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ISRAEL IN THE MIRROR OF NATURE: ANIMAL METAPHORS IN THE RITUAL AND NARRATIVES OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz

Abstract

The conversation that has been taking place between literary criticism and anthropology has drawn attention to the ways in which metaphors participate in shaping social practice. This paper explores the various relationships between certain dominant metaphors of Israelite thought and various rituals and narratives of ancient Israel. It argues that the root metaphors of Israelite thought, which are drawn from animal husbandry and agriculture, gave rise to a number of religious practices and provide the interpretive context in which these practices can be understood. By this account the rituals of ancient Israel act out the implications of those metaphors that dominate Israelite thought.

***

What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses (Nietzsche 1974:180).

Interpretive practices in the social sciences are often shaped by certain foundational metaphors. The kinds of questions that are asked and the ways they are answered are influenced by the metaphors that implicitly or explicitly guide research. Consequently, important shifts in research strategies and interests are sometimes linked with the emergence of new metaphors. As Nisbet (1969:6) points out, the revolution in European thought in the 17th century is closely linked to a shift in vision in which mechanical metaphors displaced the organismic metaphors that had previously organized peoples' conceptions of the universe and society.[1]

In the past two decades a shift has also been taking place in the kinds of metaphors that underlie the interpretive practices of the social sciences. As long as the social sciences are self-consciously modeled after the natural sciences, concepts like structuralism, functionalism, biofeedback mechanisms, and homeostasis, shape and organize research agendas. Recently, however, under the influence of Geertz, Turner and Fernandez, among others, interpreters of culture are beginning to conceive of society as "texts" that can be read and interpreted, and the social sciences as a species of literary criticism.[2] Symptomatic of this change is the appearance of terms like "metaphor," "metonymy," and the "trope" of cultures, terms that are derived from linguistics and literary criticism. It is perhaps too early to call this a paradigm shift, but it is clear that in some quarters research

strategies are changing, and the full consequences of these changes have yet to be felt.[3]

Metaphor in particular has played a pivotal role in organizing new research projects. In such studies interpreting culture involves understanding not only how certain kinds of metaphors inform systems of thought but also how the metaphoric process is implicated in shaping cultural practices and thus organizing social life. If metaphors are "good to think," research has also shown that they are good to live by (Fernandez 1972, 1974, 1977; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This paper explores the way certain dominant metaphors of Israelite thought structured the religious rituals of ancient Israel.[4]

As is well known, a large number of Israelite religious practices revolved around animal husbandry and agriculture. One of the difficulties in interpreting such rituals has been the reticence of biblical sources to provide any account of their significance. The question, therefore, arises as to where the interpreter should seek the meaning of such practices. One possibility is to interpret them in the context of the numerous natural metaphors which abound in biblical writings. Israelite religious thought, as expressed in the narratives and poetry of the Hebrew Bible, relies self-consciously on a whole host of natural metaphors drawn from animal husbandry and agricultural life. As in many traditional societies, fauna and agriculture clearly supplied a rich vocabulary for thinking about social and religious life (Douglas 1966; Radcliffe-Brown 1965; Fox 1971; Tambiah 1969; Turner 1967). In the case of ancient Israel, these metaphors provided a vocabulary for describing the relationship of Israel to its neighbors and to God and for thinking about kinship and social relations. Nature, then, served as a foundational or root metaphor for ancient Israelite thought. It seems only natural, therefore, to consider the relationship between the overt metaphors of Israelite thought and those religious practices that also involve fauna and agriculture. These metaphors which are so common in biblical thought gave rise to a number of religious practices and also provide an interpretive context in which a number of practices can be understood.

Before turning to the analysis, two methodological caveats are in order. First, in the discussion that follows I take for granted that ancient Israelites would have found implausible the kinds of interpretations offered here. In fact, they probably would have considered such interpretations quite bizarre. This fact, however, does not represent a problem for my analysis. I take as axiomatic that individuals are not aware of all the interconnections between practices and various strands of thought that exist in their culture. Consequently, the role of the interpreter is to disclose those connections that for one reason or another have remained unnoticed.

Second, I do not mean to imply that the interpretations I offer are the only ones possible. Turner (1967), for example, has shown

how symbols can be multi-vocal. The same point can be made about religious practices. For example, a practice may be an instance of an ethical value articulated by a religious system and at the same time have a connection to foundational metaphors. Indeed, I would suggest that what often gives practices their power is precisely the fact that they make contact in diverse and numerous ways with the thought and other practices of a religious system. In other words, people find religious rituals to be satisfying when they seem to fit together with many other parts of the religion in question.[5] Consequently, by accounting for various practices in terms of the metaphors governing Israelite thought, I by no means intend to rule out other interpretations of such practices.

Natural Metaphors in Israelite Thought

Fauna and agriculture serve as a source of metaphors throughout the Hebrew Bible from the earliest to the latest sources. Such metaphors also cut across genre, appearing in narratives, prophetic speeches and poetry. Moreover, with the help of natural imagery the most important religious and national themes find articulation. Wildlife, for example, is used quite frequently to speak about the relations among the nations. Israel's neighbors are often pictured as wild beasts such as lions (Is. 5:29; Jer. 2:15;50:17; Joel 1:6; Ps. 7:2;17:12) bees (Deut. 1:44), or vultures (Hab. 1:8) that attack and prey upon Israel. Egypt is described as the flesh of asses, the offspring of horses and as fish (Ezek. 23:20;29:4). Ammon and Edom are eagles (Jer. 49:16; Obad. 1:1-4) and Moab is likened to fugitive birds and doves (Is. 16:2; Jer. 48:28). Israel is also compared to a wide range of animals, such as grasshoppers (Num. 13:33), he-goats (Jer. 50:8), a lion cub and lion (Ezek 19:1-9), the choicest of flock (Ezek. 24:3), an ass (Hos. 8:9; Jer. 2:24) and a camel in heat (Jer. 2:23). Similar images inform the theological vocabulary of the biblical writers. Ovine metaphors are particularly numerous. God is frequently described as the shepherd of Israel, which is regarded as the divine flock.[6] Generally, this image has positive connotations, expressing the conviction that God is the protector of Israel. "The sheep of My pasture are men, I will increase Israel with men as a flock (Ezek. 34:31;36:37)."[7] But at times, God is the shepherd who brings the flock to slaughter (Jer. 12:3; Ps. 44:12,23;74:1). In the words of the psalmist, "Why, O God, do You reject us, do You fume in anger at the flock that You tend? (Ps. 74:1)" When Israel is deserving of punishment, God is sometimes described as a predatory animal such as a lion, which preys on the flock of Israel (Jer. 25:38). Israel's immoral behavior is also described in ovine imagery: Israel is like a flock that goes astray (Is. 53:6).

Like the flock imagery, bovine metaphors are routinely invoked to express the positive and negative aspects of Israel's relation to God. Israel as God's faithful servant is like a heifer

that God uses to plow and upon which God sets a yoke (Hos. 10:11). Those who fear God will gambol as calves in the stall (Malachi 3:20). But when people rebel against God, they are like a calf that has not been broken (Jer. 31:18) or a stubborn heifer (Hos. 4:16).

Agriculture, like animal husbandry, also supplies numerous images for describing the relation between Israel and God. Israel is likened to an olive tree (Jer. 11:16), a vine (Jer. 6:9; Ezek. 19:10; Ps. 80:9), the first fruit of God's harvest (Jer. 2:3), a watered garden (Jer. 31:12), growth of the field (Ezek. 16:7), grapes in the wilderness (Hos. 9:10) and first ripe figs (Is. 28:4; Jer. 24:3-5; Hos. 9:10). Consequently, the biblical writers describe Israel's security on its land as a kind of root, sprouting and blossoming (Is. 27:6). When Israel deserves punishment, however, God will pull up that which was planted (Jer. 45:4) and Israel will cease to produce fruit (Hos. 9:16).

The relationship between God and individuals is also captured in husbandry and agricultural metaphors. A person who studies divine law is like a tree planted by a stream of water (Ps. 1:3). One whose soul longs for God is like a hart that pants after water (Ps. 42:2) and an individual who finds God is an olive tree in the house of God (Ps. 52:10). One who does not have wisdom is like a horse or mule (Ps. 32:9), while a person who finds protection in God is like a fledgling that finds shelter under its mother's wings (Ps. 91:4). Speakers of lies are like serpents with venom (Ps. 58:5).

Kinship and social relations are also couched in husbandry and agricultural terminology. Children are described as the first fruit of their parents (Gen. 49:3; Deut. 21:17) or as olive saplings (Ps. 128:3). A man's wife is a fruitful vine (Ps. 128:3), a graceful mountain goat and a loving doe whose breasts one is instructed to suckle (Prov. 5:19). A man who wanders from his place is like a bird that leaves a nest (Prov. 27:8). Various animals such as the bull, ram, lion and he-goat are frequently used as metaphors for soldiers, leaders, princes or nobles (Miller 1970). There is also the interesting story in which Sampson tells the Philistines a riddle. When Samson discovers that the Philistines had coaxed his wife to disclose the answer, he says to them, "Had you not plowed with my heifer, you would not have guessed my riddle (Judg. 14:18)," metaphorically equating his wife with a species of livestock.

This brief overview provides only a superficial picture of the degree to which husbandry and agricultural images constitute the vocabulary for expressing the theological, national, social and moral conceptions of ancient Israel.[8] In the habits of animals, in their fighting and eating, mating and reproducing, Israel found a symbolic representation for its own social life, its relations to its neighbors and for comprehending the divine-human relationship. In short, animals, and to some extent the fields and their produce, were conceived of as a parallel world to Israelite society.

The Actualization of Metaphor in Israelite Ritual

If powerful metaphors organize human experience, it stands to reason that they may also shape social practice. Thus the importance of husbandry and agricultural metaphors in Israelite thought raise the possibility that such metaphors serve as a foundation in some sense for the religious rituals of ancient Israel. Specifically, a number of rituals can be interpreted as acting out or living out the implications of those metaphors which dominate Israelite thought. This process, which may be described as the actualization of metaphor, is most obvious in the correspondence that one finds between some of the rules regulating the social life of Israel and the rules governing the treatment of livestock and agricultural activity. If the flocks, herds and fields are metaphors for Israelites, then it follows that one should act towards the former in the same way that one acts towards the latter. In a number of instances, such a correspondence is found.[9]

First, just as Israelites are commanded to cease their labors on the seventh day, so they are commanded to let their animals rest on the same day (Exod. 20:9;23:12; Deut. 5:12-14). Second, Israelites who are sold into slavery work for six years but in the seventh year must be set free (Exod. 21:2). By the same token, Israelites may work their fields for only six years; in the seventh the fields must lie fallow (Exod. 23:10-11; Deut. 15:1-3; Lev. 25:1-7). Third, first-born male Israelites are consecrated to God and must be brought to the Temple. Similarly, the first-born animals of the herds and flocks (Exod. 22:27;34:19;34:20,26;23:17, 13:1;13:2; Num. 8:6;8:16; Deut. 15:19) as well as first fruits (Exod. 23:6,9; Deut. 26:10;23:19) belong to God and must be offered in the Temple. Moreover, as noted above, a man's first born offspring is in some cases explicitly called his first fruits (Gen. 49:3; Deut. 21:17; Mic. 6:7). Fourth, precisely the same kinds of blemishes that disqualify priests from serving in the Temple disqualify animals from being used for sacrifices (Lev. 21:17,22:19;Deut. 17:1,23:2). Fifth, the circumcision of a male Israelite must take place on the eighth day after birth. The eighth day after birth is also the first day that a newborn animal can be sacrificed (Exod. 22:27; Lev. 12:3;22:27). Interesting enough, trees are also described as "uncircumcised" (*ʿrlh*) until the fourth year of their bearing fruit (Lev. 19:33). Sixth, just as murderers receive the death penalty (Exod. 21:12; Num. 35:16-20; Lev. 24:17), so animals that kill human beings are put to death (Exod. 21:28). Seventh, Israelites are commanded not to mix their seed with outsiders through marriage (Deut. 7:3). This social rule finds its parallel in the prohibition against planting a field with two different species of crops, wearing garments made of mixed weave, yoking an ox and an ass together to plow and interbreeding two species of animals (Deut. 22:9; Lev. 19:19). Eighth, leaven cannot be used in animal sacrifices or grain offerings (Exod. 23:18;34:25; Lev. 2:11). By the same token, during the Passover season,

Israelites are forbidden to eat leavening (Exod. 12:15;18-19). Ninth, both a human corpse and the carcasses of animals are considered sources of impurity (Num. 9:7; Lev. 11:24). Tenth, when a person is impaled for a capital offense, the corpse must be buried before morning (Deut. 21:22). A parallel rule applies to the thanksgiving offering which must be eaten the day it is sacrificed; none of it must remain unconsumed until morning (Lev. 22:29). Eleventh, just as Israelites are commanded to leave the corner (*peah*) of their fields unharvested (Lev. 19:9, 23:22; Deut. 24:19), so they are commanded to leave the "corners" (*peah*) of their faces unshaven (Lev. 19:27, 21:5).

As these rules make evident, a correspondence or parallelism is established between some of the rules that govern Israelite society and those that apply to animal husbandry and agriculture. At this point, one may want to follow Douglas (1966, 1975) and Berger and Luckmann (1967) by giving such correspondences a functionalist interpretation. Acording to this view, the rules governing social relations are mirrored in nature in order to lend legitimacy and credibility to social rules. That is, these rules are projected onto nature in order to deny their conventional character and to give individuals a sense that the rules they live by are part and parcel of the natural order. The fact that society and nature are ordered according to similar principles presumably strengthens the claim that the social rules are of divine origin.

The point I want to make, however, is somewhat different. In the view offered here the correspondence of social and natural rules is the result of the metaphoric relation that Israelite religious thought establishes between Israelite society, on the one hand, and the flocks, herds, fields and agricultural produce, on the other. The metaphor suggests that the animals and fields are in some sense like Israelites. It follows then then that they should in some respects be treated like Israelites. And so they are. At the same time, the parallelism between the way Israelites treat one another and the way they treat livestock and fauna helps to sustain and strengthen the operative metaphors in the religious system. Evidence is manufactured to make the metaphors even more persuasive than they had been previously. One finds in Israelite behavior proof of the similarity between Israelites and their herds and flocks, for one has similar obligations to both. Thus, there is a dialectical relation between the foundation metaphor and the practices to which it gives rise. As the latter emerge from the metaphor, they in turn strengthen its power.

In the account I have given so far, I have been considering biblical religion from a strictly synchronic perspective. That is, I have taken for granted the existence of the Pentateuch as a redacted document and established that for Israelites who were familiar with this document as a whole, there existed a correspondence between the rules governing society and those governing the herds, flocks and fields. The metaphoric relationship, therefore, was fully in place by the fifth or fourth

centuries B.C.E., when the Pentateuchal sources were redacted. Of course, the various sources that comprise the Pentateuch have a long history behind them. The question naturally arises as to whether this parallelism also exists when the sources are viewed from a diachronic perspective. If one takes into account the dating of the various sources, does one find that the rules that I have claimed correspond to one another derive from the same authors or do they spring from different hands and thus different time periods? Since dating the sources is notoriously difficult, the following conclusions can be regarded as only tentative.

The rules about dedicating first-born animals, male Israelites and first fruits to God appear in precisely the same sources and go back to earliest legal sources.[10] This is also true of the requirement of Israelites and their animals to rest on the Sabbath day and the rules that specify a death penalty for a murderer, whether human or animal.[11] A second set of correspondences also appears together, but makes its appearance only in later sources, such as Deuteronomy, the Holiness Code and the Priestly Writings (ca. 612-500). This category includes the rule that blemishes disqualify animals and priests (or Israelites) from serving in the Temple, the prohibitions on forbidden mixtures, and the idea that human corpses and animal carcasses are sources of impurity.[12] Significantly, there may be two instances in which the rules about nature emerge prior to the corresponding rules about human beings. This appears to be the case with circumcision. The rule that an animal cannot be sacrificed prior to the eighth day after its birth is first found in one of the earliest sources (Exod. 22:29). But its corresponding social rule–that male Israelites are to be circumcised on the eighth day–is first given articulation in one of the later sources (Gen. 21:4;17:12; Lev. 12:3).[13]

At the very least, therefore, the diachronic perspective suggests that the homology between Israelite social rules and rules governing the herds, flocks and fields was at work in biblical religion from its very inception and received its greatest articulation in the sources that were written in the 7th-5th centuries. The sources also suggest, albeit tentatively, that once such a parallelism was established, it worked in two directions. If Israelite social relations provided a model for how to treat animals, in some cases the way they treated their animals also served as a paradigm for how they should treat each other.[14] Not only is nature a mirror of Israel, but Israel is also a mirror of nature.

Thus far I have argued that the correspondences between Israelite social rules and the rules governing the herds, flocks and fields is a logical consequence of the root metaphors that dominate Israelite thought. Given the success of this line of analysis, it is reasonable to ask whether the root metaphors are also at work in other biblical rules that have been recalcitrant to interpretation. For example, it seems plausible that there is a connection between

the natural metaphors of Israelite thought and the biblical prohibition against eating any land animals that do not chew their cud and have cloven hooves (Lev. 11; Deut. 14). It is probably the case, as S. Driver (1895) and Mary Douglas (1966:54) have suggested, that this rule is an *a posteriori* way of validating Israel's social life as pastoralists. Animals that chew the cud and have cloven hooves are the model of the proper kind of food for pastorlists. But given the centrality of bovine and ovine metaphors in Israelite thought, this interpretation misses other important dimensions. Significantly, cloven hooves and chewing the cud are precisely the traits that distinguish the kinds of animals that routinely serve as metaphors for Israelite society from those that generally do not. The flocks and herds which are the paradigmatic metaphors for Israelite society are also the model kind of food. Moreover, those animals which tend to serve as metaphors for other nations such as predatory animals are, by these criteria, defined as unclean. Thus the dietary restrictions carve up the animal world along the same lines as Israelite thought.[15] In a literal sense, therefore, the dietary restrictions specify what kinds of animals are "food for thought."

It is important to note that in this case the relationship between the foundational metaphor and the religious practices is different than in earlier examples. Previously I suggested that the root metaphors produced an expectation that Israelites should treat their animals in some respects the way they treat one another. The correspondences, therefore, were the logical consequence of the metaphors. But here the metaphors are actualized somewhat differently. One might say that the dietary laws are a dramatization of the metaphors that govern Israelite thought. Israel identifies itself with the herds and flocks by eating them and disassociates itself from the animals that represent other nations by declaring such animals inedible. In this case, then, the religious practices are an acting out of the script represented by the metaphors.

Asses and Neighbors

If the dietary restrictions capture the distinction between Israel and the nations, the question also arises as to whether the animal world provides metaphoric representation of the intermediate social category of resident alien. The resident alien is a person who is not of Israelite birth but who lives in Israelite society. From the perspective of biblical writers, the resident alien is one who more or less behaves like an Israelite, but is not an Israelite by physical descent. Consequently, if the resident alien has a metaphoric representation, it would have to be an animal that lives among the flocks and herds but is unlike them.

The ass has everything necessary to serve as a metaphor for the resident alien, for it stands in the same relation to the herds and flocks as the resident alien stands in relation to Israelite

society. As mentioned above, the resident alien is a loner living in and obeying the rules of a society to which he or she is not physically related. The ass too is a loner for it does not herd or flock with others of its kind. Instead, it lives alongside the herds and flocks. Moreover, the ass lacks the traits of chewing the cud and cloven hooves, and consequently is not a true member of these communities. Since the ass is ultimately an outsider in the community in which it lives, it can serve as an excellent metaphor for the position of resident aliens in Israelite society. The ass, then, constitutes what Fernandez (1972:47) has called a structural metaphor, in which the "translation between realms is based on some isomorphism of structure or similarity of relationship of parts." In this case, the ass' position *vis-à-vis* the herds and flocks is parallel to the position of the resident alien in Israelite society.[16]

There are at least two biblical narratives that appear to rest on the metaphoric relationship between the resident alien and the ass.[17] In particular, this equation is evident in the account of Jacob's daughter, Dinah, who was raped by a Cannaanite named Schechem, son of Hamor (Gen. 34). Now Hamor is the Hebrew word for ass.[18] It is no accident, therefore, that Dinah is raped by "the son of an ass," for one of the primary concerns of this story is whether Israel, as represented by Jacob and his sons, should have social relations with non-Israelites alongside whom it dwells. It is also significant that Dinah's brothers are out with the cattle when she is raped, thus expressing the opposition between the Canaanites and Jacob's sons in terms of the difference between cattle and asses. As the story unfolds, Schechem's father, Hamor (i.e., The Ass), makes the following proposition to Jacob and his sons, "Intermarry with us: give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. You will dwell among us, and the land will be open before you; settle, move about, and acquire holdings in it (Gen. 34:9-10)." Jacob's sons agree, with the stipulation that Hamor and his people undergo circumcision. However, when the Canaanites are recovering from the surgical procedure and thus incapacitated, Jacob's sons slaughter them thus making asses out of them. The story thus denies the possibility of social intercourse and suggests that an ass can never be made into an Israelite, even through the rite of circumcision. Or to put it another way, no matter what one does, an ass can never have cloven hooves or chew its cud.

By the same token, it is significant that the narrative of Balaam and the ass (Num. 22-25) is about an outsider who plans to curse Israel but who ends up singing Israel's praise. At the beginning of this narrative, Balak, king of Moab, is worried that Israel "will lick clean all that is about us as an ox licks up the grass of the field (22:4)." Consequently, Balak commissions Balaam to prophesy doom on Israel. But as Balaam is riding on an ass to join the Moabites, the ass sees an angel of God on the road and veers to avoid it. Eventually, Balaam too sees the angel,

which means, in effect, that Balaam himself has become like the ass. Thus Balaam initially intends to prey on Israel but ends up being an ass that praises the dwelling places of Israel. Balaam, therefore, as portrayed in Num. 22-24, is the paradigmatic outsider who becomes a lover of Israel.

Apart from these narratives, there are also episodic passages that make some sort of equation between the ass and outsiders with whom one lives. Ezekiel thus describes Israel's relations with Egypt during the period of slavery as whoring after a people whose members were like those of asses (Ezek. 23:20).[19] Similarly, in the story of Sampson's taking revenge on the Philistines, the local outsiders, the narrator makes a point of specifying that Sampson killed thousands of men with the fresh jaw bone of an ass (Judg. 15:15).

It also may be significant that in Zechariah's vision of the end of days the Messiah will appear riding on an ass (Zech. 9:9). I have no intention here of quarreling with the well-established view that riding an ass is a symbol of royalty (Sasson 1976). But it should be realized that this interpretation does not explain the use of asses in all biblical narratives and law. It fails to explain, for example, why Balaam the non-Israelite seer and the Shunammite woman ride asses (Num. 22; II Kings 4:24). Moreover, as Sasson points out, it also does not explain why the first-born male ass must be redeemed by an animal from the herd or flock (Exod. 12:46,13:13,34:20). An opening, therefore, emerges for an alternative interpretation. I suggest, therefore, that given the association between ass and resident aliens, there may be an additional layer of meaning in Zechariah's idea that the Messiah will ride an ass. As Zechariah describes it, the Messiah is to usher in the period of Israel's hegemony over her neighbors, when powerful nations shall become mere resident aliens. Thus Zechariah says that survivors of Philistia "shall belong to our God; they shall become like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites", i.e., local Canaanites (Zech. 9:7). In other words, the notion that the Messiah rides an ass may also convey the idea that Israel will turn its predatory neighbors into asses, that is, into neighbors with whom one can live. It is interesting that David and his sons, Solomon and Absalom, are described as riding on mules (II Sam. 18:9;I Kings 1:33,38,45). Presumably, the narrative is alluding to the royal status of these characters. But it is curious that they ride mules (*prd*) while Saul (I Sam. 9:3,5;10:14) and the Messiah are described as riding on asses (*'tn*). The mule, of course, differs from an ass in that it is a product of mixed seed. Is it possible, therefore, that the narrative hints that David and his line are of mixed seed, since David is a grandson of a Moabite woman (Ruth 4:16-17)?[20]

As in the case of the metaphoric relationship between Israel and the herds and flocks, the metaphoric relationship between the ass and resident alien generates its own set of correspondences. That is, since the ass is in some ways like a resident alien, in some

respects they are treated analogously. The ass, for example, is subject to some of the same civil and religious laws as the local stranger. Biblical law explicitly says that the citizen and local stranger are to be treated alike (Deut. 10:19,24:17). Israelites are commanded not to wrong or oppress a stranger (Exod. 22:20;23:9; Lev. 19:33;24:22) and consequently are expected to provide poor relief for local aliens (Deut. 24:19-22; Lev. 19:19;23:22). By the same token, the ass is treated according to the same laws as the ox and sheep in the case of theft (Exod. 22:3,9;23:4-5; Deut. 22:4). Second, a resident alien is also subject to certain religious prohibitions such as resting on the Sabbath, a restriction which also applies to the ass (Deut. 5:13). In fact, in one formulation of this rule, the resident alien is put in parallel with the ass: "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor, in order that your ox and your ass may rest, and that your bondman and the stranger may be refreshed" (Exod. 23:12). The local stranger, therefore, is enough of an insider to have certain religious obligations, like not working on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29) and having to observe certain purity laws (Lev. 17:15). But at the same time, the local resident is enough of a stranger to be excluded from participating in certain religious activities, such as eating the Passover offering (Exod. 12:46). The ass is in a similar no man's land. For example, while the first-born male offspring of asses theoretically belong to God, unlike an animal from the herds and flocks, an ass cannot be sacrificed. Instead, an animal from the flock or herd serves as a substitute for it (Exod. 12:4;,13:13;34:20). So the ass is subject to some of the same obligations as the herds and flocks but excluded from others, just as the local stranger is liable to certain Israelite rules and not others. Finally, if one accepts the metaphoric equation of the ass and resident alien, then the prohibition against plowing a field with an ass and an animal of the herd yoked together (Deut. 22:10) expresses in law the same idea as the story about Dinah's being raped by Schechem, "the son of an ass." Both forbid close contact between an Israelite and the local outsider.

Incest and Husbandry

The correspondence between biblical laws concerning animals and the rules governing social relations may also provide a way of understanding three biblical rules whose interpretation has been much debated:[21] the prohibitions against boiling a kid-goat in its mother's milk (Exod. 23:19;34:26; Deut. 14:21) and against taking both a mother bird and her fledglings from the same nest (Deut. 22:6) and slaughtering an animal from the herd or flock on the same day as its offspring (Lev. 22:28). I suggest that these rules correspond to ancient Israelite incest rules. Thus I disagree with Douglas, who argues that in biblical religion "we seek in vain a statement, however oblique, of a[n]. . .association between eating and sex" (1975:262). According to my interpretation, the rule

against boiling a kid-goat parallels the prohibition against a male child's having intercourse with his mother (Deut. 27:20; Lev. 18:6). Just as an Israelite man may not be stirred up by his mother, it is forbidden to cook a kid-goat in its mother's juices. The other rules are somewhat different. They insist that a person may not perform a certain kind of act (either slaughtering or taking from the nest) on both an animal and its offspring. These rules correspond to the prohibitions against a man's having intercourse with a woman and her mother (Deut. 27:33; Lev. 20:14) and with a woman and her daughter (Lev. 18:12).

It may appear that I am reading too much into these laws. However, given the overall metaphoric relationship between Israelite society and the herds and flocks and the number of correspondences noted earlier, it seems reasonable to ask whether these laws also have their social equivalents. Moreover, as noted above, other sexual prohibitions find their parallel in rules governing the animal world. The prohibition against intermarrying corresponds to the law against interbreeding two species of animals and to the rule against yoking an ox and ass together.

Still the question arises as to why an incest rule should find its parallel in the form of rules about cooking, hunting, or sacrificing. But let me turn the question around. What other kind of correspondence could be invented? From a strictly practical standpoint, it is impossible to forbid incestual relations among animals; to do so would require creating a number of herds or flocks and separating animals at a very young age from others of the same lineage. Moreover, as Levi-Strauss points out, domestication of animals requires interbreeding. Consequently, if the prohibitions of human incest are to find their parallels in rules governing animals they will have to take the form of some other cultural activity, for example, eating, cooking, or slaughtering.

Indeed, ethnographies are full of cases in which a variety of cultural activities serve as metaphoric substitutes for intercourse. To cite a few examples, the Arapesh say, "Your own mother, your own sister, your own pigs, your own yams that you have piled up, you may not eat. Other people's mothers, other people's sisters, other people's pigs, other people's yams that they have piled up, you may eat" (Mead 1935:83). Among the Ashanti "eating of one's own blood" is the way to describe certain kinds of incest and "eating a man's wife," the way of describing adultery (Goody 1956:290). The Rotinese describe the search for a marriageable girl as "to go for seed grain." Among the same group, the areca nut is a sign of a girl's sexuality and consequently, a girl's first public chew of the nut is a sign of her readiness to marry (Fox 1971:234,236). In villages in Ceylon the fact that a woman cooks food for a man is a public statement that they have a conjugal relationship (Tambiah 1969). Finally, Meigs (1984) in her study of the Hua of New Guinea points to a number of parallels between

food and sexual prohibitions. She writes, for example, that among the Hua "eating has its incest rule too: a person may not eat food that he or she or his or her offspring have themselves produced (124)." By the same token, Hua males claim never to touch a woman's vagina, and they also do not eat snails whose secretion they claim is like the secretions of the vagina (92).

The ethnographic evidence just cited lends a certain plausibility to the interpretation I have offered of the biblical laws cited above. It shows that food and eating often serve as metaphors for sexual activity and that such metaphors can and do structure human behavior. To be sure, the ethnographic literature in and of itself does not make a convincing case that a similar interpretation can be given of the biblical laws. Therefore, let me now take up each of the biblical rules individually and show how the understanding I am offering is also plausible within the context of biblical literature.

In interpreting the prohibition against seething a kid-goat in its mother's milk as being a parallel rule to incest, I am developing the view of Jean Soler (1979:29) who claims that this rule can be translated into the following statement, "You shall not put a mother and her son into the same pot, any more than into the same bed." Milgrom (1981b) has rejected this interpretation because the Hebrew term for kid, *gdy*, is neuter. According to Milgrom, therefore, the rule cannot be interpreted as a symbolic statement about a male Israelite having intercourse with his mother. In my judgment, however, Milgrom has disposed too hastily of Soler's interpretation. An examination of the role of a kid-goat in biblical narratives suggests that it frequently serves as a symbolic substitute for a male child.

In the story of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27) Jacob outfoxes his blind father by pretending to be Esau. This was quite a trick, for Esau was a hairy man and hunter, while Jacob was smooth and a mama's boy. To effect the substitution, therefore, Jacob kills two kid-goats, making one into a stew that tastes like freshly captured game and putting the hide of the other on his arms so that they would feel hairy like his brother's. The substitution of kid-goats for wild game, therefore, parallels the displacement of one kind of young man for another. In other words, just as Isaac expects to eat a dish prepared from wild game but instead is served one made from a domesticated animal, so too he intends to bless Esau the hunter, but instead blesses Jacob the domestic.[22]

The kid-goat plays a similar role in the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38). At the beginning of the story, Tamar is married in succession to two of Judah's sons, each of whom subsequently dies. By biblical law, Tamar should marry her dead husband's brother, but in this case the surviving brother is too young to marry. Judah promises that when his son matures he will carry out the levirate duties. But when the child grows up, it is clear that Judah has no intention of living up to his promise. Out of desperation, Tamar deceives Judah into thinking she is a harlot,

so that she can produce a child of his seed. Significantly, when Judah asks to sleep with her, he promises to send her a kid from the flock as a fee. So while Judah actually owes Tamar his son, he tries to satisfy her by substituting a kid-goat. Once again, the kid-goat serves as a metaphoric equivalent to a male child. Just as Tamar never gets Judah's youngest son, she also never gets the kid-goat. The kid-goat also crops up in two other stories in which it seems to symbolize a young boy.[23]

The foregoing examples suggest that there is an association in Israelite thought between a kid-goat and an Israelite male and therefore provide grounds for arguing that the prohibition against cooking a goat in its mother's milk corresponds to the prohibition against incestual relations between an Israelite male and his mother. In addition, it turns out that the two narratives which equate a kid-goat and an Israelite male derive from the *J* strand, which also specifies the prohibition against cooking a kid-goat in its mother's milk (Exod. 34:26).[24] Finally, one of the sources that defines relations with one's mother as incest (Deut. 27:20) also makes a point of mentioning the prohibition against cooking the kid-goat (Deut. 14:21).

According to the interpretation offered here, the prohibition against taking a mother bird and her fledglings from the nest (Deut. 22:6) also corresponds to an incest prohibition. It forbids taking or eating both a mother and her offspring. One is commanded to take the offspring and send the mother away. There are a number of reasons to interpret this rule as paralleling the prohibition against incest. The exact expression "a mother with her young" (*'m ʿl hbnym*) is found only twice in biblical writings outside this context. In both cases it refers to certain diastrous consequences that might befall a human mother and her children (Gen. 32:12; Hos. 10:14). Moreover, we recall that the nest is sometimes a metaphor for the home (Hab. 2: Job 29:18; Ps. 84:4). "A man who wanders from his place is like a bird that leaves its nest" (Prov. 27:8). In addition Israel's children are likened to birds that fly away (Hos. 9:11). It is also significant that a single term (*knf*) describes the wings of a bird and the corners of a man's garment. When the corners of a man's garment are cut off, his wings have quite literally been clipped (I Sam. 24:6). Intercourse and espousal are described as spreading one's wings over a woman (Ezek. 16:8; Ruth 3:9). More to the point, incest with one's mother is described as displacing one's father's wings (Deut. 23:1;27:20).

In my judgment, therefore, it is not an accident that the prohibition against taking a mother bird and her offspring appears in the same source that proscribes sexual relations with one's mother-in-law (Deut. 27:23). In other words, the source that first articulates this sexual prohibition is also the only one to mention the law against taking a mother bird and her offspring. The parallel is nearly precise.[25] Deuteronomy commands Israelites to take the fledglings and send away the mother, just as

it commands an Israelite not to take the mother of the woman he has already taken. It is also significant that when the same incest prohibition makes its appearance in another context (Lev. 20:14), its linguistic formulation is nearly identical to the rule about not taking the mother bird and fledglings. In Deuteronomy the law is formulated as follows: "If you chance upon a bird's nest. . .do not take (*tqḥ*) the mother together with her young." The incest prohibition as formulated in Leviticus states in similar language, "If a man takes (*yqḥ*) a woman and her mother (*'mh*) it is a depravity" (Lev. 20:14).

Thus far we have seen that the rules against boiling a kid-goat in its mother's milk and against taking the fledgling and its mother both appear in Deuteronomy and correspond to Deuteronomy's prohibitions on sexual relations between a man and his mother and between a man and his mother-in-law. As we leave Deuteronomy and turn to Leviticus, two interesting differences are noted. First, Leviticus specifies a wider scope of incest prohibitions and second, it does not mention the prohibition against taking a mother bird and her fledglings from the nest. Instead, it cites another prohibition which is structurally similar: one is commanded not to sacrifice an animal and its offspring on the same day. This latter rule may also be viewed as paralleling a rule about social relationships, for it follows directly after the rule about not sacrificing an animal until the eighth day after birth which, as I suggested above, corresponds to the commandment that an Israelite male child must be circumcised on the eighth day. Therefore, the parallel between a young animal and an Israelite child is already operative as one reads the law about sacrificing an animal and its offspring on the same day.

The differences between Deuteronomy and Leviticus, namely the different scope of incest prohibitions and the particular animal rule which is cited, may be interrelated. In following the subsequent argument, it may be helpful to make reference to the following diagram:

Incest Rules	*Corresponding Animal Rule*
1.Prohibition of intercourse with one's wife's mother, i.e., mother-in-law (Deut. 23:1, 27:33; Lev. 20:14)	Do not take mother bird and fledglings; send away mother-bird (Deut 22:6)
2.Prohibion of intercourse with one's wife's daughter (Lev. 18:17)	Do not slaughter animal and offspring on the same day (Lev. 22:8)

As I said earlier, the deuteronomic rule about birds corresponds to the deuteronomic incest prohibition against intercourse with one's

mother-in-law. But this husbandry proscription does not cover the scope of the incest prohibitions as found in Leviticus. For example, in addition to prohibiting sexual relations between a man and his motherin-law (Lev. 20:14), Leviticus also forbids relations between a man and his wife's daughter by another marriage (Lev. 18:17), a prohibition not mentioned in Deuteronomy. In its deuteronomic formulation, the rule about birds does not parallel the levitical prohibition on sexual relations with one's wife's daughter. To be parallel to this incest prohibition, the rule about the birds would have to be reversed: instead of being commanded to take the fledglings and send off the mother, one would have to be instructed to take the mother bird and send away her fledglings. But even if the rule were reformulated in this way, there still would be a glaring discrepancy between the incest rule and the husbandry law. Although one can send a woman's daughter to live in another man's house, if one sends away fledglings they will surely die. The rule about birds, therefore, cannot be made to correspond to the levitical prohibition against intercourse with one's wife's daughter.[26]

By this account, it is not surprising that Leviticus fails to mention the rule about birds. Instead, it cites a rule that forbids sacrificing an animal and its offspring on the same day. This rule has the advantage, so to speak, of being able to cast a wider net. It can correspond both to the prohibition on relations with one's mother-in-law and with one's wife's daughter. This is because the rule does not specify which animal has to be sacrificed first. One can sacrifice the mother animal and leave the daughter for another day or one can take the mother and save the daughter for another occasion. But one cannot have both the mother and the daughter at the same time. For this reason, the law about sending away the mother bird has been displaced in Leviticus by the injunction against sacrificing an animal and its offspring on the same day. Linguistically, this displacement is suggested by the fact that incest with one's mother is not described as uncovering what is under one's father's wings. In this context, the metaphoric relation of man and birds is not compelling.[27]

The Exploitation and Power of Metaphor

I have argued so far the the metaphor relationship between Israel and the herds and flocks creates an expectation that Israelites treat one another the way they treat their animals. This expectation in turn generates a series of homologies between Israelite social practices and the rules governing the animal world. Expectations, however, are not always fulfilled. Sometimes they are exploited for other purposes. This appears to be the case in the sacrificial system. To begin with, the sacrificial institution capitalizes on the metaphoric relationship between Israelite society and the animal world. Despite objections that

might be mounted against this view,[28] I would argue that at least parts of the sacrificial system rest on the idea that an animal's life is a substitute for the life of the person who brings the animal to be slaughtered. The sacrificial ritual itself suggests an identification of the sacrificial animal with the sacrificer or the person or persons who supply the animal. In some cases, for example, the hands of the person on whose behalf the animal is offered are placed on the animal prior to sacrificing it (Exod. 29:10,15,19; Lev. 3:2,8,13;4:4,15,24), the blood of the animal is sometimes sprinkled on the people on whose behalf it is offered (Exod. 24:8), or put on their ear lobes, right thumb, and right big-toe (Exod. 29:20; Lev. 14:14). Moreover, the earliest biblical laws recognize the idea that Israelites sacrifice the first-born males of their herds and flocks because God did not put to death their first-born male children in Egypt (Exod. 13:11-15). The fact that the sacrificial system presupposes the metaphoric relationship between Israelites and the herds and flocks would also explain why only animals from the herds and flocks can be used as offerings. Since these are the animals that normally serve as metaphors for Israel, only they can serve as sacrificial substitutes for Israelites.

While the sacrificial system takes for granted the metaphoric relationship between herds and flocks, it also exploits the expectations that those metaphors generate. As we have seen above, in a number of cases what Israelites do to their animals they also do to themselves. But the power of the sacrificial institution lies precisely in its deviation from this pattern. The very premise of the sacrificial system is that God will permit Israelites to sacrifice animals instead of sacrificing themselves and their children. In this case, therefore, one does to one's animals what one is not required to do to oneself. By violating the normal pattern of expectation, therefore, the sacrificial cult creates in participants the sense that something remains undone. This deviation may explain why the sacrificial rite is perceived to be so efficacious: it instills in actors the feeling that they should be the ones being sacrificed. The fact that God does not require them to do so reminds them of the divine capacity to forgive human failure (Exod 34:7).

This understanding of sacrifice is at work in biblical narratives. Abraham, for example, is commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22). But just as he is about to perform the act, God instructs him to offer up a ram which is caught in the thicket nearby. This story thus expresses the idea that although people theoretically owe their lives to God, God is sometimes willing to accept animals in their place. The story of Noah (Gen. 8) puts forward a similar idea. One of the important themes of this narrative is God's reconciliation to the fact that humans are imperfect and will perpetually sin. At the beginning of the story, God is unwilling to accept humanity's imperfection and consequently brings the flood. But after the flood, God accepts humans for what they are and vows never to destroy the world

again. It is significant that God's statement of reconciliation comes in response to Noah's sacrifice. Upon smelling the pleasing odor of Noah's sacrifice, God says, "Never again will I doom the world because of humanity, since the devisings of humans are evil from youth, nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done" (Gen. 8:21). Thus the formal institutionalization of sacrifice occurs simultaneously with God's acceptance of humanity's imperfection. Although humans are imperfect and deserve to be destroyed, God accepts animal sacrifices in their place. It is important to note, however, that the substitution only appeases God for relatively minor sins, such as unwittingly violating a law (Lev. 4). For heinous crimes, such as murder, the substitution is not accepted, for God demands that person's life. "You shall not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of a capital crime; he must be put to death" (Num. 35:31). Thus, the legitimacy of a given sacrifice depends on God's willingness to relinquish the divine right to put the person in question to death.[29]

This view of sacrifice sheds new light on the criticisms of the sacrificial cult that one finds in the prophetic writings. The traditional view among biblical scholars is that the prophets viewed the sacrificial system as hypocritical. On the one hand, Israelites were committing numerous sins, such as oppressing the poor, yet on the other hand, they sacrificed to God as if the cultic activities in and of themselves would guarantee divine favor. The prophets argued, by contrast, that the cult without morality is meaningless (de Vaux 1965:454-455). I suggest, however, an additional reason why the prophets criticized the institution of sacrifice. As argued previously, a sacrifice is valid only when God is willing to overlook the commission of a sin. Extending this line of reasoning to the nation as a whole, the sacrificial institution is legitimate only as long as God is willing to pardon Israel's collective sins. But when Israel's sins become too grievous, the substitution breaks down. In other words, when God decides to punish Israel directly, scapegoats are no longer acceptable.[30]

It is significant, therefore, that the prophets who criticize the institution of sacrifice are precisely the same ones who prophesy a devastating punishment for Israel and frequently conceive of God as a lion that preys upon the flock of Israel. God will not accept animals in place of Israel, because Israel has become its own sacrificial victim. According to Isaiah, for example, God says:

> What need have I of all your sacrifices?. . .I am sated with burnt offerings of rams and suet of fatlings, and blood of bulls; and I have no delight in lambs and he-goats....Bringing oblations is futile, incense is offensive to me (Is. 1:11).

Isaiah also predicts God's vengence against Israel:

> As a lion—a great beast—growls over its prey and, when the shepherds gather in force against him, is not dismayed by their cries nor cowed by their noise—so the Lord of Hosts will descend to make war against the mount and hill of Zion (Is. 31:4).

Similarly, Jeremiah criticizes the sacrificial cult (6:20;7:21;14:11) and speaks about God driving the flock of Israel to the slaughter (12:3). According to Hosea, God says, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings" (Hos. 6:6; see also 8:13;9:4). This is because Israel will be God's sacrificial victim:

> I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great beast to the House of Judah, I will attack and stride away, carrying the prey that no one can rescue (Hos. 5:14, see also 13:7-8).

Amos (4:4;5:21) also condemns sacrifice and forsees Israel's punishment (3:13;5:16;6:14;7:17). There is no contradiction, therefore, when some of the prophets who criticize the institution of sacrifice nonetheless conceive of its existence in the end of days (Jer. 33:17; Mal. 3:4). At that time the relationship between God and Israel will be restored. God will again be a protective shepherd and Israel the divine flock. Since Israel will not be subject to divine wrath, the substitution of animals for humans will again take place.

As is now evident, the bovine and ovine metaphors that inform Israelite thought are actualized in a variety of ways in Israelite religious practices. When metaphors provide a foundation for thought and practice as they do in biblical religion, there is always a danger that such metaphors will become so powerful that they will be mistaken for Truth. Therefore, at the same time that a religious system works to establish its metaphors it must simultaneously prevent them from getting out of hand. It is possible that one biblical narrative worries about this problem, namely, the story of the golden calf (Exod. 32). When Moses is up on the mountain receiving God's instruction, the people are at the foot of the mountain making a golden calf. They proclaim before this calf, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you from the land of Egypt." Cross (1973:74,198) has argued that this story was originally a legend of the old santuary of Bethel that claimed Aaronic authority for its bull iconography. In its present formulation, however, the story constitutes a polemic by another group of priests against the Aaronide priesthood and the bull iconography associated with it. Whether or not one finds Cross' reconstruction plausible, it is appropriate to consider other possible meanings this narrative might have given the importance of bovine metaphors in biblical thought and practice. From this vantage point, the story can also be read as a statement about the potential for one's metaphors to become deified. According to this perspective, the narrative of the golden calf worries about the process that Durkheim claimed was the essence of the religious life, namely, the tendency of societies to deify the symbols of their collective existence (Durkheim 1965). In this case, the Israelites take their own metaphors so seriously that they mistake the calf for God. The story of the golden calf, therefore, recognizes the temptation for society to worship itself

through its own symbols. Interestingly enough, Aaron as he is portrayed in this account realizes the power of metaphors to get out of hand. In response to Moses' accusation that he was responsible for the incident, Aaron says:

> I said to them [the Israelites], "Whoever has gold, take it off!" They gave it to me and I hurled it into the fire and out came this calf.

Aaron is alluding to the fact that the deification of one's metaphors can occur without one being aware of it. Moses' response to this incident, therefore, is calculated. He has to turn the calf from a deity back into a metaphor for Israelite society. He does this by grinding it into dust, mixing it with water, and making the people drink it. In this way the people learn that the calf is not God but merely a metaphor for themselves.

Conclusion: The Beginning and End of a Root Metaphor

By way of conclusion, it is worth considering why metaphors from the herds, flocks and fields play such a prominent role in shaping Israelite religious practices. It is probably true that such images were readily available because animal husbandry and agriculture were important components of Israelite society. Yet, pastoral metaphors are by far more important than agricultural ones in structuring Israelite practice. The question, therefore, arises as to why husbandry metaphors played a more prominent role than agricultural metaphors. Indeed, it appears that in the period during which the biblical texts were written, Israelite society was becoming less pastoral. Yet, this development does not appear to have undermined the importance of animal metaphors in Israelite thought.

It is possible that animal metaphors won out over agricultural metaphors because, as Levi-Strauss noted (1962;1966), differences between animals are excellent for expressing various conceptual distinctions. Indeed, animals are better for representing social relations than plants because animals mate, eat, die and generally perform human-like acts. It is possible that the biblical narrative about Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-16) reflects the victory of herd and flock metaphors over agricultural ones. In that story Cain and Abel bring different kinds of offerings to God. Cain brings an agricultural gift, while Abel brings an animal from his flock. God, however, looks more favorably on Abel's gift than Cain's. This story has sometimes been interpreted as reflecting the tension between the pastoral and agricultural forms of life (Speiser 1964:31). But in light of the importance of pastoral metaphors in biblical thought, another possible interpretation emerges. Perhaps the story is also about which domain–husbandry or agriculture–will become paradigmatic for Israelite thought. The fact that God looks more favorably on Abel's animal sacrifice than on Cain's agricultural gift intimates that animal metaphors are

more perspicacious than agricultural ones. One can only imagine how biblical religion might have developed had the dominant metaphors been drawn from the domain of agriculture.

There may have been other factors as well that contributed to the importance attached to animal metaphors. In biblical religion, the divine realm could not serve as adequately as a source of metaphors as it often does in other religious systems. In part, this is because Israel conceived of itself as having but one God. Moreover, biblical religion only attributed to God a limited number of human functions, including speech, jealousy and anger. But it did not ascribe to God the more basic human functions such as hunger, thirst and sexual activity. These theological ideas imposed certain kinds of limitations on what the divine realm could metaphorically be used to represent, as is evident once one turns to the mythological systems of African and Australian religions, to name but two. In these systems, the gods not only eat and drink, but fornicate, commit incest and adultery, among other things. Consequently, the whole range of cultural and social activities can be discussed in terms of the gods' activities. Israel's distinctive conception of God, therefore, foreclosed the possibility of the divine realm's serving as either a model for or a model of Israelite society. When you have only one God, and that God does not engage in very many human functions, it is difficult to represent social relationships in terms of theological statements. While God is described as the father and mother of Israel, God has no mother, sisters, or sisters-in-law with whom to commit incest.[31] By the same token, there are no wives available with whom to commit adultery. If these social relations are to be expressed, therefore, they must find their formulation in another set of terms. In the case of Israel, the herds and flocks obviously supplied the vocabulary that was used to reflect upon social life.

The herds and flocks, therefore, remained unchallenged throughout the biblical period as the foundational metaphor for Israelite thought and practice. Revolutions in thought and practice are often linked to the displacement of one root metaphor by another. A change in operative metaphors, therefore, produces a new community. To some extent, the development of early Christianity out of biblical religion is related to such an event. Given that the first Christians were urban (Meeks 1983), it is not surprising that early Christians did not find bovine and ovine metaphors very compelling. Instead a new foundational metaphor emerged, namely, the body of Christ. In the letters of Paul, for example, the community of the faithful is described as the body of Christ and each member is a member of Christ's body (I Cor. 6:15;11:3,7;12:17). The equation of individual members of Christ's body generated the following proposition: just as Christ had been crucified and resurrected, so the faithful had figuratively undergone the same process. Moreover, since God can be imagined as having a human body, social relations can be expressed directly in theological propositions. Reference to

Christ's body can explain the possibility that the community is unified despite its apparent diversity: "For as in one body, we have many members and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:4). Sexual offenses also were couched in similar terms:

> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? (I Cor. 6:15-16).

In Paul's writings, therefore, the body of Christ serves as the metaphor for stating the kinds of issues that in biblical thought found expression in husbandry metaphors.

When one root metaphor dislodges another as in this case, several consequences naturally follow. First, new practices emerge to express and validate the importance of the new metaphoric system. In the early Christian communities the eucharist constituted the embodiment of the new metaphor. By drinking the cup of wine and eating the bread, one consumed Christ's blood and flesh and literally became a member of Christ's body (I Cor. 10:4;11:23-24). Second, many of the ideas from the previous system of signification are reinterpreted in terms of the new body of metaphors. In this case, the new metaphoric system had the power to take over the notion of sacrifice from biblical religion. The crucifixion of Christ was interpreted as the quintessential sacrificial act by God for humanity (Rom. 4:25). The death of Jesus thus saves humanity from God's wrath just as the sacrifical animal did in biblical religion (Rom. 5:9). In a very real sense, then, the role of animals in Israelite religion was absorbed in early Christianity by the body of Christ. Indeed, according to Paul, Christ was the paschal lamb (I Cor. 5:7). An interesting reversal, therefore, occurred as one root metaphor replaced another. In Israelite religion, the sacrifice of an animal was a substitute for the death of humans, while in early Christianity, the cruxification of Christ was a substitute for sacrificing animals.

While a new metaphoric system can take over many aspects of a previous system, not everything can be accommodated. Consequently, as one root metaphor replaces another, those practices which cannot be assimilated have to be repudiated. The displacement of husbandry metaphors by metaphors of Christ's body may explain in part why Paul rejected the need for the gentiles to observe the distinction between clean and unclean animals (I Cor. 10:25). To be sure, such rules had functioned as a way to keep Jews and gentiles apart, and consequently, they were no longer necessary in the community envisioned by Paul. But it is also possible that these biblical rules regarding animals lost their self-evidence once animal husbandry no longer served as the controlling metaphor. It is ironic that the difference between Israelite religion and early Christianity often has been framed in

terms of an opposition between ritualistic and non-ritualistic systems. Early Christianity, like biblical religion, instituted its own eating practices (such as the eucharist) that were governed by strict rules:

> Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord (I Cor. 11:17).

The difference between the communities therefore stemmed not from a different attitute towards ritual *per se* but from the kind of metaphors that governed their practices. Biblical practices based on animal metaphors were a stumbling block for Paul, who maintained that anything that was not founded on Christ was not a foundation at all: "For no other foundation can one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:10). Thus the Gospel of Matthew was literally correct when it described Christ as the cornerstone that Israel had rejected. Israelite thought rejected the notion of God's having a human body. This was the metaphor upon which early Christianity was founded. If the displacement of one root metaphor by another plays such a crucial role in creating a new community, it is evident why the transition from one religious system to the next is so often obscure. The next system is not created until the new metaphor has taken hold. But it does not take root until it has established itself in practice and crowded out practices founded on other metaphors. By that time, of course, everything is changed and people are already living in a different world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, is author of *The Human Will in Judaism: The Mishnah's Philosophy of Intention* (Scholars Press) and "Creation and Classification in Judaism: From Priestly to Rabbinic Conceptions," (*History of Religions*, May 1987). His interests include anthropology of religion, theories of interpretation and the human sciences.

NOTES

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[1]The term "foundational metaphor" derives from Nisbet (1969), and the term "root metaphor," which will be used subsequently, derives from Stephen C. Pepper (1942; 38-39).

[2]In many ways Levi-Strauss anticipates this development by making metaphor and metonymy central categories in his analysis. Nonetheless, his search for rules and structures places him among those who work within a paradigm more closely related to the natural sciences.

[3]The most recent and radical statement of the new position is the series of essays in the volume edited by Clifford and Marcus (1986).

[4]Throughout this paper, I use the expression "religion of ancient Israel" or "rituals of ancient Israel" to refer only to the beliefs and practices of those writers who stand behind the texts of the Hebrew Bible. Archaeological evidence of course indicates that there were other beliefs and practices in ancient Israelite religion that were not reflected in the biblical text.

[5]While the view espoused here derives from the work of Mary Douglas (1975), I have a problem with the kind of language she sometimes adopts to explain the homologies one finds between a social system and that society's views of nature. Douglas, for example, understands such homologies as communicating information (5-6) or encoding or expressing patterns of social relations (249). For example, she interprets attitudes towards animals as implicitly communicating information about proper sexual behavior. But this view is problematic because no one but the anthropologist understands what is being communicated, and therefore it simply cannot be understood as communication. In my view, therefore, the homologies one finds in culture do no communicate or express anything at all. The parallels between sexual behavior and food rules emerge only because individuals experience a satisfaction when various parts of the cultural system fit together. In other words, there is a sense of rightness when various parts of the cultural system cohere. This view is also found in Douglas' work, but it is sometimes overshadowed by the more problematic language noted above.

[6]Gen. 49:24; Is. 40:11;53:6;63:14; Jer. 12:3;13:17;23:2-3;31:10;50:19;51:40; Ezek. 34:1-31; Hos. 4:16; Micah 2:12; Ps. 23;78:52;79:13;95:7;100:3.

[7]All quotations from the Hebrew Bible derive from the translation of the Jewish Publication Society of America.

[8]For a more comprehensive discussion, see Schochet (1984).

[9]A number of these correspondences have been noted by Milgrom (1981), Douglas (1975:267) and Soler (1979).

[10]In dating the sources I rely primarily upon Noth (1981). The rules about first-born animals, Israelites and first fruits all appear in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 22:28;23:19). The *J* strand knows of the rules about first-born animals and Israelite males (Exod. 13:12-13;34:19-20). The Deuteronomist mentions all three prohibitions (Deut. 15:19; Exod. 13:12-13; Deut. 26:10) as does the Priestly source (Num. 8:16-18).

[11]The law requiring Israelites and their animals to rest appears in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:9; Deut. 5:12-14) as well as the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:9). The death penalty for animals and humans appears in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 21:12,28).

[12]The rules about human and animal blemishes are found in Deuteronomy (Deut. 17:1;15:21;23:2) and the Holiness Code (Lev. 21:17;22:19) as are the prohibitions against various kinds of mixtures (Deut. 7:3-4;22:9; Lev. 19:19). The

treatment of human corpses and animal carcasses as sources of purity is specified in the Priestly strand (Num. 9:7; Lev. 11:24).

[13]It may be the case that prior to the time when the rule appeared in writing, Israelites circumcised their male children on the eighth day. There is no way to verify this. However, Ex. 4:25, which is earlier, suggests that circumcision may not always have been on the eighth day. In any case, it is still interesting that the rule about circumcising on the eighth day is articulated in writing later than the rule specifying regarding the day on which animals can be sacrificed.

[14]It is possible that the metaphoric equation of Israelites and animals with cloven hooves underlies a practice which subsequently develops in Judaism. According to one tradition when the priests stand up before the congregation to bless the people, they divide the fingers of their hands into two groups with the division taking place between the third and fourth fingers. This makes the hands resemble cloven hooves!

[15]The rabbis were sensitive to the symbolic association between unclean animals and unclean nations (Genesis Rabbah 65:1 and Leviticus Rabbah 13:5).

[16]Douglas (1975:305) gives a similar interpretation of the attitude toward the pig in biblical religion. She argues that the pig had one of the criteria that makes it an insider (cloven hooves) and thus it is treated like a half-blooded Israelite.

[17]The rabbis suggest a similar interpretation of the ass in the story of Abraham's going up to Moriah to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22). When Abraham commands his servants to remain behind with the asses, the rabbis conclude that the servants are being equated with asses (Genesis Rabbah 56:2).

[18]After completing this essay, I discovered that Calum Carmichael (1985:193-6) has given a very similar interpretation to this story. Robert Alter (1981:39), for his part, applies a similar kind of analysis to another biblical character's name, namely Eglon, which is related etymologically to the Hebrew word *ʿegel*, calf. Alter concludes that "the ruler of the occupying Moabite power turns out to be a fatted calf readied for slaughter. . . ."

[19]In several cases tribes of Israel are compared to an ass (Gen. 49:14). This comparison would seem to undermine my claim that the ass is a metaphor for the local stranger. However, as we have seen above, any given metaphor can perform a number of roles. For example, although God is generally the shepherd of Israel, in a few instances God is described as a lion that preys on Israel. Thus metaphors can be put to a number of uses depending upon the message that needs to be conveyed. Moreover, sometimes an ass is just an ass, as in the story of Moses putting his family on an ass (Exod. 4:20).

[20]Absalom is also a product of mixed seed. His mother is Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur (II Sam. 3:3). See also Cohen (1985), who gives a similar interpretation of the use of mule imagery in later Judaism.

[21]A number of other interpretations have been offered of these rules. Haran (1979), for example, treats these rules as deriving from a humanitarian concern to prevent cruelty to animals. In my judgment, this view is difficult to reconcile with the fact that ancient Israelites sacrificed animals. If cruelty to animals was so central an issue, would not the sacrificing of animals qualify as inhumane? Moreover, in what sense is it less cruel to sacrifice an animal and its offspring on subsequent days rather than on the same day? Why would cooking a kid-goat in its mother's milk be more cruel than in the milk of some other mother goat? More compelling is Milgrom's view (1981b) that these prohibitions demarcate the distinction between life and death:

> *Milk is the symbol of life and the Bible prohibits using that which stands for life to bring death. The Torah is endemically opposed to the mixing of opposites. The commingling of holiness and impurity is forbidden on pain of death; so the commingling of life and death is equally disastrous.*

Milgrom offers the same kind of interpretation of the prohibition of slaughtering a mother and its young on the same day:

It is saying that the processes of life and death have to be kept separate. The same is true with the bird and her young; she is hatching her young. Let not that life-giving process be the occasion of her death.

There is much to say for Milgrom's interpretation. But the acceptance of it does not necessarily entail ruling out alternatives. Practices can surely encode more than one set of distinctions. As previously mentioned, what gives rituals their power in a given community may be the various ways that they make contact with other aspects of the cultural system. But lest one think that Milgrom's interpretation explains all the facts, it is important to realize that it is also subject to certain kinds of criticisms. If the distinction between life and death was so crucial for the biblical writers why did they continue the institution of sacrifice, which requires the slaughter of animals? It seems difficult to reconcile this practice with a system that wants to preserve a distinction between life and death. Moreover, there are instances in biblical law that explicitly mix the categories of life and death. In order to purify oneself from corpse uncleanness, for example, a person must be sprinkled with a solution made from the ashes of a heifer and "living" water (Num. 19). Here, a substance that is symbolic of life (living water) is mixed with a substance that is associated with death (ashes of a heifer). Moreover, if impurity represents death, it is difficult to understand how sprinkling oneself with ashes of a cow could effect purification. One would expect purification to occur via a substance that symbolizes life. Finally, if the purpose of prohibition on the kid-goat was to establish a distinction between life and death, why is it only forbidden to cook it in its mother's milk? If it was cooked in the milk of another animal, would this not constitute mixing life and death?

[22]I owe this insight to Girard (1979:5) although I by no means accept his view that primitive religion can be interpreted as an attempt to deal with the ever-present possibility that violence will erupt.

[23]When Jesse sends his son David to King Saul, he sends along a kid-goat signaling that just as Saul would eat this kid, he would attempt to consume David (I Sam. 16:20). Similarly, in the story in which Manoah and his wife are informed by an angel that they will shortly conceive a male son, they reciprocate by offering the angel a kid-goat (Judg. 13:15). The goat also figures prominently in the story in which Joseph's brothers sell Joseph into slavery. In this case, it is not a kid but a male goat. The brothers dip Joseph's coat into the blood of the goat in order to convince their father that Joseph was attacked by a wild animal. Again, the goat serves as a symbolic replacement for the young lad. When Jacob sees the coat he exclaims, "Joseph was devoured by a wild beast," when in fact it was the goat that was devoured by the beasts who were Joseph's brothers.

[24]Driver (1895:32), Noth (1981:271) and Eissfeldt (1965:200) assign this source to the J strand.

[25]In a personal communication, Milgrom has objected to this interpretation because the phrase "her offspring" is neuter and thus can include male offspring. I do not regard this objection as particularly damaging to my thesis. To begin with, it is difficult to determine the gender of fledglings. Consequently, if a correspondence is to emerge between rules applying to capturing birds and capturing women, as a purely practical matter the gender of the birds might have to be ignored. Moreover, there is a larger theoretical question at stake here. If the rules governing animals are not precisely parallel to those governing social relations, does that mean that the correspondence is not operative? I would argue against Milgrom that simply showing a number of similarities is sufficient to make their correspondence plausible. The reason I hold this view is because I do not regard these correspondences as manufactured intentionally by the actors. Rather, the interconnections between various cultural rules emerge haphazardly and without the conscious knowledge of the participants. To expect a precise parallel in all cases is to take for granted a more conscious model of how social rules develop.

[26]For the sake of simplicity, I am not distinguishing here between the Holiness Code and Leviticus. I am assuming that the authors of chapter 18 had in hand the Holiness Code and therefore one can speak about them as a unit.

[27]It is possible that the rule against sacrificing an animal and its offspring on the same day also corresponds to the prohibition against sexual relations between a

man and his daughter-in-law, a prohibition found in Leviticus but not Deuteronomy. If one looks at the rule about sacrificing the animal from a woman's standpoint, she is commanded not to have a male animal and its male offspring sacrificed on the same day. Doing so would parallel the prohibition against a woman's having intercourse with her father-in-law. One might object that I have no grounds for introducing a woman's perspective. However, one has to remember that for unintentional violations and for rites of purification, women were required to bring animals to the Temple. Consequently, the prohibition against sacrificing an animal and its offspring on the same day is also directed to women.

[28]An objection to the view presented here might be raised from the recent work of Jacob Milgrom (1971,1976a,1976b) on the biblical notions of sacrifice. Specifically, Milgrom argues that the so-called "sin-offering" is not a sin-offering at all but a "purificatory offering" that cleanses the altar of impurity. By the same token, Milgrom suggests that the "guilt-offering" is, in fact, a "reparations offering" which constitutes repayment for misusing property of the deity. Milgrom's understanding of these offerings might seem to undermine the view that animals are substitutes for humans. For if the offering does not atone for a person's sin or guilt, in what sense is it meaningful to say that the animal is a substitute for human life? Milgrom's interpretation of these sacrifices, however, is not incompatible with the understanding offered here. In fact, the interpretation I am suggesting answers a question that Milgrom's thesis leaves open. According to Milgrom's understanding, the question still arises as to why sprinkling the blood of the animal effects purification. I suggest that the reason the animal's blood has such effects is because the death of the animal and the spilling out of its life force serves as a substitute for the person on whose behalf it is brought. The person who has defiled the sanctuary, for example, owes God his or her life. But rather than take human life, God takes animal life instead. The same argument can be made with respect to the "reparation offerings." The death of an animal serves as reparation for trespassing on divine property, because God ultimately has the right to take the person's life but has agreed instead to accept the death of an animal. Moreover, the interpretation I am offering is very close to that of Levine (1974:61). In analysing the notion of *kpr* (atone) in non-cultic contexts, Levine concludes that:

The term koper "ransom, expiation, gift" is a case in point. . .[It is] a payment made for the purpose of erasing or "wiping away" guilt incurred by the offense.

As a concession, one may in certain situations of limited responsibility redeem his life.(*padah*) by paying a *koper* (Exodus 21:30), when, according to the theory of Israelite law, actual forfeiture of one's life would have been required. In other situations, for example, premeditated murder, no *koper* may be substituted for the death penalty (Numbers 35:31-32). Similarly, when one's time to die has come, no *koper* is possible (Psalm 49:8). The *koper* is thus a substitute for a life (Exodus 30:12; Isaiah 43:3), one's own or another's (Proverbs 21:18). Levine argues that the biblical cultic writers alter this conception somewhat by making the sacrifice a prerequisite activity for expiation:

As a result of the performance of certain rites, God grants expiation or atonement. In such instances, expiation, forgiveness, etc., are not the direct physical effects of the rites performed. Such acts are prerequisite, but not causational. It is God who grants the desired result! (1974:65-66)

Finally, Levine argues that blood is a cleansing agent because blood can serve as a substitute for life (1974:68).

[29]This view closely resembles that put forth by Levine. See previous note.

[30]De Vaux (1965:455) anticipates this view to some extent. This idea is similar, moreover, to Girard's. Girard argues that sacrifices are displaced objects of violence. But sometimes "the mechanism of substitutions had gone astray, and those whom the sacrifice was designed to protect became its victims" (40).

[31]For an example of how kinship relations can be expressed in a theological idiom see Harman (1985) on the role of kinship metaphors in the Hindu pantheon.

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WOLF OF THE BEES: GERMANIC SHAMANISM AND THE BEAR HERO

Stephen O. Glosecki

Abstract

Undeniably, the Beowulf story as we have it was recorded long after the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, the Old English epic preserves significant traces of native Germanic myth. Addressing itself to vestiges of this mythos, this paper connects animal imagery in Beowulf with its analogues in other early Germanic sources, both literary and iconographic. Most likely, the ubiquitous animal motifs reflect migration-age warrior cults that invoked strong beasts as eponymous protectors. In particular, literary, graphic and etymological evidence suggests that magico-religious attitudes toward the bear—the spirit companion of the strongest heroes—waned slowly while Iron-Age nations evolved into the Germanic states of feudal Europe. Ultimately, the belief in animal guardians—a belief shared by other, unrelated tribal peoples—probably stems from prehistoric Germanic shamanism.

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In the past few decades the term shaman has occasionally appeared in discussions of early Germanic literature and culture. Such references are usually isolated and brief. H.R. Ellis Davidson is exceptional in that she devotes eight pages to Odin's shamanic attributes, e.g., his riding on the eight-legged horse Sleipnir ("the typical steed of the shaman"), his journeying to the underworld, his hanging on Yggdrasil ("the center of the shaman's cosmology"), his tendencies toward shape-shifting, his reputation as a seer, etc. (141-49). Emphasizing Odin's role as "the bringer of ecstasy," Davidson mentions the etymology of Wodan, a name cognate with the Germanic *wut*, meaning "high mental excitement, fury, intoxication, or possession." Since anthropologists generally consider the use of ecstasy the *sine qua non* of shamanism, this etymology, when viewed alongside the rest of Davidson's evidence, firmly links the chief Germanic god to a fully elaborated shamanic tradition–a tradition pervasive enough among the prehistoric northern tribes to have left its mark upon the literature that developed among their descendants in northern Europe, Britain and Iceland during the early Middle Ages.

Davidson's treatment of this etymology is convincing, but less complete than that presented by Haakon Shetelig earlier in this century.[1] Shetelig's discussion is important because it expands the limits of ancient ecstatic practice beyond the confines of Germanic culture to the Italic, and thus tempts us to seek a source of Germanic shamanism among the early Indo-Europeans. The temptation grows stronger when we add the Greek *enthousiasmos* to his list of terms; though not an etymon, this word meaning "possession by a god" indicates the same culture trait: ecstasy. However, a search for the ultimate source of Germanic shamanism–whether Indo-European society itself, or an auto-

chthonous Finno-Ugrian substratum absorbed by proto-Germanic invaders during a distant phase of the Neolithic–is beyond the scope of this paper.

Shetelig's discussion is also important because it represents an early effort to place Germanic ecstatic practice in the broad context of tribalism at large, where I believe it logically belongs. Hence we will return to "the Siberian shaman, and the Indian medicine-men" in an effort to illuminate the preliterary shamanic tradition that had some bearing upon the development of important Germanic works like the Old English epic *Beowulf*.

Typical of the more recent references to shamanism in Germanic studies is George Speake's single but provocative sentence in his treatment of predatory bird figures in Anglo-Saxon animal art (a treatment in its turn indebted to the aforementioned work by Davidson): "the interpretation must be that the birds represent the mind of Odin as seer or shaman" (82). Less typical are A. M. Arent's relatively frequent references to shamanism in "The Heroic Pattern: Old Germanic Helmets, *Beowulf*, and *Grettis Saga*." Although her purpose is neither to define the term fully nor apply it extensively, Arent does establish its relevance to the study of early Germanic culture (136):

> Animal names for individuals and tribes, depictions and later descriptions of the wearing of animal masks, of theriomorphic transformations, of the appearance of the ancestors or the dead in animal form, and so on attest to shamanistic beliefs among the Germanic tribes. Such animal affinities found obvious expression in warrior groups like the *berserkir* (bear-skins) or the *úlfhethnar* (wolf-skins).

Such a clear statement of the case is exceptional; more typical is Marijane Osborn and Stella Longland's incidental assertion that the opening stanza of the Old English *Rune Poem* "contains a shamanistic dimension in the reference to the casting of lots" (27).

Among such references to Germanic shamanism–references all the more intriguing on account of their usual brevity, obscurity and isolation–Peter Foote's note to Chapter 18 of *The Saga of Gisli* is especially compelling because its very terseness implies the foregone conclusion that shamanistic practices were current in medieval Iceland, Norway, and by extension–since Viking culture, like Amerindian, despite geographical variation, is generally regarded as uniform–the North Germanic world at large:

> a spell: *seithr* in the Icelandic, a type of shamanistic magic-working, probably borrowed by the Norwegians from their Lapp neighbors, although some people think it has more ancient Germanic origins (Johnston and Foote 79).

According to Foote, then, shamanic ritual persisted in Norway and Iceland until well into the historical period, and the sagas–however much one may emphasize their obvious fictionalizing of actual events (e.g., Allen 13-27; Andersson 49-50)–can be mined for evidence of genuine Norse practice.

I would expand upon Foote's tacit assumption that the sagas reflect actual practice and are not simply colorful figments of the Icelandic imagination. Although their heroes are larger than life, with exploits duly exaggerated, the sagas are nonetheless repositories of traditional lore handed down from the Migration Period and preserved, with inevitable distortion, by those northernmost Germanic peoples who resisted Mediterranean influence longer than their cousins who migrated south, such as the Anglo-Saxons. It makes sense that the sagas and eddas should retain certain common Germanic traits, highly romanticized, of course, but genuine, nonetheless. Some of these traits have their reflexes in Old English literature, too, especially in *Beowulf* and the metrical charms, although here they are obscured by the sustained efforts of the medieval Church to eradicate the old heathen folkways. As Arent writes:

> Of all the Germanic heroic epics, the Beowulf poem stands both chronologically and spiritually closest to the mythical origin. . . .The two religious streams, pagan and Christian, converged in *Beowulf* (149).

So when contemporary scholars briefly refer to shamanism in their discussions of Germanic art, they are recognizing a pre-Christian culture trait that was simply too pervasive to disappear completely from post-migration societies drawn progressively farther away from their original Baltic sphere of influence. Granted such a situation, it stands to reason that the Norse Saga writers, who were simply farther from Rome than the Anglo-Saxons, would retain sharp fragments of the shamanic tradition in their works, whereas the Anglo-Saxons would incorporate only occasional reflexes (perhaps more arcane to them than they are to us today, with the hindsight made possible by our diachronic point of view). Sporadically, scholars working independently of one another have noticed isolated shamanic elements in early Germanic art. My purpose is to focus more closely upon a few of these ancient northern culture traits that had considerable impact upon the Beowulf legend in its formative stages.

In the decades following Tolkien's extremely influential lecture delivered at Oxford in 1936 ("Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics"), mainstream Old English criticism tended to avoid sifting through the epic to find evidence of continental Germanic customs. Since Tolkien urged critics to see *Beowulf* as a work of art rather than a storehouse of ethnographic data, Augustinian approaches, which emphasize the Christian orientation of the epic, have predominated. It has thus been unfashionable to recognize native Germanic elements in the Old English epic, a work composed well after the conversion to Christianity. Nonetheless, some scholars have pursued this line of inquiry, for instance, A. M. Arent, Brian Branston, H.R. Ellis Davidson, Gwyn Jones, Francis P. Magoun, Jeff Opland, Thomas Pettitt, T.A. Shippey, and more recently, John D. Niles in *Beowulf: The Poem*

and Its Traditions. Opland and Niles both work with oral-formulaic theory, which by its very nature presupposes an early Germanic source for the complex system of versification used in Old English, Old Norse, Old High German and Old Saxon heroic poetry. But generally, Anglo-Saxonists have moved away from the methodology of Klaeber and Chambers, both of whom made extensive comparisons between *Beowulf* and the sagas, thus placing the epic in a Baltic rather than a Mediterranean context.

However, the structualist theory of Claude Levi-Strauss gives new validity to the effort to view *Beowulf* as a work that, like the language and verse form in which it is composed, is inherently Germanic and only superficially Augustianian. To those interested in the recurrent narrative patterns that Jung would call "archetypal," Propp "functional," and Campbell "monomythic," a literary work presents the reader with an *overt* text–Beowulf the epic hero, who fights monsters to earn fame–and a *covert* text–Bee-wolf the shamanistic were-bear, who grapples with underworld spirits to gain power. The overt text is Old English, civilized, Christian; the covert text is Germanic, tribal, pagan. The overt text is the folktale plot line recorded by an Anglo-Saxon scribe; the covert text is the underlying structural pattern that gives surface form to plot and character. The theory that mythic literature in general uses the same archetypal patterns finds its strongest support in the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, whose work in the discipline of anthropology, though mentioned in passing by Shippey (p. 3 note 11) and Jones (xvi), has not yet been systematically applied to an Old English work.

Levi-Strauss consistently emphasizes the universal *structures* that underlie individual *events*. In order to account for recurrent patterns in the social systems that evolve among discontinuous cultures, he tacitly applies the general principle that the human mind, like the human body, is structurally identical everywhere; therefore, people living in widely separated societies with no conceivable historical connection are predisposed by the very structure of the brain to develop culture complexes based on identical intellectual operations. However widely such complexes may vary as events, they are structurally the same–they are "a direct expression of the structure of the mind (and behind the mind, probably, of the brain), and not an inert product of the action of the environment on an amorphous consciousness" (1963:90).

Constantly, Levi-Strauss works "to discover, behind the chaos of rules and customs, a single structural scheme existing and operating in different spatial and temporal contexts" (1967:22). Shamanism offers us a case in point: although the word "shaman" is Tungusic and although the classic example of the shamanic culture complex is to be found among tribes living along the Amur River in far eastern Asia, the same complex has been attested among many other tribes widely separated in space and time. Tribal doctors applying shamanic techniques have been observed

not only in Asia, but also in the upper reaches of Northern Europe, in Africa, both Americas, Oceania and Australia. Therefore, we can consider shamanism to be a structure and its discrete manifestations as events. For a full definition of the culture complex, including wide-ranging examples, the reader is referred to Mircea Eliade's seminal work, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, which gives some attention to the shamanic traits of early Germanic society (379-87 *et passim*).

For now, we can define the shamans briefly as tribal doctors–typically healers, but potentially destroyers–who employ ecstasy to help their friends and harm their enemies. During trance, when their souls are said to range far beyond the body, they manipulate familiar spirits to accomplish the desired effect, benign or malignant. More often than not, shamans claim to assume the form of their guardian spirits during the metempsychotic journey; hence, as a general rule, to be a shaman is to be a shape-shifter. Since a confusing array of terms has been used to denote the shamanic guardian–familiar, tutelary spirit, animal companion, animal helper, animal guardian–I will henceforth use the Ojibwa term *nigouimes*, which means nothing other than "shamanistic animal guardian" (Levi-Strauss, 1963:18). Among the Ojibwa as among most other shamanic tribes, the *nigouimes* is usually identified with an animal ranging in the tribal habitat. It is not uncommon for a doctor to claim more than one *nigouimes*, as among the Netsilik, where shamans (*angatkoks*) keep acquiring more of these mysterious allies (*tunraqs*) throughout their careers (Balikci 225). In the northern hemisphere, the most powerful, if not the most common, *nigouimes* is the bear.

Arcane images of the bear link *Beowulf* to a shamanic tradition. Although the beast itself never fully materializes in the overt text of the poem, nonetheless it lurks between the lines, buried in the covert text, and its bulk gives the hero shape, strength, and size. Tribal bear lore exerted powerful influence upon the Beowulf legend in its formative stages; reflexes of this preliterary influence can still be seen in the poem passed on to us by an Anglo-Saxon who indulged an antiquarian interest as he reworked continental material for his insular audience.

The link between Beowulf and the bear has long been common knowledge among Anglo-Saxonists;[2] our immediate task is to account for this vague but vital connection. T. A. Shippey offers us a starting point in one of the more recent articles touching upon Beowulf's relation to the bear. In "The Fairy-Tale Structure of *Beowulf*," Shippey concerns himself mainly with the morphology of the poem but also makes some provocative remarks about the characterization of the hero. Two of these need some qualification. The first, having to do with the bear as perceived by tribal people, pertains to the epic as an Old English version of the widespread Bear's Son Tale: "To primitive peoples the bear is remarkable chiefly because it can hibernate, i.e., it appears to die and come to

life again" (11). As far as it goes, this statement is quite true: the bear's long sleep and dramatic reawakening–groggy, half-starved, proverbially irascible–must be impressive indeed to hunters who track this quarry knowing full well that the bear is the strongest, most dangerous game of all.

And here a crucial point must be made: those tribes most impressed by the bear are also those most intimately associated with shamanism, as A. Irving Hallowell shows in *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere*. A careful reading of Hallowell leads us inexorably toward a general rule that has significant implications in the context of *Beowulf*: among tribal peoples, bear cults do not appear in the absence of shamanism. Although the converse is not true at all–shamanism occurs widely outside the range of the bear–we can assume that evidence of a bear cult equals evidence of shamanism. And this is what the arcane bear imagery in *Beowulf* amounts to: evidence of a preliterary Germanic bear cult, which amounts to evidence of preliterary Germanic shamanism.

Further, few ideas are more fundamental to this culture complex than the belief that the shaman has the power to die and return to life. Eliade dwells upon this point in his definitive work on the subject (33-66, 93-95). In initiation rites especially, falling into a state of ecstasy and later awakening from the trance is regularly viewed as a ritualistic death and rebirth which distinguishes the practitioners from their peers, just as the bear's sleeping and reawakening distinguishes it from other, more ordinary animals. With good reason, these two creatures, bear and shaman, often converge in the tribal mind; to some extent, their special powers are attributed to secret knowledge acquired during metempsychotic journeys to and from the realm of the dead, usually imagined as a shadowy underworld.

So Shippey is quite right when he asserts that the bear's power "to die and come to life again" is very impressive to the tribal mind. And the real impact of this impression can best be accounted for in the context of shamanism.

Therefore, his second remark, which directs readers of *Beowulf* away from the study of shamanism, is considerably less helpful than his first: "Of course the grave, thoughtful, dignified hero of the poem that we know bears little trace of the shaman" (11). On the contrary, the hero we know is subtly but indelibly marked by reflexes of Germanic shamanism, especially insofar as he displays notable ursine affinities. Furthermore, the implication that Beowulf's shamanic traits must compromise his dignity should be discarded, for in tribal culture shamans, however offensive their habits may appear to us, were usually venerable figures, respected doctors, true dignitaries, often quite thoughtful and grave, even though they may have muttered and frothed during fits of ecstasy. The fact that nowadays we are generally repulsed by shamanic practice attests to our extreme distance from, and concomitant misunderstanding of, the realities

of tribal life. In the eyes of their peers, shamans were sophisticated professionals, well-versed in the esoteric knowledge of the tribal elite, holding in their hands the power of life and death over friends and enemies.[3] Shamans were priests of their people, who, like Beowulf, regularly met monsters in the course of their careers. Unlike the Beowulf whom we may know, but just like his hypothetical prototype in earlier versions of the Germanic *Bear's Son Tale*, shamans themselves became like monsters, since they generally assumed animal form to attack enemies. Still, in the eyes of their own people, such conduct, strange as it may seem to us, was admirable, not reprehensible.

Since they were typically shape-shifters, and since the bear is so widely associated with the shaman, it is ironic that Shippey should call Beowulf a "bear-hero" and yet deny the shamanistic overtones of such an epithet. For to call Beowulf a "bear-hero" is to recognized the shape-shifting propensities of this enigmatic character, who preserves vague nuances of preliterary Germanic myths, the details of which have long since been lost.

Nor is it surprising that Beowulf should be associated with the bear, for this animal is so prone to being seen as a were-creature by the tribal beholder. And here Shippey's first remark falls short, because it emphasizes hibernation to the exclusion of an even more impressive ursine attribute: in northerly ranges removed from simian habitats, no other wild animal is so anthropomorphic. No other northern animal regularly rears up and walks like a human on two legs, nor sits down squarely on its haunches with its back resting comfortably against a tree. No other northern animal has the same "sagacious qualities, the omnivorous habits, and the wide range of facial and bodily expression of emotional behavior" (LaBudde 227). Further, "a bear, unlike other animals, walks on the sole of his foot with the heel touching the ground and leaves a footprint of heel, toe, and arch like that of a human being" (LaBudde 228). Finally, the bear has a wider than usual range of vocalization, including a peculiarly human-sounding high-pitched whine, easily followed by hunters.

There can be no doubt that the bear's anthropomorphic traits must have struck the tribal mind with a rich suggestive power at least as strong as that of the creature's annual reawakening in the spring. Such is the conclusion enforced by universal tales of were-bears in northern lands, where hunters for millennia have closely interacted with this animal, who generally has a shamanistic spirit power commensurate with its irresistible physical force.

It is well known that Beowulf in action borrows something of the bear's great power, if only in his preferred method of combat–the bear-hug:

> I wouldn't bear a sword, a weapon against the dragon,
> if I knew how I might otherwise honorably come to
> grips with that monster, as I did with Grendel long ago (2518b-2521)[4]

Not only does the hero here wish to dispatch the dragon with the same ursine grip that overcame Grendel, but, as he boasts a few lines before, it was this very battle-grip that burst the heart and bones of Dæghrefn, the Frisian champion:

> Not at all was he allowed to bring that treasure, that fabulous necklace, to the Frisian king, for the standard-bearer, the valiant nobleman, fell in the fight; nor was the sword his slayer, but rather the battle-grip smashed his throbbing heart, broke his bone-house (2503-2508a)[5]

Furthermore, like the bear in relation to other animals of the north, Beowulf is more massive than other men, as the coastguard exclaims the moment the Geats land (247b-249a). And he is much stronger, too, as Hrothgar points out when he hears of the hero's arrival (377-381a).

But Beowulf also has a much less tangible association with the bear–a spiritual association all but lost for the modern reader. This spiritual dimension becomes clearer to us at our remove in time and culture if we look briefly at the bear lore of a few tribal societies observed in our own era. In the unavoidable absence of a common Germanic ethnography, we must satisfy ourselves with such obliquely illuminative evidence, drawn from the records of temperamentally similar cultures and applied to the long-gone society that contributed some fragments of its mythos to the Beowulf legend as we now know it.

Among the Lapps and other Finno-Ugrian peoples of northern Eurasia, no other phase of social life involves more elaborate rituals nor more binding taboos than the culture complex built up around the bear hunt. Underlying reasons for this reverent ceremonialism affecting all members of the tribe may perhaps be implicit in the above discussion–the bear's uncanny hibernation, its striking anthropomorphism. Or the reason may lie in the huge amount of food afforded by a slaughtered bear; such a slaughter led to "eat-all" marathon feasts, both in Eurasia and North America. Or it may lie in the fact that before the invention of firearms, killing and dressing out a bear involved much teamwork and a genuine communal effort.

In any case, the very number of *noa names* (euphemisms coined to prevent overt reference to the tabooed entity) accumulated by the bear demonstrates its awesome power in the minds of tribal hunters. Our own terms–bear, bruin–originate as *noa names* designating brown, the color of this creature of power. The Indo-European term, **rks*–apparent in the root morpheme of "arctic" and in the Latin *ursa*–probably disappeared from Germanic long before the historical period, perhaps as a function of the very shamanism we are presently trying to trace. Precisely the same sort of displacement occurred among the Lapps, whose Finno-Ugrian term, *guowža*, was largely replaced by a North Germanic borrowing, *bernu*, at some point in the distant past

(Collinder 158). The very presence of this Scandinavian term, readily available for an ancient borrowing into Lappish, suggests a very early date for the loss of some form of **rks* in favor of a Germanic *noa name* cognate with the New English *bear*. All by itself, this process of euphemistic displacement can hardly reflect anything other than a powerful taboo governing the bear; in turn, the presence of such a binding taboo shows that a bear cult must have existed among the primeval Germanic tribes. Moreover, it would be surprising to find that such compelling tribal attitudes could influence the Germanic lexicon without leaving their mark upon the literature, too.

Among the many "safe" names for bear that could be assembled from northern traditions (e.g., "winter sleeper," "golden paw," "honey hand," "sticky mouth," "hairy one," "master of the forests," "owner of the earth," "god of the mountains," "chief," "elder," or, quite simply, "that's him"), one particular class stands out dramatically. This class comprises kinship terms like "beloved uncle," "elder brother," "chief's son," "grandfather" and "grandmother" (Hallowell 43-50). These terms that address the bear as consanguineous kin imply, along with a totemic family tree, widespread traditions of shape-shifting colorfully illustrated by other elements of bear hunt rituals.

In the Lapp camp after the kill, for instance, one hunter claimed the honor of tying the muzzle of the freshly slain bear to his own face in a ceremonial gesture obviously devised, for whatever more immediate reasons, to approximate the face of the man to the face of the bear. Along with the Lapps, the Voguls and Ostyaks of northwestern Siberia performed a dramatic reenactment of the successful hunt, wherein one hunter played the part of the bear, speaking its appropriate lines in dialogue with the other actors (Collinder 156-63).

Constantly, the dead bear received its due respect. It was generally treated like a person during the hunt itself and, especially, in the course of the attendant ritual, which began in earnest with the actual killing of the bear and the hunters' formal apology for having been obliged to slay this grandfather figure in the best interests of the tribe. Also practiced by Asian tribes farther east, this apology to the slain creature of power calls to mind the bear lore of the Amerindians, which has some striking parallels with Finno-Ugrian and, hypothetically, preliterary Germanic tradition.

In Northwest Coast culture, where the bear's role as the totemic ancestor of certain clans has in itself overtones of shape-shifting and hence, of shamanism, Grizzly-Bear Woman, a common totem pole crest, stands out as a clear example of the anthropomorphized bear (Frazer 3:293-94). Moreover, the totemic use of bear imagery among the Tlingit and Haida may suggest that for the early Germanic tribes too, the shape-shifting bear may have come about in myths of origin devised to account for the acquisition of the totem.

Grizzly-Bear Woman–mythically the wife of a grizzly and mother of his cubs–has a striking analogue in North Germanic literature, in which *Bera* ("She-Bear") of *Hrólfs Saga Kraka* marries *Bjorn* ("He-Bear") and has a son, *Bjarki* ("Little Bear"), the hero widely known as an analogue for Beowulf himself. As R. W. Chambers indicates in a summary of pertinent scholarship, Beowulf's own name means "Bee-wolf," which seems quite the most likely etymology among the other possibilities discussed and discounted by this notable scholar (365-69). Recently, in "*Beowulf*: The Mark of the Beast and the Balance of Frenzy," Thomas Pettitt has confirmed Chambers' opinion and also noted the important relationship between the were-bears in *Hrólfs Saga* and the hero of the Old English epic (528, 530). The same points also figure importantly in Arent's essay (150).

To go a step beyond Chambers, Pettitt and Arent, this metaphor, "Bee-wolf"–a kenning based on the bear's proverbial love of honey–may represent an actual Germanic *noa name* for this creature, comparable to the euphemisms noted by both Hallowell (50) and Chambers (366): "honey-eater" and "honey-paw." Apparently, Beowulf's name commemorates the fact that hungry bears must have been a real problem for early Germanic beekeepers, whose honey farming was a central concern among tribes so devoted to their mead that they devised charms to foster the production of this essential ingredient (Spamer).

The hero we know as Beowulf, then, probably owes both his ursine name and bear-hug battle grip to a dim figure from a totemistic past–a primeval were-bear from a tribal tradition, a shamanistic shape-shifter, perhaps even the eponymous ancestor of a Germanic clan. So when the Angle-Saxon scribe–himself a Christian living in a culture no longer tribal, much less totemic–committed the *Beowulf* material to writing, he preserved for us, probably wholly unwittingly, some most intriguing ethnographic data.

For this ancient Germanic ancestor figure, lurking behind the Beowulf we know, would have been a shape-shifter on the order of Grizzly-Bear Woman, who appears in the lore of various Northwest Coast tribes, and whose diffusion throughout the Coast culture area may be compared with the diffusion, and consequent diversification, of the Beowulf/Bjarki material in the preliterary Germanic world. The persistent legend of a full-blown were-bear family, which lasted long enough to find its way into *Hrólfs Saga*, a fourteenth-century source, reveals a primal notion that the early Germanic peoples shared with other hunters of the north: humans and bears are bound in an uncanny union so close that it can only be described as a bond of genetic intimacy. Generally, such peoples do not distinguish sharply between individual and species. To them the solitary, concrete beast–formidable as it may be in all its bone-crushing force–immediately partakes of the much more awesome power of the universal set of bears, a vast abstraction, something on the order of deity.

In the tribal mind, the boundary between scientifically distinguishable species need not be sharp and clear as it is supposed to be in the mind of a modern zoologist. From tribe to tribe, different entities are grouped together in various ways to form elaborate constructs widely different from one another and downright alien to the eye of the modern observer. The range of variation from one system to the next is limited only by the range of human intellection. So to our way of thinking, the lines between the species in any given tribal system often come in strange places and intersect in surprising ways. Species wholly distinct in our system may converge within the tribal mind, which orders its reality according to principles quite different from those applied to modern science. Human and bear may merge. Their physical and spiritual identities may become inseparably bound up with one another.

Therefore, the Northwest Coast Amerindians speak of their "Grizzly-Bear Grandmother," the Lapps address the hunted bear as "grandfather," the Beowulf poet praises a hero whose name means "bear," and the Icelandic saga writer celebrates the exploits of the offspring of a woman and a were-bear. This widespread tendency of tribal people to blur the lines between the species is the rationale underlying both shamanism and totemism. If we view the Old English epic apart from its reflexes of these archaic institutions, then we may catch a glimpse of the poem as perceived by the insular Anglo-Saxon scribe, but we draw a curtain over the rich body of traditional material imported by his ancestors from the Baltic shores of northern Europe.

The most transparent version of the primeval Germanic were-bear is the *berserkr*, that ferocious shape-shifting warrior romanticized in the sagas. As the Oxford English Dictionary etymologizes it, the word *berserk* literally means "bear-coat;" most likely, the term reflects the belief that these shamanistic warriors really changed into bears when their fits of battle-franzy came on. As a shape-shifter who fought in a state of ecstasy, the *berserkr* is best understood in the context of shamanism, and the figure invites comparison with similar figures in other tribal societies, such as the wolf warriors of the Nootka or the Pawnee. Since *berserkers* were apparently thought to use both shape-shifting and ecstasy in combat, they should be considered shamanic, if not actual shamans.

It is the conventional task of shamans to borrow the form of the *nigouimes* when they issue forth on metempsychotic journeys into the spirit realm to grapple with the supernatural enemies of the tribe—enemies who manifest themselves in the forms of disease, death, tempest, famine and other afflictions unavoidable in human life. *Berserkers* diverge from shamans mainly insofar as they are typically destroyers, whereas shamans are typically healers, whose ability to harm is secondary to their ability to cure. Further, *berserkers* fight flesh-and-blood enemies, whereas shamans fight spiritual enemies. Still, the ecstatic warrior in

bear form becomes a sort of secular shaman, whose mission is to destroy the physical rather than the spiritual enemies of the tribe.

It is beside the point whether we choose to regard shamanic shape-shifting as delusion, fantasy, hysteria, psychosis, or more astutely, as a symbol of doctors' powers over their peers. For in tribal societies in which the shaman's power has been known both to kill and to cure, shape-shifting ability is simply accepted as something given, a tool of the doctor's trade. So shape-shifting and shamanism are virtually inseparable. One presupposes the other. Therefore, to recognize Beowulf's shape-shifting tendency by pointing out his vague connection with the bear is, in effect, to recognize his affinity with shamanism.

The most compelling example of a shamanic warrior in the entire Germanic corpus is the aforementioned Bothvar Bjarki ("War-wolf Little Bear" Pettitt:530), son of a were-bear, who fights for King Hrólf in the Scylding dynasty's last stand at Leyre. As the story goes in *Hrólfs Saga*, Bjarki, alone in the royal hall, falls into a deep trance while the battle rages outside. During his trance, a huge bear appears in the van of Hrólf's army, devastating the Danes' enemies. But when Bjarki is forcibly awakened, the bear ally disappears at once, and the Danes soon utterly lose the battle.

Bjarki in his trance should be seen as a warrior shaman in ecstasy, sending forth his bear spirit–his *nigouimes*–hoping to save his tribe. In the attacking army is Queen Skuld, who is seated on her sorceress' scaffold (a construction mainly associated with the *seithr*), and who becomes Bjarki's evil genius and rival shaman. Having waited until the disappearance of Bjarki's *nigouimes*, her only viable foe, she sends forth her own *nigouimes* in the form of a monstrous boar that seals the fate of Hrólf and his men.

Bjarki, who figures in other sources besides *Hrólfs Saga*, has long been recognized as a direct analogue for Beowulf himself.[6] The link between these two heroes is probably genetic. If we could trace them back through oral versions of their stories, they would most likely fall together into the same distant prototype. As E. V. Gordon suggests in his *Introduction to Old Norse*, "It is probably the same story differentiated during centuries of independent transmission in different lands" (26). If both heroes descend from a mythic warrior-shaman, perhaps the eponymous ancestor of a bear clan, then this lineage would account for the overtones of shape-shifting implicit in Beowulf's name as well as in his remarkable habit of using the bear-hug in combat.

Another subtle but significant link between *Hrólfs Saga* and *Beowulf* can be seen in the comparable use of boar imagery in both sources. In the former the boar is the *nigouimes* of two powerful characters, Athils and Skuld, enemies of Hrólf, both well-versed in sorcery. In the latter, images of the boar, appearing six times on battle gear, clearly have apotropaic power, twice emphasized by

the poet–first when the Geats arrive in Denmark and second when Beowulf girds himself for his plunge to the bottom of the sea.

> Boar images shone over cheek-guards, adorned with gold,
> glinting and fire-hardened–it held the life-watch,
> the war-minded one for the fierce ones (303b-306a).
>
> But that gleaming helmet protected his head, the one
> that had to stir up the floor of the mere,
> to seek out the water-mingling, adorned with treasure,
> wound round with lordly bands;
> thus the weapon-smith wrought it in far-off days,
> formed it wonderfully, set round with swine-shapes,
> so that thereafter no sword nor
> battle-mace might bite into it (1448-54).[7]

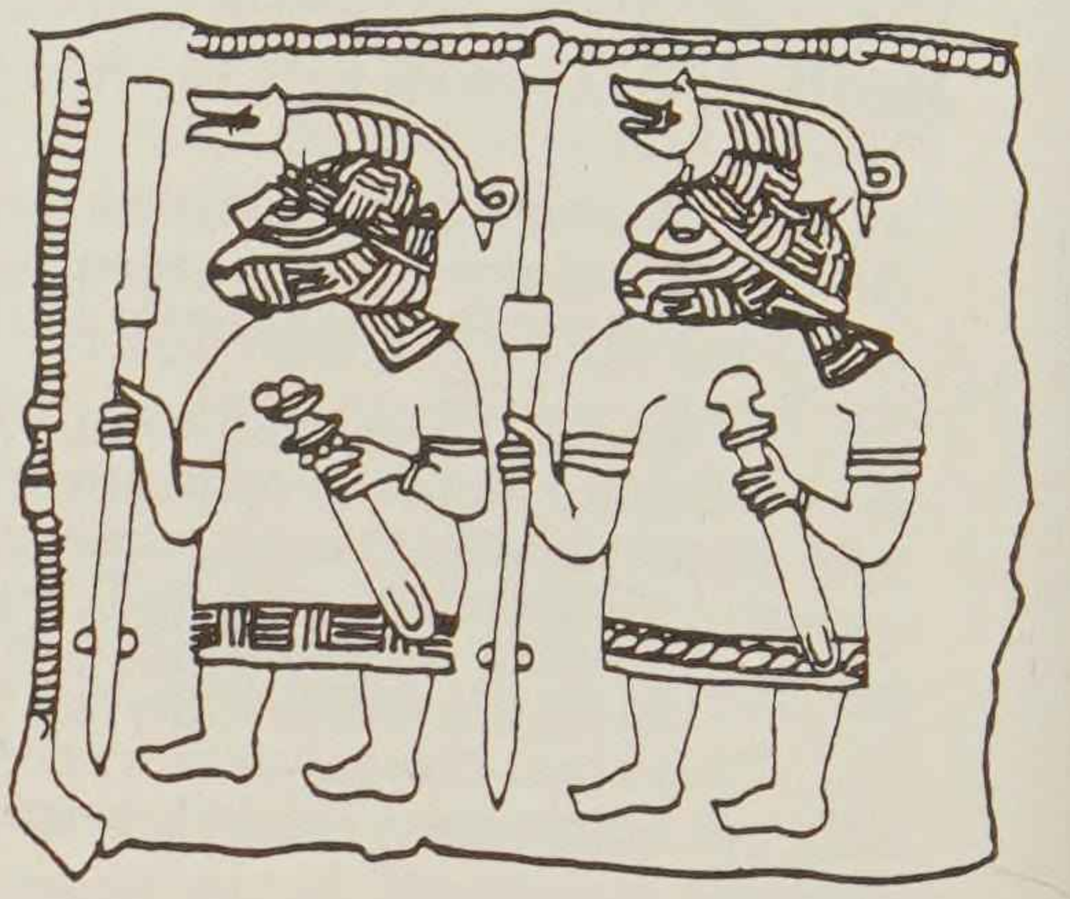
The protective power so apparent in these passages must be implicit in the other references to the boar in *Beowulf*. One of these, in which *eoforas* ("boars") appears in variation with *fethan* ("foot soldiers"), suggests that boars and warriors–like the bear *nigouimes* and Bjarki–are interchangeable:

> . . . in battle
> we protected the point, when foot soldiers clashed,
> boars struck together (1326b-28a).[8]

Like *eoferas*, several other poetic terms for "warrior" also suggest that certain aggressive animals were once seen as shamanic guardians for men in battle: *beorn*, "bear"; *freca*, "wolf"; *wælwulf*, "slaughter-wolf"; *heoruwulf*, "sword-wolf." As Arent notes, these Old English terms for "bear warrior" and "wolf warrior" stem from the same shamanic tradition as the Old Norse terms *berserkir* and úlfethnar (150-51). The same origin probably accounts for the intriguing relationship between the Old English and Old Norse cognates *eofor*, "boar," and *jofurr*, "prince." One term designates an animal, the other a man. The theriomorphic transformations implied here, though reduced to fantasy in our own society, are often credited by tribal people.

The shamanic implications of such animal imagery gather force when considered in light of artifacts like the widely published sixth-century Torslunda dies, one of which depicts a shape-shifter in the form of a wolf. (See Plate 1). This same shamanism is also suggested by the "man-between-monsters" motif–formerly, and, to my mind, erroneously known as the "Daniel in the Lion's Den" motif–found on another Torslunda die in Norse metalwork and woodcarving, and most dramatically in the context of Old English literature: upon the Sutton Hoo purse-top. (See Plate 2). These so-called whispering beasts seem to be graphic representations of the *nigouimes*, either initiating or





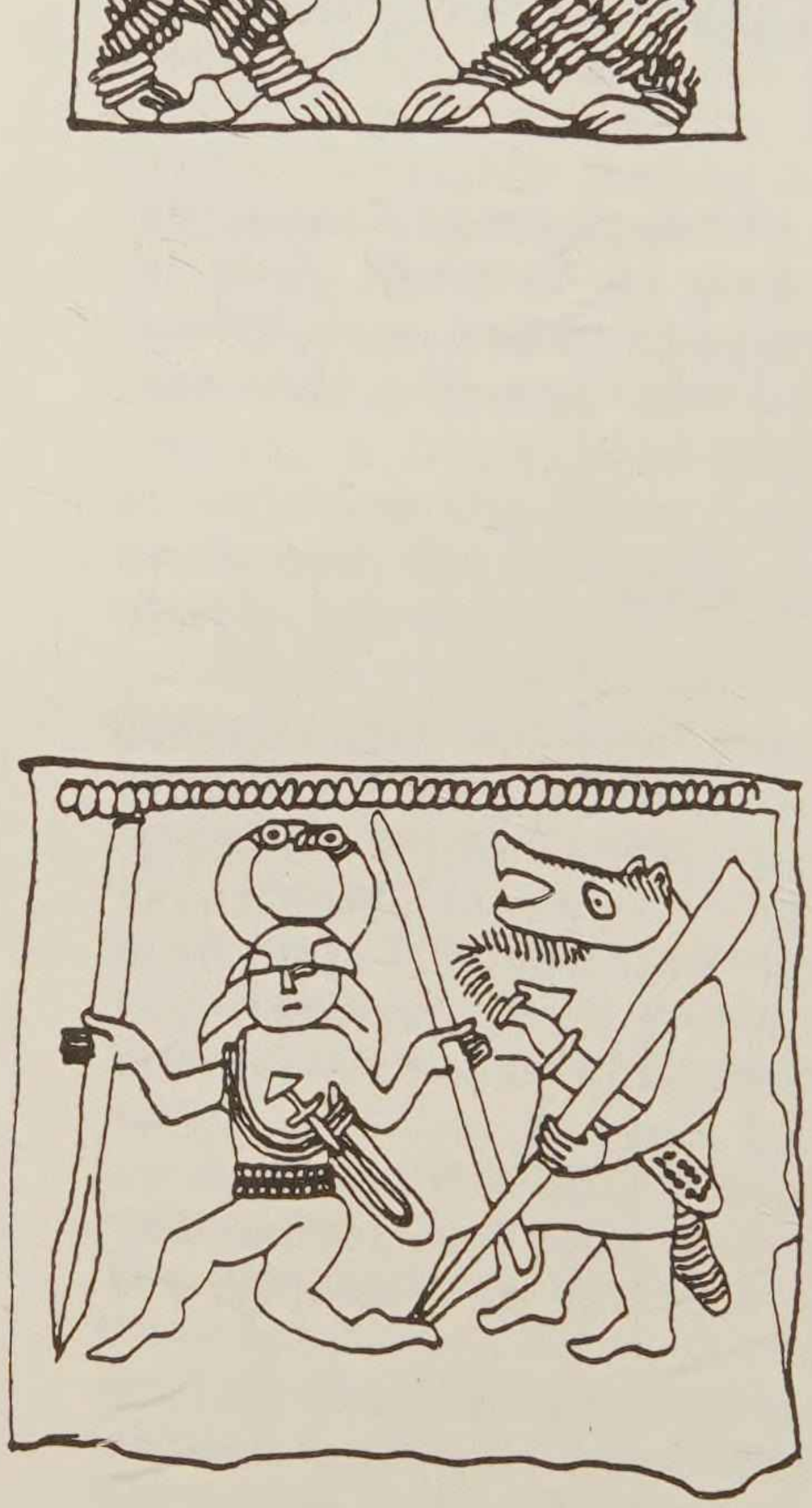




PLATE 1
The Franks Casket: Detail, Side Panel
After Branston 11.

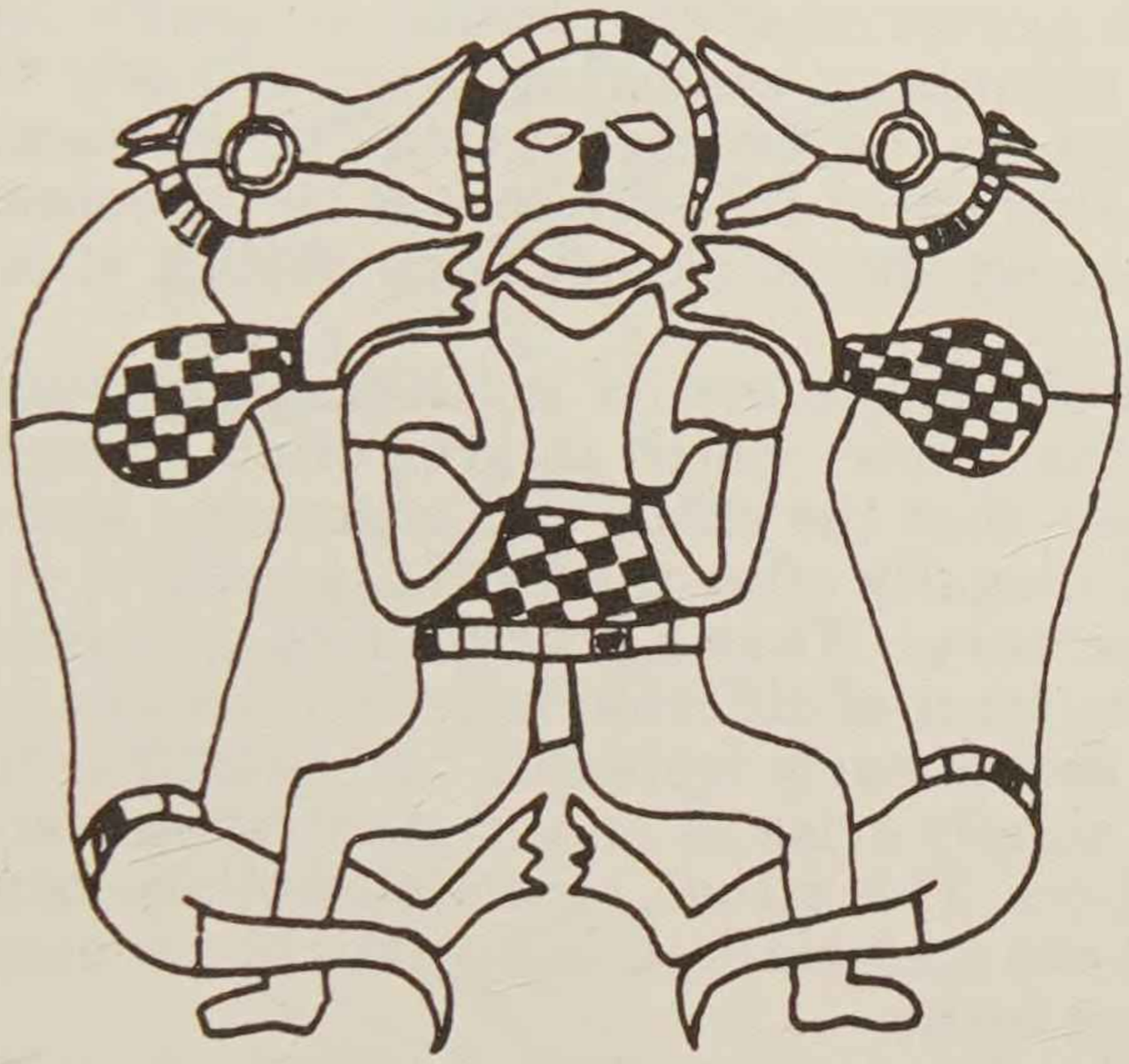


PLATE 2

Purse-Top Plaque, Sutton Hoo

After sketches done in the British Museum, with reference to Bruce-Mitford, Sutton Hoo 104. This figure first appeared in *The Mankind Quarterly* (Glosecki, "Men Among Monsters" 210).

advising a shamanic warrior. If we attempt to arrive at the original motive underlying the bracketing-beast motif so widespread in Germanic art, and especially if we place the motif alongside Odin and his famous familiars, the two ravens *Hugin* "Thought" and *Munin* "Memory" symmetrically perched on either shoulder of the shaman-god, whispering their wisdom in either ear, then the shamanic interpretation of the Germanic man-between-monsters design becomes irresistible.

Here, too, might be mentioned that inscrutable figure on a side panel of the Franks Casket: a shape-shifter seated in state, holding regalia, with a goosehead protruding from his forehead (See Plate 3). Could this seventh-century carving represent vague Northumbrian memories of continental shamanic lore? Puzzling indeed is the ubiquitous animal imagery of early Germanic art, which, if rooted in the preoccupations of a shamanic society, suggests that this tribal institution was so widespread before the migrations that we should expect some vestige of it to surface in *Beowulf*.

But of all shamanic motifs in Germanic sources the most important is the *seithr*, which figures often enough in different sagas to suggest that the ritual was a genuine Icelandic practice that persisted illegally after the Christianization of the island in the eleventh century. When a practice like the *seithr* is described in detail by a number of different saga writers who seem tacitly to accept it as a fact of early Icelandic life, then it is likely that the ritual did not simply arise as an imaginative convention in a rich literary tradition. This ritual, shamanic both in form and motive, could hardly have materialized in an artistic vacuum unrelated to genuine culture traits.

In the *seithr*, the seer mounts a raised platform surrounded by singers, whose rhythmic chanting induces ecstasy. It is impossible to say how many different things the shaman may have hoped to accomplish in this trance—the sagas show that it is used mainly to predict the future and cast evil spells on enemies. The most graphic description of the ritual appears in *Eiriks Saga Rautha*, in which sorceress Thorbjorg conducts a *seithr* remarkable for its minute detail. Such close description strongly suggests that shamanic ritual persisted into the Christian era in Iceland, at least, for minutiae like Thorbjorg's catskin-lined gloves seem to represent contemporary observations of flesh-and-blood shamans, and not simply the inventions of an imaginative thirteenth-century author. Such accumulation of detail in a genre known for its sparseness of description suggests that the saga writers saw or heard of the traditional regalia of North Germanic shamans.

Vestiges of shamanism probably persisted into the Christian era in England as the Sutton Hoo purse-top, the Franks Casket shape-shifter and the ursine attributes of Beowulf indicate. And

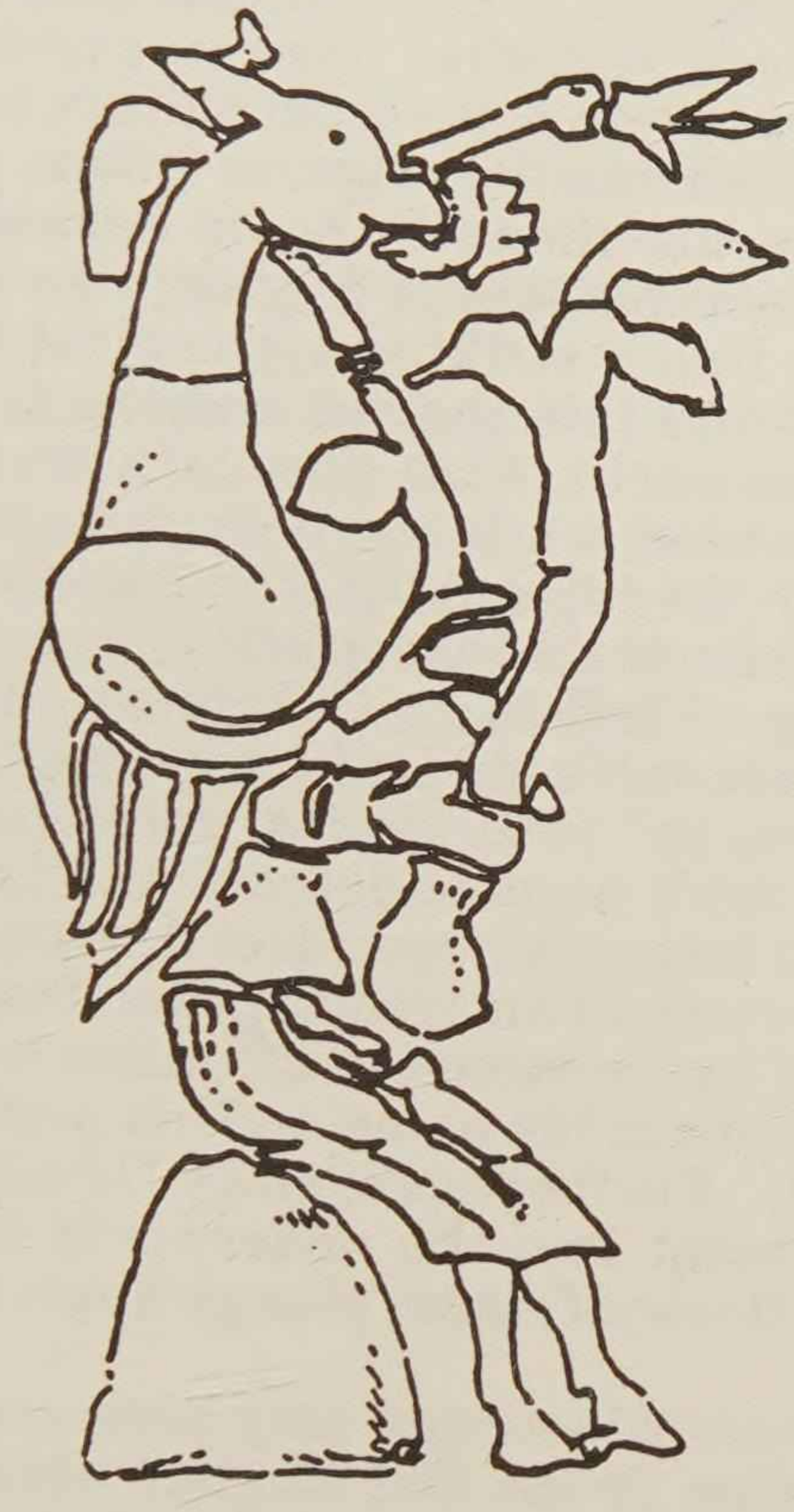


PLATE 3

The Torslunda Dies

After Bruce-Mitfold, Aspects, Plates 57-59.
These figures first appeared in *The Mankind Quarterly* (Glosecki, "Men Among Monsters" 209).

at least one of the metrical charms utilizes a shamanic motive. *With Færstice* preserves a cryptic remedy for *elfshot*–an affliction based on the belief that invisible enemies (elves, Æsir, or witches, according to the charm) can shoot unseen darts into people, with diasastrous effects. Patently, *elfshot* is the Germanic version of the familiar shamanic weapon of "pointing the bone" or "shooting" disease. *With Færstice*–strictly speaking, is a counter-charm designed to neutralize the sorcery of a disease-shooter. This shows that West Germanic doctors at some point were shamanic, and that the literate Anglo-Saxons preserved vestiges of this primeval shamanism in traditional remedies fixed in psychoactive verses and probably elsewhere too–in non-verbal culture traits effaced by the passage of time. If shamanism figures in one part of the Old English corpus–the charms–then why not in *Beowulf*?

Moreover, in marked contrast to Augustinian interpretations of the poem, one may find a striking typological correspondence between Beowulf's descent into the sea and the typical shaman's descent into the underworld, that dim subconscious realm of spirits and symbols, where, while the body falls into ecstasy, the psyche does battle with the supernatural enemies of the tribe. The Augustinian approach explains this episode as an allegory for the apocryphal harrowing of hell (e.g., Cabaniss). But this is one possibility only, for Beowulf's dreamlike journey and dangerous combat with "alien spirits" (*ellorgæstas*) correspond in tone and temper with the shaman's psychic descent and infernal struggle against the strong but intangible spirits of disease. If one accepts descent into earth or water as an archetype for descent into depths of mind, then Beowulf has pronounced affinities with the shaman, aside from those inherent in his name and his preferred method of combat (the bear-hug). Furthermore, since Davidson asserts that Odin's traditional descent into the underworld is shamanic, the same can be said for Beowulf's own plunge down to the eerie hall on the floor of the sea.

So Beowulf's downward journey may preserve another reflex of Germanic shamanism in the Old English version of the bear-hero story. Along with his ursine style of combat, Beowulf's extraordinary size and preternatural strength also suggests a close connection with the bear, a creature of power that, in turn, is the focal point of circumpolar shamanic ritual. His ultimate origin in a shamanic warrior cult–probably continental and prehistoric–is implicit in his very name, Wolf of the Bees, which, as shown above, may have originated as a *noa name* coined to prevent the breaking of a strong taboo that restricted interaction with the bear. This shamanic connection seems stronger still when we juxtapose the Old English bear hero with his literary cousin, the Old Norse *berserkr*, and with the animal art on the Torslunda dies, the Sutton Hoo purse-top, and the Franks Casket. And the link grows stronger too when we consider the boar's role as *nigouimes* in *Beowulf* and *Hrólfs Saga*. Also, poetic terms for warrior, such as *beorn* and *freca*, with their animal referents and

theriomorphic implications, suggest that shamanic guardians were once commonplace among the aggressive Germanic tribes. Therefore, in view of these widely dispersed reflexes of Germanic shamanism–and of shamanic ritual's apparent persistence into the Middle Ages in Iceland and, perhaps, vestigially, in England too–I feel misled by strict Augustinian readings of the epic, and also by the remark that Beowulf "bears little trace of the shaman." Though arcane, and in many ways alien to mainstream Western culture, vestiges of shamanism probably had considerable impact upon the characterization of the Old English bear hero.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Glosecki is Assistant Professor of Old English Literature at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Aside from the *Mankind Quarterly* articles listed below, he has published "*Beowulf* 769: Grendel's Ale-Share" in *English Language Notes* 25.1 (September 1987). Presently, he is revising *Shamanism and Beowulf: Back to the Tribes*, scheduled to appear as Volume 3 in *The Albert Bates Lord Studies in Oral Tradition*, published by Garland.

NOTES

[1]Shetelig gives a fairly detailed etymology of the name Odin (415-16). His name (ON. *Odinn*, OE. and OS. *Wōden*, Langovardic *Wōdan*, OHG. *Wuotan*) is a derivative of the adjective ON. *odr*, OE. *wōd*, Gothic *wōds*, OHG. *wuot*, "possessed, frantic," and is also related to Latin *vates*, "seer, prophet, god-possessed singer." The name referred originally, therefore, to that ecstatic condition which in every age has been regarded as the effect of a supernatural force giving the person possessed by it a supernatural power; this is well known in the Greek oracles, the Siberian shaman and the Indian medicine-men. For a fuller discussion of this etymology, see Opland (29-32).

[2]Both Klaeber (xxv) and Chambers (365-81), drawing upon Panzer's seminal work on the subject, treat *Beowulf's* relation to the *Bear's Son Tale* in some detail. More recently, Thomas Pettitt has discussed Beowulf's affinity with the bear in "*Beowulf*: The Mark of the Beast and the Balance of Frenzy." A. M. Arent and T. A. Shippey also treat this central topic. Rhys Carpenter argues that the *Bear's Son Tale* also influenced *The Odyssey*.

[3]Although some are inclined to view the shaman as a demented psychotic, Eliade cogently argues against this ethnocentric impression (23-32). Several anthropologists show that the shaman is typically a high-ranking member of the tribe, feared by most, respected by all. For instance, Asen Balikci writes that "the shaman, or *angatkok*, occupied an important position in Netsilik society. Although in daily life he behaved like an ordinary hunter, he was generally respected and feared for his supernatural powers" (225). Similarly, in regard to the Jívaro, Michael Harner writes that the shaman acquires "wealth and social influence" mainly because other tribesmen "court his favor in order to assure themselves of his future willingness to cure them" (117). Robert H. Lowie emphasizes the fact that "radically different notions as to eminence occur in other parts of the world," going on to say that in Maidu society, for example, "there is an elective chieftaincy based on wealth and generosity, but in reality the shaman, especially if leader of the secret society, completely overshadowed the headman" (342). One might also consult *Kwakiutl Ethnography* by Franz Boas for further examples of the shaman's prestige in tribal society.

[4]Klaeber (1950:95). Subsequent passages from *Beowulf* are also drawn from this edition of the poem. Pettitt also treats the ideas discussed in this paragraph and quotes the excerpts reproduced here:

wæpen to wyrme,
with tham aglæcean
gylpe withgripam.

Nolde ic sweord beran,
gif ic wiste hu
elles meahte
swa ic gio with Grendle dyde.

[5]In Old English it reads:

Nalles he tha frætwe
breostweorthunge
ac in campe gecrong
ætheling on elne;
ac him hildegrap
banhus gebræc.

Frescyninge,
bringan moste,
cumbles hyrde,
ne wæs ecg bona,
heortan wylmas,

[6]Other Icelandic works mentioning Bjarki are the fragmentary *Bjarkamál*, Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, the late medieval *Bjarkarímur*, Snorri's *Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál*, Chapters 53-54), the lost *Skoldunga Saga* (summarized by Arngrim Jónsson in 1594), and the *Series Runica Regum Daniae Alterum*. My sources for this information are the works cited by Garmonsway and Gordon. My discussion of Bjarki's performance at Leyre echoes a short passage in an earlier article on the archaeological evidence of early Germanic shamanism (Glosecki "Wolf Dancers" 314).

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Response to Stephen O. Glosecki's "Wolf of the Bees: Germanic Shamanism and the Bear Hero"

James Weldon

I enjoyed reading Mr. Glosecki's article. The background material on shamanism and the kinds of scholarship that have explored this field, I feel, he has presented rather well in a concise and engaging way. The principle flaw in the paper, as I see it, rests with the unconvincing manner in which the thesis of shamanism is linked to ancient Germanic culture one hand and to *Beowulf* on the other. The argument remains too squarely based on source material and not enough on primary linguistic and cultural evidence. For example, neither the Eddas nor the sagas feature prominently in Mr. Glosecki's discussion. Almost no reference to recent Germanic archeological scholarship supports the archeological evidence drawn from non-Germanic sources, upon which the structuralist theory of this paper ultimately depends: even classic studies, such as Grönbech's *Culture of the Ancient Teuions*, seem to have been ignored. This still excellent study discusses the pagan feasts–the "blot" so often mentioned in literary sources.

The one saga mentioned in Mr. Glosecki's account, *The Saga of Hrólf Kraki*, is interpreted along highly questionable lines, as is *Beowulf* itself. At one point in the saga Mr. Glosecki maintains that Bothvar Bjarki ("Bjarki" means "little bear"):

> falls into a deep trance while the battle rages outside. During his trance, a huge bear appears in Hrólf's army, devastating the Danes' enemies. But when Bjarki is forcibly wakened, the bear ally disappears at once, and the Danes soon utterly lose the battle.
>
> Bjarki in his trance should be seen as a warrior shaman in ecstasy, sending his bear spirit. . . .

In the saga itself we are not told that Bjarki falls into a trance, although editors and translators have assumed this to be the case (see Stella Mills' translation, *The Saga of Hrólf Kraki* and the introduction by E.V. Gordon). Furthermore, Bothvar Bjarki retains shape-shifting powers as the result of a curse placed upon his father, Bjorn, who roamed as a bear by day but lived as a man by night. Bjorn conceived upon Bera (fortunately at night) three sons, but Bera was forced to eat the flesh of Bjorn, and he bore the penalty of this hideous, albeit unavoidable, act: one was half elk, one was part hound and the third, Bothvar Bjarki, was normal, except that he had courage and strength and once, but only once, was able to use his "bear" powers to aid his king, Hrólf. Bothvar Bjarki in the saga does not have the reputation of a "shape-shifter," as does Ulf Bjalfason or Kveld-Ulf in *Egil's Saga*. Moreover, Glosecki defines the *berserkr* (the word literally means "bear shirt") as "a shape-shifter who fought in a state of ecstasy"

and claims that *berserks* "should be considered shamanic, if not actual shamans." However, in the saga, Bothvar Bjarki constantly opposes *berserks* and defeats them. It is difficult, then, to agree with Glosecki that Bothvar Bjarki, who uses his magic only once and who abhors the "shamanic" *berserks*, should be seen as a "warrior shaman in ecstasy."

Mr. Glosecki represents the final battle between Hrólf's forces and the forces of Skuld as a kind of duel between the shape-shifting powers of Bothvar Bjarki and Skuld. In Glosecki's version, Skuld represents a "rival shimanka" who projects her spirit in the form of a boar while "seated on her sorceress' scaffold." In the saga, Skuld is indeed a sorceress who "sat in her black tent, weaving her spells" (Mills' translation, 85). Earlier a prophetess did sit on a scaffold, but she was a nameless witch at the court of King Frothi at the beginning of the saga. Skuld and Bothvar Bjarki resemble typical magicians and heroes with special powers who constantly appear in legend and saga. Mr. Glosecki's rendition of *The Saga of Hrólf Kraki* does not convincingly argue otherwise. He might have compared other sagas more closely. Dreams and events commonly occur in the sagas in which human, natural or supernatural forces take on animal forms which affect the human world, and not all reflect shamanistic practices; word play, tradition and non-literary conventions could just as well account for them.

The hero's name and his strength is slender evidence for connecting *Beowulf* to shamanism. Mr. Glosecki notes (as Chambers and others noted long ago) that one possible interpretation of the name "Beowulf" is "Bee-Wolf," a kind of metaphor for "bear." But rather than argue against other possible interpretations of the hero's name or defend this theory, he prefers to coerce the reader into accepting the authority of the statement by saying:

> Beowulf's own name means "Bee-Wolf," which seems quite the most likely etymology among the other possibilities discussed and discounted by this notable scholar.

Beowulf's only other link with bear figures, as reported by Mr. Glosecki, is his preference for fighting with his bare hands—the "bear-grip" according to the author. Such statements carry the argument, which is unfortunately supported by little evidence. The obvious parallel, *Grettir's Saga*, is not mentioned.

This article would have benefited from a more scholarly examination of primary archeological and literary sources. Some Germanic archeological material is alluded to by Mr. Glosecki, but usually across secondary sources, many of which are out of date. Interesting helmet plates from southern Sweden have been unearthed, which depict a "priest" perhaps dancing beside a bear or wolf or a man masked as such (see Magnusson's *Viking: Hammer of the North*). This sort of evidence would do more to

bolster Mr. Glosecki's argument than the artifacts to which he makes reference.

Department of English,
Wilfrid Laurier University,
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N26 3C5

HOW MASKS WORK, OR MASKS WORK HOW?

Judi Young-Laughlin and Charles D. Laughlin

Abstract

Masking is ubiquitous to the culture areas of the world and is a symbolic activity inextricably associated cross-culturally with cosmological drama and shamanic ritual. Our question is, "Masks work how?" In Part 1, we place masks within their physical, cultural and cosmological context so as to view the activity of masking as part of a wider symbolic process. Masks are seen to be transformations of face. In Part 2, the work of masking is realized as a transformation of experience, and is related to a general cycle of meaning in culture whereby cosmological beliefs give rise to direct experience, and experience verifies and vivifies cosmology. And in Part 3 the "how" of masking is explained using a biogenetic structural perspective which traces the possible transformations of brain that may occur within the wearer and audience and that may mediate a variety of mask-related experiences.

***

Are we eternally confined to the futile activity of thinking about thoughts, verbalizing about words, and theorizing about theories? Or is there in the very *nature*, or what we might call the Tao, of symbols—a vision so immediate, so intimate, and so bright that we are blind to it—a vision in which the clamor of conflicting theories, thoughts, and words yields to the deep harmony and silence of the Word?

James N. Powell, *The Tao of Symbols*

The use of masks in Western drama dates historically to the early Greeks and prehistorically probably to Upper Paleolithic times (see Eliade 1964).[1] Masking, as well as theatrical drama, most likely originated in mystery plays in which performances were intended to portray events in mythological time and relations among cosmic forces (see Lommell 1967, 1970; Turner 1974, 1979, 1982a). Before a certain point in history, masking, cosmological theatrical drama and shamanic ritual were very likely all of a piece, as is indeed still the case in numerous non-Western societies today (Turner 1982a).

Our central question is, "How do masks work?" Or, using less correct, but more description grammar: "Masks work how?" We address our tentative answers to this question around the three words: "masks," "work," "how." (See Figure 1). Part 1 will set masks within their physical, cultural and cosmological contexts in order to view them as participating in a greater, ever-changing symbolic process. In order to do this we view masks as symbolic transformations of face and place the human visage likewise within a nest of contextual background. Part 2 presents the work that masks do as transformations of experience, placing performance in general and masked drama in particular, into a broader "mandalic" context we call the cycle of meaning. Finally, using a biogenetic structural framework to consider the "how" of

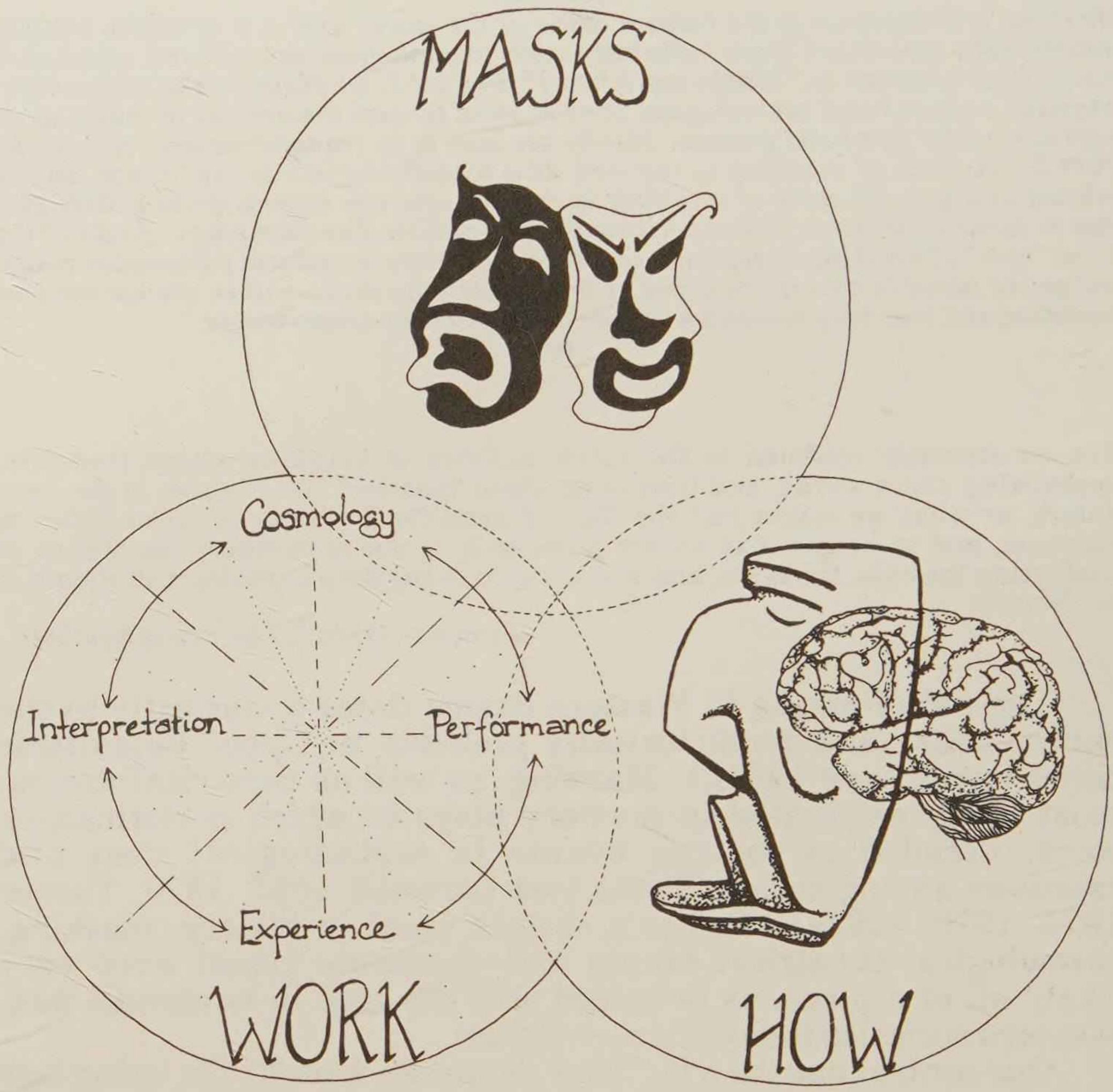


FIGURE 1
Masks Work How?
The integration of three perspectives:
the transformations of face, experience and brain.

masking, we will examine the possible neurophysiological structures, transformations of brain, that may occur in the masker or among audience members. As our group (see D'Aquili and Laughlin 1975; D'Aquili, Laughlin and McManus 1979; see also Turner 1982b) has shown over the years, ceremonial ritual is an evolutionary outgrowth of ritualized forms of communication that developed widely among primates and other non-human, social animals. It is a small wonder, then, that the field of anthropology, as it has become more sensitized to the role of symbols in human cultural life (e.g., Crumrine and Halpin 1983; Taylor 1985; Dow 1986), has taken a keen, cross-cultural interest in the variety of forms of theatre (Turner 1982a; Schechner 1985; Napier 1986). And, as there is no more symbolically-loaded, fundamental image universal to humankind than the body image, it is not surprising that anthropologists have shown an interest in the kind of body image transformations involved in theatrical masking (see Blacking 1977).

Part I
Masks: Transformations of Face

Masks are transformations on faces. And if faces are understood phenomenologically as the nexus of physical relations comprising the body and, beyond the body, the physical world, so too can masks be construed as the nexus of symbolic relations comprising regalia, and beyond regalia, the cosmos (see Figure 2). Faces are the most salient part of the body in signalling emotion, intention, and other non-verbal cues to others (Izard 1971;Ekman, Friesen and Ellsworth 1972). Certainly for human beings the face is the main context for the delivery of speech.

> The ability to voluntarily make [sic] novel facial movements was probably a preadaptation for the elaborate facial expressiveness and the evolution of vocal language in humans (Chevalier-Skolnikoss 1982:359).

All humans manipulate and change the face for signalling purposes. All non-human, social primates do the same. There is even evidence that anthropoid apes can dissemble. Eighteen-month old gorillas, for example, have been observed to make "puckered-mouth expressions, and even hugged and kissed the observer. . . as [they] surreptitiously attempted to take her watch or tape recorder" (Chevalier-Skolnikoss 1982:337). The number of ways humans transform the face, other than by voluntary and involuntary motor expression, is vast. Changes wrought by scarification, painting, piercing, temporary or permanent distortion, tattooing, and clothing or framing the face, are all examples of "masking" without necessarily utilizing an object we are culturally conditioned to call a "mask." Indeed, it is difficult to find cultures that do not in some manner alter the face from its natural form. Transforming the face for symbolic purposes is virtually a cultural universal.

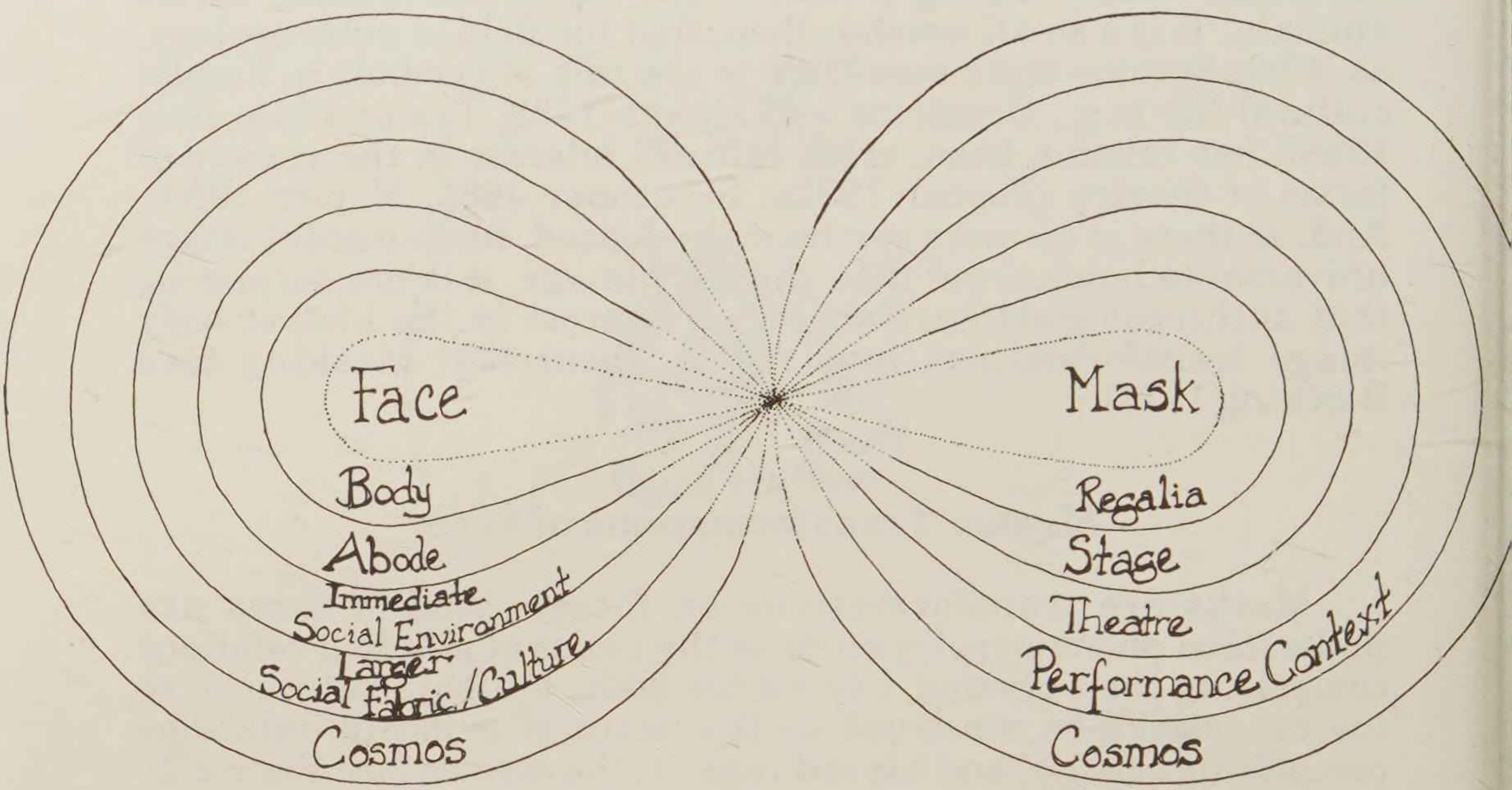


FIGURE 2
The Contexts of Face and Mask
The interpenetration of two modes of cosmological expression.

Our own culture tends to view masks as objects which, because they can be removed from the face can also become artificially removed from the normal contexts which animate their life and spirit. Failure to see masks and their contexts as one process precludes an understanding of how they work and what work it is that masks perform. Cultures other than our own may use the mask in a ritual performance and then–much to the astonishment of the Euroamerican museum collector–throw the delicately carved wood into the fire or onto the dung heap. To such cultures the special qualities and meanings of masks are inextricably interwoven within their performance context, and they are seen as no longer of value as a solitary and inanimate *objet d'art*.[2]

The Contexts of Face and Mask

If there is truth to the idea that "humans carry and express multiple and ambivalent identities simultaneously" (Schechner 1985:4), then nowhere is the dialectic among multiple identities more profoundly apparent than in the *Noh* masking tradition of Japanese theatre. In that tradition we see no clearly demarcated distinction between face and mask but rather the seeming paradox of both at once. The mask, *t'ai*, "what is seen by the mind," and the face, *yu*, "what is seen by the eyes," (Schechner 1985:8) provide a focus for the simultaneous perception of the visible and the invisible. Physically emphasized by the fact that one can still see part of the actor's face behind the character's face, this ambiguity furnishes an "intentionally incomplete transformation" (Schechner 1985:9), supporting the view that "theater and ordinary life are a Mobius strip, each turning into the other" (14).

Under certain circumstances the experience of unification of face and mask may arise. This unity is symbolized in Figure 2 by the nexus between the two spheres of expression (Laughlin, McManus and Webber 1985;Webber, Stephens and Laughlin 1983). This moment is akin to a:

> . . . dialectical process in which one no longer is worn by his mask, no longer merely hides behind his mask, and does not tease himself into believing he can become maskless, but instead takes responsibility for his mask and wears it so his face, society, and gods are seen through it but not identified with it (Grimes 1975:516).

A common characteristic of the mask is its exaggeration and formalization of the features of the human face to an extent beyond what a face is itself physically capable of expressing. This expansion and combination of features and expressions seems to have the effect of essentializing, that is, bringing more clearly into a central focus, expressions and features inherent in a facial aggregate. A mask is at the same time face and transcendence of face. Another seeming paradox is at work in the play of masking; it is exemplified by an expansion of expression leading to a centering of perception via performance action. This two-way

perception is not unlike a spiral moving both centripetally and centrifugally, out of and into a center. It can lead to both transportation (the movement of individuals in space and/or time) and transformation (the changing of an individual's state of mind or being) of audience and actor during or after a performance event. The spiral encompasses all parts of one's being and social milieu; it reaches from the mask to the cosmos that is being symbolically depicted and home again. Here lies the chief parallel between theater and ritual (see Schechner 1985:119; Turner 1982a).

If a mask is seen as a central pivot around which successive concentric rings depict its contextual domains–the nexus, a face, plays the role of catalyst and converter. Figure 2, borrowing from Schechner's notion of the "Mobius strip," places face and mask in their receptive nests, "each turning into the other." According to Webster's dictionary, the word "nest" means "a bed or receptacle," a "place of rest, retreat, or lodging," a "group of similar things," "a group of objects made to fit close together or one within another." Mask, like face, is lodged within its nest. Only within the tradition of a cosmological system would the full symmetry of their interaction be manifest (See Barba 1982). If there is no belief in a cosmos, then the scope of the interaction, or interfacing (a surface forming a common boundary of two bodies, spaces, or phases) is reduced. In Euroamerican life and theatre this narrowing of perception and worldview is reflected in a largely monophasic (as opposed to polyphasic; see Laughlin *et al.* 1986) reality. This reality in turn interfaces with its performance expression and produces a theatre that "is one of transportation without transformation" (Schechner 1985:131).

The first contexts of face and mask are those of body and regalia, respectively. Body is construed here to include the physical form of the body as well as its dress and ornamentation and the totality of the "language" it speaks. Regalia may include any costuming worn to augment a mask for a given performance, accoutrements seen as crucial to characterization, activities that ensue in relation to this new combination of symbolic elements, and again, the movement-language that is "spoken." The distinction between these two aspects of physical manifestation is similar to that made in India between *lokadharmi*, the behavior (*dharmi*) of humans in daily life (*loka*), and *natyadharmi*, their behavior in dance (*natya*; Barba 1982:7). In Western terms Barba has renamed these "daily techniques" and "extra-daily techniques." If the body's daily techniques "have communication as their aim. . .the aim of extra-daily techniques. . .[is] information" (Barba 1982:9).

Body and regalia embed one within the immediate environment; in turn they constitute an environment for face and mask. An abode, e.g., this room, lodges the body in its immediate, moment-by-moment environment and can communicate a vast amount of information. Similarly, a stage incorporates

performers and their performance spaces and informs the performers themselves and "those-for-whom-the-performance-exists" (Schechner 1985:6).

The immediate social environment and its sister, the theatre, condition the interactions that transpire in them. The immediate social environment for an individual can include relatives and close friends who, for example, influence perceptions about the planet. The theatre encompasses performers, performance areas, audience and audience areas, for instance, the theatre's house or its neighborhood (e.g., West End or Broadway). This whole set of variables carries on an ever-changing dialogue with the immediate environment, with each individual body in that environment and ultimately with each face that is watching or participating in a performance event.

The final two contextual rings of the face-mask aggregate are fairly self-evident. The larger social fabric, or culture on the one hand and the performance context on the other are influenced by and influence the preceding four (or eight!) rings in fundamental ways. Performance context includes the text or subject matter, e.g., a ritual or mystery play, and the training of those who perform it. In cosmological systems that are intact the social fabric provides and controls training, which often utilizes fragments taken directly from performance texts. Training is interwoven into greater social patterns, so discrepancy among these various contexts is minimized. The worldview supports the social fabric which informs the performative score which bolsters the immediate community which encourages the making and wearing of masks and the participation in masked drama. Masked drama communicates to an audience, informs wearers and creators, divulges cosmic order through its portrayal of meaning in all spheres of community, culture and cosmos. In and out of this spiral web of symbolic relations, bridging the worlds of contingent and transcendent existence, a mask finds itself face to face with the visage of any and all aspects of the divine or mundane. The work of the mask is essentially this: to bring transcendent experience to mundane awareness.

Part II
Work: Transformations of Experience

As Edmund Husserl (1977) and before him Franz Brentano (1924) taught, the *sine qua non* of experience is its intentional nature. That is, consciousness is always of something. There is always an object of consciousness, for example, a form, color, thought, feeling, or internal image. In this view, the totality of moment-by-moment experience is conditioned by the focus of attention. A special species of intentional object in everyday social interaction is the face, and in some forms of cosmological drama, the mask. A mask in cosmological drama is an intentional object with remarkable evocative power. For both actor and

audience a mask draws the special gaze of the face and operates to focus and condition experiences of reality intended by a performance.

The work of masking is at the nexus of an unfolding symbolic domain, the intent of which is a transformation of experience (see Turner 1982:43). The experience that is transformed by masking within the context of drama is for an actor that of his or her position and meaning within the cosmic arena, and for the audience that of the face and expression of the cosmos.

The Cycle of Meaning

In most intact cosmological belief systems experience of the world is considered relative to the domain in which it occurs, and that domain is located in a cosmos of multiple realities (Schutz 1945; Eliade 1959,1964; Ricoeur 1962). For people in such societies there is not a single world of experience but several. Mundane, daily experience may be regarded as profane, but there are other, perhaps less ordinary, experiences that inform one of other worlds, sacred domains that give the world of mundane existence transcendent meaning (Eliade 1959). In order to understand these matters more clearly, it helps to lodge experience and performance within a cycle of meaning (see Figure 3) that schematizes the reciprocal feedback and dialectical relations among systems of belief, symbolic expressions of such systems, direct (often transpersonal) experiences, and the interpretation of experiences.

Universal to all societies, the central dialectic of the cycle of meaning exists between enculturated systems of belief and the direct experiences of individuals. Belief in, or knowledge about, a cosmos comprised of multiple realities (common, but not universal, to all societies) derives initially as an interpretation of experiences of some individuals within society. Cosmological belief systems may be linked to activities, practices, symbolic expressions and cognitive-perceptual operations that confirm those systems. Multiple-reality cosmological beliefs give rise to experiences that verify and vivify those beliefs. And, of course, experiences interpreted as being of multiple realities may actually cause transformations in a belief system (e.g., A.F.C. Wallace's [1966] "revitalization" process).

An auxiliary dialectic of the cycle exists between the mythopoeic expression (e.g., drama, ritual, art, or myth) of cosmological realities on the one hand and the interpretive framework (e.g., textual guidance, group consensus, or shamanic intercession) on the other. There is inevitably an interpretive frame to all experience, phenomenal experience being constituted in part by sensation and knowledge (see Laughlin *et al.* 1986:108).

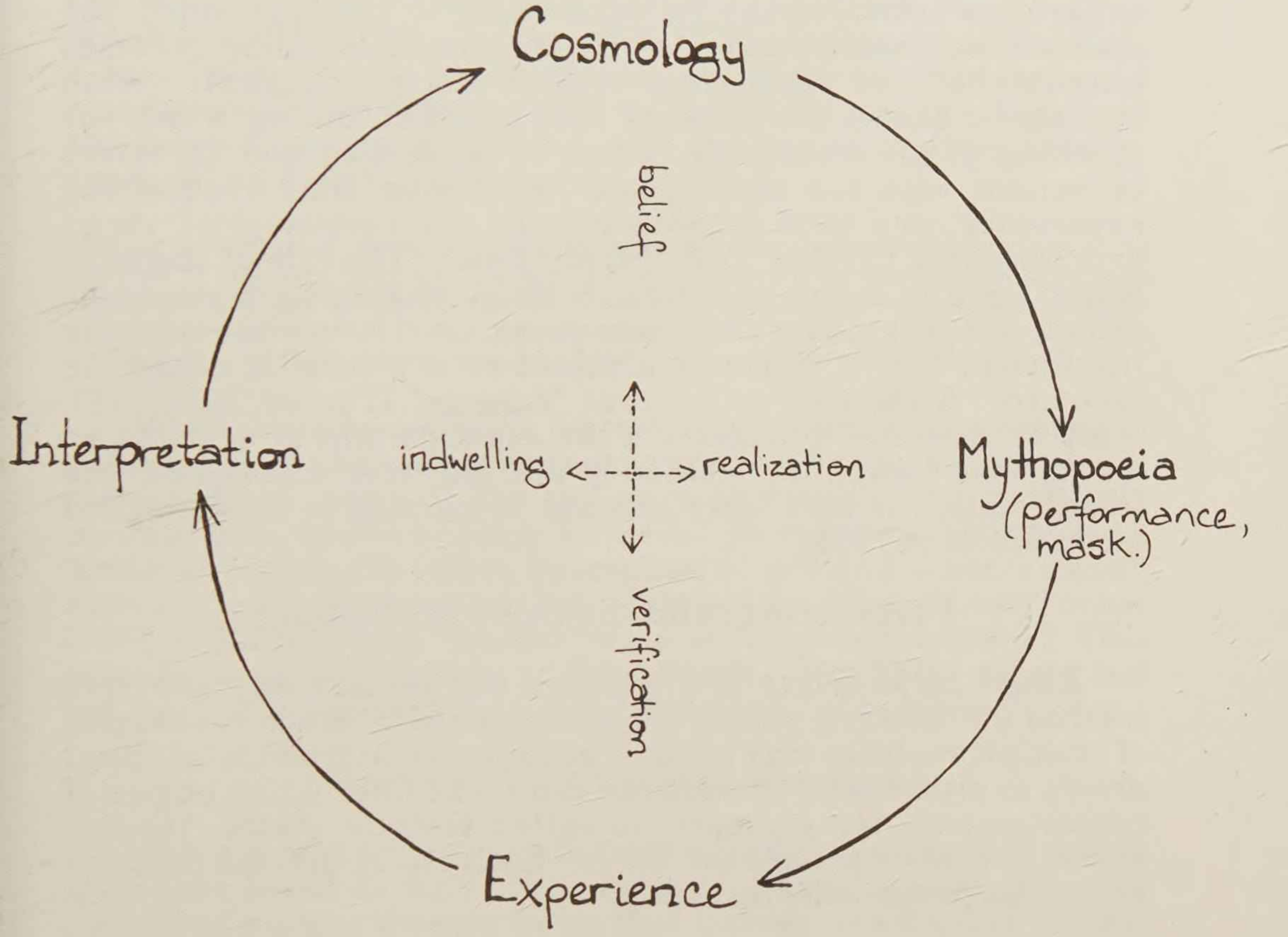


FIGURE 3
The Cycle of Meaning
Cosmology gives rise to experience via penetration by its symbolic representation, and experience is interpreted so as to verify and vivify cosmology.

Commonly, there is a consonance between a mode of symbolic expression and an interpretation of experiences that arise as a consequence of participation within a symbolic frame. A participant typically "indwells" (Polyani 1969: 134) within the symbolic confines of a mythopoeic mode until such time as the experience intended by the symbolism is realized–until the cosmological reality suggested by the symbolic frame becomes phenomenally or intuitively real to the participant. With realization begins the phase of interpretation during which the meaning of an experience comes to be understood in terms consonant with the mythopoeic expression that evoked the experience, and thus consonant with the cosmological views expressed (see Crocker 1985; Eliade 1964). The role of shamans looms large in many societies, both in producing mythopoeic events and in guiding their interpretation. It is often socially insufficient that a vision be attained or a prophetic dream be dreamed. A shaman, or cultural "exegete" (Turner 1982b:18), must be consulted to ascertain the exact portent of a vision or dream (see Laughlin, McManus and Shearer 1984) and the interpretation is inevitably couched in normative cosmological terms (Crocker 1985).

Performance and the Cycle of Meaning

Ritual performance is a common and remarkably effective method for inducing phases of consciousness in which realization of multiple realities may occur. Participation in traditional ritual drama as either actor or audience can evoke alternative phases of consciousness, for example, so-called ecstatic states, trance, vision, dream or possession states. Such ritual dramas combine numerous components including:

> costumes and masks, exercises and incantations, incense and music: all designed to 'make believe' in the literal sense—to help the performer make into another person, or being, at another time in another place and to manifest this presence here and now so that time and place are doubled. At the level of the audience a change in mood and/or consciousness is effected; this change is either temporary or permanent. And, in some kinds of performance—rites of passage, for example—a permanent change of status of the participants is achieved (Schechner 1977:123-124).

The various components of performance may combine to enact spatiotemporal aspects of cosmic domains ordinarily invisible to mundane consciousness. Spatially considered, a performance may enact events occurring more or less simultaneously in alternative domains, but which are invisible to neophytes and immature participants because of profane influences upon their "normal" waking consciousness. Considered temporally, performance can experientially bind time so that events of the present are integrated with what occurred before, perhaps in mythological time (e.g., Australian aboriginal "dreamtime"), and with what is yet to come. Events ordinarily perceived as occurring in temporal

sequence may be depicted, perhaps even experienced, as but phases in an unfolding totality, or as essentially timeless. This time-binding quality of many ritual dramas helps produce a characteristic expansion of cosmic awareness. In tension with ordinary time, consciousness, along with other factors, produces the sense of sacredness in a performance (see Myerhoff in MacAloon 1984:173ff.; Turner 1985:227ff.; Zerubavel 1981:101ff.; Eliade 1959). Events in sacred time, i.e., at the origin of the world and the creation of people, are made real in the present. Events in the present become associated with the sacred and are thereby rendered profoundly meaningful.

> During performance, if everything goes right, the experience is of synchronicity as the flow of ordinary time and the flow of performance time meet and eclipse each other. This eclipse is the "present moment," the synchronic ecstasy, the autotelic flow, of liminal stasis. Those who are masters of attaining and prolonging this balance are artists, shamans, conmen, acrobats (Schechner 1985:112-113).

When it works well, the cosmological ritual drama evokes in participants a phase of consciousness whereby one experiences a release from many of the ordinary sociocultural constraints operating in mundane consciousness. Normal ego-bounds (i.e., habitual patterns of affect, perception of self and other, arousal, reaction, etc.) are transcended. One enters what Victor Turner (1979;1982a) called a "liminal" state or "subjunctive mood." This state is roughly equivalent to Schechner's (1985:237) "not me, not not me," Stanislavski's "as if," and Bateson's "play frame."

Masks and the Cycle of Meaning

There is perhaps no more famous a tradition of masked drama than that found in Bali. This form of drama is part of a rich variety of *warang* theatre forms that include non-masked drama, puppet shows and shadow plays (see Zoete and Spies 1979). *Warang* theatre is a form of ritual drama pre-dating Buddhist and Hindu influences, and it has remained virtually unchanged for thousands of years (Holt 1967:187; Zoete and Spies 1970). In the masked dramas (such as those depicting the eternal conflict between the monster, *Barong*, and the witch-like widow, *Rangda*, the materially realized manifestations of *Rasa*,[4] the primordial source of all), exquisitely carved masks are used ritually to depict cosmological figures in a public forum. They are staged especially during times of stress and danger and operate to make the invisible forces of change visible (Lommel 1970:94). The normally invisible forces depicted in Balinese masked drama are often distinctive for their horrific features. As Napier (1986:197) notes:

> The iconography is recognized as intrinsically transformational and. . . the nexus of this transformation is, ideally, a horrific apotropaic face. This nexus. . . is crucial to masking, since. . . the motif of the horrific face provides a structural mediation that is also an archetypal refinement of sensory experience.

Masked dancers are considered to have special powers, and their actual performances may be prefaced by long hours of preparation involving special diet, purification and protection rituals (McPhee 1970). All of this is understandable when considering the cosmological context within which Balinese theatre is situated, and the phenomenology of dramatic events:

> The gesture-language, the attitudes of the Balinese stage today, can be paralleled in the oldest stone figures in the temples, because the ritual knowledge which created the one still directs the other and is still the eye through which the Balinese view behavior in the dance world where artists and spectators are equally at home. The imagination of the audience as well as the skill of the dancer animates the forms and lives in the familiar ritual which is bound by indissoluble links to the ritual of their own life (Zoete and Spies 1970:268).

Masks themselves are considered sacred objects, and they are handled ritually (McPhee 1970:300). The process of mask-making is an elaborate ritual affair and involves a dialogue between the mask-maker and the spirits (Napier 1986:210).

The work of the mask then is to serve as an intentional object nested within concentric aureolas and networks of symbols that point outward from the body to the cosmos. In a sense, masks are faces of the cosmos. As a symbolic transformation of the face, a mask draws and centers the gaze of both actors and audience, while the rest of the theatrical accoutrements form a mandala-like symbolic context. The mask becomes the predominant figure and the theatrical accoutrements, the ground of perception. Within the context of performance this "mandala" is a living, moving, unfolding unity of symbolic expression. In masked drama the gaze always returns to the mask. One authority, discussing the importance of masking in traditional Japanese *Noh* plays notes, "It is no exaggeration when the actors say, 'A *Noh* play begins with the mask'" (Nakamura 1971:159). And as with any intentional object, a mask can condition the principle factors of experience. A mask naturally has even greater power as the central focus of perception because of its status as a transformation of the face. The transformations may be multiple due either to changing contexts in which masks are nested or to built-in transformative functions in the mask itself, e.g., some mask changes in Japanese *Noh* or Northwest Coast transformation masks.

Just as we focus our attention on a face to obtain information pertaining to a whole being and the environment beyond that being, so we focus on a mask as a guide to the qualities of the cosmic reality of which it is a facial representation. The ordinarily invisible reality faces both actor and audience out of the mask. In Husserlian (1977) terms a mask is a preeminent transcendental guide or clue to the essential qualities of the multiple realities in which the mask is symbolically embedded. And as an essential quality is often the unity underlying apparent conflict, discord,

diversity and disease, so masking may be utilized as the face of power in a service of healing (see Parkin 1985).

Masquerade among the Sinhalese is particularly interesting in this respect, for masks are used publicly to depict cosmological and cosmogonic events relative to myth (Goonatilleka 1978) and also in healing ceremonies (Wirz 1954; Yalman 1964). The Sinhalese tradition of masked dramaturgy has remained unbroken for thousands of years (Lommel 1970:77). As is usually the case in such traditions, the stylistic roots of their masks are to be found in early folk art, and, as such, they are intimately embedded in conceptions of mythic reality.

> The healing-ceremonies are. . . part and parcel of the prevailing religious beliefs, in this case, those of Buddhism, and many legends confirm this (Lommel 1970:83).

The Sinhalese thus manifest this universal principal of mythological inclusion. As Napier (1986:25) notes, "The religious incorporates the theatrical and the theatrical the religious; supernatural efficacy and theatrical device are no longer opposing conditions."

Through the magic of the mask, the Sinhalese incite the healing of a *dis*-ease which, as in virtually all shamanic cosmological cultures (Parkin 1985) is thought to be caused by an untoward fragmentation in cosmic affairs. In Sinhalese the word *tanikama* means "separateness" or "aloneness," i.e., alienation from the process of the whole (which is at "ease"). Alienation is caused by one or more of eighteen demons enacted with masks by a shaman-healer in an elaborate ritual. By enacting first the personification of the demon spirits and then by placating and subduing their forces through ritualized activity, a patient is brought to a new harmonious balance, a "cure" that is a psychological and phenomenological process of returning the patient to the community.

We are particularly interested in this aspect of Sinhalese masquerade, because it illustrates one of the more intractable problems of explanation found in the field of symbolic anthropology. As Lommel (1970:84) reminds us:

> We have, as yet, not been able to define the interrelationship between body and mind, at least not clearly enough to explain the effects of a 'healing ceremony' on a patient in scientific terms, let alone to apply similar techniques ourselves. Scientific 'proof' of the efficacy of such techniques is still missing.

As the Balinese and Sinhalese examples illustrate, a mask is not merely an exegetical guide, a particularly sumptuous metaphor the meaning of which is to be ascertained by application of rational formula. What Western ethnologists and other analysts have long failed fully to appreciate is that the significance of masks lies in the lived experience related perceptually and cognitively to them. A mask and its attendant regalia may come alive for both actor and participant during a

performance or a later phase of consciousness, e.g., contemplation, dream or trance. In 1986 we collected data during a mask workshop in British Columbia attended by Western mask makers, actors and directors. Work with masks can in some individuals very quickly evoke hypnagogic, meditation, and dream imagery. One mask maker even completed a mask begun before having a dream according to the form it took in the dream. The dream image came replete with the body-form associated with the mask he had started to make the day before. It seems likely that some kinds of masked ritual drama are explicitly intended as evocative performances leading to later realizations. For example, among the types of meditation-related rituals carried out by Tibetan Buddhist monks is a type of masked dance-drama called *cham* (see Jerstad 1969; Nebebesky-Wojkowitz 1979; Stein 1957). Monks who specialize in dancing *cham* do so only after extensive meditation upon, and presumably realization of the state of consciousness represented by, various deities that are also the objects of other forms of meditation. This dance-drama is intended specifically to evoke experiences in dancers and to bring cosmology alive in dramatic form for both laity and clergy.

Part III:
How: Transformations of Brain

As interested in masks as some ethnographers have been over the years, there still exists a paucity of theoretical accounts of the universal properties and structures of masking (exceptions being Grimes 1975; Napier 1986; Levi-Strauss 1982). This has been noted by a number of scholars (Jedrej 1980; Tonkin 1979; Tooker 1968; Crocker 1982). The biogenetic structuralist group has been particularly interested in masked drama because of the radical symbolic transformation of the human form it affords–from that of the face of the mundane personhood to that of a supernatural or cosmic being (Webber, Stephens, and Laughlin 1983).

> The mask is not only a complex symbolic object but is, more fundamentally, a simple structural relationship between a spirit that can be seen and a mortal person who, though also present, cannot be seen (Jedrej 1980:225).

We have hypothesized that in cultures exhibiting intact cosmological belief systems experiences related to masked ritual drama operate to vivify cosmology and are made meaningful within its context. In order for this transformation to be effective, it must be directly experienced as real by the mask-wearer, the audience, or both. Accompanying the paucity of theories of masking, there is a lack of data in ethnographic literature pertaining to the phenomenology of masking. There is little information describing the experiences of masked actors, mask-makers, and those observing masked drama. We hope to stimulate fieldwork directed at uncovering the cross-cultural phenomenology of masking, a project that will, among other

things, bring ethnological understanding of masking more in line with developments in modern theories of drama, e.g., Brook (1968–"holy theatre"), States (1985–audience phenomenology) and Raz (1983–phenomenology of actor-audience interaction).

Anthropology continues to remain ignorant of the rich explanatory material available from modern neuroscience (cf. Turner 1985:249ff.). Much of the work of our group over the past few years has been to map the difficult relations between brain, symbolism and direct experience so that the data on all three domains can be described and accounted for by a single unifying perspective (see d'Aquili and Laughlin 1983; d'Aquili, Laughlin, McManus 1979; Webber, Stephens and Laughlin 1983; Laughlin, McManus, Rubinstein and Shearer 1986). We have shown in a number of circumstances that, by manipulating symbols, shamans and other agents of control can evoke predictable experiences in initiates. These experiences are often both extraordinary (transpersonal) and explicable in their cultural context by interpretation drawing on that culture's cosmology. For this reason we suggest that a major intention of masked drama is the incubation and evocation of direct experiences rooted in a culture's cosmology (see Raz 1983). The relation between masking and experience is lawful and based in part upon the effects of changing the internalized body image of actors (see various articles in Blacking 1977; also see Barba 1982).

We already know that mask traditions considered as art must be analyzed within the wider context of a culture's mythopoeic system (Levi-Strauss 1982). But merely exegetical methods will not do, for within the context of mythopoeic associations arises direct experiences of the "power" of the masks (see Crumrine and Halpin 1983). The coalescence of hidden wearer and the spirit of the mask holds the key to evoking this power (Napier 1986; Jedrej 1980; Tonkin 1979). In functional terms this fact seems to be a special case of the well known and more general principle of reversibility, that is, the principle of intensifying an already extant tension between pairs of opposites (e.g., temporal/atemporal, male/female, noble/commoner, king/fool) by reversing their mundane order. Reversal is often considered the key to understanding the role of certain types of ritual as triggers to insight and creativity (see Leach 1961:132ff.; DaMatta in MacAloon 1984; Koestler 1971). Masking typically causes a reversal of the readily observable person to the status of hidden and the usually hidden spirit, ancestor, hero, or god to the status of observable–both embodied within a single being (Crocker 1982). Furthermore, as Napier (1986:16,18) has noted, the use of masked drama is commonly found in situations in which some sort of change is imminent in the psychology of the actor, the society at large, or the environment:

> The presence of masks in situations relating to transition is so commonly the rule that exceptions to it are hard to find. Whether the change is from one social status to another or in the conscious states of the mask wearers or their audiences, again

and again mask users or their observers or both attest to some change in conjunction with the mask's presence. . . . The transforming role of masks is developmentally most dramatic in their association with the greatest paradoxes of all—that is, with creation and destruction, birth and death. In these most moving and difficult of all transitions, the use of masks illustrates the continued attempt to confront paradox by recourse to personification, to state that mutability is a precondition of personality rather than an aberration.

This is the transformative aspect of theatre emphasized by Turner (1982a) and Schechner (1985) and applied to the masking process. Masking is an extreme form of metamorphosis (Morinis 1985:165) that may be used to initiate an individual into the mysteries of the cosmos and thereby render the initiate fundamentally changed (Laughlin *et al.*, 1986).

Symbolic Penetration and Re-entrainment

Our hypothesis is that the transformation of internalized body image brought about by masking, along with the reversibility of outer-form oppositions, produces a symbolic penetration to alternative neurological entrainments that mediate extra-ordinary, transpersonal experiences of self and world. First we need to define two terms.

"Symbolic Penetration" refers to the process by which an initial image or sensation evokes (triggers, activates, excites) a field of multiple somatic (perceptual, cognitive) associations that are its meaning. On both phenomenological and neurological grounds sensations, images and multiple perceptual or cognitive associations are constituted by an organism's nervous system. Penetration may not occur unless some network of neural cells is initially activated, for example, cells in the retina. "Penetration" refers, therefore, not only to relations between an object in the world (for instance, a mask "out there") and a brain, but also between initial sensory activity (e.g., an initial sensory image of an object that becomes known as "a mask") and the totality of neurocognitive processes arising as a consequence (e.g., the entire field of associations, or meaning, within consciousness of the mask). Depending upon the extent of penetration and the exact range of neural entrainment, a variety of experiences may be evoked by masking (see Grimes 1975). In any case, the neural systems to which initial sensory activity penetrates are very likely "neurognostic" structures (Laughlin and d'Aquili 1974), that is, they are specific organizations of cells genetically predisposed to cognize about a specific range of stimuli, in this case faces.

"Entrainment" refers, as the root of the word implies, to the connecting of various neurocognitive, neuroendocrine and other somatic systems to produce a moment of consciousness. Patterns of entrainment are continually changing due to their formation from and within the field of potential social relations among millions of living cells. Thus we speak of re-entrainment of neural

networks to emphasize the changing patterns of interaction among neural cells and systems of cells producing different perceptions, affects, behaviors, cognitions and sensations. The actual range of re-entrainments becomes conditioned during the life of any organism; patterns of entrainment become habitual or recursive.

The process of symbolic penetration may potentially widen the range of entrainments beyond that available in mundane life. Novel patterns of re-entrainment producing alternative experiences and phases of consciousness are potentially available within the physiology of an organism, though they may not have been previously activated and therefore are not developed. Yet the proper symbolic conditions, say, an application of Barba's "extra-daily techniques" can bring about the evocation and development of previously potential entrainments. We suggest that under appropriate conditions transformations of body image, especially facial images, can participate in just such a process of symbolic penetration. The field of entrainments mediating motor activity, affect, perception, metabolic activity, and cognition is expanded and reorganized to produce a far greater range of entrainments than those previously possible within a more limited set of habitual patterns associated with a mundane body image.

Mask as Penetrator

A fair amount is known about the biology and neurobiology of facial form and expression (see Redican 1975;Chevalier-Skolnikoff 1982; Benowitz *et al.*, 1983; Ekiman, Friesen and Ellsworth 1972; Izard 1971; Ley and Bryden 1979; Cicone, Wapner and Gardner 1980; Dekosty *et al.* 1980). Indeed, interest in the biology of facial expression dates back at least to Darwin (1872). Simple recognition of faces is mediated by extensive cortical tissues located on the underside of the temporal and occipital lobes of the brain (see Figure 4). Patients sustaining damage to these areas exhibit a striking syndrome know clinically as *prosopagnosia*, "the. . .inability to recognize faces." A patient can see faces but cannot cognitively identify them. Damage of this kind seems to leave few other deficits, suggesting that the areas of cortex indicated are quite specialized to deal with facial form (Geschwind 1979). There is evidence to suggest that the right hemisphere has the advantage in recognition of faces while the left hemisphere has the advantage in recognizing words (Leehey and Cahn 1981; Hilliard 1973; d'Aquili 1982:383).

The area of cortex responsible for recognizing emotional expression by faces seems to be different from the area denoted above (Figure 4) for facial form recognition (Benowitz *et al.*, 1983; Dekosty *et al.* 1980; Ley and Bryden 1979; Cicone, Wapner and Gardner 1980). It is located on the superior surface of the

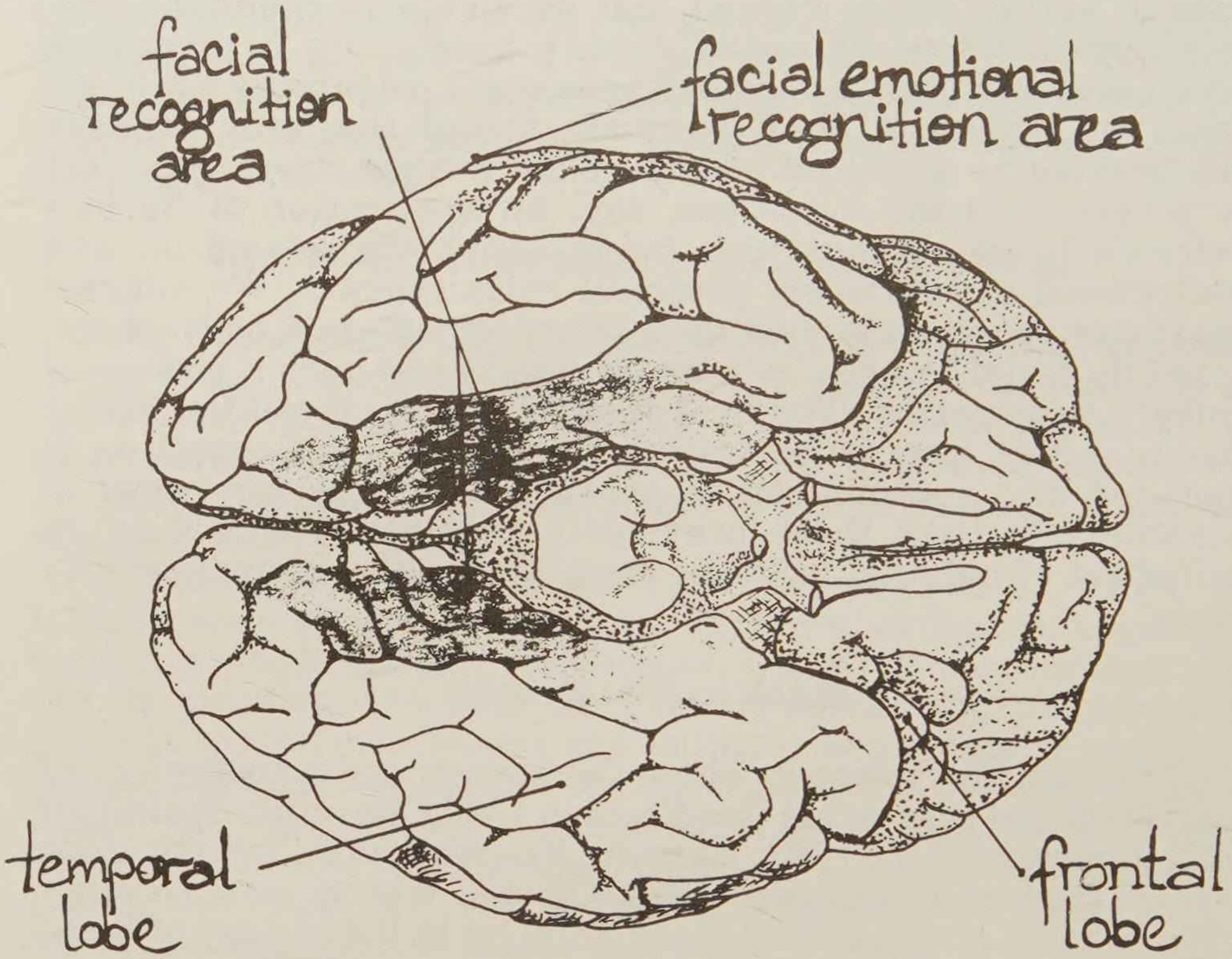


FIGURE 4

Facial Form and Expression Recognition Areas

The human neocortex as seen from the bottom of the brain.

temporal lobe on the right hemisphere, a position comparable to the speech-related Wernicke's area on the left hemisphere.

The right hemisphere specializes in the mediation of emotion, a fact noted by Hughlings-Jackson in 1879 (see also Galin 1974; LeDoux and Hirst 1986:294). Our group considers this lateralization of affect and face association to be fundamental to understanding some of the mechanisms operating in religious ritual in many cultures (see d'Aquili 1982;1983). Likely, the right lobe networks linking prefrontal (intentional) temporal (imaginal) and limbic (affective) tissues account for the efficacy of certain symbolism in evoking intense affect. We suggest that this is especially the case with masking and other transformations of facial form and color used in ritual drama. The lateralized and highly specific neurognostic structures organized to recognize both the form of the face and its expressive signals are active at birth and continue to develop throughout life. As other authorities (e.g., Geshwind 1979; Chevalier-Skolnikoff 1982; Cicone *et al.*, 1980) have noted, the amount of tissue dedicated to this function and its remarkable specificity fits well with the importance of the face as a signalling feature in a highly social mammal. Moreover, it seems likely that the human nervous system, and perhaps the nervous systems of other highly social mammals, is genetically predisposed to seek out faces in the environment and to develop and apply knowledge of the face's expressive signals. It is obvious from experience, as well as from the observation of infants and non-human social mammals, that there is a predilection to focus attention on faces as compared to other parts of the body. Thus it is no surprise that a main locus of symbolic-affective association in ritual drama is the face and its natural and culturally augmented transformations.

We suspect that, just as concentration upon particular images is causally linked to predictable and distinct experiences in meditative practices (Laughlin, McManus and Webber 1985), the disciplined donning and dramatizing of particular masks is causally linked to predictable and distinct experiences (Webber, Stephens and Laughlin 1983). And these experiences are causally linked to the simultaneous blending of conventional, ego-identifiable imagery, affect, and somaesthesis, and alternative (frequently reversed or contrary) imagery, affect, and somaethesis produced via penetration by the mask and associated imagery and activities. The presence of these variant phenomena, simultaneously operating within the sensorium of an actor, sets the stage for a transformation of initial experiential dualisms by means of a reorganization of operating neurocognitive and neuroendocrinal structure mediating two sets of experiences.

Mask imagery may involve simple exaggeration of features common to the human face. A mask may depict a face characterized by extreme pallor, oversized eyes, or an oversized mouth suggesting a smile, grimace or neutral affect. Exaggeration is mediated by the same neurocognitive systems

that ordinarily process the human face and its emotional expression but perhaps evokes a more profound effect upon individual feature-detecting and affective networks than would be the case in normal social discourse.

However, mediation may be more complex and involve the simultaneous ("parallel") processing by normally dissociated neurognostic networks. For example, under proper conditions a mask constructed so that it combines the features and colors normally associated with both the human face and the face of a carnivore (e.g., bear, tiger, wolf) would evoke the neurognostic structures that recognize the face of conspecifics, non-conspecifics, or even dangerous creatures. These structures would operate in parallel fashion to re-entrain and blend the affective and other responses normally reserved for each form alone. These associations would be presented to consciousness as a gestalt in accordance with well known principles of perceptual processing. For instance, it is known that color and form are processed by different areas in the visual cortex and are combined for consciousness in a single percept. A mask may combine normally discrepant cues of form and color that simultaneously penetrate to structures that recognize, say, human male form as well as the colors (e.g., yellow and black stripes, bright red skin) and features (e.g., fangs, feline eyes, long hair) of a non-human creature. This novel re-entrainment of normally discrepant structures would, of course, be augmented in drama by the non-human behavior of a very human actor. Once established, this novel re-entrainment of neurocognitive structures may become permanent and habitual in the organization of the nervous system, and, as it were, take on an autonomous life of its own, manifesting in the dreams, trance states and even ordinary waking consciousness.

From the point of view of masking and penetration one of the more intriguing but controversial theories of affect and facial expression is the so-called facial feedback hypothesis (see Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth 1972; Tomkins 1982). According to this view responses of the facial musculature to stimuli in the world may actually produce affect, rather than affect's arising initially as a visceral response and being merely expressed by the face. This order reverses the usual commonsense direction of causality. If true, however, the facial feedback hypothesis could account for a number of phenomena of interest to performance and transpersonal anthropology. We may being to understand the emphasis in many cultures upon developing proper posture, facial expression and behavior preparatory to realizing discrete, alternative phases of consciousness. This emphasis upon body posture is common to Hindu and Tibetan tantric yogic techniques for entering contemplative states. We may more easily understand the relations between exaggerated facial expression in drama traditions such as Western clowning and Japanese Kabuki in which the face itself provides a base for painted-on masks and

in which exaggerated expressions are effected and manipulated using facial musculature.

We do not endorse the more extreme forms of the facial feedback hypothesis (see Buck 1980) but rather wish to suggest that affective, perceptual, cognitive and other manifestations of radical re-entrainment may be accomplished under certain circumstances "from the outside in" (by modification of facial and other somatic musculature) as well as "from the inside out" (an internal reorganization resulting in a transformation of facial expression and other activity). When the face itself is used as the base of a painted-on mask, not only the outer visual image of the mask may penetrate but, for the actor, so may the activities of the neural networks controlling facial expression. When the face is covered by a mask that it cannot control with its musculature, facial expression may have a penetrative influence due to the relaxation of the hidden face. This case, the relaxation of expression may have something of the effect of the so-called "neutral mask" in some Western theatrical traditions.

In any event an individual may experience the radical re-entrainment of neural networks as a possessing psychic entity, a phenomenon well noted in anthropological literature (Bourguignon 1976). Such possession is beginning to be associated in clinical literature with the psychopathology commonly known as "multiple personality syndrome" (see Crabtree 1985). This is far too complex an issue to go into here, but suffice it to say that multiple, transpersonal entrainments are possible in every human being regardless of culture. Some cultural traditions take advantage of this potential to bring individual experience into accord with a cosmological worldview comprised of multiple realities. Such traditions rely heavily upon the ability to penetrate ritually, thus activating multiple entrainments within an individual nervous system and producing alternative phases of consciousness and experiences that confirm a worldview. Because these techniques penetrate in part to right lobe systems linking affect and image, the potential for intense, emotionally charged experiences of self-transformation may be realized (d'Aquili 1982;1983).

The significance of this potential self-transformation is well known in Western theatre. For instance, there exists a tradition dating at least to the world of Jacques Copeau at the Vieux Colombier Theatre in Paris in which masking is used to teach actors to drop ego-conditioned responses and to go through movements in a more relaxed and flowing way (Saint-Denis 1982:170). The experiential power of masks in performance is well appreciated in these traditions. As Nikos Kazantzakis noted in 1935:

> I felt a great joy trying again to harmonize. . . fearful antithesis. . . Woe to him who sees only the mask! Woe to him who sees only what is hidden behind the mask! The perfect sight is to see simultaneously. . .the sweet mask and behind it the abominable face (from Peter Bien's introduction, Kazantzakis 1982:ix).

Unfortunately, transpersonal anthropology is still in its infancy and has not yet been widely accepted in the discipline (Laughlin, McManus and Shearer 1984). The result is that anthropology in general is behind modern drama theory in understanding the importance of transpersonal experiences for giving rise to and vivifying religious and mystical traditions around the world. Furthermore, the discipline has failed to appreciate the powerful transformations of personality and experiences of self that may occur as a direct consequence of participating in ritual. So powerful are these transformations within the lives of people that it is not at all elitist to say that, short of actually participating in these events and experiencing the transformations of consciousness that may be evoked, the ethnologist has limited phenomenological grounds for understanding what is actually going on. Short of realizing the power of the masks themselves, ethnologists cannot possibly know how masks work, although they may be able to appreciate to some extent that masks "work how."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Judi Young-Laughlin, a graduate of The Drama Studio, London, has worked in the Canadian theatre for the past 16 years. She is a writer and clown who has done research on masking and movement in Canada, Switzerland and Japan; she currently teaches movement and masking near Ottawa.

Charles Laughlin is a professor of anthropology, Department of Sociology-Anthropology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6. He is co-author of several books, including *Biogenetic Structuralism* (1974), *The Spectrum of Ritual* (1979) and *Science as Cognitive Process* (1984). He has done research among pastoralists in East Africa and among Tibetan lamas in Nepal.

NOTES

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[2]An interesting exception to the usual Western habit of objectifying masks was encountered by one of the authors (Judi Young-Laughlin) in at least one school of clowning, that of Canadian clown master Richard Pochinko. In his work a series of six masks is made, worn, and internalized during a process of exploration with each. Afterwards, the emerging "clown" is encouraged to toss the masks aside, indeed, never needing to wear them again, yet forever having them present for potential expression.

[3]Victor Turner (1985:221ff.) offers a very useful discussion of the meaning of the word "experience." Our use corresponds to the second sense in which he uses the term (222), one similar to Dilthey's *Erlebnisse*, "lived though experience." However, the biogenetic structural definition of experience is neurologically much more explicit (see Laughlin 1987). In our view all experience is constituted within, for, and by the nervous system.

[4]Rasa means "flavor," "taste," "to partake of only a little bit in order to savor its essence." The interface occurs when "preparers and partakers meet" (Schechner 1985:139).

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POSSESSION STATES AMONG THE ŚAKTAS OF WEST BENGAL

June McDaniel

Abstract

This article describes three forms of goddess possession in West Bengal. Bhor nāma is the descent of the goddess upon a ritual practitioner, usually female, at specific times and places, for healing disease and answering questions. Āveśa is an emotional state, in which a devotee is possessed by the deity in a state of love, and their personalities are mingled together. Mahā-ullāsa occurs in the tantric ritual circle or cakra and is a state of bliss in which the bodies of the group members become the bodies of the deity. These states are described from both Bengali texts and field notes and placed in the context of broader ritual theory.

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Bengali Śaktas worship the mother goddess in many manifestations, especially the *dasa mahāvidyas* or ten major incarnations. Of these forms the two most frequently seen in possession trance are Kālī and Tārā, goddesses associated with death and rebirth, wisdom and inspiration.

We shall explore three types of goddess possession in this paper. The most frequently seen form of possession is *bhor nāma*, the descent of the goddess upon the individual. It is induced by ritual on specific days, often in temples or before statues of the goddess. The possessed person, usually a woman, answers questions about healing, employment, family problems and other topics.

The second type of possession is *āveśa*, which is an emotional state arising out of love for the deity. It may be seen in *bhāvāveśa*, in which the person's feelings and moods are those of the deity, and *devāveśa*, in which the person's identity and personality are believed to be identical with the deity. The goddess is not coerced by ritual, but rather comes to possess the devotee as a gift of love. Possession is unpredictable, but often occurs in ritual contexts.

The third type is the ritual group possession of the Śakta *cakra*, the state of *mahā-ullāsa* or ecstatic joy. The worshippers ingest ritual substances, and all of their bodies become the bodies of the deity. During the time of the ritual, they are no longer bound by traditional social and ethical rules, for their identities have been merged with that of the god and goddess; they need not follow human expectations. I will describe these states using both Bengali texts and field notes from research done in West Bengal during 1983-1984.

Bhor may be a painful form of possession trance. The person often writhes on the ground, gasping and screaming. During my time in Calcutta, I saw a holy woman (*sādhikā*) experiencing *bhor* on a new-moon night. She was a thin, quick woman in her fifties, married and of low caste. Her white hair came down her back into long matted knots (*jatā*), and her teeth were stained red by *pān*. The slow, steady chanting of a Bengali song was dying away, and

a steady stream of moans, screeches, grunts and incoherent words began to issue from her.

This was the induction of *bhor*, as the *sādhikā* entered trance. She was surrounded by a close circle of attendants, older women dressed in the white saris of widowhood. At a distance, a crowd of people watched, householders with children who wanted answers to questions, or the blessings of Mā Kālī.

Induction of trance was accompanied by the singing of a variant of the "Hare Kṛṣṇa" mantra in a minor key. Even the children sang, and the *sādhikā* lay flat on the floor, writhing and rolling rapidly back and forth. Her mouth was open, gasping for air, and her head moved from side to side. Her arms were outspread, and her feet kicked in random movements.

The goddess' presence was perceived in her voice, which gasped and screamed answers to questions. Her body continued to roll and twitch throughout. One of the older women took the role of organizer, having people ask questions and then repeating them to Mā, who would answer in *bhor*. The observers milled around, jockeying for position, and keeping up a steady stream of commentary on the situation. The questions were about family situations, marriage, health, future accomplishments, work. Her answers tended to be optimistic, with admonishments for people to do meditation and follow spiritual rules in their lives.

During the trance, an aisle was kept empty from her feet outwards, and people generally did not sit directly in front of her. After about a half hour of questions, her voice became more hoarse and gasping, and the attendants began the chanting of a Śiva song to bring the trance to a close. During this song she lay slumped on the floor in a heap, but would periodically roll back and forth in a frenzy, screaming and then slump down again. She would become stiff, with her face on the floor.

She gasped to the goddess not to make things so difficult for her, to ease her burden, to give her less power. The apparent response of the goddess was a lessening of trance, as her words became quieter and her body more still.

The women attendants began to move her unconscious body, which lay drooped like that of a doll. They rubbed her limbs, re-arranged her sari (white silk with a wide red border, laying in total disarray), hugged her and rubbed her head with oil. They threw sanctified food (*prasāda*) out into the crowd and there was a mad scramble for it, especially among the children. As the *sādhikā* returned to normal consciousness, the crowd dispersed and she ate some *sandeśa* and other sweets. She later spoke of how Mā Kālī lived in her heart and would possess her in order to help others. Her husband accepted the trances as adding honor to the family.

Another holy woman interviewed, Yogeśwarī Devī, lived in a small temple in the jungles near Rājpur. In her states of possession trance, she would materialize herbal medicine and bowls of food for her devotees. Her guru forbade *bhor* trances,

saying that they would cause her to lose her spiritual power. However, after his death, she returned to possession states, alternately speaking in the voice of Bābā Śiva, a deep male voice, and Mā Kālī, who had a female voice.

When asked of her possession trances, she said:

> I could see a light when I was very young. After seeing the light, I would feel quite strange. I could not understand what was happening inside me. I found that I had strange abilities. I could cure patients, and they made a temple for me. I could convert a wood-apple leaf into a Siva *linga*. I could give [materialize] statues of Laksmî and Narayan.
>
> First I sit for meditation, and then I see a blue light, which gradually becomes yellow and then disappears. Then I become unconscious. People say that I change during that state. I only feel sleepy.
>
> Now sometimes I experience *bhor*. Suppose I see a patient who is in a very bad condition. While looking at him, I will suddenly have a state of *bhor* descend upon me. Then I will give the patient an amulet or something else. But I don't know where these things come from.
>
> Gurudev was frightened. He realized that I had attained power (*vibhūti*), and he stopped it. He did ritual worship to me. Then gradually I lost the power. But again, a few days ago, it happened again. I gave amulets to several people. But I did not realize what was happening; at such times I am unconscious. When I was in Khardaha, my disciples saw me playing with snakes, and a little girl used to come out of me and play with me. My disciples have seen this, but I did not feel anything at the time.
>
> I do not experience *bhor* whenever I sit, but I desire it very much. *Bhor* comes according to God's wishes. Before, I used to experience *bhor* on Monday and Friday. Now I do not have these experiences. Before experiencing *bhor*, my heart fills with tremendous joy, and I can see a bright light. I don't feel then like talking to others. When I used to experience *bhor*, a man once came and touched a hot iron to my body, but I did not feel anything. Many people came to examine me.

Yogeśwarī's trance states were not accepted by her husband, from whom she is separated. Her married life was unhappy, involving much arguing with her in-laws and she left her home to travel and become a *sādhikā*. While Yogeśwarī's trances are at new-moon and for purpose of helping devotees and answering questions, her religious orientation makes many people see her states as *āveśa* rather than *bhor*.

Āveśa is another form of possession, an intense state of devotion in which the deity may simply entrance the person, or actually speak through him or her. Sometimes the person may experience many mythic roles rapidly. The facial expression changes as the person becomes a warrior, a sage, a queen, a vengeful harpy. *Bhāvāveśa* is a trance state due to strong concentration or love. The worldly identity is forgotten, and the inner visualized states become real. Stories about saints (*siddhas*) in *bhāvāveśa* tend to dwell upon two aspects. In one the saint becomes oblivious to the outside world and is harmed or tortured but does not feel pain. In the other the visualized imagery becomes physically real: the colored powder seen in a vision dyes the saint's clothes; the finger hurt in the vision bleeds physically; the token given by the shining deity is still clutched in the person's hand when he or she returns to normal consciousness.

The holy woman, Ānandamayī Mā, who died recently, was well-known for her spontaneous possession states and her biographies include detailed descriptions of these states. She was of Bengali brahmin background and maintained a celibate marriage. During her lifetime, she was widely regarded as a saint (*siddha*). While she went through an initial period of ritual action (as dictated by an inner voice), she is best known for her later experiences of sudden *bhāvāveśa*, possession by the *bhāva*, or intense emotion, of a great devotee, sage or deity. A disciple describes her during *kīrtan* or hymn singing:

> As the sound of *kîrtan* would reach Her, She would generally drop whatever work She might be doing and gradually Her body stiffened and fell on the ground. She would remain in this condition for varying periods. Afterwards or at times, She would stand erect resting only on the big toe or only on the forepart of Her feet, with both hands raised above Her head, Her eyes fixed steadily ahead without even a flicker of the eyelids. Sometimes Her head would bend backwards until it touched Her back. She would either stand there absolutely still and motionless, or sway rhythmically with the heaving of her breath. Often she would run dancing to the spot where *kîrtan* was being sung, sometimes very gracefully undulating like a wave, and sometimes with incredible swiftness. Her movements then would be quick like a flash of lightning.... Frequently She would roll in ecstasy to and fro on the ground in a whirl over a distance of 15 or 20 yards like a dry leaf driven before a storm. It was impossible to stop Her at such moments. She who was usually so modest and never unveiled Her face before strangers would now run and dance bareheaded, entirely oblivious to the external world (Devotees 1946:172).

Even stranger events are described:

> There were occasions when Her body would stretch and become much taller than usual; or again it would shrink into an inconceivably small size. At times it would become rolled up like a round mass of flesh, as if there were no bones. Sometimes the entire body would so throb and thrill with strong emotions surging through it, that it would get swollen and red, with every single hair standing on end. She would sometimes shed profuse tears or laugh and become stiff as in a stupor. There was, in short, no end to the varieties of Bhavas and their expressions induced in Her by the chanting of God's holy name at *Kîrtan* (174).[1]

It was felt that such bodily changes reflected a divine presence. At one point, she conducted a ceremony in which she worshipped herself as Kālī and had rapidly changing facial expressions and action. Disciples would see in her many different deities and persons, but she avoided answering when they asked her for her true identity.

Another recent saint, Nityagopāl, was known for his states of *āveśa*. During *kīrtana* singing, Nityagopāl would have ecstatic symptoms: bristling hair, trembling and shivering, babbling like a child, teeth chattering violently. His disciples describe his limbs lengthening and shortening and his skin turning white and dark, red and blue. He would dance in two styles–the *lāsya nṛitya*, in a feminine manner, softly and sweetly, and the *tāṇḍava nṛitya*, vigorously, like Śiva. At the temple of Bhāvatārinī, the *Caṇḍī* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* was being read. Nityagopāl

became *āveśa* by the goddess Caṇḍī, and began to dance. Blood gushed out of his mouth as he went about in trance-dance.

Āveśa includes a wide range of manifestations: intense emotion, bodily distortion, trances and visions. These changes as described by devotees include expansion and contraction of the body, fainting, change in skin color, great heat. At times there is also ecstatic speech or glossolalia, when the person speaks incoherently, or in a language unknown to observers. This language is usually assumed by them to be Sanskrit. *Āveśa* causes the person to act as a vessel for the deity dwelling within, as does the state of *ullāsa* in the tantric *cakra*.

Śakta tantric *cakras* are circles of people who perform ritual worship. The rites are notorious as orgiastic ceremonies in which drunkenness and indiscriminate sexuality predominate. However, it is less well known that the goal of the *cakra* is to cause its participants to become possessed *en masse* by Śiva and Kālī or Śaktī.

Reliable descriptions of *cakras* are rare. However, the *Kulārṇava Tantra* goes into great detail about the human aspect of the ritual. The *Kulārṇava* is an authoritative Śakta source on ritual, widely quoted in other tantras.[2] It both guides practice and gives a philosophical basis to the ritual; it is part instruction manual and part divine justification. In the secondary literature about *cakras* the actions tend to follow the *Kulārṇava* instructions.

This tantra emphasizes the secrecy of the ritual path and organizes its discussion of ecstatic states around two rituals: the states of piercing or penetration (*vedha*) which arise in initiation, and the states of bliss (*ullāsa*) which reveal themselves in the *cakra*. As the *cakra* ritual begins, goddess or *mātṛkā* mantras are chanted over the wine and root or *mūla* mantras over the flesh and these are eaten by the participants. It is believed that the deities enter these substances and then take over the people who eat them. The text states repeatedly that the human couple then manifests the divine couple, and should be worshipped as Śiva and Śaktī. The combination of alcohol and meditation (*dhyāna*) causes fainting and a variety of ecstatic states.

At the Bhairavī or Śrī *cakra*, after the substances are taken and possession occurs, acts are evaluated by criteria different from ethical rules. All actions become good, since they are the actions of deities. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* states:

> In this state, discussion shows the fruit of mantra, sleepiness is *samādhi*, bad actions are worship, union with Śaktī is liberation, one takes food as if it were a sacrifice to Bhairava, and conversation, O Īśani, is seen as the chanting of hymns.
>
> The contact of bodily parts is *nyāsa* (ritually placing a god in the body), taking food is the pouring of oblations upon the sacrificial fire, observation is meditation, and sleeping is like embrace.
>
> In this way, whatever actions are performed by persons in a state of *ullāsa* (ecstatic joy), they are considered to be auspicious actions.

Enthusiasm, bliss, increase in knowledge, poetry, speech, playing on the flute and the vina, weeping, falling down and getting up again, yawning, walking, even various bad acts;

All of these actions, O Devī, are called yoga. (Dasa, 1383 BS:VIII 59-61, 63-64).[3]

In the *cakra*, states of bliss are induced by both ritual and wine and the states of intoxication caused by both become extreme:

Intoxicated by passion, the women take shelter with other men, treating them as their own. Each man also takes a new partner (śakti) and treats her as his own, when in the state of ullāsa.

Seized by delusion, the men embrace other men.

The women are confused and ask their husbands such questions as:

"Who are you, who am I, who are these other people, why are we here, is this a garden, or our home, or an inner courtyard?

O Śāmbhāvi! The yogis take the food from each other's plates, and dance about with their drinking pots on their heads.

The men fill their mouths with liquor, and have the women drink it from their mouths. They also put spicy food in their mouths, and put it into the mouths of their partners.

The women who are overcome by emotion clap and sing songs whose words are unclear, and they stagger while dancing.

Yogis who are intoxicated fall upon the women, and the intoxicated yoginīs fall upon the men. O Kulanāyikā! They are induced to perform such actions, to fulfil their mutual desires.

When this state of *ullāsa* is not accompanied by perverse thoughts, the bull among yogis reaches the state of identity with the deity (VIII, 67-75).

The *cakra* may induce several stages of *ullāsa*. The highest is called *manollāsa* or *anavasthā*, the state beyond all states:

In this condition, [the worshipper] is beyond control by body and senses.

In the state of this highest swoon he takes on the form of the greatest mantra, and this state of swooning brings [him] to the root of liberation.

He gazes outward but looks inward, and his eyes are unblinking. This is the *śāmbhavī mudra*.

This is the greatest of states, the true form of the bliss of union, [transforming] the nature of the self. By means of this, he truly becomes the deity. There is no doubt about this.

Persons engaged in self-study can know some of this bliss. But this state is beyond description, and must be experienced, as the pleasure of drinking sugared milk must be experienced.

By means of concentration this great joy causes god-possession [*devāveśa*]. This stage is called *brahmadhyāna*, and it is visible when the hair stands on end, and through other such symptoms (VIII, 83-90).

Thus we have three forms of possession. *Bhor* is individual and voluntary, induced by chanting and rhythmic movement but often viewed in a negative manner because of its use of a deity power towards material, and thus lower, ends. *Āveśa* is a result of devotional love, in which the goddess sends ecstatic emotional and bodily symptoms to a devotee. It cannot be consciously sought, though it often occurs within a ritual context. There is union with

the goddess, or with many deities in rapid succession. *Mahā-ullāsa* is voluntary and occurs in a group, induced by eating and drinking ritual substances which are both sacred and forbidden. Possession may be affected by the setting, the purity of the persons involved, and the wishes and actions of the guru.

Etymologically, all three terms are associated with richness. *Bhor* is commonly translated as weight, pressure, or domination. It is derived from *bhṛ*, "to grant or bestow," and from *bharan*, "to fill, stuff, feed or maintain." It is associated with abundance and fulfillment, glory and support. *Āveśa* is commonly translated as "passion," "confusion," "rapture" and "obsession." It is derived from *viś*, "to enter, drive in, to take possession of," "and from *ā*, meaning "towards." It is associated with *praveśa kara*, meaning "entrance" or "admission." It is seen as "depth," "penetration," "realization" and "intense love." *Ullāsa* is usually translated as "delight" and "gladness." It is derived from *ut* and *lās*, meaning "to shine forth" or "radiate." It is associated with "bliss," "beauty" and "revelation." The metaphors for these types of possession are thus "domination" and "filling," "passion" and "entering," and "shining joy."

Typologies of Possession

We may compare these states to some major typologies of possession. One early writer, T. K. Oesterreich (1930), distinguished types on the basis of memory and will. He used two divisions and thus four types: somnambulistic vs. lucid, and spontaneous vs. voluntary. In somnambulistic possession, the person remembered nothing afterwards, as if he or she had been sleepwalking; while in lucid possession, the person retained memory, as if he or she were a passive spectator of an internal drama. In spontaneous possession the person was in a state of compulsion, possibly caused by obsession, epilepsy or hysteria. In voluntary or artificial possession, the state was chosen by the individual and induced by ritual.

Another major writer, I. M. Lewis (1975), contrasts central and peripheral forms of possession. In the central form, possession is highly valued by some portion of society; it is a desirable state which supports some religious, moral or political belief, and the spirits are viewed as sympathetic. In the peripheral form, possession is not valued and is considered undesirable, an invasion by evil spirits which requires a cure. Lewis also contrasts shamanism (the ascent of humans to the gods) with possession (the descent of the gods upon humanity) and quotes two types of possession described by Luc de Heusch. De Heusch contrasts inauthentic possession, a religious experience and "joyous Dionysian epiphany." Lewis prefers to call these "unsolicited" and "solicited" types of possession.

Raymond Firth (1967) distinguishes spirit possession (when a person's actions are controlled by a spirit who many inhabit his or

her body), shamanism (when the person controls the spirit) and mediumship (when a person is used as a means of communication with spirit entities). However, this distinction is less useful than the previous typologies, because mediums may both control the spirits who speak through them, and also be controlled by them.

Some of these categories can be applied to Sakta possession. *Bhor* is somnambulistic. The "*bhor* ladies" (a Bengali term alluding to the fact that most people who go into this state are women) tend not to remember what happened in trance and to disclaim responsibility, referring questions to the disciplies that are present. Often, women interviewed could give a fairly coherent account of events but would say that they only knew what happened because they had heard it from their devotees. *Ullāsa* seems to be a semi-conscious event; the memory is blurred by wine and group excitement. Events are remembered more for intense emotion than for "internal drama," which is more typical of yogic visualization. Spontaneous possession (*āveśa*) is remembered, but rarely discussed. It may be viewed as illness if it occurs in a householder environment, but when accepted as a real event, especially in a renunciate setting, it is one of the highest and most sacred states possible, a gift from the deity. *Āveśa* is spontaneous, while *bhor* and *ullāsa* fit into Oesterreich's "artificial" category because they are induced by ritual.

All of the Sakta possession states described here fit Lewis's category of "central" or "valued" states. These are accepted as descents of the goddess and, as such, they are respected. "Peripheral" states would be those in which the possessing entity was not believed to be the goddess but rather a ghost (*bhuta*), ancestor or demon disguising its identity. The difference between central and peripheral states is context: central states tend to occur in settings of ritual practice, while peripheral states are unexpected, occuring among worldly people or smaller groups.

In peripheral cases the family may call an exorcist to get rid of the offending spirit, and the exorcism may involve torture. One holy woman interviewed had been a householder when she first began to enter possession trances and see visions. Her relatives called an exorcist (*ojhā*) who tied her down spread-eagled, put a fire between her legs (her legs were thick with scar tissue), and hit her with shoes and other objects for a week. The belief is that during possession the human personality is gone and only the spirit feels pain. When the woman continued to have visions and trances after this exorcism, her relatives grudgingly admitted that perhaps she really was visited by the goddess.[4] Acceptance of goddess possession as a genuine phenomenon seems to be largely a result of trial and error. There are no Bengali possession cults for transforming a negative aspect of the goddess into a positive one.[5] *Bhor* may be seen as positive (a gift from a great deity) or negative (the expression of a frustated ghost), but if the person is thought to be *āveśa* he or she may gain disciples.

The spirit possession of an individual in a family setting may also be used to make money. Several psychiatrists interviewed in Calcutta stated that they never saw cases of mental illness with religious imagery and that the villagers value such people as oracles and diviners, assuming them to be possessed periodically by various deities. They are not considered to be ill and thus are never taken to doctors. They sit at the front of their houses, getting paid for their predictions.

While some people possessed by the goddess make claims of miraculous healing, the only figures which can be called shamanic are tantric healers who make astrological amulets and invoke the goddess' power. The *piśāca tantrika*, or "black magician," on occasion deliberately becomes possessed by the destructive aspects of the goddess in order to cast spells and protect clients from danger. In the back of the *Kālî bārî*, or temple, in Calcutta where a *piśāca tantrika* practiced, was a huge pile of human skulls and bones. The goddess' power (*śakti*) passed through these to empower the magician. Other tantric healers are not possessed, but worship the goddess with great ceremony feeling that she speaks to them through intuition.

Interpreting Possession

How can the forms of Śakta possession described in this paper best be interpreted? *Bhor* seems to fit naturally into performance theory, because the possessed person (usually female and lower caste) acts before a audience. The setting is usually dramatic, a full or new moon, with a stage area and devotees as assistants. It is public, with a predicted time and place, and the ritual practitioner may wear special dress or symbolic ornaments. Entrance into the possession state is voluntary, induced by music and chanting or dance, and movements become spasmodic as trance descends. The deity has its own flamboyant style of movement, gesture and speech, and often answers questions and predicts the future. The deity's voice may sound higher or lower, younger or older, or of a different gender than the practitioner's (ghosts and demons have nasal voices). There is continual audience commentary on the depth of trance, the believability of the performance, and the utterances of the deity.

Ullāsa may be viewed best as an instance of Victor Turner's (1969) "liminality" and "communitas," which he found illustrated in several cultures. In the tantric *cakra*, socially liminal persons (often lower-caste, especially the women, and sometimes renunciants) are in a religiously liminal situation (forbidden sexuality and food). Caste and family relationships are suspended, as may be seen in the religious statements condoning incest and adultery (though these may also be interpreted as *sandhyabhasa*, a linguistic code). The group is egalitarian; all are equal before the ingestion of sacred food (*prasāda*), and afterwards all are equally divine. All actions and interactions become

sanctified, and participants live in the time and place of the gods. Hierarchies are negated. Śiva and Śakti are in the lowest and highest, pure and impure, male and female. The participants gain mystical knowledge and powers and their identities are consciously merged with that of the deities. The *cakra* takes place in a secluded locale, and no outsider may participate. What is dangerous and polluting to others, sanctifies and unites the participants.

Āveśa is spontaneous, non-ritual possession by a deity, often accompanied by visions of lights or paradises. It may occur while the person is alone or with a group of devotees, often during meditation or *kīrtana* singing. It is an emotional expression between lover and beloved, and group presence is an intrusion into a private relationship. The worshipper is believed to feel such an intense love for the deity that a sense of personal self is lost, and the person experiences the thoughts and feelings of the deity. Saints are said to try to keep such states hidden if other persons are present.

Āveśa is a special type of relationship between worshipper and deity, often described using metaphors of kinship or romantic love. The bond of blood or passion amounts to a unity of person and deity, and the worshipper's devotional love is believed to become so intense that the normal boundaries of personality dissolve. The devotee may be the young child on the lap of the goddess, or the unborn child in the goddess' universal womb. Or he may be the *vīra*, the tantric hero, who conquers her and forces the union. But at a deeper level he is united with the goddess, who may show her love by her descent into the devotee's mind and heart.

Āveśa occurs when a person is identified with the deity in various ways. Ānandamayī Mā spoke of the progressive internalization of the deity in her own life–first present in the prayer-room, then in nature, then as the beloved always at her side, and then within everything, especially herself (Atmananda 1978: 147). When this inner deity dominated, she had no responsibility for her actions, which were then due to *kheyāla*, a spontaneous upsurge of divine will. Her personal identity was gone. She said, "My inner world is a vacuum, with nothing within. If you hit an empty drum, sound comes out of it. In this way, whatever I speak comes spontaneously, from this inner void" (Kavirāj 1383 B.S.: 1).

She stated that at such times her actions were not *abhinaya*, the playing of dramatic roles, but rather *līlākhela*, the play of deity acting through her body. Her identity fluctuated randomly between union with, and separation from, the deity. She had no ritual to control these states.

Āveśa may also be used as a proof of divinity. There are partial incarnations of deities called *āveśa-avātaras*, whose possession states prove that some aspect of the deity has manifested in them. In devotional Hinduism deities may incarnate both fully (a person is aware of his or her divine

identity) and partially (often one is not aware). Ānadamayî Mā was often called an avatar, and people continually guessed which deity was her true personality.

The style of interpretation most appropriate for *āveśa* would not be anthropological but rather psychological. This approach ought not reduce the phenomenon to psychological categories but rather clarify some of the dynamics involved. The neo-Freudian psychology of Heinz Kohut focuses upon the issues of narcissism and the pre-oedipal formation of the self. It discusses partial and fragmentary selves, which may coalesce and split apart.[6] These various configurations of the self oscillate between cohesion, fragmentation and reintegration. Such oscillation is determined by the two earliest self/object relations: idealization (the dominance of the object) and grandiosity (the dominance of the self). Kohut writes,

> As a result of this approach we recognize the simultaneous existence of contradictory selves: of different selves of various degrees of stability and of various degrees of importance. There are conscious, preconscious, and unconscious selves; there are selves in the ego, the id and the superego; and we may discover in some of our patients contradictory selves, side by side, in the same psychic agency (in Ornstein, 1978:96).

According to Kohut, personality-swings between one self and another are due to an imbalance at the earliest stage of psychological development, when an infant is attempting to differentiate itself from the objects and persons in its environment. Multiple selves may be organized in an attempt to deal with maternal inattention and environmental unpredictability. Such a self does not have a single, firm foundation but rather a series of personality organizations at its core. While for Western psychology such an unstable self is considered undesirable, in a Bengali religious context it is valued because it is more open to ritually-induced or spontaneous identification with the deity. While Western psychology seeks to support a strong central personality based on interaction with other persons and social learning, Bengali ecstatic groups emphasize a looser, more flowing personality, capable of intense emotion and identification with mythical-religious figures. While one values individuation and separation, the other emphasizes merger.

This shift in self-organization may be seen in the three forms of possession: the domination of the deity over the self in *bhor*; the merger of *āveśa* and *ullāsa*; and the control of the deity by the devotee in tantric magic and *bhakti* devotion. In the last the deity cannot ignore the power of the devotee's love and passion and is forced to respond. The deity shares emotion with the person, helping the fragmented self to reintegrate or dissolve depending upon whether the spiritual goal is a new self, or no self. The god may be everything and the self nothing, or the self may be everything and the god a mere image, or both may be everything and nothing together, both infinite light and total emptiness.

Possession is more than a concern for social status and religious power; it is a way of understanding one's relationship to the universe, reflecting a theology of direct and unmediated unity.

All these states of possession differ from the more widely-known yogic states of concentration and trance (*samādhi*). While the yogic states emphasize self-control and the limitation of emotion, possession states are "affect-dominant." They are known by their emotional intensity. Possession is also more social than yogic practice; its context is that of small ritual groups or village communities. Only in that form of possession known as *āveśa* is emotion personal and valued for being so. Because it is viewed as devotion (*bhakti*), it is an interaction of caring rather than manipulation between deity and devotee. The deity does not act only through, but with, the person, welcomed by the devotee's passion and love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

June McDaniel, 27W064 Jewell Road, Winfield, IL, 60190, received her Ph.D. in History of Religions, University of Chicago.

NOTES

[1]These are also classical Vaisnava ecstatic symptoms, the *sāttvika bhāvas*, first described in detail by the followers of Caitanya, a fourteenth century saint believed to be a joint incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

[2]The early tantric writer Arthur Avalon calls the *Kularṇāva Tantra* the most frequently cited text in the tantric literature.

[3]This translation of the *Kulārṇava* Tantra comes from a Sanskrit text with Bengali translation.

[4]This case is described in greater detail in my dissertation, "Bhāva: Religious Ecstasy and Madness in Bengal" (University of Chicago, 1986).

[5]In his book *Medusa's Hair* Gananath Obeyesekere described such transformations among the *sādhikās* he interviewed.

[6]In the study of this phenomenon he was preceded by Carl Jung's work on "splinter psyches."

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WOMEN'S INITIATION RITES IN AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIONS; A STRUCTURAL SOURCE ANALYSIS

Carol A. Myscofski

Abstract

This study analyzes the initiation rites performed in twentieth-century Afro-Brazilian groups which introduce a dedicated follower to her mediumistic role. The essay describes the background of Afro-Brazilian religions, summarizes the initiation ceremonies according to recent studies, and systematically compares the structures of the rituals with similar African rituals. Afro-Brazilian religions are centered in the ritual worship of personal deities. Since their establishment, they have been led by women of African descent. The initiated mediums of filhas de santo embody sacred powers during rites and keep the practice a living religion. For them, initiation rites are believed to be derived from African practice. My purpose in this paper is to investigate this claim and to discover the specific African sources for the Afro-Brazilian religious initiation ritual and to relate Christian or indigenous influences.

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Introduction

Afro-Brazilian religions cannot be understood as a single, unified phenomenon. As they flourish in different forms in Brazil today, they comprise a "complex of beliefs and rites of African roots, fruit of the interaction among the black, Amerindian and European cultures" (Bento:14). While Afro-Brazilian religious centers or temples have only appeared in historical records since the early nineteenth century, it is certain that the development of Afro-Brazilian religions began with the first African slaves brought to Brazil in the early sixteenth century. The leadership of the temples themselves has been dominated since their recorded establishment by women of clear African descent. Women function as priestesses and predominate among the initiated and uninitiated followers. Only in newer groups and in those which have attenuated connections with their Brazilian lineages do men figure as leaders and, more rarely, as initiates.

In Afro-Brazilian groups, the initiation rite is the means for a follower to dedicate herself to one of the many deities or spirits and to play an honored and envied role in cult ceremonies. Initiation is not required for ordinary membership but is a sign of devotion to the divine powers or is undertaken in response to divine demands; it may be the first step to a position of leadership in a cult center. From the point of view of the practitioners, initiation rites are believed to be directly derived from African practice.

Africans in Brazil

The Afro-Brazilians who began and now lead Afro-Brazilian religious groups are the descendants of colonial slaves who were

seized from the Portuguese-held West Coast of Africa and Mozambique territories and taken to Brazil to replace the decimated native population as forced laborers. Africans worked Brazilian sugar plantations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and were imported through the beginning of the nineteenth century to work the gold and diamond mines and rubber plantations. Portuguese colonists and exploiters had been lured to the Brazilian territory with grants of large tracts of land and considerable latitude in developing them. The original experiment of a neo-feudal independent state launched in 1500 failed, however, as insufficient numbers of landowners chose to reside in the colony. The later centralized royal colonial government supported the *latifundia*, large plantations dedicated to the monoculture of specific crops, and other means of rapid exploitation of the territory for the ultimate benefit of the Portuguese crown. When indigenous peoples of South America resisted the repetitive labor required and received protection from Roman Catholic missionaries, the Portuguese landowners began using enslaved Africans, as they had in Portugal, to work in the colonial industries.

The Africans taken to Brazil came from three culture areas: the Sudanese, including Yoruba, Gêgê, Akan and other tribes; the Sudanese Moslems, from Haussa and Mandingo tribes; and the Bantu, including tribes from Angola, Congo, Benguela and Mozambiquean regions (Ramos 1956:97-98). The Africans, once in Brazil, were not permitted to continue or recreate any sense of their native societies. Slavery disrupted familial, social and political ties. Home villages were uprooted and the Portuguese slave-owners separated members of the same tribe or regional group so as to eliminate the possibility of cooperation against their authority.

The religious milieu into which the Africans were immersed was that of sixteenth-century Portuguese Roman Catholicism, itself a mixture of both the conservative and ritualistic Catholicism under royal patronage and the popular belief system. Popular customs included the cult of the saints, feast-day celebrations, religious confraternities for men, processions, and private devotions. This latter aspect, the Catholicism formed by Portuguese customs and folklore, was practiced by immigrants and missionaries alike and constituted a secondary tradition transmitted separately or alongside the more orthodox Roman Catholic religion supported by state and ecclesiastical authorities.

On outlying plantations and among the urban lower classes, that is, in those segments of colonial society with which Africans had most contact, only the rudiments of Roman Catholic practice could be continued. Scarcity of clergy, the distance between colonial cities and rural sites, and imported anti-clerical attitudes forced Portuguese immigrants to rely on remembered and customary religious activities. The sacramental rites of baptism, confession, marriage and so on were performed infrequently or

inconsistently and often *en masse* by traveling missionaries; these might see their outland parishioners as seldom as once in seven years. In the scattered inland villages, only the Portuguese matronly ideal–the virtuous plantation wife–could maintain a Roman Catholic presence through traditional or domestic practices which could be performed without a resident priest. It was in this religious and social setting that the African slaves first found themselves.

It is impossible now to ascertain the exact numbers of Africans who were taken to Brazil during the slave trade era. The Brazilian government, at the time of the establishment of the republic (1890) and under the influence of statesperson, Rui Barbosa, destroyed all official documents and customs records relating to the slave trade. The intent was to obliterate a shameful blot on that country's history (Ramos 1956:21), but that act has resulted in wild and varying attempts to quantify the slave trade. By 1830 at least 3.6 million Africans were brought through legal and clandestine means to work in Brazil.[1] The largest numbers–over a million–were imported in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These Africans constitute one-third of all blacks taken to the Americas as slaves.

Although not all of these survived the sea voyage from Africa or more than a brief life in harsh labor, blacks both slave and freed nevertheless outnumbered whites two to one in census counts between 1600 and 1818. After that date the largest group was that of the mixed-race descendants of Africans and Europeans (Carneiro 1936:101-102).

Afro-Brazilian Religions

Throughout the colonial period slave and freed blacks were under the social and religious control of the Portuguese-Brazilian overclass. That control, however, seems to have affected only the more superficial layers of African-derived religious activity and beliefs. Despite the overwhelming rule by European colonists, female slaves and freed women of African descent nonetheless preserved the core of their traditional religious beliefs. One of the most important strategies was the sheltering of the latter under an adapted, and later, irreplaceable layer of popular Catholicism. On plantations and in the peripheries of the cities, as colonial records report, white owners even encouraged African tribal dances, viewing them as folk tradition not unlike their own, rather than the religious ceremonies which they undoubtedly were (Warren:203). With regard to black men, however, the slave owners showed certain concern for religious and social orthodoxy, breaking African traditions by the scattering of tribal groups, forced conversion to Catholicism and the offering of opportunity for upward mobility in colonial society as a freed Christian gentleman.

African religion, then, was chiefly preserved among black women. Women of African descent, like their Brazilindian and Portuguese-Brazilian sisters, did not have those ecclesiastical roles open to them in which black men found refuge. While a small number of slave women in central and southern Brazil were permitted to join black brotherhoods as special members, the more prestigious and powerful Roman Catholic priesthood, monastery life, or lay religious associations remained closed to them. The preservation of traditional African beliefs, enhanced in post-colonial years by contact with the parent religions, led to the development of the syncretistic religious practices of the Afro-Brazilian religions now called *Umbanda* and *Candomblé*.

Specific historical reference to Afro-Brazilian religious centers established in urban areas begins only in the early nineteenth century. Early references are less than clear about the nature of the practice. While it is certain that Afro-Brazilian religion had been developing in the northeastern coastal cities, a site of origin outside the first reported temples in Bahia may never be found. Afro-Brazilian religious phenomena have their roots in the tribal religions of the enslaved Africans, that is, in Yoruban (Nagô), Dahomean (Gêgê), Fanti-Ashanti (Mina), Angolan, Congo and Haussa religious traditions. Muslim tradition is claimed but not substantiated. Included as well are aspects of popular Catholicism, notably, the association of African deities with Roman Catholic saints, member affiliation with the latter, and for most, participation in the Roman Catholic Mass. More recently, especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the later influence of Kardecism[2] and its advocates has been significant.

Afro-Brazilian religion has different names and varying forms in different regions of Brazil. In order to introduce its basic practice and belief system, the following limited generalizations must suffice. The religion is structured according to Yoruban ritual practice. Theology and calendar are parallel to Yoruban traditions, and the names of deities invoked in Brazil are in Nagô, based on a Yoruba dialect. Scholars earlier in this century also reported identification of goddesses and gods in Gêgê dialect. Afro-Brazilian religion is centered in the ritual worship of goddesses and gods, the *orixás*. Each *orixá* is a personal deity closely associated with the powers of nature, such as the sky, storms, or sea, or with the more abstract cosmic forces such as love or war. The mythology of these African deities has been preserved only in a skeletal form. This has formed the basis, however, for their identification with Roman Catholic saints or divine images since the colonial era. Yemanjá, for example, the goddess of the ocean, is identified with Our Lady of Navigators, while Exú, trickster and deity of changes and passages, is usually identified with Satan. A single pattern of identification does not exist for all Afro-Brazilian religious groups; the associations of divinity and saint have varied over time and across regions.

Afro-Brazilian religions afford significant roles for active members. These roles, such as *mãe de santo*, *filha de santo* and the attendants on the *mãe* and *filhas*, have been traditionally held by women. Each Afro-Brazilian religious center is led by a priestess, *mãe de santo*, or priest, *pai de santo*. In this central role women have control over more than two thirds of all centers; this number is diminished from earlier reports. The term *mãe de santo*, meaning "mother of the saint" or "mother of the holy" is also often rendered "mother of the divine." The traditional Nagô title *ialorixá* corresponds to these meanings. The *mãe de santo* directs all rituals performed in a temple, including the larger sacrifices and offerings; she also performs the initiation and divination ceremonies. Where husband and wife direct a temple together, the male priest performs the blood sacrifices. Each *mãe de santo* is assisted by a *pequena mãe* ("little mother") who trains to succeed in the former role (Carneiro 1936:74-75; Ribeiro:39-40).

While the *mãe de santo* directs the temple, it is the *filhas de santo* or "daughters of the holy" who are its life. The initiates, called also by the Nagô term *iaô* ("wife"), serve as ritual embodiment for the African *orixás*, Brazilindian spirits or "old black" souls. The *filhas* are initiated by the leader, trained in their ritual roles, and receive the possessing presence of the divine powers while under ritual trance. Participants in Afro-Brazilian religions suggest that women are closer to their traditional roots or have special innate magical powers which allow them to be more receptive to divine communication (Bastide 1978:93).

In the third category are those who attend the person filling these two central positions. A woman, or more rarely a man, may work as a personal attendant or *ekédi* to the *filhas de santo*, as a preparer of ritual food or *iya bassê*, or as a song leader or caller during rituals, *iya têbêxê*. For these roles Nagô terms have been retained and no specific Portuguese terms consistently replace them. Many Afro-Brazilian groups also distinguish between the more advanced or dedicated but uninitiated temple members, *abians*, and ordinary followers (Bastos:93-94).

The central roles are traditionally held by women, and men have served in secondary positions as honorary patrons, maintenance men for temple buildings and grounds, or as drummers and musicians for rituals. Only men serve the last two functions. Afro-Brazilian groups with stronger ties to African Bantu traditions are led by a priest, *pai de santo* or *babalorixá*, and male diviner, *babalaô*. Women nonetheless predominate in the roles of initiate-mediums and temple attendants (Pierson 1967:288-289; Bastide 1978:192). Estimates from the late nineteenth century through the 1950's conservatively listed ratios of female to male members at five to one and of female leaders to male at two to one. More recent studies indicate a gradual increase in male participation. Increase is largest in the category of general membership. Increase has occurred in the roles as mediums, as *filhas de santo*, only in groups that have reformed

their rituals and beliefs distinctly apart from African traditions (Leacock:103-107).

Ritual practice at the Afro-Brazilian centers consists primarily in: the lighting of candles; shell divination; small animal sacrifices; food, flower or drink offerings; and vows and prayers made by members. More important, however, are the larger group rituals, in which drummers and priestess call *orixás* from Africa and other possessing powers to their Brazilian center to be present in their initiate-mediums. The *orixás* receive the worship of their followers and bestow boons and guidance. The ritual trance achieved by the *filhas de santo* is not unlike shamanic possession. However, in these rituals the *filhas* lose their identity to the possessing force, are dressed and treated as the powers themselves, and usually do not recall their actions under possession (Carneiro 1948:29-39; Bento:14). Further, each member in an Afro-Brazilian religious group has one or two divine powers protecting or guiding her or his life; these powers function like Christian patron saints or namesakes. However, only a small number of individuals are called to be initiated into the role as medium for the *orixás* or spirits and to embody that spiritual presence in the temple ritual dances (Pierson 1971:288-289; Bastide 1978:192).

The religious centers themselves are small and independent. Most of them trace a doctrinal lineage back through their leaders, connecting them either with early temples in the cities or with noted leaders who reformed central practice through renewal of African traditions or through introduction of Brazilindian or Kardecist spiritual features. Distinctions are made between categories of Afro-Brazilian religious groups by region and by traditional religious bases. In the northeastern states and in Rio Grande do sul are *Caboclo* groups that have included Brazilindian spirits as their guiding divinities. Temples of Salvador and the state of Bahia are *Candomblés*. They have the clearest and proudest ties to African Yoruban traditions; they include the veneration of the spirits of wise "old blacks" (*preta velha, preto velho*). Religious centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo called *Macumba*, once included a mixture of elements from Christian, Brazilindian and several African sources. The term *Macumba* today usually refers only to "black," or evil, magic. Now many temples refer to themselves as *Quimbanda*, derived from Angolan *cambinda* and indicating "white," or good, magic. Temples of the central-southern region and elsewhere which have been influenced by Kardecism or other European spiritism, or which have consciously modernized traditional practices, are *Umbanda*. This term is now passing into general usage as a brief rubric for any Afro-Brazilian religious center (cf. Cacciatore:21-25).

In the past the preservation of African religious traditions by Brazilians of pure or nearly pure African descent suggested an attitude of undiminished pride in their severed past. This was so especially among women, and it was a mark of difference between

these and other Brazilians of European or mixed racial descent (Pierson 1971:304). This aspect of black solidarity has, however, diminished. Recent studies show that Afro-Brazilian religious groups have extended their membership to nearly all Brazilian ethnic groups and classes, fast making this a Brazilian, as opposed to an Afro-Brazilian, religion.

The Initiation

The most significant distinction within an Afro-Brazilian religious temple is that drawn between participants, ordinary members of the center, and the initiated *filhas de santo.* The latter are the vehicles or *cavalos* ("horses") for the appearance of the central sacred forces in the Afro-Brazilian belief. It is they who embody the power of deities and spirits during the sacred rites, and, in so doing, keep the practice a living religion. *Filhas de santo* hold a prestigious role in Afro-Brazilian groups. They are irreplaceable in the religious center and are esteemed in the wider community for their abilities and intimate contact with the divine. *Filhas* come to their role through one of two routes: they may themselves seek further involvement in the local Afro-Brazilian temple and request initiation, or they may have entered trance spontaneously during religious rituals and thus be seen as "called," perhaps against their own inclinations. In either case, the woman who is to become a *filha de santo* and serve as a medium for a possessing spirit must undergo initiation.

The rituals summarized for the following analysis are described in several works dating from the mid-1920's to the 1960's. Details of the rituals vary considerably, but the main ritual events are constant among all accounts. Comparing these, it appears that the more recent ceremonies are generally less detailed, involve a shorter period, and may not include blood sacrifices. Those temples which continue more elaborate initiations claim a closer adherence to African tradition. It is in fact this consideration which will be tested in this analysis.

There are two distinct sets of ceremonies which make up a full initiation ritual. The first, *Dar Comida à Cabeça,* or "giving food to the head," serves as prelude to the full initiation rite. it may also be used separately as an act of devotion to one's guardian deity or *anjo da guarda.* The second set of ceremonies is the actual initiation, called Borí (from the Yoruba), or *Feitura de Santo* or *Fazer Santo* ("the making of the deity").[3] The completion of the second set allows the devotee to become a *filha de santo* and act as medium for her deity in cult dances and consultations.

Afro-Brazilian Preliminaries: *Dar Comida à Cabeça*

The first set of rituals, *Dar Comida à Cabeça,* takes place in Afro-Brazilian religious centers over several days. It consists of three steps: divination; washing a sacred stone or necklace

(*lavagem das contas*); and offerings to the head of the follower. The last two steps may follow the first only after several days have been spent gathering the necessary materials.

The first phase typically involves consultation of deities in general or of the god of divination, Ifá, through the casting of African cowrie shells. Two matters are of concern here: which of the many Afro-Brazilian powers actually rules the head and guides the destiny of the initiate, and which priestess is to be responsible for the ceremonies to follow. When these details are determined, the selected priestess continues the ritual by constructing a necklace with beads in the colors sacred to the guiding divinity or, in a few cases, selecting a special stone such as a meteorite fragment (Rodrigues:75; Quirino:68; Fischer: 24).

For the second step, an initiate returns to the temple. The necklace or stone is consecrated by offering it to the guardian deity and by washing it in either water from a sacred jar or in other sacred liquids such as honey, palm oil and herbal water. The necklace or stone (the latter now placed in a pouch on a neck-string) is given to the initiate to be worn at all times. It reminds the initiate of her deity and insures her protection against minor difficulties and major catastrophes (Verger 1957:80; Rodrigues: 75).

In the third step, which concludes the preliminary ritual, an initiate is seated in the room in the temple considered the home of the deities. This small interior chamber contains the images and is the site of private offerings and rituals. In some groups a ritual bath may precede these final steps (Carneiro 1936:74; Sturm:229). The initiate is dressed in white, or a white cloth is draped across her shoulders, and she is sprinkled with sacred water from the deities' jar. A series of foods is raised and offered to, or placed briefly on the head of, the initiate. These foods may include sacrificed birds or more mundane substances such as honey, cassava meal, palm oil or chewed nuts. If birds are sacrificed for the rite, their blood is poured over the head and shoulders of the initiate and over her necklace, and feathers are stuck to her forehead. The offerings to the head are accompanied by chants which call for the strengthening of the head by the deity who will dwell in it; they ask "that this head may help others" (Verger 1957:80; cf. Quirino:68-70).

Afro-Brazilian Initiation: *Feitura de Santo*

The full initiation ritual, if it is to be undergone, follows immediately after the *Dar Comida à Cabeça*. The "making," or "work of the deity," takes place over a longer period of time, from sixteen days to several months, and involves from ten to fifteen distinct ceremonies. These consist mainly of preparatory rituals, a long period of seclusion, and several rituals which welcome the initiate into this new role and and then return her to regular life.

The preparatory rituals focus on the body of the initiate. The new seat of the deity is strengthened and purified through baths, shaving the head, ritual markings and special clothing.

The first ritual is the bath or *abô*. In the past, the initiate bathed at night or in early morning at a stream or spring near the temple site and, upon returning to the temple, was strengthened with a symbolic wash of herbal water (Bastos:161; Quirino:68). More recent versions, however, simply call for a bath outdoors using water from the deities' sacred jar prepared with an infusion of special and sacred leaves. The leaves are picked in advance and may include as many as sixteen leaves from each of the two dozen varieties; these are prepared by the celebrating priestess. The aromatic qualities of the leaves are important to the ritual, imparting their sacred strength to the entire body of the initiate (Fischer:25; Rodrigues:77-78).

After the bath, the initiate dresses in new white clothes while her old clothes are destroyed. She returns to the temple, entering a special small room, the *aliaché* or *camarinha*, where she is to remain for most of the initiation period. Here the rituals continue (Fischer:25; Ramos 1951:60).

Next, the celebrating priestess cuts the hair and shaves the head of the initiate. In earlier or more rigorous rites all body hair may have been removed; but now only the head is touched. The shaving is followed by further washing of either the whole body or only the head; this washing may be done by pouring sacrificial blood over the head or rubbing an herbal paste on the head and temples. Songs accompany this rites, the *Entrada do Santo*, the "entrance of the deity" into the head (Rodrigues:79; Carneiro 1936:74; Quirino:68-70; Fischer:25).

Another washing of the head precedes the final preparatory ritual, the *Efún*, in which the head, temples, cheeks and hands of the initiate are painted or marked with chalk paste. The designs, called *pontos riscados*, include concentric circles on the crown and characteristic sacred designs of the tutelary deity. These circles may be done in white only or in white, red and blue. They emphasize the connection between the initiate and her deity and serve to strengthen her as an embodiment of the divine (Rodrigues:79-90; Quirino:70; Ramos 1951:60).

From the conclusion of the first bath the initiate is called *iaô*, also *iawô* or *yaô*, from the Yoruban for "wife" or "bride." She may also be simply referred to as *a noviça* or *a iniciada*; no other special Brazilian term is used.

The preparatory rituals end, leaving the initiate in the room where she is to spend from sixteen days to nine months. The duration of this seclusion varies from temple to temple and may even vary within a temple. Three to nine months are the usual prescribed limits; in all cases the more recent accounts report shorter seclusion periods.

During such time the initiate may not leave the temple or speak with visitors; sexual relations are absolutely forbidden. A

special diet is followed and, for some, the head is to be kept covered and protected. An initiate spends her time learning the doctrines and practices of the temple in general and those of her own deity in particular. She learns the songs, chants and rhythms that call the deity from Africa, the sacred designs which focus divine power, and the clothing and foods used in rituals (Rodrigues:84; Quirino: 71-72; Ramos 1951:60; Fischer:25).

The long period of seclusion is ended by the first of the return rituals, the *Dia de Dar o Nome* ("the day of the giving of the name"). The day is begun with the sacrifice of birds and the consultation of cowrie shells for reassurance. The initiate undergoes another ritual herbal bath. The principal rite of the *Dia de Dar o Nome* is the first public dance by the initiate. She dances while the priestess and *filhas de santo* call on her deity to come and enter the new devotee. During her possession trance, a state called the *ôrunkó*, the initiate calls out a special name of the deity. This is the ceremonial name by which she will be known in the temple, and it also designates an aspect of the deity which has not yet been represented by one of the deity's other mediums (Carneiro 1936:74; Sturm:229). After the initiate acknowledges the leader of the temple by bowing, she is declared *feita* ("made," "complete"). In most temples a festive meal is then held among initiated members to welcome the new *filha de santo* (Quirino:72; Ramos 1951:61; Fischer:25).

On the Sunday following the Naming Day, two ritual events are held: the *compra*, or auction of the newly-initiated woman, and her *quitanda*, mock-fair. All temple followers are invited to these events, as are the medium's family and friends. In the ceremony of the *compra*, the *filha* is symbolically auctioned to her husband, a member of her family, or some other person chosen beforehand by her. The sum is paid to the temple to cover the expenses of all the rituals and the period of seclusion. The *comprador*, or purchaser, has certain rights of service from the new *filha*. She may also choose to buy herself so as to remain completely independent. The *quitanda* follows, and in it the new medium sells food, drink and household items to the guests to cover ritual expenses. Among the articles for sale may be ritual items used during the preceding ceremonies which are now valued for their sacred powers (Carneiro 1936:75; Ramos 1951:61; Fischer:26).

After these final rituals in the temple the medium may return home immediately in which case she leads a great, festive procession. Or, she may remain in seclusion until the following Friday. On that day the initiation cycle concludes with a Mass at a local Roman Catholic church (Quirino:73; Fischer:26; Sturm:230).

The initiation rite inaugurates a medium's service to the religious center. From the day of its completion she is required to help with certain ceremonies, attend all meetings, and dance in the special rituals that call the deities to visit their followers. She

is expected to give an elaborate festival to mark the one-year anniversary of her initiation and to mark the day annually with rituals. After seven years she may undergo similar ceremonies to achieve the higher rank of *ebomim*. She may then give blessings, direct other *filhas* and assume one of several religious offices in the temple (Ramos 1951:61; Fischer:26; Sturm:230).

Sources

Given the cultural and religious background of Brazil, an independent religious ceremony might draw on three kinds of sources: Brazilindian, Roman Catholic and African. Indigenous influence on Afro-Brazilian religious development, however, appears limited; only in distant northern and southern religious centers has there been any lasting effect. This consists of the addition of *caboclo* spirits to the pantheon of possessing powers and the use of stereotypic Brazilindian dress and ritual objects by the leader. Roman Catholicism has had a shaping influence on Afro-Brazilian religious beliefs but, surprisingly, the initiation ritual has drawn both structure and specific elements almost exclusively from African sources. The parallel rites in Roman Catholicism are the sacraments of baptism and secondarily, confirmation. Afro-Brazilian religious initiation resembles neither of these as they were practiced in colonial or post-colonial Brazil. There are, however, striking parallels between the described Afro-Brazilian religious ritual and the initiations required for priests and secondary religious functionaries in Dahomean and Yoruban tribal groups of the west coast of Africa.

The practices and beliefs of Afro-Brazilian religions seem closest in overall composition to the worship of *orishas* by the Yoruba people or *vodun* by Fon or Dahomeans. Both of these latter groups worship several clusters or pantheons of deities in addition to less specified divine forces and family ancestors. In the African tribes each of three pantheons of deities has a separate priesthood, and within the cult groups of each cluster of deities there is a sharp distinction between the role of priest/priestess as cult officiant and that of the devoted members of the group. Both priest/priestess and devoted worshipers undergo initiations. For the former, initiation involves training for ritual performance and secret divination practices. For the latter it is a series of purification rites and instruction in lesser temple roles, e.g., cook, sweeper, or, human vehicle for possession by one deity in the annual festival. The officiant's role may be hereditary or sought by choice. This varies from tribe to tribe. Candidates for the secondary role of cult medium or special devotee may be decided from birth by parents or chosen by a deity through spontaneous trance during any ritual. One's "guardian deity" in Africa is usually that of the clan or family group (Idowu:131-135; Bascom:77-78).

These aspects are in direct contrast to the Afro-Brazilian groups in which the worship of many deities occurs in each temple; the deities are not grouped into pantheons, nor are the officiant roles attached to such. Officiant roles are not structurally separated from those of the mediums but are related to them within a single hierarchy: one simply rises through the ranks with seniority and ability. Membership in Afro-Brazilian religious centers is always a personal choice, and the guardian deity is thought to be somehow related to one's deeper personal identity.

In the transmission of initiation rituals from Africa to Brazil, then, there has been a convergence of rituals and roles. In Brazil the steps of the initiation ritual for the *filha de santo*, the medium who is possessed by the deity in weekly or more frequent ceremonies and who may by seniority or though acknowledged spiritual virtue ascend into priestly roles, has apparently been reconstructed from separate African rites for the priest/priestess and for the medium.

Analysis of *Dar Comida à Cabeça*

The ritual of *Dar Comida à Cabeça* as constituted in Brazil has no direct parallel in Africa. Many elements, however, have African counterparts. First, the consultation of the shells to determine the guardian deity and performant probably derives from the usual practice among Dahomean, Yoruban and other tribes of consulting the priest of Ifá or Fá (the deity of divination) at the birth of a child to ascertain its future. Among the Akan, Dahomean and Yoruban tribes as well as among tribes of the Bantu regions (Verger 1969:51; Ellis 1964b:96) divination is also arranged at the beginning of important rituals, even those dedicated to other deities.

The second step, washing a necklace or sacred stone, may be related to the use of insignia of different materials and colors to designate the separate priesthoods in Dahomean and Yoruban religions. Dahomean mediums also wear beads which represent the power of their possessing deity. Only when these are worn, may the possessing trance be achieved (Herskovits:45). The act of washing may be related to ritual bathing.

The final stage, offering food to the head of the devotee, combines elements of African rites usually featured in full priestly initiation ceremonies. Draping in white cloth appears in a Dahomean ceremony, and white clothing is customarily the dress for members of African religious officiant ranks (Verger 1969:57; Carneiro 1936:72). The blood and feathers of sacrificed hens or roosters are similarly used in Dahomean rites to mark the head or body of initiates (Herskovits:42). Food, such as is offered to the head in Brazil, is offered to the deities and then distributed and eaten communally at the beginning of Yoruban rituals that include mediumistic possession (Verger 1969:54-55).

Analysis of the *Feitura de Santo*

Brazilian initiation, the *Feitura de Santo*, draws elements primarily from Yoruban and Dahomean ceremonies for the initiation of young men or women into priesthoods of deities other than Ifá (Fá or Dã). The rite draws elements secondarily from initiations into lesser roles. As certain elements are not present and separate rites have apparently been collapsed in the Brazilian rituals, source dependence may be illustrated by looking at two representative African initiation rites: the first from Dahomean religion, the second from Ewe and Yoruba practice.

The first pattern derives from initiation in Dahomean groups. Candidates for the role of medium in a Dahomean cult study the myths and rituals of one of three pantheons, usually for a set number of days. The rite of initiation begins as the future *vodunsi*, or "wives of the gods," (though these can be either men or women) are called from their homes. At the cult site they fall to the ground as though dead. Initiates are brought back to life when the names of the deities are called sixteen times. Then they spend from three to nine months in seclusion in the cult house, learning the secret language and special dances. During this time they generally keep apart from other villagers and abstain from sexual activity.

At the end of this period the deities are requested to release their devotees, and the initiates are taken outdoors to be ritually bathed. Their heads are shaved and they are drenched with the blood of sacrificed chickens; the remainder of that day is spent in ritual dance.

Several days later a ritual war is held to determine which deity each initiate will serve. Preliminary to the war are the riding and sacrificing of sacred animals. Wearing bead necklaces indicative of their status, initiates then assault villagers and temple officials with small rocks. A priest of the pantheon leads each initiate away from the battle and into the cult building, touching the latter's bead necklace and naming the guardian deity. The initiates spend several days begging in the marketplace, completing their initiation cycle and being ransomed back by their families for a set fee. Their commitment to their *vodun* is marked by the continual wearing of a bead necklace (Herskovits:40-45).

Many of the elements of this extended ritual occur in Brazilian practice, although not in the same pattern. There is no ritual death in the Afro-Brazilian initiation, and the period of seclusion *follows* the bath, head-shaving and animal sacrifices. Each initiate in the Afro-Brazilian ritual receives a necklace of beads but has already been told the identity of her guardian deity. No ritual war or sacrifice of larger animals takes place. The Brazilian *quitanda*, or mock-fair, may be patterned after the Dahomean practice of begging in the marketplace, and the *compra*, or

auction, is certainly related to the ransom paid by African initiates' families.

A second pattern derives from the initiation found among the Ewe and Yoruba. Young men or women who seek to be priests or priestesses first study rituals and roles, often in training groups. After two or three years each initiate is taken to the shrine of a deity to undergo a consecration ceremony. The head is shaved and the entire body rubbed with an herbal mixture. The initiate is then dressed in ritual attire such as a girdle of palm-leaves and accepts the obeisances of family and friends. Finally, to ascertain acceptance by the god or goddess, the initiate is wrapped in a white cloth and seated on a special stool. After the head is again rubbed with a special paste, the deity is called to accept the new officiant. During the chanting which follows the deity descends to possess the initiate and to dance. A celebration feast concludes the ritual, and the novice must remain in the temple in seclusion, keeping silent and celibate for the next seven days and nights. Afterward, she or he leaves with a new name as a fully ordained priestess or priest (Ellis 1965:142-144;1964b:97).

This ritual may be seen as a religious source; its structure has been transmitted to Brazil. As in the Brazilian ritual the preliminary rituals include head-shaving and the use of two herbal mixtures—one for the entire body, another for the head. A new white cloth is used to mark the initiate, but only after the deity has approved the applicant through possession-trance does the period of seclusion begin. Unlike Brazilian practice, all study should be concluded before the rituals of initiation take place. In both cases seclusion includes silence and sexual abstinence, and it ends with the giving of a new name.

Other ritual elements of the *Feitura de Santo* have sources in Africa as well. As demonstrated by historian Arthur Ramos (1956:52), all non-Portuguese terms used in the ceremony are Yoruban. These include designations for specific rites (*borí*, *abô*, *efún*) and the hierarchical titles, *iaô* ("bride," "*filha de santo*") and *ialorixá* ("wife of the god," "*mãe de santo*"). The latter two terms are those for Yoruban mediums. The use of white clothing for priests, especially those newly initiated, is found in Dahomean and Yoruban practice, and the use of white markings on the head and upper body is found among Fanti-Ashanti priestesses (Ellis 1964a:123). Finally, the connection between an initiate's blood and sacrificial blood, as well as the use of a spring for the ritual bath, may be a continuation of the Bantu belief in blood as part of the cosmic river, (which is both in and out of the body); it may also be a continuation of the ritual connection with sweet water and waterfalls, the arteries of the earth (Bento:129).

Conclusion

Initiation ceremonies in Afro-Brazilian religion are based, at some distance, on specialized Dahomean and Yoruban rites for

priests and for mediums in special cult groups. Separate elements may be traced to Dahomean and Yoruban sources, the general structure to Yoruban and Ewe sources. Bantu and other African sources do not seem to figure separately in these rituals. Finally, while many rites of the longer ceremonies derived from the initiation of African priestesses and priests, the titles and duties correspond to those of African mediums.

These changes suggest a historical, syncretistic trend of religious adaptation to radically different circumstances. While no simple explanation can suffice to clarify the transformation completely, four elements are significant in the pattern of Afro-Brazilian religious development.

The first element is the gradual assumption of predominance by the Yoruba tribe among enslaved Africans in Brazil, particularly in the northeastern region, which served as the founding place for Afro-Brazilian religious groups. This predominance may have been due to the larger numbers from that tribe present in the colony or to the adoption of their principal dialect as *lingua franca* among blacks in Brazil. The clearest religious result of Yoruban dominance has been the use of Yoruban theology, rituals and structure in all Afro-Brazilian religious groups.

The second element is the clear shift of emphasis regarding ritual roles in Brazil. The priestly officiant roles were less important, since the mediumistic roles formed not only the center of religious practice but also the necessary first step on the ladder of religious leadership positions. All ritual roles became directly related in a continuum within the leadership structure, a situation quite distinct from that in Africa.

The third element is the historical condition supportive of the preservation of African religions in Brazil. It was certainly not feasible for African religions to continue as complete institutions under the strictures of slavery. Portuguese Roman Catholicism and the colonial enterprise did not permit rival priesthoods or other clear institutional challenges to survive. Only covert, small group practice preserved the fragments of the religions of different tribes. These fragments resurfaced later in the Afro-Brazilian centers with at least the format of the traditional rituals remaining intact. From this perspective the collapse of several rituals and roles into single patterns is not surprising; the detail of preservation is remarkable.

The final element in the development of Afro-Brazilian religions is their continuance by women of African descent. Slave and freed black women had fewer opportunities in the Christian world and met with less rigorous compulsion for conversion. Their adherence to traditional African beliefs and roles formed the solid foundation for the Afro-Brazilian religions now flourishing.

Surprisingly, little Roman Catholic influence has affected these initiation ceremonies. The use of sacred water stored within the religious center and the washing of ritual objects may be

distantly related, or at least relatable, to similar Roman Catholic practice. Ending the Bahian initiation with a Roman Catholic Mass is an obvious adaptation. However, Christian influence can be discovered beyond the level of individual ceremonies–in the structures of belief. It has been suggested that the presence of the cult of the saints in the Brazilian colony provided the theological framework for the integration of many separate African cults into a single religious practice (Quirino:47). The associated attributes and hagiographies of Roman Catholic saints have in fact supplanted some of the forgotten or suppressed African divine mythologies. Beliefs in a guardian deity–called a "guardian angel," or *anjo da guarda*–and in the relationship between one's own personality and that of the *santo* developed in the Roman Catholic milieu as well and are not attributable to African practice. Finally, the personal choice and sense of individual dedication involved in the membership and initiation in Afro-Brazilian religious groups derives not from African sources but developed in Brazil under Roman Catholic influence.

It is not certain whether the elaborate initiation ceremonies analyzed here will continue to be practiced among Afro-Brazilian religious groups. Leaders and members now accept greater variation in religious practice and beliefs, incorporating elements of many religious sources. It is becoming impossible to describe an average group or usual ritual. The survival of Afro-Brazilian religious practices is assured, but the direction of development has entered a new phase of adaptation and complication which may, in the long run, move away from traditional African sources.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carole A. Myscofski, Department of Religious Studies, 416 G.C.B., University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO, 65211, is Assistant Professor of the History of Religions. She has recently published "Women's Religious Roles in Brazil: A History of Limitations" (*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 1985) and is currently researching women in indigenous Brazilian religions.

NOTES

The research represented in this paper is based on archival and library work completed in Brazil and the United States. Although I saw several Afro-Brazilian rituals in Rio de Janeiro, I neither had the opportunity to observe the initiation rite nor chose to undergo the initiation myself. As the more esoteric African-based groups which perform this complicated rite seem to be rapidly declining, such fieldwork is becoming less feasible and the older sources I employed more valuable.

[1]This estimate averages the extremes of 2,500,00 (by earlier Brazilian historians) and 14,000,000. There were 14,000 Africans in the colony in 1585; in that century and the next, approximately 6,000 slaves per year were brought from Africa, while in the later two centuries of the slave trade the yearly average was closer to 13,000 (Bastide 1978:33-36; Ramos 1956:21).

[2]The spiritism codified by Allan Kardec (1809-1869) incorporates lineages of spiritual power, thus providing a new organizational base for Afro-Brazilian theology; several Kardecist centers also support belief in *karma* and reincarnation.

[3]The term *Fazer Santo* is found only in Manuel Quirino's summary of this ritual (67).

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REVIEWS

Schooling as a Ritual Performance. Peter McLaren. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986. ix + 326. $33 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-7102-0617-8.

It is fair, somewhere in a review, for a reviewer to say something of his or her own expectations; they inevitably affect the review itself, regardless of the merits of the book in question. Such full disclosure is especially important in this case, since McLaren's book has received very high praise as "impressive," "original," "brilliant, important, and provocative," from scholars who know far more about ritual and education than I do. I hasten to add at the outset, therefore, that I would recommend this book to undergraduates as well as to graduate students, not only to scholars in ethnography and ritual studies but to academics interested in public or private education.

McLaren's book recognizes the dignity of individuals who make their own social worlds and then believe in them. The book also laments make-believe and the manipulation of the human spirit by those who make the rituals of everyday life serve the purposes of an institution, a social class, an economic system, or an ideology. McLaren is a humanist, and humanists will be glad to find in this book an intelligent addition to the repertoire of criticism.

One of McLaren's major concerns is how to liberate the human body in the classroom: to incorporate into education some of the genius and freedom of what he calls "the street corner," where gesture and speech, minds and spirits interact more freely. This book examines the symbolic give-and-take in a classroom in order to show how the acquisition and use of language–and other signs–helps to create and re-create a social system. By their linguistic performances, students are demonstrating their practical understanding of how to "get by" in a school situation, but they are also demonstrating linguistic competence. Cicourel, Mehan and other ethnomethodologists have a lot to say on this subject, and McLaren's book would have benefited had he engaged them in his own work.

In this book, where so much is given to the description of the street corner as a locale, a sociologist might expect to find more explicit and detailed reliance on Whyte's *Street Corner Society*. In a book devoted to the ethnographic description of an inner-city area, one might expect to find good use made of Suttle's major study of ethnic groups in Chicago, where the street corner and other urban sites become locales where significant communication takes place in a variety of signs and symbols. One might expect, in a book about the conflict between the culture of students and that

of educators, some development of earlier work done by Coleman on high schools.

In a work on ritual, even though it is impossible to use, let alone to know the entire body of relevant literature, I found McLaren's bibliography very instructive. Nonetheless, he ignores works of immediate interest to his project. McLaren is concerned with how schools tend to cool off the aspirations of the working class for a better fate; schools use educational rites to initiate the young slowly into the working class. He would have put his book into a much wider, comparative framework by using Lane's study of rituals in the Soviet Union, some of which are designed precisely to satisfy middle class aspirations with working class status.

More than one generation of scholarship is missing here. It has been over fifty years since Weber acknowledged to his students that the spirit had been driven from Western institutions, but Weber receives only an honorable mention in this study (once, in a reference to the "iron cage" metaphor). Of course, McLaren is very interested in charisma. He notes how the charisma of Christ has been reduced even in the Mass to a celebration of the authority of the school system, and he deplores the absence of the charismatic heroes of the street corner in the hagiography of the school room. Had he been interested in developing his analysis in terms of the rationalization or routinization of charisma, however, his study would have been enriched in two ways. For one, he would have been able to speak to those who, in several generations, wish to explore the ways charisma has been tested in street fights or in the classroom, in battle and in the slow, repeated forms of probation offered by organizations like the school. For another, he would have been able to develop a theoretical counterpoint to those engaged in the ethnographic study of ritual. There is a perfectly acceptable tradition of "thick description" in ethnography, and McLaren has certainly given us a thick description. Nonetheless, it is essential to stand outside one's own description and to challenge it from a theoretical perspective that raises different questions and suggests alternative methods. The causes of criticism and of hope would both have been better served in such a process.

Conflict between generations is indeed one source of the muted violence that is expressed in the rites of the street corner, just as it is expressed in the crucifix that hangs on the schoolroom wall. Why, then, does McLaren make so little use of Girard's work on violence? There is only one reference to Girard that I could find in McLaren's book. It occurs in a passage devoted to the ways in which the student is sacrificed to "the system," to the "wider relations of class, authority, and power." Indeed, McLaren notes that his own observations "strangely mimic Girard's argument" about how institutions emerge from sacrifice; there is indeed something to be learned from the study of victims, and this is McLaren's point as well. The costs of a system are symbolized in

rite, but they are paid for in the sacrifices of the human spirit and intellect. Those sacrifices are disproportionately paid by the young. That is why the conflict between generations can be so violent and why rituals are therefore crucial.

The note of subdued violence is evident not only in the rites of the school but in McLaren's text itself. McLaren would like to see more rituals of resistance to the "ossified" channels and "dead symbols" of educational rites. Students need rites in which they can celebrate the heroes of the breakdance, the hockey rink and the motorcycle—not saints, prime ministers and "historical figures." It would be difficult to find a more explicit reference to the elimination, if only in fantasy, of the older generation's figures of authority.

There is no doubt where McLaren stands in the conflict of generations. He knows that the street corner is a violent place, where one meets "the law of the jungle." There, at least, the young know what they are up against and can either fight or run: a preferable state to the "slow, institutionalized death of being a student" (McLaren's terminology).

Certainly I wish McLaren well in attacking whatever literal-minded or essentialist constructions seem to hinder the spirit and call for sacrifices of the intellect. As I have indicated, he has more allies than he realizes even among the "mainstream social scientists" whose work he deplores or ignores. I am concerned that this book will not place ritual studies in the academic framework that they very richly deserve. On the other hand, those who have been waiting for a successor to Jonathan Kozol (whose work McLaren does not mention) may find in this book at least an alternative source of anthropological criticism of schooling.

Richard Fenn
Princeton Theological Seminary

Society as Text: Essays on Rhetoric, Reason, and Reality. Richard Harvey Brown. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. x + 252. Bibliography, index. $24.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-226-07616-4.

The contemporary emergence of hermeneutical approaches in the social sciences has enjoyed a range of influence affecting how the issues of interpretation, explanation and human agency are to be treated in current studies. Writers including Dilthey, Mannheim, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Taylor and Geertz have offered interpretive models and methods for describing cultural processes of meaningful human action, reason and community. Richard Harvey Brown's book makes a valuable contribution to this legacy and contributes fresh insights and methods for a truly hermeneutic understanding of the ways ritual and and reality are linguistically structured, represented and misrepresented in the spheres of everyday life, politics and the social sciences themselves.

Brown grounds his "metaphorical-metalogical analysis" of the rhetorical construction of reason in a definition of social ritual as the construction of social reality through linguistic action.

For Brown, a metaphorical-metalogical analysis of "society as text" reveals that the origins of all truth-claims lie in language and its contextual, ritualistic use. By emphasizing that there exist alternative ways of truth telling, whether in religious, scientific or everyday discourse, he aims to remind us that "the relativity of reason accords with the responsibilities of communication" (118). In being part of context-giving rhetorical traditions, we are responsible for the forms we use to tell our truths.

A central question that Brown returns to throughout the book is what form of rationality, community and self would invite a discourse of societal self-direction founded on and serving the dignity of human agents? Brown argues that this question of moral discourse is increasingly difficult to answer because of the fact that contemporary Western society is eviscerated of narrative form. Brown writes:

> As society can be seen as a factual text, so fictional texts can be viewed as social-symbolic acts, as representations of possible selves and societies. With the collapse of moral agency in public life, however, contemporary civic culture has been eviscerated of narrative forms, and meaningful plots are ever harder to find in society and in fiction" (143).

In taking narrative to mean an account of an agent whose character or destiny unfolds through actions and events in time, Brown maintains that the existence of narratives presupposes a symbolic order or meaning in which significant action by moral agents is possible. Narrative, and thus meaningful social ritual, "requires a political economy and collective psychology in which a

sense of lived connection between personal character and public conduct prevails" (144). Such a proposition, though, is less and less valid in advanced industrial cultures, and is in fact threatened with extinction. Despite this, Brown argues that narrative remains vitally needed in contemporary civil discourse.

Approaches for analyzing the textual dimensions of social life are taken by Brown from semiotics, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. Brown's concern is to "advance a theoretical-cultural practice that assumes the primacy of human authorship" (113). He argues that social text analysis includes both an interpretive hermeneutics and a structuralist semiotics as its methods of proper explication. That is, in addition to hermeneutic interpretation that focuses on semantics and pragmatics, textual analysis of society also engages in semiotic explanation that focuses on syntax and grammar. The two often contradictory social science discourses of interpretation and explanation "may be dialectically conjoined in the metaphor of society as text" (135).

Society as Text calls for an answer to the question of how social theory might be linked with political praxis in a humanizing, non-technical way. Brown provides a response that argues for joining knowledge of society with public moral action by restoring critical judgment to its former privileged status in intellectual and public life. He draws upon the theory of rhetoric as resource for his project of analyzing "social texts" in the form of identities, theories, ideologies and rituals to reveal how historical forms of consciousness and knowledge are constructed through the persuasive use of language. I highly recommend this book as a penetrating analysis of the construction of post-modern ritual and social realities.

Pierce Julius Flynn
Department of Sociology
University of California, San Diego

The Cult of the Goddess Pattini. Gananath Obeyesekere. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1984. xv + 622. 25 color photographs with commentaries. Epilogue, references, name index, subject index. $42.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-226-61602-9.

The Cult of the Goddess Pattini is perhaps the most important book on myth and ritual to have been published in recent years. In this book the author establishes a method for understanding myths and rituals not only in relation to social structure but also to the processes of the unconscious. Translations of the ritual and mythic texts are provided, and detailed descriptions of actual ritual performances are given so that the texture of this book resonates with the texture of life in a unique manner.

Although a wide range of issues are discussed in this book, critical to Obeyesekere's thesis is the distinction between myths and rituals as ideal representations in which religious and philosophical values are embodied. He focuses on rituals of catharsis in which there is a spirit of competition, ritual play and an exchange of obscenities. The author is at his best in the analysis of these rituals, for he shows a great sensitivity to the manner in which such rituals give direct expression to the anxieties of a group. In the *ankeḷiva* rituals analyzed in this book, it is the anxiety about castration and impotence that seems to be predominant in its expression. The space here is an exclusively male one from which women have been expelled for the duration of the ritual.

It seems to me that there is little doubt that Obeyesekere's book will be successful in constituting a counterpoint to the usual anthropological method of concentrating on collective representations in the study of myth and ritual to the exclusion of the subjectivity of the individual. Whereas earlier studies have analyzed such cathartic rituals, they have taken the parody and lewdness embedded in these rituals as constituting a critique of the social system or as being abstract statements about the nature of time. Obeyesekere would not reject such interpretations, but he draws pointed attention to the effective content of such rituals and urges us to study how the effect of the individual may be involved in them.

Whereas I think Obeyesekere has established the general case for studying the personal meaning of symbols, the clinical model of the individual that he uses seems to privilege the unconscious as a seat of instincts and drives rather than as a form of organization, despite his undisputed sensitivity to cultural forms. Thus, he is very sensitive to the contexts in which anxieties about castration or impotence arise to the surface but seems less concerned with the evidence in the myths and rituals about the anxieties relating to the mergence of an authentic self. The privileged place given to the father-son relation and fear of castration does not allow the author to see the myths and rituals

from other perspectives, for example, from the perspective of a female subject or of the self in relation to a female other (as distinct from a male other).

One general criticism that I have of the book is that the understanding of the female subject does not acquire the same depth as that of the male subject. For example, the section on the mother goddess cults relies rather heavily on judicial norms about the female role rather than delineating the notion of the female self from the myths and rituals. Obeyesekere's notion of the idea type of female personality developed here seems less useful than the psycho-biographical method that he used in the earlier book on female ascetics.

One final point needs to be made about Obeyesekere's depiction of the language of the rituals. The language abounds in various figures of speech, ranging from analogy and metaphor to puns and euphemisms. One magnificent example of such ritualized speech is one in which abuse is heaped upon imaginary gods in the pantheon. Clearly, there is a whole area of comparison between the language in cathartic rituals, such as possession, and the language of the unconscious that can be developed in the decade to come.

Related to the above question is the process of ritualized repetition. If rituals are means by which the anxieties of a group may be given expression, then how does the repetition of events in the space of a ritual differ from their repetition in the analytical space? Are both kinds of repetitions an attempt to capture and define the reality which might escape from the broad nets cast upon it through mythic representations?

These and other questions will concern scholars who wish to explore the relation between rituals and the processes of the unconscious, but these questions will be asked in the context of the magnificent achievements of this book. The sense of a genuine quest that the author conveys though his medium is bound to touch any reader at the core of his or her being.

Veena Das
Department of Sociology
University of Delhi

Aditi: The Living Arts of India. Edited by Rajeev Sethi. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985. 280 pp. Photographs. $27.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-87474-852-6. $19.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-87474-853-4.

This sumptuous, lavishly illustrated volume was designed to accompany the exhibition, "Aditi–A Celebration of Life" presented in New Delhi, in London and at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in the summer of 1985 as part of the Festival of India. The exhibition presented 2,000 objects and 40 live artisans and performers, organized around the theme of the *samskāras* (rites of passage) of Indian culture. Wall painters, dancers, potters, musicians, puppeteers, acrobats, toy makers, impersonators and magicians were among the traditional artists who presented art forms which accompany the rituals of courtship, marriage, pregnancy, welcoming the child, and initiation, among others. The book explores this relationship between the performing arts, ritual and psychological development and focuses on "the impact of performance, crafts, and myth on the world of the child as he traverses the cycle of life in traditional Indian society" (9).

The first two-thirds of the book contain a text by Pria Devi and Richard Kurin, "Aditi–A Celebration of Life," divided into 17 short chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter touches briefly upon the phase of the child's developmental cycle, from "Fertility" to "Birth" to "Learning to Be and to Do" and finally "Moving Out" into the community at large. This first section pays somewhat less attention to scholarly detail, having the feeling of an exhibition catalogue, with a text designed for the sensitive and intelligent layperson. A lyrical mood is created through short bits of poetic text interspersed with original and traditional verses, surrounded by beautiful color and black and white photographs with captions explaining the significance of each. A spirit of creativity, joy and beauty is conveyed within a setting of a general anthropological understanding of some of the main undercurrents of Indian culture. Individual ritual practices, drawn from diverse geographical, ethnic and religious groups, are chosen to illustrate a common ground of thought and practice which is distinctly "Indian."

Following are four articles by eminent scholars of religion, arts and Indian culture: Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Sudhir Kakar, Nazir A. Jairazbhoy, and Stella Kramrisch. Each author examines the relation between performance, the arts, ritual and the world of the child in more depth. O'Flaherty discusses "The Role of Myth in the Indian Life Cycle," pointing out that "myth and reality in Hindu India are such identical twins that it is often impossible to tell them apart" (185). Her examination of Hindu gods shows their intimate relationship to human affairs, both physically and conceptually: gods are fed, housed, clothed, fanned

and sung to, and may appear in human form at any time. Myths, then, in O'Flaherty's view, "constantly remind Hindus how close they are to all the gods of the pantheon" (185), and are conceptual tools for understanding critical passages in the life cycle. Mythical, symbolic explanations or stories accompanying rites of passage also "express many of the powerful emotions that the ritual itself does not spell out" (187). Drawing on Vedic and Puranic sources, O'Flaherty shows how life and fantasy constantly interweave, enriching one another, teaching and stimulating the developing child's imagination.

Kakar provides a more anthropologically grounded summary of the developmental and ritual life of "the Child in India." He points out, for instance, the vast discrepancy between the treatment of boys and girls, glossed over in the previous sections. He quotes women's folk songs which lament this gap: "'. . . what a tradition has started! Drums are played upon the birth of a boy. But at my birth only a brass plate was beaten'" (203). Kakar also reviews the different traditional views of childhood in the West and India and emphasizes the far more positive and accepting attitudes in India. He then discusses in some detail the individual Hindu rituals performed at particular points in the child's life cycle, placing these in a social and psychological context.

Jairazbhoy's article, "Performance, Music and the Child," is an excellent in-depth overview of Indian performance traditions in relation to ritual, the arts and the world of the child. Jairazbhoy explains the rich variety of live performance events the child is exposed to, in the home, the community and in public places. He relates the performance traditions to specific social, economic and cultural factors, such as the availability of patronage. Then he shows both the traditional performer/client *jajmani* relationship, where artists were often commissioned for ritual occasions by wealthy landowners, and the creative adaptations professional performers are making to changing times, such as working for agricultural companies and adapting traditional dramas to include commercial messages. Jairazbhoy's discussion is also very valuable for its illumination of the differences in tradition in specific areas of India, and the inclusion of several case studies of Rajasthani and Delhi-based performers.

Kramrisch's "The Ritual Arts of India" focuses on domestic painting, a little-known area of Indian ritual arts. She presents remarkable details about women's domestic ritual painting (on floor, paper and wall) and tribal, shamanistic wall painting done by men. In both cases, inner states are immediately transformed into living representations through the medium of rice-paste designs. The description of Saora dream-painting, taken from Elwin's *Tribal Art of Middle India* is a remarkable reminder of the antiquity and vitality of ritual forms of art in India.

Overall, *Aditi* is a beautiful exhibition catalogue supplemented by significant scholarly contributions, organized around the theme of ritual arts and the child. It will serve equally well as

a collector's volume, an introduction to an important, under-represented area in Western studies of Indian culture, and as a sourcebook of ideas for further research.

Sarah L. Caldwell
Department of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley

The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China From the Eighth Through the Eighteenth Centuries. David Pollack. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982. xv + 250. 10 prints. Bibliography, index. $32.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-691-03126.

Western scholarship has long examined the process by which the Japanese have adopted then adapted elements of other cultures, most notably the Chinese and more recently the Western. David Pollack's book is part of a continuing interest in this fascinating issue, but he offers a new and penetrating analysis.

Pollack bases his study upon the theoretical work of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. He begins with the assertion that a geological fault runs through the entire semiotic field of Japan. Because Japanese culture assumes that meaning is essentially "central and formless" and form is "peripheral and meaningless," a fundamental disjunction exists between Japanese perceptions and Chinese forms (writing) through which these perceptions must be expressed. When Chinese culture entered Japan, a rift was created between *Kokoro* (mentality, meaning) and *Kotoba* (form) which runs through the entire field of aesthetics from the *Kojiki*, written in the eighth century C.E., to the modern day.

Pollack maintains that at the level of meaning, the Japanese insisted upon defining their arts and ideas against the ground of "otherness," which was invariably China. In chapter one he observes that, whereas the Japanese language is polysyllabic, agglutinating and highly inflected, Chinese is monosyllabic, isolating and uninflected. When Chinese writing was adopted by the Japanese for expressing their sentiments, perceptions and ideas, these extreme contrasts produced profound dissonances, which "can be traced into the deepest structures of language, and so inevitably into the manifold ways that language and culture shape each other" (23).

Focusing his attention on this dialectic between formless meaning and meaningless form at work in the adoption, adaption, and synthesis of Chinese culture in Japan rather than upon any particular set of materials, Pollack examines this creative polarity from the writing of the *Kojiki* to *The Tale of Genji*, *Shinkokinshu*, the "Five Mountains" literary movement within Zen, Renga and Noh theory and aspects of Tokogawa aesthetics. In Pollack's own words:

> We are not concerned so much with Chinese "influences" upon Japan—if indeed we are dealing with such at all—as with a constructive dialectic, carried on over the centuries, that took the form of a Japanese monologue with itself about China. I have tried to show how Japanese thought consistently referred the question of signification back to China, with the result that a dynamic and dialectical concept of meaning developed as something composed of the interplay of two terms, the Japanese term emerging into meaning only as its content took form against the background of China (185).

Because *Fracture* covers such a range of complex philosophical issues, qualifications and objections are bound to arise. Nevertheless, Pollack's analysis is thought-provoking and fresh. A second important strength of this impressive study is the author's control, indeed mastery, of a wealth of detailed information, especially with reference to Chinese culture. Thirdly, the author moves with competence through discussions of such topics as literature, painting, theatre, religion and philosophy. He sheds considerable light on these topics in spite of occasional lapses into "lit crit" jargon. His generally lucid application to a Japanese context of an analytical method which arose in Europe will probably prove stimulating to those students of ritual who are familiar with the subject.

This handsome volume is a major contribution to Japanese literary studies.

Eugene R. Swanger
East Asian Studies
Wittenberg University

Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion. Robert P. Weller. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987. ix + 215. 2 maps; 6 tables; 13 figures; 8 plates. Appendix A: Geomancy; Appendix B: [Chinese] Character List. Notes, references, index. $22.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-295-96397-2.

Several years ago in Taiwan, a friend observed that, although anthropologists and historians of religion covering China had made progress in understanding Chinese religions, they had done little to advance theory for the study of religion in general. At the time, it was hard to disagree. This book by anthropologist Robert Weller, along with other recent works, shows that the situation has changed. Other examples appear in the study of myth by N.J. Girardot (1983); the study of Chinese syncretism by Judith Berling (1980) and various responses to it, including the study by David Jordan and Daniel Overmyer (1986) on sectarianism in Taiwan; and the study of popular and elite religion edited by David Johnson (*et al.* 1985).

Based on his dissertation research in Sanxia Township, Taibei county, Taiwan, Weller's book presents one local instance of the diverse yet unified "system" of Chinese religion. He does an excellent job of treating not only the "little tradition" but also such "great traditions" as Buddhism and Taoism. His major theoretical contribution is, thus, in the areas of popular and elite religion. In fact, one laments that he was (unavoidably) not aware of similar contributions in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China,* edited by David Johnson, *et al.* For example, David Johnson (1985) advances theories developed in the study of European popular culture in much the same direction that Weller takes and uses some of the same theorists, such as Antonio Gramsci. Moreover, much of what is presented by Johnson and others in *Popular Culture* supports Weller's claim that his "broader conclusions," while based on the situation of northern Taiwan in the last century, can clearly also be applied to the rest of China, at least for the late imperial and republican periods (169). For present purposes, however, I am more concerned with his further claim about the cross-cultural applicability of his conclusions. He states:

> Even more generally, I would suggest that this study's emphasis on interpretation over code, on the diversity of styles of interpretation across social lines. . . and on the possibilities of making and reinterpreting meaning can help clarify issues of culture and ideology in any culture (169).

Let us look at each of these points individually. Emphasizing "interpretation over code" means insisting that religious tradition does not lie in the supposedly distinct ritual code of a given socio-religious group. The code exists in the form of "ritual media" for the most part available to everyone. The "interpretation" of available media by a particular group is what actually defines a

tradition. We should not seek to identify distinct sets of ritual symbols. We should look at how similar ritual media are differently interpreted by villagers, urban elites and monastics. This realization is shared by Roger Chartier (1984) in his work on European popular culture, in which "appropriation" is roughly synonymous with Weller's "interpretation."

The further beauty of Weller's book lies in his identification of "the diversity of styles of interpretation across social lines." Instead of covering only "popular" and "elite" traditions, he covers six traditions: popular, Buddhist, Taoist, modern elite, [traditional] state cult, and five element theory. He identifies their interpretive styles according to three conceptual pairs: pragmatic/systematized, personified/impersonal and active/-passive. The popular tradition is characterized by the first term in each pair, while the other traditions all have mixed characteristics.

"The possibilities of making and reinterpreting meaning" are determined by which characteristics are present in a tradition, which is in turn determined by "social relations," i.e., by whether one is socially conditioned by strong or weak kinship concerns, a high or low level of education. Nobody simply holds an "ideology;" instead individuals and groups are always in the process of "ideologizing" or "pragmatically reinterpreting" available ritual media.

> There is thus no mechanical dichotomy between pragmatic and ideologized interpretation. Religion becomes ideologized (that is, more systematized, passive, or impersonal) in various ways, and to varying degrees, according to the social relations of the people involved (159).

How well this model would work outside the fluid and lively religious situation of modern Taiwan is for others to determine. It works very well in that situation. Weller gives us a clear portrait of the Chinese religious "system" that many have recognized but not painted as well as he does.

Christian Jochim
Religious Studies
San Jose State University

The Shaman's Touch: Otomi Indian Symbolic Healing. James Dow. Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1986. xiii + 180. 23 figures and map. Guide to pronunciation of Otomi. Bibliographic notes, bibliography, index. $13.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-87480-257-1.

This book on the *vadi*, or shaman, among the Sierra Otomi people in central Mexico is based on James Dow's fieldwork in this region since 1967. He presents his work as a contribution to the discussion of shamanism among specialists as well as a guide for the general reader. The author attempts to demystify shamanism and to "develop a model of symbolic healing that not only explains what the Otomi shamans do but also explains modern psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and religious healing" (xiii). With such ambitious goals this book seems in places to fall short, especially with regard to the author's interpretation of religious healing. Yet, this is one of the few anthropological studies of shamanism that situates healing in a religious context.

Dow presents extensive ethnographic descriptions in the form of reconstructed conversations with Don Antonio, the Otomi shaman who is his major informant. Using this conversational technique, Dow makes anthropological observations on the specific themes and then inserts appropriate quotations from Don Antonio. Although the personal tone of the conversations is largely lost, the chapters contain significant material on Otomi beliefs and practices. In particular, we learn more about the spirit beings and soul-forces which Don Antonio will evoke. Against the background of the Otomi worldview Dow explores the relationship between the shaman and patient. He is cogent in his remarks both in the text and in the bibliographic notes that the therapeutic context of the patient should be considered apart from the performance of the shaman. Dow focuses in particular on the ritual healing and spiritual counseling the shaman provides for individuals suffering from resentment and envy.

The book discusses the difference between the supernatural animal companions, namely, *tonales* and *naguales* (60ff.) and describes some herbal remedies used for curing among the Otomi (110ff.). Dow includes important sections on disease etiology among the Otomi (83-95). This study also contains descriptions of the *costumbres* and *limpia* rituals as well as the ceremonial cutting of paper figures. *Costumbres* are the major offerings in which supernaturals who aid the shaman are ritually celebrated by the community of shamanic practitioners. Limpia are the purification ceremonies in which the Otomi shamans use figures of paper cuttings to invoke soul-forces (*zaki*) and animal companions (*rogi*) to protect and heal a patient. Dow also explores the importance of music as ritual language in these ceremonials.

Surprisingly, however, the work does not explore dreams, songs, or naming as performatives which may provide interpretive

schemas for understanding such shamanic rituals. The ritual performance, for example, may be considered from the standpoint of a restaging of a revelatory dream. Thus, the shaman's personality and his "secondary revision" of dream material would seem crucial to an adequate understanding of his/her ritual. This could have been explored when in one quotation the illiterate Don Antonio compares dreams to reading (51). He reflects on dreams as a means whereby the shaman learns what the patient's problem is and who the enemy is. This knowledge becomes the basis for his shamanic combat during the ritual and, as such, a means for interpreting the structure of the rite. The shaman's personal dream world may also be interpreted in light of Otomi myths, but Dow presents little such material.

The theoretical framework within which the material is presented and interpreted is a "biocultural" analysis. This biocultural model is compelling in that it helps to explain the liminal role of the shaman in moving between emotional states and cultural symbols. Religion in this study, then, is presented as symbolic healing in which ritual actions in the cultural sphere have psychological and somatic effects on individual believers. The ritual manipulation of specific mythic symbols enables the Otomi shaman to effect psychological release of emotional blockages for his patients. Dow briefly discusses the current understanding of "psychoanalytic" techniques utilized by shamans. But he proposes that a more universal theory describing the underlying process of shamanic healing is needed.

Although I applaud Dow's detailed ethnography and his understanding of symbolic healing, I think that his study does not take due account of the numinous quality of religious experience in forming the shaman and his/her rituals. The author's instrumental model does not allow interpretive insights to surface sufficiently from the ethnographic material. His reliance on one shamanic informant is less problematic, finally, than his exclusive reliance on emotions as "the generalized media in the self-system that permit communication between the self and the somatic subsystems" (146). It seems clear that the shaman uses other generalized media such as psychic/self states associated with meditation, trance and purposeful action in ritual. Moreover, it is in ritual that the shaman imparts to his/her patient-clients an experience of mystery whose emotional tone is but one facet of its power.

John A. Grim
Religion
Sarah Lawrence College

Spiritualist Healers in Mexico. Kaja Finkler. Foreword by Arthur Kleinman. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985. vii + 256. 15 tables and 6 figures with commentary. $29.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-03-063912-3. $14.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-89789-092-2.

Spiritualist Healers in Mexico skillfully combines qualitative ethnographic techniques, quantitative measurements of symptom levels and the analysis of perceived change in illness. Using a broad theoretical framework, the author emphasizes the biocultural interactions in illness and health care. The two interrelated tasks of her book are the demonstration of the successes and failures of an alternative healing system and the description of the interaction between a therapeutic regime and the historical and politico-economic forces in which such a regime is enmeshed.

Finkler's initial chapter is theoretical. It contrasts the "biomedical" symbols with "culturally meaningful" symbols and introduces her basic concept of "symbolic manipulation." According to Finkler, "Biomedical symbols lack efficacy outside of Western industrial society." She further argues that "biomedicine's symbolic cures are frequently rejected by patients with syndromes not readily amenable to speedy recovery in favor of culturally specific recovery symbols " (68). This chapter, on the whole, presents an effective balance of the abstract with the empirical and sets the tone for the entire volume.

The lengthy chapter devoted to Spiritualism as a religion presents Mexican Spiritualism as a dissident sectarian religious movement founded in 1861 by a "recalcitrant priest" named Father Elias, and as fanatically anti-Catholic with a non-biomedical health-care delivery system. Standing in opposition to the Catholic Church, the separate rituals and doctrines of Spiritualism have "powerful influences on listeners." The impact of these doctrines may be seen through the prohibition of social interchanges both "directly by their rigid rules of demeanor and indirectly by incorporating trancing in the rituals" (34). These rituals stress vertical interaction between humans and the supernatural. Sundays and the first day of each month are the days on which the most important oral "irradiations," or spiritual teaching, occur. Moreover, all four deities "irradiate" jointly during four annual celebrations. Rhythmic cadences are the characteristic feature of the delivery of these irradiations whose patterned and repetitious content focuses on "God's praise of His own greatness and His beneficence to his people" (21). Also contained within these irradiations are "references to Mexico as the New Jerusalem, the pearl and light of the world where all mankind will congregate one day" (22).

Finkler is interested in the exploration of Spiritualist therapeutics from the individual participant's perspective, so she

focuses on the degree to which Spiritualist procedures effect individuals. After examining the structural sources of the power of the "compelling linkages between the individual and social levels" (11), she sums up as follows:

> I am convinced that the significance of Spiritualist healers, like that of practitioners elsewhere, rests on their success in ministering to patients with chronic pain in a way that biomedicine cannot match because the latter lacks emotionally charged symbols derived from the sufferers' collective experience (196).

In the final three pages of the book, Finkler states her assumption that symbols are not always shared and that "not all persons have an equal capacity to respond to culturally produced symbols" (197). Thus, she makes a twofold proposal. First, Rappaport's paradigm concerning the interaction between ecology and the symbolic universe needs to be explored further in relation to health-care phenomena. Second, "historical paradigms must be brought to bear on health-care delivery systems because they illuminate the sociocultural factors that bring about a given health-care delivery establishment" (198). The most significant aspect of this section, however, is the author's recognition of the limitations of her quantitative methodologies in the identification of behavioral regularities. The identification and assessment of such regulations then require a "probing into [the] subjective perceptions of the human condition." She concludes by stating that the phenomenological perspective employed in her study has contributed to a "multidimensional understanding of human health and illness."

In sum, Finkler has presented a well conceived and carefully documented book. Kleinman's foreword provides an excellent and informative overview of the work. Students and scholars of religion and ritual, ethnomedicine and health care systems, medical history, the political economy of health care and, of course, Mexico, will find the information contained in Finkler's book a valuable contribution to their knowledge.

Roland A. Foulkes
Department of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley

From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina of Madagascar. Maurice Bloch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. x + 214. $13.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-1400-76883.

Maurice Bloch's work has evolved over the years with remarkable consistency and creativity. By remaining committed to his ethnographic research in Madagascar, Bloch has been able to fashion new ideas, new theories and new interpretations. In this book he undertakes a detailed study of circumcision ritual among the Merina. He approaches it from two sharply different angles: that of symbolic analysis and that of history. He discovers that the core of the ritual has remained rather stable over a period of two centuries, 1770-1970, but that its scale and its political significance at a wider than a domestic level have varied greatly. This meticulously established finding is interesting because it indicates that a simplistic application of Marxist theory to the data fails. The symbolism, or ideology in this sense, of the ritual does not alter significantly in response to politico-economic change.

Bloch's conclusions are very much a sign of the times in anthropological thinking in general. We are currently entering a phase of what I could call "interpretive Marxism," in which Marxism does not reject meaning. Bloch's symbolic analysis contains an encapsulated history, that of the replacement of earlier populations, all known as Vazimba, by the Merina themselves. The Vazimba stand in the ritual for what is wild; the Merina ancestors stand for order and authority. Both combined give fertility, the "blessing" of Bloch's title, which is held to flow from the act of circumcising the young male child. Such a blessing, however, cannot be realized without violence. Vazimba "strength" has to be appropriated violently. The child is removed from women and symbolically placed with the ancestors. He then forcibly re-enters the domestic space of women–the family house–through the window, an act Bloch calls "penetration." Fertility comes from the timeless ancestors, but it can be achieved only in the biologically-based domain of women. The ritual appears to act out this process in a way that Bloch characterizes as mid-way between an action and a statement. Indeed, this description is at the heart of his "placement" of the category "ritual" in general.

Such a bare summary of the symbolic analysis in no way does justice to the complexity of material that Bloch analyzes. It indicates, however, that a core set of meaning is replicated over time. But this core engages variably with historical events, such as the growth of colonial power and the concomitant encroachment of Christian missions, both Protestant and Catholic. Circumcision changed from a familial-style ritual to a royal one as the Malagasy state of Merina itself grew. The

incidence of circumcision declined after the French took over, and the ritual began to gain anti-elite tones after independence in 1960.

The major arguments which Bloch makes have to do with the general analysis of ritual in the light of his ethnography. I shall select three loci as examples of his thought. First, in circumcision ritual women are made from time to time to oppose men. They are overcome and "dominated" in the progression of the ritual. But this does not mean that we can interpret from this event social evidence of low status for women in the society at large. On the contrary, women in fact have relatively high status and power, but in the ritual they:

> act out the symbolically constructed femininity of houses associated with division, maternal kinship, death, and decay. . . . These roles are part of a drama that creates an image and that needs to be created because of many ways it contradicts what everybody knows" (45).

It is the last statement here that is most arresting. Bloch is saying, here and elsewhere, that religion creates its own ideological world which is *defined* by its contradiction with the physical world.

Second, the relationship between natural and ancestral fertility implicates violence.

> The antagonistic yet complementary relationship of natural and ancestor fertility that underlies Merina kinship is. . . revealed. . . .The one leads to the other after violence (72).

Violence is again "needed" in order to construct transitions between one type of fertility and the other, as though the ritual has to break through different worlds in order to achieve its purposes. Here is one model for the relationship between ritual and violence which can be seen elsewhere as well as with the Merina. Violence ruptures, as one might expect. In New Guinea rituals, it ruptures boyhood and creates manhood, as does Merina circumcision.

Third, the most subtle argument about ritual is found in the conclusion (Chapter Eight: "Towards a Theory of the Transformation of Ideology"). Here Bloch is able to criticize the theories of Althusser, and he uses the contrast between practical and ritual "knowledge" developed in his own earlier writings. In Althusser's formulation, ideology both organizes social reproduction and yet at the same time sets up "imaginary relationships." Bloch comments:

> If that were so, ideology would obviously have to change when the socio-economic formation changes. In this case the ritual would have had to vary in its content as the political situation changes and we know this was not so (187).

We might add that the adaptation of specifically Christian ritual around the world to different circumstances could be looked at in

the same way as Bloch has examined Merina circumcision. As he has tested Althusser, so his propositions can be further tested.

To re-appropriate a term from religion back into anthropology, this book is a "blessing" to our discipline: the fertility of its ideas will surely generate more work by anthropologists of the future, and perhaps also some "violent" controversies as well.

Andrew Strathern
Department of Anthropology
University of Pittsburgh

The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Carlo Ginzburg. Translated by John and Anne Tedeschi. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. xxi + 145. Appendix, notes, index of names. $8.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-1400-76688-3.

Bergen Evans some years ago entitled one of his popular lectures, "Why Do People Tell Such Dreadful Lies?" His analysis, which centered on his interpretation of ego fulfillment, relates directly to the theme of Ginzburg's book. As the records clearly show, the Inquisition found no shortage of those claiming to be witches, who attacked and killed children, caused storms, destroyed crops and brought about illness and death. The penalty for such claims was not ridicule but total community rejection, torture, service as a galley slave, or death by burning. The problem is made more complex when the rituals and practices of witchcraft are balanced against the ritualistic claims of another group: those who asserted that they battled witches on the "home grounds" of the witches themselves and at the witch Sabbats. These "defenders of the faith" assumed that the success of annual crops depended upon whether or not they defeated the witches in battle (involving the ritualistic use of "fennel stalks"). Battles against witches, then, became directly related to fertility cults. This anti-witchcraft group was the Benandanti, identified as having been "born with the caul," night walkers who left their bodies, usually during Ember Days, met with the Devil, and engaged witches in decisive battles.

Ginzburg's study is based upon records of the Inquisition, and it provides insights that are different from those one gains from the *Malleus Maleficarum* and from the more widely dispersed contemporary treatises on witchcraft. From these records comes the testimony of men and women who claimed either to be witches, or to be Benandanti (or eventually both as the distinction between the two faded). There are full accounts of witch mischiefs, of the Sabbat, of the perpetration of evil and its battles with good. Confessions describe the departure of the soul from the body and the riding of cats or hares or goats to the meeting place of Josephat in the "center of the earth." One sees in detail the Devil, either as a cultured and wealthy gentleman, or in his more traditional forms; one hears his demands that his followers be accountable to him for carrying out assignments of evil. And, over and over again, the pattern is repeated; the stories are consistent as the ritualistic concepts emerge.

Night Battles is clearly organized and effective in its presentation. Ginzburg helps us to understand the dilemmas facing the inquisitors as they attempt both to respond to the forces of witchcraft and to the claims of those who battle witches on their own terms. One comes face to face, too, with peasants whose limited understanding makes it impossible for them to ignore the

signs of the supernatural all around them. After all, evil was (and is) endemic; and the signs of witches were everywhere and their ritualistic behaviors easily identified.

Why do people tell such dreadful lies? Such lies were the work of the inquisitors, the confessors and the preachers, who made popular beliefs correspond to the theoretical formulations of the educated classes, as well as the contribution of the peasants desperately searching for answers to the evil they saw everywhere–an evil about which their priests constantly reminded them.

The religious system itself, with its almost limitless control and its myths and traditions that extended far beyond theological doctrines, was also a factor. One should not discount the escapism that witchcraft offered. In short, sixteenth and seventeenth century European witchcraft provides an example of an era when belief in witches dominated the imagination of the learned and the untutored, of the believer and the non-believer, of the cleric and his flock.

Robert Nossen
Associate Provost Emeritus
University of Pittsburgh

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:

Castle, Tony, Ed. 1987. *Young People's Mass Book*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Fries, Henrich & Otto Herman Pesch. 1987. *Streiten Für: Die Eine Kirche*. Munich: Kösel.

Harris, Maria. 1987. *Teaching & Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Johnson, Mark. 1987. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Jones, Cheslyn, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, S.J. 1986. *The Study of Spirituality*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Kimball, Don. 1987. *Power and Presence*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Moran, Gabriel. 1987. *No Ladder to the Sky*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Rifkin, Jeremy. 1987. *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc.

Warren, Michael. 1987. *Youth, Gospel, Liberation*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

READER FORUM

This space is donated to JRS readers, free of charge to relay information about conferences, courses, meetings and other events concerning ritual; solicit information from others working in your particular area of interest within ritual studies; report new investigations or new directions in ritual study; direct attention to books, research projects or reports of special interest to ritual studies scholars.

PASSAGES: RITES AND CELEBRATIONS IN THE RURAL MIDWEST was the theme of an interdisciplinary conference held October 30-31, 1987 at Norskedalen, a restored farmstead near the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. Papers presented featured research on life-cycle rites, seasonal festivals and rural, midwestern holidays. Robert Swartz, Norskedalen, P.O. Box 225, Coon Valley, WI 54623.

VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY is a quarterly international journal published in cooperation with the Commission on Visual Anthropology (CVA). Each 100 page issue contains articles, ethnographic photo-essays, research reports, reviews on films, books and exhibitions, as well as discussions and statements about work in progress. Editor: Jay Ruby, P.O. Box 4998, Philadelphia, PA, 19119 USA.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION (SSSR) will be meeting October 28-30, 1988 at the Bismark Hotel, Chicago. Papers will be presented on the theme "Religion and Social Conflict." Also of interest is the SSSR Monograph Series, #4 *The Sacred and the Subversive: Political Witch Hunts as National Rituals* by Albert Bergesen and #7 *Leaving Cults: The Dynamics of Defection* by Stuart A. Wright. To order contact: SSSR: CUA, Marist Hall Room 108, Washington, DC, 20064, USA.

RITES AND REASON is a research-oriented theater of the Afro-American Studies Program, Brown University. With the help of resident scholars selected from various disciplines, the theatre creates original productions based on the black experience. Scholars may also contribute to the work of the program and its research through lectures, colloquia and writings that may form the basis for new theatrical works. For more information contact: Professor George Bass, Afro-American Studies Program, Box 1904, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.

CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE PROJECT, University of California, Berkeley is a four-year project designed to stimulate interest in the study of non-elite mentalities and behavior by

emphasizing interdisciplinary research on regional opera, popular religion and folk art. Each year a seminar composed of visiting scholars and the project organizers will focus on a general topic: "Religious and Ritual Opera" in 1987-88; "Liturgies and Scriptures of Popular Religion" in 1988-89. Contact: Professor David Johnson, Chinese Popular Culture Project, Center for Chinese Studies, 2223 Fulton Street, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

MEANING IN RITUAL AND TRANCE: RITUAL EXPERIENCE IN HISTORY is the title of The Pittsburgh Symposium First Biennial Conference on Social History, sponsored by the Carnegie Mellon Univeristy Dept. of History and the Pittsburgh Center for Social History, to be held May 10-11, 1988 in Pittsburgh. Contact: Peter N. Stearns, Dept. of History, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

THE RITUAL STUDIES GROUP OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION (AAR) featured sessions on "Rituals of Healing" and "The Process of Change and Development in Ritual Activity" in its 1987 December meeting in Boston. For the 1988 meeting in Chicago, the call for papers on Ritual Studies will focus upon two areas: the ritual use of masks, and the ritual activity of politics. For more information contact: Thomas V. Peterson, Division of Human Studies, Alfred University, Alfred, NY, 14802.

ANOTHER CALENDAR YEAR has passed, and it is time to renew your subscription to the *JRS* if you have not already done so. Remember, library subscriptions are needed for the continued survival of this journal, so if you work in a college or university, please recommend the *JRS* to your bibliographer. Sample issues and information available upon request. Back issues may also be purchased. (See the front section of this issue for information on subscription rates).

INTRODUCTION

Fred W. Clothey

The present issue focuses on the role of fieldwork in the study of ritual. While concern for fieldwork has been part of the methodological repertoire of our anthropological colleagues for decades, most scholars in the humanities continue to eschew fieldwork in their research. There is, in fact, a persistent inability–if not discomfort–on the part of many of us in the humanities to observe and interpret the human condition as it may be expressed in non-literary ways. Scholars of literature, religion, philosophy, even language are often untutored at "reading" the nuances of gesture and act and interpreting the symbolism of sight, sound, and touch.

This inability is a distinct handicap in the study of ritual and especially of rituals which occur in a number of societies where the written word does not have the primacy that is sometimes assumed. It remains something of a scandal that scholars with grants in hand regularly stay for extended periods of research in Asia, Africa, and Latin America even though they may have little or no self-consciousness as to the implications of their very presence in these societies, let alone a systematic methodology for observing and interpreting what they see in these contexts. Similarly, graduate programs in the study of religion or literature continue to forego training students in the art of interpreting the cultural matrices of these expressions. Cultural matrices, especially those set in the contemporary moment, are best seen and heard in the context of sustained interaction. Yet precious few scholars in the humanities, even those trained in historical method or cultural criticism, are adequately trained in fieldwork techniques.

The study of ritual humbles those of us who are not so trained (and even many who are). We learn the hard way to become sensitive to the disparities between performance and text, to the nuances of vestment and movement, to the many faces and gestures of functionaries and participants, to the colors, smells, and chants, and to the interstices of time and space. Either we turn to the anthropologists for help or learn from the seat of our pants. What we learn, in the end, is that our very act of studying is as much a form of ritual as the phenomenon we are studying: there is the reciprocity of participant and observer, the exchange of worldviews, the engaging of senses; the will to affirm self-identities while also seeking transformation from the state of puzzlement to that of understanding. This "ritual" dimension of fieldwork deserves more self-conscious consideration and analysis.

This issue is an attempt to invite such self-consciousness. These scholars–all but one trained in the humanities–reflect on

the role of fieldwork in their study of ritual, and more broadly in the study of religion and culture itself.

Three of the present essays (e.g., Ruel Tyson, Dan Gold and my own) were presented as part of a panel at the American Academy of Religion in December, 1986. The panel, "Fieldwork and the Study of Religion" was convened by Joanne Punzo Waghorne, now an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Jack Lightstone (the lone social scientist) demonstrates how fieldwork has informed interpretation, and Ron Grimes shows how fieldwork is an essential part of the process of "ritual criticism."

We have asked two "veterans" to critique and respond to the essays: Sam Gill, an historian of religions at the University of Colorado, whose research has included considerable fieldwork among native Americans; and Andrew Strathern, Mellon Professor in Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, who has spent more than a decade in field research in Papua New Guinea. Both critics point out things their colleagues in the "human sciences" will want to ponder further.

Fred W. Clothey,
Associate Editor

TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE INTERPRETATION OF RITUAL

Fred W. Clothey

Abstract

This essay represents a groping for a comprehensive hermeneutics of religious phenomena by highlighting some of the concerns that have become part of my method for interpreting rituals in contemporary South Indian contexts.[1] *These concerns are not unrelated to the hermeneutical process more broadly conceived, for the method spelled out here is derived selectively from a variety of approaches; especially those that are phenomenological, anthropological, historical, and morphological.*

***

Introduction

This exercise is, in its present state, a meditation on seeing, and it is not unlike one of my periodic trips to the optometrist to have my spectacles checked. In attempting to delineate my hermeneutics of religious phenomena, I will first summarize my method in a single paragraph or two. It entails a hermeneutical spiral[2] which focuses on and gathers a phenomenon's multiple meanings, returns these to the hermeneut, who weaves of these a canopy of meaningfulness, then interprets their significance for the larger universe in which he or she stands. In the spiral, the stance of the interpreter is made self-conscious, "deconstructed" and reconstructed again and again so that still other meanings can be sought at other focal points and in wider contexts. It is a method concerned for the phenomenon's placement in its appropriate contemporary context, its cultural history, and its universe of morphological significance.[3] The method gropes for wholeness, yet not in the sense that wholeness is a monolith–some ontological *logos* or universal "intentionality" such as that implied by the term *eidos*.[4] Rather, "wholeness" is more nearly the sum of many parts, many individual and communal perceptions gathered into configurations that reflect the phenomenon's contemporary microhistory, the cultural history which has informed it, and its relationship to the human enterprise at large. The method seeks to be both human and humane inasmuch as it insists that celebrating and preserving the human being of the observed and the observer has top priority. It evokes humility, an overwhelming sense that every interpreter (especially the foreign one), however rigorous the method and sensitive the spirit, is always a learner, finite in his/her own cultural, academic and personal garb and painfully aware of the distinction between being and understanding. Each of these steps recurs, as in a spiral, in the discussion that follows.

Any hermeneutical method which has any hope of being comprehensive should address at least five sets of issues. I have

tried to organize these remarks and raise my questions around five axes of concern.

A Quest for Meanings

The first set of concerns is that which invites us to probe for meanings. The interpretive process starts with the ritual itself–with that which is manifest. When we ask what is seen (or, for that matter, heard, touched, or smelled) and what it *means*, seeing starts to grope toward comprehension. The harder we look and the better we see, the more apt we are to recognize that every ritual (or any other religious phenomenon) may have almost as many meanings as there are human beings for whom it is meaningful. Meaning is inevitably plural and, like ritual itself, is dynamically processual–a verbal in constant flux rather than a frozen and finite noun. In fact, I have come to use three separate terms to speak of the ambiguities with which "meaning" is fraught. The word "meaning" I reserve to refer to a "unit of intelligibility," a single consideration or connotation in a universe of possibilities, each of many explicit and implicit interpretations evident in a single time and place. I use the term "meaningfulness" to refer to the mosaic of meanings ascribable to the phenomenon in its total cultural setting,[5] in the case of my own studies, the Indian or sub-Indian context. I use the term "significance" to refer to the ritual's linkage to the theoretical and taxonomic world represented by the interpreter; it is that which links the ritual to the interpreter's larger universe of human inquiry.

At none of these levels are meanings monolithic or singular. Yet in the recent history of our craft we have been shown a succession of meanings to be found, especially in Indian ritual experience, to which we are all too wont to ascribe *the* central meaning of Indian ritual. We have been introduced to cosmogony (Eliade); purity and pollution (Dumont), dividuation and gift-giving (Marriott); political and economic reciprocity (Stein, Appadurai); sacrifice (Biardeau, Shulman); sexuality and asceticism (O'Flaherty); and linguistic, syntactic expression (Staal). Whenever each of these suggestions has become public, after an initial period of skepticism, we have sometimes assumed it is the paradigmatic meaning, the primordial core of Indian ritual. Very much like children after a birthday, we have worn the new theoretical garment until someone points out that it is soiled or fails to cover certain strategic bare spots.

The Plurality of Meanings

In fact, there are manifold meanings, including many that are conscious and explicit (Turner's "exegetical") as well as those which are implicit (Turner's "positional"). Careful observation forces one to move beyond "root metaphors" and binary

oppositions, beyond categories of great and little traditions; of brahmanical and non-brahamanical. Even the more flexible continuum of "classical," "normative," "popular," and "folk" does not do justice to the pluralism of meanings often consciously appropriated in a single ritual performance.

Consider, for example, an *abhiṣekam*, the "Hindu" ritual of "bathing" and anointing the icon performed in many contemporary temples, especially in South India. There are obviously "classical" dimensions preserved in the ritual but this "classical" background is of many kinds: these include aspects and allusions from the vernacular tradition as well as from the Sanskritic tradition, and both oral and written "classical" sources are reflected in several forms. Further, the ritual has been influenced, in part, by Vedic, *ágamic*, and tantric sources covering hundreds of years of development and modification. For that matter, we can not be certain that the ritual, as performed today, merely follows a text *per se* so much as it is derived from performances previously done and transmitted by a group of priest technicians. Nor is its "core meaning" to be found in any single *sutra* of some *ur*-text, nor in the opinion of a commentator, nor even in the interpretation of the "performing" community of priests. That is, there are a number of "classical" characteristics that are retained in the present performance of such rituals.

Similarly, one might ask: what are the "normative" meanings represented in the *abhiṣekam*? Are they the "normative" meanings espoused by religious elites of each generation, the "normative" of priests or of pandits, of temple officials or of savant-saints? Are the "normative" meanings those of the priests at one temple or those at another, of the priests at a single temple or the office bureaucrats at the same temple? There is, in fact, no single person or group of persons who embodies the "normative" interpretation of a ritual's meaning.

In the same way, every ritual, including the *abhiṣekam*, will have its "popular" meanings. Such meanings are derived and selected from "classical" sources, mediated through "normative" agencies, and appropriated by the multitude of common persons who perceive, adapt and apply these in ways that are localized, made pragmatic, and filtered through the screens of personal, familial, and local exigency. Explicit popular meanings are almost as abundant as the persons or families who appropriate meaning from the ritual. Finally, even "folk" meanings and antecedents may be found for such rituals as the *abhiṣekam*. These meanings are much more apt to be focused by concern for locality and kinship and expressed in rituals, deities and shrines not yet explicitly appropriated by the Hindu mainstream. Yet, we know there is a "classical" character to folk religion in the sense that such religion existed centuries ago, often alongside "high" religion. For centuries it expressed itself in folk epic, drama, and ritual, it was retained and reformulated orally, and it frequently influenced and was influenced by "classical" and "normative"

religion. Many a written myth and orthodox deity at least since epic times had its antecedents in oral form in the folk landscape. We find that there are nearly as many explicit "folk" religious meanings as there are folk, and even "folk religion" is not without its connections to the "classical." In short, it is hard to distinguish where the meanings ascribed to the "folk" performance of rituals of anointing leave off and where the meanings in the "classical" performances of *abhiṣekam* begin.

But the quest for meanings is made more complex by the fact that many meanings are not consciously known to participants and informants. Quite beyond explicit "classical" or "folk" perceptions are implicit meanings often hidden from the investigator.[6] These implicit meanings are discovered only with painstaking and sensitive observation and the asking of hosts of questions: What is the spatial context in which the ritual is set? When does the ritual assume its special significance? Who are the people for whom it has significance? Who does what with respect to the ritual?[7]

Meaningfulness

All such meanings, taken together, form the fabric I call "meaningfulness." Like a tapestry, it is woven by the interpreter as a picture of the landscape of meanings which has been presented–an act of interpretation and meditation.[8] This level of interpretation, which I am calling "meaningfulness," cannot, in the last analysis, avoid a conscious use of interpretive tools which help clarify the ritual's total meaning. Let me make clear what seems to be the obligation at this level of interpretation. On the one hand, the interpreter is obliged to be faithful to the meanings that are to be found in the indigenous landscape. It is these meanings that become the threads for weaving a fabric of meaningfulness. Yet the tools available for such a weaving project are those the interpreter brings–the methods, theoretical options, even the mind-set and general orientation of the interpreter. I will return later to the complex problem of the relationship between the interpreter and interpreted but for the moment I want to suggest only that the relationship between the tools and the meanings that are tooled is a complex series of checks and counter checks. The interpreter must be conscious of his/her diagnostic tools lest he/she bludgeon with an ax what calls for sandpaper. But no theoretical tool, I have concluded, should take priority of place over that domain of human meanings whose understanding is our objective. The fabric of meanings, therefore, which the interpreter weaves (i.e., the meaningfulness of the ritual) must therefore be faithful, above all, to the meanings discovered. Similarly, the interpretation at this level seeks to organize and systematically present these meanings as embodiments of the religion and culture at hand. One could put this in Lee Schlesinger's and Val Daniel's terms: the interpreter

speaks not so much in the terms of the interpreted phenomenon as *for* these terms.[9]

Significance

This brings us, however, to the question of significance and a further level of diagnosis and discourse. A world such as Indian religion, faithfully explored, cannot help but invite reflection. It ought to challenge not only the mind-set and orientation of the foreign interpreter but all his or her theories and methods as well. In all likelihood no single theory will exhaust the meaningfulness of any ritual. The ritual's significance then is what it asks of the interpreter, what it says to the disciplines of academia, what thought, action or feeling it invites; what challenges to theoretical assumptions it brings; what it adds to and subtracts from the religious, cultural, and intellectual world of the interpreter; and, not least of all, what it suggests about the human situation at large. This enterprise suggested by Eliade's (1969:62) call for creative renewal is one for which the historian of religion should be well equipped.

Ritual as a Lens into "Microhistory"

A second major concern in interpreting a contemporary ritual (or any religious phenomenon) is placing it in its appropriate contemporary frame. Ritual serves as a lens for viewing a great deal about the contemporary human situation, particularly as that situation is expressed in the immediate context of the ritual. Simply put, the ritual reflects, to varying degrees, the "microhistoric whole" which is its contemporary time and place. That "whole," again, is plural and fluid. The relationship between the ritual and all the components of that "whole" will seldom be isomorphic or unequivocally direct. Yet, insofar as it is human beings who perform and ascribe meanings to rituals, the ritual will not be unrelated to other expressions of the human species. One of the endlessly compelling elements in studying religious phenomena is that these are not isolated from literary, artistic, social, philosophical and many other kinds of expression. The "religious" touches upon virtually all other things human and can hence be a window into these other things. Indeed, so varied are these relationships that we do well to decide which sets of relationships we want to explore most, and to decide what constitutes the "religious" in this multitude of interstices. Of course, the nature of the frames chosen for the placement of the phenomenon alter the nature of the questions asked and the interpretations afforded. Ideally, all possible "frames" should be tried in an exhaustively comprehensive interpretation. Most of us, however, are not exhaustive in our interpretations, nor have the time to be, so we become reluctantly selective. I find that in my efforts to understand contemporary ritual I am likely to use

three frames more often than others. Below, I describe each of these briefly.

The Frame of Contextuality

One of the frames or contextual questions that continue to be important for the student of religion is that which seeks to identify the *religious* element underlying rituals and other phenomena. I use the word "contextuality" to mean that which places the phenomenon in terms of the believer's perceptions of a total context–that is, the Sacred or ultimate. In the Hindu landscape, this process might be referred to as *darṣan*–seeing the phenomenon in terms of its ultimate reference. Placement or orientation may well be the quintessential religious act. Placement in the context of ultimacy is the religious frame by which the participant ascribes meaning to a phenomenon such as ritual. In some contexts and for some persons that "ultimate" is understood in very mundane terms of social, ecological, or sub-cosmic contexts. In other cases, ultimacy is perceived in supra-social, supra-ecological, and supra-cosmic terms. In some cases, this sense of "contextuality" is only implicit, yet my hunch is that the process of placement in the context of totality is apt to be present wherever there is religion. If this process is somewhere near the heart of the religious enterprise, religious persons are "map-makers," to use Jonathan Z. Smith's phrase (1978:291), for they use the forms of religion to provide orientation to that which is thought to transcend the forms. So too is the interpreter a "map-maker" who, like the religious persons being observed, seeks to "see" and "place" the phenomenon into a larger religious frame which is part of the context being studied. As such, the interpreter may well be engaged in a religious task whether or not he/she is religious.

The Frames of Religious and Ideological Forms

But quite apart from this fundamentally religious question I find it instructive to place rituals, and hence to understand them in terms of the totality of "formed" religion of which they are a part. I am not entirely comfortable speaking of "root metaphors" as though one symbol may express better than any other the whole of a cultural fabric. Yet single symbols do often serve as prisms, refracting the light which is present in its moment in time and place. Every religious phenomenon, including ritual, which is ascribed meaning by human beings is part of a total religious configuration constructed by those human beings. Hence, it is apt to be related in varying degrees to the ideological and cultic life of those persons.

A mortuary ritual, for example, will tell us something not only about a people's view of death, but their view of life. In it we may see a community's model of the ideal person or intimations of

divinity. In the ritual activities of death there is apt to be expressed cosmology, anthropology, theology, soteriology and perhaps not a little of the ethical and mythological patterns of the relevant community. In this sense the ritual phenomenon is like the top of that proverbial pyramid, related to, informed by, and reflecting many elements of a total belief system which yields itself to us, the interpreters, only as we return to it time and again, sometimes with slightly differing frames each time.

The Frames of the Contemporaneous Human Situation

But these religious or ideological issues are themselves never formulated in a vacuum; insofar as they are the expressions of human beings, they are of human beings who live in specific times and places. The ritual is framed in a larger sense by social groups, ecological and geographic settings, cultural mind-sets, personal historic experiences and many other factors. To see these factors is to see still another kind of context or "frame" which the student of religion cannot ignore. One does not have to accept the assumptions of any single social scientist, reduce the whole to any single theory, or assume a unidimensional isomorphism between religion and that other domain–be it culture, society, economics or geography–to acknowledge that the religion of human beings occurs in living contexts and is influenced by these contexts. Indeed, we cannot interpret the forms of religion apart from examining the social and geographic space in which these forms are shaped. Viewing the ritual in these terms enables one to see the various concentric circles of its setting.

I do not mean to suggest that the student of religion is going to explore every nook and cranny of cultural space which his/her colleagues in other disciplines are exploring. Rather, I'm suggesting that if one is serious about asking the question "why" about any single religious phenomenon, one should be prepared to find many possible answers. I have observed in my work on Murukaṉ and Ayyappaṉ how peoples' imagings of the divine are at times influenced by individual and communal self-perception, by the nature of the work a people do, the ecology of their region, the significant role models and values of their sub-culture, and their attitudes toward political figures and family members, among other things. There is little reason to ignore the probability that myths, rituals, ethical systems, and other religious forms are created, modified, and appropriated for reasons that are similarly human and/or mundane. Discovering these human factors in the shape religion takes in any particular place–without assuming religion is explained by any one of them or all of them combined–is part of any comprehensive study, and more of us should be about the task.

Ritual as Historical Embodiment

This leads to a third major concern in a comprehensive study of the ritual. I am persuaded that no religious phenomenon can be adequately understood apart from its "history." Hence, consideration must be made of that "diachronic whole" which has informed the phenomenon, which has caused it to be in process, both the cause and consequence of creativity, appropriation, and change. Virtually every ritual (and, more generally, every religious phenomenon) is an "historical pageant" in the sense that historical accretions are still present or acted out. This is especially true in the Indian context where history is evoked and gives authentication, legitimation and identity of lineage to persons and phenomena. It is also particularly true of such rituals as festivals where numerous reminders of the past remain part of the living cultus. But history or "tradition" is not static. We can not speak of history as unilinear or evolutionary or as having proceeded in predictable stages; nor can we any longer believe that by understanding the origins of a phenomenon we understand its true essence. Rather, history is processual and multiple; it is regional and local, civic and institutional, personal and communal. It may be "revealed" in moments such as those captured in an icon, an inscription, or a census report. Yet even these historical "moments" are the results of a process. The same is true of texts, Sanskritic, vernacular, oral or folk. What is recorded is but the tip of a cone. How then do we presume to be *historians* of religion if all we do is translate texts, describe icons or count noses without exploring the processes by which these things came to be?

The Study of Antecedents

It is not my intention in this context to explore the whole question of historiographical method. Rather, I want to make but two rather straightforward suggestions. The first is that any time the focus of inquiry is a ritual, its interpretation requires consideration of its past, both recent and ancient. An understanding of the ritual can be enhanced by the study of at least its *selective* history, that is, by studying its antecedents and precedents in such a way as to discover the process of its becoming. This study must look for ways in which previous meanings come to be ascribed to the ritual or its precedents and why these meanings were ascribed; how such meanings were shaped by the various ideological and socio-cultural frames of the past. Knowing these meanings is important not because we can assume they persist into the present (though sometimes they do), and not only because they are important in their own right (and they are), but also because the process underlying earlier sets of meanings may provide insight into the process underlying a later set of meanings.

One way of referring to this enterprise is to speak in terms of a stick in the stream–a ritual phenomenon at any moment may be seen as accumulating and reflecting the flotsam and jetsam of its cultural history. Another way of putting it is to speak in terms of a trail of pyramids like the trail of cones one finds on a highway under construction. If study of ritual in its microhistorical setting is like study of one inverted cone, then we can also study the historical "trail" of this ritual by studying a series of inverted cones in its past. This series will seldom be a straight line or even a single line; but will rather consist of converging trails, each inviting exploration into the whats and whys of meaning to be found. Texts, icons and inscriptions of tradition become pyramids which, in their own right, invite detective work into the various contextual frames that shape them.

The Study of Interpretive Traditions

Secondly, historic study also means that even the contemporary itself is not a frozen moment, but rather a moment very much in process. More of us need to engage in long term studies which follow the diachrony of a ritual not only from the dawn of the modern moment (whenever that was) but over an extended period of time. Here again, the processes by which meanings are created, ascribed, modified, appropriated or lost are an important concern. Why does the worship of Mariamman become "orthodox" for brahmins in our lifetime? Why does the Ayyappaṉ pilgrimage become exponentially popular within one or two decades? Who are the communities and persons who perpetuate belief and practice from earlier generations and why? Who are those who adapt traditional values to contemporary circumstance and why? What are the factors that lend contemporary credibility to those religious practices that have a traditional heritage and what is the process by which apparently new observances are given legitimation? To what extent does the religious "tradition" or the "normative" practice match the self and communal perceptions of the common person who appropriates certain aspects of the cultural whole? What are the boundary situations which motivate persons to engage in rituals and enhance the meaning and affirmation to be found therein? These kinds of questions reflect the dynamism and process of religion, its creation, modification and appropriation. Yet they can generally only be answered after prolonged study over a period of years–that is, after new cones have been put down in any area still under construction. These are questions still not being satisfactorily addressed within our discipline except by a handful of historians of religions and some anthropologists.

Morphological Considerations

A fourth consideration in understanding a ritual is placing it in its "morphological whole." What is the relationship of the ritual to the universe of religion and human being? What is the role of patterns and structures in our understanding of the ritual? These are complex questions on which a host of monographs has been written. We are all aware of the plethora of sloppy work done in the name of "comparative religion" and the imperialistic and reductionistic dangers of imposing general interpretations forged from one culture onto data from alternative cultures. And yet should those of us who work on the religion of a single geographic area be doomed forever to hold meaningful professional conversations only with those who work on the religion of the same area? And, if, as linguists have reminded us, there are structures apparent in the character of language across cultural and geographic boundaries, are there not also structures discernible in humankind's religion? If so, what kind of structures? I do not want to work my way through this maze in this context. I only want to offer a few tentative suggestions and raise some questions.

Indigenous Structures

First, I believe we are obliged to discover those organizing principles or categories of coherence which are operating in the community of the observed. This is part of what I meant earlier by a search for meaning and meaningfulness. Seldom will there be a total absence of structures or organizing principles, whether explicit or implicit, in a people's practice of religion. The student of ritual must seek to bring these to consciousness to the point that these "indigenous" structures can challenge the structures of the observer/interpreter's discipline. We have begun to do our job when the phenomenon can ask its questions of us and not merely the reverse. These indigenous structures should challenge disciplinary assumptions, presupposed categories, and principles of coherence. This does not mean we have to assume each newly discovered indigenous structure is paradigmatic for the entire culture or that these structures can be applied to other cultures.[10] Even so, it might be refreshing, as Val Daniel (53) suggests, tongue in cheek, to Panini-ize Western assumptions for a change, instead of chopping India into Dumontian and Weberian categories.

Morphology's Role in Elucidating the Particular

But discerning indigenous structures still doesn't take us far enough. There is that persistent question of the ritual's relationship to a human whole. What keeps the study of the particular from being trivial and merely parochial? Here at least

two concerns surface. The first is the matter of understanding the nuanced selfhood of the particular. We understand the uniqueness and particularity of something only when we see it over against all others. If a phenomenon in a given place and time can embody certain units of meaning or connotations, would not the same or a similar phenomenon have other units of meaning or connotations in other contexts? A table, for example, will have several meanings in several different contexts. Here it is a place for study; there a place to sit around for fellowship; somewhere else a symbol of distance between lecturer and audience; elsewhere a "stepladder" for changing a bulb; and, when placed in the doorway of a dean's office, it becomes a symbol of protest. Each of these meanings of table may be ascribed to "table" in differing contexts. Will all of them be ascribed to "table" in a single context? Perhaps, but probably not. The point is the meaning of a table in a particular place becomes more clearly focused when it is seen in contradistinction to the totality of possibilities available to "table." Morphology here elucidates the particular.

Morphology and the Question of Significance

The second concern has to do with the problem of significance discussed earlier. Few of us who have done our interpretive work well will return to our own worlds without new questions, (however privately these are voiced), about ourselves, our disciplines, our religious traditions, our mindsets. We grope for that neutral language, that universe of structures which accommodates both domains, ours and the other's, and permits us to reflect cross-culturally and cross-disciplinarily on the implications of what we have observed and come to understand. Morphology can provide a language for this sort of discourse. It is a pity that more of what passes for religious studies in our departments (to say nothing of divinity schools) has not yielded to a morphology that transcends what I suppose would have to be called "Religionism,"[11] the assumption that religion is equatable to one's own tradition or that another religion can be seen adequately with lenses framed by one's own tradition. For the historian of religion, morphology is the invitation, indeed, the obligation to put an end to this academic chauvinism, and redefine the paradigms of our discipline.

The concern for morphology also implies a relatedness to the discussions of our sister disciplines. If there is a structural coherence to religion; if, as students of more than one religion tend to argue, there are similarities in patterns and themes in several cultural and religious traditions, what are the bases of these apparent structural similarities? Debate continues as to whether such structures are physiological (Lévi-Strauss, Campbell, Chomsky, Staal); sociological (Durkheim, Dumont); cultural or ecological (Pettazzoni, Rappaport); psychoanalytic (Freud, Spiro, Obeyesekere); or ontological (Eliade). There is no reason why

more of us, as we explore the causes for the ascription of meaning around the rituals we investigate, should not enter into this discussion. Can "possession," for example, a phenomenon afforded religious sanction in South India, be understood better if we could find some way to analyze the biochemistry of the brain at the time of a trance? Or would more extensive information on the social, psychological, ecological setting of the "possessed" enhance our understanding? Perhaps team research that transcends disciplinary boundaries is a natural and necessary outcome of these kinds of morphological questions.

The Relation Between Interpreter and Interpreted

A final and by no means the last concern of this outline is the issue of the relationship between the observed and observing human beings. It is not my intention to say anything new on this matter, but to summarize my own posture after a few years of research. The ascribing of meaning is a profoundly human enterprise; the interpreter's first priority is to respect the personhood of those human beings who ascribe meaning to phenomena. Indeed, listening to and studying a fellow human being's religious orientation remains one of the best and most profound ways to demonstrate that one cares. Yet understanding another does not mean that one becomes the other; in fact, precisely because the interpreter remains an "other," the understanding is never total. The more carefully one does one's work the more aware one becomes of the limitations of the interpretation. The interpreter is always a learner and never an expert. The interpreter never ceases to be a human being. Of course, one is obliged to be rigorous, thorough and scrupulously fair in the discovery of the other, but one is obliged to be human and humane.

This balance between subjectivity and objectivity is never easy to strike. Our forebears probably overstated the interpreter's attitude (as well as the nature of the Christian ethic of *agape* which informed them) when they spoke of "self-denial"[12] and the necessity for an understanding which "rests upon self-surrendering love."[13] Perhaps it is more realistic to speak of "loving the other as one loves the self," of listening with care to the other rather than of expecting to recover the fullness of intention and internality in the mind of the other.[14] John Carman, in characterizing Van der Leeuw's position, is probably closer to the possible when he suggested that the interpreter "must pursue the art of the actor in a play, who is able to identify himself imaginatively with the experience of others," or with some personal experience (Carman:275).

More particularly, I believe it possible and appropriate in the interpretive process for several steps to occur:

(1) The interpreter seeks to be self-conscious, at every stage of the "listening" process, of one's own posture; of the "language," theories, and orientation with which one "hears." The interpreter must "deconstruct" or minimize as much as possible the orientation he/she brings, particularly in the early stages of the inquiry.

(2) The interpreter seeks to defer to the interpretations and orientations of the other (e.g., informants and native exegetes) to the point that the other's understandings, evaluations, and interpretations are clearly and freely expressed.

(3) Once rapport has been established, the interpreter may utilize one's own posture judiciously, in a "creative subjectivity," to ask questions and offer hypotheses; in each case to help clarify the other's world of meaning and to place and distinguish it in relation to one's own.

(4) The interpreter seeks to take seriously the other's responses to such questions to the point that tentative hypotheses and diagnostic interpretations are discarded when they are not documentably supported by the evidence at hand.

(5) The interpreter seeks to be available, when appropriate as a "learning consultant," a friendly but limited "outside" resource, and even as constructive critic. This role may well include the publication of one's findings and interpretations in the society one has sought to understand.

(6) The interpreter seeks to return at last to one's own world and discipline to speak for the other (rather than in the terms of the other) and to explore the "significance" of what one has heard and interpreted in ways that address the discipline, religious tradition, and "home turf"–including the possibility of identifying new paradigms for inter-religious conversation, study, and interpretation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fred W. Clothey is Professor of Religious Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2604 CL, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. He is author and/or editor of five books on religion in South India, the director of five documentary films on Hindu ritual, and Associate Editor of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*.

NOTES

[1]While this essay focuses on the interpretation of contemporary expressions of ritual, much of what is said could be applied, more broadly, to religious phenomena at large, whether contemporary or historical.

[2]This is the term used in a slightly different way by Ted Brenneman and Alan Olson in modifying Heidegger's notion of the hermeneutical circle.

[3]Note the three configurations of Van der Leeuw's phenomenological method: synchrony, diachrony and morphology.

[4]I share Gadamer's suspicion of the "romanticism" of those early phenomenologists who deemed it possible to "get behind" the intention of a text's authors.

5The relationship between meaning and meaningfulness discussed here is not unlike the distinction Suzanne Langer makes between a connotation and a conception.

[6]The Tamil term *parakkam* (custom or tradition) is one such implicit meaning. When a Tamilian is asked why he/she performs a certain ritual, the most common answer is *parakkam* ("It is customary"). The casual observer may find this response disappointing as expressing no thought or self-consciousness as to the significance of the act. Yet, *parakkam* implies the action links the participant to a performative tradition and an historic lineage. It enables the person to act out who he/she is within the various communities and identities. This is of no little significance in the performance of rituals in the South Indian context.

7The series of questions which Ronald Grimes poses are useful tools with which interpreters can start the process of discovering implicit meanings in the study of ritual.

[8]I am using the word "meaningfulness" in a way that is similar to the way Val Daniel uses the word "culture." For Daniel, "culture" (for me, in large measure, "meaningfulness") is a product of the conversation between an interpreter and his/her informants or, more particularly, "constituted of those webs of relatively regnant and generative signs (symbols?) of habit, spun in the communicative act engaged in by the anthropologist [historian of religion] and his or her informants."

[9]Ibid, (227), citing Lee Schlesinger from an unspecified source.

[10]Agheananda Bharati, in an address given at the conference "Pilgrimage: The Human Quest" at the University of Pittsburgh in May, 1981, argued that *darṣan* [vision] was the quintessential feature of all pilgrimage, not only those of India. While suggestive, this argument is difficult to sustain conclusively.

[13]"Religionism" (a relative of "sexism" and "racism") manifests itself in the tacking of courses on "world religions" onto curricula which spend 99% of their time on a single religion. It is adding panels at national conferences to accommodate other traditions rather than asking whether the traditional panels are asking the right questions in the light of the world's pluralism. It is evolving an internal theology and dissecting the scriptures of a particular tradition as if people who oriented themselves by other questions and other scriptures did not exist.

[14]This is Brede Kristensen's phrase (Inleiding:24) as translated by John Carman in *The Theology of Ramanujan* (Yale 1974:384).

[15]Van der Leeuw's phrase from *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (384).

[16]Note Clifford Geertz' skepticism as to "the myth of the chameleon worker, perfectly self-tuned to his exotic surroundings, a walking miracle of empathy, tact, patience, and cosmopolitanism" and his inclination to doubt the possibility that fieldworkers could have "more-than-normal capacities for ego effacement and fellow feeling" (236). Cited in Daniel:49.

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THE TESTIMONY OF SISTER ANNIE MAE

Ruel W. Tyson, Jr.

Abstract

This study is focused on an instance of a genre, oral testimony in a ritual setting, in this case, the setting of a Pentecostal revival service. It is part of a larger study which seeks to relate ritual actions of testimony and ritual actions of healing. The assumptions informing the grounding of this complex rhetorical act in its various contexts are phenomenological, and the methods of analysis range from rhetoric to Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin. From rhetorical analysis the argument moves toward identifying the epistemological and hermeneutical aspects ingredient in the testimony itself. A short concluding section reflects back on the ethnographer and ethnography and raises the question: in what sense is ethnography a "testimony?"

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Pine Grove Holiness Church is an independent Protestant Christian church in Robeson County, North Carolina. Its membership is composed entirely of Lumbee Indians. The Lumbees, the fifth largest Indian tribe in the United States, have never known life on a reservation. In Robeson County the Lumbees were reported in 1980 to number 35,528 persons, while the white population totaled 39,994 and the black 25,800. The Lumbees work in mills, own small farms, or hold blue-collar jobs. They support many churches in this rural county. Some of their churches belong to national organizations like those of the Methodists and the Assemblies of God, while others like the Pine Grove Holiness Church remain independent, largely relying on the pastor and his following within the church for their existence. Many, perhaps most, of the testimonies given in Pine Grove Church are rendered by members of its pastor's circle of followers.[1]

The testimony of Sister Annie Mae was given during a church service in the Pine Grove Holiness Church, July 6, 1979. This particular service was one in a series held in the mornings and the afternoons at Pine Grove during its annual revival week. It is customary for this church to hold revival services during the week of July Fourth, the traditional week for mill closings and vacations in this area. The church schedules these revivals during this week in explicit recognition that it is going against the habits of many who are more interested in, as the pastor expresses it, "going to White Lake and to Carolina Beach."

Built by its members, the white frame church with a tin roof stands on an infrequently traveled country road in Robeson County, North Carolina, in the upper reaches of the Cape Fear Valley not far from Interstate 95. Like the county at large, the land on which the church stands is flat and sandy. In early July the fields surrounding the church are waist high with beans and head high with corn.

If you stand in the center aisle of the church and look west through the front door, you will see across the road a large family burial ground, well kept by one of the largest families in the county. The cemetery entrance is defined by two brick columns which support a black wrought iron archway spanning the white, sandy one lane path leading into the grounds. The family name spelled out between the bands of the archway appears stark against the cloudy blue sky of the July morning. The pastor's name is identical with the name above the cemetery entrance. He is a contractor and carpenter who leads a country gospel group in addition to pastoring three churches in different parts of the county. Each church is independent of each other and from any denominational affiliation. The pastor, like everyone in his church at Pine Grove, is a Lumbee Indian.

The morning services begin about ten o'clock, Monday through Friday. Members finally "stand at ease" at about one o'clock for dinner brought and served by members of the church. The dinner is served in the Fellowship Hall, a forty-by-eighty foot framed one-storey structure which was also built by church members. It stands a hundred yards behind the church on a grassy plot bordered on three sides by a corn field. The building is largely given over to a dining room with long tables end on end. Across the back of the room is the serving and cooking area. To the north side of this area the pastor has his office and a studio where his musical group practices. The afternoon service begins about 2:00 p.m.–"come on back when you hear singing in the house"–and usually lasts until three or four o'clock. The times for beginning and ending these services are not regulated by the clock. This particular revival began on Sunday July first and ended on the sixth, the day this testimony was given.

This morning the humidity was already high at ten o'clock, and by noon the temperature would reach the low nineties in this church cooled only by two portable window fans. By the time the singing began about two dozen persons had arrived; by the middle of the morning service thirty adults would be present. The majority of the adults are women accompanied by a number of children ten years old or younger. The service begins with hymn singing, initiated variously by two or three women, with the congregation singing seated in rows of wooden pews on either side of the pulpit area and on the first several rows in front of the pulpit.

Nine hymns were sung prior to Sister Annie Mae's testimony, with many "Amen's," "Praise the Lord's," and "Yes, Jesus's," intoned between. There is piano accompaniment with tambourines joining in, as well as clapping and shouting out heard above the music. Between the seventh and eighth hymn there was short testimony by a woman about fifty years old. The titles of the hymn disclose the themes that echoed as Sister Annie Mae began to speak: "Press Along;" "How Beautiful Home of Jesus;" "We Will Never Grow Old;" "As I Travel Through this World;" "Hold

Me by Thy Side, Help Me Walk in Paradise." Sister Annie Mae's testimony began on the last notes of the hymn, "Crossing Over in the Light of Home."

The Testimony of Sister Annie Mae

(1) Praise God. You know those old songs we used to sing. . . but I still feel just like they did back then. . . singing. I thought about an older person, you know, their hair is turned white, Praise God. And you know, I seen some, and I heared about some, when they are just about to cross over, Praise God, and some of 'em say they could see angels, and they could hear the angels sing, and ask one that was standing by, "Could you see the angels?" And they tell 'em "No" they couldn't see the angels. But, Praise God, they are so near home they could see the angels. Praise God in glory. They were just about to take them over.

(2) Praise God. Hallelujah. You know, it's real! It's wonderful! You don't have to fear, Praise God, when you come down to the end of life's journey, you don't have to be afraid, Praise God. Because you got something inside that'll take you home. Praise God! Hallelujah! You know, it's going to be wonderful!

(3) You know one time I was in the studio, Praise God, and the power of the Holy Ghost fell on me, and it just shook me all over the place, Praise God. And you know it seemed like. . . I just felt as if I was in heaven, Praise God, Hallelujah!

(4) And you know, I could speak through faith, or through a vision, or something or other. Jesus don't want us to cry when his children go to heaven. Oh God, to go home, it's wonderful!

(5) And you know, when you are around them, you can feel it too—Oh thank you Jesus! I remember Miss Martha up here the night she went to meet the Lord, we was there, Praise God. And you know, I walked in there and looked on her face, a-laying there, Praise God. She did not know she was in the world. And I stood there, and I looked at her, and I just see her going home, I could just feel it, you know. I felt the Spirit of God just run all over me, Praise God. And I surely felt like she went home, Praise God.

(6) I thank the Lord today for being saved.
I thank Him for being sanctified.
I thank Him for the power of the Holy Ghost.
Praise God! It's real, people. It's real, Praise God.
And if you don't have it, you need to seek for it.
Praise God. Because you can have it. The Bible says
you can have it, Praise the Lord!
It's wonderful! Praise God!

(7) You know, I tells some of 'em one time that it's just like a new dish of food. If you would come to my house, and I had fixed something you had never tasted, you might look at it, with all different things in it, and say, "It don't look good," or maybe "I wouldn't like it" or something. But you will never know until you taste it. You will never know until you eat some of it, Praise God. And that's the way it is with the Holy Ghost. You will never be able to know about the Holy Ghost until you received it, Praise God, and then after you receive it, then you know what somebody else is talking about. You know what someone else feels, Praise God! It's wonderful! I just wouldn't take nothing for it. And I am so glad that I was raised up in it. And I've known it ever since I was a little child. . . like this one and these over here. Praise God.

(8) You know, I used to go to Evergreen down there. That's where I was raised, Praise God. And you know, them older women they wore dresses a-dragging the floor. You couldn't see their shoes, Praise God. And my grandmother, she wouldn't wear nothing but cotton stockings, and she dyed them black. They had to be black. And that's what she wore. And you know, I was a little child. . . I come yesterday evening to thinking about it. . . I was a little child. I could see them older people a-shouting and a-praising God. And the place was filled with the Spirit of God. I just feel it too, Praise God. Some of it come over my head and all over me when I was a little girl, and I knowed it was real from that moment on. And I'll tell you, nobody can't change me. They just *come too late*, and I've been *in it too long*, and I know *too much about it*. For that I Praise God.

I got it!
I got it!
I got it!
[*speaks in tongues*]
It's real, Praise God!

[*speaks again in tongues*]
It's real!
Oh yes, Jesus!
Thank you God.
It's real.

(9) Some people say that the healing days are over. My God is a-healing people. God is a-healing people right on. Praise God! The ones' that got saved, the ones that has touched the hem of his garment. Praise God. They are being made whole. Praise God.

(10) You know, in these last days the Devil is trying to take peoples' minds. He's a making 'em nervous. He's a-gettin' to where they can't hold jobs. He's a-gettin' them to where the doctor cannot help 'em. And He's recommending 'em go to the psychiatrists! Praise God! But you know what? When we go to the psychiatrists, we are lowering the standard of holiness. We are letting Jesus down, Praise God. When we do it, and stand in this church and tell somebody "God will heal you," then go to such a man as that, what do Jesus think about us when we do that? Praise God.

(11) And you know what? The Spirit of God took me over that night at that service, Brother Everett was there. And I was ashamed of it, I wasn't going to tell nobody about it, Praise God. And the Spirit got me aholt, and I had to get up there and tell these people, Praise God. It was as if I weren't even talkin'. The Spirit took over, and I said I wouldn't go to save my life, Praise God. When I did that, there weren't no way I would go to a psychiatrist then, Praise God. I'd been back-slid, Praise the Lord, and I couldn't go then. And from that moment on that I said that, I don't know where them headaches went, I don't know where them pains went. But they went, Praise God.

Oh Praise God!
I'm healed,
I'm healed,
I'm healed, Praise God.
He's a healer,
He's a healer, Praise God!
And He will heal you.
He'll do for you what He'll do for me.
Praise God!
Hallelujah!

(12) And about a year ago. I don't know, I hadn't kept account of it, I had sugar, Praise God. God healed me *instantly* here one Sunday. Right *there*! He healed me *instantly*!

People, He's a healer!
He's a healer, Praise God.
Aha. . . He's a healer, Praise the Lord!
And He loves you just as good as me.
He'll heal you, Praise God.

(13) Pray for me that I'll stand because we are in the last days. Praise God. I dreamed last night, Praise the Lord, that one of those beasts had come. Praise God, Hallelujah! Praise the Lord. You know, he came to our house, and it was trying to get in, and I was trying to push the cats out, and that thing clawed me on the arm, and it had claws that long and about as sharp as a razor blade. Praise God. And I went running down into the room where Lonnie was, and I got him to come up there, and he couldn't. . . and that thing was a-cuttin' its way in, it was coming *in*. . . and he couldn't do a-nothing with it. And we left and went to a woman's house, and either it was the same or another one, and it was trying to get in there. And we left there, and went to Brother Sermon's house, Praise God, way up there in Doke County. And Brother Sermon was sleeping and Sister Evelyn was sleeping, and we tried to get them up and tell them about it. Sister Evelyn was sleeping so and we couldn't do nothing with her. And so Brother Sermon did get up, and he come in there, and he had a box about *that* big and about *that* high, and it had that little teenie wire on it. And him and Lonnie got that thing in that box. And you know what it did? It just busted it in several hundred pieces about the size of a seed, a string bean seed, and there was lights on that thing, and ever' one, a light on it, and that thing was trying to get on our skins, trying to cling to our bodies, and it could sting you, Great God!. . .And my little boy woke me up, and I said, "Lord, thank the Lord, I'm glad you woke me up. I was dreaming about one of the beasts that's coming in the last days!

(14) Praise God! People! We are near, we are nearer these things than we think we is, Praise God. People is so concerned about living, so concerned about preparin' to live. My God, I feel like we are almost to the end, Praise God. And I tell you we are not close enough to God to feel these things and see these

things. If we would, we would forget about our jobs sometimes. We would forget about our housework sometimes. And we would go and obey God, and try to get somebody saved. Praise God!

(15) I want you all to pray for me, and I don't know what this dream means unless it is referring to Revelations when it says these things are going to come and take place. And I tell you, I feel a need in my heart to get closer to God, to get more humble.

(16) And you know, I told Brother Runyon out there today, people's going to come down, we are going to come down. We are drifting away from the old landmarks, and we've got to come back. We are going to come down. People are up so high. They are going to fall down. Praise God. I told 'em this church at the beginning of the year, I felt like things were going to happen this year that never happened. And we are just in the beginning of it, Praise God. And all this gas problem, all this fruit problem, and all this here. But it's going to get worse and worse, and it will get worse. And I believe that we are going to see Jesus coming. I don't think the times are going to get any better. It's going to get worse, and we are going to have to adjust to it. We're to serve the Lord, and we are going to have to obey the Lord.

(17) I want you all to pray for me because God wants to use me, 'cause He's got more, something else for me to do. I don't know what it is. Sister Harmony said one night that she dreamed that the Lord had given me the gift of healing, Praise God. And you know I told her, if the Lord would give me that gift, I would be glad to have it. Praise God.

But you know, we've got to be in a position where we can obey God any time anywhere to have these gifts. We cannot have these gifts and do what *we want* to do, but we are going to have to do what God *wants us* to do. So I want to obey the Lord, I just want to go through with Him.

(18) People! We are in the last days!
People! Did you know we are in the last days?
Did you know Jesus is just about to come,
Praise God?

And our children's lost. And our friends' lost. And our neighbors' lost, My God! We need to move out.

We need to be more concerned! Praise God! We are going to stand around and let our children slip through our fingers and go to Hell. Praise God. And I'll tell you, if we can't help our own children, how can we help anybody else? Praise God. The Bible says church starts at home and then goes abroad. We are supposed to work with other peoples' children. Praise God. We're supposed to love other peoples' children. Praise God. Pray for me, and I'll pray for you all.

[*The next testimony began fast upon the last words of this one, and Sister Annie Mae could be heard still speaking in the background*].

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Here is an instance of Merleau-Ponty's (1962:184) statement made good in action: "The spoken word is a gesture, and its meaning, a world," for the testimony of Sister Annie Mae is raised out of a life. The several modes of description are in accord with the concords and discords in her life. She describes herself, but she also describes a world of places and a people, relations and neighbors, her time and the times in which she lives. The testimony discloses places and times in her history, and her assertions implicate a cosmos deeply associated with her time and the times in which she lives.

The actions of the testimony, then, situate Sister Annie Mae amid the ties that constitute her world, yet she tells and shouts of a home that is heaven, known in part already. This ecstatic discourse relies upon locality and connection, yet relates in detail and episode how the speaker experiences other tongues, another world, other realms, other beings. While unforgettably a first person confession, narrative, and exaltation, the testimony sometimes turns personal experience into public example; and the speaker's personal history claims to be representative of her audience. Among the testifier's several voices there is the instruction of the pedagogue and the advocacy of the apologue stirring the brothers and sisters to action.

The enactment of the testimony is an offering, according to the teaching it presents about exchanges and transformations. It practices what it advocates. The vigor of its presentation and the vividness of its representations do not obscure those aspects which are reflections of and reflections on the life of the speaker. Its narrative work and its confessional declarations do not exclude reflexivity. This testimony at once enacts a life and reflects upon that life and other lives connected with it who share, or may share, similar experiences.

In forms appropriate to its genre, the testimony is a formalization of the religious practice and religious understanding of the speaker; both practice and reflection find

modes of articulation in the course of the testimony. The speaker is a religious virtuosa who articulates and interprets her religious practice with respect to the world and times in which that practice thrives. Her exemplary powers reside in the examples she narrates and in the perspicuity of her interpretations of them. Like other skillful doers–for whom doing is a mode of knowing–she senses that her art can only be communicated through the persuasion of her examples. For it was through the authority of exemplary persons, so she tells us, that she acquired the gifts of art she embodies in her testifying.

I claim that all these flat descriptions of Sister Annie Mae's testimony are authorized by listening to her speaking. By attempting to identify aspects of her rhetorical practice we may gain limited access to her experience. In making her experience available to her listeners, she also provides clues for its interpretation, or, as I prefer to say, for an appreciation of her testimony. In the testimony itself she provides many conditions necessary for an understanding of it.

This overall characterization of the testimony scarcely begins to plumb its depths. The text itself rewards a careful attention to its details, but even to do this requires ignoring other dimensions of its meaning. I have not, for example, referred to the lively relationship between Sister Annie Mae and the congregation. This interplay provides a vital source of energy and commentary on the testimony during its enactment. Some members in the group to which she speaks are mentioned in her testimony, some by name, others by indirect reference. I pass over the exchange of testimonies in this service and almost all other services, including what the exchange of dreams and visions in the public space of that church creates: a memory theatre, a religious pedagogy for the young, and a source of recollection and restoration for older persons present. There are other dynamics in these exchanges: risk-taking, bidding for status, contests in religious virtuosity, muted criticism of members and ministers, arguments about "right teaching." Thus, the medium of testimony is a major mode of communal criticism, personal disclosure, and collective affirmation and celebration.

The particulars of this testimony, even severed from its ritual setting, are rich and complex. The physical gestures accompanying her delivery are themselves eloquent. Sister Annie Mae stands in her place and speaks her testimony, but she accompanies her speech with gestures that assist its enactment:

[*pointing*]: "there," "over there," "down there," "up there," "right there," "here," "about this long," "about this wide,"
[*raising arms to shout*]: "Praise God: Hallelujah!"
[*turning from one side to the other*]
[*looking up*]
[*closing eyes*]
[*smiling*]
[*frowning*]

These gestures are an extension and enrichment of her speech, tying her testimony to places, making special places out of space, and creating fleeting icons of memories now being made all this and more are the work of the body in concert with Sister Annie Mae's speech. They help create the worlds of her testimony.

Her gestural speech, moreover, etches places into particularity: here (where she stands), there where she stood (in this church); the studio; Miss Martha's house up here. . . and Martha a-laying there; Evergreen down there; the night of that service (the time and place go together); right there (the place where she once stood and was healed); her room; down there where Eldon was (certain people, in this instance, her husband, go with a certain place); another woman's house; up there in Doke County; Brother Sermon and Sister Evelyn's house; "outside this church today, I told Brother Runyon;" time, place, person, all in relation to each other.

Persons inhabit her narratives and are appealed to as witnesses to her words, including all members of the congregation and others not present, such as those who have crossed over: Miss Martha, my grandmother, Brother Eldon, Lonnie, Brother Sermon and Sister Evelyn, my little boy, Brother Runyon, Sister Harmony. In addition to specific persons, she names groups of persons and types of persons: Jesus' children; older persons; "people;" some of them; older women; little children; them older people; some people (that say healing days is over); the ones that got saved, ones that touched the hem of His garment; peoples' minds; psychiatrists; doctors; nervous people; people who cannot hold jobs; people the doctor can't help; "we" [those around her as she speaks]; "we" [anybody doing certain things]; people so concerned about living and preparing to live; people are going to come down; we are going to come down; we are lowering the standards of holiness, drifting away from the old landmarks; we are going to see Jesus coming soon; lost children, lost friends, lost neighbors; our children, other people's children. She also names other beings and powers: the angels, Holy Ghost, Spirit of God, Jesus, Lord, God, Devil. Even animals: beasts, cats are related to persons, groups, and Sister Annie Mae through experience, Scripture, and dream.

Between these groups and types of persons, as well as between the powers and different realms, there are oppositions, an important kind of relationship. There is some opposition in herself between the tendency and temptation to be "back slid" and obedience to the dictates of the Spirit, as mediated through her own words: "When I did that" (saying she would not go to a psychiatrist "to save my own life"), "there weren't no way I would go to a psychiatrist then, praise God. I'd been back-slid. I couldn't go then." Other oppositions also bind and drive her testimony: those who feel but cannot see the angels and those who see and feel the angels, namely, those who are crossing over. Those who don't have the Holy Ghost and those who do; those who seek for it

and those who don't. Those who tasted and those who do not. Those who know what it is like to receive the Holy Ghost, and those who do not. Those who try to change me; "from that moment on I could not be changed (7)." Those who say the healing days are over and those who are healed; the ones' that got saved and those that are not saved. Devil and Jesus: those who stand for Jesus and those who let Jesus down and follow the Devil and go to the psychiatrist. Those who uphold the standards of holiness and those who lower the standards of holiness. Those who can be awakened from sleeping and those who cannot. Those concerned about living and those close to God. Those who forget housework, jobs, and get somebody saved, and those who do not. Those who do and do not know we are in the last days. Those who do and do not know Jesus is just about to come. Heaven and Hell. Saved and Lost.

The most ecstatic predications in this testimony are confessions of possession and transformation. The narrative portions of the testimony recount transitions and continuities in the life of the one who exclaims: "I got it!" or, "I am healed!" Frequently, these ecstatic utterances affect a change from the narrative past to the present of immediate confession, celebration, and thanksgiving. Ecstatic prediction and personal narrative are presented in continuity with one another in the action of testifying. Ecstatic utterance rises out of recounted experience in which past and private experiences are made public and present.

The testimony begins with a recollection of old days and old people and old hymns, and ends with a charge on behalf of saving children, and a request for prayer and a promise of prayers for those who have listened and joined with her. In between, the listener is presented with a variety of transformations in tone, intensity, rhythm, and forms of discourse. Here are some of the particular exchanges and transformations, transitions and continuities in the action of the testimony:

> feeling now like they felt then;
> crossings and endings of life's journey to home/heaven;
> The Holy Ghost fell on me and it seem like I was in heaven;
> It seemed like I wasn't even talking (10).

I must stress the transformation of speaking. The reflexive statement, a comment on her own action, follows the first narrated experience of the Holy Ghost (2). The narrative goes like this:

> You know, one time I was in the studio, Praise God, and...
> the power of the Holy Ghost fell on me,
> and it just shook me all over the place,
> Praise God. And you know it seemed like...
> I just felt as if I was in heaven,
> Praise God! Hallelujah!

And the comment, immediately following the telling of that experience, is this: "And, you know, I could speak through faith,

or through a vision, or something or other." The suggestion, or hint here, is that her speaking is transformed "through vision or faith, or something," just as her experience of the Holy Ghost transformed her so that she felt as if she were in heaven. The report of two dreams, which comes later in the testimony, lends complexity to these comments by Annie Mae about how she speaks.

The transformation of speaking is an important self-description by Pentecostal people. As Annie Mae's credo of thanks says, being saved, sanctified, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost are the authenticating experiences which bestow Pentecostal identity. The speaking in tongues is held by many to be the necessary condition for sanctification. Indeed, later in the testimony, she will say about another Holy Ghost experience, this one associated with a healing experience "It was as if I weren't even talking. The Spirit took over. . .(10)."

The concern with speaking tongues whether one has "the tongues" or not coupled with the ritual actions of praying, singing, preaching, and testifying make it necessary to describe Pentecostal persons as having a special relationship to speach. This is a speaking religion more than a scriptural religion. And the Holy Ghost falling on persons in the form of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4) limits human speech, making it especially problematical, yet also of great value as sanctifying experience.

The Sunday following the day on which this testimony was given, "the ladies' Sunday School Class" had a lesson on the "the difficulty of taming your tongue." The teaching was that only the Holy Ghost can tame your tongue. Praying and testifying are ways of inviting the taming of the tongue as well as affirming and claiming those prior experiences of the Holy Ghost in which, as in Sister Annie Mae's case, the Holy Ghost took over her tongue. As indicated earlier, it is quite probable that at the peak of one of her most ecstatic utterances, her speech was transformed into other tongues (7).

The statement that she could "speak through faith, or through a vision" is a self-interpretative comment which is confirmed by the narrative incidents which populate her testimony. Self-interpretative commentary caps each narrative incident she recounts, and each narrative is structured by an episode and its transformation from the ordinary to the extraordinary. For example, when Sister Annie Mae tells of being in the presence of dying persons, those who "are going home," she says, "I can feel the Spirit of God run all over me, thank you, Jesus." One kind of transformation going to meet the Lord is answered by another: Spirit running over the agent and narrator of the testimony, an experience that authorizes in Sister Annie Mae the belief that Miss Martha "surely went home." The credo section of the testimony follows:

I thank the Lord today for being saved.
I thank Him for being sanctified.
I thank Him for the power of the Holy Ghost (5).

This is a series of thanksgivings for past transformations and for the Holy Ghost which made them possible. The Holy Ghost is an intrusive narrator indeed! Sister Annie Mae makes an imperative for her listeners from these transformations: "If you don't have it, you need to seek for it."

This testimony reports and teaches forms of transformations: tasting and knowing; receiving and knowing; receiving and knowing which allows one so transformed to understand the words and feelings of others who likewise have experienced the Holy Ghost. These transformations are claims for modes of knowing that provide the basis for a community of interpretation, a community enacting itself in the testifying of Sister Annie Mae and in the recurrent responses by her fellow members. The exchanges between speaker and listeners, who respond in speech of their own, are exchanges that exhibit the teachings about knowing and interpretation expressed in the testimony.

Ordinary incidents in her life become transformed by the presence of the Holy Ghost, which in turn becomes evidence for the claim she makes. The cardinal claim is: "It's real!" The experience of the Holy Ghost is real. This is followed by a praise of thanksgiving. The recounting of *past* experiences generates confirming experiences of a similar kind in the present. When Sister Annie Mae shouts "Praise God" in the tenth section of her testimony, she breaks into a second ecstatic chorus of utterances. While she does so, more than one person in the congregation joins her in speaking in tongues. The same is repeated after another account of healing: the claim of transformation by the testifier transforms the listeners; exchanges and transformations recur during the testimony in a variety of intensities.

There are counter transformations: "the Devil's taking peoples' minds, making them nervous, making so they can't hold jobs." And this is countered by narration of a personal experience, ending in "I am healed–He's a healer–God's a healer–We live still in healing days." And by recurrent claims to reciprocal and duplicating experiences:

He'll do for you, what He'll do for me.
He loves you just as good as me.
Pray for me, and I'll pray for you.

The testimony itself is an exchange, and some of its sections repeat in fine what is enacted in the whole: telling a dream, repeating someone else's dream about the testifier. Then there are reported conversational exchanges between Sister Annie Mae and Brother Runyon, between her and members of the church, as she reports these conversational exchanges in the testimony.

Finally, there is the exchange which particularly interests Sister Annie Mae and many anthropologists: the exchange called gifts. For the gift of the Holy Ghost: "I just wouldn't take nothing for it." There is also the gift of food, and in Sister Harmony's dream Sister Annie Mae receives the gift of healing (the gift to heal). Then, there is the exchange of dreams in the telling about them, concluded by a conversational exchange: "And you know I told her, 'if the Lord would give me that gift, I would be glad to have it.' Praise God (17)."

As persons are related to particular places in this testimony, so exchanges and transformations are related to time–time denominated in several modes. First there is the historical life time of the speaker, the time of her life's history. Next, empirical or biological time is grasped through an image of movement toward "crossing over" and "going home/heaven"–"when you come down to the end of life's journey" (1). She understands her own life in the image of a life's journey. But that view itself has a history, a beginning in another kind of time related in the testimony, the turn her life took following her first baptism by the Holy Ghost:

> I was a little child. . . I could see them older women a-shouting and a-praising God. And the place ["Evergreen down there"] was filled with the Spirit of God. I just feel it too. [*Note her shift to present tense*] Some of it come over my head and all over me when I was a little girl, and I knowed it was real from that moment on. And I'll tell you, nobody can't change me. They just come *too late*, and I've been in it *too long*, and I know *too much*, about it (8).

This initial experience established a new time for her to live in, "from that moment on" (7). From that moment on, she entered the life's journey she spoke about in the first section of the testimony. All other special times partake of this original time of the Holy Ghost. The subsequent experiences of Holy Ghost and healing redound upon this first special time. The series of special times stand out in her narration and elicit her most ecstatic utterances: from the "I got it!" after telling of the first Holy Ghost experience (7) to the "I am healed!" which follows the two healing stories. The experiences of these special times may account for her opening statements:

> You know. . . those old songs we used to sing. . . but I still feel just like they did back then, singing (1).

The repeated installments in the history of her relation with the Holy Ghost provide a continuity in the history of her feelings. The structure of the testimony is disclosed in the beginning image: older persons, their hair turned white; and the concluding co-relative image: "children" who may slip "through our fingers and go to Hell" (17).

Individual life journeys are set in another time–a cosmological equivalent of the individual, like Miss Martha, going to meet the Lord. This cosmological time is the time of "the last days" when

"we are going to see Jesus coming." According to her testimony, the religious life of Sister Annie Mae is set not only in the autobiographical time of her life's journey, but in the days of healing which continue under the power of the Holy Ghost, and finally in the most comprehensive time of all, the time of the last days. Personal history is situated in a cosmos: autobiographical temporality is informed by cosmological time of the days of healing and the last days of historical time. The cosmological framework the testifier invokes is more than a frame, it is a source for the interpretation of her dream. Or rather, the authority for her claim about the last days is the same as her authority for the interpretation of her dream of the beast, namely the Bible, and what she calls "Revelations," chapter 19 in particular.

It is striking that the description of her relation to the beast in the dream: "that thing was trying to get on our skins, trying to cling to our bodies" is similar to the Holy Ghost experiences she relates. Yet there are distinctive differences as well. Her understanding of herself in the larger time of the cosmos enables Sister Annie Mae to render an interpretation of the dream based on the teleological direction of history rather than on an interior drama and dreams in her psyche: "I want you all to pray for me, and I don't know what this dream means unless it is referring to Revelations when it says these things are going to come and take place" (14).

Just as the direction of time is employed as reference to the interpretation of her dream, so individual experiences of healing are employed to embody her claim that the healing days are not over. Sister Annie Mae's testimony has cosmological reach and autobiographical depth, and it attains these features through a series of individual experiences that become exemplary for larger claims about the Holy Ghost–about healing and about the healing days in which she lives.

In the course of the testimony she alludes to immediate past incidents. These asides manage to give the hearers brief fragments of the history of this particular testimony: "I came yesterday evening to thinking about it (7);" "I dreamed last night...(12);" and "I told Brother Runyon out there today . . .(15)."

But these incidental times pale beside the imperative to "get somebody saved," particularly children, now that she and her associates live in the last days. Her understanding of the time of the world requires action in it.

I end this survey of clusters of particular features in this testimony by stressing its action, the investment of the person in the many agencies at work in this total enactment. Here are some of the actions: praising, thanking, thinking, feeling, seeing, saying, looking, running, tasting, knowing, receiving, talking, shouting, healing, saving, making, getting, recommending, letting down, standing up, trying, cutting, coming, sleeping, dreaming, waking, forgetting, drifting, giving, obeying, praying–all through the action of speaking as testifying.

I have characterized this testimony as presenting both practice and reflection, experience and interpretation. I said that her practice included a style of interpretation, which is formalized in the utterances of the testimony and in the manner she speaks them. I want to turn my attention to this characterization by examining some of the particulars in the discourse.

Sister Annie Mae interprets one episode, or narrative fragment, by another episode or narrated incident–another instance of the exchange pattern I have already noted. Being in the presence of persons "who are going to meet the Lord" is coupled with a report of a Holy Ghost experience. Miss Martha "did not know she was in the world. . . I could just feel it. . . I felt the Spirit of God just run all over me, Praise God. I surely felt like she went home (1,4)." On the other hand, being saved and sanctified is like going home to meet the Lord. In the first Holy Ghost experience reported in this testimony (2), which follows the introduction about older persons hearing angels as they cross over, Sister Annie Mae describes her experience in the studio: "And you know, it seemed like. . . I just felt as if I was in heaven. Praise God! Hallelujah! (2)."

She is mistress of the simile and the hypothetical as modes for talking about what she means when she exclaims "It's real." The centerpiece of her interpretative skill is the example, with commentary, of tasting a new dish of food–an example and commentary of interest to the student of religion in facing the unfamiliar in the field, from dishes to dreams. Preparing, hesitating, and choosing to taste a new dish is presented as an allegory for receiving the Holy Ghost, followed by an exposition. True to her style, she again engages in the use of a simile: "I tells some of 'em one time that it is just like a new dish of food (6)." Here Sister Annie Mae turns pedagogue, the example of tasting a new dish quickly following the preceding section with its performative speech of thanksgiving:

> I thank the Lord today for being saved. I thank Him for being sanctified. I thank Him for the power of the Holy Ghost (5).

Then, the reiteration of her ecstatic predications:

> It's real, people! It's real, Praise God.

To provide the conditions presupposed in the performatives of thanksgiving and the exclamations of the "real," she recalls a particular time when she explained what it was like to receive the Holy Ghost: "It's just like a new dish of food." In her example she provides the "felicity conditions" for receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the consequences which flow from such an exchange. These consequences illuminate the basis of the community; and the bases for the community further specify the conditions which make possible the total speech action of the testimony, including

most necessarily, the corresponding responses by those who speak and shout in reply to the various claims and cries of the testifier.

In the commentary which follows the example of tasting a new dish Sister Annie Mae claims that possession of the Holy Ghost is also access to the community for those who already find it real and wonderful, those who have already tasted the new dish. Access is by gift of the Holy Ghost, usually marked by the speaking in other tongues, and it enables the recipient to understand the language of those who speak about the Holy Ghost. By this means she indicates the conditions for the understanding of her own testimony in its deepest levels and greatest riches. The reception of the gift also enables the recipient to understand the feelings of those who shout "It is real!" or "I am healed!" or "I got it!" Within the limits of this genre and by the way she construes the example, Sister Annie Mae is performing an epistemological inquiry into the conditions of Pentecostal religion, and, of course, for her own testifying. The Holy Ghost experience provides the arc between individual experience and the community, the conditions–which include testifying about the gift–for "inter-subjectivity."

In her own way she knows about the "the hermeneutical circle," and in her own language she offers an epistemology which supports her metaphysical claim, "It's real!" Tasting new dishes is a good way to think about the Holy Ghost and about the necessary conditions for knowing and not knowing about it. Here are her words:

> You will never know until you taste it. You will never know until you eat some of it. And that's the way it is with the Holy Ghost. You will never be able to know the Holy Ghost until you receive it, Praise God, and then after you receive it, then you know what somebody else is talking about. You know what someone else feels....It's wonderful! (6).

Next, she moves into a narration of her first Holy Ghost experience as a little child, which culminates in the first of the two great ecstatic irruptions in the testimony. Thus she repeats a pattern, what I have called her interpretative style: from performative utterance to example, followed by assertions in commentary on the example, then concluding with an autobiographical narrative. The multiple modes of presentation which compose this testimony resist any effort to classify testimony according to one genre.

I have already indicated that Sister Annie Mae tells a dream and couples the telling with an interpretation (12,14): "I was a-dreaming about the beasts that's coming in the last days (12)." In these sections of the testimony (12,14) she spells out more fully the cosmological setting that had initially been implied in the imagery of crossing over in the first part. In the interpretation of the dream, she situates the dream, the dreamer, and those who hear her in a cosmic setting that has a teleological direction in

time, and a geography divided into this world, heaven or home, and hell.

The utterances in this testimony–"It's real! It's wonderful!"–linger in echo the longest. In them, metaphysical and aesthetic judgments work in high harmony. How are we to understand these claims? Though they are in the ecstatic mode, they are claims to knowledge; they can be translated more prosaically: "I know."

I characterized Sister Annie Mae's testimony as the practice, or the formalization, of her religious life through the art of testifying. As a religious virtuosa, she is the mistress of the techniques I have noted in the preceding discussion. It is in attending to the various modes of presentation found in her testimony that an answer can be given to the question I just raised.

Wittgenstein (1969:4) wrote:

> "I know" often means: I have the proper grounds for my statement. So if the other person is acquainted with the language game, he would admit that I know. The other, if he is acquainted with the language game, must be able to imagine how one may know something of the kind.

This is what Sister Annie Mae does. She asserts, or makes a claim and, as a part of unfolding that claim, she provides by narrative fragment, simile and example, a family of transactions, contexts, types of experiences, or, in Wittgenstein's metaphor, a series of "games." The several episodes, closely controlled by her own commentary upon them, enable the listener to imagine how she knows what she claims to know. The offering of example and autobiographical fragment make possible the listener's imagining something of the experience of the person who speaks. And that requires the listener to master these rhetorical modes if he or she is to imagine how Sister Annie Mae knows what she claims to know.

It has been the burden of my appreciation of this testimony to show that Sister Annie Mae offers some instruction in the mastery of the techniques necessary for understanding her testimony. Mastery of the speaker's rhetorical practice is the necessary condition for appreciating testimony as a form of religious action.

Instruction by Transposition

The ethnography of Sister Annie Mae's testimony makes clear that it rises from the histories of her person, fellows, and place. All discourse, spoken or written, rises from a locality and a prior field of practice, no matter the differences in the extent and publicity of its intentions. Closer attention to the various worlds implicated in specific discourses can make us more cautious in yielding to the lures of taxonomy and to that form of cultural transcendence practiced by social scientists called comparative

study. Comparative study is useful, but its achievement ought to be purchased by careful attention to the details of local discourse and practice since quick displacement from local speech communities, their power, identity, and limits distracts us to the general and the abstract, in short, to taxonomy and classification. Perhaps there is another kind of comparison, a kind that does not bypass the self-examination of the ethnographer's guild on the way to the construction of classification systems, what I will call comparison by transposition.

The rhetorical practices of academic guilds which study other cultures and the practices of Sister Annie Mae's church are, in their respective ways, "the fellowship of discourse," to use Michel Foucault's (1976:225-226) concept in "The Discourse on Language." In both sets of practices many similar devices are employed to assure the identity of the group, and both require apprenticeships for full admission, whether the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as in Sister Annie Mae's case, or the rites of initiation into the guild, which in the case of the anthropologist requires the threshold crossings of the fieldwork. Many of the same closures and deflections occur in each where normal and normative practices veil a host of premises, including the adoption of exemplary forms of expression, whether spoken or written. What happens when similar rhetorical forms and functions are compared between the testifier and the ethnographer?

To allow one set of practices to question another set is to observe what Merleau-Ponty (1964:122) calls "the ethnological method's rule of reciprocal criticism." While Merleau-Ponty's illustration of this rule is the mutual interrogation of the myths and practices of the witch doctor and shaman with the myths and practices of psychoanalysis and the psychoanalyst, the same rule applies to the mutual appreciation and criticism of rhetorical forms, for example, the Pentecostal testifier and the phenomenological ethnographer.

Sister Annie Mae's testimony, if transposed into the practice of the ethnographer, or held up as a critical norm by which to appraise the ethnographic writer's discourse, confronts that writer with the proposal: anthropological discourse is a kind of testimony; and as my analysis made clear, Pentecostal testimony is a kind of anthropological discourse conscious of its hermeneutic. Am I willing to imagine–and I suppose with "imagine" I must qualify, *seriously* imagine–ethnographic discourse as a type of testimony, an example of that kind of performative discourse? I note that the key term in this proposal for the conversion or transposition of testimony and ethnographic discourse is *example*. To make a claim that testimony is an example of a kind of ethnographic discourse is to perform an act of accreditation which largely lacks the backing of the anthropological guild which, until recently, had endorsed by common practice the third person report of the omni-competent observer. Of course, *that* form of discourse as exemplary is endorsed by repeated performative claims of its

guild members, and no doubt, its privileged status gains some of its power and charm of the normal by the absence of any acknowledgement that this is the case.

Once comparative or reciprocal criticism of forms of discourse between rhetorics of testimony and the rhetorics of impersonal observation and analysis begins, boundaries are violated and the responsibility for the choice of exemplary forms becomes explicit and open to cross-cultural criticism. What is to count as the exemplary form of expression is the crucial decision.

If the proposal that ethnographic writing is a kind of testimony is entertained seriously, then the performative matrix of all ethnographic discourse is opened. This does not entail accepting the claim that the form of testimonial discourse employed by ethnographers will be identical to the form of testimony employed by Sister Annie Mae, or to that of a witness in a court of law. It is in the comparative study of both kinds that the identifying differences of each becomes visible. Both are bearers of social facts mediated through their memory systems which are at once personal and collective, both a part of and a part from their respective fellowships of discourse.

To practice this rule of transposition while noting differences installs a regular disturbance in the economy of rhetorical practice, and for the ethnographer it means a constant erosion of confidence in the forms of redescription and analysis we perform on the "data" we bring from the field. The practice of the rule of reciprocal criticism does more than question the rhetorical forms; it includes an even more fundamental questions: What is ethnography and what kind of knowledge does it call its own? Is there any knowledge it can call its own? Is ownership or possession the right metaphor? Is there another kind of economy here than that of private property?

Again, Merleau-Ponty (1964:120) challenges a well-entrenched assumption about the status of this discipline, perhaps an assumption that encouraged the notion of knowledge as ownership and private possession. "Ethnology is not a speciality defined by a particular object, 'primitive societies'; it is a way of thinking, a way of thinking which imposes itself when the object is 'different,' and requires us to transform ourselves." It is not the mere collection of data to be possessed and processed and circulated within that form of exchange we call a guild. The requirement of transformation here proposed as a part of the practice of the ethnographical method's rule of reciprocal criticism and comparison finds an echo in the imperatives of Sister Annie Mae's testimony. While the kinds of transformations are manifestly different, the analogy is strong and compels reflection on the form of life that Lévi-Strauss (1975:55) calls "one of the few genuine vocations."

The kind of thinking this vocation imposes on us transforms our ways of perception and expression as we encounter the other in an economy of difference and similarity. This engagement with

other lives, other forms of living and speaking, also imposes a reflexive bent about the adequacy of our forms for representing others. These occasions are not planned. Like the Pentecostal, transformations which impose themselves upon us in the field have an unpredicable quality. If "gift" is a form of acknowledgement of the contingent character of this practice, we have to taste it, as Sister Annie Mae's epistemology requires, if we are to know it. If we are to know something of this Lumbee woman's religious life and social world, and how they interpose themselves upon each other, we must "taste" it. Careful attention to her testimony, for which she confesses responsibility, redounds back upon the ethnographer who would represent it to readers far removed from the flatlands of southeastern North Carolina. Under the rule of reciprocal criticism, that effort may be aided if the writer can be instructed by the forms of this testifier's practice. What transformations will occur in the rhetorical practice of the ethnographer only subsequent writing will testify.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruel W. Tyson, Jr. is Director of The Program for the Arts and Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and is Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies. He is co-author with colleagues James L. Peacock and Daniel W. Patterson, of the recently published *Diversities of Gifts: Field Studies in Southern Religion*, University of Illinois Press.

NOTES

[1]This essay is based on fieldwork carried out in 1978-1979 in the southern piedmont of North Carolina among black, white, and Lumbee Indian Pentecostal churches. Fieldwork among Pentecostal/Holiness/Wesleyan groups was the first part of a two-part field study. The second field study was carried out in 1981-1984 among Blue Ridge Calvinists (Primitive Baptists). Support for the earlier fieldwork on which this essay is based consists of grants to the author and his colleague, Prof. James L. Peacock, by the National Institutes of Mental Health and the University Research Council, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The second phase of fieldwork among Primitive Baptists was carried out by the author and colleagues Peacock and Daniel W. Patterson, supported by a research grant of the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1981-1984. The author expresses continuing appreciation for his colleagues while relieving them of all responsibility for the views he expresses here.

In the article, all names have been changed. Numbers in parentheses in the commentary on the testimony refer to the stanzas which I have created from the continuous delivery of the testifier. A shorter version of this essay appears in *Diversities of Gifts: Field Studies in Southern Religion*, ed., Ruel W. Tyson, Jr., James L. Peacock and Daniel W. Patterson (from the *Folklore and Society* series, Roger D. Abrahams, Bruce Jackson, and Marta Weigle, eds., Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. Copyright 1988 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois). Reprinted with permission of the University of Illinois Press.

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APPROACHING SOME HOUSEHOLDER YOGIS: TO VISIT OR MOVE IN?

Daniel Gold

Abstract

Anthropologists and religionists, exercising their subjectivity in distinctive ways, often adopt different fieldwork methods. Their differences are apparent in diverging relationships between the roles they adopt as visiting observer and entrenched participant. While anthropological ideals present a close interplay between participation and observation, religio-historical practice often shows the two activities as at least temporally separate. Nevertheless, characteristic styles of religio-historical writing can be enhanced through judicious use of anthropologists' close field methods. A project on the ritual life of some Rajasthani householder-yogis undertaken jointly by an anthropologist and historian of religions reveals the contrasting fieldwork styles of each.

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The human significance of religious ritual is a subject central to the writings of both anthropologists and historians of religion. Indeed, in the humanistic study of religion, the two academic disciplines often appear to converge. Like religionists, long conversant with the problems of hermeneutics posed by theological discussions, anthropologists are becoming more aware of the subjective nature of their study (see Clifford and Marcus 1986). Conversely, historians of religion are moving beyond texts to do research in the field, long the sole preserve of anthropologists. Nevertheless, the two disciplines continue to draw on different dimensions of the investigator's subjectivity. And this difference shows up not only in distinct styles of writing but also in alternative ways of working in the field.

The contrasts between the two styles of fieldwork were brought home to me, a religionist, during some fieldwork I did with my wife, Ann Grodzins Gold, an anthropologist. Our different disciplinary perspectives led us to ask our own questions and interact with informants in our own ways. Since most discussions of fieldwork have come from anthropologists, I will focus here on some *differences* in the religionist's approach. Contrasts will thus be purposely heightened in order to emphasize the distinctiveness of a religionist's fieldwork style.

Our project concerned the relationship between yogic traditions and ritual life among a caste of householder yogis in Ajmer district, Rajasthan. Known as Naths, these yogis trace their descent to fabled Nath yogis of old. Stories of the great Naths of the past tell of the miraculous results of strenuous yogic practice, and the occasional sight of rough Nath ascetics can still inspire awe among common villagers. The householder Naths we knew, however, were usually farmers of their own land, and did not normally practice rigorous forms of yoga. Instead, they kept

their yogic heritage alive by performing rituals that recalled ascetic ways.

Taking shape in an Indic style familiar to villagers, these rituals serve at once to distinguish the Naths from the other farmers with whom they mixed and to give them a special role in village society. For the village as a whole, the Naths are able to ward off calamity, particularly pestilence, through powerful mantras uttered in a strange-sounding vernacular. A number of the personal rites of the Naths–particularly those surrounding death–also differ visibly from those of other Hindus. Not cremated like ordinary Hindus, the Naths are buried like yogis. Their graveyards, located near their living quarters in a way that violates common Hindu concepts of pollution, can then become a continuing reminder of the Naths' strange ways. At the same time, Naths are leaders in an esoteric funeral cult, participation in which can save one's soul from rebirth. An important component in the ceremonies of this cult, as well as in many group rites in which Naths participate, is the lengthy performance of religious songs. Often understood to be composed by great yogis and certainly containing yogic language, these songs are difficult for the "outsider" to comprehend and are said to convey esoteric knowledge. The cultic heritage of the Naths makes access to magical power continue to appear as their birthright, which may then be cultivated convincingly by particular individuals.

As fairly conventional householders with an ascetic, yogic identity, the Naths present some interesting problems for students of Indian religions. The anthropologist of India sees classical Hindu religious ideals of renunciation embodied in occult ritual running counter to village norms. Historians of religions see popular ceremony substituting for contemplative technique. For both anthropologist and historian of religions, practical problems in field study of the Naths entail getting access to ritual and texts that often appear ordinary, but are understood to be occult and the exclusive preserve of initiates.

Though Ann and I approached the householder Naths in different ways, during the course of our field experiences in India both of us sometimes saw ourselves as visitors, and sometimes acted as if we had moved in. As visitors, we remained at a distance from the scene we were studying, trying to experience only those aspects of it that would immediately fit into our larger academic projects. The questions that we asked were the ones that we had set out to answer. Having moved in, we let ourselves get involved in local life–which often took us in unexpected directions. We then found solutions to academic problems that we hadn't anticipated, and saw that many of the questions we had come with were not always apt. Our experience suggests that while both visiting and moving in are likely to be part of the experience of most fieldworkers, they may be found in contrasting relationships among anthropologists and historians of religions. The differences

between these relationships, moreover, are not as simple as they might initially seem.

At first glance, the difference between "visiting" and "moving in" as modes of field experience can appear as a straightforward contrast: the religionist is the visitor and the anthropologist moves in. Consider the origins of our joint project. Ann had drawn my attention to the hymns sung by the Naths in the village where she had established herself. These oral texts bore a distinct family resemblance to the songs of the Hindi sants–songs which I was studying as the scripture of sant panths, scattered sectarian institutions. Ann, having moved into the village, saw the yogis in the context of the total village culture. I, the visitor, saw the yogis and their texts in terms of the other religious materials I was studying. Looking at the contrast in this way tells us something about the relationship of the different methods of the anthropologist and the religionist to the academic contexts of their study.

But focusing on the subject-object relationship in fieldwork can turn the tables on the two disciplines. For even if anthropologists should try to go native–and this is not a generally prescribed goal–they usually meet resistance from themselves as well as their villagers. In the end anthropologists remain visitors, never really totally assimilating the culture of their village nor standing in its kin-networks. Students of Asian religion, on the other hand, are usually drawn to their subject–at least at first–through some element in them that reacts to what Eliade has dubbed "the religious imagination." That is, they possess a sensitivity to different religious significances together with a desire somehow to comprehend them. The problem is what to call this peculiar faculty–perhaps the religio-*historical* imagination? At any rate, if we don't always expect the traditions we study to reflect some ultimate truth, we at least may hope that they will reveal some exciting secrets about the human psyche. And not only do religionists themselves have some personal fascination with religious materials, but during fieldwork they also often find themselves studying voluntary, sectarian groups where they would happily be received as full-fledged members. In this situation some fieldworking religionists can *really* move in, becoming understood genuinely to belong to the group they study by both those within it and themselves.

Now the contrast I have characterized as one between moving in and visiting corresponds in part to the two aspects of participant-observation invoked by the anthropologist.[1] To participate, fieldworkers must in some way move in; but to observe they must remember they are visitors. Yet the anthropologist is typically enjoined to move-in-and-participate and observe-as-a-visitor at the same time. My experience as a religionist, on the other hand, made me acutely aware of visiting and moving in as at least temporally distinct activities. And on reflection it seems to me that the distinctness of these two

activities may be indicative of a characteristic religio-historical approach to fieldwork. For the religionist may move-in-and-participate and observe-as-a-visitor to such extremes that the two aspects of fieldwork can in practice become separate physical operations. The fieldwork methods of the religionist may then contrast radically to the old anthropological *ideal*, of keeping "participation" and "observation" closely integrated around everyday physical activity. Religionists, who focus on inner realities, may wind up having to integrate their experience as participant and interpretation as visitor in more inward, personal ways.

To illustrate the different fieldwork experiences of the anthropologist and the religionist, I will contrast Ann's approach with my own. I think the contrast will be informative, even if we do not prove to be (so to speak) ideal types. First I will compare our separate projects, and then examine the ways in which our projects intersected in the study of the Naths. Finally, with reference to the joint article that emerged from this crossing of paths, I will reflect on the dynamic of religio-historical writing that may emerge from the tension between the anthropologist's and religionist's field-styles. Throughout these discussions I will pay attention to the problems we were studying, our field encounters, and, the ways in which I, at least, was engaged with my subject.

I should point out now that the two of us were not married at the time, although we were more than acquaintances. I was based in Banaras, Ann in a Rajasthani village. Fortunately, both our projects involved some traveling. And I think that the role that traveling played in our respective field projects says something about our different disciplinary approaches. So I will use it as a way into my investigation.

I was in India to study the North Indian sants. These are medieval poet singers who have left verses that have since become scripture for a number of sectarian lineages scattered all over North India–including, luckily for me, Rajasthan (see D. Gold, 1987). I had to travel just to get a sense of the tradition I had come to study: indeed, to construct that tradition, to select and put together those aspects I would write about. Ann was studying the practice of pilgrimage by her local villagers, and she accompanied them to various shrines (see A. Gold, 1988). So even when she went with them all the way to Orissa, she remained, in a real sense, in her local village culture. For Ann's project this was crucial, since as an anthropologist she felt that her study should have a specific local grounding. And seeing her materials in the context of a local culture made her particularly aware of the ramifications of the institution of pilgrimage for everyday life: the role of caste groupings for seating arrangements on the pilgrimage bus; the relationship of pilgrimage to village life-cycle rites. My field of study made me aware of my materials in terms of religious phenomena generally, first in India and then the world.

My problems were those of religious traditions: the uses of texts by different groups, the growth of religious institutions, the very idea of tradition itself among sants. The contexts in which we saw our material, then, generated different problems. To be sure, these problems have been nurtured in distinct traditions of study. But the traditions themselves have developed around different, if overlapping, ranges of material: in anthropology, particular religious phenomena as elements in the whole of a local culture; in religious studies, particular religious phenomena among all the religious phenomena of the world.

Our different field approaches led us to different field encounters. The people Ann was interested in encountering were for the most part limited to inhabitants of her own and neighboring villages. Together with her villagers even when traveling, Ann got to know a number of people reasonably well over a fairly long period of time. Though most were not very literate, she could learn from them as people and appreciate them as individuals. After the usual period of resistance and finding her way, moreover, she formed a few real friendships. I, on the other hand, was interested in meeting selected people from all over North India. The number was practically infinite. If I heard of another group on a journey I would add it to my list. Visits usually lasted no longer than a few days, though they might be repeated after some months or a year. While it was possible to gauge people's attitudes to other sant groups and see how they used sant texts, most of my encounters were not particularly deep. Nor did I meet many people on these visits whom I came to regard as my friends.

I did, however, find a lot of teachers. Fieldworkers dealing with people knowledgeable in a literate tradition often get put in the position of students whether they like it or not. And to learn the local lore, styles of life and patterns of ritual at a particular place, this path of least resistance is often what is called for. Even ordinary devotees not normally in the socio-religious role of teachers are often happy to talk about their experiences and explain their religion. The religionist may meet some of the same reticences encountered by the anthropologist in reference to political rivalries, economic skulduggery, and sexual scandal. But the subject of religion—the focus of the researcher's interest anyway—is usually a good ice-breaker among sectarian devotees, and may then lead to discussions of more mundane and exciting matters. Thus, even though I rarely knew particular individuals as well as Ann, my brief encounters on these journeys were usually fruitful for my purposes.

Moreover, there was one place among the many seats of North Indian sants where I really did feel at home. And this may be where the experience of some students of Asian religion differs from that of most anthropologists. A number of us in the present generation of fieldworkers in Asian religion have had the experience of getting some roots in—feeling moved into—a

particular Asian environment. Characteristically, this is a different experience from that of the anthropologist in the village, living as a participant observer with rural peasants. In contrast to anthropologists really roughing it in the village, we often live fairly comfortably in an urban, or at least provincial, environment. After a while we may find ourselves interacting easily with townspeople who are sometimes more urbane than ourselves. We participate as we can, but are not really worried about observing. Instead, we are living our lives in Asia for a time–gaining a sort of field experience, but not consciously doing field*work*. For some, this experience may occur during the period of a grant just as often awarded for the study of ancient texts as for investigating contemporary movements. For others, it may take place before any thoughts of grants have cluttered the mind; indeed, it may have been what led to an interest in comparative religion in the first place. My experience of this sort was during Peace Corps, where I lived in a provincial town in which I came across a group that revered the sant texts. I became interested in the texts and felt a personal tie to the local guru. The guru has since left the body, as they say, and in studying religion my understandings about the texts and traditions have changed, and I hope, grown. This aspect of my field experience as a religionist is probably the least generalizable, though it may be the most ideal-typical (at least according to my ideal types).

For most religionists, their engagement with their subject matter is no doubt the most individual and idiosyncratic aspect of their work. Some think the religious phenomena they study are a revelation of the spirit; others understand the same phenomena to be the manifestation of a psychosis. Most are often intrigued by what they see; and all are sometimes puzzled and questioning. Nevertheless, whatever the religionist's ideas about the ultimate ontological status of specific phenomena, the religious materials themselves usually demand some personal engagement, engagement of a sort not always called for by the cultural materials of the anthropologist. This more inward engagement emerges in part, I think, from two characteristics of religious materials: first, these materials usually derive any importance they have from their meanings to those who use them; and second, those meanings are likely to have a universal scope.

Though many anthropologists concern themselves whole-heartedly with the meanings attributed to phenomena by human subjects, not all do. Ecological anthropologists in particular have been forthright in denying the importance of these meanings for much of their analysis (Harris 1979). And when humanistic anthropologists do look for subjects' meanings, they usually locate them, like Geertz, in the webs of significance spun in particular cultures. But since religions stand out within culture just on account of their powerful meanings, as a focus of study in their own right they normally demand a consideration of the understandings of human subjects. And even when religions are

seen by scholars as particular, they are usually understood by adherents to offer truths and experiences of universal application. Thus, a serious understanding of particular religious traditions calls for at least some reflection on these self-conscious universal meanings. And this is where the religio-historical imagination may come in.

Very often we find it impossible to take universal doctrines we study seriously as truth. But we may be able to comprehend some of the experiential aspects of universal religious claims: if these doctrines were true, we might imagine, where would they put me as a being whose aims are moral, social, hedonistic, political, god-fearing? Take your pick. And toward the end of our studies, our imagination can serve to link up our professional and personal realities: if my analysis of this tradition really is correct, what does this general truth about religion mean for me as an individual finding my way in the world? At any rate, the universal claims of religion, often transcending concrete cultural norms, invite these sorts of questions; and I think many of us are religionists and not anthropologists because we are prone to ask them. So even if we have never physically "moved in" to participate personally in a tradition, it can still present us with a highly personal level of engagement.

But let us return to the long-distance field-romance–and the diverging academic problems on which it thrived. There I was, a religionist moved in on a center and visiting the peripheries, when Ann told me about the Naths in her village, who seemed interestingly peripheral to my project. Ann was interested in the Naths because they were the only caste in the village that talked seriously of release as a genuine option at death. Her problem was one of classical Indian sociology as presented by Dumont, but rethought from an ethno-sociological perspective: what were the meanings of freedom–including release–for householders and ascetics? Having discovered that most of the householders with whom she went on pilgrimage were only vaguely interested in release, the Naths sparked her curiosity. How did they see the world? What did they do to act on their vision? And as a group with distinctive ritual practices, did they play any particular role in the religion of the village as a whole? I, on the other hand, was first interested in the Naths through some striking parallels between the yogic aspects of their oral texts and those of the sant texts I was studying. Then, as I saw more clearly the mundane, "householderly" ways of these Naths, I wondered at their references to recondite yogic terminology. Incongruities appeared between text and context; a wide gap emerged between the apparent yogic experience referred to in the Naths' songs and the Naths' evident ritual practice. In contrast to Ann's classical problem in the sociology of Indian religions, my larger problem became that of an esoteric tradition that had become popular and communalized.

These different problems called for different types of field encounters. To understand the soteriological outlook of the Naths and the role they played in the village, Ann used some of the same methods she had employed to understand other aspects of village religion. She discussed the meanings of texts she had recorded with her regular interpreter-informants, who in fact included some Naths. These and other Naths explained their distinctive traditions, and Ann witnessed some of their rites. Other villagers then told her of their reactions to the Naths' ways. I was more interested in exploring some of the internal differentiation within the Naths' religious tradition. Was there any esoteric aspect left to it at all? So in addition to Ann's informants I sought out some of the recognized religious leaders and renowned singers. What did the songs mean to them? How did they come to sing them? How did they relate the yogic terms in the songs to their own experience? How did the songs themselves work in the ritual?

I think these questions show that Ann and I had a different sort of engagement with our material. That is, we encountered it through different aspects of our personal psychology. As a humanistic anthropologist trying to penetrate the webs of meaning in her village, Ann tried to participate as a person among ordinary villagers and also maintain her observing critical intellect. I, of course, could not help but try to do some of this too when I was in the village, but I also—what shall we say—tried to exercise my religio-historical imagination. I did this in two directions. The first, perhaps, was doomed to failure from the beginning. I tried to understand the yogic referents of the songs by relating them to those parallels in the sant texts that were explained to me by people who really did use them for yogic practice. This was, in a sense, part of my earlier sant project, and my imagination began working on it before my longest stay in the village. But when I got to the village I could find no imaginable correspondence between the meanings reported by Naths and the sant usage with which I was familiar. This, together with many observable facts about the village Naths, led me to the conclusion that the yogic terms had little basis in any yogic experience of those who sung them. In this instance, hard field experience checked imaginative excess. But the new field realization then led to another approach to the Naths, which I think turned out to be more fruitful. I tried to imagine the existential situation of ordinary householders who happened to be born yogis, and thus supposed to be masters of asceticism. What were their inner conflicts? How did they resolve them religiously? These questions in turn led to other observations, other oral texts, and other sorts of interviews.

Our different types of engagement with our material led us not only to different dialogues with informants, but also to some crucial dialogue among ourselves. Certainly, I felt free to make my imaginative leaps because, thanks to Ann, I had some grounding in the concrete cultural order of the village. I needed

Ann's knowledge of the context of the songs and the character of the singers to understand the reality of the songs' primary ritual nature. Moreover, without the network of acquaintances Ann had built up through extended residence in the village, many of the songs would not have been accessible at all. For the rites at which some of the songs were performed–though commonly known to exist–are understood to bind the participants together so powerfully that no outsider is permitted to witness them. Since even Ann, a village resident, was not able to attend, I, a casual visitor certainly wasn't. We had access to the texts performed there only because some of Ann's trusted informants, members of the cult, were able to convince the group leader to let them record the songs, which could then be heard outside the ritual context. What Ann learned from my work was less concrete. Certainly, an acquaintance with the textual background of the Naths' songs showed her that they were not just village phenomena, but had links to a wide tradition of oral literature. And through my field queries we both learned that the larger tradition, at least, was grounded in yogic experience as well as hallowed by ceremonial life.

Out of this joint anthropological and religio-historical field endeavor one paper has so far emerged (Gold and Gold 1984). And since the material was largely Ann's to begin with, I felt compelled to do most of the writing. The article thus turned out to be a religio-historical one, sharply juxtaposing the cultic and practical aspects of the Naths' tradition with their yogic heritage. Why is this juxtaposition characteristically religio-historical? Much of the dynamic that is found in religio-historical writing, I would argue, comes just from revealing the interplay of mundane, concrete realities with the apparently irrational aspects of religious belief and behavior. In this genre of writing, the historian-of-religion's long-standing aversion to a social-scientific reduction of religious materials means that both sides of the sacred and profane polarity seem separately grounded. Work in history of religions then becomes more powerful to the extent that the concrete realities are seen as real and the insight into the religious imagination acute. A sharp delineation of both elements is crucial (see D. Gold, 1988).

Writing in this religio-historical style can thus profit from anthropological wisdom. Coming closer at times to the anthropologists' ideal of participant observation can make religionists more fully aware of the hard contexts of religious behavior, and we have much to learn about close field methods. But this does not mean that religionists should neglect fieldwork styles more in keeping with their own endeavor and perhaps with their own natures. For to understand the religious imagination, we may have to exercise the religio-historical imagination. And in fieldwork this exercise is likely to come through a dialectic of moved-in, participating encounter and more distanced, visiting, individual integration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Gold is Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, Rockefeller Hall 388, Ithaca, NY, 14853. He has written *The Lord as Guru: Hindi Sants in North Indian Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1987) and *Comprehending the Guru: Toward a Grammar of Religious Perception* (Scholars Press, 1988). His current research interests include the relationships between religious imagination and literary form in India and the development of Nath tradition of Rajasthan.

NOTES

[1]Geertz 1976, pp. 22-23, discusses parallel dimensions of this participant observer opposition in terms of Heinz Kohut's contrast between experience/near and experience/far concepts.

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RITUAL, REALITY, AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: THE CASE OF A RECONSTRUCTIONIST SYNAGOGUE

Jack N. Lightstone

Abstract

The Reconstructionists' transformation of the traditional sabbath morning liturgy encodes statements regarding the nature and boundaries of sacred castes, times, speech, and space. With respect to all of these realms the effect is to soften the boundaries of once clearly differentiated entities and to value a mixture of sacred and mundane, special and ordinary, religious professional and lay persons. The blurring of these particular boundaries in the congregants' liturgy fits their social allegiances and proclivities regarding participation in North American culture and society. They experience their liturgical practices as particularly appropriate, given their social experience; their patterns of social involvement feel emotionally satisfying and cogent in relation to their liturgy. Just as they participate in the aesthetic, artistic, cultural, economic and social enterprises of higher-status North Americans, they assert a desire to remain Jews, and thus retain, but mix, once highly differentiated realms in their particular variation of the traditional rabbinic sabbath morning liturgy and service.

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This paper emerges out of a larger collaborative research project. The latter aims to examine the meaning and function of ritual for contemporary members of established religious denominations. The project analyzes ritual behavior at three levels, familial, congregational, and communal. What follows brings to bear the problematic, methodology, and theoretical perspective of that larger project upon a limited sample of data. This essay considers the character and significance of ritual practices in evidence in the Sabbath morning liturgy of a reconstructionist synagogue. The study thereby intends both to shed light on the meaning and function of the ritual actions in question and, via these data, to contribute to the theoretical and methodological debate itself.

I
Larger Problematic

Too often the study of religion–contemporary Western religions in particular–fails adequately to document, interpret or explain ritualized activity. Students of religion have tended to concentrate on the effect of modernity on religious belief and theology (Douglas 1982); social scientists have interested themselves in issues of authority and levels of affiliation among "mainline" religious groups (Wilson 1969). Even those who in some sustained fashion have concerned themselves with the practice of religion in the contemporary Western world (Cohen 1983) have tended to concentrate on the ever declining levels of religious observance among contemporary Western groups as measured against traditional norms of religious practice.

What scholars of religion have found is by now hardly news, but continues to be documented as it defines the major directions of research. Students of religion in the modern Western world have for almost a century pointed to the continued secularization of society. Traditional beliefs and the authority of church and synagogue clergy impinge ever less upon patterns of life and modes of thought. Regular attendance at churches and synagogues of established denominations continues to decline. By contrast, norms and worldviews are seen increasingly to be taken from the secular sphere, with the realm of psychology and psychodynamics supplying much of the framework by which individuals understand themselves and their relation to others.

But while all this remains true, and much researched, little attention has been paid to the role of religion and of established religious institutions in the lives of an undeniably secularized population. With traditional belief systems and authority structures on the wane, affiliation with established religious denominations and selective practice of their rites nonetheless continues. Indeed both Catholic and Protestant Christianity have experienced so-called revivals of various sorts, even among relatively secularized populations. And Judaism too has experienced the same, not only in the form of the *Baal Teshuvah* ("Returnee-Revivalist") movement in Orthodox Judaism, but also in the continued reinstatement by mainline Reform Jews of more traditional Judaic rites.

All this, as Mary Douglas (1982) has pointed out, has caught the field of religious studies unawares and is, indeed, somewhat of an embarrassment to liberal and radical theologians of the religious denominations themselves. Witness such ironies as J. Petuchowski, a major ideologue of Reform Judaism, calling in 1972 for "limits" to "liberalism" in Reform, by reintroducing some concept of a normative rabbinic *halakah* (i.e., rabbinic law). For this he was branded by many of his colleagues and lay Reform intellectuals as neo-Orthodox. His heresy was explained away with references to a more classical rabbinic training received back in Europe. He was believed to have backslid to the sins of his youth—a mere anomaly. But some ten to fifteen years after Petuchowski's heresy of the early seventies, rabbinical graduates of Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion wear the traditional *talit* and *kippah* (prayer shawl and skullcap) at their graduation ceremonies—now worn by both men and women rabbinical graduates alike.

Even this brief example indicates that with respect to Judaism at least, terms like "revivalism" or "neo-conservatism" help little in characterizing, interpreting or explaining the phenomena before us; such terms imply a return to the past only—for some a welcome revival, for others a deplorable anachronism, depending upon one's predilections. Obviously, male and female rabbis together wearing prayer shawl and *kippah* at their graduation is no return to some past state of affairs. It is a contemporary

expression of the integration of tradition and modernity in some new thing–an expression communicated in a primarily behavioral and ritual mode, rather than in a theological or ideological one.

This example suggests that the failure adequately to address the problem of the role of religion in contemporary, secular society stems in large measure from the inattention, or an inability to attend to the role of such selective religious practice in North American society and culture. For as M. Douglas (1982) has pointed out, there exists a bias among contemporary scholars of religion (as among many liberal theologians) toward matters of belief and theology. Consequently, there is a hiatus in the study of religious practice. Both scholars and theologians attribute an autonomy and primacy to the realm of ideas, mediated in primarily discursive language–views no doubt tied to their own social contexts. The result is not only a lack of attention paid to what may be communicated in religious rites and rituals, but also a dearth of theoretical and methodological tools with which to describe, interpret and "explain" such activity.

II
Methodological and Theoretical Perspective

The methodological and theoretical perspectives of this paper follow from the problematic. Our focus is structured patterns of ritual activity. For the purposes of this analysis we use F. Bird's (1980) characterization of ritual action. Ritual acts are shared, repeated, symbolic actions, intrinsically valued by the actors; in these respects rituals may be distinguished from habits or routines. Rituals consequently are communicative and are fraught not only with explicit, but also implicit, meaning (Douglas 1966; 1975). Rituals may have latent functions as well, for example, managing intense emotions (Sheff 1977). All these aspects and roles of rituals are enhanced by the dramatic character of ritual behavior (Turner 1969; 1974). Let us spell out some of these propositions.

That basic repeated patterns can function as means of communication within a particular cultural setting has been argued by social anthropologists going back to Durkheim (1954).[1] Literary structuralists, like J. D. Crossan (1975), and psycho-linguists, like B. Bernstein (1971), have shown the value of such a theoretical perspective in shedding light upon shared patterns of speech and of literature. M. Douglas (1970; 1975) has extended these theoretical perspectives to the study of implicit meaning encoded in patterns of shared rules.[2] Given that rituals may be seen as an instance of rules, it seems profitable to develop a theoretical and methodological approach to the analysis of the implicit meaning of ritual acts.

For the purposes of this exercise it is proposed that any particular ritual action (i.e., priestly blessing) conveys meaning

because of its appropriation of basic patterns evident at other ritual instances (i.e., blessings over the Torah reading) in some larger structured complex (i.e., communal morning liturgy). The analysis of the implicit meaning in the formal patterns of texts provides an apt analogy. The larger ritual structure corresponds to the text as a whole. One may liken ritual actions to the literary units of the text; it is via the repeated rhetorical patterns in passage after passage of the text, or in ritual after ritual, that meaning is communicated. As with literary structures, the knowledge implicitly conveyed in ritual patterns is not necessarily referential in character; participants may not prove capable of articulating such meaning in propositional terms.

The non-referential character of what is implicitly communicated in the patterns of a ritual complex raises the question of the validity of such statements for the actors. No particular states of affairs to which the actor might point validates a cognitive proposition conveyed by the ritual pattern. This is so even when the ritual involves making what appears to be cognitive statements, like, "This is the Torah which Moses put before the People of Israel–the word of Yahweh, conveyed by the hand of Moses." Rather, the cogency of the meanings implicit in the ritual patterns has to do with the fit, or homological relations which cut across the various structured patterns constituting the actors' socio-cultural setting.

C. Geertz (1966) has proposed that religious knowledge finds its rationality in a mutually confirming relationship with other aspects of the cultural system. M. Douglas (1970; 1981) has empirically shown that the social map, or ordered pattern of social relationships, will significantly correspond to the mapping of the world in belief, rituals, rules and taboos. She points to a tendency for patterns implicit in these spheres to replicate one another. Because of this tendency the actors may experience any one instance of the pattern as "emotionally satisfying" (Geertz 1966) or "self-evidently appropriate" (Douglas 1975:276-318).

Of the various structured or patterned spheres of the cultural setting, Douglas views the social setting as the independent, determining variable. Yet for Douglas the social system effects a bias toward certain patterns and their implicit meanings, rather than determining outright their shape and character. Like Durkheim (1964) she recognizes that this bias effectively limits what is *plausible* to the group, given what is historically *available* to work with. Cultural bias operates as movement in one direction or another along a continuum whose ends are given by the group's antecedent formulations. Thus, the comparison of historically close groups should prove necessary to the study of the meanings communicated by the patterns of any one group.

Viewing variation in ritual patterns as movement along an historically given continuum seems particularly salient in the study of contemporary religions. In the modern period a community's ritual forms often arise in a context which stresses

an historical consciousness and a self-awareness of how one does things differently than another closely related community. This certainly is the case for contemporary Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and even Modern Orthodox Judaism. Historical-comparative endeavors are germane to interpreting ritual patterns, for it is in variations upon the classical rituals that actors make their idiomatic statements about the nature of things.

In the modern world, no particular religion or religious denomination plays that overarching normative role common in traditional society. Today, religious beliefs and practices determine particular sub-groups, even sub-cultures of the larger cultural setting. Religion both reflects and serves a larger cultural setting which far exceeds the borders of the religious group; yet at the same time shared patterns of religion differentiate the actors from others in that larger setting. It is our hypothesis that this location of religion in contemporary society helps bring to the fore a principal problematic of contemporary, secular and pluralistic society: What for any group of persons is the desired or desirable boundary between the group and society at large, between participation in the particular and in the more general culture? By viewing the ritual patterns of distinct communities comparatively, one discovers the place and character of that boundary.

These theoretical considerations inform our analysis of the ritual of the Reconstructionist congregation.[3] Our theoretical perspective also underlies a self-imposed limitation for the purposes of this particular article. While researchers acquired, and congregants offered, information regarding the participants' understanding of their congregation's liturgical practices, at this juncture we have bracketed such interpretations. It follows from our theoretical stance that the congregation's structured variation of the classical liturgy implicitly communicates non-referential knowledge of the world, *apart from* any interpretations which the participants may offer. Their tendency to interpret in a particular manner what they do is further data about them and their congregational liturgy. But *their* interpretations lie outside, and therefore would muddy the exploration of this article's hypothesis.

Before proceeding, a brief account of how data were collected is in order. Two researchers attended Sabbath and Festival services at the synagogue for approximately eight months, during which time researchers documented the performance of the liturgy, the physical setting, the participation of the congregants, and the interaction among participants. During the informal period of socializing which weekly occurs after the termination of the service and the *kiddush* (the blessing of the Sabbath or Festival day over wine), the researchers had the opportunity to chat with congregants about the service. The study of the synagogue liturgy had been preceded by some ten months of interviews, during which time researchers met with about one dozen families, four

times each. This prior phase of the research supplied information regarding the family members' religious observance and beliefs, occupational and social involvements, attitudes to the synagogue, to the Jewish community, and its institutions. Of particular importance in our study of families was the use of ritual, widely defined, in the context of family life. Synagogue officials offered further information about the socio-economic status and social profile of this relatively small congregation. Documents from the metropolitan area's Jewish Federation provided demographic data on the Jewish community at large.

III
The "Setting" of the Reconstructionist Liturgy

The performance of the Reconstructionist sabbath morning ritual occurs within an ideological framework. Most of the synagogue's members share the Reconstructionist philosophy; it is implicit in the community's ritual innovations, and is often referred to during the service. Hence the dramatic setting of the sabbath morning service includes both the physical environment–the "staging"–and an ideological context. The latter might be said to be the "author's notes" to the actors, the reasons underlying some of the script, especially for the times when the drama departs from the conventional. In sum, the setting of the liturgy includes the movement and its ideology, the physical location of the synagogue building, the development of the congregation and character of its regularly attending members, and the architecture and interior arrangement of the synagogue.

The Movement: its Ideology and Organization

The Reconstructionist Movement differentiated itself from the United Synagogue of America (the Conservative Movement) in a number of stages (cf., M.L. Raphael 1984). It began in the late 30's as a "left-wing party" within the ranks of both the Conservative (and to a lesser extent) Reform Rabbinate; these rabbis assented to the theology, ideology, and resulting program of Rabbi Mordechai M. Kaplan, Jewish educator and faculty member of the Jewish Theological Seminary. In the last 15 to 20 years, Reconstructionism has emerged as an independent movement in North America with its own congregational organization, distinctive rabbinic association, and a separate Rabbinical Seminary, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia. Thus, the movement has adopted an institutional structure which parallels that of other mainline North American Judaic Synagogue movements, particularly the Conservative Movement.

Reconstructionism remains the smallest of these North American movements–largely because of its relative "youth," but perhaps also because of a more pronounced ideological character. For reasons which we shall see, its ideology appeals to a more

educated stratum of the Jewish population. As in this particular congregation under study, the professional ranks tend to be highly represented in the movement's membership.

Kaplan (1934) conceived of Judaism as the "evolving civilization of the Jews." He claimed that the canonical texts of Judaism, from the Bible through Ancient and Medieval Rabbinic Literature, reflect the various stages of Israelite and Jewish social experience. Heavily influenced by Durkheim, Kaplan saw rabbinic law, doctrine, and ritual as collective representations, informing and being informed by the evolving social reality of the Jewish people. Since the God-idea was one aspect of these collective representations, the traditional understanding of God was first, a reflection of social experience and second, an evolving symbol. Kaplan solved the problem in modern Jewish thought of the relationship to the natural and supernatural by virtually eclipsing the latter by the former.

Kaplan's active program had Judaism serve a social function, namely, the enhancement of Jewish social experience and the preservation of the Jewish people. In addition, he felt that all modern laypeople could and should, in the spirit of intellectual honesty, be encouraged to recognize and understand the natural basis for Jewish religion. He felt that such a program would allow modern Judaism to respond more effectively and change more readily to meet the ethnic-social reality and consciousness of modern, educated North American Jews.

Among the major results of Kaplan's program was the development of the synagogue-center, which met the liturgical, religious, educational, social, and recreational needs of Jews. (Synagogue-centers now abound among all North American Judaic movements).

The congregations of the Reconstructionist movement may be subdivided into two categories. First, there are congregations which were originally associated with the Conservative (or Reform) movement, but which had long been served by rabbis of Kaplanesque leanings. Second, a number of congregations were founded as Reconstructionist synagogues before the opening of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Congregations originally founded as Reconstructionist synagogues may differ from those which developed within Conservative Judaism. The latter probably display a more conservative approach to liturgical matters; socio-economic traits of their members will more closely approximate those of "mainline" Conservative (or Reform) congregations. But data on these matters still awaits systematic collection.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinate and Movement has issued its own edition of the liturgy for Sabbath and Festivals. The prayer book heavily depends upon the Conservative prayer book in both substance and form. The Reconstructionist prayer book, *siddur*, takes the formal and substantive reforms of the Conservative *siddur* as a point of departure and takes matters several steps

further. Hebrew and English are on facing pages, with meditations and other supplementary readings interspersed among traditional elements of the liturgy as well as filling the pages of a substantial appendix. Medieval supplementary hymns which appear in the traditional Hebrew *siddur* are largely eliminated, as are some biblical psalms which traditionally have been recited in the liturgy. What remains in the Hebrew focuses on what the ancient rabbis would call *matbea' tefillah* ("the basics of prayer"). Even here, however, the Hebrew text has been modified, especially regarding messianic expectations; the editors have eliminated eschatological expectations of the restoration of the Temple State, its cult and the Davidic monarchy. Another sensitive issue within the Reconstructionist liturgy is the traditional claim to Jewish exclusivism–left largely untouched in the Conservative edition.[4]

The Congregation: its Building and Membership

Our Reconstructionist Congregation is located in a large eastern city. The building stands on the northern edge of the central-western part of the city's residential district. One mile to the south, a mile and a half to the southeast, and for some three miles to the southwest are areas of Jewish population. The major Jewish communal institutions, such as the Federation (the umbrella institution for all Jewish communal services), are concentrated less than a mile south of our congregation. Within a one mile radius from the southeast through southwest are some one dozen synagogues, almost all Orthodox. One of the largest Conservative congregations of the city lies only six blocks or so to the south, another is situated about a mile and a half to the southwest.

The Reconstructionist Congregation and the major Conservative one to the south define a north-south line separating distinctive socio-economic territories. The neighborhood immediately to the south and east is middle income and upper lower income in character. It is ethnically mixed, with some minimal inter-ethnic tension. The area also includes a rather high proportion of Jewish elderly. Further to the southeast we encounter upper-middle and upper income enclaves. Immediately to the south and west live quite wealthy families. Further to the southwest and west one finds mixed upper-middle and upper income areas. To the North is a large non-residential area characterized by middle sized non-retail business and light manufacturing. About two miles to the north lies the closest northern suburb, also with a substantial Jewish population in the middle and better income ranges. In all some 65,000 Jews live within a two to three mile radius of the Reconstructionist synagogue.

The synagogue building is austere compared to the other synagogues in the neighborhood. It is roughly one and a half

stories in height, although it appears even less lofty from the outside. The roof is flat; the sides are normal household red brick. The design is rectangular. The main doors into the building are on the extreme left of the wall facing the street and are simple doors that might just as easily mark entry into a small commercial or industrial operation. Municipal public works buildings and storage facilities flank the building. Except for the congregation's name over the door and on the sign on the lawn, and some understated stain glass windows on the eastern wall near the southeastern corner, one might easily mistake the synagogue building for another small to medium sized non-retail commercial building. The building is relatively new, little more than a dozen years old.

The interior of the building is as "mundane" as its exterior, with the exception of the area of the ark of the Torah scrolls behind which are the stained glass windows. A platform (*bima*) of modest proportions occupies this southeast corner of the building; the ark, six chairs and the reader's table (*shulhan*) stands upon it. The platform rises about ten inches above the floor. The ark curtain and doors are transparent; the Torah scrolls are visible at all times. The eternal flame burns immediately above and in front of the ark.

The table, *shulhan*, from which the liturgy is led and at which the rabbi addresses the congregation, stands offset before the ark on the platform. Like the ark, the *shulhan* is of simple design with little decoration. Together the table, *bima*, ark, and windows have a light, open, and airy feel about them. There is less of the sense of a *locus sanctus* about the ark and platform as there is in other synagogues. There is none of the rich dark woods, or inspiring, sculpted or cast decor, or tapestry-like ark curtains and table covers, which one finds in most other synagogues and which tend to set the place apart from the world outside the sanctuary.

The room contains no permanent pews. A sector shaped array of ordinary moveable seats fans outward before and on either side of the corner in which the ark is situated. Normally, seating provides for about 100-150 congregants. There are, of course, no separate areas for women and men. The rabbi often sits on a slightly more decorous chair on the *bima*; on some Sabbaths he sits in the first row of the congregational seating. The room then is not a sanctuary *per se*, but functions as one when the prayer service is in progress. With the exception of the ark area we have a large, open multipurpose room.

On the western and north sides of the main room is a mezzanine. Folding partitions can set off the mezzanine and the areas beneath them from the main hall. One such area is used for the *kiddush* (the traditional blessing over the wine followed by light refreshments) which takes place weekly at the end of the Sabbath morning service.

The regularly attending congregants differ in not a few ways from their counterparts in the neighboring synagogues.

Attendees are largely between the ages of 35 and 60 with the average tending to the mid to late forties; on average they are younger than those in regular attendance elsewhere. Yet for all the relative youth of the worshipers, little accommodation is made for children. There is no nursery or children's service (other than a program held in a room upstairs on the semi-monthly "family Sabbaths").

Many worshipers come as couples. Middle aged urban professionals are particularly in evidence. Businessmen and merchants from small and medium sized concerns are somewhat less represented than is the rule in nearby congregations. There is a higher proportion of professional women than seems the norm elsewhere. Most are university educated; many with post-graduate degrees or professional degrees beyond the Bachelor's level.

The synagogue has few professional functionaries. The incumbent rabbi arrived some ten years ago, immediately after his ordination. He is their first full-time rabbi. Previously, the congregation saw one of its lay leaders as its spiritual mentor and resident expert on Reconstructionism. The latter individual currently enjoys what is essentially rabbi emeritus status. One of the more elderly members of the community has served on a part-time basis as Torah reader; he also instructs those preparing for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. His role then appears roughly that of the *hazan sheni* (assistant cantor) in a traditional setting. There is no professional cantor; the rabbi leads the liturgy.

Sabbath Morning Service

The morning service follows the text of the Reconstructionist prayer book, a detailed analysis of which falls beyond the scope of this essay. In the present context our analysis focuses upon how the liturgy is carried out in the congregation in question and wherein the patterns of its *performance* differ from those of the almost one dozen Orthodox congregations in the immediate vicinity.

Typical Orthodox Sabbath

In most of the large Orthodox congregations roundabout, the Sabbath morning service begins at approximately 8:30 a.m. and will terminate between 11:00 and 11:45 a.m. Male attendees (with male or female offspring) will straggle in from 8:30 to 9:45. Many women may not arrive with their husbands, but file in between 9:15 and 10:15 (with older female offspring). Single young adults may arrive anytime from 8:30 to 10:15.

Adults, adolescents, and young adults sit in specific areas with attendees of their own gender. A barrier (*mehitsah*) separates the sitting areas of the genders. Generally, the women's seating area is more distant from the center of liturgical activity than the

men's. Young boys and girls may sit with either of their parents (until "junior congregation" commences in some synagogues, about 10:00). Children roam about quite freely. Off limits to them usually are the platform (*bima*) on which the ark and dignitaries' "thrones" are situated and the area of the reader's table (often on a second *bima* located more centrally among the men).

The Orthodox (and Conservative) Sabbath morning prayer service is comprised of six main divisions: blessings of the dawn; preliminary psalms; the morning service proper; the Torah and prophetic readings; the "additional" Sabbath prayer; concluding hymns and psalms. The morning service proper, legally the mainstay requirement of the morning liturgy, is itself comprised of two main sections: the *shema* ("Hear O Israel," with attendant blessings and prayers); the *tefillah* or *amidah* (the "Prayer" said while "standing").

In modern Orthodox and Conservative synagogues the rabbi normally delivers from a pulpit on the *bima* a 10 to 20 minute sermon. The address often takes as its point of departure some aspect or passage of the Torah reading and links the latter to rabbinic texts in some skillful manner; both biblical and rabbinic passages are then brought to bear on a contemporary issue.

By the standards of a Reform or Conservative synagogue, the Orthodox service may appear informal to the point of disrespectful or indecorous. In fact, this informality is more the case at certain junctures in the service than at others. Movement and talking is tolerated (indeed, even permitted under Jewish law) until the beginning of the morning service proper (the "Hear O Israel") and after the completion of the *Keddushah* (the *sanctus*) during the repetition by the leader of the *amidah*. What lies between is set off from the rest by a number of proscriptions which have as their alleged aim the maintenance of strict concentration throughout. The same is true (although to a lesser extent) during the "additional" service, again through its *Keddushah*.

Total proscription on movement is in effect during the *amidot* of both the morning and additional services, again until the completion of the *Keddushah*. The devotee must stand, feet together, facing the ark (usually located on the eastern wall). So one may subdivide the traditional service based on increasing limitations upon normal activity, movement, and mundane speech.

Dress too has a role to play in making the service distinctive. Men and women must wear head coverings. Men will normally use a *kippah* (skullcap), women a fashionable hat. Men wear prayer shawls (over jackets and ties), with the required fringes on each of the four corners. Women generally do not, but dress fashionably. The prayer shawl (*talit*) is an interesting garment. While they need not be, they are almost all white with similar trim in black or navy blue. The more traditional the congregation, the larger the prayer shawls. While persons may wish to call attention to their status, or religiosity, by using elaborate

embroidery along the collar (*'atarah*) of the shawl, 90% of its area will normally remain unadorned. Hence in a traditional congregation, the suits of the men, of normal variety in style and color, will be almost completely hidden by their nearly identical prayer shawls. Sitting together, the men appear as a consistent area of white due to the white robe-like effect of the prayer shawls. The less Orthodox the congregation, the less this effect.

We shall raise other salient aspects of the Orthodox service, as we describe our congregation's Sabbath morning liturgy.

Traditional vs. Reconstructionist Worship

The regular weekly Reconstructionist Sabbath morning service commences relatively late, after 10:00 a.m., and terminates about noon. As a result the majority of those who attend are seated when the service begins, or shortly thereafter. Couples arrive together; relatively few children (except for family Sabbaths) and few unmarried young adults are present. (Soon-to-be *benei* and *benot mitzvah* and their parents must attend at least one service per month). Men and women sit together as couples when both spouses come. Children, when present, sit with their parents. The rabbi generally sits on the *bima*, on the side opposite the table, or, at times, in the first row of the congregation.

Men and women are relatively well dressed, yet some wear more casual clothing than would be deemed appropriate in an Orthodox or Conservative synagogue. Many women wear no head covering. Of those women who do, some wear a "male" skullcap and prayer shawl as well. (Proportionally fewer women appear in male religious regalia on family Sabbaths). All of the men wear skullcaps and prayer shawls. Many men fold their prayer shawls so that they appear more like scarves than body-wraps. The upshot is that the clothing of both men and women generally remains fully visible. The same is true of women's hair fashion.

Decorum is evident throughout the service. There is little talking or movement, other than that resulting from congregational singing and chanting and movements related to the ritual–standing, sitting, individuals moving to and from the table during the Torah reading as required. The differentiation of particular parts of the service by increased restriction on speech and movement is not in evidence. One finds only an undifferentiated, consistent politesse.

After a brief opening hymn, the service begins with the sabbath morning service proper, although the Reconstructionist prayer book does contain the preliminary blessings of the dawn and psalms. From the outset, the liturgy is reduced to the Reconstructionist's version of the rabbinic essentials, the *matbeah tefillah*.

The morning service proper, comprised of the *shema* and its blessings, the morning *amidah* and the Torah lecture and prophetic readings, are conducted in turn by the rabbi, with the

part-time *hazan sheni* reading the Torah and a capable congregant chanting the prophetic text. No effort is made to conduct matters so as to honor the rabbinic proscription of interrupting the main part of the service, the *shema* and its blessings and the *amidah* through the *sanctus*. The rabbi may interject very short prefatory remarks between passages of the liturgy and interrupts his own conducting of the liturgy to announce pages, for those who cannot follow the Hebrew. The usual congregational response to any use of the divine name in a blessing, namely, "blessed is he, and blessed is his name," is said in violation of the proscription. Some of the liturgy is read in English in unison, others responsively with the rabbi or a designated congregant. There is some variation in the texts recited from week to week. The rabbi may include a passage from some modern Jewish thinker's work in lieu of a traditional text. Parts of the text of the *shema* are read in unison in Hebrew and in English by the rabbi.

In traditional settings the *amidah* is once done silently by individual congregants as a personal devotion. The cantor then repeats the whole, now with the *sanctus*. The repetition includes near its end the priestly blessing of Leviticus (in some congregations performed by the members of the priestly caste, but usually by the cantor). In our Reconstructionist synagogue the morning *amidah* is begun in unison with the rabbi; the *sanctus* too is sung in unison. The remainder of the *amidah* continues in much the same way as the *shema*–some is chanted by the rabbi, some in unison, some in English. Again one observes variation from week to week. There is no repetition of the *amidah*. No part is done as a silent devotional prayer. Interestingly, the priestly blessing is said in unison, with the men wrapping their wives and children in the prayer shawl in a sort of family hug. There seems a clear understanding that each adult blesses the other spouse; adults bless their children. Single adults wrap and bless those next to them.

Following the *kaddish* (doxology) which concludes the *shema* and *amidah* and differentiates it from the Scriptural readings, the Torah scroll (usually one) is removed from the ark amid unison singing of the standard liturgical hymns. Two congregants, male or female, are honored with the opening and closing of the ark. The rabbi recites a meditation in English before the open ark (in lieu of the Zoharic meditation in the Orthodox and Conservative prayer books). After the scroll is taken out of the ark and the ark closed, the synagogue president (currently a woman), holding the Torah, leads a processional among the congregants, some of whom touch the outer covering of the scroll and then kiss their hand, the traditional act of veneration of the Torah scroll.

The scroll is brought to the Table, its coverings are removed by the reader and the reading proceeds. Just like traditional settings, congregants are called up in turn to recite the appropriate blessings over the reading of subsections of the day's

Torah portion. This honor is bestowed by a lay synagogue officer on men and women alike.

The traditional minimum of seven such "congregant-readers" (excluding the chanter of the Prophetic portion) is not observed. As a result the reading of the Torah portion for the day (according to the synagogue's triennial cycle of readings) remains unfinished.

Some few congregants themselves chant the text over which they have recited the blessings or read for other honorees. This is hardly the norm; few possess the requisite knowledge, and in any event, such an occurrence must be arranged in advance to allow for preparation on the part of the congregant reader. Being able to read the text, and to a lesser degree to chant the prophetic lecture, wins status and honor for the one so schooled.

The text of the blessings over the Torah reading are not those of the traditional liturgy. The latter refer unequivocally to the exclusiveness of the Jewish people and to the expectation of eternal life after death. Both have been edited out of the Reconstructionist version in favor of sentiments regarding the importance of the Torah as a guide and inspiration for the ongoing life of the Jewish people.

Rabbinic law establishes a protocol concerning the sequence of persons called up to recite the blessings over the Torah reading. The first such *aliyah* ("ascending" to the table) must go to a (male) member of the priestly caste, the second, to a (male) Levite. The remainder go to commoners. Our congregation has abandoned this protocol, just as they have essentially "democratized" the priestly blessing.

The reading of the Torah in a traditional congregation is a fairly drawn out affair. The lecture itself is lengthy, as the weekly Pentateuchal readings are defined so as to complete the entire Pentatauch in one year's cycle of Sabbaths. Ancient rabbinic texts indicate that in second and third century Palestine, each cycle took three years, a third of the Pentateuch being completed in any one year. Our Reconstructionist congregation has shortened the Torah reading by adopting a triennial cycle (evoking the ancient Palestinian custom as precedent). But they have organized their triennial reading of the Pentateuch in a curious manner. Each week they read one third of the normal weekly portion according to the traditional annual cycle. That is, in year one, they will read the first third of each weekly portion; in the second year, the second third, and so on. The obvious disadvantage is that the congregation never hears the text in sequence, but only as a curious array of disjointed chapters out of context. The advantage is that they may retain the traditional names for individual Sabbaths, each of which is normally referred to by the name of the weekly Torah portion. Furthermore, in their own view the congregation may legitimately observe the festival each Fall which celebrates the completion of the yearly cycle of Torah readings.

As in traditional congregations of European ancestry the scroll is held aloft for all to see at the conclusion of the readings. At this moment the traditional "catechism" chanted by the congregation specifies that "this is the torah which Moses placed before Israel, from the mouth of the Lord, by the hand of Moses." Such claims about revelation and Mosaic origins are excluded from the Reconstructionist liturgy.

The prophetic reading in Hebrew follows, chanted by a congregant of either gender with requisite competence. The Torah service generally continues with prayers for the State of Israel in English and Hebrew; although some weeks the prayer is overlooked. The traditional recessional with the Torah cum veneration and the returning of the scroll to the ark follows. Sometimes a meditation in English is recited by the rabbi before the closing of the ark.

At this point in modern Orthodox and Conservative congregations the rabbi delivers his sermon. In our congregation one would describe what transpires as a discussion led by the rabbi on a topic which he has chosen in advance. He briefly introduces the subject of discussion, often with reference to something in the Torah reading and how it relates to some salient contemporary problem, political, social or moral. He then chairs the open discussion among the congregants. It is clear that this is the highlight of the service for many of those in attendance. There is little reticence evident in joining the discussion. Congregants will freely disagree with one another and with the rabbi. The mode of argument is rarely based on appeals to Judaic texts, or principally Judaic texts, but remains largely the discursive rational argumentation which one normally associates with intellectual arguments among self-styled pundits. After a reasonable length of time the rabbi terminates the debate with some harmonizing remarks intended to bring some manner of closure to things.

An effort is made on family Sabbaths to have a guest lecturer in lieu of the rabbi. Again after the initial address the "sermon" evolves into a debate of sorts.

One cannot escape the feeling that these sermon discussions are felt to be the highpoint of the morning liturgy. The impromptu truncating of the morning service and Torah reading seem to be meant to allow sufficient time for an anticipated lengthier discussion.

The Reconstructionist prayer book has substantially reduced the concluding additional service. An opening text introduces the *kaddish*, which is followed by a hymn. The congregation under study generally eliminates the additional service altogether. The service concludes much as would a Conservative one, with *kaddish*, three concluding hymns sung in Hebrew (*ein keiloheinu, aleinu, adon olam*). The mourners' *kaddish*, recited by the bereaved, precedes the last hymn.

The congregation retires to the congregational *kiddush*, the blessing of the Sabbath day over wine followed by light refreshments and snacks. Congregants greet one another with *shabbat shalom* ("May you have a peaceful sabbath") and engage in light conversation before departing.

IV
Meaning and Explanation

As argued earlier, a major locus of meaning in contemporary Judaic liturgy derives from controlled variance of the structure of the traditional Orthodox service. This is especially so in the case under study. Our congregation is located in a sea of modern Orthodox congregations. To these Orthodox synagogues, friends, relatives and associates of our congregants go—however infrequently. No doubt, social and familial obligations oblige our Reconstructionists occasionally to attend Orthodox services. We deal, furthermore, with "first generation" Reconstructionists. Many or most will have had prior association with other congregations and received some religious education; these will likely have taken place in a modern Orthodox setting—even when families were not themselves Orthodox. A number of congregants in their 50's and 60's will have previously been members of more traditional synagogues. Our interviews indicate that many congregants, particularly males, have had extensive Orthodox religious education, some in day schools. Orthodoxy and its liturgical ritual is no distant ancestral memory. Rather, traditional Judaism is part of the life history of virtually all congregants and remains an ongoing aspect of their setting. It is in relation to that setting that they perform and experience their own Reconstructionist sabbath service.

On the surface, the sabbath morning liturgy as carried out by our Reconstructionist congregation intends to provide a meaningful experience of worship for congregants who are educated, highly secular, and liberal. The text of the liturgy strives for "intellectual honesty" by reflecting contemporary liberal attitudes and values. Claims regarding the exclusiveness of the Jewish People are shunned. The text excises allusions to the authority of a tradition believed to be revealed by a personal transcendent deity. In general, the supernatural is eschewed.

In the practice of the ritual the congregation strives to eliminate exclusive roles based on ascribed status. Men and women are supposed to participate equally in all aspects of the performance of the liturgy. The vestigial rights, privileges, and duties of the priestly caste also have disappeared.

Scratching the surface, however, one may expose other layers beyond the quite intentional reflection of liberal, intellectual, and egalitarian commitments. Their translation of much liturgical language into an egalitarian, rational, and natural idiom indicates a relative inability to view language as other than

discursive. B. Bernstein (1971) has studied the social factors underlying such preferred patterns of speech. Even if his study is ethnocentric, as some critics have maintained, Bernstein's findings appear germane to our data. M. Douglas (1975:175) provides us with an apt summary:

> Professor Bernstein pointed out that humans speak and that it is high time to note that speech is patterned in different ways according to the pattern of social relationships. He likened the control of speech by social factors to a coding system. The difference between fully explicit speech, the elaborated code, and the context dependent restricted code was obviously going to be crucial to education. For the child of [a] middle-class family is introduced to a set of roles and speech forms which is geared to success in school and the outside world where verbal explicitness counts. The child who can only handle the restricted code and who only knows social roles which are given implicitly, not defined verbally, is at a disadvantage in education.

Douglas elsewhere (1972) carries Bernstein further in proposing that persons who can "handle" restricted codes can "read," in context, the layers of implicit meaning in symbols and symbolic language, the very stuff of liturgy. They do not feel the need to have such language translated into an elaborated code which explicitly pins down a set of meanings communicating referential knowledge.

Those, on the other hand, who are more skilled in elaborated codes require just such a translation. The validity of the resulting referential knowledge will be judged by empirical canons. It is the latter state of affairs which appears reflected in the Reconstructionist congregation, particularly in the overall direction of emendations to the text of the liturgy.

In Bernstein's view it is the character of social relationships which is implicitly encoded in modes of speech; it is interesting to note that our congregants explicitly reject even vestigial religious authority based on ascribed status–male, priest, etc. They value achieved status based on academic-like Jewish learning and intellect, for them a competition much in tune with their general values and predilections outside the synagogue. Many indeed are rather highly educated professionals. Reconstructionists' social and socioeconomic commitments and relations in the everyday spheres of life are reflected in the relatively elaborate code of their liturgy Upon these basic predilections, not their Judaism, their livelihood and relatively high socio-economic status depends.

Other aspects of their service tend to confirm this impression. The "sermon" is not a sermon at all; it does not function to highlight the rabbinical expertise of the rabbi, but to manifestly edify the congregation. In the Reconstructionist setting the sermon's place is taken by something akin to a discussion or, at times, a debate. Therein congregants, the rabbi among them, vie with one another to display, first, their skills at social, moral and philosophical analysis and second, their knowledge of Judaic sources. This competition for achieved status based on intellect

extends beyond the sermon/debate; congregants compete to display the knowledge required (in ascending order) to read Hebrew, to chant the prophetic portion, and to chant the Torah reading. Each of these talents, which one may liken to academic achievement, wins recognition from fellow congregants.

Much of the structure of the service, when compared with Orthodoxy, appears congruent with the above analysis. Just as the social distinctions based on ascribed characteristics are explicitly rejected, so the definition of space and time in the liturgy implicitly expresses a lack of comfort with an autonomous special sacred realm. The distinguishing of particular moments in the liturgy which are increasingly removed from the realm of normal human activity, such as speech and movement, are less in evidence in the Reconstructionist liturgy. The Orthodox prohibitions limiting first speech and then movement of the feet are absent in the morning service and *sanctus*.

The relative lack of distinctively sacred realms appears all the more evident in spatial arrangements. Men and women sit together. The prayer shawls do not hide the individual's apparel. So no undifferentiated territory of white is created. The seats are moveable; the room is multifunctional; the synagogue architecture and internal appointments do not create the atmosphere of a *locus sanctus*; the Torah ark is transparent. The table from which the Torah is read and the service led by the rabbi is not always located on the *bima*; when the table stands at floor level, the rabbi sits in the first row of seats–part of the congregation and yet not entirely so. Even in the liturgy the Torah text itself ceases to retain its canonical closure. No longer is the Torah a sacred realm, the internal order of which cannot be changed, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing may be removed. The particular triennial cycle of reading adopted by the congregation reads the sections of Torah out of order and out of context. The practice, when pressed for time, of prematurely halting the reading of the Torah in Hebrew in order more speedily to complete the lecture in English further contributes to this effect. Indeed, time is saved especially for the sermon discussion.

The data indicating the rejection of autonomous bounded realms of time, space, and social caste may be interpreted in more positive terms as a proclivity toward mixing realms and crossing boundaries. The seating is mixed, with men and women sitting together. Some women wear male liturgical paraphernalia, the skullcap and prayer shawl. The table is often in the midst of the congregation. The transparent character of the ark seems to allow those outside constantly to penetrate it. Among the men, normal Western attire is not hidden by prayer shawls; rather liturgical and non-liturgical apparel are both fully visible. The rabbi does not wear clerical robes. The room in which the service takes place is multifunctional; indeed the entire synagogue building resembles in architecture a secular medium-sized business complex. The perquisites of ancient social castes are not only

rejected but also interspersed, by assigning functions traditionally reserved for a particular caste to any congregant.

In this liturgical mixture of realms and groups one finds a collective representation of the congregants' basic social values and proclivities. Among the primary questions facing North American Jewry for the last 100 years has been the appropriate degree of assimilation to the general social and cultural milieu. To state matters otherwise, what degree and what kind of mixture of the Jewish and non-Jewish realms is desirable? Various groups have responded differently to such questions. Some have expressed their desired degree of mixture not only via behavioral norms governing levels of social, economic and cultural dealings with the non-Jewish world (e.g., contemporary Orthodox legal interpreters, like Rabbi Moses Feinstein), but also have symbolically reflected their sensibilities in the style and character of their liturgies. Certainly that appears the case for our Reconstructionists.

The Reconstructionist liturgy of this congregation does not do away with the sacred. But neither does it define the sacred as that which occupies its own homogeneous territory, guarded and differentiated from other realms. Rather our reconstructionists appear to distribute or disperse the sacred throughout the ordinary. Material in suspension in a liquid may provide an analogy. The material does not dissolve; neither does the substance remain a solid block into which the liquid may not penetrate. Relative to the traditional Orthodox service, the Reconstructionist liturgy allows the traditionalists' hierarchy of differentiated realms in social, spatial, and temporal spheres to melt into one another. Thus priestly functions devolve upon non-priests. The *sanctus*, *amidah*, *shema*, and other prayers are not a clearly differentiated hierarchy of sacred moments defined by proscriptions regarding common speech and movement. In moving toward what Bernstein calls an elaborated code, the use of language in the Reconstructionist liturgy approaches that of everyday technical and rational society. The architecture of the building and its appointments do not so radically distinguish the place of prayer from mundane space, but relative to the traditional synagogue, effect a continuity between the sanctuary and normal territory.

If indeed our Reconstructionists feel comfortable in maintaining any distinctively sacred realm, perhaps it is in the realm of mind, in discursive communication and debate about Jewish history, values, and sources. If there remains "a people dwelling apart" for our congregants, it is participation in that discussion and debate which symbolizes belonging to that sacred people.

In summation, our Reconstructionists' transformation of the traditional sabbath morning liturgy encodes statements regarding the nature and boundaries of sacred castes, times, speech, and space. In all of these realms the effect is to soften the

boundaries of once clearly differentiated entities and to value a mixture of sacred and mundane, special and ordinary, religious professional and amateur. The blurring of these particular boundaries in the congregants' liturgy "fits" their social allegiances and values regarding participation in North American culture and society. Their liturgical practice will be experienced as particularly appropriate, given their social involvements; their social experience will feel emotionally satisfying and cogent in relation to their liturgy. Participating in the aesthetic, artistic, cultural, economic, and social enterprises of higher status North American society, Reconstructionists still assert the desire to remain Jews, so they mix once highly differentiated realms to create their particular variation of the traditional rabbinic sabbath morning service.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack N. Lightstone is Professor of Religion at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3G 1M8. He is the author of *Yose the Galilean: Traditions in Mishnah and Tosefta* (1979); *The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora* (1984); and *Society, the Sacred, and Scripture in Ancient Judaism: A Sociology of Knowledge* (1988). His articles have appeared in *Studies in Religion, The Journal of Religious Ethics, The Journal of Jewish Studies, Semeia,* and *Culture.* The author's research has attempted to bring social-scientific perspectives both to the analysis of historical data about Ancient Judaism and to the study of contemporary Jewish life and religion.

NOTES

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[1]Shared patterns, whether behavioral or literary, may convey meaning because of the law-like, albeit implicit, rules governing (1) the elements of the structured pattern, (2) the relations among those elements and (3) the range of permissible content of any one element. Such implicit meaning remains distinct from the particular substance in any one instance of the pattern. Indeed, one might argue that the meaning of the particular exemplar is in some measure dependent upon the existence of the structured pattern and the implicit meaning therein encoded. To put matters more forcefully, the explicit meaning of any occurrence of a pattern has somehow to do with both what at this juncture is (a) the same as and (b) different than other similar instances. The implicit meaning, conveyed in any one occasion has to do with (a) what is like other instances, (b) in spite of the differences.

[2]In practice, symbolic anthropology has come under fire for over-interpreting, and sometimes distorting beyond recognition, its evidence. I know of no methodological safeguard for this tendency—other than taste and judgment.

[3]They not only determine our methodology but also inform our selection of the data.

[4]The Reconstructionist prayer book is currently undergoing revision. As a result many of the above issues seem to be matters of current debate. And others, like gender specific language, join the list of salient issues.

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RITUAL CRITICISM AND REFLEXIVITY IN FIELDWORK

Ronald L. Grimes

Abstract

One view of ritual is that it is pre-critical, if not pre-rational, thus implying that criticism has no place in the inner circle of ritual enactment. To the contrary, I argue that ritual traditions typically involve the exercise of critical judgment, and therefore there is little point in scholars avoiding it. Ritual criticism is the act of making judgments about rites, and its exercise, especially by observers in cross-cultural contexts, is potentially laden with conflict. My aim is to reflect on some of the problems of engaging in criticism outside the context of one's own traditions. To this end I use a specific example, that of a classical Indian dance performance, and subject it to criticism in order to formulate and refine the critic's task.

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Greek root of "criticism" means "to judge." The Oxford English Dictionary notes that Dryden in 1674 linked the term to Aristotle's Poetics and used it to denote the observation of the "excellencies" of a work. When Matthew Arnold used it in 1865, he meant the disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate "the best." And when Dowden used it in 1878, he was referring to the ability to see things as they are without partiality–without the intrusion of personal likes and dislikes.

Between their times and ours circumstances have changed. No longer a term denoting a search for positive instances or the superior qualities of something, in current popular usage it carries a radically different connotation: criticism is an expression of personal tastes, particularly those that are negative.

My aim is not to overturn ordinary usage of the term "criticism" by ridding it of its negative overtones, because I am convinced by Kenneth Burke (1966) of the creative power of the negative. Instead I want to reflect on the process of evaluating rites, especially as encountered in fieldwork situations. Part of the work of ritual criticism is reflecting on the ways both participants and observers decide that one way of doing a rite is more effective or appropriate than some other way. Ritual criticism may include evaluative judgments, but only insofar as it takes into account the circumstances and contexts in which ritual knowledge (cf., Jennings) is produced.

Ritual criticism is value-laden but not merely personal inasmuch as it is contextualist in its approach. This contextualism does not mean that in practicing criticism one lapses into mere relativism–the view that one view is as good as another–only that criticism is never absolute and thus should never attempt to gain a privileged position. Judgment-making is always political, always interested, and thus always negotiated. There is no such thing as disinterested criticism, and for this reason it must systematically attend to the conditions of its own

constitution. Neither disinterested nor purely personal, ritual criticism is essentially dialectical. Nor should it be centered in a single religious tradition, academic discipline, or role such as "the critic."

The very phrase "ritual criticism" can raise eyebrows and provoke suspicion. On the one hand, it may sound too negative for liturgical theologians or too reductive for historians of religion. On the other, it may sound too normative for social scientists who study ritual. Nevertheless, ritual criticism goes on more frequently than we might suppose, no matter how ritual is practiced or studied, so I would defend the importance of engaging in it overtly. Ritual criticism is not necessarily either reductive in any social scientific sense or normative in any theological sense. Theology and the social sciences both have their ways of putting judgments into force; each is normative in a different way. Social scientific explanation typically exercises normative power by reduction. It looks for social functions beneath the avowed intentions of those who enact the rites. Talal Asad (1986:161) notes that the attribution of latent or implicit meanings to alien practices without the acknowledgment of the practitioners is a "theological" exercise.

Theologians, unlike social scientists, "elevate" rather than reduce; they appeal to norms "above," "below," or "behind" those acknowledged in the sciences. In religious studies, which claims both theology and social science as kin, the usual way off the horns of this dilemma is to resort to phenomenology, a peculiar kind of description, or, more accurately, a kind of rhetoric used for description. In my opinion a phenomenology of ritual is at best preliminary, and at worst, psychologically projective and ethically evasive.

Ritual criticism is not a posture of neutrality taken up between normative and explanatory disciplines or between religious traditions and cultures. The assumed universality of phenomenological description is no less "theological" than the assumed validity of scientific explanations. As distinct from both explanatory and phenomenological approaches, ritual criticism is a kind of cultural critique (see George Marcus and Michael Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* 1986; cf., Searle's "critical liturgy" 1981:349).

Why would anyone want to engage in ritual criticism? One reason is that people can be exploited by rites because they lack the means for judging them–particularly those guarded by claims of immunity from analysis–so we need a vocabulary that helps us recognize ritual exploitation. A second reason is that, since we do in fact evaluate rites as we try to revise them, we need to be more aware of the grounds for revision and the limits of tacit, as well as explicit, evaluation. Third, if ritualists borrow rites and parts of rites, discriminating what to leave and what to take, then it would be useful to understand the consequences and implications of such choices. And fourth, scholars sometimes claim that such-and-such

a gesture or function is appropriate to such-and-such a type of ritual, implying that different genres of ritual demand different sorts of criticism because each genre implies its own goals. These are some of the uses of ritual criticism.

To the anthropologist's ear the phrase "ritual criticism" may suggest ethnocentric judgments made about somebody else's rites. To a liturgist it could connote a theologian's program for liturgical revisionism. To a literary theorist it probably sounds enough like "literary criticism" to be either vaguely threatening or mildly interesting. When I first coined the phrase, I had in mind an analogy with literary criticism. The analogy was borrowed from Tom Driver (1977) who suggests that theology is to religion what literary criticism is to literature. Literature, like religion, is a primary process upon which secondary, more analytical, processes depend.

Scholars debate whether literary critics ought to exercise normative judgments, especially if they are made for the sake of a literature-consuming public, but, as far as I know, their differences do not lead them to reject the critical task altogether. Likewise, ritual studies ought not shirk the task either. Criticism in literature has a longer history than in either religious studies or anthropology. In fact, there are so many options that histories of criticism are possible and a meta-criticism has become necessary in order to classify schools of criticism, so one should be extremely careful when using literary criticism as a model. Two of the most reliable, recent guides to it–Wayne Booth's *Critical Understanding* (1979) and Frank Lentricchia's *After the New Criticism* (1980)–illustrate well the morass of misunderstanding that is possible among critics who think they must disprove other critics' perspectives before they can proceed. Since ritual criticism hardly exists except in covert or parochial forms, my problem is not how to sort out and identify the various schools but how to define the task and convince anyone it is worth doing.

The criticism of ritual ought to mediate between the theory and practice of it. And theorizing about ritual ought to be rooted in field study. Even ancient ritual texts are best interpreted in the light of methods developed out of actual observation of contemporary rites. In religious studies the priority of field study is not so clearly established as in anthropology, but there has long been a practice of anchoring theories of religion in the history of specific religions. The emphasis on fieldwork in ritual studies extends and deepens this commitment to the minute particulars of local practice. Ruel Tyson (1975:12), one of the pioneers of fieldwork in religious studies, argues:

> If the practice precedes the theory of it and if the explication of methods presupposes a history of application, then field work should precede theories of culture, including the relation between religious action and other cultural forms; and practical criticism should precede theoretical criticism.

Tyson refers to himself as a "practical critic," by which he means one who richly describes and interprets specific cultural performances. Perhaps I am not stretching his intention too far by suggesting that the practical critic is one who criticizes practice. If this extension of his definition is acceptable, I count myself a practical critic; my interest in ritual is not just theoretical.

However, for Tyson criticism is virtually synonymous with interpretation. For me it is not; criticism is one kind of interpretation. It is one aspect of the hermeneutics of ritual and does not constitute the whole of it. Rather, it is that phase of intercultural hermeneutics in which judgments are exercised and conflicting definitions of the situation made overt. Thus, it may evoke conflict and controversy. Some scholars would avoid the term "criticism" altogether. They prefer "interpretation," because it sounds less judgmental. They argue that even though "criticism" among academics is not supposed to connote saying negative things, it nevertheless encourages an insidious judgmentalism. But I am not convinced. Denying the element of criticism implicit in both the study and practice of ritual is like Pentecostals who deny they engage in ritual at all. Covert criticism too easily becomes repressed, hence lethal, so I prefer to retain the term with all its prickliness precisely because it reminds us of the grounds of inter-cultural and inter-religious conflict.

Ritual criticism is the activity of exercising judgment about a rite or some aspect of it. More precisely, it is the act of identifying and articulating the grounds–usually multiple and conflict laden–for evaluating them. Unlike ritual theories which aim to explain rites, ritual criticism may change, improve, establish, or disestablish them. Ritual criticism makes overt the "interested-ness" of enacting and interpreting rites. So it is not merely esthetic; it is also ethical and political.

Tyson insists on the priority of fieldwork, and his article in this issue of the *JRS* is a good example of a tightly focused case study based on long-term field study. But not all field situations are alike. What is expected of fieldworkers, by themselves as well as their hosts, varies widely. Though other trends are now emerging, theories of ritual have typically been generated by anthropologists and historians of religion working in non-Euroamerican contexts or by theologians able to presuppose longstanding, multi-national religious traditions. Such contexts presuppose greater spatial or temporal distances than have been characteristic of my most recent field projects, which have had to do with ritual and the arts.

Most of the situations out of which these reflections on ritual criticism arose were neither exotic nor traditional. Rather they were experimental and/or intercultural. All of the contexts were contemporary and North American. The durations were brief, ranging from a few hours to a few weeks. At first, I did not even

think of them as fieldwork, because they were concentrated on performances and events rather than traditions, cultures, or societies. Among them were three classical Indian dance performances,[1] an "environment" called "Tempest on Snake Island,"[2] the Towneley Cycle of Mystery Plays,[3] a consultation-with-performance on ritual and performance in the Canadian Museum of Civilization,[4] and an enactment of an Ndembu rite by students of Edith Turner.[5]

Insofar as these contexts for ritual criticism involved observation, participation, and documentation they resemble anthropological field study. But insofar as they called for overt judgments and involved discussions about the adequacy, authenticity, and effectiveness of enactments and performances, they have similarities to liturgical and artistic criticism.[6] Willingness to respond was often laid down as one of the conditions of my participation and observation. In almost every instance I was invited for a short period to observe and/or participate and assess, so I was not afforded the luxury of detachment, scientific or otherwise. I have no objection to labelling them "field consultation" rather than "fieldwork," as long as it is recognized that one sometimes encounters similar consultations in the midst of more standard fieldwork situations.

A more schematic summary of some of the contexts of ritual criticism includes at least the following:

1. Emic (within a religio-cultural tradition)

1.1 Ritual conflict, e.g., the sort of criticism implicit in contests between sorcerers or in "guerrilla" masses celebrated in defiance of church authorities
1.2 Ritual revision, both overt and implied, in the normal course of transmitting and adapting rites

2. Cross-cultural (between religio-cultural traditions)

2.1 Polite, self-conscious, inter-religious, dialogical criticism.
2.2 Less planned, not so polite, culture-contact: polemical criticism
2.3 Inter-cultural performances (e.g., tourist Voodoo) that call for "appreciation" or similar esthetic responses

3. Etic (between a scholarly or "foreign" tradition and an indigenous and/or religious one)

3.1 Field study criticism, e.g., verbal give-and-take between observers and participants

3.2 Academic critique (which is sometimes quite different from what goes on in the field, because it occurs in the presence of colleagues)
3.3 Evaluative consultation, e.g., applied anthropology or similar activities in which an outsider, sometimes considered an authority, responds to a ritual event

Ritual criticism is obviously neither ethnography nor literary criticism. In none of the dozen or so instances of this sort of consultative field observation has anyone either used the term, specified a clear aim, or defined the process. But I suspect that the role I am being asked to play is not entirely new. I suspect that from time immemorial ritualists have asked others what they thought about rites not their own.

Field workers, especially new ones, are usually preoccupied with their motivations and purposes. But often we forget that participants, performers, and ritualists have their own purposes for inviting us or allowing us to observe. So consultation is, or ought to be, mutual. Perhaps we use them as "data," but they use us as well. The presence of a field worker in a tribal household may, for example, bring prestige (or blame). Thus a participant-observer may be tolerated for reasons that differ widely from his or her own motives.

In North American contexts one is sometimes invited under the rubric of "critic" or "respondent" when the unspoken expectation is that one function as publicity agent or chronicler. Both I and my students have encountered this in our field studies. Since I had not sought most of the occasions I have mentioned, I was not initially very self-conscious about defining what I was doing. Neither were hosts; often they were motivated by curiosity: What would "a ritual studies person" observe and say? The actual process was sometimes unnerving to them. Even educated, literate audiences become self-conscious when someone is invited to observe them, especially when it becomes known that the whole event, not just the officially designated performance, is being watched and interpreted. For example, because I defined the Toronto Towneley as an "event" rather than a "theater performance," I included not only the plays but also actors' and audience members' ways of framing their roles. Thus, when photographers moved closer to cut out the Park Plaza Hotel sign from their photographs of Jesus on the cross, I moved back to be able to include the Park Plaza sign as well as the media people and buffs with their cameras. Ritual criticism involves documenting those who document, and so doing evokes considerable self-consciousness.

How far a theorist can extend field observations beyond their immediate occasion is always a matter for debate. The extension of the "case study" that follows is no less problematic; in fact, it may be more so because of its unfinished nature. Not yet having

produced an adequate example of ritual criticism and knowing of none by other scholars–though some of the writings of Tyson, Schechner, and reflexive anthropologists such as Crapanzano and Rabinow come close–I have chosen to represent my own work in process. What follows, then, is not quite ritual criticism but rather the remarks which first forced me to think of what I was doing as ritual criticism. They were written to be delivered orally in a response to a performance. Subsequently, the remarks themselves will be subjected to criticism.

Indian Dance Seen With a Western Eye

"On other occasions I have been asked to respond, to a Bharata Natyam performance. The responses were of differing sorts: bodily in a workshop, informally in discussions with a theorist and critic, and now, formally 'from the point of view of ritual studies.' Not invited as an expert on either dance or Indian religions, I come as a student of ritual. On earlier occasions organizers, dancers, audience, and I have queried each other: Is Bharata Natyam ritual or drama? Usually we concluded with a both-and answer of some sort. How to define what was transpiring in front of us was a major question, not just for me but for performers and audience."

"It is not easy to say what Bharata Natyam is. Usually, it is described as a classical performance style from India, one that combines dance, drama, storytelling, and ritual. Publicity frames such an event as a 'classical Indian dance.' To the Western ear the phrase creates certain expectations. 'Classical' suggests 'quasi-canonical.' This is not entirely inappropriate, because Bharata's codification of the *Natya Shastra*, on which Bharata Natyam is partly based, is sometimes referred to as 'the fifth Veda.' 'Fifth Gospel' would be a loose analogue. Of the classical we do not expect radical innovation or obvious experimentation but fidelity to a finely honed tradition. However, like classical ballet dancers, Bharata Natyam performers can exercise considerable creativity by re-combining elements within the tradition, and practitioners differ in their sense of obligation to the purity of the tradition."

"For Western audiences the classical is likely to be consumed 'with taste.' 'Classical' connotes 'not folk' and is for 'the cultured.' We do not, for example, speak of classical Pueblo or Navajo dance; clearly certain class and ethnic values are encoded in the designation. We are likely to construe the classic as purer and more static than it really is."

"To the Westernized ear 'Indian' may at first mean only 'not American,' 'not European.' By virtue of its otherness, Indian dance can be dismissed as 'theirs, not ours.' It can be liberally and tolerantly appreciated, venerated just because it is different, or romanticized as exotic. Because it is other than North American, we inevitably search for similarities and analogues. We are unable to see it with an Asian eye; this inability is both a liability

and an opportunity. Purists–and they are as numerous among buffs as among practitioners–might insist classical Indian dance is 'archetypally' Indian or that the iconography of its gestures, postures, and rhythmic patterns should be traditional, as opposed to imported or made up. But the complexity of modern Indian, as well as North American, society and history militates against purism. In previous Bharata Natyam performances I have witnessed that both the Indianizing of the North American eye and the westernizing of classical Indian dance were transpiring. The cultural dynamics of such cross-fertilizing are not unique. Tourists in Arizona, for example, regularly fail to recognize that twentieth century rock music and nineteenth century pan-tribal circle dancing are now as Navajo as the traditional 'sings' (see Martin 1979)."

"Ritual studies, at least as I view it, begins with the act of describing the performance events themselves rather than with standards 'above,' parallels 'beside,' or heritages 'behind' what is seen. And such a description has to include in it the frames of reference of those involved in the event, not just the primary actors. And this includes the audience. The interpreter of ritual is obligated to say as much about the *seeing* of the performer's dance, as about the seeing of her *dance*, or the seeing of *her* dance. One's seeing and hearing are almost as ritualized as an actor's performance, and the study of ritual must attend the ritual of spectating as well as the ritual of dancing."

"This performance event has transpired in a non-sacred time slot. By being situated in the post-dinner hour of 8 o'clock and not, say, at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, sundown on Friday, or 9 a.m. on Monday the event is dissociated from worship and work respectively and associated with entertainment."

"This event functions as both interlude and finale in relation to events that surrounded it. As interlude it helps us relax and recover from the major 'acts,' the usual sequence of academic discussion and lecture. As finale, it suggests that intellectualizing exists for the sake of the object of study–in this case, performance. Following the performance with a discussion between a moderator and discussant, however, re-frames it as 'subject matter' or 'data,' thus implicitly confessing our ignorance of it while symbolizing our intention to understand it. We are supposed to enjoy it as entertainment, appreciate it as culture, and understand it as subject matter–all this in a focused American two hours, not a diffuse, Indian afternoon."

"Spatial framing of classical Indian dances in North America tend to be simple. Wooden floors are essential for the drumming actions of the dancer's feet. Beyond this requirement settings and physical properties have been minimal in all cases I have observed including this one. One such event was held in the basement of a church; another in an auditorium. (The very fact that church stages are typically in basements tells us a great deal about the place of drama in Christianity)."

"In the performance we have just witnessed action clearly dominated scenery; scene did not 'act' except, according to a few audience members, to detract. The flowers, candles, incense, and small pictures provided by the performers were relegated to background and defined as devotional rather than dramatic accompaniment to the dance itself."

"This is the second occasion on which I have seen performers who were North American women trained by Indian teachers. And their self-understanding of their roles differs from that of conventional North American theater actors. Although they played their roles in subjunctive mode, 'as if' they were real, this dramatic self-consciousness did not stop them from denying that they were merely acting. One of the performers said she incarnated the deities she danced; the other spoke of it as an act of devotion."

"Both wore traditional Indian costumes, the main function of which was not to convey office or character but to create beauty and generate an atmosphere. The costumes were neither official uniforms nor theatrical, character-specific costume. In the West this way of using costume is probably more characteristic of oral storytelling than of ritual or drama. In storytelling dress is often neutral, since a single teller may have to tell about, and act out in a limited way, several characters."

"Bodily training is essential in classical Indian dance. Neither performer denied the body; both affirmed it. And both insisted that, done properly, bodily training and spiritual training were the same thing."

"One of the most Westernized features of these two performances was the tendency toward autobiography. Both dancers and audience expressed interest in performer's autobiographies. Many audience members were looking for autobiographical traces between the cracks of the formalized structure of the dance. The dancers spoke of their own lives and spiritual journeys. Audiences wanted to know how each woman came to do what she was doing and what it meant to her personally. Audience members implied that they venerated dance forms for their capacity to express performers' personality and values. Inquirers, with very little questioning, took the performers' feelings about their own performances to constitute the meanings of those performances. In ritual criticism we do not ignore ritualists' comments but interpret them in the light of gestures, social situation, and historical context."

"But what about the actual art form itself? Diagrammatically representing the form and style of a dance is notoriously difficult. The earliest dance notation records (as opposed to descriptions) are from fifteenth century Catalonia, and the major systems presently in use, e.g., Labanotation, date back only to the turn of the century. These technical ways of describing movements are not intelligible to untrained audiences. So it is best to attempt a brief, non-technical description of characteristic gestures and

postures. It would be interesting to know whether we could agree upon a common description."

"As audience, we can respond to the geometric and kinesthetic qualities of classical Indian dance without ever knowing whether or what they signify. In this, and only in this sense, is a dance 'universal.' Classical Indian dance is not universally intelligible (probably no art form is) even in India. Even there, the dance sometimes survives for viewers by virtue of formal qualities which do not 'mean' in the same way some of the *mudras* (hand gestures) do."

"Seen formally, Bharata Natyam is not basically aerial, though it can include occasional spins and leaps. The distinctive bent-knees form a triangular base that grounds the flowing upper limbs. The style is less flight-oriented than ballet, which in its early history sometimes used wires to lend bird-like qualities to dancers. We are shown most postures frontally; seldom are profiles or backsides presented. In comparison to Western dance forms, the facial gestures of Bharata Natyam are both articulated and stylized in greater detail, and in prescribed, not spontaneous, ways. The dancer's face is not neutral or 'neutral-elevated' as we see in ballet. Many of the hand and arm gestures are obviously mimetic, but we would wrongly conclude that all of them are. Another notable feature is that movements are often momentarily frozen into sculpture-like poses. Marceau says of Western performance, 'A mime sculptures space while a dancer fills it' (cited in Royce 1977:51). In classical Indian dance the dancer fills space and sculpts her or his body."

"Since Bharata Natyam is a veritable catalogue of Indian sculptural iconography, one ought to ask to what extent the postures were hyperboles and to what extent, actually reflective of bodily comportment in India. The layering of gestures is thick. Among its sources are Indian temple carvings, ordinary Indian interaction, codified Bharata Natyam gestures, and improvisations of the dancers themselves, including some that seem recognizable as American gestural accents or female mannerisms. (No doubt, this comment will elicit debate)."

"The narratives in the Bharata Natyam performance we have seen were erotic, a quality Western audiences resist treating as religious. Besides being danced, Bharata Natyam performances are also told. Dancers become narrators telling stories of passion and love. In telling them, they play the roles of characters, for example, courtesans and deities. Though the dance, story, and drama are erotic, I doubt that on first viewing, our Westernized eyes actually perceived them as such, no matter how we conceived them. What was done with pelvis, breasts, buttocks, eyes, and thighs was not immediately recognizable to us as erotic. To be sure, the audience immediately perceived the sensuousness of the dance, but in the generalized way tree bark or flower petals are sensuous. It is another step from the sensuous to the erotic, and yet another from the erotic to the sexual (a step not taken in

Bharata Natyam). As soon as the Westernized mind knows one of the performances is about a courtesan, the Westernized eye expects provocative, sexual gestures. But identifying courtesans with prostitutes, we learn by understanding this performance, is ethnocentric. So the audience had to work to perceive the dance as religiously erotic rather than sensual only in the broad sense or sexual in the narrow sense. When we succeeded, we learned to imagine a courtesan as something other than degraded, the object of contempt, pity, or lust."

"Western religions tend to segregate eroticism from spirituality. The exceptions are in mystical and romantic tributaries to mainline traditions.[7] As if to compensate, popular sentimentality makes a quasi-religion of passion and elevates gender display to iconic status only to exploit it commercially. The result is anything but spiritual or erotic. The efforts of spiritually minded choreographer-dancers such as Martha Graham and liturgical dance societies have chipped away at the wall that traps dance into estheticism and identifies religion with private piety or public morality. But the Western eye is rooted in genre distinctions which are themselves classificatory grids in a cosmology and thus not likely to be overturned by a performance."

"The language of Bharata Natyam is predominately gestural, not textual. There are texts, but texts alone are considered inadequate instruction; one must study with a teacher. The gestures themselves are highly formulaic and stylized. Seen formally, they appear ritualistic to Westerners, but "translated" into dialogue, some of the stories sound quite secular and dramatic."

"Perhaps all gestures have meaning, but not in the same way. Some of them are codified, named, taught, and recognized; others are not. Bharata Natyam is full of the former sort. The codified ones in the dances were used less to tell than to illustrate or evoke a narrative based on a story about divinely inspired love. However, the dances included far more than the sum of its narratively inspired gestures."

"The pantomimic vocabulary of Bharata Natyam is not a language in the strict sense. I doubt that anyone could actually use it to tell new stories to those who are not already familiar with them by other means. Western dance and drama have dropped many of the elements of gestural language from their vocabulary. Western artists have largely abolished the allegorical, noun-like postures and gestures that used to characterize elocution manuals and the stage. Such gestural vocabularies we associate with slapstick, melodrama, or the sign language of the deaf. Consequently, we have to do perceptual and attitudinal work not to see the *rasas* of classical Indian dance (mood stylizations) as stereotyped; archetype and stereotype seem to appear in the same image."

"In cross-cultural situations what gestures evoke from an audience may be dissonantly related to the intentions of

performers. Gestural dissonance can be the occasion for various responses: concluding someone is ill or possessed, evoking fascination, or entering into intercultural conflict and misunderstanding. On some occasions it educates or even inspires."

"In most respects this audience is like the ones that attend any esthetic or cultural function in the West. However, we did not have to pay admission, and we are expected to reflect on what we have witnessed. Though audience members hardly function as a congregation, we are in limited ways a community. The conventional way a Western audience symbolizes its recognition that a performance is sacred is silence, non-applause. Occasions such as this one are anomalous. We are not a religious community. Yet the semi-religiously motivated performance has been set in the midst of cultural-educational activities, so by definition we are not watching only to enjoy. From the point of view of those who subsidized the performances, they should have educated us. From the point of view of the dancers they should have also inspired us. Whether or not the intentions of either dancers or audience are religious, the social definition of the situation is not, unless we want to claim that the study of religion is itself religious. For most audience members this performance was an object of study or esthetic contemplation rather than a medium of sacred participation. Audience members have repeatedly remarked on the beauty of the gestures. This sort of comment is what observers sometimes offer when they like a performance but do not know what else to say. Beauty is a value-conferring notion, one that, historically speaking, refers to form as the object of that evaluation."

"The actions of Bharata Natyam both frame and are framed. They are framed by being stylized, set on a stage, put in a specific time slot, and so on. They frame by constructing, at least momentarily, a worldview, a lens through which other things can be perceived. In comparison to modern Western dance or to classical Western liturgies the Bharata Natyam performances are quite plot-oriented, a feature North Americans associate with drama. However, most of the stories they tell are set in mythic time, a feature typical of ritual. Emphasis is upon theatrical rehearsal and spiritual preparation equally, but since small shrines were erected on stage, and performers made offerings to their teachers and patron divinities, some Western audience members might want to define the event as a rite. Most, however, probably frame the actions as drama or dance."

"Much more could be said about this specific performance or about classical Indian dance in general, but my aim has been simply to engage in some brief reflections that indicate possible directions for the study of ritual and theater. A theater critic might have assessed the energy and precision of the dancer and, at least implicitly, compared her work to other Bharata Natyam performances, or, if daring, to classical ballet or modern jazz

dance. Such a critic might have recommended one of the performers or performances above the others. A historian of religion, on the other hand, might have told us more about their rich textual and contextual allusions and, if predisposed to flirt with anthropology, compared it to, say, reconstructions of pre-Columbian dance in the Valley of Mexico or to pan-tribal powwow dances at the turn of the century. Both sorts of insight could lead us beyond, or deeper into, the impressionistic way most of us are bound to respond to classical Indian dance in North America."

"I am hesitant to draw any general, scholarly conclusions on the basis of observing a few Bharata Natyam performances, but I would venture the following as tentative hypotheses for further cross-cultural testing and theoretical reflections:"

> "[1] All performance includes ritualistic and dramatic (confirmatory and conflictual) framing, though they do so in greatly varying degrees. The work of ritual criticism is to attend to and describe all the forms of action no matter how they are labeled. Only subsequently, ought one worry about the problem of relating various genres of action such as dramatic and ritualistic."
>
> "[2] A performance should not be described as religious simply because a performer intends it so. Nor is it artistic because an audience determines to see it as such. The meaning of a performance, insofar as it resides in texts or in actors' intentions, can be drastically modified, if not inverted, by its meaning as a social 'event.' A rite's intentions (in the formalistic, Aristotelian sense) may be in marked conflict with the intention of both performers and observers. The weight of social and spatial contexts may override intentions (in both the psychological and formalistic senses of the word). Ritual criticism requires attention to the dissonance between intentions and functions."
>
> "[3] Dissonance of intentions does not always imply that a performance has failed,[8] since ritual regularly exploits such dissonance. In postmodern North America dissonance is increasingly being regarded as an achievement."
>
> "[4] Performance in the Western world is commonly treated as a commodity with attendant dynamics of objectification, marketing, display, and research. No theory of ritual ought to denigrate this social fact as a substitute for interpreting it. The ritual critic must

attend to basic social facts of enactment–in this case, at least gender and ethnicity."

"[5] North American audiences are typically split between those who 'see' and those who 'feel' a performance. Other cultures may 'move' (kinesthetically) one or 'hear' one. Cultures seem to have a tacit hierarchy in their way of valuing and ignoring sensory input (cf., Ong 1962:ch.2,5). An important factor in inter-cultural events is the difference between varying modes of sensorium organization. Ritual criticism must not presuppose that one sensory mode is more essential than another."

"[6] In the study of performative genres there is sometimes a hermeneutical circle operative not only between performers and viewers or performers and scenarios but also between artistic genres. This fact is humorously illustrated by a dialogue between King Vajra and the sage Markandeya."

> King Vajra requests the sage to accept him as his disciple and teach him the art of icon-making, so he may worship the deities in the proper forms. The sage replies that one cannot understand the principles of image-making without a knowledge of painting. The king wishes for instruction in this art and is told that unless he is accomplished as a dancer, he cannot grasp even the rudiments of painting. The king requests that he be taught dancing, whereupon the sage replies that, without a keen sense of rhythm or a knowledge of instrumental music, proficiency in dance is impossible. Once again the king requests that he be taught these subjects; to which the sage replies that a mastery of vocal music is necessary before one can be proficient in instrumental music (from the Visnudharmottara Purana cited in Vatsyayan 1968:2).

"The king, we are told, learns them all. One is left suspecting that, upon finishing, he will be advised by the sage that he must now master the art of self-knowledge and observation. Whether this is so or not, one conclusion seems clear: in India one art must be seen in terms of another, and therefore, in North America seeing dance only as dance is the surest way to alter its meaning fundamentally. The ritual critic must attend to connections between media."

***

Some Principles of Ritual Criticism

This excursion into classical Indian dance constitutes neither an ethnographic field study nor a fully developed work of ritual criticism. My point in including it is simply to ground these reflections in some specific field data and to precipitate discussions about the critique of rites and ritualized performances. Perhaps it suggests well enough how criticism can proceed only if it uncovers the implicit definition(s) of the situation. Typically, such situations are multiply framed with implicitly conflicting definitions. For the North American Indian-trained dancers the performance was efficacious ritual; for the audience, it was entertainment, education, and culture. But having recognized the differing definitions of the situation, we have only begun the work of criticism. Several things are missing from the account, and I will try to enumerate them in the context of some basic principles of ritual criticism.

(1) **Describe fully, evocatively, contextually**. Since criticism is a judgment-laden activity, adequate description must precede it. Criticism is always present in any scholarly account, including what appears to be sheer description. The ritual critic cannot hide behind such descriptions and phenomenologies. Descriptions, like performances, are implicit critiques. As Tyson (1975:35) puts it, "Modes of presentation are signals of evaluation." Criticism is inescapable, though one can minimize, disguise, or try to subdue it. I have my doubts about the possibility of fully disengaging normative and critical intentions from descriptive ones, although both anthropologists and religionists regularly try.

Knowing well that descriptions themselves are rife with covert criticism, many of us are nevertheless unwilling to give up the attempt to suspend judgment temporarily and thus separate, momentarily, description and criticism. Suspension of judgment, however, is an insufficient, though necessary, procedure.

Though I have been critical of hiding behind descriptions, especially when they function as covert theology, there is no substitute for an adequate, well contextualized description of a rite as the basis for criticism.

In retrospect descriptions of Bharata Natyam in the preceding account seem both too brief, too generalized, and insufficiently contextualized both historically and sociologically. In some places I conflate more than one performance, thus my descriptions of the postural and gestural style of Bharata Natyam lack specificity. Much is missing: colors of costume, light intensity, sound quality, the smell of incense, quotations from dancers and audience. The work of generalizing begins too soon, and the philosophical preoccupations sometimes attenuate descriptive attentiveness.

Since my remarks were scheduled to follow the performance, it seemed unnecessary to describe what we had just seen. However,

my comments soon reveal that we do, in fact, see "different" performances even when we see "the same" performance.

(2) Articulate multiple points of view and maintain the plurality of voices. Ritual criticism involves the articulation of conflicts between at least two standpoints, often, but not necessarily, those known as insider/outsider, participant/observer, or emic/etic points of view. These are not always held by different persons. An insider can both participate and observe, just as an outsider can both observe and participate.

Points of view and purposes are often–perhaps, usually–plural and dissonant, so this plurality should be made explicit and treated as an object of criticism. This amounts to saying that ritual criticism, as a matter of principle, involves reflexivity. Criticism of a rite, particularly if it is someone else's, is warranted only if it eventuates in self-criticism as well.

My account notices the multiplicity of viewpoints and the plurality of voices, but it fails to present them. As we say of bad fiction, it *tells* us but does not *show us*. The reader has to take my word for it (though the audience did not). Even though I might have been quizzed by participants and audience, their queries do not make it into my account. Even when I am, in fact, answering their questions, those questions are not on the surface of the account.

(3) Locate the sources of indigenous criticism and account for them. Ritual criticism in postmodern North America seems to assume a highly reflexive event-orientation. Whether or not such an orientation is found elsewhere, some sort of ritual criticism is probably an aspect of ritual practice and study in every culture, including decidedly local ritual traditions found in societies more circumscribed than our own. Criticism is implicit in any performance. Thus, a scholarly ritual critic, refusing the assumption that rites themselves are pre-critical, should formulate indigenous, or participant, criticism explicitly. Criticism is not only of rites but by rites. Practices, like theories, imply value judgments. Ritualists are seldom uncritical about their rites, although their criticism may be implicit rather than explicit, or they may select the audiences before whom critiques are aired. And participants have their own ways of explaining the explainers, by mime for example.

Participant, or indigenous, criticism can take a variety of forms: the social and religious critique implied by an actor's or group's continuing practice; the ongoing criticism within a group or tradition that enables it to select this and reject that; and public criticism by observers of performances. Comments by a ritual critic are valid only insofar as they take account of the ways participants themselves evaluate their own activities.

My account of Bharata Natyam does not sufficiently distinguish nor adequately develop the various axes along which criticism might move: between the dancer and her teacher, between audience and dancer, between audience and respondents,

between respondents and dancer, between audience factions. Both on-stage and after-performance politics are opaque in the account. In addition, more sustained biographical interviewing probably would have uncovered other polarities generative of self-criticism, e.g., between the dancer's North American and her Indian qualities, or between her desire to innovate and her desire to transmit a tradition, and so on.

(4) **Make explicit the grounds of scholarly criticism.** Criticism is always from a point of view and for a purpose, both of which should be specified. But often an explicitly stated purpose, such as the testing of a theory, is not the only purpose–maybe not even the real, which is to say, dominant purpose. Interpreters of rites are just as liable to have unrecognized agendas as participants are to have unrecognized functions for their rites. Consequently, one purpose for studying rites may be to discover one's own judgments and values. Whether or not this is a stated purpose, it is often a side-effect.

Ritual criticism needs to specify what it is against or what it is avoiding. When early anthropologists followed in the wake of missionaries, they were determined not to impose clothes and values. Like early anthropologists who defined themselves as not-missionaries, the first generation of religionists defined themselves polemically as not-theologians. Not theologians, we religionists have not wanted to be imitation anthropologists either.

One can smell these agendas behind the scenes of my account. In addition I wanted to avoid engaging in theater criticism (often calculated to inform culture consumers so they can make good choices in ticket buying). But a reader has to infer these motives. Further, my account, like many that issue from religious studies, is theory-shy. It would probably be better if it were not. I can only hope this exercise moves one step closer to the formulation of ritual theory.

Theories and explanations imply values and criticisms which can only be hidden but not escaped. Like it or not, theories and explanations are often experienced by participants as critiques. If we scholars can argue that rites function differently from ritualists' intentions, we should recognize that our theories often function differently from our intentions.

Explanation is a kind of criticism. Just as description and prescription are inevitably tangled, so are explanation, appreciation, and criticism. Functionalist and psychological interpretations of rites are often experienced by ritualists as critiques whether or not they are so intended.

Like theories and explanations, assumptions about the genre of a performance (e.g., that it is a "ritual drama," that it is a "rite of passage," etc.) imply principles of criticism: rites of passage should transform and weddings should wed. Even though genre definitions may be empirically derived, they often function as norms and determinants of scholarly expectation.

My treatment of genre, whether correct or not, is overt and played off conflicting specifications of genre. Genre and definition are tightly interwoven considerations, and they form, covertly or overtly, the basis of any evaluative conclusions that a ritual critic may tender.

(5) Criticism should take the form of mutual consultation. Ordinarily, the right to engage in ritual criticism should be granted as well as earned. Because it is ethical in nature, this will probably be my most controversial proposition. By arguing that ritual criticism is not a right, I am emphasizing its interpersonal, intercultural nature. But this is not enough. In most situations I believe that the ritual critic should be granted the right to criticize by participants. I say "most" because in situations of ritual abuse, waiting for permission can itself become an ethically questionable act. Criticism may serve scholarship in the end, but in the beginning it must serve participants and performers. The practice and criticism of ritual are systemically interrelated tasks and their circularity is potentially infinite. In less metaphysical and more practical terms this means that the task of criticism is never finished. There is no such thing as the criticism that ends all criticism.

James Dittes (1977) has presented a strong argument for locating the reality of an event *between* an observer and performer–which is to say, not *in* a dancer, tradition, script, or observer. In "The Investigator as an Instrument of Investigation," he illustrates ways of avoiding both an "inflated" approach (in which an observer substitutes him- or herself for the data) and an "incongruent" one (in which the observer's reactions are suppressed). He illustrates how to cultivate an "instrumental" method in which the observer's involvement is actually a critical tool, not merely an introductory, pre-investigative fact. His method–and I believe it is a method, not merely an idiosyncratic preference–forces us to examine not just the formal structures of a performance but audience response as well, and a scholar is merely a particular sort of audience member. We must study performative events, not just the movements of the dance itself, and respondents are sometimes part of such events, both in Asia and in the West.

In my account of Bharata Natyam the parameters of consultation are barely perceptible; the reader would have to guess the extent to which the response was consensual and the extent to which it was an individualistic tour de force. That I was invited and did not barge in like Frank Hamilton Cushing ("first U.S. Ethnographer and War Chief among the Zuni," as he used to sign his name) among the Zuni is clear enough, but to work as valid ritual criticism we need to know much more about behind-the-scenes interaction.

(6) Specify the audiences and reflect on the ways they shape the tenor of the various performances–religious, artistic, scholarly. Actual audiences and anticipated audiences

often differ. When they do the results can be quite revealing. This discrepancy can be as true of audiences for articles as for religious enactments and artistic performances.

My response takes account of certain features of the audience, e.g., that it is educated, Western, etc., and the rhetoric of the presentation is attuned to the interests of such. But it says nothing about the dancer's image of the audience both before and after performance. To what extent did it determine or influence her selection of dances? To what extent did it condition her attitude?

Anytime a response has to follow a performance immediately, it is inevitably pressured to serve as applause, as appreciation. Perhaps respondents can also provide further information, say, about the history of the art form. But probably only a scholar would feel obligated to try to turn post-performance response into theorizing or, if a theater critic, into criticism. My account lacks the edge it is required to take on if the anticipated audience is the readership of a scholarly journal.

Genres of criticism, like genres of performance, have different effects and so do assumptions about the ultimate destination of criticism. Knowing that participants will read one's interpretations of their rites makes a difference in what is written about them.

The hosts, who posed the initial question–which was something like, "What could you as a ritual studies scholar contribute to our understanding of Bharata Natyam?"–were not the only ones to whom I addressed my response. For example, the dancer on this occasion was, in fact, quite hungry for informed critique. (On another occasion response was met with indifference; on another, it would have been defined as out of bounds).

(7) **Ritual criticism ought to be written reflexively.** At its best ritual criticism is self-critical. Scholars studying ritual have generally avoided systematic or overt criticism for a variety of reasons, among them a desire to avoid self-righteous, religiously inspired judgmentalism. Religious studies scholars have tried to avoid what one might call "religiocentrism," making judgments about one religious tradition from the point of view of a privileged other tradition. This view has often been buttressed by a rhetoric requiring authors to be missing, or more accurately, transparent but in full control. I am not suggesting that scholarly writing should lapse into autobiography or become self-preoccupied, but it should be self-aware; an author should be sufficiently visible that readers have some idea how to compensate for inherent biases.

No doubt there is a danger that in ritual studies rites and ritualists can become displaced by ritologists bent on understanding what they are doing. So perhaps the call for reflexivity is only a necessary transition phase. But the notion of reflexivity, the capacity for performed self-observation, has recently become important in some anthropological approaches to ritual (cf., Ruby 1982), and it ought not be dismissed as mere

academic narcissism. Significantly, anthropologists are locating reflexivity in ritual performance, not in scholarly observation. If this claim is at all true, it suggests that reflexivity, though it may in some instances be a disease, is probably both widespread and normal.

Reflexivity is at the center of my account. Attention is on the interaction of Western expectations and an Asian dance form. But it is not systematic in its exploration of the means and extent of performative self-consciousness. Consider the questions that are not entertained: Do Bharata Natyam dancers train with mirrors? How self-conscious was this dancer? How does she gain perspective on herself? By asking others? By imagining how she looks? What exists for the sake of what in this event? Does the dance give rise to reflection, both hers and ours? Or does reflection require the dance as illustration?

Reflexivity need not be personal or autobiographical, so similar questions can be raised about Western audiences. We desperately need an audience or congregation criticism that parallels reader criticism in the study of literature, because, just as authors alone do not make meanings, neither to ritualists.

Obviously, I am now in deep and murky waters, which I would have avoided if I could, but I have argued that criticism is inescapable. It can be rejected as altogether out of place and thus carried on clandestinely; left only to scholars as an arcane activity or only to practitioners as an esoteric one; regarded as antithetical to both traditional and experimental rites; or experienced as an exercise in racist, sexist, or ethnocentric judgmentalism. But it cannot be escaped, so it must be questioned.

Some of the questions that should appear on any future agenda for ritual criticism are these: is a ritual criticism modeled after literary or dramatic criticism doomed to be ethno- or religio-centric? How do we know what activities are ritualistic in order to begin the work of criticism? Are definitions of ritual and its various sub-types themselves culture-bound? Are not all classifications and judgments bound to specific groups? Are we forced into the ritualist's position of contending that the only adequate ground for criticism is full participation (e.g., via membership, ordination, or conversion)? Whom should the hypothetical ritual critic serve—only other scholars, tourists and other sorts of culture-consumers, or ritualists themselves? How is it possible to criticize ritual disinterestedly? Is not any act of assessing a rite necessarily centered in the religiosity (or lack of it) of one's own culture? If biblical criticism and anthropological criticism have to admit to being agents of enculturation rather than universal guardians, how can we expect ritual criticism to fare any better?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Grimes is General Editor of the *Journal of Ritual Studies* and Chair of the Department of Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5.

NOTES

[1]The three performances were as follows: (1) Bharata Natyam and subsequent workshop with audience members, both by Maureen Sanderson (Madhurika) at Wilfred Laurier University's Festival of Play in 1977; (2) "Images of the Feminine in Indian Dance" by Roxanne Kamayani Gupta and subsequent formal discussion by those attending a meeting of the Eastern International Region of the American Academy of Religion at Syracuse University in 1983 (for study purposes I had access to video tapes of previous performances); (3) Odissi style dance by Menaka Thakkar and Guru Kellucharan Mahapatra at the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa, Canada, 1987, followed by informal discussion with performance theorist and theatre director, Richard Schechner.

[2]Organized in 1982 by Welfare State International of England, directed by John Fox and others; staffed by residents of Ward's Island off the Toronto shoreline. Described in Grimes 1982; cf., Coult and Kershaw 1983.

[3]Sponsored by the *Societas Poquli Ludique* and directed by David Parry, May 25-26, 1985, on the campus of the University of Toronto. Performances were during the day; discussion of text and performance were conducted during the evening. Later in the same year further critique took place at the Modern Language Association meetings in Chicago. Organizers of this group invited me to observe, participate and respond.

[4]Organized and convened by Ronald A. McRae of the National Museum of Canada in October of 1987 for the purpose of determining what types of performance—indigenous and otherwise—would be appropriate in the new Canadian Museum of Civilization (under construction).

[5]Symposium on authenticity in performance sponsored in 1985 by the American Anthropological Association, Society for Humanistic Anthropology.

[6]One might want to examine other models and motives for evaluating cultural action. For example, Howard Richards in *The Evaluation of Cultural Action* (1985) attempts to reflect philosophically on the problem of evaluating programs in Latin America. Not only does he face the problem of how to integrate ethical concerns with those of productivity, he approaches the problem with considerable philosophical sophistication concerning the epistemology of cross-cultural evaluation.

[7]Denis de Rougemont (1963:7-8) remarks, "We find no single Christian equivalent. . . of the Kama Sutras, of the Tantras, of so many other treatises on eroticism in the Vedas and the Upanishads, relating the sexual to the divine; still less, of the famous sculptures on the facades of the great Hindu temples, illustrating in the most precise manner the unions of the gods and their wives....Confronted with [the] endocrine crisis [of puberty], Christianity is content with extremely severe moral counsel and vague or hygienic advice."

[8]On the matter of ritual failure, or what J. L. Austin calls "infelicitous performances," see Grimes 1988.

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IN, OUT, AND IN-BETWEEN
A Response to the Articles

Andrew Strathern

Since Malinowski, anthropologists in the field have been preoccupied with the practice of "participant observation," which inevitably defines them as an anomalous category, neither fully in nor fully out of the society they are investigating—"marginal natives," as they have been called in one formulation of this betwixt and between status. We may also tend to think that this status is both peculiar and unique to the anthropologist. The papers in this collection demonstrate that this is not so, for a number of reasons.

First, they show that this anthropological method is also practiced by students of religion who do not otherwise identify themselves as anthropologists. It is true that in his paper Daniel Gold distinguishes between his methods as a religionist and those of his wife as an anthropologist. His observations here are certainly most interesting. He implies that the religionist does not get as close to the people of any particular local community as the anthropologist expects to do. However, in his case, this situation was more an artifact of his research topic as such than of the fact that he was not an anthropologist. He was studying the North Indian sants, medieval singers whose songs are preserved by many geographically separated lineages; hence he had to travel. His wife studied a particular local village and how its members made pilgrimages. She therefore traveled also, but only to accompany "the" local group when its own members traveled. Each learned from the other. They might have been two anthropologists, in fact, profiting greatly from their close relationship to meet and share ideas. In his writing, Gold indicates that he wants to encompass both religious ideas and mundane realities—as Tambiah and Southwold, two anthropologists—have also consistently done. His wife's work contributed data on the latter, his own on the former.

Gold conveys a sense also of his engagement with his research topic, indicating that it affected his inner sensibility, breaching the boundary between himself and the subjects of his study. The same sense of intermingling is conveyed by Tyson in his presentation of the testimony of Sister Annie Mae. Her words alone testify to a remarkable phenomenon: that Pentecostal imagery is most powerfully and effectively developed by peoples who initially received it from outside, in this case the Lumbee Indians. The themes of rhetorical devices, especially the insistence on reality and directness in religious experience, which appear in Annie Mae's "text" can be paralleled from the words of new Pentecostal believers in the Mount Hagen area of Papua New

Guinea, far removed indeed from Robeson County, North Carolina. This gives us another context of mingling: the development of comparable forms in discrete settings. Exactly how this happens is an intriguing topic for research. Here, however, I am interested in Tyson's own commentary. He delineates appreciatively the rhetorical techniques which Annie displays. Surely those techniques are ones which suit, and emerge out of, oral cultures. He goes on from these to examine reflexively the relationship between himself, the "phenomenological ethnographer," and "the Pentecostal testifier." He considers this relationship not directly but by way of analogy. The ethnographer is also a testifier, using examples to demonstrate his generalizations; the testifier is also an ethnographer, consciously drawing on experience to build up a picture of the world. Tyson is, in other words, *impressed* by Sister Annie's testimony, and sees in it both a model for and a challenge to his own communication as an ethnographer. How is he to represent her testimony in his, and what can he learn from it? Whatever the specific answers one gives to these questions, it is evident that asking them indicates a mutual crossing-over between observer and observed. Tyson even refers to this as "the rule of reciprocal criticism," although we may wonder what possibility, in practice, Sister Annie had to exercise her side of this equation. Did she read the article? Did she comment on it?

Tyson's overall approach approximates that of Grimes. Grimes, however, expands and articulates the idea of "ritual criticism" in a more explicit fashion, even emerging at the end of his discussion with some important principles for ritual criticism: full description, maintaining a plurality of voices, locating indigenous criticism, making explicit one's ground for criticism, and seeing criticism as based on consultation; overall, reflexivity once more. Post-modern (or post-objectivist) as all this is, it is nevertheless not an "up in the air" version but one which is more "down to earth," and for this it should also be congenial to anthropologists. In today's world, when many boundaries are breached, it is appropriate also that the event on which Grimes comments is itself a "mixed" one: an Indian ritual dance performed by North American dancers. The performers were thus themselves crossing boundaries. Such an act inevitably heightens self-consciousness and hence the possibility of critical reflection. In this way it becomes more likely that "an insider can both participate and observe, just as an outsider can both observe and participate." Grimes' approach is healthy and demystifying: we are far from the artificial notion of the aloof scientific observer and from the idea that "primitives" lack individual consciousness, both ludicrous inventions of nineteenth century thought. Observer and observed are equally human, as in Tyson's account. And if the account is not coldly scientific, it must be warmly evaluative, which implies both criticism and appreciation, and hence again an engagement with rather than a distancing from

the topic of study. I would also add here that indigenous criticism is not limited to "mixed" contexts such as those on which Grimes comments in his paper: criticism of performers and their decorations also appears in Hagen. Indeed it is important. A good performance indicates ancestral approval, and a bad one its absence, so performances are also diagnostic omens, or rituals at more than an interpretative level. And all this is clearly within the awareness of the participants and the spectators. So much for the idea of the "unaware" ritualist!

Although at first sight, Lightstone's paper might seem to strike out in a different direction from the other papers, in fact it fits quite well with one theme I have mentioned here: that of mixture, permeation. Lightstone is describing a form of Judaic worship which preserves a strong sense of Jewish identity while dispensing with certain overtones considered unacceptable nowadays. The ritualists here have done their indigenous criticism and come up with a new version of ritual! The example lets us see once more how performers are themselves *aware* of what they are doing. Here they have bridged the gap between their "mundane realities" and "the sacred" by using a code of worship which corresponds more closely to the code of the world outside the synagogue to which they belong, and thus to "value a mixture of sacred and mundane." They have become in a sense their own observers, or precursors, first rejecting an earlier liturgical form, and, second, creating one of their own, compounded of old elements but framed and expounded differently. Their essential creativity emerges. The observer must be *at least as creative* in order to realize and delineate this process.

Fred Clothey's essay offers an introduction to the others by gathering these multiple tendencies of the papers into a single trope: his image of the "hermeneutical spiral," leading to a kind of eclectic holism. Modest and tentative, he is respectful to his subject matter. He recognizes multiplicity of meanings, as Victor Turner so preeminently did. He acknowledges history, as one who works in India must. He recognizes also that the relationship between interpreter and interpreted is problematic. The two are not entirely merged, but the one speaks for the other, he argues. What does this mean? Perhaps that the interpreter "unpacks" meanings in a way those interpreted may not be able to do, by bringing to bear on phenomena many different "frames" (contextuality, ideology, contemporary situation). Clothey thus gives the interpreter a special role: to expound what is there but may not be immediately evident. He restores, then, a special role to the writer while still recognizing the need for reflexivity highlighted so forcefully by Grimes and Tyson. At the analytical level he grants full equality to observer and observed, and suggests that at least it might be refreshing to see the data inside-out rather than outside-in. In the same vein I have often thought that a Hagen view of western society could be as illuminating as

the reverse. And he adjures the interpreter, in his final summing-up, to be self-conscious, to defer to exegesis, to use creative subjectivity, to be a "learning consultant," and finally to cross back into his own world and speak for the people he has studied by representing them as accurately as he can. Noble ideals! And ones which can be pursued only if the interpreter-observer retains as fully as possible his humanity at all stages of the enterprise.

Especially for this last reason I find these studies congenial. They incorporate many anthropological theories, but convey their own sense of humanistic discipline. What they tend to lack, I think, is the further step in the constant interweaving action which is demanded of practitioners in the "human sciences." The sociological aspects and explanations of the rituals they explore need not be displaced by a kind of passionate phenomenology. For example, the Lumbee Indians may occupy a certain overall position in the class structure of society which makes them value so strongly the "reality" of their religious experience; and the Jewish synagogue Reconstructionists presumably occupy a different, and higher, position in their local structure, which might help to explain their religious attitudes. Phenomenology and inter-subjective understanding are fine; but perhaps we need also to pay attention to the social frameworks of class and caste with their implications of inequality and sometimes exploitation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Strathern is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, 15260. He has conducted extensive long-term fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, and has held previous positions in Cambridge, London, Canberra, and Port Moresby.

A RUMOR IS AFIELD: "FIELDWORK LEADS TO SPREADING RUMORS"

A Response to the Articles

Sam Gill

Gossip has it that the Inuit host of the famous Danish ethnologist Knud Rasmussen set him straight for his habit of asking the why of the Inuit's every activity. Fed up, Aua took Rasmussen outside where the bitter wind whipped the snow about. Pointing across the landscape he addressed Rasmussen:

> In order to hunt well and live happily, man must have calm weather. Why this constant succession of blizzards and all this needless hardship for men seeking food for themselves and those they care for? Why? Why?

When Rasmussen couldn't answer, Aua took him to a nearby home. In it two shivering children huddled beneath a skin rug. Aua spoke again:

> Why should it be cold and comfortless in here? Kuglo has been out hunting all day, and if he had got a seal, as he deserved, his wife would now be sitting laughing beside her lamp, letting it burn full, without fear of having no blubber left for tomorrow. The place would be warm and bright and cheerful, the children would come out from under their rugs and enjoy life. Why should it not be so? Why? Why?

With but a shrug from his guest, Aua took him to the home of his sister, Natseq.

> Why must people be ill and suffer pain? We are all afraid of illness. Here is this old sister of mine; as far as anyone can see, she has done no evil. She has lived through a long life and given birth to healthy children, and now she must suffer before her days end. Why? Why? (Rasmussen 54-56).

The term "fieldwork" and its partner "informant" set my teeth on edge. The callous and clinical nature of these words fit all of those tantalizing tidbits I've heard about anthropologists. But now students of religion are running to the field. Not the mission field where future Christians grow, but the field of academic study; the field of facts and data and theory and method. One source of my repulsion is my experience as a child on my father's farm, where working in the field meant much sweat, long hours, and low pay; where dirt was the measure of exotica (though I do recall one early morning seeing the lights of a flying saucer as we called them back then). Now I burn with envy as I overhear my professional colleagues speaking of their summer research in Japan or India, their year in Indonesia or Cairo, their informants in Mexico or Canada. And they invariably come back with

photographs! From the place on which I stand, these sound more like holiday than work.

The Navajo landscape is another source of my timidity. I went there some years ago to do (ahem) fieldwork. I did many of the proper things. I wore a chambray shirt, boots, and a cowboy hat. I hired Navajo informants (oops!). My family and I lived with a Navajo family in a Navajo hogan. I ate Navajo food. I worked with Navajo people. I traveled here, there, and everywhere talking to Navajo elders; even tape-recorded and photographed a few. But I was lost and confused almost all the time I was there. I remember a time that I was directed on what in my home town we called "a wild goose chase." It lasted more than a week. Every day I packed up and headed out for the believed location of a particularly knowledgeable Navajo elder. Traveling for hours through the hot desert terrain I usually managed to find my destination only to be told that my informant had just left for some remote location. I no longer remember whether I ever found him, but I do know that fieldwork took on new meaning: my fieldwork came to be my earth-covered hogan to which I daily returned, seeking within it fortification against a world that seemed to be playing so unkindly with me.

There are a couple of other negative associations I have with "fieldwork." One has to do with the "field" part, the other with the "work" part. In almost every sense the word "field" has to do with place, with territory. This reflects one of the most fundamental approaches to the interpretation of religion. Characterize the categories of place and, presto, we will have discerned the terms of religious significance. Place denotes order and order denotes meaning. Place is distinguished by boundary or frame and by principles of order which students of religion have understood largely under the rubric "center." "Work" means to conduct purposeful activity and in most senses it means to make something. At the least, work implies that a worker knows what he/she is doing. But it also suggests to me that one who does "fieldwork" has already tipped the methodological scales. He or she knows the place and the work to do there. The work is to make something resembling religion out of them. This work may appear scientific, but it may also suppress the experience of confoundment and confusion that often leads to insight and discovery, yet I suspect that the ease and assured success of this endeavor is because both our observations and the sense we make of them are predetermined by the way we understand and interpret religion. I am growing increasingly wary of the way we understand the category place (as distinct patterns of boundaries and center) as fundamental to the study of religion. I am also wary of the way we understand religion.

But now I must get to the task assigned me, the comment on the papers in this issue.

In "Approaching Some Householder Yogis" Daniel Gold addresses the style and method of fieldwork more directly than

any of the other authors. He is concerned with what distinguishes religionist-style fieldwork as distinct from anthropologist-style fieldwork. Though I appreciate Gold's attention to the task and the use of his and his spouse's parallel experiences in India, there is much that concerns me in the approach he proposes. Gold centers his discussion on the nature of the relation a fieldworker has to place. The fieldworker already knows the place and takes it for granted. The variable is whether one "visits" or "moves in" the place. Gold's argument is fascinating. Contrasting his style as religionist to the work of his spouse as anthropologist, Gold said that he was interested in only "meeting selected people from all over [India]," that most of his "encounters were not particularly deep," and he writes: "nor did I meet many people on these visits whom I came to regard as my friends." Yet, he also held that his method was that of those "fieldworking religionists [who] can *really* move in, becoming understood genuinely to belong to the group they study by both those within it and themselves." What a remarkable incongruence exists between Gold's impersonal approach and the intimate results he claims. What is his method and how does it accomplish the claimed results? Frankly, I think that the proposed approach is not a method nor does it work. The key to it is given when Gold discusses the special equipment of the student of religion. He calls it a "peculiar faculty," "a sensitivity to different religious significances," "a desire somehow to comprehend [these significances]," and, inspired by Eliade's language, he dubs this faculty "the religio-historical imagination." This peculiar faculty is attuned to "ultimate truth" and "exciting secrets about the human psyche." The meanings that the "religionist" discerns are universal, yet they "demand some personal engagement." Gold holds that "our imagination can serve to link up our professional and personal realities."

According to Gold, to do fieldwork as a "religionist" one "exercises the religio-historical imagination" through which one encounters the objects of study which are "inward realities" working "through different aspects of our personal psychology" to access "ultimate truth." This sounds more like therapy or some forms of religion than academic method. Pity the poor scholar unequipped with the "peculiar faculty." Can it be acquired or taught? How does one measure the validity of knowledge gained by the exercise of "religio-historical imagination"? The "religionist" with this approach can understand himself as having "moved in" while never making a single friend, because all is possible in one's imagination. But as an academic method, this may be a romantic delusion.

Daniel Gold's discussion of fieldwork methodology reflects a view and perspective on religion and the study of religion I find dangerous. My objection is not that he proposes being imaginative, but rather the understanding of religion that Gold conjoins with imagination. I have a great fondness for imaginative academic endeavors; indeed, I think that as students

of religion we are often frightened of our own imaginations. Still we must be clear on what roles imagination plays. These are largely heuristic; they lead not to the revelation of ultimate truth, but to the formulation of hypotheses to be investigated. We must bear the responsibility for the claims we make based upon the exercise of imagination. The only way I see that one can argue the validity of Gold's approach is to propose that the exercise of one's religio-historical imagination is a process of revelation of universal and ultimate truth open and common to all. If such a view were held it would negate the significance of fieldwork, for one could gain revelation as adequately by the exercise of one's imagination at home as well as anywhere in the world.

Jack Lightstone's case study of a reconstructionist synagogue is informative. Though it does not deal directly with the methodology of fieldwork, it demonstrates that attention to the details of the particular, the local, are rich and illuminating; that they provide a vivid base on which to demonstrate a position.

Lightstone's study rests on his hypothesis that "viewed comparatively, the ritual patterns of distinct communities communicate their mapping of the place and character of that boundary." However, that a professionally and intellectually oriented congregation would prefer the ritual patterns permitted by Reconstructionist Judaism seems hardly surprising. I don't see the argument. The case as presented seems self-evident.

As to the fieldwork dimension of this study, we are told that two researchers spent eight months documenting "the performance of liturgy, the physical setting, the participation of the congregants, and the interaction among participants." We learn that the "researchers had the opportunity to chat with congregants about the service" and that for ten months they conducted interviews with a dozen families associated with the congregation. My feeling is that the field research portion of this study was not as effective nor as efficient as it ought to have been. At least it is not apparent from the article. It appears that the family interviews (notably done prior to the eight-month study of ritual) were conducted primarily to establish a socio-economic and intellectual profile of the congregation. If this is the case, clear statistical measures would add much. Since the thesis of the paper rests on the character of the congregation, we need to know how that profile was measured. How were the families chosen? When percentage of the congregation does the sample constitute? What data were gathered? What is the statistical measure of accuracy? Sociologists are trained to do this sort of work, and the utilization of their statistical methods would be an important contribution here. If the family interviews were to assess the views of congregants, even if in addition to the profile, this information made no apparent contribution. Surely the statements gained during the "chats" would enrich and add force to this study. There appears to have been an extensive and careful field study. My complaint is that the study and the reported

conclusions seem to be relatively little influenced by the data and information collected in the field study. It may simply be that the hypothesis being tested turned out to be so obviously correct that field observation was largely redundant.

I suspect that near the end of his article Jack Lightstone grew a bit concerned that he had not reflected enough of "the religious" in his study. To rectify this, he tried exercising his religio-historical imagination to produce such statements (all found in the conclusion) as: "our Reconstructionists appear to distribute or disperse the sacred throughout the ordinary," "if our Reconstructionists feel comfortable in maintaining any distinctive sacred realm, perhaps it is in the realm of mind, in discursive communication and debate about Jewish history, values and sources," and "in all these realms the effect is to soften the boundaries of once clearly differentiated entities and to value a mixture of sacred and mundane, special and ordinary, religious professional and amateur." The terminology and categories in these statements are those of the analyst rather than those he has studied. In these statements the analyst moves beyond the case study to argue the affirmation of his general thesis. For students of religion the language he uses is so familiar that perhaps we don't recognize it as imprecise and bordering on the nonsensical. In Lightstone's view the boundaries that differentiate religion have gone soft: the sacred is mixed with the mundane, it is dispersed throughout the ordinary, except perhaps in the mind or in discourse. No longer is there a clear difference between special and ordinary, religious and the not religious. Lightstone somehow sees these statements as conclusions, yet I see them as blurring and making useless the categories (patterns of place and order) that are fundamental to the academic study of religion. What is so concluding here? In the invocation of his religio-historical imagination it seems to me Lightstone effectively nullifies what should be an extension of his project. The exciting questions that this case study raises for me have to do with how this congregation is unquestionably religious without engaging the category distinctions or the terminology that students of religion depend so heavily upon. There is no "sacred center," no clear boundary between the "sacred" and the "profane." The Reconstructionist community remains vital, but our old place categories no longer make sense.

Few have had the courage and knowledge to move toward "a comprehensive interpretation of ritual" and I applaud Fred Clothey for doing so. He is systematic and provides definitions of terms and discussions of analytical procedures. His article could be used as a manual or guide. Had I been assigned the task of responding to interpretive approach, I would have much more to say of Clothey's article. Though Clothey does not address the issues of fieldwork directly, he understands the researcher to be in conversation with those whose religion is studied. In the outline of steps that ought to occur in the interpretation of ritual, with

which Clothey concludes the article, he approaches the position of "ritual criticism" that Ronald Grimes describes in his article. Clothey holds that the interpreter must be self-conscious, must minimize and deconstruct his/her own orientation, must defer to the interpretations of those studied (with the catch that one can defer only "to the point that the other's understandings, evaluations, and interpretations are clearly and freely expressed"). He sees the interpreter and the informant in a collegial relationship seeking the mutual advancement of knowledge. An interpreter is a "learning consultant," "a friendly but limited 'outside' resource."

Clothey's model of field research could be exemplified powerfully by Victor Turner's relationship with Muchona. When engaged with fieldwork among the Ndembu in Africa, Turner located a native colleague. They spent much time discussing questions of meaning and significance in Ndembu ritual. When I went to live with the Navajos, I sought a Muchona Navajo, some wise old intellectual who cared as much as I did about what Navajo things meant. What surprised, and at first discouraged, me was the paucity of Muchona Navajos. Navajos care deeply about meaning, but I never found one who cared about *my* questions of meaning. Most Navajos wouldn't even talk to me about their religion. Navajo young people I have had as students have confirmed that it is inappropriate even for a Navajo to ask her/his elders "how?" and "why?" questions. Many field researchers have told me that they were ignored, rebuffed, and even misled during the course of their field research. Sometimes this negative reception occurs prior to the establishment of the rapport that Clothey recognizes as essential, but I believe that it can be, and often is, more than that. Those in whose rituals we are interested need not discourse about or contemplate upon their rituals for them to be meaningful; they perform their rituals rather than talk about them. In such cases, and I think they constitute the greater portion, Clothey's collegial approach is simply impossible.

Clothey's notion that a fieldworker "return at last to one's own world and discipline to speak *for* the other," seems presumptuous to me. Most of those I have known who have spent considerable time in another culture return humbled by what they do not, cannot, and can never know of that culture, especially of its rituals and religion.

The relationship between those studied and the researcher is explored by Ronald Grimes in "Ritual Criticism and Reflexivity in Fieldwork." It must be understood at the outset that this relationship, at least in my experience, is often impossible, but, as Grimes shows, a ritual-performing group may seek the "expert view." The academic study of religion has been, I think, a wimpy discipline. We shrink from saying anything that is relevant outside our own specialty. While some religion scholars are active lecturers, few are employed as consultants, especially by religious practitioners. Any practical concerns of a student of religion are

often frowned upon. Relevance to one's own culture is not the only measure of worth in any discipline, but as supposed experts on religion, historically and culturally, we need to be much more aggressive and positive about the significance and importance of this knowledge and expertise to contemporary religion and culture. We have been bound by our understanding of religion which limits religion to "the sacred" and the study of religion to writings. We have either ignored or been embarrassed by anything that does not fit our expectations.

Religions, like economies, have some forms that work better, that are more aesthetically pleasing as systems, that integrate more or less with other cultural systems, and that manage history and change more creatively and effectively than others. The same is true for rituals, both within a single religious tradition, and from tradition to tradition. As students of religion we ought to follow Grimes' suggestion and engage in the development of "ritual criticism" and I would propose "religion criticism." As he notes, ritual criticism requires making judgments and these are always political. But such recognition not only moves the study toward a more responsible position, it moves it, as Grimes shows, toward a more self-reflective one. Everyone is the winner on this course of action.

While "ritual criticism" would not be something that Navajos would likely invite a ritual scholar to perform for them, it is an important dimension of their own ritual performances. This might be an important expansion upon Grimes' position. Accurate and creative ritual performance is essential to Navajos, because rituals cure the ill. Failure to cure is often attributed to the singer responsible for the ritual performance. In some cases, a Navajo family will hire, along with a singer to perform a curing ritual, a second singer to observe and to ascertain the accuracy and effectiveness of the performance of the first singer. There is also much discussion and controversy among Navajo ritualists about the performance of any ritual. This is often due to the existence of parallel lineages of ritual. I have been around singers when they argued vehemently about the proper way to perform ritual. This amounts to ritual criticism as a dimension of ritual performance.

Ruel Tyson's "The Testimony of Sister Annie Mae" is the most exciting article in the issue in the sense of bringing to presentation the largest body of field-collected data. Tyson presents the text of Sister Annie Mae's testimony at Pine Grove Holiness Church on July 6, 1979. The testimony is moving and powerful. Tyson's analysis of it is careful, clear, extensive, detailed, and convincing.

To evaluate Tyson's relationship to his field study, I want to recall Tyson's observation that:

> this is a speaking religion more than a scriptural religion. And the Holy Ghost falling on persons in the form of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4) limits

> human speech, making it especially problematical, yet also of great value as sanctifying experience.

Tyson presents the testimony in eighteen paragraphs. He does not discuss his reasoning for the paragraph divisions. The breaks seem to correspond with such things as change of tense, with the presence of an exclamation ("Praise God"), or with change in subject. The testimony is presented in prose form for the most part. Though Tyson does not explain his use of ellipses, they are apparently used to convey breaks in speech that denote asides or to render speech more grammatical. Sometimes they suggest pauses in delivery.

Notably a few paragraphs and parts of paragraphs are presented in poetic form. Paragraph six is presented this way, yet with no explanation of the line divisions or why there is a shift to poetic form. Other poetic presentations are found in paragraphs eight, eleven, twelve, and eighteen. All these are in the present tense. They also appear formulaic and repetitive.

Though it is but a guess, it appears that where the referential and content aspects of the language become more problematic, Tyson shifts to the poetic style of presentation. Nested in brackets in the poetic part of paragraph eight is the indication that Sister Annie Mae speaks in tongues. Prose-style presentation represents speech that communicates a message, poetic-style presentation represents comprehensible speech that is formulaic and somewhat problematic, and bracketed non-presentation represents incomprehensible and wholly problematic speech.

The style of presentation establishes an analytical hierarchy in which prose is the most important. But this hierarchy of analysis seems to be the inverse of the hierarchy of values held by church members. "This is a speaking religion."

My point is that field research ought not only to provide important data, it must present and analyze that data in a manner consistent with the way it is performed. Anyone present on an occasion of someone speaking in tongues knows that it is a moving, powerful, even frightening experience. It is a climax reached upon waves of emotion built higher and higher in such forms as testimonial speech. It involves interaction and support from others present. Tyson witnessed all of this happening in the Pine Grove Church, but he chooses not to incorporate into his presentation the performance qualities, the style and texture of Sister Annie Mae's testimony. Not until well into his analysis does Tyson even mention the audience responses to the testimony, including the important observation that some in the congregation joined Sister Annie Mae in speaking in tongues.

As Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock, and Barre Toelken have shown, texture and style voice, rhythm, pitch, and pace and audience interaction and participation can be presented along with the words spoken.[1] A poetic presentation of the spoken words can be more consistent with and appropriate to their presentation

than a prose presentation. By adopting some of these methods Tyson might have provided his readers with more of a "taste" of Sister Annie Mae's testimony.

These comments are in no way intended to distract from Tyson's excellent study; they are made only to argue that what one does with one's field data (even its physical presentation) is as important as collecting it. My comments also intend to show that even the physical presentation of the data is directed by one's analytical and theoretical stance. These are matters for careful self-reflection as Grimes and Tyson both discuss.

Tyson's concluding remarks deserve careful consideration. He dares to consider ethnographers (and one supposes students of ritual more broadly) in the same terms as the testimonial practitioners of the Pine Grove Church; as both constituting "fellowships of discourse." This leads him to see "anthropological discourse as a kind of testimony;" and Pentecostal testimony as a kind of "anthropological discourse, conscious. . .of its hermeneutic." Such a comparison opens self-reflective questions: "what is ethnography and what kind of knowledge does it call its own?" Tyson is led to ask of "the adequacy of our forms for representing others." These are *the* questions when we consider our forays into field research and even in the presentation of the data and information we collect. We are a long way from resolving these questions, though I'm not sure that resolution is all that desirable.

One thing that strikes me about fieldwork is how little we actually know and experience of other cultures, their religions and rituals. To a degree this is merely a matter of economy. As individuals often working alone we enter cultures (often vast in population and territory) with acquired language skills and stay for a brief time (even if this amounts, as it almost never does, to years). The amount an individual can observe in a given time is severely limited compared with a native of the culture. Most research on specific rituals is based on no more than one actual observation of a ritual performance. A huge number of rituals studied do not have a single full and adequate description. Even for the well known Hopi of the southwestern United States sketchy general descriptions of ritual are the norm, and few detailed descriptions of actual performances exist. Although Hopi clown rituals are performed often, the published and manuscript descriptions of these performances are negligible.

As students of ritual we must acknowledge that we know very little of that upon which we discourse as authorities. To engage in fieldwork is a giant step toward fuller information and greater authority, yet we scarcely surpass the level of occasional and incidental knowledge overwhelmingly biased by the interest, worldviews, and academic theories we bear as we conduct the task.

Rather than sink into a state of depression and despair, acknowledge the impossibility of our task and sadly close shop, I think we ought to joyfully acknowledge what we can do and

proceed to do it well. I am writing under a title that says that fieldwork leads to spreading rumors. The word "rumor" derives from the Latin suggesting "noise" and is understood as meaning "general talk not based on definite knowledge." Rumor is, as Anne Doueihi (307) has put it:

> significant noise, a mumbling or whispering which, while not altogether clear, is nevertheless significant, meaningful. . . .Its exact meaning may be unclear or unverifiable, but that is precisely what makes it so interesting. It is the undecidability of rumour that makes it so meaningful to those who bear it.

The motivation for research of any kind is the recognized absence of clarity. Were everything clear, there would be nothing to do. Field research is often conducted in search of information that would lead to attaining clarity. But by the nature of the endeavor, field experience and the resulting field data (interestingly we often call them field *notes*), are never altogether clear, though invariably we recognize them to be significant, meaningful. When we return home to participate in our academic "fellowship of discourse," more than anything we want to show the success of our study by presenting a picture of clarity. We seem often forced to hide the fact that we are not at all clear about the noises we have heard. We present our conclusions in the context of abstract theories and statements of analytic and interpretive procedure that we seldom use. We give authority and force to the noises we have overheard by calling them facts, observations, and data. In other words, we present "general talk" in a form that will mask the clearest character of our field experience: that not much is clear, and we are often confused and confounded by what we have seen and heard. As horrifying as it may seem, we create and spread rumors. But by denying that we are rumor mongering, we lose all the fun and creative excitement that motivates us to engage in what we do in the first place. It is, after all, the undecidability of rumor that makes it so meaningful to those who hear it.

Perhaps we have gotten our notions of meaning confused. We tend to operate as though undecidability, unverifiability, and the lack of clarity threaten meaning. But such a view of meaning not only takes the play out of scholarship, ironically it also leads us to act irresponsibly. In viewing our task as obtaining clarity, conclusion, and general talk we are encouraged to suppress the contingency, the uncertainty, the indefinite base on which our conclusions are constructed. Perpetuating this confusion, whole traditions of scholarship build layer upon layer each one accepting as fact the rumors presented by all preceding layers. Were we to acknowledge that much of what we do is to create and spread rumors, such edifices of scholarship might be replaced by much more dynamic and creative forms; ivory towers might be replaced by mobiles that would dance and play in the breezes of scholarship.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Gill is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, 80309. He recently published *Mother Earth: An American Story* and *Native American Religious Action: A Performance Approach to Religion*.

NOTES

[1]In Toelken and Scott (1981) see pp. 65-116; in Hymes (1977) see 433-457; cf. Tedlock (1972) and Hymes (1981).

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RESPONSE TO JAMES WELDON'S CRITIQUE OF "WOLF OF THE BEES: GERMANIC SHAMANISM AND THE BEAR HERO" JRS 2/1 WINTER, 1988

Stephen O. Glosecki

Editor's Note

Readers may wish to refer to JRS 2/1, Winter 1988, pages 31 to 57, for Stephen Glosecki's article and James Weldon's response. The following is written in reply to Weldon's critique of the article.

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I am grateful to James Weldon for an insightful response to this article. His critique turns on three particular points: the need for further study of Icelandic sources, the absence of overt bear imagery in *Beowulf*, and the lack of extensive archaeological evidence in my essay.[1] Weldon's suggestions are excellent; however, to apply them would be to expand a long article into a short book.

A single article cannot exhaust the evidence from the Old Icelandic heroic corpus. Much more might be said about Odin's shamanic attributes, especially as represented in *The Lay of Loddfafnir*, where he hangs on the World Tree to win secret knowledge rather like a Mandan warrior suspended from his sacred cottonwood during the Sun Dance. And Volund, too, as depicted in *The Lay of Volund*, has notable affinities with the smith/initiator of Asian shamans. Eliade (1972:470) quotes a Yakut proverb: "smiths and shamans are from the same nest." In this poem Volund eats bear meat and sits on a bearskin. Are these vestiges of shamanic bear ceremonialism? Eddic poetry is rarely so specific regarding food and clothing. When such details do appear they seem significant, possibly as reflections of ritual. The divine smith of the Norse pantheon also consorts with a swan maiden, forges talismans, dismembers princes, and soars through the sky. Such behavior parallels shamanic myth. Arcane lines in *The Poetic Edda* suggest shamanic practices such as the use of talismanic animal parts to summon supernatural assistance. *Sigrdrífomál* 21, for instance, says to carve runes *ábjarnar hamni* "on bear claws."

The sagas too contain vestiges of shamanism, and, according to Arent (150) several bear heroes besides Bjarki: Bjorn, Bjarni, Orm Storolfsson, Grettir Asmundarson. To her list we might add Gunnar Hamundarson, whose *fylgja* "fetch" is said to be a huge bear (*Njal's Saga*, ch. 23). This *fylgja* of the sagas strikes me as a shamanic holdover, a reflection of the animal guardian. Most likely, Bjarki's evanescent bear at the end of *Hrólf's Saga* is the hero's *fylgja*, exceptional here because he seems to control it, whereas other saga characters generally have no such ability. How does Bjarki control his bear companion? He must do it through a typically shamanic technique of ecstasy. There is no

better way to explain the bear's uncanny appearance while Bjarki "sleeps" and its equally uncanny disappearance when he wakes.

However, Weldon suggests that Bjarki simply sleeps at this climactic moment in the last chapter, because, he says, "in the saga itself, we are not told that Bjarki falls into a trance." But to me it seems unlikely that Hrólf's greatest hero would decide to sleep while his lord faces death just beyond the door. When Hjalti looks for him outside, Hrólf says Bjarki will be where he can do the most good. Then, when Hjalti rouses the hero, Bjarki tells him, ominously, that his waking will hurt the king and hints that his "sleeping" would have won the battle.

Quite frequently in the sagas, yawning and sleeping have supernatural implications, as though sleep is a doorway to the dreamtime, opening on the dim realm of the *fylgjur*. Earlier in *Hrólf's Saga*, for example, Hrólf and his men fall asleep just before the sorcerer-king Athils sends his boar companion into the hall to attack them (presumably by using the *seithr* in another building). Slumber here seems unnatural–perhaps an effect of Athil's *sendingar* "sendings"–because the Danes, expecting imminent hostility, would hardly be relaxed enough to sleep. Similarly, in *Njal's Saga* (ch. 12), several characters grow drowsy or sleep as enemies approach: Svan yawns and says he sees the *fylgjur* of his attackers, who are approaching his house at that very moment. Hoskuld in his sleep sees the bear companion of Gunnar enter his brother's house (ch. 23). Gunnar (ch. 62) grows sleepy on horseback, dismounts, reclines, and envisions a pack of wolves, the *fylgjur* of his enemies, who are waiting in the hills to ambush him.

Bjarki's sleep at Leyre corresponds with these other examples of unnatural slumber. In a troublesome half-line often emended by editors, the same ability to "sleep and send" is attributed to Grendel by Beowulf. This ability is supernatural, in itself neither villainous nor heroic, but available to exceptional individuals like Bjarki who may use it for good. Some like Athils, Skuld and, putatively, Grendel, may use it for evil. At line 600a, Grendel *swefeth and sendeth*, literally "sleeps and sends." Klaeber emends the second verb to produce the reading "kills and cuts," which may misrepresent the poet's intentions. Bjarki, possibly like Grendel, can also "sleep" (use ecstasy) and "send" (project and direct his *fylgja*). And although he only uses his bear powers once–which is enough to illustrate their shamanic effect–the veiled ursine traits still account for his name, strength, courage, and overall character.

Weldon voices other objections to the shamanic interpretation of shape-shifting imagery in *Hrólf's Saga*. He argues from a primarily literalistic standpoint: Bjarki, a typical hero, is sleeping, not sending. His bear traits, inherited from his were-bear father, do not connect him with the *berserkir* "bear-shirts," who are usually villainous in the sagas. Skuld is a typical magician, casting spells but not necessarily sending her boar companion (cf. Athil's boar in the earlier chapter). In his view, the shape-shifting

abilities of such characters simply represent "word play, tradition, and northern literary conventions." But I undertook this study in the first place because "tradition" and "literary conventions," comfortable abstractions, may categorize the shape-shifting motifs, but they do little to explain their origin. Traditions and conventions do not materialize in a cultural vacuum. Bear warriors reflect bear cults. And, to underscore a point made emphatically in my article, veneration of the bear, a tribal practice with a circumpolar distribution, simply does not occur in the absence of shamanism–at least not among the northern tribes studied by Hallowell and other anthropologists.

So the bear traits of these Germanic epic heroes are typically shamanic (the Tutchtone say the grizzly is *natci* "dream-doctor"), but they are *not* typically heroic. Nor, for that matter, is Skuld a typical magician. Compare Bjarki or Beowulf with Gilgamesh or Achilles: the bear connection is what distinguishes these Germanic heroes and, if anything, makes them atypical in the annals of epic literature. Similarly, compare Skuld with Merlin or Circe, the alchemist or the herbalist. Skuld's sorcery is also atypical, since it can hardly have any other effect than the sending of the boar. Such sending is standard shamanic practice, but not a standard epic motif. Translators put Skuld on a scaffold, a seer-shaman's high seat, because this contrivance, though atypical in epic literature at large, is regularly used for the *seithr* in the sagas (e.g., *Eirik the Red*, ch. 3; *The Saga of Gisli*, ch. 18).

Further, the *berserkir*–though stylized as braggarts and bullies (the "Black Barts" of the sagas)–suggest the sort of animal cults that extend shamanic practice from individual to group. As among the Amerindian "secret" societies, the spirit bond with the companion becomes the distinguishing mark of a special social class: the fiercest warriors, whose ferocity is a gift of the eponymous animal. While the sagas stereotype *berserkir* as braggart bullies, they also give them pride of place in the vanguard of kings such as Hrólf and Harald Fair-Hair. In *Grettir's Saga* (ch. 2) Harald's *berserks* are accredited with the Hafrsfjord victory. This apparent contradiction–*berserks* are villainous renegades, *berserks* are heroic champions–probably results from a literary distortion of actual archaic culture traits. Discussing the *berserkr* tradition, Arent and Pettitt both decide that Bjarki and Beowulf, with their ursine style of fighting, have an arcane but direct connection with the warrior cults of the preliterary Germanic tribes. I agree, of course, but go a bit further by suggesting that these bear cults imply organized shamanism in ancient Scandinavia as they do more recently in Hokkaido or Alaska.

My article emphasized Bjarki because his bear powers are obvious and also because he and Beowulf originate in the same body of early Scandinavian myth (Gordon 26; Klaeber xx). As Weldon points out, Grettir Asmundarson is another important analogue and probably another bear hero. However, since the

bear traits of Grettir are so much more obscure than those of Bjarki, I chose the latter as a rhetorically stronger analogue. Aside from Grettir's fights with Glamr and the Sandhaugar trolls events that parallel Beowulf's struggles against Grendel and the *merewif*–two other episodes are especially noteworthy. After killing a bear, Grettir keeps its severed paw, perhaps as a talisman (ch. 221). Later, pitted against impossible odds, he receives unexpected help from Hallmund (ch. 57). This mysterious helper could personify a bear companion, since he materializes so abruptly, and since, strangely, he lives in a cave up under a glacier, rather like a bear. But Beowulf's connection with Grettir is more remote than the link with Bjarki, and the focus of my article would have shifted away from shamanism if I had tried to work out the various problems involved in the Beowulf/Grettir parallelism (see Arent). I feel, too, that Beowulf and Bjarki are probably mythic, whereas Grettir is historical; this disparity poses further problems in the effort to connect Beowulf with Grettir.

Admittedly, it is difficult to forge a strong link between Beowulf and the bear, for the animal simply does not appear on the surface of the epic. When Weldon emphasizes this problem in his critique, he unravels the weakest strand in the entire argument. Working from internal evidence alone, we can only emphasize the hero's name and his few bear traits, the bear-hug, the preterhuman strength, traits that have long been common knowledge among Anglo-Saxonists. However, since most Anglo-Saxonists accept the *Bee-wolf* "bear" etymology nowadays, it seems otiose to belabor other, less convincing interpretations, e.g., "woodpecker" (Grimm) or "barley-wolf"/"ergot" (a crop blight: Gerstein). The "bear" interpretation is not only more consonant with Beowulf's character, it also corresponds perfectly with the ursine material in other Germanic sources, especially *Hrólf's Saga*. Various authorities corroborate this conclusion, e.g., Skeat, Panzer, Klaeber, Chambers, Carpenter, Shippey, Arent, and Pettitt. So my discussion of the "bear" etymology–which cites Chambers' survey of the scholarship–is in fact presented not *ego dixi*, but rather *nos diximus*.

Archaeology clinches the case with circumstantial evidence scattered across the early Germanic world. Wide dispersal of the evidence argues in favor of a common Germanic bear cult as the origin of the Old English and Old Norse bear heroes. To reiterate my argument's key point, bear cults do not appear in the absence of shamanism. Various finds confirm the ritualistic importance of bear parts and bear figures among the early Germanic peoples. However, to avoid duplicating material from my articles in *Mankind Quarterly*, I do not cover the archaeology closely in this essay. But here, too, Weldon is right–archaeological evidence strengthens my argument–and his suggestions are astute, especially regarding the famous Torslunda dies.

Unearthed in Öland in 1870, the dies have since been illustrated often, with Magnusson's plates among the more recent,

although Bruce-Mitford's are still the best (1974:pl. 57-60). The dies were used to stamp helmet ornaments in sheet bronze. They are usually dated at the sixth century, which coincides with the only datable event in *Beowulf*, i.e, Hygelac's Frisian raid, circa 521. The dies parallel the *berserkir* and *úlfhethnar* cults dimly reflected in the sagas. Even more compelling is the name of the site where the dies were found: *Björnhövda* "Bear's Head," a striking place-name. Since the head of the slain animal is often a focal point in bear-hunt rituals, *Björnhövda* may have been a site associated with the prehistoric Germanic bear cult. Knut Stjerna once argued in favor of Öland as the center of Beowulf's Geatland; it may also be significant that the unique epithet *beorncyning* "bear?-king" is applied only to Geatish leaders in *Beowulf*.

Other finds point toward a widespread reverence for the shamanic bear guardian, who surfaces in the sagas as the bear *fylgja* of characters like Bjarki, Gunnar, and possibly Grettir. Archaeologists in Orkney, working under John Hunter at a Norse site first surveyed by Raymond Lamb, found a bear's canine in 1984; the owner of the tooth had tried to pierce its base, presumably so it could be suspended as a talisman. In the recent Coppergate excavations in York, bear claws have been found. Although archaeologists theorize that these claws appeared adventitiously in Jorvik—on a pelt to be used by a tanner—perhaps they had a ritualistic significance in the mind of the one who owned them (a *berserkr*?). Teeth and claws are the weapons of the bear. Sympathetically, like the bear-claw necklaces of Assiniboin shamans, they would give bear power to warriors who carried them.

Sigrid Kaland mentions stone clubs in bear-head shape; prehistoric hunters who, according to Saxo Grammaticus, drank bear blood; plus a spear socket and many sword hilts with apotropaic bear figures. She speculates that *berserkir* wore animal pelts like the Torslunda were-creature depicted beside a horned man. Klavs Randsborg, of the *Forhistorisk-Arkaeologisk Institut* in Copenhagen, tells me that prehistoric Germanic burials sometimes include bear claws or clay effigies of bear claws among the grave goods. Kaland confirms this, adding that such burials in Norway can be quite rich, with the noble dead interred on or under a bearskin. I interpret such finds as evidence of a culturally central bear cult current during the migrations and crucial to our understanding of the Germanic bear hero. If Beowulf's name and strength and ursine habits reflect this ancient bear cult, if his powers are the gift of the bear guardian, then he is a character rooted in a tradition as shamanic as that of Wun-Nes-Tow, the Blackfoot grizzly bear doctor observed by George Catlin near the mouth of the Yellowstone in the early nineteenth century.

Beyond the bear imagery of saga and epic, other motifs suggest a shamanic origin for certain aspects of early Germanic art. My article mentions a few of these motifs: the boar guardian depicted on Beowulf's helmet and corroborated by boar figures on

the Sutton Hoo and Benty Grange helmets and on one of the Torslunda dies; Beowulf's infernal descent, which parallels the shamanic journey downwards; the shamanic weapon of "shooting" disease, represented as "sending the iron" in the Old Norse metrical charm *With Færstice*. But my article allowed small space for analyzing these motifs, which have become the subject of a book, *Shamanism and Beowulf: Back to the Tribes*. Only a book-length study can fully resolve the problems that Professor Weldon generously presented in his critique.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen O. Glosecki is Assistant Professor of Old English Literature at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, 35294. He has published articles in *Mankind Quarterly* and *English Language Notes*, and presently is working on a book on shamanism and *Beowulf* which will appear as volume three of *The Albert Bates Lord Studies in Oral Tradition* (Garland).

NOTES

[1]Weldon suggests that more authorities might have been cited, Grönbech and Magnusson among them. Here, in principle, I agree—but with one important reservation: the broad focus of this article precludes citing all the relevant scholarship from any one discipline. While Grönbech's book is indeed useful, I was more reluctant to rule out the work of scholars like Peter Buchholz ("Schamanistsche Züge in the altislandischen Überlieferung"), Mary Gerstein ("Germanic *Warg*: The Outlaw as Werewolf"), Edgar Polomé ("Approaches to Germanic Mythology"), Dag Strömbäck (*Sejd*), and Raymond P. Tripp ("The Effect of the Occult and the Supernatural upon the Way We Read Old English Poetry"). The work of Gustav Hübener (e.g., "Beowulf and nordische Dämonenaustreibung") merits careful reassessment today. Along with a few physicians (e.g., Guenter B. Risse, Sisvan W.A. Gunn), dozens of anthropologists have written books and articles on shamanism. Significant studies start to emerge in the late nineteenth century; the best fieldwork has been done in the twentieth century. So Weldon is quite right to assert that other authorities could be cited. But a single article on Germanic shamanism cannot accommodate all the experts in the three disciplines (literary criticism, anthropology, archaeology) that converge upon the subject.

REVIEW ESSAY

Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis. Robert Wuthnow. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987. xii + 435. $38.50 (hardcover). ISBN 0-520-05950-6.

In this new work, Robert Wuthnow elaborates his emerging perspective on cultural analysis and provides a range of empirical applications. In his introduction, he explains that this book is a collection of individual studies under a broad theoretical umbrella. The book does not contain a systematic theoretical argument or even a tightly knit series of empirical essays. Wuthnow does not apologize for this problem-oriented quality. He defends it as a particularly important one for demonstrating his new approach. This the book certainly does, making very clear both the strengths and weaknesses the approach implies.

The book can be divided into three sections. The first two chapters define the theoretical framework. The next two produce examples of "cultural analysis" in a relatively pristine form. The subsequent five chapters study the relationship between ideas and social structure though they do not closely cohere with the first two parts. Because the first sections make the most important contribution to cultural studies, I will devote the rest of this discussion primarily to them.

In the first section, Wuthnow argues that there have been "classical," "neoclassical," and "poststructuralist" approaches to the study of culture. The first perspective, exemplified by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, initiated the discussion of culture in the following terms: "subjectivity versus material facts," "invisible versus visible," and "reductionism versus autonomy." The neoclassical approach, contained in the works of Bellah, Berger, and Geertz, tried to correct these failures by placing the problem of "meaning" in the forefront and championing an explicitly "interpretive" and culturalist approach. In reaction to this dialectic, Wuthnow suggests, there has emerged the most recent phase of cultural analysis–exemplified by Foucault, Douglas, Habermas, and to a lesser degree Berger–who have tried to avoid the dualism and reductionism of the classical group without falling into the subjectivism and interiority of the neoclassical approach. It is with this group that Wuthnow stakes his claim.

Wuthnow calls these thinkers poststructuralist because "they present simplifications that seem to have more to do with formalistic rules and abstract patterns" than with substantive contents and meanings. Indeed, he argues that such a poststructural approach brushes aside the traditionally hermeneutic concern with the difficulty of establishing meaning.

The conclusion that these examples seem to suggest is that the problem of meaning may well be more of a curse than a blessing in cultural analysis. When we set out to study it, the available evidence generally makes it elusive. If we claim to have extracted something about it, we have probably claimed too much. When we think we have studied it, we have probably turned anyway to an examination of the relations among cultural elements [i.e., to the poststructural approach].

Many students of culture will feel, as I do, that this is an untenable position. Surely hermeneutic philosophy from Dilthey to Gadamer has demonstrated that if cultural "structures" are going to be analyzed, their "meaning" will have to be interpreted. Semiotics—much less poststructuralism—may see itself in a scientific, post-meaning framework, but this false consciousness simply misinforms them about the epistemology they inevitably employ; it does not accurately describe it. Ricoeur and Geertz make a similar rejoinder against Lévi-Strauss. He does not appreciate the possibilities for objectivity that exist within hermeneutics itself. Wuthnow has offered us an uncomfortable compromise between empiricism and meaning analysis that in my view is untenable. But whether or not one agrees with Wuthnow, one must admire his ability to transform an esoteric dispute into an argument for an empirical cultural sociology.

In the second section of this book, Wuthnow elaborates what he describes as this "poststructural approach" in relation to moral obligations and, he shows how secular rituals can be studied in this way. He criticizes the literature that has developed about moral obligations on the grounds that it either deals exclusively with norms or rules or avoids culture by discussing developmental psychology. In contrast, Wuthnow insists that it is the formal properties of moral codes and their internal structures and relationships that must be the object of sociological analysis. Moral obligations rest on being able to see and maintain internal order between symbolic structures and relationships. Only if such boundaries and distinctions can be maintained will we know the place of things and how they obligate us.

Wuthnow believes that there are three such boundaries that can be identified empirically. The first has to do with the distinction and relationship between what he calls "moral objects" and "real programmes." People maintain moral obligations of positing a moral object, like God, and then a set of actions (real programmes) that guarantee their orientation to that symbol. To keep these separated is precisely the point, for the actual relationship to the moral object can never be demonstrated: only the real programme can. Still, the person believes that the latter engages him in a relationship with the former. The second boundary that establishes moral obligations is between the real self and the social role it plays. Again, these symbols must be separated but also connected. Only if self is separated from role can individual integrity and confidence be maintained no matter what a person actually does. Only if self is connected to role, by

contrast, can this personal vitality be connected to actual social behavior. Finally, moral obligations often involve a distinction and connection between what is seen as inevitable and what is seen as the product of intention. Heroes conquer that which was thought to be impossible; anti-heroes succumb to forces beyond their control.

> Each of these symbolic distinctions seems, on reflection, to serve a useful function in maintaining the authority of particular moral commitments. Cultural constructions that mandate certain courses of behavior as desirable, as "moral," can be viewed, not simply as subjective commitments of attitudes, but as codes which consist of many symbolic elements with an underlying structure involving boundaries between moral objects and real programmes, selves and actors, and realms of intentionality and inevitability. Any erosion or blurring of each boundary, therefore, constitutes an area in which one might look to identify potential crises in moral authority.

Wuthnow goes on to apply this model of moral breakdown to a number of central issues in modern society, e.g., the decline of opportunities for private volunteerism, and the growing centrality of technology in contemporary capitalism, and the growth of scientific, and hence deterministic, theories of causation. He concludes with a discussion of whether there has, indeed, been a "crisis in modern society," as contemporary cultural critics maintain. Although he has found empirical evidence that there has been a blurring of essential moral boundaries, he can foresee a number of ways in which the necessary distinctions can be restored.

I have discussed this third chapter at some length because it indicates the empirical payoff that Wuthnow's analysis can provide. The structural approach has been used to produce an ingenious and systematic *cultural* conception of moral commitment. In my view, this is far and away the most impressive intellectual performance in the book and could provide an exemplar for future sociological research. On the other hand, the discussion violates Wuthnow's explicit program, for he certainly has to enter the thicket of meaning to construct the structures he has described. They cannot be observed as objective structures in and of themselves.

In the second chapter of this section, "Ritual and Moral Order," Wuthnow tries to demonstrate that a dramaturgical perspective on social behavior as ritual can be combined effectively with a structural approach to moral commitments. After reviewing the current literature on ritual, he develops an analytic perspective that defines ritual as the expressive and relatively formalized dimension of action. As such, the purpose of ritual is to communicate, not to integrate. The structural aspects of this definition are apparent.

> Ritual regulates and defines social relations. It may do so by sharpening the boundary between two social statuses governed by

> different relations and expectations (rites of passage), or by reminding people of the relations they share and the principles underlying these relations (collective ceremonies), or by simply sending signals concerning the definition of positions and relations in ongoing social activities (etiquette, protocol, etc.).

In these terms, it makes sense to suggest, as Wuthnow does, that it is the overall level of uncertainty in social relations that determines whether and when ritual activities occur. "It is. . .the need for communication in order to reduce uncertainty and clarify obligations that renders the performance a meaningful event." According to Wuthnow, this formulation "emphasizes the structural patterns or relations among cultural elements that influence the likelihood of any subject of these elements being meaningful." While he suggests that this approach can be applied to an extremely wide range of collective phenomena–from McCarthyism, to witchcraft trials, to collective punishments–his analysis here is often vague and overly generalized, e.g., "Lynchings were collective rituals in which traditional white Southern loyalties were dramatized." This kind of interpretive slippage is exactly what one would expect from the overly simple identification of rituals with "reducing uncertainty." The set piece in this chapter is a seventeen page analysis of the ritualistic aspects of "Holocaust," the 1978 television mini-series that was the center of tremendous public discussion and controversy. There are original and compelling aspects to this analysis. Its reliance, for example, on observable and empirical indicators derived from a re-analysis of easily available survey data should convince social scientists that analyzing rituals does not mean entering some weird and foreign land.

> The present approach to this task focuses on connections between the observable aspects of ritual and the observable manifestations of other conditions in the society. It makes no claims about the hidden meanings or psychological functions of the ritual event. It examines, instead, patterns among observable symbols themselves that appear to lend legitimacy to the event in the specific social context in which it occurs.

Once again, however, Wuthnow's effort to avoid thick interpretation–a term that, contra Wuthnow, can apply to structural analysis as well as to the often ephemeral webs that Geertz has recently spun–has its costs. The symbolic structures that he produces are not rich or internally differentiated enough to be particularly compelling. There are also serious drawbacks that result from Wuthnow's decisions to abandon the Durkheimian understanding of ritual for some loosely "dramaturgical" approach. His analysis becomes overly cognitivist. Moral obligations cannot be considered without a sense of normative constrictions and solidaristic relationships. Still, what Wuthnow has written is provocative and internally

consistent. He knows what he is doing, and he has produced an ambitious set of sociological constructions.

The third section of Wuthnow's book consists of five chapters, all of which are more concerned with developing models and empirical generalizations about the relations between culture and social structure than with investigating culture in and of itself. The first three chapters are concerned with ideology, its definition, production, and institutionalization in an historical and comparative perspective that spans the early modern and modern periods. The next chapter is devoted to the production and institutionalization of modern science. The last chapter is a detailed look at the Reformation and its relation to a variety of national social structures in early modern Europe.

In these discussions, culture typically assumes the position of a weak, dependent variable, pushed hither and yon by ecological, economic, and political forces that are described in noncultural ways. The studies often identify this cultural variable, moreover, in catchwords like "individualism," and "rationality." In this third section, in other words, the implications of Wuthnow's impossible dream of avoiding the thicket of meaning become rudely apparent. For these discussions lack the countervailing forces that the earlier chapters possess, i.e., the studies of symbolic structures, which investigate meaning in spite of themselves. Only in this third section, then, do Wuthnow's theoretical chickens come home to roost.

Meaning and Moral Order is an ambitious and often extremely interesting work. It not only lays out the fundaments of an approach but tries to demonstrate how it can be substantiated empirically. Some of this approach works very well and is deserving of the flattery of imitation. Much of it, in my view, does not. The book deserves to be widely read and thoroughly debated, not just by cultural sociologists but by theorists. This discussion will surely make an important contribution to the emerging social scientific study of cultural life.

Jeffrey C. Alexander
Department of Sociology
University of California, Los Angeles

REVIEWS

The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World. Pierre Vidal-Naquet. Translated by Andrew Szegedy-Maszek. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986. $28.50 (hardcover). ISBN 08-8018-3251-9.

This excellent book does not come as a surprise to students in the field of Greek and Indo-European studies, and particularly to those who over the last thirty years, have been following the impact and challenge represented by Claude Lévi-Strauss' method in humanities and social sciences. Pierre Vidal-Naquet's book illustrates well what a critical application of structuralism can do in the field of classical studies.

Two of the chapters were already translated into English: "Le chasseur noir" as "The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian Ephebia" in the 1968 translation by Janet Lloyd, and "Land and Sacrifice in the Odyssey" in M. I. Finley's 1973 edition devoted to issues on land and economy in Ancient Greece. They were republished in R. L. Gordon's book, *Myth, Religion and Society: Structuralist Essays by M. Detienne, L. Gernet, J. P. Vernant, and P. Vidal-Naquet* (1981, Cambridge University Press), along with three other pieces: "Recipes for Greek adolescence;" "Slavery and the Rule of Women in tradition, myth and utopia;" "Athens and Atlantis: structure and meaning of a Platonic myth," translated by the editor. These pieces have been retranslated from the original French version by Andrew Szegedy-Maszak. Vidal-Naquet has altered and corrected them substantively, as he has done with all the chapters of the book which, apart from a brief text ("Were Greek Slaves a Class?" 159-167), were previously published in specialized French journals and collections before being recompiled in *Le Chasseur Noir: Formes de Pensee et formes de Societe dans le monde grec* (1981, Paris: Maspero).

The English text is thus a bit more than a simple reproduction of the French original. The translation is, in any case, magnificent and impressively faithful to the original.

The book could be articulated into two main theoretical divisions. (Part 1, "Space and Time" and Part 4, "The City, Vision and Reality") are concerned with issues related to the dialectic existing between the Greek place (a plane having its own order and obeying specific rules) and the Greek space (as an effect of processes of temporalization, critical reading and reinterpretation of the place). The others, (Part 2, "The Young, the Warriors" and Part 3, "Women, Slaves, and Artisans") analyze the human condition in the Greek *polis* from a highly sophisticated critique which confronts the methods used by the philological tradition and, through a careful piecing of texts, redescribes such major

themes as the Athenian Hoplite, the Platonic artisan, the slave, and the Greek fear of any gynecocracy, or women's rule. The conclusions presented are of the following order: Athens is an exclusive men's club. Its civil economy is ordered according to paradigms such as the war is to the boy what marriage is to the girl. Gynecocracy (women's rule) as well as doulocracy (slave's rule) are unthinkable and are rejected in the vague and primitive margins of the Greek *politikon*.

Vidal-Naquet's method (129-137) owes much to Claude Lévi-Strauss and George Dumezil whom he wonderfully brings together under the genius of the eighteenth century Jesuit Joseph Francois Lafiteau, missionary in Canada and author of *Moeurs des sauvages amériquains comparés aux moeurs des premiers temps* (1724). Vidal-Naquet's goal in *The Black Hunter* is:

> to bring into dialogue that which does not naturally communicate according to the usual criteria of historical judgment. I am not unaware that some of the comparisons I have put into play might appear as strange, if not so attractive, as the chance encounter 'on a dissecting table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella' in Lautreamont's phrase. It is not obvious *a priori* that, in order to understand the treatment of women in Aristophane's comedies and in Herodotus' history, one must first attend to the opposition between two very different types of slavery (xix).

Positivist oriented readers will be surprised by Vidal-Naquet's techniques. Yet, the method works and brings about imaginative and coherent pictures of Greek values, mores and social organizations. For example, the chapters on "The Black Hunter" (106-128), "Recipes of Greek Adolescence" (129-158) and "Slavery and the Rule of Women" (205-223) are magnificent.

In brief, Vidal-Naquet's book is a gem. It will stimulate further thoughts, discussions and writings on the Greek *politeia* and *politikon*. It should be read by all those who are involved in classical and comparative studies. It puts into circulation a structuralist reading which is provocative and simultaneously rings true.

V. Y. Mudimbe
Romance Languages Department
and Graduate Program in Literature
Duke University

Kinship and Pilgrimage: Rituals of Reunion in American Protestant Culture. Gwen Kennedy Neville. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. vi + 162. $18.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-19-504338-3.

Recently, anthropologists have been an increasingly interested in the analysis of modern complex societies. This analysis has led to a growing number of monographs which focus on Western Europe and America. The results of these studies have been mixed especially when the analyses have tried to combine traditional anthropological methods within a historical and developmental framework. The most successful efforts, in my judgment, have come from anthropologists who focus on process and symbolism based on the work of Victor Turner. The present work draws heavily on Turner's approach and illustrates both its strengths and its weaknesses.

Neville's work attempts to describe a distinctively "Protestant" style of pilgrimage where the believer travels back into traditional ritual and communal settings after having gone into the individuality and dispersion of modern Anglo-American societies. This type of pilgrimage contrasts with the traditional Roman Catholic ideal of pilgrimage as travel to a ritual "center" such as Rome, Fatima or the burial place of a saint. Although this contrast is drawn too sharply to suit my taste because elements of both types of "pilgrimage" exist in either form, Neville effectively utilizes the Protestant model to shed light on reunion events within American Protestant culture. I believe that she makes a convincing case for declaring these to be "rituals of reunion." She argues:

> I am suggesting that the Protestant pilgrimage to reunions, homecomings, and institutional denominational centers—all shrines within the pilgrimage complex—is indeed the ordered antistructure of the bureaucratic rational system of postindustrial Protestantism (27).

The majority of the book consists of excellent descriptive analyses of various concrete examples of American Protestant rituals of reunion. Neville amply documents her thesis through her analyses of family homecomings in the rural south (rural and communal centers are contrasted with the anonymous, individualistic and urban character of most of American life) and in the well known denominational conference center at Montreat, North Carolina. This finely tuned observational analysis is one of the important contributions of anthropology to the analysis of American social life.

The first weakness that I find in this approach is its tendency to oversimplify the rich historical backgrounds of this ritual form. Neville's efforts to demonstrate the contrast of the Protestant ritual of reunion with the medieval and post-medieval Roman

Catholic pilgrimage rituals lead her to underestimate Catholic historical influences on Protestant ritual forms. She sees Protestant pilgrimages as an inversion of the Catholic pilgrimage. Her linkage of "outdoor" services in Scotland, Wales, and America with social movements of resistance also needs more careful historical analysis.

A second weakness of this and many other anthropological approaches to ritual forms is to see them as intended only "for social and political purposes" (42). This approach needs to be supplemented by careful attention to the structure of the religious experience which takes place within such ritual settings. Such religious experience is then seen to have a transcendent referent. In other words, the pilgrimage ritual for those who participate in it cannot be reduced to social and political dimensions alone, although no one would deny that these are present.

In summary, I would recommend Neville' book, not without some qualifications, as a fresh and well documented example of what anthropology can bring to the study of American religious ritual forms. The hermeneutical questions which it raises should lead us to more detailed and useful efforts along the lines that she has so ably followed.

James S. Dalton
Department of Religious Studies
Siena College

Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing. Michael Taussig. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. xix + 517. Maps and photographs with commentary. $29.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-226-79012-6.

Michael Taussig has written an important book which is certain to arouse a great deal of debate and controversy in ritual studies and throughout the social sciences for years to come. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* is the intellectual sequel to Taussig's earlier ardent contribution to the understanding of the "encounter" between capitalism and pre-capitalist forms of production in the South American "peripheries." The book covers two sides of the same coin: the nature of "capitalist penetration" and native resistance to such encroachment through shamanistic healing.

Taussig's earlier concern with the inhuman side of the process of commodification at "the margins" of capitalism is given full body in this new book. According to Taussig, the capitalist process of ever expanding commodification is so destructive and inhuman that "a culture of terror" emerged where torture and other obscene rituals of depreciation became the idiom mediating the encounter of two worlds during the colonial enterprise.

> The creation of colonial reality that occurred in the New World will remain a subject of immense curiosity and study—the New World where the Indian and African *irracionales* became compliant to the reason of a small number of white Christians. Whatever the conclusions [sic] we draw about how that hegemony was so speedily effected, we would be unwise to overlook the role of terror (5).

In South America a culture of terror was beat out of the Indian body and was fed with ever more delirious Spanish colonial fantasies of savagery, cannibalism, and the wildness inspired by the steamy jungle. According to Taussig it was sheer terror that brought the *irracionales* into the newly emerging [dis]order of commodification. Taussig's aims are ambitious. The Putumayo (Colombia) atrocities of the rubber boom are not unique to that part of the world, nor are they derivative of the peculiarities of a conqueror, in this specific case inquisitional Spanish culture in its most dangerously paranoid variant. For Taussig, terror is inevitable in the:

> global stage of development of the commodity fetish; think also of the Congo with its rubber and ivory, of the enslavement of the Yaquis for the sisal plantations of the Yucatan in Mexico, of the genocidal bloodletting in tragic Patagonia—all around the same time (129).

Taussig's book is divided into two major parts: the first part on terror, the second part on shamanistic healing. The two parts

are not well integrated. Here I shall focus on the theoretically more ambitious chapters on terror. The rather long part on healing is based largely on Taussig's extensive experience in the Southwest of Colombia. Taussig, himself a physician, argues that his shaman friends throughout rural and urban Colombia cure by appropriating and subverting the colonially constituted power first imputed on the *indios salvages* by the nervous colonialists. The shamans do not ritually re-establish some harmonious structural design or order, but rather thrive by subverting the arbitrary structures of power, curing by a "tripping up of power in its own disorderliness" (xvii).

The chapters on terror cover various aspects of the anthropology of the horrible–from rescuing Timerman's voice from the torture chambers that flourished in Argentina's "dirty war" during the seventies, to representations of terror in Dante, Asturias and Roger Casement. For the most part, the chapters on terror are not based on firsthand field research but rather rest largely on analyses of Casement's report on the atrocities committed by a Peruvian-British company headed by the infamous Julio C. Arana on the native Indians employed in the collection of rubber in the Putumayo districts of Southwestern Colombia .

Conquest, the act of overcoming the other, (particularly the Spanish oicotype *conquistar)*, was unspeakably brutal. Taussig's masterful writing makes the point that the devil also dwells in the details. Taussig dissects the very inhumanity of a voracious expanding economic system which can never quite satiate its feeding frenzy for profits. Mr. Arana's main problem, was, simply, inducing the Indians to gather rubber for him. And inducing Indians to gather rubber was only half the story. The second half of the story was to keep them, to "recruit" the Indians through debt into an economic system of commodity fetishism which they resisted as most foreign to their hearts. As Arana eventually testified in 1913 to a British House of Commons Select Committee investigating the atrocities committed in his rubber plantations, *conquistar* really meant doing business.

But the Indians would not do business with the whites. And the problem was not one of labor scarcity. There were plenty of Indians. The problem was, and Taussig comes back to this point again and again, that the Indians resisted adopting the white man's *way* of doing business. Recruiting Indians into the white man's ways was brutally messy:

> They [rubber station managers] force the Pacific Indians of the Putumayo to work day and night at the extraction of rubber, without the slightest remuneration. . .they give them nothing to eat. . .they keep them in complete nakedness. . .they rob them of their crops, their women, and their children to satisfy the voracity, lasciviousness and avarice of themselves and their employees, for they live on the Indian's food, keep harems and concubines, and sell these people at wholesale and retail in Iquitos. . .they flog them inhumanly until their bones are visible. . .they give them no

> medical treatment, but let them die, eaten up by maggots, or to serve as foods for the chiefs' [i.e., rubber station managers'] dogs. . . they castrate them, cut off their ears, fingers, arms, legs. . . .And they also tortured the Indians with fire, water and upside-down crucifixion. Company employees cut the Indians to pieces with machetes and dashed out the brains of small children by hurling them against trees and walls. The elderly were killed when they could no longer work, and to amuse themselves company officials practiced their marksmanship using Indians as targets. On special occasions such as Easter Sunday, Saturday of Glory, they shot them down in groups or, in preference, doused them with kerosene and set them on fire to enjoy their agony (34).

The book's greatest strength–its detailed brilliant analyses of the horrible and its place in carving out today's South America–is perhaps also its main weakness. Is this culture of terror, where social and economic consensus was beat out of the Indian's body, the inevitable outcome of the clash of two ways of constituting the world (capitalist and "pre-capitalist")? Is there not something terribly Spanish about the rituals of terror (castration, rape, floggings, etc.) which flourished in the Putumayo and elsewhere in Spanish America? Were not the Yaqui and Patagonian tragedies invoked by Taussig also perpetrated by some Spanish culture? Obviously the Spanish do not have a corner on terror but, it seems to me, that cultural angle can not be overlooked in a book on the culture of terror.

This cultural angle brings us to another problem in the book's treatment of terror and the politics of pain. Terror, if not quite endemic, remains an epidemic in the South American world long after the conquest. A culture of terror with its own grammar and vocabulary engulfed much of Latin America during the last decades. Argentina's recent "dirty war" is one of the best known and best documented examples. In this case the "security" forces, of the last decade, set out to cleanse the "fatherland" of "subversives" eliminating some 10,000 innocent civilians, including children. And Central America has recently experienced a fury of terror quite unprecedented in Latin American history. Yet Taussig's book, although briefly discussing Timerman's calvary, is inexplicably mute on this issue. The author overlooks a number of rich sources of data on collective terror. It is incredible that a book by so sophisticated a writer as Taussig, with a self-stated interest on torture, does not refer to the important work by Amnesty International!

Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing must be seen in relation to Taussig's earlier work on the nature of capitalist penetration in the South American margins. In Taussig's earlier controversial book, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, he analyzed how and why the Afro-American cultivators of the Cauca Valley (Colombia) and the Bolivian mine workers of Oruro (studied by June Nash), indicted an "economic system which forces men to barter their souls for the destructive power of commodities" (1980: xii). According to Taussig the confrontation of such an evil system

with use-value philosophy in the "pre-capitalistic" world resulted in the emergence of symbolically telling collective representations. People entered (or were accused of entering), into pacts with the devil to increase productivity, and money was baptized.

Were these devil pacts the result of the native indictment of a foreign way of constituting the world? Or, as some scholars have pointed out, were they more likely good old-fashioned peer group sanctioning against those who worked too hard and, thus, put pressures on others to perform more piece-work?

Taussig's corpus has been welcomed in many circles as representing a new and seductive "experimental" blending of political economy and interpretative traditions in anthropology. Yet I would anticipate that many will see *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* as finally crowning Taussig as the incorrigible *enfant terrible* of what some other scholars have gone so far as to call a dangerous current in Modern American anthropology—grand on prose yet thin on field-gathered data. So while some anthropologists have already heralded *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* as representing the very "cutting-edge" of contemporary anthropology, others will no doubt hope this new book belongs more at the periphery of the field than at its most promising edge. In any event, whether the book represents the very best treatment of the anthropology of the horrible and not merely the worse of today's horrible anthropology, Taussig's new book will no doubt stimulate debate in postmodern anthropology for years to come.

Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco
Department of Anthropology
University of California, San Diego

Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self. Fred R. Myers. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986. 344. 8 photographs, 11 maps, & 12 diagrams. $27.50 (hardcover). ISBN 0-87474-690-0

In this contemporary ethnography of a Western Desert Australian Aboriginal society, Fred Myers presents carefully considered interpretations of many aspects of Pintupi life. He purports to "show how one can combine the phenomenological attention to the 'life world' of experience with an analytic grasp of the structures that underlie action." Although Myers' study is more concept-driven than "phenomenological," and contains no phenomenology in any formal sense, his interpretations are always original and continually stimulate the reader's sociological imagination.

Scholarship regarding Aboriginal people has been focused primarily upon kinship and the principal "transcendental value" of Aboriginal life–the Dreaming. Myers reviews the contributions of Strehlow, Stanner, Miggitt, Munn and Berndt to an explication of the Dreaming, but these great scholars have succeeded in recording only the structure of the Dreaming: its capacity to organize conceptualization about the environment, its ritual organization, and its role in Aboriginal political life. Myers contributes to this "structural" understanding by linking Aboriginal claims to land with the local orderliness of the everyday Aboriginal polity. However, the fact remains that no anthropological scholar has yet identified the lived meaning of the Dreaming for Aboriginal people.

Myers relates one Dreaming story in detail (from the Tingarri cycle) and offers a brief discussion of the organization of circumcision ceremonies, but he is constrained by the fact that the essential "structural" features of Aboriginal ritual have already been presented in the literature and by the fact that ritual secrecy makes any exegesis of "the details" (307) of ritual offensive to contemporary Aboriginal people. Myers correctly observes that the identification of persons takes on a structure that is played out in ritual and embodied in the unchanging desert landscape, but he views this formal order to be less totalistic and hegemonic–at least for the Pintupi–than have previous ethnographers. According to Myers:

> The ritual, land-based organization of men into a totemic system of differences within an encompassing framework of connectedness is a fragile form of integrating individual autonomy into a social whole.

For Myers, the real story of Aboriginal people lies not in their "beliefs" but in their local social interaction. He states:

> Much of my research involved quite technical traditional social organizational analysis: of land tenure, of travel histories, of

> kinship. I came to understand that *how* Pintupi did things was the most important element to study.

Myers is to be credited with giving precedence to what most concerns the Pintupi, "the importance of 'the other.'" He writes: "I came to see that the 'feel' of Pintupi life was central" especially "their awareness of people as persons." The abiding preoccupation of Aboriginal people is with "feeling happy," which means "to be shown affection and concern, and to show it," and to have "smoothly running relations," especially among kin. This emphasis "on the affective relationships" overwhelms the ideological value of the Dreaming. "It is almost as if the medium–the particular ritual or myth, the object–that unites people does not matter; it is a relator." What matters is "the context of relatedness among participants."

Myers' analysis hinges on three principles fundamental to Aboriginal social life: relatedness, autonomy, and hierarchy. In maintaining relatedness, Aboriginal people avoid "outspoken criticism," "direct confrontation" and the "the appearance of egotism, self-assertion, or private willfulness (all considered harmful) and accept identity with others as part of the self." "The egotistical aspects of individuality" are effaced from the public domain, and "there is little motivation or power to coerce others." Not only are Aboriginal people unassertive over their fellows, never seeking to dominate others for "to be happy at. . .one's own success compared to another's failure would be bad." Aboriginals administer all this with "neither specific governmental structure nor true 'leaders.'"

> For Pintupi, the fabrication of binding authority is not the means for organizing a community. Their concern for individual autonomy opposes that sort of development. They sustain the community not by legislation or subordination of individuals to an institution that represents them collectively, but rather by continually renegotiating their relatedness in consensus (270).

But it is a peculiar "autonomy" that relies upon consensus. Myers asserts that "shared identity with others" is a primary feature of selfhood, and he emphasizes "the concern individuals show to complete themselves through identity with others." If "Pintupi ethnopsychology seems to view an individual's internal state as extensively connected with a web of significant others," then "autonomy" is too strong a term. If autonomy means the freedom to have legitimate sex and to participate in rituals, along with "a reluctance to permit others to impose their authority over oneself," and "a great tolerance for the sheer qualities of individuality," then my objections are merely semantic. But it autonomy means any sort of isolationism or rugged individualism then Myers is off-target. Only an idiosyncratic "autonomy must be expressed through sustaining relations to others." The third principle of Pintupi social life, hierarchy, seems even less fortunate a term, as it is a hierarchy that operates without any

coercion–it is not stratified socially, but it is reciprocal. The term derives from Myers' reading of Louis Dumont and so has a narrow field of reference.

Despite these minor objections, Myers' examination of the tension between "relatedness" and "autonomy" (or "differentiation") is highly suggestive and offers some valuable insights to why Pintupi corporate identity remains contingent rather than enduring. Myers has not yet arrived at the explanation of the ironies of Aboriginal social life, but he offers a fascinating and cogent contribution to the study of some of the central issues.

Kenneth Liberman
Department of Sociology
University of Oregon

Black Theatre, Dance, and Ritual in South Africa. Peter Larlham. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, Theatre and Dramatic Studies, 1982, 1985. 121 + pp. $39.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-8357-1658-9

Although the author's claim that "this book surveys indigenous Black performance in South Africa" (xiii) is certainly overstated, both knowledgeable readers and newcomers to these traditions will welcome the appearance of Peter Larlham's *Black Theatre, Dance, and Ritual in South Africa.* The volume is a rewrite of Larlham's 1981 doctoral dissertation, "Black Performance in South Africa," submitted to New York University's Drama Department. Both the dissertation and the book examine only a "cross section" (xiii) of performance styles, specifically Zulu folk and independent Afro-Christian church ritual music and dance in Zululand and Natal, and urban popular theatre, which has no single Black ethnic affiliation. The narrative is engaging and is at its best when providing firsthand accounts of performances and ritual celebrations such as a rural Zulu wedding, and weakest where it makes attempts at overview, explanation, or brief review of a performance genre, often from secondary sources.

Politically, the book is "correct" in that it speaks directly of the environment of apartheid society and its restrictive effects upon African performance culture. Regrettably, however, the author does not deal theoretically with the interaction of social forces, repressive or otherwise, with performances, performers, occasions, and genres. As the French social theorist March Augé (*The Anthropological Circle* Cambridge, 1979:107) has noted, the point of such research is to discover the articulation of fields of interpersonal communication with their external determinations. Larlham acquaints us with intriguing contemporary ritual symbols and performance metaphors, but does not address their efficacy, which is inextricable from the circuits of power that make up a society's empirical structure. The entire study suffers from the absence of any analysis revealing the links between relations of force and relations of meaning (Augé, 1979:112).

Thus in the first chapter, entitled "Traditional Zulu Rites and Ceremonies," Larlham speaks of the role of apartheid and the South African government's "homelands" policy in the preservation of a rural lifestyle "where traditional rites and ceremonies are still practiced and remain fundamental to the existing social structure" (1). But he does not speculate as to the empirical status or meaning of traditional modes of symbolic action in a situation where indigenous social and political institutions have been abolished, emasculated, or reinvented in forms designed to reinforce the structure of contemporary apartheid society.

Failure to address the social context of the production of meaning in contemporary African culture is similarly evident in

references to "the increasing clash between elements of traditional dress worn only for the [wedding] ceremony, and everyday dress" (9). Is Larlham dealing with "clash," or conscious, self-defensive cultural compartmentalization? Referring to brideprice, the author asserts that today the institution is less "a means of maintaining social equilibrium" than a "commercial transaction" (11). While the adage "Our daughters are our Barclay's Bank," is a popular joke in the African townships, the reality is that the custom of brideprice is commonly practiced even among prosperous middle class families who do not need the cash. Whenever brideprice is practiced, the money is referred to as "cattle," and the payment stands as a material symbol of the honor and status of both bride and groom and the social alliance of their families, although it is expressed in the measures of value introduced by the economic relations of capitalism.

In the early part of Chapter One, Larlham brings together most of the existing written accounts of Zulu performance from the early 19th to the early 20th century. Although many of these accounts have been abstracted and published elsewhere, it is helpful to have them presented as a whole. These accounts are drawn from the memoirs of early travelers, missionaries, ethnographers, and representatives of European governments, and, to some degree, all reflect the colonial mentality and ideological prejudices of their authors and their times. The historical value of these documents is, to some extent, contingent upon the explicit recognition and analysis of these underlying attitudes. Larlham chooses to present them without editorial comment, in the form of primary source as unmediated fact. He may have regarded the ideology of these interlocutors as transparent or no great detraction from their value in establishing a kind of historical "ethnographic baseline" for traditional Zulu performance. Even so, some reflection on their empirical status as strongly mediated, rather than unmediated records of historical culture would have been reassuring.

In the rest of Chapter One and the three chapters that follow, Larlham gives straightforward and enormously useful firsthand accounts of a rural Zulu wedding, an independent "Zionist" Christian ritual, the festivals of Isaiah Shembe's Zulu nationalist Church of the Nazarites, and contemporary Zulu folk dances performed primarily by migrant workers. Although all of these accounts suffer from a lack of social analysis, the author gives a valuable if brief review of the history of black Zionism in South Africa and the place of the Shembe church within this emerging religious and ritual tradition. Larlham regards it as "unfortunate that most travelers' experience of the Zulu folk tradition is limited to a packaged display of a few exotic aspects of Zulu life" (59) at the Durban area "African Habitat" theme parks. Having myself witnessed what becomes of traditional male dance forms when performed for tourists at the mine compounds near Johannesburg on Sunday mornings, I wonder whether it might not actually be a

good thing that both urban and rural performances created entirely by, of, and for migrant workers and their communities remain relatively inaccessible to casual travelers.

The last two chapters deal with what Larlham identifies as "popular theatre" and "committed theatre," respectively. The difference between these two categories seems to be the relative orientation toward unconscious naturalism, rhetoric, melodrama, and entertainment values on the one hand, and conscious political advocacy, communicated through experimental performative techniques, on the other. There is some excellent descriptive and informative interview material here, even if a good portion of it has appeared elsewhere. Indeed these other published sources, rather than firsthand observation, appear to provide the basis for many of the chapters. I would suggest that those looking for a meatier contextual analysis rooted in explicit theoretical frameworks consult Robert Kavanagh's *Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa* (Third World Books, 1985) and my own *In Township Tonight: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* (Longman and Ravan, 1985) as well as "Ideology and Tradition in South African Black Popular Theatre" (*Journal of American Folklore* 99:392, 1986).

Larlham gives a good account of the effects of government repression on committed theatre, noting that:

> The long tradition of enforced racial and tribal segregation has created a unique situation in South Africa where, at present, it is impossible to consider indigenous performance outside its existing sociopolitical context (92).

I second that. Ultimately, the difficulty with Larlham's narrative is not the lack of such statements. It is rather with the decision not to attempt a serious explanation of exactly how the "existing sociopolitical context" of apartheid has shaped the forms and occasions of ritual and dramatic performance, and how, in turn, performance culture has served Africans in both the adaptation to and the construction of their own social experience.

David B. Coplan
Comparative Humanities Program
State University of New York, Old Westbury

Afro-Caribbean Folk Medicine. Michel Laguerre. South Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1987. viii + 122. 2 photographs, 1 map, 1 figure, and 4 appendices. $29.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-89789-113-9.

Because of the scattered, but abundant, bits of history, anecdotes, and recipes concerning folk cures and healers among Afro-American peoples recorded from colonial times to the present, Michel Laguerre's attempt to provide a theory of folk medicine in the black Caribbean looks auspicious. As a collection of former lectures and seminars based upon summer fieldwork in the area, this book offers a brief account of the creation, acquisition and use of folk medical knowledge among Afro-Americans, principally in Caribbean countries. The focus of the book is two-fold. First, Laguerre explains the origins of various folk medical traditions in North America and the Caribbean as a syncretism of European folk, Amerindian, African, and modern cosmopolitan medical knowledge and the transmission of that tradition among healers and their clientele. Second, he places the effectiveness of Afro-Caribbean folk medicine unapologetically in the context of an alternative treatment of disease for peoples in Third World Caribbean societies–treatments preferred to modern cosmopolitan, Western medicine.

Divided into seven chapters, the author's theoretical approach relies almost entirely on taxonomies of disease origin, folk remedies, situations on plantations favoring oral transmission of medical knowledge, types of healers, and the clientele for folk cures. Heeding Alan Dundes' (1968) caution towards tripartite taxonomies, the reader should question the validity and frequent appearance of the customary three categories that form Laguerre's classifications.

Of major significance to ritual studies, however, is Laguerre's taxonomy in Chapter One of the origins of disease and corresponding types of healers: natural, human (or magical), and supernatural. Because the origin of illness determines whether a ritual should be performed–a point made later in Chapters Four and Six–such a taxonomy is crucial to ritual concerns insofar as ritual becomes obligatory with supernaturally caused sickness. One must question, however, the justification for dividing the world of sickness along these lines, since the author provides no reason for doing so except in order to reclassify overlapping categories of earlier observers, e.g., geographical taxonomies of folk medicine. In addition to skirting dangerously the ambiguous boundaries of magic, witchcraft, and religion, Laguerre's distinction between humanly caused illness and supernaturally induced sickness is weak. Both supernatural design and human manipulation participate in magical and supernaturally caused illnesses. There is a degree of supernatural intervention and human manipulation in both categories.

In Chapter Six, while restating the syncretic origin of Afro-Caribbean folk medicine, the author writes that the theological content, material symbols, (e.g., crucifixes), and ritual behavior in Afro-Caribbean curing rituals derive from an European Christian framework that explains "the religious ritual performance of a large segment of the Caribbean population" (75). In addition to oversimplifying Roger Bastide's (1971:23-43) meaning of "syncretism" as cultural borrowing, which seems closer to a definition of cultural diffusion, the author overlooks the African influence on European worship in the Americas. For example, kinetic possession trance, so typical of African worship, was vital in 18th and 19th century revival meetings on the American frontier where the presence of Afro-Americans was encouraged. In Chapter Two, Laguerre makes the interesting and valid observation that many African curing rituals had to be abbreviated in order to survive the total institution of plantation slavery. Despite his tendency to overshadow the impact of African theology on Euro-Americans, the author writes convincingly in Chapter Six that Afro-Caribbeans began to equate their form of possession trance with the Christian need to exorcise demons as a cure for disease, although the two belief systems giving rise to trance behavior were etiologically dissimilar.

As an ambitious and sometimes successful attempt to classify types of diseases and healers in Afro-America, this book presents interesting data on Caribbean folk concepts of human anatomy, types of healers with their corresponding nomenclatures in different societies and their networks of apprentices who diffuse medical traditions, successful treatments that folk herbal knowledge may have to offer modern medicine, and a contrastive list of various herbs used in different countries for the treatment of specific ailments. It is historically interesting, for example, that Afro-American folk cures, some of which white colonialists adopted, still persist–although as rejected knowledge–among the upper and middle classes in the Caribbean. With regard to ritual performance, however, Laguerre's general comparison of Christian faith healing rituals as an exercise in "laying on of hands" with African-derived healing rituals that rely solely on possession trance is illustrative of a taxonomic approach that has little to offer to the description and significance of ritual, which, admittedly, is not the primary intent of the author.

Walter Pitts
Department of Anthropology
Louisiana State University

Jazz: Myth and Religion. Neil Leonard. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. x + 221. Bibliography, index. $16.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-19-504249-2.

Most jazz criticism has been of little use or interest to anyone other than a small circle of afficionados. Neil Leonard's *Jazz: Myth and Religion* seeks to change this pattern. Leonard speaks to sociologists and anthropologists about jazz as an art form and about jazz an an occasion for the establishment of religious and parareligious beliefs and activities. The author argues that in a secular age, jazz has satisfied many of the needs usually associated with religious behavior.

Relying on Troeltsch, Leonard suggests that jazz disrupted the "church-like" orthodoxy of the classical musical establishment of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This new musical phenomena was subject to hostility from within the circle of its new devotees in addition to the attacks from the traditional musical establishment. The history of jazz, from New Orleans to Swing to Be-Bop and free Jazz, is characterized as schismatic and as the result of competing myths, prophets, rituals, and forms of gnosis. Drawing upon the works of Victor Turner and Bryan Wilson, Leonard demonstrates that loosely organized, sect-like groups have arisen around each musical style and are typified by their desire for *communitas*.

Of most interest to ritual studies scholars will be Leonard's account of the development of jazz rituals, defined as "prescribed, repeated practices and patterns relating to the music and the gnosis." Rituals are categorized as relating to musical performance, appearance, language, humor, and initiation. Leonard's encyclopedic knowledge of the jazz tradition has resulted in one of the best accounts of rituals associated with a popular Western musical form. Although his descriptions are often anecdotal, they are informed by a solid grounding in the social scientific literature and should be received as an important contribution to ritual studies scholarship.

Scholars of religion, however, may be disturbed by the loose way in which Leonard has defined religious behavior. Indeed, *Jazz: Myth and Religion* is weakened by the author's failure to distinguish carefully between sect and subculture. More positively, Leonard's decision to be interested in function rather than metaphysics suggests new possibilities for the study of religion and the arts.

Traditional approaches have emphasized theology over anthropology and sociology and have ignored popular cultural forms. In fact, Christian accounts of jazz and other black musical forms have labeled them the "devil's music." Leonard's study rejects this stereotype. He provides a sophisticated account of the way in which an artistic activity, in a community of production

and consumption, can take on the characteristics of a religious organization.

James C. Hall
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

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:

Blanchard, Kendall. 1985. *The Anthropology of Sport.* South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.

Elsbree, Langdon. 1982. *The Rituals of Life: Patterns in Narratives?* New York: Kennikat Press Corp.

El Guindi, Fadwa. 1982. *The Myth of Ritual: A Native's Ethnography of Zapotec Life-Crisis Rituals.* Tucson, AZ: Univ. of Arizona Press.

Kerns, Virginia. 1983. *Women and the Ancestors: Black Carib Kinship and Ritual.* Urbana, IL.: Univ. of Illinois Press.

Literature and Theology. March 1987. Univ. of Oxford Press. (Journal)

Moore, Tom. 1983. *Rituals of the Imagination.* Dallas, TX: The Pegasus Foundation.

Munn, Nancy. 1986. *Walbiri Iconography.* Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Swiderski, Richard. 1986. *Voices: An Anthropologist's Dialogue with an Italian-American Festival.* Ontario, Canada: Centre for Social and Humanistic Studies.

Turner, Victor and Edward Bruner. 1986. *The Anthropology of Experience.* Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois Press.

EDITOR FORUM

Letter from a Contributing Editor to the General Editor

Dear Ron:

I've just now reviewed the first few issues of the *JRS* and offer the following reflections. What's good is the scope and diversity of the articles, though they lean a little too heavily on conventional ideas of ritual, that is, it is either religious or "primitive" (usually meaning African, Native America, etc.). The treatment of the subject matter as alien others, primitives, or "differents" is troubling. Such treatment is implicit in many of the articles, as is the old nature-culture division. The subjects of some of the essays are treated as "nature people" whose truth is in their "originality" (their "distance" from modern or postmodern Western concerns).

I would like to see a more active engagement concerning interculturalism, the development of a single system of analysis of ritual actions that applies to historical and current materials equally, and to Western and non-Western cultures equally. Of course, I am aware of the irony of defining cultures by this Western and non-Western opposition; it privileges that which I am criticizing.

Many of the articles are hard to read because they are written woodenly. The don't read well. I understand that scholarship and punishment have long been cozy (from the first day of school on), but part of my crusade is to identify scholarship with performance (i.e., entertainment). I don't degrade entertainment, so I believe a good essay is a good read. Victor Turner always had about him the sparkle of an entertainer.

To produce good writing takes aggressive editing, which I do for *The Drama Review* but which I don't feel is done at *JRS*. By aggressive editing, I mean returning manuscripts for rewriting; making deep editing suggestions. Also I think interviews, drawings, and photos would loosen up the format and feel of the journal and make it more fun to read.

As for pure substance, of course that depends on what comes in—or does it? I have found that an aggressive policy of meeting people, commissioning articles, and seeking materials is better than the passive receptacle policy of publishing "the best" that comes in the mail, which too often reduces a magazine to a contest among graduate students to see who wrote the best paper.

The book reviews have interested me more than most of the articles. They seem fairly concise and strong, and they help me keep up with the field. With important books two contrasting reviews could be run. The difficulty with reviews is that "a word" appears to be "the last word."

Although "special issues" can be stultifying if carried to an extreme, I think the broadness of ritual studies is such that each issue should have a cluster of articles about significant topics, e.g., violence, performance, relation of religious belief (ideology), ritual action, etc. This would help the editors focus on what they want and thereby give a basis for getting, shaping, and presenting first-rate materials.

Making a journal, my experience suggests, is like making a theatrical production. The director (editor) cannot be passive, though it may appear that s/he is. But at all levels–soliciting materials, active editing, making clear what the magazine stands for (its own "point of view" or "politics") the editor's (or editors' plural) choices and feeling should be out front. So I think you also need an editorial section where the editors speak their minds concerning what issues are burning in the ritual field. If there are no burning issues, then that is a devastating message.

So there you have my reactions.

Richard Schechner,
Contributing Editor, JRS

Editor's Reply

Dear Richard:

May I have permission to "deeply edit" and then publish your letter? I agree with much of it, and what I disagree with may prompt some interesting conversations.

You asked for a section in which the contributing editors could engage one another. Well, here it is.

I agree that the view of ritual reflected in some of the articles is that it is "primitive" or "original." There is still a widespread assumption–even among scholars–that ritual traditions don't change much and that, when they do, they become inauthentic. Just the opposite seems to be assumed about theater: unless it is always coming up with something "new," it is inauthentic. For this reason I am not ready to identify all kinds of ritual with entertainment or even performance; (much depends on what is meant by this latter term).

The *JRS* aims to become genuinely intercultural. That aim has yet to be achieved. The first step is to establish an international board of corresponding editors, something we hope to achieve within the next year or two.

As to the quality of the writing, what can I say. You know what academic writing is like. You'd probably be surprised how heavily I edit. The Associate or Managing Editors often do a second editing run. Some of the editing is "deep." Many articles

are sent back with not only re-writing suggestions but re-reading ones as well. Nevertheless, as you imply, it's amazing how regularly something exciting can sound so dull. Even the pictures we've gotten have been, for the most part, dull. We should do better.

Your notion of "aggressive" editing disturbs me. Maybe the source of my disturbance is the term itself. As an author there is nothing I hate more than an editor who thinks he/she knows what article I *should have* written. And there is nothing I like better than an editor who knows how to get inside my skin and criticize me from the point of view of my own best intentions. You edit *The Drama Review*. Its readership is wide and established; you are financially secure (at least in comparison with the *Journal of Ritual Studies*). And more importantly, you do not cut across as many disciplines as we do. At least that is my perception. Ritual studies has just barely begun the process of finding its task, consolidating some vocabulary, and identifying its proponents. Too heavy an editorial hand could skew authors' willingness to write for readers in other disciplines.

Fred and I have had discussions about the problem of the *Journal's* point of view. Both of us think the *JRS* should not merely reflect the status quo regarding the study of ritual but should actively help determine it. To this end we do, in fact, solicit articles; we don't just passively receive them. I suppose readers might infer the *Journal's* "politics," but at this stage I am not convinced that an ideology of some sort would serve us well, unless it is the simple ideology of getting people who don't normally talk to or read one another to begin doing so. If we were being swamped with articles, and if there were competing journals in the field, your suggestion would make better sense. But for the moment I am not prepared to exclude on principle any scholarly approach to ritual, even those I don't especially like. It would be interesting to hear from other editors, authors, and readers on this topic.

There are some special issues in the making: Islamic ritual, ritual in Korea, ritual and power, ritual and drama, etc. We hope that by adding respondents to some of the articles we can increase the level of dialogue among readers.

Thanks for taking time to evaluate the first few issues.

Ron Grimes

READER FORUM

This space is donated to JRS readers, free of charge to relay information about conferences, courses, meetings and other events concerning ritual; solicit information from others working in your particular area of interest within ritual studies; report new investigations or new directions in ritual study; direct attention to books, research projects or reports of special interest to ritual studies scholars.

CORRECTIONS to 2/1, Winter, 1988: The correct spelling of the author of "Women's Initiation Rites in Afro-Brazilian Religions: A Structural Source Analysis" is: **Carole A. Myscofski**.

RITUAL AND PERFORMANCE IN AFRICA: scholars interested in this topic should consult *The Drama Review* (Summer 1988,13/2, T118) which contains several articles on the subject.

SEMINARS ON RITUAL have been sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. "Ritual and Performance" was the theme in 1987; for 1988 it was "Ritual and Power." (The *JRS* expects to publish a special issue based on articles from the 1988 seminar).

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING, Baltimore, Maryland, October 13-16, 1988 will be organized on the theme of "Oral History, Community History, and People of Color." Meeting sessions include workshops on techniques for interviewing and transcribing, editing for radio, producing videos, as well as sessions with scholarly papers addressing important questions of oral historical analysis. For more information Contact: Richard C. Smith, Secretary, Oral history Association, c/o Oral History Program, 136 Powell Library, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

ANTHONY SEEGER IS NEW DIRECTOR OF SMITHSONIAN'S FOLKWAYS RECORDS, publisher of US folk and tribal music, and of an historically significant collection of spoken word recordings. Copies of the Folkways Records catalogue may be obtained by writing the Birch Tree Group Ltd., Box 2072, Princeton, NJ 08540, or calling 609/683-0090.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN ITALY, July 20-23, 1988, in Padua, Italy, gave a critical presentation of the visual-anthropological documentation, strategies and theoretical-methodological approaches that have characterized developments in this field in Italy. For more information contact: *"Incontro Internazionale sull'Antropologia*

Visuale in Italia," Dipartimento di Psicologia Generale; Piazza Cavour, 23; 35139 PADOVA.

RITUAL STUDIES GROUP, AAR (American Academy of Religion) will sponsor the following events at the National Meeting in Chicago, Nov. 19-22, 1988.

Session on Politics and Ritual Activity,
June McDaniel, (College of Charleston), presiding;
Ivan Strenski, (UCLA), responding.
Participants:
"On Rituals and the Transformation of Social Order"
Tom Driver (Union Theological Seminary)
"Ritual Expression in the Urban Church"
Eleanor Scott Meyers & Janet R. Walton (Union Theo. Seminary)
"The Last Supper and the Roman Theatre"
Christine C. Schnusenberg (Univ. of Chicago)
"Mao's Little Red Book & Rites of Legitimation in China"
Catherine Bell (Santa Clara University)

Session on Ritual Transformation through Masks & Clothing
Thomas Peterson,(Alfred Univ.), presiding;
Raymond D. Fogelson (Univ. of Chicago), responding.
Participants:
"The Festival Masks of Loiza, Puerto Rico"
Edward C. Zaragoza (Drew Univ.)
"Ritual Use of Masks in Iroquois and NW Coast Cultures"
Kathleen Margaret Dugan (Univ. of San Diego)
"The Garments of the Gods in Japanese Ritual"
Alan L. Miller (Miami Univ. of Ohio)
"Masking and Self-Transformation in Japanese Ritual & Theatre"
Richard A. Gardner (Sophia Univ., Tokyo)

For more information, contact Tom Peterson, Alfred University, Division of Human Studies, P.O. Box 847, Alfred, NY 14802.

ANOTHER CALENDAR YEAR has passed, and it is time to renew your subscription to the *JRS* if you have not already done so. Remember, library subscriptions are needed for the continued survival of this journal, so if you work in a college/university, please recommend the *JRS* to your bibliographer. NEW LIBRARY RATES WILL GO INTO EFFECT IN JANUARY, 1989, so encourage bibliographers to subscribe now. Sample issues and information sent upon request. Back issues may also be purchased. (See the front section of this issue for information on subscription rates).

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