malevolent forces its audience may fear.

The process which effects disenchantment is rationalization. Weber saw the Old Testament prophets and the early Christians as agents of rationalization, insofar as they abandoned any pretense of pantheistic relativism; theirs was the only truth. Baal and the sorcerers had to be dismissed; Yahweh's truth had to be affirmed. This monopolization of magical discourse was the first station on a long line leading to Galileo and Newton; it was the first step toward a comprehension of the uniformity of nature. In many ways the world of the early prophets was still an enchanted garden (Weber 1958:329-343). In the old-fashioned language of Weber's contemporary, Sir James George Frazer, the prophets occupy the ground where magic becomes religion (Frazer 1922:50-60).

There is much in Idahosa's life story and message that reminds one of the early prophets. Indeed, he may have consciously constructed it after their image and example. He resembles Elijah, Jeremiah and a whole series of modern African charismatics of the early twentieth century in calling on his followers to renounce magic. But the power of religious

faith vested in the one God differs little from the power of magic. Rivals for the leadership die mysteriously; adherents prosper; the righteous triumph.

J.D.Y. Peel (1968:294-300) in a famous history of a Yoruba syncretistic church movement, Aladura, remarks that these churches combined some of the features of prophetic movements with others characteristic of a much later phase in rationalization, the religions of industrialization, e.g., the Wesleyans, whose message appealed to the geographically and socially transitional classes of newly urbanized areas. There is no mystery in this fact; social change in Nigeria is occurring at a faster rate than it ever has in Europe in historical memory. If the Church of God Mission must reconcile the competitive claims of magic and magicians with the monopolistic claims of religion, it must also deal with the claims of science, whose doctrines and technology have followed–in some cases even accompanied–those of the missionaries.

Although his church denies biological evolution, Idahosa is founding a hospital in which both scientific medicine and Christian healing will be practiced. By claiming that science will only work if the individual is not corrupt (the electricity will stay on) he assimilates a technology based on impersonal laws and neutral observation to an ideology of personal causation.

Last and most obviously he uses the airwaves. The message given by Idahosa and Oritsejafor is directed at an audience that has seen in its own lifetime unpredictable changes in the modes and relations of production. In practical terms rural change and decline, urbanization and the market economy have, quite simply, changed the way people view their lives. Education and the new media have changed their knowledge of the world. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the inhabitants of modern Nigeria occupy several eras and several worlds simultaneously.

Ritual messages have to transcend, not merely the barrier between modes of thought, but the barriers between different ethnic traditions, which are often mutually hostile. In contemporary Nigeria, hegemonic ideology must mediate these contradictions.

We turn now to a consideration of the effect the television medium has upon Idahosa's message. One very obvious fact

about any television programming is that it has to be rigorously scheduled. In this sense, TV is the ultimate product of rationalization and routinization. It is the product of the clock, an implement which Georg Simmel (1950:409-424) saw as emblematic of the slickness and pace of modern life. African ritual, whether traditional or charismatic, was not tied to strictly structured linear notions of time. On occasions when we attended traditional rituals, people who had been regular participants for years could give us little idea of when they might start or finish, making it extremely difficult to coordinate our attendance with such urban requirements as transport and babysitters. To our mind there seems an inherent contradiction between the emotion, fervor and disorder of the charismatic demands of the clock.

On the other hand, the demands of television have a peculiar hastening effect on ritual. Most of traditional ritual time was *not* spent in effervescence, anti-structure or peak experience. Clifford Geertz (1973:403) has described much of Balinese ritual as getting ready and cleaning up afterwards. The traditional rituals we observed involved a great deal of waiting. The conditions of broadcast ritual do not allow for such a luxurious use of time. The preachers could not pay for it, and the congregation has the option of turning the switch, a response to boredom not available in a temple or village plaza. On TV, the illusion that something is happening must be maintained at all times. That illusion must be created in the face of limitations imposed by the medium itself (a small, two-dimensional picture made up of dots) and in the Third World further limitations peculiar to conditions there, e.g., poor speakers and reception, lack of equipment, etc. Most of Idahosa's and Oritsejafor's programs consist of talking heads against monotonous backgrounds. Even the impact of color is limited by the fact that the vast majority of the audience possess black and white sets. Excitement is created by the content of the spoken message and the rhythmic cadence of the sermon, which combines the intonations of southern Nigerian speech with the rhetorical techniques of the southern Baptist or Pentecostal preacher from the US.

Ben-Amos (1977:8), a pioneer in the study of the performative aspects of folklore, as well as an authority on the folklore of Benin, has noted that distinctive rhythms are important markers of various genres of African folk

performance, serving to announce and identify them and arouse in the audience expectations of predictable form and content. The rhythms and rhetoric of televised sermons in Benin stress urgency, crisis and proposed solution–techniques as appropriate to the selling of God on TV as to the selling of soap. Yet there is little of the more extreme histrionics of some American pentecostal services, such as speaking in tongues and agitated bodily movement. Ben-Amos (16) notes that the performance of folklore in Benin is relatively free from mimesis and suggests that this may be due in part to a value attached by Bini culture to composure and retaining one's dignity at all times.

A number of varied and subtle issues arise when one considers the place of the television screen in ritual space. One has to be careful not to allow Western categories to intrude on one's consideration of life in Benin. Not surprisingly, a large number of Western discussions of ritual on TV assume that it necessarily involves the projection of sacred space (the place of worship) into the secular (the living room). Of course, not all Western audiences accept the sacredness of religious programming. Goethals (1981:13), writing about secular ritual rather than the electronic church, notes that ceremonies which take place in a church, arena, or imposing public building are portrayed on a medium so circumscribed that it cannot easily convey a sense of actuality. TV ceremonies are received amidst the bric-a-brac of everyday home life. A twenty-inch screen near the family photographs, record player and half-finished cup of coffee is not good material for the construction of sacred space. Furthermore, much television viewing in North America is individual, rather than collective. Can an individual viewer, TV pastor, choir and unseen members of an audience constitute a church in the Durkheimian sense? A decision to invite Jerry Falwell into one's home when 28 other channels are broadcasting is very different from a choice to leave Oritsejafor's program on the screen when the only competition is either Idahosa or a not very popular local discussion program.

The assumption that the home is not a primary place of worship does not work for contemporary (and traditional) West Africa. Most Edo homes still retain a shrine at which the family ancestors are worshiped. In many cases such shrines are maintained by those who are nominally Christian. As

Fustel de Coulanges (1979:34-39) observed of ancient Rome and Greece, domestic worship constituted the central core of the ritual practice of antiquity. As Levi-Strauss (1964:214-215) remarked, secular and sacred objects–each with its own corner and use–can be contained in the same room. This may appear alien to Westerners, but it is hardly unheard of elsewhere. The television screen has, perhaps, lost some of its novelty as far as we are concerned, whereas to many West Africans, it is a preeminent magical or quasi-magical symbol of exotic technology. The charisma of Idahosa and Oritsejafor cannot be detached from the charisma of the medium they command. In our experience, the viewing audience for a television program in Benin was often an extended family group whose membership largely coincided with the congregation which worshiped at the family shrine. Fundamentalist Christianity, condemnation of corruption and faith healing may not appeal to the rigid traditionalist, the ambitious businessman, or the committed Roman Catholic, but there is a large, wavering audience of potential converts in addition to those already committed to the cause. Once, their worship was centered around the shrine of the ancestors. Now, there is a new central point in the dwelling. The aim of the TV preacher is to make the machine a new focus (in both the modern and the Roman sense: focus as "sacred hearth") of ritual attention.

Idahosa's competition lies not in the religious realm, but consists of forces which are very well represented in the variegated fare offered at other times on television. The state and federal governments claim more time than any church could for secular rituals and official pronouncements. They preach the virtues of discipline and national unity. Even though some of the political leaders are not exemplars of discipline, nor are they incorruptible, these rivals cannot be explicitly condemned in sermons, which can be critical only of past regimes. Supporters of the Church of God Mission are unanimous in condemning the violence and immorality of Western programming. In a certain sense those programs, mainly thriller and cop shows, are rituals, in which the "good guys" and "bad guys" enact a version of the hegemonic discourse of an alien culture that is sometimes misunderstood, sometimes all too well understood. The church encourages its members to switch off their sets when such programs are

broadcast. By its disapproval, the church not only discredits rival broadcasts but adopts a policy that dovetails nicely with that of the Federal Military Government, which supports cultural nationalism and opposes cultural imperialism and has reduced the foreign content in TV programming.

Superficially, the Church of God Mission's programs resemble TV evangelism in North America, but an appreciation of the relationship between producers, medium and audience enables us to understand the profound cultural differences which can so readily thwart our understanding of them. We have seen that TV preachers are viewed by many (including themselves) not as the importers of an alien commercialized religion but rather as defenders of both universal and African values, as cultural nationalists. The career of Idahosa greatly resembles that of many earlier West African charismatics, but his church has arisen in the post- or neo-colonial world and his members have not been oppressed for their faith. Idahosa's message is hegemonic, because it opposes corruption and stresses the desire for national unity without singling out specific individuals or groups for criticism. It is particularly appropriate that the church explains both individual and societal misfortune in simple, personalized terms, not only because such explanations are politically expedient and coincide with official doctrine, but also because they reflect the prevailing thought patterns of those who still inhabit the "enchanted garden." In this world of miracles the healing acts performed in Idahosa's churches are less strange than they would seem in our own culture. Idahosa's message appeals particularly to those who are becoming skeptical of tradition but are nonetheless worried by the anomie (normlessness) of modern life. The success of the programs demonstrate a harnessing of technology in the service of religion, so the television itself becomes part of the enchanted universe. In Benin City the television and the shrine do not occupy separate worlds. Not only do they share a room, Idahosa's church has shown that they can be made to share a message.

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[2]In recent years, students of mass communication in North America have become particularly interested in the electronic church and its role in the rise of the Moral Majority. A recent issue of the *Journal of Mass Communications* (35/1:89-173)

contains a number of articles which analyze the class and religious affiliations of regular listeners to gospel programs and the political content of some of the messages conveyed on them.

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REVIEWS

Songs for the Bride: Wedding Rites of Rural India. William G. Archer. Edited by Barbara Stoler Miller and Mildred Archer. Studies in Oriental Culture, Number 20. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. xl + 181. Foreword by Barbara Stoler Miller, bibliography of writings of William G. Archer, 13 photographs of wall paintings. $27.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-231-05918-3.

Reviewer: William Harman, DePauw University

Marriage is the most auspicious of the several life-cycle rites *(saṃskāras)* of the Hindu tradition. Here, William Archer offers us an intimate, engaging account of the celebration of a marriage from the point of view of women in the Kayasth caste of the Bihar district of northern India. The heart of the book is a series of lyrical translations from Bhojpuri, a dialect of Hindi, of the songs sung exclusively by women during the intricately orchestrated ritual sequences that precede, accompany and occur as denouements to the weddings of this caste. Archer introduces and intersperses the translations of the songs with brief descriptions of the ritual occasions, beginning with ceremonies involving the selection of a spouse and the ensuing betrothal. Other rituals include the acts of negotiating a dowry; the erection of a wedding pavilion; various preparations, lustrations and dressing ceremonies in the homes of both the bride and groom; the ceremony proper; and the rituals involved in integrating the new bride into her husband's home and extended family. The songs themselves are ceremony-specific, sung only during the rituals they accompany. In several cases, the singing of the songs constitutes the essential portion of the ritual. Therefore, Archer takes care to describe the participants involved and to give the reader an appreciation of what is happening during the actual singing.

Archer's work has largely been associated with his prolific writings about Indian sculpture and painting, but in this posthumous piece we discover a new range to his talents.

Linguist, ethnologist, and poet, he offers translations of a little-known folk poetic genre, translations that are direct, sonorous, earthy and sometimes bawdy. His annotations reveal sensitive insights into the emotional repartee that occurs among participants during this festive, but also very dangerous period. The wedding is a time when two extended family systems, strangers to each other, assume formal, long-term mutual obligations and responsibilities. There is caution, anticipation, fear, humor, sadness, excitement, belligerence, hope and resignation. The wedding segments are, in part, ritual occasions for the expressions of these sentiments and Archer's trained sense of the interpersonal cues represented in the simultaneous combination of acts and words gives the reader a feeling for the deep texture and symbolism of events. The songs themselves are passed down, often in writing, from mothers to daughters to grand-daughters. They describe, address or are placed in the mouths of a wide variety of kinfolk: sisters, husband's brothers' wives, father's sisters, mothers and fathers, mothers- and fathers-in-law and more. Readers will likely come away with a strong sense of the corporate, cooperative endeavor the wedding represents and requires. At the same time, we learn via the lyrics that the actors, especially the women, are undergoing poignant and very personal experiences in this drama.

Archer's interpretations of the rituals and lyrics focus on the symbolism of fertility and sexuality. Scholars of ritual are not likely to be impressed with his very brief theoretical discussion, unless they note that it was written in 1944. Much has happened since then in ritual studies, much which this work anticipates. The most striking from my perspective is the emphasis he has placed on those elements of the wedding which are the exclusive domain of women. Descriptions of Hindu domestic rituals in the *Gṛhya Sūtras* stipulate that in addition to specific public rites for all marriages there are always certain women's rituals that vary from one group to another. The classic, Sanskrit, male-written documents give these women's rites no more than passing notice. But in the past 15 years, and largely because female scholars have gained access to this separate world of ritual hidden from the view of male observers, we have come to realize in a systematic way how crucial and pervasive these women's rituals are. Archer somehow knew this, in part, perhaps,

because of his study of the wall paintings of this general region. Those paintings, about which he has written elsewhere, reveal a preoccupation with wedding themes, and are usually done in a ritual context and almost always are executed by women.

Archer was also ahead of his time in his appreciation for the subconscious, or, as he put it, the "semiconscious" power of symbolic action. He compares the entire marriage ritual to a surrealist poem, ballet or novel. He believed these wedding rituals evoke unspoken–in some cases unspeakable–emotional responses by virtue of the skillfully assembled juxtaposition of objects, words and actions. Readers interested in domestic ritual, women's studies, folklore or modern Hinduism will find this work a valuable resource. Miller's foreword places Archer's material in the context of current scholarship, as do the supplemental notes of both editors throughout: they have added bibliographic references to relevant material on Hindu marriage and ritual as recent as 1984. Poetry and ethnology too infrequently accompany each other in scholarship, but here we find a fortuitous exception.

Music and Trance. Gilbert Rouget. Translated by Brunhilde Biebuyck. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. xix + 395. Discography, Filmography, Indexes. (Hardcover). ISBN: 0-226-73006-9

Reviewer: Nina DeShane, York University

Rouget has made an important contribution to the field of ritual studies with this scholarly examination of the cross-cultural occurrence of music and trance in a diversity of religious settings. He is careful to define his terms and in general builds his theoretical arguments with conservative caution, meticulously illustrating each point with a variety of examples chosen from an enormously diverse range of cultures.

Music and Trance begins with a detailed consideration of the salient features of the French words, *trance* and *extase* (11). Rouget points out that although these words are frequently used interchangeably in French ethnological

studies they are in fact mutually exclusive terms which should not be confused. He lists the characteristics associated with each as follows: *extase* is indicated when the participant exhibits immobility and silence in an atmosphere free from crisis. *Extase* may be induced through sensory deprivation, and/or solitude and it is characterized by recollections and hallucinations. In contrast, individuals in the state of *trance* may exhibit any of the following performance traits; movements, frequently danced movement, in an atmosphere of sensory overstimulation in the form of musical accompaniment and noise. Participants often experience amnesia. *Trance* does not include hallucinations. Although the etymological distinctions drawn between these terms are of more significance in French than English, the careful delineations made by Rouget are of importance to all scholars interested in various forms of ritual processes. The North American solution to the study of trance and spirit possession has been generally vague, tending to group all such occurrences under the single heading of "altered states of consciousness" (Erica Bouguinon: 1973). Rouget rejects this generic category in favor of a more precise concept which allows for the identification of a variety of trance states and their related levels of consciousness.

Rouget hypothesizes that possession is a religious experience which fosters the visit of the spirits or deities among people. This is one of the few generalizations with which he appears to be comfortable (31). Further classification follows from the participant's level of ritual expertise: shaman, initiate or adept. The culturally-specific reason for each ritual performance illustrates the author's theories regarding the complex nature of trance states (e.g., divine inspiration, communion with ancestral spirits, initiation into a ritual group). The author touches briefly on the various forms of trance but the major focus of the book is on possession cults.

There are many musical forms which accompany trance performance and with the exception of shamanic possession, the music is provided by musical experts. Rouget contrasts this situation with the dance performed by the initiates themselves. "Dance should thus be seen as doubly more important than music; first because it is the possessee's own

business, and because music, or at least a large part of the music, is played for the purposes of dance" (114).

If, in possession, dance oscillates between two poles, the figurative and non-figurative, the one being identificatory behavior, the other dance as trance behavior, this is because it provides the adept with the means of assuming his new personality and living intensely at the motor level (117).

After providing a broad overview of musical examples relating to trance performance, the author points out that there are no universals which can be identified as governing factors in the initiation of trance. Rather, there are just as many forms of music connected with trance rituals as there are religious beliefs that manifest these performances.

Rouget concludes with a series of governing principles which he suggests link the occurrence of music and trance in diverse ritual settings:

Emotional trance: "it is music alone that produces the trance." In these cases it is dependent upon the individual's listening to sung poetry in order to enter a trance state springing from an emotional response to the lyric line. (Arabs and some New Guinea tribes) (316-317).

Communal trance: "occurs in two forms, induced and conducted. Both forms are closely connected with dance" (318-319). Trance here becomes a uniform part of a service to the group. Music induces the trance and continues to conduct it in ritual dancing. (Sufis, Shakers) (320-321).

Shamanic trance: "requires that the shaman acts as his own 'musicant' to provide the appropriate ambience for the onset of trance. The shaman's trance is not necessarily dependent upon music alone but music and dance may constitute a technical device aimed at attaining trance." (318-320)

Trance possession: has the most ambiguous and contradictory relationship with music. Here music frequently triggers trance and simultaneously sustains the ritual event. (Voodun, Shango). The music, because of its symbolic musical code and movement system, is identified with the sacred, allowing the initiate and observers to recognize the spiritual entity present.

Rouget carefully documents each of his ideas with a series of religious and musical examples. He is cautious in the development of any single theory preferring instead to deal

with specific differences. This is an important work for scholars of ritual studies, anthropology, folklore, religion, ethnomusicology and dance ethnology. Rouget successfully identifies various trance behaviors that have too long been grouped together in large categories. The ideas and concepts presented here are important issues for all involved in any aspect of ritual studies.

A Musical View of the Universe: Kalapalo Myth and Ritual Performances. Ellen B. Basso. Conduct and Communication Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. xvi + 311. 18 photographs with commentary, appendixes, index, index of myths. $35 (hardcover) ISBN: 0-8122-7931-X.

Reviewer: Jonathan D. Hill, Southern Illinois University

This book on myth and ritual among the Kalapalo, a Carib-speaking society of the Upper Xingu region in Brazil, contributes to the growing movement toward an ethnographic poetics, an anthropological approach in which oral narratives are treated as literary forms. By paying close attention to the contextual and formal details of narrative discourse, the practitioners of an ethnographic poetics aim to go beyond simple translations of the contents of myth to more full-bodied reproductions of narrative discourse in its full social complexity. Ethnographic poetics is one of several approaches in contemporary interpretive anthropology which takes a self-critical, reflexive awareness of itself as a method for constructing texts. The activities of transcribing oral narratives into written texts, translating interpersonal experience from a different cultural setting and contextualizing narrative and ritual performances are not merely exercises in empirical description but deeply interpretive acts of representation.

Basso's treatment of Kalapalo narrative and ritual performances succeeds in creating an impressively rich representation of her subject. The first two chapters provide an overview of theory and methodology for studying symbolic performance as the social construction of meaning, as well as a general introduction to Kalapalo storytelling and discourse structures.

Chapter three contains a transcription and analysis of a Kalapalo narrative about their historical experiences of the Europeans, or Christians. Basso's commentary on the merging of mythical and historical consciousness (56-62) shows how the Kalapalo construct their history out of such elements as ideas about actors and their moods, motivations and goals relative to one another. The methods of ethnographic poetics are especially well-suited to the study of indigenous forms of historical consciousness embodied in narratives.

Chapter four is pivotal in the organization and significance of the book, since it explores the hierarchy of sound symbols in Kalapalo narratives as keys for understanding the indigenous theory of degrees of animacy. At the bottom of the scale are inanimate body parts and things, which make only "noises" (-*tifi*-). Next to the bottom are animate beings and bodily organs capable of independent motion and feeling, which both make "calls" (-*tsu*-). Nearing the top of the scale are human beings, who are capable of lying, fantasizing and socializing through "speech" (-*ki*-). Finally, at the top of the hierarchy are powerful beings who are hyperanimate, inventive, creative and dangerous because they act primarily through "music" (-*an*-). In the Kalapalo world view, music subsumes and transcends the language of mortal human beings because, "music is amenable to far more complex and highly varied, even idiosyncratic, interpretation than is language" (70).

Having set up her study in this manner, the author goes on to explore narrative and ritual performances clustered around three broad topics which together form the core of Kalapalo emotional and intellectual life: the governance of grief (chapter five), fantasies of erotic aggression (chapter six) and ritual music (chapter seven). These three chapters form the main substance of the book, and each contains multiple transcriptions (-lations) of narratives, as well as detailed commentaries. In very general terms, we learn that Kalapalo myths explore the dark side of social relations, such as murderous impulses and "fearfully extreme physiological processes (eating, fasting, sexuality) that are regarded in their restrained expression as the foundations of life" (208). Restrained expressions of human physiological processes are the building blocks of an elaborate set of ritual practices which

in essence convert such potentially disruptive emotions as grief, sexual longing, jealousy and anger into socially integrative patterns of behavior (e.g., the strict rules and speech varieties governing affinal relations).

A major theme that stands out in Basso's analyses of Kalapalo myth and ritual is the intimate connection between physical appearance of the body and inner character. The Kalapalo, like many other indigenous peoples of South America, construct a system of moral and aesthetic values directly from their understandings of human bodily processes and emotions. Rather than imposing a set of abstractly conceived values onto the human body, seen as a pre-symbolic entity, the body is itself called into being through representations, such as the hierarchy of sound symbolism in narrative and ritual performances, which distinguish between natural, cultural and supernatural beings.

The final chapter explores Kalapalo ritual music as the enactment of an emergent community experience which transcends problems of the individual and the narrow social ties of everyday life, "allowing intensified production to take advantage of surplus resources available in dry seasons" (257). Kalapalo ritual music does not merely reenact mythical themes or episodes, but places performers and audience into a special relationship with the space-times of myth and the hyperanimacy of powerful beings.

Basso's book on Kalapalo myth and ritual performances is a powerful demonstration of the need to treat the form, content and context of religion as inseparable dimensions of a single process of the social creation of meaning. The book deserves a close reading by anyone interested in ritual studies, literary criticism or interpretive anthropology.

Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays. Carol Thomas Neely. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985. xi + 261. $24 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-300-03341-9.

Reviewer: Marianne Novy, University of Pittsburgh

Marriage is often a concern in Shakespeare's plays, but it has taken a feminist literary critic to write a book about it. Carol Thomas Neely examines the counterpoint of marriages and what she calls broken nuptials, "parodic or irregular wedding ceremonies, premature or postponed consummations, estrangements, mock deaths, and real deaths" (1). Taking Michelle Rosaldo's view of the importance of studying "the meaning [women's] activities acquire throughout concrete social interaction," she focuses on marriage because "it is the social context that centrally defines the female characters in Shakespeare's plays" (2).

The book discusses five plays in most detail, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Winter's Tale* and includes interesting observations on many others, especially the comedies and romances. A main concern is how the plays "release and exorcise male and female anxieties about marriage" (58). In the romantic comedies, broken nuptials "break down resistance, transform misogyny, qualify romantic idealization, and acknowledge sexuality." Even when initiated by men, they "give women the power to resist, control, or alter the movement of courtship (57). But the completion of the nuptials at the end of each comedy reestablishes male control. Neely demonstrates the assymmetry of sexual relations in *Much Ado*: "the bawdy persistently views sex as a male assault on women" (41) and Beatrice's wit, unlike Benedick's, is self-deprecating.

In the less protected world of the problem comedies, "sexuality becomes more central and more debased and...marriage becomes legal and socially more difficult" (63). Discussing Helen, the controversial heroine of *All's Well*, Neely accounts for critics' polarized response by noting her "blend of idealized virtue and urgent desire" (67). While in *All's Well*, marriage is realistically presented as "an open-ended bargain...with the possibility for reform and future

gains," (102) in *Measure for Measure* it is "a social punishment for sexual sins."

Othello presents a more extreme version of "the idealization and degradation of sexuality, the disintegration of male authority and the loss of female power, the isolation of men and women and the association of sexual consummation with death" (105). Neely observes that Othello lacks the realistic acceptance of sex that Desdemona and the other female characters show; he is vulnerable to Iago's image of sexuality as "a violent, bestial overpowering of the woman by the man which degrades both" (120-121). She demonstrates Desdemona's energy, assertiveness and power and the combination of "politeness, generosity, openness, and firmness" (123) with which she addresses all the other characters.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, institutional marriage loses "its comic purpose as a ritual for reconciliation and rejuvenation and...its tragic status as a catalyst for self-knowledge and self-destruction" (143). However, Antony surpasses all the other tragic heroes in the extent to which he accepts sexuality and the central couple consummate a symbolic marriage, which is "a liberation of sexuality from family, society, and history" (163). Nevertheless, "gender distinctions...are not dissolved but are explored, magnified, and ratified" (165).

In the late romances, Shakespeare diffuses marital, familial and political conflicts into two generations. Death of a mother, real or apparent, is a frequent theme, and father-daughter bonds are more emphasized than marriage. *Pericles* begins with the image of father-daughter incest, presented as an emblem of tyranny. Such power is tempered in the other fathers; they must "acknowledge the sexuality, maturity, and independence of daughters and wives" (190).

Neely's study is distinguished from most earlier books of feminist Shakespeare criticism not only by its focus on marriage but also by its greater awareness of complexity. This sensitivity is shown, as well, in the introduction's carefully nuanced presentation of the multiple pressures on women and marriage in historical Renaissance England. The introduction also discusses the contrast between focusing on powerful women characters and focusing on the patriarchal constraints of political, economic and familial structures, and identifies a third mode of criticism that examines the

interaction between powerful women and patriarchal structures. (These contrasting modes of feminist literary criticism have analogues in feminist scholarship in history, anthropology and other fields).

It is this third mode that Neely practices. She shows the imbalance of power between the sexes in Shakespeare, but also shows the complexity of his female characters and of their strategies. She notes his repeated dramatization of women's friendship, in which "women's sympathy for and identification with each other cross boundaries of age, class, role and value...But at the same time, female friendships consistently support and further women's bonds with men" (75). She demonstrates how often the language of Shakespeare's male characters suggests difficulty in accepting sex and how the female characters' more realistic speech educates them in the romantic comedies, but not in *Othello*; however, she notes the key passages in late plays where men's attitudes are more accepting.

In asking feminist questions, and in discussing the rituals of contracting and breaking nuptial bonds, Neely is able to see Shakespeare's plays with a new vision that illuminates many of their smallest details, as well as larger patterns. Her thoroughness, her literary tact, her lucid writing, and her imaginative sympathy all contribute to make her readings convincing. In Neely's book, the dramatist who has contributed most influentially to our culture's image of marriage and gender relations receives a valuable re-interpretation.

I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing It, You Know: A Study of the Performed African-American Sermon. Gerald L. Davis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. xvii + 185. $24.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-8122-7987-5.

Reviewer: Robert C. Williams, Muhlenberg College

Many books which deal with sermons and sermonizing are unduly repetitious and boring, but happily Mr. Davis' study of the African-American sermon is impressive and absorbing. An informed documentation of the sermon as a form of oral

creativity, Davis' book generates strategic questions worth pondering.

Is the business of preaching primarily a literary undertaking? Is the sermon, if not belonging totally to, nor absolutely dependent upon, the art of writing simply a product of aural/oral creativity? As an art form, is the sermon to be construed more as an object of religion or of aesthetics? In order to convey a message which people can easily claim and/or absorb, do preaching and sermonizing suggest that vocal communication is primary? Do they suggest that the sermon is primarily and distinctly an act of ritual performance?

Interestingly, Davis' scholarly examination of preaching is really a study of the African-American sermon as a performed craft. Moreover, his study is a sustained analysis of preaching which adds up to being an assessment of the sermon as a form of ritual genre in spontaneous sound, art and verbal narrative system. Being an instance of a ritual performance with religious intent, the African-American sermon, as investigated by Davis, is rather nicely characterized as a display of narrative creativity and verbal modality. Accordingly, the African-American sermon is the paradigmatic guide for the dramatic performance of many jokes, tales, political speeches, raps and toasts. More specifically, and in Davis' view, the African-American sermon model–as typified in the celebrated preaching of Bishop E.E. Cleveland, the Rev. Carl J. Anderson and His Grace, King Louis H. Narciss–consists of a "verbal mold" and a "narrative system." These two items are recognized and organized "serially in performance" and, interestingly, are related to an overall "religious intent" wedded to the antiphonal resonance of black preaching (46, 105). The units of the black sermon usually are given "coherence through the use of thematic and formulaic phrases" which are punctuated by means of a "sermonic counterpointing instrument" (34). This "instrument," observes Davis, is infused with dramatic spiritual expressions. Thus, the religious intent of the narrative system and the sound of the counterpointing instrument are dramatically united by means of "the performed sermon as an event" (34).

The sermon as dramatic ritual event is precisely the folkloric and sociolinguistic reality studied by Davis. In sum,

an implication of Davis' study is that the successful African-American preacher capably blends the sophistication and savvy of the actor, musician and folk storyteller. Thus, the sermonizer unwittingly participates in a process of give-and-take, an emotional transaction, between preacher and people. Four units comprise the structure of Davis' intriguing investigation of the sermon. These chapters or units are: (1) sermons as expressive systems, (2) performance in the sermon, (3) structure of the sermon and (4) testing the performed sermon model.

In constructing this book, Davis made an important methodological choice. He decided to examine the sermon phenomenon from at least two vantage points. First, some of his analysis was done from the perspective of the congregation, from the point of view of those who regularly "test" the sermon performance. Second, he has studied African-American sermons by using the disciplines of folklore and linguistics. Davis, thus, has bravely confronted the trend toward viewing the sermon as being primarily governed by the grammar and syntax of the written word. In writing this book, he looked at the sermon in the active voice, "considered it intellectually" (xv), and thereby affirmed the centrality of expressive systems and vocal utterance in the making of sermons. Part of his affirmation is that the African-American sermon is an instance of "God's codebook for secular living and sacred example" (xiv).

The major limitation in Davis' book is the tendency to use expressive jargon and the complex ideas of a community of specialized scholars. This tendency is evidenced in his 10-page discussion of the "test" for a successful or exemplary sermon. Within that discussion comments on the referential function of the sermon are sometimes excessively technical and dense. At certain points, both the specialist and the intelligent amateur reader will be frustrated with Davis' handling of some of his material. In more than one instance, Davis presents an external and mechanical account of the inner logic and workings of sermons.

When sermonizing is regarded as a central feature of worship, Christianity stands or falls on the effectiveness of preaching (as was claimed by the preacher/theologian P.T. Forsyth). Awareness of the structure and style of the sermon, as performed in the context of black worship, might offer us a

more realistic picture of the so-called sacred and secular world. I wish I knew of books on sermons written by persons in the fields of homiletics, folklore and speech communication which treat preaching with the insight, skill and relevance displayed by Davis. Rather than suggest a system of steps to take in the analysis of the structure and sense of sermons, Davis reveals that he is aware of the power of sermons as performed ritual events.

Research in Ritual Studies: A Programmatic Essay and Bibliography. Ronald L. Grimes. ATLA Bibliographic Series, No. 14. Metuchen, N.J.: The American Theological Library Association and Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985. ix + 165. Author index. $15 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-8108-1762-4.

Reviewer: Paul Bernabeo, Rhinebeck, NY

Religious Studies professor, Ronald L. Grimes, has done the scholarly community a good service in preparing his bibliography in ritual studies. Because the field of ritual studies remains only loosely bounded by more established disciplines of study and its ground is only partially cultivated, there are rocks and muddy runoffs in this bibliography as there are in the field. One of the virtues of Grimes' effort is the exposure of the present limits of ritual studies as a field of inquiry in the process of clarifying its goals and interests.

Grimes' approximately 1,600-item list of English-language essays and books published largely between 1960 and 1983 is preceded by a programmatic essay reprinted from *Religious Studies Review*, vol. 10, no. 2 (April, 1984). This essay is the key to the compilation and organization of the bibliography, which falls into four large sections: ritual components, ritual types, ritual descriptions and general works. These sections have smaller parts in which users will begin to recognize their own interests. For example, "ritual components" includes action; space; time; objects; symbol and metaphor; self; divine beings; language; and quality, quantity and theme. "Ritual types" includes rites of passage; marriage rites; funerary rites; festivals; pilgrimage; purification; civil ceremony; rituals of exchange; sacrifices; worship; magic;

healing rites; interaction rites; meditation rites; rites of inversion; and ritual drama. The third section lists works that describe the activities of particular religions and cultures; the fourth includes works from ten areas of study that bear on ritual studies, including: anthropology, education, literary criticism, psychology, sociology and various disciplines of religious studies.

The author admits that he has tried not "so much to reflect as to shape the field by singling out some works and skipping over others" (3). His goal, which he calls "an urgent research priority for ritual studies," is "the development of a ritual criticism" (4). Wary of the influence of literary criticism, Grimes resists the temptation to pass judgment on the flurry of generic terms that pollinate his field: worship, rite, ceremony, liturgy, festival, magic. A branch of the ritual criticism Grimes aims to nurture must address the histories of these terms; moreover, it must seek to understand the semantic values they bear inside and outside the ritual communities that spawned them. Students new to this field are likely to gasp for fresh air in Grimes' programmed environment, but serious researchers for whom this bibliography is intended, whether students or teachers, will find plenty to enrich their thinking and research.

A few oversights (admittedly easy for any reviewer to spot) should be mentioned. It seems unfortunate to me that a place is not found in this bibliography for recent translations of classic works in the field. An example is *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 2 vols., edited and translated by Manomohan Ghosh, 2nd. rev. ed. (Calcutta:1967). This approximately 2,000 year old Sanskrit treatise on religious performance is the Indian counterpart to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Works in Chinese studies are poorly represented. Emily Ahern's *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge:1981) could be added as could two works that probably were too new to greet Grimes' diligent eye in time: Frits Staal's *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* (Berkeley, 1983) and Henry John Drewal and Margaret T. Drewal's *Gelede: A Study of Art and Female Power among the Yoruba* (Bloomington, 1983). I wonder, too, despite a separate category for symbol and metaphor, how Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto, 1977) could be overlooked or excluded.

But these are minor drawbacks in the swell of information provided. This works belongs in every research library serving the interests of the liberal arts and by virtue of its very existence, is a point of departure for research in a growing field of study.

Between Theatre & Anthropology. Richard Schechner. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. xiv + 342, illustrations, bibliography. $35.00 (hardcover). ISBN 0-8122-7929-8.

Reviewer: Frank Manning, Univ. of Western Ontario

When Claude Levi-Strauss met Roman Jakobson in New York during World War II, the *entente* led them on parallel, though at times convergent, paths: structural anthropology for Levi-Strauss, structural linguistics for Jakobson. Three decades later another meeting took place, also in New York, between Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. Again the exchange opened parallel paths, as well as active collaboration. Turner espoused "performance ethnography," the playscripting and acting-out of ethnographic monographs as a means both of better appreciating the native experience and of developing a critique of how that experience is communicated in conventional anthropological writing. Schechner pursued "theatre anthropology," an approach aimed at introducing cross-cultural materials into theatre as well as at understanding and experimenting with, the social basis of performance situations. Their common interests brought Turner and Schechner together in numerous conferences and workshops, which in turn established them as the nucleus of a seminal group of performance scholars.

Between Theatre and Anthropology is Schechner's account of life on the "liminoid" track–a fast one at that–between disciplines that have come to achieve a cozy mutual admiration. Coverage is highly personal, centering on the author's work as a theatre director, his forays into non-Western cultures and the activities of his close collaborators. The seven chapters were originally written and published as separate essays, but have been revised for the present volume. Nonetheless, in style and scope the book is recognizably an

anthology, not a unified study–a sampling, provocatively put together, of Schechner's views about what anthropology and theatre have to say to each other.

Schechner's insistence on cultural variety in theatre stems from his view that the modern world is "intercultural." It is a "world of colliding cultures no longer dominated by Europeans and Americans, and no longer capable of being dominated by anyone" (149). Schechner implements this understanding by having his own company perform a Japanese ritual in an experimental theatre for an American audience, or by bringing an international conference of performance scholars to a black Pentecostal church in Brooklyn. Obviously, he rejects the notion that a performance must be traditional in order to be authentic. A Haitian voodoo service performed by trained actors for a tourist audience has as much claim to authenticity as one performed by conventional ritual specialists for a congregation of devotees. This view, while discomforting to the romantics and purists among us, is ironically consistent with what anthropologists have usually said about cultural relativity.

Schechner highlights the subjunctive qualities of theatre, an emphasis that was undoubtedly nurtured through his work with Turner. For example, he describes "performance consciousness" as a "celebration of contingency" that is "full of alternatives and potentiality" (6). The fullest statement of this position is made in his thesis that the essence of dramatic action is the "restoration of behavior" that is, the creative reconstruction of behavior that has been removed from its social and psychological contexts outside the performance setting. "Put in personal terms," he writes, "restored behavior is 'me behaving as if I am someone else' or 'as if I am beside myself,' or 'not myself,' as when in trance" (37).

Schechner's major interest lies in restorations of behavior that are not bound by fixed rules and roles, as in stereotyped conceptions of classical theatre, but instead are negotiable, open-ended and continually subject to revision and improvisation. He deals at length with theme parks like Plimouth Plantation and Fortress Louisbourg, where actor-employees are given "biographs" of historical figures whom they "play" in a simulation of daily life that is performed for an audience of tourists who not only watch the proceedings, but also are encouraged to participate in them and thus to

"interact" with the principal *dramatis personae*. Encompassing and refiguring a bewildering diversity of conventional dramatic frames, this type of contrived ethnographic setting is regarded by Schechner as crucially important in the development of a performance theory that is informed by contemporary society and popular culture.

A rather different example of the suspension and confusion of customary dramatic frames is seen in Belle de Jour, a sado-masochistic theatre in New York where members of the "audience," male and female, are invited to come on stage and either spank others or be spanked, with the victim's buttocks fully exposed. One regular patron, a mechanic in "real life," is particularly fond of having Belle, the middle-aged buxom impressario who runs the show, urinate into his mouth and drive a three-inch nail through his penis. For Schechner, this sort of theatre is, *inter alia*, a rough-cut version of the evening news on TV, where violence is treated as entertainment and given sexual appeal through newscasters chosen for their implicit, but thinly-veiled, sexuality. He contends that the significance of the violence-entertainment-sex formula is more apparent in the widespread media coverage that is given to a "good sexy murder trial" (321)–a contention, one suspects, that is readily corroborated by the Buxbaum case.

Schechner envisions a future where "metaphoric" (artistic) knowledge will enjoy parity with "linear" (scientific) knowledge (149-150). Unfortunately, there is a cultural lag between the ideal and the book itself, which is burdened with all types of linear communication–lists, classification schemes, charts, graphs, structural maps, some embellished with mathematical subscripts and other geometric figures. Schechner seems driven to identify, with absolute precision, the significance of his performance experience in an attempt to abstract theory from it. The exhibited result is an almost obsessive reflexivity, which is at odds with much of the book's general argument.

Such problems notwithstanding, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* is undoubtedly a major work in the field of performance studies. It promises both to keep Schechner's name at the forefront of that field, and to reward the reader with ideas that, like modern theatre, will entertain, disturb, engage.

The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan. William R. LaFleur. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983. xvi + 204. $27.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-520-04600-5.

Reviewer: Gary L. Ebersole, Ohio State University

This is an important book, which champions the need for grounding the study of medieval Japanese works of literature in their cultural episteme. In terms of ritual studies it is suggestive rather than an immediate contribution. LaFleur's work is divided into eight chapters covering: (1) the rise, and much less so, the fall, of a Buddhist episteme in Japan; (2) the *Nihon ryōi-ki* and the *rokudō* cosmology; (3) inns and hermitages as symbols of impermanence (*mujō)*; (4) Tendai thought and praxis in the aesthetics of Fujiwara Noh Shunzei; (5) the informing influence of the *Vimalakirti Sūtra* on the *Hojō-ki;* (6) the Buddhist cosmology and dialectic in Zeami's Noh plays; (7) *kyogen* as social satire and ritual; and (8) a passage from Bashō's *Oku no hosomichi* and his use of the past.

The stunning breadth of this book is at once its strength and to a lesser extent its weakness. Each of the chapters contributes to the whole, though some are necessarily more successful than others. LaFleur is at his best when dealing with texts, often offering brilliant readings. The chapter on the *Nihon ryōi-iki*, for example, is simply the best presentation available of the intention behind the text's composition and function. LaFleur convincingly argues that the *Nihon ryōi-iki* presented a then new Buddhist cognitive map of reality to the Japanese, including the law of karma and transmigration through the "six courses," (*rokudō*). The argument in Chapter 6 that the structure of *rokudō* "is the underlying framework of a day's repertory of Noh [plays];" "a day at the theater adumbrates microcosmically the basic world order of Buddhism" (122) is less convincing. To make this argument stick, LaFleur would have to do more than catalogue the progression of the Noh play types in a typical day's fare and relate this to the categories of beings in the *rokudō*; what would be required is a careful and full audience-oriented critical study of the experience of the Noh plays. Even then, however, it is doubtful that many people ever sat

through an entire day's sequence of plays. LaFleur finds meaning and structure of various sorts in the texts, in the sequence of the plays' performance and so on, but in Zeami's day (in fact until the modern day) Noh was not a textual art. For such structures to have had meaning for Zeami's audiences, they would have had to have been absorbed either consciously or unconsciously in the audience members' minds during the performance.

In LaFleur's analysis of specifically ritual dimensions one often wishes for more depth and detail as, for example, when he suggests that esoteric Buddhist ritual, including the *nembutsu odori*, was ludic. The pursuit of this insight could have offered a useful contribution to ritual studies. While he expands on ludization in the *kyōgen* farces, he does not deal with this element in Bashō as one might have expected. Similarly, while LaFleur writes of the significance of "body-mind" in esoteric Japanese Buddhism and its associated rituals as a way of learning coequal with the written word, he does not really pursue this. He does not study the practice of *mudra* (hand gestures) nor explore dance and movement in the Noh plays. In the chapter on Fujiwara no Shunzei's use of Tendai Buddhism, he seeks to bring Tendai philosophy and the medieval Japanese aesthetic into clearer view "by demonstrating the interpretive continuity" throughout the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Mo-ho-chih-kuan* (Japanese *Maha shikan*), and Shunzei's poetic treatise, the *Korei fūteishō*. Yet again there is no effort to explore if and how *shikan* meditative practice informed the genesis and structure of Shunzei's poetry.

Pointing out what LaFleur does not do in this work is not meant to take away from the significance of what he has done. This book is one of the most important works on the Japanese religious tradition in recent years. Thoroughly inter-disciplinary in approach, it opens up new areas for further research and is very suggestive about possible ways to approach and reread works of Japanese literature. It is per-haps indicative of LaFleur's success that one can look forward to more research into the interrelationship of Buddhist thought, ritual praxis and the literary arts stimulated by this book.

Folk Icons and Rituals in Tribal Life. Pramod Kumar. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, Inc., 1984. xiii + 85. 116 photographs, glossary, index. $31.25 (hardcover).

Reviewer: Stuart H. Blackburn, Univ. of California, Berkeley

This compact monograph, less than one hundred pages of text and more than one hundred photos, offers a portrait of ritual life among a tribal group in southern Rajasthan, India. As the foreword warns us, the book does not suffer from theoretical overweight. A critic is told to "keep in mind that the author has never received any formal training in ethnology but hails from an artistically very talented family" (vii). When we learn that the study of ritual is based on "several months" of fieldwork by a college teacher for whom English is not a first language, the reader shudders. Although these disclaimers are not false modesty, the book does have its minor pleasures.

Primary among these is that the narrative maintains a close focus on the Mina tribals. We learn that the Mina worship some of their ancestors in the form of stone, sculpted icons, that the icons are chiseled by a group of low-status Brahmins and that some tribals have recently taken to sculpting the icons themselves to save money and travel to the city. The heart of the book describes exactly how the icon is purchased (a description dramatized by bits of conversation between tribal patron and Brahmin artisan), how the icon is later consecrated at a large folk temple and finally how it is installed in a family-based ritual directed by a possessed priest (*bhopa*). Most importantly, we cannot miss the point that all this activity rests on the belief that problems like disease, money and land are caused by a dead relative and will only be removed or alleviated by proper worship of that relative. Also highlighted are the central role of the *bhopa* in diagnosing the problem and leading the family through its cure, and the significance of the large folk temple in investing the stone icon with its power.

What is lacking is any attempt to study this ritual process. This is all the more unfortunate because the data presented demonstrates that the Minas' rituals are part of a fundamental process in folk Hinduism that links ancestors, folk heroes, regional gods and goddesses and pan-Indian

deities. The legends of the Mina deified dead, their iconography and their manner of worship are all replicated in other regions of India. Although the author is well-placed to offer an explanation of this fundamental process, he is sublimely silent.

The author did not intend to write an analytic study, yet this total abstinence from analysis perhaps makes the book more satisfying. This book is a journal, a narration of who and when. The writing is light and personal and takes the reader rather close to the Mina tribals as they move through their rituals, centered on the stone icons of the ancestors. In this respect, it has some merit. Like the many plates that accompany it, however, the narrative remains a series of black and white stills suspended before us. We overhear conversations, learn of individual motivations and share small triumphs, yet these portraits rarely rise above their flat outlines. An exception is a scene in which a possessed priest "shaking his head wildly and breathing violently, shrieked and stood up with fan and sword and instructed" the author "to take his photography quickly" (44).

Despite the rich material that it contains, this book will be useful only to the Indian specialist and perhaps to those scholars interested in the issue of ethnographic genres. This is not the best example of the journalistic genre, but it reminds us of its possibilities.

Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual and Politics Since the Middle Ages. Sean Wilentz, Editor. Published under the auspices of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, Princeton, NJ. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. ix + 344. Tables, illustrations. $30 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-8122-7948-4.

Reviewer: Peter Sahlins, Harvard University

Long considered an epiphenomenon of political history, ritual and symbolism in politics–the political significance of ceremony, pageantry, festivals, emblems, monuments and so on–have become the latest fashion of academic culture. These ten essays represent some of the recent work in America and

on the Continent which has again turned history on its head: influenced by art historians, literary critics and anthropologists, the contributors expand the study of ritual far beyond its inherited domains and return the history of *mentalités* to the realm of power and politics. Edited by Sean Wilentz, this volume encompasses a rich world of political culture, from the Spanish kings of the Reconquest to German metal-workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The contributors, many of whom condense much larger or ongoing studies, bring a distinctive set of historical concerns about a particular period. The diversity of subjects and interpretive frameworks makes this volume less coherent than it could have been and many of the essays share an implicit model about the relation of "power" and "symbolism" which fails to go beyond received functionalist interpretations. But the volume is a welcome contribution to the inter-disciplinary study of ritual, symbolism and power.

In attempting to give a unity to the essays, Wilentz retells the tale of the Emperor's clothes: if the "clothing of power," he asks, is to be taken seriously, if the representation (in the semiotic sense) of authority is that which matters in politics, is there any point in discussing a "reality" underlying political ritual and symbolism? Wilentz draws his framework from Clifford Geertz's seminal "Centers, Kings and Charisma," originally published in 1977 and reproduced in this volume: every society has its "master fictions" which make the rhetoric of power and authority, of the sacred and charismatic center, somehow inseparable from the "real" business of politics. But Geertz's terms and constructions, which resonate with the echoes of Edward Shils, Max Weber and Paul Ricouer, among others, appear infrequently in the essays in this volume.

Richard Wortman's essay on the competition between Saint Petersburg and Moscow as the symbolic and political center of Tsarist Russia tacks Geertz onto an otherwise "traditional" history; Maurice Agulhon's study of symbolic space and the "monumentology" of Paris in the political and national struggles of Right and Left since the French Revolution identifies an important problem, though the essay might have profited from a study of Geertz and previous fashions of French anthropology (Durkheim, Mauss, Levi-Strauss). Wortman and Agulhon, like many of the other contributors to this volume, tend to focus on the functional

value, the strategic and propagandistic uses of symbolism and ritual in expressing both political intentions and constitutional doctrines. It is a framework which must be used with care when discussing pre-Revolutionary conceptions of symbolism and sovereignty, at a time when the clothes of the Emperor were still taken seriously.

France and Spain, two polities with historically very different expressions of kingship, receive the most attention of the Old Regime states. In surveying the French "models of rulership," the political ritual complexes which made up what early modern contemporaries saw as the *dignité* of the French monarchy, Ralph Giesey summarizes a number of monographs without drawing explicit connections among the rites of state. Fortunately, Sarah Hanley explores in detail the changing significance of ritual and discourse in one such ritual: the ceremonial *lit de justice*. She argues convincingly that the constitutional significance of the ritual was fashioned in the sixteenth century out of a mythology of the medieval monarchy. The only contribution to consider medieval kingship itself is that of Teo Ruiz, who describes the "unsacred" character of royal power of the Castilian kings, the legitimacy and authority of whom were grounded in military valor and success during the Reconquest. Several kings had tried to introduce the regalia of office, which appeared in England and France, but "public opinion" in Castille and Leon had failed to respond.

Such manipulations of symbolism and ritual are cogently treated by John Elliott, who looks at art and architecture as modes of propaganda in seventeenth century Spain, locating the building of the Buen Retiro in the context of the ministerial reforms of the Count Duke of Olivares. For Britain in the "post-revolutionary" period, David Cannadine studies the "invention of tradition" by the British monarchy: he traces the development of ceremony and political ritual during three periods since 1820 in which the formalization of pageantry was inversely related to the strength of the crown.

The strength of this volume, as well as its weakness, lies in the diverse interests of its contributors. More than need be in such a collection, the essays lack a *topos*. The inclusion of two contributions which expand the idea of politics itself away from the form and institutional organization of the state–Rhys Isaac's study of political metaphors in an eighteenth century

Virginia planter's diary and Alf Ludtke's discussion of "self-reliance" as political action in workers' culture at the turn of the century–cast the net of symbolism and politics too widely. All of the contributors seek to expand the ideas of "ritual" and "symbolism" to the realm of "politics," but taken together, the essays lack a common language. While Hanley and Alguhon sometimes invert the relationship of power and its representations, power and symbolism remain for all the authors discrete categories of action and thought. Only rarely are the categories of myth, symbolism and ritual explicitly linked to larger cosmological systems as well as to the "real business" of governing. These treatments of ritual and symbolism in politics are to be welcomed for the disciplinary boundaries which they constantly cross, though many readers might find here too many discount choices in this world of high fashion.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The **JRS** will acknowledge receipt of all books, serials and monographs that deal directly with ritual studies, yet receipt does not guarantee acceptance for review. Works to be reviewed are selected at the discretion of the editors. The **JRS** gratefully acknowledges receipt of:

Baker, Maureen. 1984. *The Family: Changing Trends in Canada*. Scarborough, Ontario: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Barr, Robert. 1984. *What is the Bible?* Minneapolis: Winston.

Beckford, James A. 1985. *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements*. New York: Tavistock.

Gue, Leslie R. 1984. *An Introduction to Education Administration in Canada*. Scarborough, Ontario: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Hanson, Paul D. 1986. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Jackson, Michael. 1986. *Barawa and the Ways Birds Fly in the Sky*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Malina, Bruce J. 1986. *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation*. Atlanta: John Knox.

Mills, David and Robert Lumiansky, Eds. 1986. *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, Vol. 2. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Ochs, Carol. 1986. *An Ascent to Joy*. Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press.

O'Toole, Roger. 1983. *Religion: Classic Sociological Approaches*. Scarborough, Ontario: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Rochford, E. Burke, Jr. 1985. *Hare Krishna in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.

Slusser, Gerald H. 1986. *From Jung to Jesus: Myth and Consciousness in the New Testament*. Atlanta: John Knox.

Weidman, Judith L., Ed. 1986. *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*. New York: Harper & Row.

APPENDIX

CONSTITUTION

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3. *FREQUENCY OF PUBLICATION*: The journal shall be published twice yearly. If the amount of publishable material is sufficient and funding permits, publication may be increased to four issues per year.
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October 31, 1985

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DOCUMENTATION, ENDNOTES & REFERENCES

Authors should clearly distinguish documentation from endnotes. Endnotes are for further elaboration;

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6. When referring to two or more works by the same author: (Turner 1984:83; 1983:22).

7. When referring to several different sources: (Turner 1984:83; Tillich 1965:232; Smith 1986).

8. When referring to two works by the same author in the same year: (Turner 1984a:23; 1984b:111).

EXAMPLE OF PAGE FORMAT (WITH AUTHOR-DATE DOCUMENTATION)

Turner's Theory of Liminality

[sub-head, if desired]

[body of text, double spaced]

Originally, the term "liminality" designated something specific, the transition phase of a rite of passage in traditional societies. Later Turner invented the neologism "liminoid" to apply in general to transition phenomena in industrial societies. He says:

[offset quotes longer than 3 lines]

> We might say that liminal genres put much stress on social frames, plural reflexivity, and mass flow, shared flow, while liminoid genres emphasize idiosyncratic framing, individual reflexivity, subjective flow, and see the social as problem not datum (1979a:117).

Most of Turner's interpreters pay attention to the differences in social contexts implied by each term. What interests me is the shift in his focus from ritual specifically to transition phenomena generally.[1] [endnote number] His usual examples of liminoid behavior are taken from the arts (cf. Tillich 1960:3) or from celebration and other modes of cultural inversion.[2]

EXAMPLE OF NOTES FORMAT

[1] D.W. Winnicott (1958) was criticized much in the same way for overextending the idea of transition "objects" to include all transition "phenomena." See, e.g., Flew, 1978.

[2]Other substantive notes follow in this same format.

EXAMPLE OF REFERENCES FORMAT

[article in collection with two editors]

Flew, Anthony. 1978. "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena: Comments and Interpretations." *Between Reality and Fantasy*. Eds., Simon A. Grolnick and Leonard Barkin. New York: Jason Aronson.

[translated book]

Girard, Rene. 1977. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.

[article in collection]

Tillich, Paul. 1960. "The Religious Symbol." *Symbolism in Religion and Literature*. Ed., Rollo May. New York: Braziller.

[1st work in a given year]

Turner, Victor. 1979a. *Process, Pilgrimage and Performance: A Study in Comparative Symbology*. New Delhi: Concept.

[2nd work in same year]

--------1979b. "Dramatic Ritual / Ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Drama." *Kenyon Review* 1/3:80-93.

[article in volume edited by author]

Winnicott, D. W. 1958. "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena." *Collected Papers: Through Pediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. Ed., D.W. Winnicott. New York: Basic.

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