

# THE ART OF RITUAL: RITUAL AS A TOOL FOR HEALING

by

MEGHAN S. GOYER

(Under the Direction of Carolyn J. Medine)

## ABSTRACT

The following study examines ritual studies, first through tracing the evolution of the field of ritual theory, and subsequently through identifying the various aspects of ritual that serve to fulfill its function of achieving wholeness, and therefore health. It is with this consideration that the structure of ritual is analyzed as effective in combination with other healing tools. This is evidenced through a look at how ritual structure underlies the techniques of expressive arts therapy. By identifying ritual structure at work in unexpected places, it then becomes possible to propose it as an intentional tool for healing. This is an essential realization in light of the declining health on all levels within modern American culture.

INDEX WORDS: Ritual, Ritualization, Ceremony, Health, Healing, Modern American Culture, Expressive Arts Therapy, Creativity, Metaphor, Embodiment

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MEGHAN S. GOYER

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by

MEGHAN S. GOYER

Major Professor: Carolyn J. Medine

Committee: Kenneth Honerkamp  
Simon Aderibigbe

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
August 2008

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to:

Nancy Lynn Knollman Goyer, for giving me art and teaching me about the power to heal

Steve Goyer, for reassurance that it will all be O.K. and that it's impossible to be perfect

Amanda Goyer, for instigating big picture perspective and keeping me laughing

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Through my study of world religions, it has become apparent to me that love is a major common thread throughout them all. Love is the product of harmonious, reciprocal, connection. Roger Housden's words reverberate with this truth:

When the heart opens, we forget ourselves and the world pours in: this world, and also the invisible world of meaning that sustains everything that was and ever shall be. When the heart opens, everything matters, and this world and the next become one and the same. (Housden 7)

The resonance that arises from this balance runs as a strong current through the foundation of all religions I have thus studied. This makes perfect sense, seeing that rituals are the building blocks of religion and making connections is what rituals do. The etymology of the word "religion," reveals its fundamental role of connection maker. According to *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary Of Modern English*, the word "ritual" is derived from the Latin term *ritualis*, meaning, "a religious rite, or ceremony." The same book defines "ceremony" as akin to the Latin word *cura*, which refers to a medical cure. Both ritual and ceremony fall under the umbrella of religion, a word that *Origins* relates to the word "ligament," which is affiliated with the Latin *religare*, meaning, "to bind again...to bind strongly...to one's faith or ethic" (Partridge 89,135,334,557,556). Considering the relationship between these words, it may be said that ceremony and ritual serve to cure a religious disconnection, thereby reuniting one with their faith, and ethic. At its essence, ritual re-connects.



It is significant to note that while ceremony can be understood as the skeleton of ritual, it is traditionally differentiated from the latter based on lack of contact with the “sacred.” I use quotations marks here to draw attention to the use of the term in naming something that is beyond terms altogether. The word “sacred” is a loaded one. I assert that what that word represents may indeed be called something else by a variety of thinkers and practitioners. Perhaps “God” is what one calls it, or simply “higher power,” or “cosmic oneness,” or “energy,” or “mystery,” or “super-empirical other,” as Kevin Shillbrack proposes. The word does not matter, for in its essence, what is trying to be named, is unnamable. I make this assertion in order to soften preconceptions, and to make the “super-empirical other,” and therefore, ritual, more accessible.

Making connections is what rituals do, and in consideration of the connection conflict emerging in America today, this may be useful knowledge. Connections, on all levels, are failing. There are, in fact, a growing number of dis-connections. It was not until recently that I understood the connection between “dis-jointed” and “unhealthy.” The word “health,” comes from the concept of wholeness. If health means whole, and wholeness requires connection, or re-connection, then we must be missing something in our culture. This is reflected in the psychological struggles that pervade our current society, which are often over-medicated for, and left otherwise unattended.

Malidoma Patrice Somé affirms this in his book *Ritual*. He writes: “without real ritual there is only illness” (Somé 96). This is apparent, in the symptoms that manifest.

Somé explains:

The fading and disappearance of ritual in modern culture is...expressed in several ways: the weakening of link with the spirit world, and general alienation of people from themselves and others. In a context like this there are no elders to help anyone remember through initiation his or her important place in the

Community. Those who seek to remember have an attraction toward violence. They live their life constantly upset or angry, and those responsible for them are at a loss as to what to do. (14)

Conflict and violence appear alongside over-medication, depression, anxiety, fear, alienation, homelessness, racism, etc. It is my belief that this is due to the absence of guided integration usually achieved with ritual, which in its wake leaves behind disconnect between self and self, self and spirit realm, and self and others; what I call “the three others.” Somé echoes the relationship between these three realms by identifying the significant interdependence between communal ritual, family ritual, and individual ritual, which he supports by pointing to how ritual allows for communal grief, social grief, and individual personal grief (12, 81). Without balance among all of these levels, harmony will not be achieved, and health will be impossible. In order for this balance to be maintained, we need to step back and see the connections coming from all sides, which is a prominent function of ritual. The lack of balance is in a reflexive relationship with ritual, meaning that without ritual, there is no balance. What this means, however, is that the balancing function of ritual has the potential to be identified and subsequently applied intentionally, in order to promote wholeness.

Somé identifies the tragedy of a ritual-less culture: “where ritual is absent, the young ones are restless or violent, there are no real elders, and the grown-ups are bewildered. The future is dim... I am tempted to think that when the focus of everyday living displaces ritual in a given society, social decay begins to work from the inside out” (12,14). This is dangerous, because it is not obvious on the outside, and it can affect more than we know. Today, I think, people are just beginning to see the

symptoms of What Somé diagnoses as the emptying out of “spiritual and psychic fuel,” accompanied by the failure to face emotions (18).

There is, however, room for solution in the ever-widening gaps. Somé acknowledges this when he notes that those who may or may not be aware of this reality, nevertheless, reflect it. He explains that this is evident in the large numbers of people in the crowded west that want healing: “People who know that somewhere deep within is a living being in serious longing for a peaceful and serene life” (96). With this in mind, ritual can be viewed as a potential solution, for it breaks down all that obscures one from their authentic self, in order to facilitate movement into wholeness with it.

Rituals are the building blocks of religion, and traditional religion is losing popularity daily. People, however, continue to engage in ritual like activities. Concerts and music festivals; sports and games; exercise, including yoga; and many current television shows reveal the innate human desire to find wholeness, and the modern human condition to search for it outside of where it has traditionally been found. This makes sense, as the process of death and re-birth that ritual facilitates is more than a mere process. It is rather the substance of living, of transitioning through life. In this light, ritual can be understood as a comprehensive way of life, as it structures a movement that occurs constantly underneath awareness. By bringing attention to this inherent process through ritual, trust and comfort in it can be achieved. Considering that today people frequently engage in situations that reflect or mimic the ritual structure points to the ability of various media to achieve similar results. In realization of this, it becomes apparent how various media can be incorporated intentionally into an

adaptation of ritual structure, in order to make healing through the process ritual facilitates accessible.

In this paper, I will use the process of creating art in a therapeutic setting to demonstrate the possibility of implementing the process of ritual outside of the loaded language traditionally accompanying it, language that tends to push people away. In addition, I will show how the specific tools of art are used to enhance the ritual experience. Throughout this exploration, I will use various examples of that which is considered to be “art.” This is for both the metaphoric ability of art to point at what words cannot express, in addition to my personal experience of using it to such ends. Art has served as a constant tool in my quest, and as I narrate the structure of journey, I can hardly exclude it. I offer many examples from *Letters to a Young Poet*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, for this book pushed me just where I needed to be as I grew to make sense of my past in light of the present world around me, a process that echoes ritual function. In order to appeal to the intricacies of my experience, I will use art to speak about it.

Art has been so successful in effecting such transformation in my life based on the specific tools it employs to speak to inner solitude and the process of death and re-birth inherent in life. This agency that lies at the core of creating art is able to represent that which can find no words. Roger Housden eloquently offers that “great poetry happens when the mind is looking the other way and words fall from the sky to shape a moment that would normally be untranslatable,” referring to the power of the imagination to inform (Housden 10). In this way, he signifies the importance of moving past words in the movement towards understanding. Housden further acknowledges the power of moving beyond words by explaining that “when you enter a poem with your

heart as well as your mind, a tremor of recognition will run through you. You *know* what the poet is saying, but you know it viscerally, not with your body of information” (11). It is art’s capacity to transcend words that enhances the discovery of new knowledge, in turn echoing a central element of ritual: its capacity to inform. By using art in the context of ritual, the epistemological function of the imagination and creativity can work with the epistemological function of ritual to enhance the process of dying to the old and awakening to and informing the new. This function of art, more than anything, has pushed me into comfort in my own vast solitude and into confidence in creativity and love. It is for such experiences with the healing power of art that I feel that it is appropriate to use art in order to speak about such complex ideas as those addressed in this paper. Through the use of words as well as art, I will demonstrate the reciprocally enhanced usefulness of both ritual and art therapy in the promotion of healing.

I will begin the discussion on the relationship between ritual, art, and healing with a brief look at how ritual studies, as a specific field, has evolved. The field of ritual is far from new. People such as Arnold Van Gennep, Victor Turner, and Mircea Eliade, have contributed greatly to the study of this subject and have opened doors for others, such as Catherine Bell, and Ronald Grimes, to elaborate. I shall present the work of these scholars, along with that of several others, as a framework from which to define what ritual is and how it functions. It is important to recognize here that each of these theorists arrived at their contribution to the field from a different point of origin. The diversity of their epistemologies had been reflected in the range of their methodologies, which points to the many reasons that ritual is considered so important. Joseph

Campbell, for example, was working from a Roman Catholic background, but his interest in Native American culture prevalent from his boyhood led him to study languages, the psychoanalytic ideas of Freud and Jung, and comparative mythology, while “retaining and interest in many disciplines from archeology to psychology and art, as well as English literature” (Bowie 284). It is from this perspective that Campbell proposed a *monomyth* or “a universal pattern that lies beneath the heroic tales of all cultures” (284). In this way, his work was like that of Mircea Eliade, René Girard, or Claude Lévi-Strauss, in that “he was interested in looking for ultimate truths and meaning behind ethnographic details, and wished to embrace the whole of human history in his purview” (284). Rather than ethnography, theory and storytelling fueled him to peel away the layers of religion and see it as functional.

Similarly, Van Gennep, followed by Turner, “looked at a wide range of customs not in order to amass data, but to see if he could discern their underlying structure” (146). Van Gennep, like Campbell, however, spent his life within academia, while Turner worked in the field among the *Ndembu* tribe of what is now Zambia. His anthropological experience led Turner to focus on “religion, ritual, and symbols,” in light of their role in maintaining social cohesion (152). His observations led him to focus on the performative aspects of ritual, which informed his subsequent work. Social function was not his only concern however, as evidenced in his work on *Christian Pilgrimage*, written with his wife following their conversion to Roman Catholicism.

The variety reflected in this brief description of the sources of my core thinkers reveals the range of methodological approaches to the study of ritual, ranging from field work to cultural studies, which were informed by equally diverse epistemologies,

echoing the diverse manifestations of ritual and ritual-like structure in our modern world. This signifies the array of situations in which ritual is significant, as well as the range of possibilities for implementing ritual structure. It is the various different contributions made to the field that will serve as a basic framework from which to build the case that ritual does and can serve many functions, independent of its placement within or without religion. These functions, while incorporated into various diverse structures, all appeal to the same basic transformation from death, into the abyss, and through re-birth.

It is through acknowledging the various contributions I think are key in the evolution of the field of rituals studies that I will lay a groundwork from which to individually address ritual tools: what Catherine Bell refers to as “certain distinctive features” (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 69). Such “tools,” represent various efficacious elements that are common to the function of all successful ritual. These tools are likewise evident in the function of art therapy, which is why I present them side-by-side. I am in no way trying to claim to have the complete list, and I acknowledge that there are many other approaches to the study of ritual than the one I take. This is the approach I present, however, for this is the approach that makes sense to me -- or rather that helps me to make sense of it. By advancing though this means, I am able to connect the qualities of ritual I find valuable, as revealed and validated by personal experience and research, with the function of healing I have witnessed it fulfilling. Through examining the overlap of these tools as present in both ritual and art therapy, I will make the case that it is possible to employ different combinations of such identified instruments in a unique new way that can be made appropriate to a range of situations.

The potential of achieving ritual benefits is important in light of the current state of health in the Western world today, especially in the United States. Ritual opens doors, that we might not see through other means. Making the healing values of ritual accessible will promote and increase ritual experience, resulting in better health. Here, I focus on the healing of what I call “the three others”: healing divisions between each other, human or natural, within ourselves, and between ourselves and the ultimate other. With this in mind, I will culminate the discussion with a short discourse on ritualization, or the act of creating new ritual. In this way, I will make the case that ritual structure has the potential to be incorporated with other tools to act as a vital force in the maintenance of religion and spirituality, as well as secular health, which will have great affects on individual selves, communities, and societies alike.



## CHAPTER 2

### RITUAL STUDIES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

The field of ritual studies emerged out of a debate over the origins of religion. The question fueling the debate was whether to attribute the origin of religion and culture to ritual or to myth. This invariably resulted in multiple perspectives on the issue, between scholars of social anthropology and religion, of the East and of the West, all of which have made influential contributions to the field (Bell 3). Many played a role in the fluctuating evolution of the field of ritual studies, but a few select individuals have made particularly important contributions, which pertain specifically to my research on ritual and healing, which I will address below.

Catherine Bell, a scholar of the development of ritual studies and the efficacy of ritual, attributes the origin of the ritual-myth debate to Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), who “pioneered one of the most influential early understandings of mythology” (Bell, *Perpectives*, 3). His stance, that myths were “originally poetic statements about nature, especially the sun,” was challenged by Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), who was followed by William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), Sir James Frazer, and Émile Durkheim (3-4). Roberston Smith, working from Tylor’s assertions about social evolution, proposed rituals to be the groundwork for religion through their function of honoring the social order. For him, ritual served the function of maintaining community. Through him, ritual studies turned towards taking a cognitive approach. Frazer, working from the influence of Robertson Smith, along with that of Tylor, further developed a

theory which presents religion playing the role of mind tamer as it fulfills its need to “understand, explain, order, and adapt” (12). Through his work, Frazer brought attention to the role of religion in making sense of the infinite “pattern of birth, struggle, defeat, and resurrection” (5). This identified pattern influenced the later work of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner who acknowledged the function of ritual to guide one through death and re-birth, thus affirming a substantial function of ritual that continues to influence scholars in the field today.

Also working under the influence of Roberston Smith, but with a structural functionalist approach, was Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), who along with Karl Marx and Max Weber, fathered sociology. Durkheim effectively turned scholarly attention away from the individual experience of religion and ritual, and back onto the experience of the community. He emphasized that at the foundation of religion was a distinction between the sacred and profane. He proposed ritual as the means to making the communal sacred, which he identified to then “function to ensure the unconscious priority of communal identification” (Bell, *Perspectives*, 24). He postulated ritual as the means to this end, through the arousal of passionate emotions, which provide a perspective of a reality greater than one’s self, and which, in turn, support dependency on the sacred community. Durkheim’s acknowledgment of the function of ritual as unifying, along with his emphasis on the essential role of personal experience, influenced Turner, who later explained the spontaneous bond between initiates which arises from the shared experience of intense emotion as *communitas* (24-25).

Ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) challenged Durkheim, offering “insights into the internal organization of ritual activities [that]

challenged many traditional ways of categorizing ritual and opened up new perspectives on the relationship to social organization” (Bell, *Perspectives*, 35). This turned the gaze to the function of ritual in maintaining social cohesion, a theme which grounded the later work of Turner. Van Gennep, working from Frazer, asserted the significance of context in understanding rites, while remaining “still very much concerned to demonstrate the universality of certain patterns,” which was supported by “his most famous work, *The Rites of Passage* (1909) [which] appeal[ed] to universal patterns within examples from many disparate traditions” (36). Here the archetypal qualities of ritual structure developed.

Van Gennep’s work focused especially on “those rituals that accompany life crises, those critical moments in social life when individuals move from one status to another” (36). In acknowledging the universal transitions inherent in life, he asserted the important function of rites to “cushion the disturbance” of transition for both individuals and social groups. He coined the term *rites de passage* to refer to such ““life-crises,”” and the “change of place, state, social position, and age,” naming those rites performed at significant life transitions, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death, as well as at celebrations throughout the year, and times of crisis (Turner, *Ritual Process*, 94).

Identification of this major function of ritual, however, was not the only influence Van Gennep had on the field. He also made a defining contribution to the study of ritual by identifying three stages of it: “separation, transition, and incorporation” (Van Gennep vii). His attention to this pattern reflected the important job of honoring transition in individuals, society, and “natural phenomena” (ix). In each case, van Gennep acknowledged ““regeneration as a law of life and of the universe,”” asserting that “the

energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals” (vii).

In this way, Van Gennep called attention to the process of regeneration in the social realm, identifying the function of rites of passage as rites that express the natural movement from death to re-birth. He explained how “for groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way” (189). His acknowledgment of the transition between death and re-birth has contributed greatly to the field of ritual studies in its direct influence of the theory further developed by Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade. Van Gennep connected the function of this transitional stage to the role of the sacred, which he distinguished from the profane, as initiated by his predecessors. It is the role of the sacred in rites that he credits for instigating incorporation back into the social group (Bell, *Perspectives*, 36). Turner and Eliade extend Van Gennep’s framework further, attending to the role of the sacred in ritual.

Victor Turner (1920-1983), a cultural anthropologist, continued Van Gennep’s work on the structure of ritual, supporting the role of ritual in maintaining social cohesion and in facilitating regeneration through death and re-birth. In this way, Turner saw ritual as a means for guiding individuals and communities through change, so that both self and community could be reaffirmed. His perspective was that “many forms of ritual serve as ‘social dramas’ through which the stresses and tensions built into the social structure could be expressed and worked out” (Bell, *Perspectives*, 39). In this way, he addressed the symbolic acting out of social tensions as a primary role in ritual.

Turner's later work further implemented the function of release as a ritual tool. This is exhibited in his work on ritual and play, which he identified as the means to expressing metaphor. Turner had a powerful impact on the field of ritual studies with his elaboration of Durkheim's initial three phase ritual structure. Turner emphasized that ritual's effectiveness in maintaining social structure is in debt to its "mechanism for constantly re-creating, not just reaffirming this unity" (39). Turner developed van Gennep's three-part structure of ritual, using it to explain the structure of this function. Turner argues that the first stage of ritual separation involves a movement out of one's previously held social role. This separation is symbolized in ritual as death, which as Turner explains, "signif[ies] detachment of the individual or group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions, or from both" (Turner, *Ritual Process*, 94-95). This death is important, for as the initiate is removed from his previous role, he is like a slate being wiped clean, reflecting the necessity of death for ultimate re-birth; for, in order that a new state be born, an old state must first die. Turner refers to this crossing as "the threshold period," which moves one into what he calls *liminality*.

This liminal phase is "betwixt and between" death and re-birth of social roles and identities. Stepping over the threshold into the in-between, the initiate exists in a completely ambiguous and indeterminate state. Here she belongs to no category, and embodies no status. Here the initiate possesses nothing. This is often exhibited in ritual by the generic clothing worn by initiates, whose behavior is passive and humble. They must follow instructions, and accept punishment without complaining. The ritual participants "have to submit to an authority that is nothing less than that of the total

community” (Turner 103). Turner recognizes that “it is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life” (95).

Here, the strong are made weak and the weak are made strong. As Turner puts it: “Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low” (97). He supports this theory by detailing how the participant that will soon hold a high status will be tempted to use his authority to satisfy his private wishes, and therefore must be admonished in advance for the desire to “possess for oneself what should be shared for the common good” (103). This forces the initiate to be humble, and “his subsequent power is thought partially to spring from this profound immersion in humility” (104-105). Turner emphasizes that humility is necessary for the initiate of any status, for it is the essential experience of what it is like to be low, which promotes the blank-slate condition needed for the inscription of new knowledge pertaining to new status. Turner asserts that such learning occurs from contact with the sacred, as well as from elders in the community, and can only arise from the low, humble state of liminality.

Another manifestation of ritual action occurring during liminality, pertains to the common ritual experience of multiple initiates. Turner uses the term *communitas* to identify the common bond that develops in the ambiguous place of liminality where hierarchy has disappeared and camaraderie has developed. The ambiguity of identity that the initiates embody, combined with their shared experience of humility and sacredness, form a spontaneous bond between them. Turner explains how this bond is “held to be sacred or ‘holy,’ possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that

govern structured and institutionalized relationships, and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency” (128). This experience of general “humankindness,” results in the ability of *communitas* to “liberate the human structural propensity and give it free reign in the cultural realm of myth, ritual, and symbol” (133). Turner refers to Martin Buber to explain how this relationship is “always a ‘happening,’ something that arises in instant mutuality, when each person fully experiences the being of the other” (136). This results in perceived freedom which often has an empowering magical quality. This freedom breaches previous social boundaries which cease to exist within ritual, so differences are overcome that may have formerly impeded such relationship outside of ritual (128, 133).

This power cannot sustain itself for long, for according to Turner, “the immediacy of *communitas* gives way to the mediacy of structure” (Turner, *Ritual Process*, 129). This unavoidable progression is reflected in the ritual structure, which guides one out of the limen and back into society. In the absence of structure, the sacred bond of *communitas* carries initiates through the suffering of ritual, and into re-birth. It is in fact the *communitas* experience which leads one “back from the unfamiliar bush to the familiar village” (15). In this way, Turner establishes *communitas* as arising from the absence of structure, in turn affecting the regeneration of “the principles of classification and ordering on which social structure rests” (180). Therefore, according to Turner, ritual guides one through the death of her previously held social role into “anti-structure,” which serves itself in reciprocally guiding one to re-aggregate into the social order. Through this ritual experience, one is made aware of how properly to fill her new role, thus enforcing the maintenance of the social structure. Turner explains how rituals

“provide men with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture,” affirming ritual’s role in maintaining social cohesion through guiding individuals between different social roles (128-129).

Turner’s contribution of such an elaborate understanding of ritual structure continues to influence ritual research, as does his work with symbols, which he articulated as “the irreducible unit of ritual activity” (Bell, *Perspectives*, 41). Turner understood symbols to be rooted in bodily experience, validating the significance of personally participating in ritual, and setting the stage for future work on ritual embodiment. According to Bell, “his emphasis on how ritual does what it does by means of a process of dramatization led him and other scholars to explore ritual as performance” (42). In addition, she adds, “his hermeneutical approach to symbols as an ambiguous and suggestive language for communicating complex ideas and attitudes about social structure” has influenced others to think more openly about the function of symbol as communication in ritual (42).

Symbols were likewise key to Clifford Geertz’s understanding of the function of religion and ritual. Geertz (b.1926), contemporary American anthropologist, “is often seen as a representative of the *symbolist* approach to religion, with its focus on *what religions represent*” (Bowie, 20). For him, the “symbolic activities of religious ritual constitute a system of values that acts as both ‘a model of’ the way things actually are and ‘a model for’ how they should be” (Bell, *Perspectives*, 66). In this way, Geertz saw ritual symbolism as a tool for informing a coherent understanding of reality as it is, as well as a tool for creating a new understanding of such. This work of symbols is



prevalent in ritual, Geertz asserts, for “it is in ritual, he suggests, that images and attitudes about the nature of existence are fused with one’s actual experiences of the realities of existence” (66). He explains how in ritual, a single set of symbols works to demonstrate how “the world as lived and the world as imagined...turn out to be the same world” (66). Just as Turner saw symbolism in ritual as a tool for communication, Geertz sees the function of symbolism in ritual as the means to creating a coherent understanding of the world from both the individual and collective perspective.

The role of symbolism in ritual was further investigated by Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), a major historian of religion, who connected the role of symbols to ritual experience in asserting “that myths and symbol provide a clearer and more spontaneous view of the various forms in which humans experience and express the sacred than is afforded by ritual” (Bell, *Perspectives*, 10). In this way, Eliade acknowledged ritual as a means of interaction with symbols and myths and, thereby the sacred. For him, rites “are reenactments of the deeds performed by the gods in the primordial past,” and it is “by performing these deeds again in ritual, [that] the participants identify the historical here and now with the sacred primordial period of the gods before time began” (11). So, like Turner, Eliade considered rituals to be a dramatization, though Turner saw the subject matter to be social drama, whereas Eliade saw it to be the re-enactment of the sacred cosmological myth. For Eliade, the ritual was secondary to the myth, which as “a manifestation of the sacred” is dependent on ritual action for expression (11).

For Eliade, the structural maintenance achieved through ritual was based highly around contact with the religious or sacred. In this perspective, the initial separation

stage of ritual is not so clearly from one's specific role in social structure, as Turner sees it, but from profane reality. For Eliade, the profane is the world of the every day and is distinctly separate from the realm of the sacred where the divine appears. This profane world is where humans exist most of the time. They fulfill various roles within the structure of their society that change, over the course of time. It is often this change that calls for ritual. Echoing Turner's assertion of the ritual function to facilitate smooth transition between social roles, Eliade attributes to ritual initiation the job of teaching one new behavior patterns, techniques, and institutions of adults, as well as the sacred myths and traditions of one's tribe, including the names of the gods and their history. The death that occurs to the profane condition is considered central to ritual for Eliade, as it is equated to the end of childhood and ignorance. His distinction between profane and sacred space and time continues to fuel contemporary thinkers on the subject.

Eliade explains that sacred space, which corresponds to ritual space, reveals itself through what he called a hierophany, which either arises on its own accord, or is provoked. The hierophany serves as a point fixed in space from which structure radiates out and around. This structure is apparent and necessary amidst the chaos of the profane world (Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 161-168). Likewise, the sacrality of the hierophany serves as a reference back to profane reality. Eliade explained how "by manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in the surrounding cosmic milieu" (12). This paradox makes possible the crossing back and forth between the permeable boundaries of the sacred and profane, and thus the hierophany serves as a threshold between two worlds, crossed through ritually symbolic death.

After one dies to the profane world she enters that of the sacred, which Eliade claims to play a central role in initiation. In reference to this, he explains how “the change is always religious, for the change of existential status in the novice is produced by a religious experience,” thus honoring the power of the sacred in the function of ritual (Eliade, *Rites*, 1). Such power is only relevant in the darkness of liminality where one faces primordial creation, and from which both society and individuals are re-born.

Eliade’s words demonstrate:

The road to the self, to the ‘center’ of his [the seeker’s] being...The road is arduous, fraught with perils, because it is in fact, a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to the divinity. Attaining the center is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation; yesterday’s profane and illusory existence gives place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring, and effective. (Eliade, *Myth*, 18)

In this way, Eliade confirms the importance of ritual in guiding one through the threshold between profane and sacred, into the darkness, and then into new life.

For Eliade and Turner ritual is, essentially, a social process maintaining order. The physical space in which ritual is performed is the foundation on which the other functions of ritual operate. Often, ritual is enacted in space already considered sacred; According to Eliade, initially, all space is amorphous and chaotic. It is not until the sacred reveals itself through what he calls a hierophany that a point becomes fixed in space that serves as the center from which structure radiates out and around. Without this sacred manifestation to order space, all that would exist would be chaos. Not all ritual theorists agree on this fractured understanding of space. The other side of the debate argues that all space is sacred, and rather than creating order out of chaos, ritual is instead honoring the manifestation of a sacred unity already there. Victor Turner though, applies Eliade’s idea of separating sacred from profane space specifically to

ritual purposes. He argues that ritual must be performed in a sacred space, explaining how it is “In this way [that] a small realm of order is created in the formless...” (23).

Sacred space, at the same time that it is a hierophany, revealing the sacred, maintains its profane characteristics. Eliade explains how “by manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in the surrounding cosmic milieu” (Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 12). This paradox makes it possible for it to affect the profane world while initiating crossing of the permeable boundary between the sacred and the profane. In this way, the hierophany acts as a porous threshold to the divine. According to Eliade, “the threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds--and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible” (25). Sacred space is both boundary and passage, guarded by ritual. Crossing a threshold is achieved through ritually symbolic death and crossing back, into the profane, it is guided by the ritual specialist so that integration into the social is maintained.

This process of transformation reflects journey in linear time, the historical marking of time by rituals. Many rituals are repeated at specified times--whether every week, month, or year, or once in a lifetime. Repeated rituals function to interrupt linear time and allow the sacred to enter. This means that one is able to enact ritual, and access its accompanying qualities over and over, which will ultimately inform comfort with all that was previously the other. Characteristically, such repetition of ritual occurs in relation to astronomy and agriculture, and is enacted at transitions reflective of

archetypal cycles of Earth and human beings, including times of celebration and times of crisis.

Rituals also mark time in the form of Van Gennep's rites of passage, which function in orienting individuals to significant life transitions, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Considering this, it becomes clear that rituals serve in guiding one through the death and re-birth of identity, while marking the passing of time in a way that structures one's existence within it. Knowledge of one's culture and one's place in it informs behavioral norms as well as a renewed sense of unified "self" and with community and purpose.

In comprehending the role of change as intertwined with disjunction and thus suffering, traditional societies place much emphasis on rites of passage, for their performance structures the process of change. Ritual promotes growth—not just change—through its ability to create a "time-out," in which one is allowed to sit with self, others, and the sacred in the ritual process.

Turner and Eliade inform this work in that we recognize that ritual is problematic for modern people who experience change constantly and may not experience growth in the chaos of the fast-paced world. For true growth to happen, time must be carved out, and set apart. Ritual "presses pause" on time in a way that allows the initiate to step out of normal social structure and exist outside the pressure of society. Both Eliade and Turner recognize this. For Turner, this pause is essential if one is to successfully resume a modern pace.

The work of Eliade and Turner, along with other classical ritual theorists, established the idea of ritual structure, which some scholars have seen as archetypal, in

the Jungian sense. Not all contemporary ritual studies scholars agree with this Jungian approach, however. Catherine Bell does not. Her approach to ritual is historical. In *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, she traces the evolution of the field of ritual studies in order to point to complexities and fluctuations of its history. In doing so, she attempts to present the “position that ‘ritual’ is not an intrinsic, universal category or feature of human behavior--not yet anyway. It is a cultural and historical construction that has been heavily used to help differentiate various styles and degrees of religiosity, rationality, and cultural determinism” (ix). She acknowledges that our current concept of ritual attempts to “identify a universal, cross-cultural phenomenon,” yet emphasizes that it is “inevitably, a rather particular way of looking at and organizing the world.” From this standpoint, Bell addresses in her history “specific theoretical issues concerning the dichotomy of thought and action in ritual” (ix).

Through her rather mechanical approach, Bell demonstrates the variety of explanations about what constitutes ritual and calls attention to their reflection of the context in which they were developed. It is through this perspective that she arrives at the understanding that “any discussion of ritual is essentially an exercise in reflective historical and comparative analysis” (x). Through such an approach, Bell intends to demonstrate that the progressive development of the idea of ritual occurs in limited instances, and that “multiple and even mutually exclusive perspectives on ritual continue to coexist,” pointing to the elusiveness of ritual identification as well as back to the significance of “historical changes in the projects of scholarly analysis” (x).

Despite her hesitancy to classify ritual according to any universal standards, Bell does allow that, presently, “it is understood to play a wide variety of roles and to

communicate a rich density of overdetermined messages and attitudes,” thus confirming the classical view of ritual as a communication tool. She likewise acknowledges the role of the other, which may or may not be sacred, by designating ritual as “the medium chosen to invoke those ordered relationships that are thought to obtain between human beings in the here-and-now and non-immediate sources of power, authority, and value” (xi). Ultimately she attributes to ritual the “ability to have people embody assumptions about their place in the larger order of things” (xi).

This “big picture” perspective, which will figure into my work in the next chapter, is perhaps what she is trying to show us through tracking the history of the field. This is because such a perspective is vital to the maintenance of social structure and identity, of individuals, communities, and even fields of study. This perspective allows the acknowledgment of the impact one’s self makes on the theory she writes. In light of this, Bell calls on “the modernist enterprise of establishing objective, universal knowledge,” in attending to the more recent understandings of ritual function (xi). Her overall stance towards ritual studies is reflected in the advice of Xunzi, the ancient Chinese sage, who “warns against the temptation to reduce this complex phenomenon to simplistic formulas or strict categories,” for he explains that elaborate methodologies will point one away from reality, and trap one in a position of superiority, from which no understanding of ritual will be able to arise (xii). Bell’s hesitancy to put ritual in a box, or boxes, indicates a sort of call to action: one that calls on big picture perspective in understanding ritual according to the here and now.

The impact of ritual on the here and now is addressed extensively by Ronald Grimes, who asserts that the lack of ritual in American culture has an impact on our

ability to heal as individuals and communities. He points to the fact that the average American's primary epistemological source for ritual is the media, which he acknowledges as misrepresenting the other. The media, he claims, operates from a position of seeming superiority, thus breaching the warnings of Xunzi and Bell. This, he notes, serves to create more distance between the average American, and the ritual other, which is paradoxical to the ritual function of unification. People are not experiencing ritual this way, except through the ritualized viewing of T.V. or movies. This allows people to be "tourists" of rituals. The result is that the "connection with ordinary life is severed," and both religion and ritual are reduced to one dimension: "mystery" (Grimes, *Rite Out of Place*, 21). This only makes ritual more inaccessible.

In light of the media's failure to share authentic ritual experience, Grimes offers a "contemplative" alternative, calling on the importance of ritual criticism, and in evaluating ritual success and failure. Grimes proposes the use of "ritual creativity," which he refers to as "ritualization" (85). He calls for the use of the imagination, while cautioning us on the negative effects resulting from this process. Grimes, like those before him, presents ritual as a tool to be used in both developing and sustaining identity as well as in relating to the other in an inclusive way. Grimes thereby acknowledges the ability of ritual to both unite and deconstruct, and like Bell, calls us to an active big picture perspective approach to ritual.

Despite Bell's assertion that ritual is impossible to define singularly, I follow in the footsteps of the previous scholars in understanding ritual according to its function of facilitating regeneration through death and re-birth. Such re-birth depends on integration of separate parts of the self, or the group, into a whole. The reconnection that ritual



accomplishes is defined by the etymological foundations of the word “ritual” itself. Ritual is commonly understood to be the building block of religion, a word which *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, relates to “ligament,” which in turn is affiliated with the Latin *religare*, meaning “to bind again...to bind strongly...to one’s faith or ethic” (Partridge 354). The wholeness that results can be understood as health according to *Origins*, which acknowledges the etymology of the word [“health”] as akin to “whole” (282). The cure therefore, appears to be re-connection, the defining function of ritual. Interestingly enough, the etymology of “ritual” identifies it with “ceremony,” which comes from the word *cura*, referring to a medical cure, thus supporting the role of ritual as medicine via its ability to connect (89).

Like those before me, I recognize that ritual’s ability to heal is owed to the role of the sacred, but I am stepping onto my own path in asserting that the “sacred” can be understood as anything affecting reverence. The elements of awe and reverence, along with humility and intention, are what I believe makes something a ritual versus a habit. It is likewise on this basis that ritual has recently begun to be differentiated from ceremony. The term “ceremony” has long been equated with ritual, but recently an effort has been made to distinguish between the two. Ceremony, is considered a subcategory, or type of ritual. Seen this way, ceremony differs from ritual in that its object is not that of the sacred, but rather the secular world. Eliade notes that “*ceremonious* becomes a term distinguishing nonreligious formal activity, while *ritual* is reserved for that subcategory of ceremonial activity referring to ‘mystical notions’” (Eliade, *Ceremony*, 181). This difference of function is reflected in outcome as well, for whereas ritual serves to influence transformation, ceremony is concerned simply with the

maintenance of already existing secular structure. In ceremony, participants represent themselves in the social roles they already fill, whereas in ritual, participants are removed from such roles entirely. In this way, ceremony's application is "restricted to specialized aspects of social and cultural life, and to its immediate concerns" (182). Unlike ritual, "ceremony does not act on the other world in order to influence this world; it acts solely on this world" (182). Ceremony is therefore seen in cases of "sociopolitical" ritual, such as presidential inaugurations, where its formality "offers idealized representations of normative social arrangements" (180). Ritual, on the other hand, recognizes the fault of social structure and addresses such gaps in order to serve the maintenance of a realistic structure. In ritual, this structural maintenance is based highly around contact with the religious or sacred.

While this divide between ritual and ceremony seems vast, the manifestations of both ritual and ceremony exemplify the same underlying structure. When we see that the missing element in keeping ceremony from acting as ritual is its lack of connection with the sacred, it becomes possible to see how ceremony could be transformed into ritual through the addition of reverence and intention. This concept can also be applied to other places where the underlying structure of ritual is evidenced. Eliade does acknowledge that: "inasmuch as sociopolitical, religious, and 'sacred' interests overlap and even converge, the relation between ceremony and religion is problematic" (179). In light of this, Grimes acknowledges that: "ceremony is not so much an analytic type as it is a layer, attitude, sensibility, or 'mode' of ritual" (179). In recognizing this, it is my assertion that it is possible to incorporate the attitude of ritual in already existing ceremonial structures. I propose that one way to succeed in doing this in the modern

Western world is by identifying and using the specific tools of ritual in combination with other media that offer, and enhance, such functions. Through identifying the possibility of taking advantage of the connecting function of ritual in this disconnected world by incorporating specific ritual elements into structures already parallel, and in many cases offering helpful tools, it becomes apparent that the key to health is right under our noses.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RITUAL TOOLS**

Despite any specific purpose ritual may serve, its structure can be understood as effective because of a set of tools or functions that can be identified as working within its structure. According to the theories we presented in the first chapter, ritual can be understood at the most basic level as facilitating transition out of one state and into another. This chapter will look at how this is accomplished, using Catherine Bell's idea of the "big picture" to examine the functions of ritual in human life, particularly in coming to understand how ritual is a process of healing as well as of transformation. We will argue that human beings' lives take them, naturally, through phases that were once marked ritually—birth, adulthood, marriage, and death. Modern Western culture does not always mark these passages, which leaves the human person and community afraid of change. Ritual, we assert, is necessary as a form of practice, for it not only takes us through change, it also "trains" the human being to face change. The key tool in ritual that makes this possible is liminality. For the modern person liminality is not a formal structure, but rather something that he or she can generate, through other ritual tools such as symbolism (particularly of death and re-birth), solitude, surrender, ritual space, ritual time, memory, witnessing, and embodiment, which call on such qualities as patience, humility, awareness, and reverence, to promote integration through personal and communal ritual.

Ritual, as previously defined by some theorists, moves the human being through death and re-birth. This process is the substance of all transition or change. Change is not easy, as it requires letting go, a death of sorts, and death is hard. Death, we might argue, is humanity's greatest fear, one which has not only influenced the development of religious institutions, but also results in many often unconscious responsive actions, both mental and physical, that directly influence one's experience of life. People must confront death on both the macro-scale, as in the end of physical life, as well as death on the micro-scale, as present in the essence of all transition.

Many people are not aware of this confrontation that often happens in the recesses of the mind. Paradoxically, in order to live life fully, one must become aware of his or her resistance to death. Ritual is one vehicle for this awareness. Ritual offers an opportunity to practice approaching death, offering guidance through it, on a scale that is manageable. The symbolic death facilitated by ritual reflects the fluid change that continues to hurt as long as we continue to resist it and, in this way, re-trains one's habitual relationship to change, leaving one marked, we want to argue, with patience in the process. Ritual's offer of the opportunity to safely practice becoming more comfortable with the inevitable contributes greatly to its healing properties.

Eliade explains how often in indigenous rites, ritual death is facilitated through the re-telling of a creation story that involves descent to the underworld. This is commonly symbolized by the idea of being swallowed by a monster. In modern ritual, death is not so dramatic. Nonetheless, both circumstances ask the initiate to take the equally threatening step over the threshold and to surrender to the unknown (Eliade, *Rites*, xii-xiii). It is exactly surrender that must happen, for only when all attachments

are relinquished, is one truly the blank slate she or he needs to be for the sake of forthcoming rebirth. This can be understood through an example: If a cup is full of juice, and someone desires it to be full of water, first they must pour out the juice. So, in its essence, ritual death is a sacrificing of attachments, and of control.

Joseph Campbell speaks of this surrender in terms of being called to pursue a quest. To him, one identifies the call to search, based on dissatisfaction with the current state of things, which asks her to step over the threshold and into the adventure itself. This understanding is helpful when identifying ritual structure outside of formal ritual contexts. It is easy to identify how one may experience dissatisfaction in her day-to-day life that urges one to turn in a new direction. It is the everyday that Campbell is contextualizing what he calls the hero's journey, a journey within. For Campbell, using Jungian psychology, there is something that is "becoming" within everyone, and it is through taking up the quest upon receiving the call that leads to movement through and integration of the different parts of one's self. Self-hood, to Campbell, cannot be isolated and is ever changing, "the old self dying away, and a new self emerging" (Medine, 2010).

Campbell's framework of transformation is parallel to that of Victor Turner's, yet it allows understanding of everyday reality, which may be hard to glean inside the specific structure of indigenous rites presented in the context from which Turner was working. Campbell and Turner, used together, offer a fuller understanding of how the structure of ritual is one that facilitates growth in response to a call from the reality of continual change and the need for positive transformation.

The alternative to intentionally stepping over the threshold is denial of the call, which generates suppression and results in disharmony, whether identifiable or not. This step into adventure does not have to be solely understood as risk, however. Often, in fact, the symbolic death marking ritual entry can act as a release, resulting in freedom from a previous burden or situation. Even if release is not experienced initially as positive, surrendering to the process of release is essential to the ultimate fulfillment of journeying into cohesive new being.

The success of ritual in achieving this stems from the in-between place of liminality that is constitutive of its structure. Liminality is a space in which one experiences instability, but it is a safe space, in which chaos is contained and which allows one to look at social and personal constructions directly and consider them fully. In this way, liminality offers one a time in managed chaos in which one can evolve. Turner notes that in the liminal space ritual participants are “liberated from normal demands,” and here, “in this gap between ordered worlds, almost anything can happen” (Turner, *Dramas*, 13). Here, the power of creativity is free to inform and to form.

The catalyst for essential ritual surrender is humility, which by definition entails lowness and insignificance. Turner, as we identified in Chapter 1, acknowledges the significance of humility in the function of ritual. Humility is necessary for the initiate of any status, for it wipes the slate clean, allowing for new life to be re-written. Humility can be understood as the result of surrender. It is the looking back, from the freedom of the limen, at what one has let go of that produces the understanding of one’s lack of individual priority in the world. This in itself is beneficial and begins a process of

healing, as such perspective has the potential to result in greater understanding of the power relationships operating in the world.

In the ritual process, one is equal to others, as is evidenced in Turner's identification of the experience of *communitas*. As Turner defines it, *communitas* is the spontaneous bond that is made between multiple peoples sharing a ritual experience. It is my assertion, however, that, in a time without formal ritual, this harmonious bond may arise between the initiate and the sacred and within the self. Here, I want to introduce the function of ritual in promoting connection with what I call "the three others": first, other as other persons and anything external, such as nature; second, other as the sacred or mysterious; and, third, other as the self.

Concerning the relationship to self as other, it is important to consider the role of solitude. Solitude can be understood as loneliness or as a retreat into a mode of being that allows one to reconnect with the self, the other, and the divine (James, *Varieties*, 290). As retreat, solitude serves to identify the need for relationship, as powerful starting points from which to re-connect: "to return from solitude of individuation into the consciousness of unity with all that is" (290). Rainer Maria Rilke, in *Letters to a Young Poet*, emphasizes repeatedly the importance of becoming comfortable in one's own solitude. To Rilke, solitude is considered both "burden and a gift." It is an opportunity for positive experience, gained only after difficult work. Rilke recognizes that there are questions only solitude can address. It is useless to "[look] outside and [wait] for outside answers to questions that only your innermost feeling, in your quietest hour, can perhaps answer" (Rilke 11). In this way, he affirms the need to turn inward and face our own identity.



This surrender breaks down cultural and self imposed borders, putting us into a chosen limen that reveals the underlying interconnectedness of all things and offering comfort to one assuming her proper place in it. In this way, Rilke is acknowledging that the walls kept up by people afraid of confronting their solitude, must be torn down before integration is possible. This is like the experience of symbolic death in ritual. Stephen Mitchell, in his introduction to Rilke's work, acknowledges that "like a poem, [our solitude] can mirror back to us our condition, changing as we change, clarifying as our vision becomes clear, until its insights become as familiar and obvious as our own face" (xvi). This affirms that we must first enter our own solitude to gain integration and become whole.

This feat is possible thanks to the power of witnessing. To witness something means to observe it from the perspective of an "other." It means to ask the questions of a beginners mind, which Shunryu Suzuki explains as "empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities." It is the kind of mind "which can see things as they are," he says, "which step by step and in a flash can realize the original nature of everything" (Suzuki 14). To witness then, requires the release of judgment in exchange for curiosity, for it is only then that we may see the humbling big picture in which all things interconnect. In solitude, the space of liminality, one can ask questions and patiently wait for answers so that we come to know our selves. In direct support of this, Rilke writes:

I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live the*

questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. (Rilke 34)

Solitude offers us perspective, relating to the self as “other.” I learned this lesson in a painting class. I learned how to see the whole. Over and over, my instructor would remind the class to walk, physically, to the other side of the room and, from this different perspective, to look back at our work. Looking at one’s work—and I would add, one’s self—from a variety of perspectives opens the possibility of seeing, and understanding better, the big picture. This widened perspective deflates fears and empowers accurate perception, resulting in humility and fueling integration. Through stepping back from the self, it becomes obvious that the self is one cohesive whole, however disconnected its inner-workings may seem. Those disconnected parts are what Jung calls the shadow.

Robert A. Johnson names that part of ourselves that knowingly influences how our identity appears, the persona, which he defines as “what we would like to be and how we wish to be seen by the world” (Johnson 3). He elaborates that the persona is the ego that “we are and know about consciously,” but that there is another “part of us we fail to see or know” (3). This he calls the “shadow,” borrowing from Carl Jung who wrote, “Everyone carries a Shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s consciousness, the blacker and denser it is. It all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions.” He continues, “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light but by making the darkness conscious” ([www.reconnections.net/shadow2.htm](http://www.reconnections.net/shadow2.htm)). Johnson explains how it is through “the shadow-making process [that] we divide our lives” (4). He acknowledges that “the refused and unacceptable characteristics do not go away; they only collect in the dark corners of our personality. When they have been hidden long enough, they take on a

life of their own--the shadow life.

The shadow is “that which has not entered adequately into consciousness” (4). It has not been integrated into the whole of being, but remains fractured and hidden. Johnson warns, “the shadow gone autonomous is a terrible monster in our psychic house,” one which can result in depressions, accidents, and other sorts of negative outcomes (5). This dramatically highlights the importance of confronting the shadow side during growth, for as Rilke reminds us, “if there is anything unhealthy in your reactions, just bear in mind that sickness is the means by which an organism frees itself from what is alien; so one must simply help it to be sick, to have its whole sickness and to break out with it, since that is the way it gets better” (Rilke 93-94).

In order to confront the shadow side, the modern person must enter a ritual space of solitude. Solitude, as a personal limen, serves as a tool in healing; for, if ritual can be used to break down walls between self and solitude, then self can look into its innermost depths. Recognition requires sincere identification. In ritual, we symbolically engage the shadow self. Johnson explains that “if we *ritually* acknowledge this other dimension of reality [the shadow], the unconscious cannot tell the difference between a ‘real’ act and a symbolic one” (Johnson 21). So, ritual facilitates the viewing of one’s shadow through tricking the unconscious, in order to create the safe space needed to ask it beginner’s questions. The connections within self likewise become more apparent which promotes understanding, and thus, integration. In solitude, we confront the self and make symbols. As Rilke explains, when this happens, “your solitude will be a support and a home for you, even in the midst of very unfamiliar circumstances, and

from it you will find all your paths” (Rilke 44). You will find harmony within the wholeness of your self.

Solitude as ritual action gives permission to follow that path into self. It convinces the modern alienated human being, gently, that reflection is not going to be easy, but that it is going to be more than worth it; and, that when it is difficult, it is supposed to be. Solitude, far from keeping human beings isolated, reestablishes connection. This is comforting, for it implies that multiple other people have had a similar experience, and even though you have never met them, a spontaneous *communitas* emerges out of the independent but parallel experience of traversing the same difficulties.

Both William James and Rilke assure us that solitude is an internal orientation which, once established, we take with us into the world. Rilke writes, “And you should not let yourself be confused in your solitude by the fact that there is something in you that wants to move out of it. This very wish, if you use it calmly and prudently and like a tool, will help you spread out your solitude over a great distance,” for it is stepping over the threshold into the difficult quest that calls on us to move through death into harmony (Rilke 67). He urges to see that, perhaps, in the modern world, onward is inward:

What is necessary, after all, is only this: solitude, vast inner solitude. To walk inside yourself and meet no one for hours - that is what you must be able to attain...for what is happening in your innermost self is worthy of your entire love; somehow you must find a way to work at it. (56)

It is precisely this search for “somehow” that is successfully completed through the guidance of ritual. Ritual offers the work that opens doors into solitude, and asks us to grow, yet does so simultaneous to giving us the courage we need to do so.

The growth that comes from witnessing the self in solitude demonstrates, ironically, the power of relationship. Finding communion in the shared experience of

solitude is a form of connection to others. Mark Nepo, in The Book of Awakening, acknowledges such connection as vital in order to “survive in an inner way that matters” (Nepo 131). When the experience of facing authentic self is shared with other people, the communion becomes inter-relational, which stimulates Turner’s *communitas*. This suggests that individual experience influences communal experience, as Durkheim observed (128).

Solitude generates virtue as well. By walking deep into one’s own shadow filled solitude, one also becomes more humble and capable of seeing oneself reflected in others: a capacity which can be cause for increased sympathy, thereby further stimulating *communitas* to arise. What solitude achieves on its own, however, is communion with self, which makes relationships with others possible. *Communitas*, for Turner, requires others. When equal selves are in a rite of passage, a spontaneous bond forms, uniting them through their shared irreproducible experience of authentic being. As this happens for all participants simultaneously, each individual’s sense of self as other is reciprocally validated and supported, thus creating the limen—a safe space in which it may be explored.

There is witnessing in this traditional form of *communitas* as well. In the limen, all participants are acting as witnesses not only to their own experiences, but also to those of others. Here, others are able to provide authentic and unique vantage points, which help one to see and affirm the big picture. In support of the impact of witnessing, Marshall B. Rosenberg refers to Carl Rogers, who emphasizes that ““when I have been listened to and when I have been heard [witnessed], I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and go on. It is astonishing how elements that seem insoluble become

soluble when someone listens. How confusions that seem irremediable turn into relatively clear flowing streams when one is heard” (Rosenberg, 113). It is in this way, through witness, that validation, support, and integration occur in the ritual process. In solitude, this space is formed alone, only by “someone who is ready for everything, who doesn’t exclude any experience, even the most incomprehensible,[who] will live the relationship with another person as something alive and will himself sound the depths of his own being” (Rilke 90).

Buddhism offers us an insight into this power of solitude. Direct experience is the means by which ritual communicates. According to the Buddha, direct experience is all we have. The Buddha emphasizes awareness of direct experience as primary and necessary to the perspective of emotions as secondary. Thus, he proposes, that in paying attention to our direct experiences and how we manipulate them, we are able to see how we assign them emotions. When we have this wide angle perspective, it becomes evident that emotions are self created, which in turn releases them of their importance, and our attachment. The Buddha was not suggesting that we do this in order to stop feeling, but rather that we start witnessing how we feel.

Witnessing leads to expression: to story. Turner’s three-part structure of ritual through death, liminality, and re-birth, is in accord with linear time, which is experienced in the West as disconnection between past, present, and future. The reality of ritual, however, particularly when limen becomes solitude, is that the archetypal journey can exist outside the imposed structure of time as linear, making possible connections between previously separate temporal states.

One important way this happens is through memory, bringing the past into the present. In ritual proper, this is partly accomplished through connecting present initiates with all previous initiates. In connection with these ritual ancestors, they are brought to life, where they offer support into the future. Another way ritual integrates time through memory, is by pulling one's own past experiences out of their dusty hiding places, so that they may be confronted. Ritual space is one in which we can ask questions of our collective and individual pasts.

Ruel W. Tyson, Jr., using the work of Augustine and Keirkegaard, explains that life is lived forward, but understood backwards (Medine, 2010). He identifies this looping back as occurring at a point of crisis or of realization; a moment in connected time, produced as the future circles back to the past, overlapping meaningfully in the present. In this way, divided time becomes merged into one moment. This moment is the "aha" moment in which everything becomes one-- sometimes just long enough for the clarity needed to take the next step forward into the whole.

This living life forward and understanding it backward integrates experience in order to promote movement into the future. If left undone, the result will be disconnect, which will express itself in different ways and at unexpected times. Nostalgia, for example, can be understood as resulting from a disconnection with the past that can generate a terrible present. "All these disfigured and decaying things," as Rilke calls them, contribute to the pathological identity of individuals, but also of communities (Rilke 47). Communities have collective pasts that are equally as important to face, and by facilitating this, ritual has the potential to promote healing on a large scale, for it

directs communities through the process of integrating a negative broken past into a positive cohesive present.

The process of integrating the past into the present is expressed through story. This refers to the process of expressing identity. Essentially, this is ongoing, but it is not always, or often for that matter, conscious. Ritual, combined with myth, brings awareness to this process, which results in the fractured parts of identity becoming integrated into a whole in a way that makes sense in relation to itself, and to the larger whole of the world. We have spoken of this as involving not triumph, but surrender which breaks down culturally created and self-imposed borders and call into question the categories that are used to organize meaning, opening the space for possibility. Rilke explains that this is so because, as seen in ritual structure, we come to be “alone with the unfamiliar presence that has entered us,” and “because everything we trust and are used to is for a moment taken away from us” (Rilke 83). He acknowledges that this leaves us “standing in the midst of a transition where we cannot remain standing,” explaining “that [this] is why the sadness passes: the new presence that has been added, has entered our bloodstream” (84). Rilke reminds that “the quieter we are, the more patient and open we are in our sadnesses, the more deeply and serenely the new presence can enter us, and the more we can make it our own, the more it becomes *our* fate; and later on, when it ‘happens’ (that is, steps forth out of us to other people), we will feel related and close to it in our innermost being” (85). This cohesive identity reflects one’s story, which has made sense of the past, in a way that continues to inform the present. The unfamiliar has become familiar, and remembering becomes a tool for maintaining whole identity into the future.



What name can we give to reality experienced in this way? The experience of *communitas*, of solitude, can be so powerful as to seem other-worldly, a manifestation of mystery that arises during ritual, and is often named “divine” or “sacred.” The term “the sacred,” however, has accumulated much theoretical baggage. Using a more inclusive term--such as “ultimate other” or “super empirical”--opens doors to encompass individual experience. William James identifies the religious dimension of the human being as that capacity to experience such a phenomenon mysteriously “other.” He emphasizes the necessity of that capacity for an existence within consciousness of “*a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call ‘something there’*” (James 39).

James places this perception outside the boundaries of psychology, thereby signifying the indescribable character of it. This reality consists of “super-normal incidents,” including “voices and visions and overpowering impressions of the meaning of suddenly presented scripture texts, [and] the melting emotion and tumultuous affection connected with the crisis of change”--all experiences which have been documented during ritual. As James explains it, such “super-normal incidents” stand up to criticism despite their non-rational qualities, and when they are reached, their reality makes a strong impact, even more so than “results established by logic ever [do]” (379).

Once experienced, this reality assumes an irrevocable position of priority within one’s *epistēme*, one’s way of knowing. The transmission of this non-rational form of knowledge is a defining quality of ritual, its epistemological function. Such ritual knowledge is evidenced in James’s outline of how “mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths

of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain, and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time” (385). In this way, ritual emerges as “a postulator of new *facts*.”

Such knowledge is “grasped” by the individual, as the individual is “grasped” in the hold of the super-empirical other. James explains this occurrence: “when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power” (389). It is through this transformation that the participant gains a perception of something greater than himself, and by which his “self, hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified.” It is this unifying re-birth that makes ritual so powerful. Ritual offers another way to know.

The world interpreted religiously is not the materialistic or rational world over again, James argues, but rather “must have, over and above the altered expression, a *natural constitution* different at some point from that which a materialistic world would have.” Out of this new perception of the world, we act differently: “It must be such that different events can be expected in it. Different conduct must be required” (389). The nature of such a new reality means that, “no adequate report of its contents can be given in words” (James 384). In some essential way, therefore, the experience of the super-empirical is an individual one, even in group ritual practice: the experience of it “cannot be imparted or transferred to others” (James 384)..

In traditional rituals, ritual leaders, traditionally elders in the community who have gained ritual wisdom from their ancestors, guide ritual. Each time a ritual is performed,

therefore, a connection is made to all those who have performed it throughout time.

This evokes an even “bigger picture” sense of *communitas*. This, in itself produces awe.

No matter how we name the “sacred,” our experience of it should be defined, as William James, among others, tells us, by awe and reverence. Paul Woodruff, in *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue*, confirms that it is reverence that “lends ceremony”—and, we would add, ritual—“the feelings that make ceremony worthwhile” (Woodruff 41). According to Woodruff, “reverence is the well-developed capacity to have the feelings of awe, respect, and shame when these are the right feelings to have” (8). These feelings are identified with the “sacred,” the super-empirical, because “true reverence...cannot be for anything that we humans make or control” (28). This implies an unnamed other.

These feelings also contribute to social cohesion, as Turner asserts. Woodruff refers to Confucius in China and Plato in Greece, both of whom “wanted to see reverence in their leaders, because reverence is the virtue that keeps leaders from trying to take tight control over other people’s lives” (4). This reveals the inner path of the ritual meta-function to influence social cohesion, which leads from reverence to humility. Woodruff attributes the ability of reverence to accomplish this to the contribution of awe in stimulating a step back into witnessing.. Reverence for and awe before the elders, one’s fellow initiates, and the self is an element of *communitas*, which, in turn, calls for witness. Reverence and witness indicate an “ideal of unity” that can be thanked for “begin[ning]... deep understanding of human limitations; from this grows the capacity to be in awe of whatever one believes lies outside our [human] control,” whether that be “God, truth, justice, nature, or death. The capacity for awe,

Woodruff explains, is the capacity for humility that “brings with it as it grows the capacity for respecting fellow human beings, flaws and all” (Woodruff 3).

The ritual process facilitates movement through transition, making connections—to self, other, and super-empirical other—for the ones involved until there are no more connections to be made in that space, and exit begins as integration occurs. The fact that relationship is at the heart of ritual function indicates the additional value of it. The direct experience of ritual, the entry into the limen, creates space between an individual’s attachment to emotions and preconceptions of and about the other, making room for the other to be present in its authentic form and bodily.

Ritual happens through and to the body as well as in the mind. Ritual provides direct experience that transforms. James confirms the power of embodiment when he writes that “our immediate feelings have no content but what the five senses supply” (385). In terms of thought, James suggests that our experience via the senses is important in maintaining unification between our two-part experiences of our world. He names one part of our experience “the objective part [which] is the sum total of whatsoever at any given time we may be thinking of” (387). The other part he calls subjective, which he explains as “the inner ‘state’ in which the thinking comes to pass” (387). “The inner state,” he explains, “is our very experience itself; its reality and that of our experience are one” (387). Therefore, as James explains it, the subjective inner state is essential to our understanding of the world, and dependent on experience. Ritual provides actual, bodily experience that affects our inner state and, in turn, the union of our world view (387). Ritual uses direct participation of mind and body to create a space for “higher energies,” to filter in (390). Nick Crossley supports this role

of embodiment when he identifies Marcel Mauss as “suggesting that at least some of our patterns of bodily activity constitute forms of reason-reason which, *qua* habit, is irreducible to our conscious and reflective life, and which, consisting as it does in uses which the body makes of itself, cannot be separated from the body,” thus supporting the body’s role in gaining knowledge (Shillbrack 35).

The body in ritual is situated in time and space, even as the mind is set free to question, to reverence, to witness, and to change. Both body and mind are “crossing,” as we referred to it in our first chapter. Embodiment is a key tool of ritual. To embody something, means to form into its body--in other words, acting as the visible expression of something intangible. Embodiment is a powerful tool in its ability to “‘condense’ meaning and circumvent verbal negotiation,” alluding to ritual’s capacity to articulate knowledge as a unified whole through the use of symbols, and outside the boundary of words” (Shillbrack 35).

All of the tools of ritual elaborated above contribute to ultimate re-birth out of ritual structure. They facilitate the process of death to the present situation and make integration possible by encourage movement into and through the in-between. Through engaging one’s own story in liminal solitude, outside the pressures of the world, one encounters “the three others,” resulting in a re-born identity that has been informed by understood experience. We take this with us, as William James explains. Turner’s *communitas* cannot exist indefinitely. As initiates re-enter social structure, authentic *communitas* that may have existed in-between, becomes based on memory, which is incorporated into the identity of each individual, as well as the collective identity of those that shared the experience. Turner attributes to *communitas* the support needed to

carry one through the darkness of liminality, a transgression required of transformation. Whether the bond forms within the self, or within a group of selves, the experience of it carries one into death and darkness, and through birth out of the dark womb of liminality. If solitude is a means to *communitas*, it can exist indefinitely in its potential. In this light, James argues that solitude becomes a resource, a space we take with us internally. It is in this way that ritual leads one “back from the unfamiliar bush to the familiar village” (Turner, *Ritual Process*, 15). Through both formal ritual and solitude, we learn to cope, in different ways, with the responsibilities of our new status in society, maintaining social structure, fulfilling Turner’s prognosis of ritual function, and personal wholeness.

## CHAPTER 4

### RITUAL STRUCTURE AT WORK IN THE WORLD

#### A Case Study: Expressive Arts Therapy

Since the beginning of my ritual research journey, I have found my world framed by ritual more and more. Continual affirmations have abounded, confirming my suspicions that the structure defined in ritual indeed underlies the very processes we as humans struggle with most. Such challenges are inescapable, but if addressed within a structure such as that articulated in ritual, they can be transformed from overwhelming chaotic roadblocks, into appreciated necessities for growth. This process that ritual frames exists in the world on its own in many ways, both on the macro- and micro-scale. It is my belief that through identifying, and then applying, such a defined structure to transitions, such as grief, and trauma, one may gain control of the fractured uncertainties, and find unity, thereby achieving wholeness, and fulfilling the defining function of health.

While I do believe that the encounter between audience and art piece resembles the structure of ritual and, therefore, can be healing, that investigation is for another time and place. Here, I will look at the specific use of art in therapy as beneficial to the healing process based on the archetypal ritual structure it facilitates. By referring to the unique method developed by the ArtReach foundation, I will demonstrate how the structure of ritual enables and enhances the success of art therapy as a healing tool, and, ultimately, will point to the strength of the ritual structure itself, in a way that

supports the potential use of ritual as a tool for healing among various media already at work among parallel structures in the world.

The ArtReach Foundation is a non-profit organization that has developed “a unique program using expressive arts and creative problem solving,” to offer victims of traumatic military and natural disasters “the tools necessary to heal and live productive lives” ([www.artreachfoundation.org](http://www.artreachfoundation.org)). The method it has developed is “based on the well-founded concept that artistic, imaginative, and self-expressive activities are emotionally healing and promote positive growth and development” ([www.artreachfoundation.org](http://www.artreachfoundation.org)). Their successful technique incorporates the range of expressive arts therapy tools with valuable research about trauma and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), personality, the brain, community, and healing. The ArtReach approach is effective because it appeals to the core of what makes us humans in a way that our humanity is responsive to. This is likewise the reason for the success of ritual.

My choice to ground the comparison between ritual and art therapy in the specific method of the ArtReach foundation is the result of my personal experience with it. On several occasions I have been a part of the healing experience offered by their unique method. Just as the experience of ritual is beyond words, the ArtReach method must be experienced to be fully understood, which is why it was through participation in it that I was able to see so clearly the reflection of ritual structure. While appealing to art therapy in general as an example of ritual at work in the world, referring to the ArtReach method specifically will allow me to make more comprehensive connections. Ultimately, this will provide a more cohesive explanation of the relationship between the two



separate, but similar, means to healing, by illuminating where they overlap. Through examining this along the lines of a specific example, I will then be able to make the case for the potential of this overlap to occur between ritual itself and other media working in the world to accomplish ritual tasks.

In order to make this claim, I must first justify it, and so I present this specific look at art therapy as the medium. According to the American Art Therapy Association, art therapy is defined as:

A mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight. (American Art Therapy Association)

Such a definition gives creativity a lot of potential power, though it is a resource that has been taken advantage of throughout history. It was only in the 1940's, however, that the tool of creativity influenced the birth of the distinct field of art therapy (American Art Therapy Association). In reference to it's development, Shaun McNiff explains, "whereas art therapy was initially used almost exclusively with psychologically handicapped people, it has now expanded to every sector of society" (McNiff 3). It has become a modern tool accessible to the average person. McNiff also addresses the evolution of art therapy into a method of healing, the categorization which, he explains, as having come from a recent skepticism of being associated "with the realm of healers." (3). According to McNiff, this "was considered threatening because it suggested that art therapy was something other than a scientifically valid method of treatment" (3). McNiff explains this tension as resulting from a cultural loss of "the ancient insight of Socrates, who chided Charmides for trying to heal the body without

first engaging the soul. ‘Curing the soul,’ he said, ‘is the first and essential thing’” (3). In this way, McNiff identifies that art therapy is truly healing, in that it inter-incorporates the body, mind, and soul in a verifiably successful way. Such comprehensiveness is reflected in the definition of art therapy according to The American Art Therapy Association above, as it indicates the effectiveness of art therapy in many different settings, with many different people. This is supported by the structure of art therapy itself, which takes advantage of various tools from a range of artistic media. McNiff explains how “the inclusion of different media reflects a desire to embrace all of life in art’s healing process,” emphasizing the ability of art therapy to integrate the life experiences of many different types of people in many types of situations (6).

My work speaks of creating art over observing art, for that is what Art therapy facilitates. Its methodology is based around the physical manifestation of the creative reservoir hiding in both individuals and groups. By calling on this tool, art therapy strives to access that which is otherwise inaccessible: memories, specifically traumatic ones, and feelings--including fear, shame, grief and doubt--that arise in thoughts and ideas, which one may not even be aware of having. After facilitating resurfacing, the art therapy method incorporates a re-working. This is where the true healing happens. The significant point here is that healing *happens*. It does not already exist, but rather must *become* (Campbell, *Mask*, 22). This implies the significance of experiencing the process, which art therapy structures intentionally. This re-creation of story, which we discussed earlier, is a key point of comparison between ritual and art therapy, for as it is employed as a tool in the structure of ritual, it is taken advantage of in art therapy, and integrated with tools known to aid the practice of re-writing.

The “tool box” of art therapy is full of various techniques, all of which depend on creativity. Just as story does, creativity, the fuel of creation, comes into being as it is employed. The act of creating implies the evolution inherent in the process of becoming. It is precisely for this reason that it is such a valuable tool. Ultimately, the force of creativity will never be fully understood. Harry A. Wilmer in his book *Practical Jung* discusses Jung’s viewpoint of this valuable unknown in the following way:

But, the actual happening and the inner mysterious catalyst,  
 What was that?  
 There is no way of actually knowing.  
 We cannot recreate a creative event in a laboratory.  
 Perhaps some model will evolve  
 Through artificial intelligence,  
 But the spark that created the model, what was that?  
 The final explanation will always elude us. (260)

Creativity is thus confirmed as a mystery, and may perhaps even be seen in this light as sacred. Wilmer supports Jung’s view on the matter when he notes that, “To say that it [creativity] is a mystery, that it is an ultimate expression of the self or the Godhead, is only marginally helpful” (261). In other words, whatever way one attempts to understand the source of creativity, she will end up with the conclusion that it is ultimately mysteriously unknowable. Existing as such, creativity fits neatly into the function of ritual, as both facilitate connection with an ultimate unknowable other.

Catherine Moon, in her article, “Prayer, Sacraments, Grace,” articulates this:

Engagement in creating is an act of manifesting faithful devotion to an ultimate reality...No matter what term is used to refer to this ultimate reality, it is clear that our senses alone cannot observe and come to know the object of our faith. It is through our imaginations that we apprehend God, Mystery, Higher Power, Ultimate Good. (Moon 29)

By naming “ultimate reality,” what we called the “super-empirical,” as the “other” from which creation stems, she is confirming the unique ability of art to “apprehend God,

Mystery, Higher Power, Ultimate Good.” She explains this in specifying that “what cannot be seen, heard, felt, touched, smelled, tasted, or logically understood can still be imagined, and so the imagination is an instrument of faith. This faith,” she says, “becomes concretized--becomes something that can be seen, heard, felt, touched, smelled, perhaps tasted--through the act of making” (29-30). In this way, Moon emphasizes embodiment, which we discussed earlier, and the valuable role creating art can have in establishing connection with the “other.” She, likewise, credits the “other” as the inseparable source of creation. Through creativity then, as through ritual, one may connect with this mysterious other, in order to realize all the possible connections within it, until the lines become blurred, and one merges with it, attaining unity, and thus further enhancing creativity.

The power of art therapy to connect one with the mysterious ultimate other for the sake of promoting wholeness is evident in the traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, both of which emphasize greatly the goal of unity. In these traditions, the ultimate “other” is known as consciousness, or awareness. Judith Cornell in *Mandala* highlights this: “In the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the practice of art is a creative process of alchemy that integrates spiritual consciousness with the gross aspect of the physical body and art material” (Cornell, 26). This “enlightenment, or total healing--physical, mental, and spiritual transformation and blissful integration of the self with the one light,” she explains as “the ultimate aim of these practices” (27). Cornell focuses on the use of mandalas, or symbolic creations mirroring the shape of a circle, in achieving such aims. She points at their ability to “reveal unity between human existence and the structure of the cosmos - opening up a perspective in which things can be understood as a

whole” (2). In this way, art is demonstrated as a tool in connecting various parts of the small story on the meta-scale.

While creativity functions as a tool in facilitating such connection, it is not to do so from a place of pure disconnection. Rather, creativity is the act of making what is already there, but invisible, visible. June Singer, in *Seeing Through the Visible World*, confirms that “there is a ‘visible world’ and there is an ‘invisible world.’ Both are real, although they are real in different ways” (Singer xxi). The visible world, she explains, “coheres around the concept of who we are, what we need, what goals we feel motivated to achieve, and how we proceed as we seek those goals. The personal ego dominates this world, giving rise to ambitions and drives, and seeking practical solutions to pressing problems” (2). This is the world of identity, of the rational conscious mind. This is the world that, as we argued earlier, one must die to in order to reach the world of the invisible, necessary to subsequently inform the re-birth of identity. The invisible holds clues to the visible, however, as Johnson and Rilke showed us, and until we are able to see them, they will remain shadows and haunt. Singer explains:

Whether or not we address ourselves to the second world, it affects us profoundly through subliminal messages, feeling tones, unconscious impulses and reactions, hopes and dreams, fears and specters, and glimpses into the sometimes frightening, sometimes glorious realms of possibilities. The invisible world is also the one from which inspirations come, in which new connections may be seen, and where we can sense the relatedness of all that appears to be separate and distinct in the visible world. (2)

The visible and invisible worlds are interconnected; in fact, “the actuality of their being connected is what makes them work,” and in order to understand their interrelatedness, new connections must be made (5). The function of creativity is thus valuable in diving into the depths of the psyche and pulling the “images and manifestations of the invisible

world,” into “the forefront of consciousness” (3). The tool of creativity is so helpful in achieving this, because, as Singer explains, “In exchange for the promise of security, many people put a barrier between themselves and the adventures in consciousness that could put a whole new light on their personal lives, and extrapolated, on the society in which we live” (3). Creativity, however, like solitude, offers a safe space in which to explore the shadows, allowing one to discover the wide range of possible connections, in order that they may choose which ones make sense in the context of making their story whole. It is clear that wholeness is only the result of diving into the depths, a function ultimately accomplished by ritual and, as we argued, solitude, and specifically attributed to the tool of creativity. In this way, it is apparent how the structure of creativity mirrors the death and re-birth process reflected in ritual structure, contributing to the effectiveness of art therapy as a tool in healing.

Unification with self is the ultimate goal of both ritual and art therapy, and is only partly accomplished through identification with the ultimate other. This interaction between self and ultimate other evokes the reciprocally influential separation from self as other, initially essential for later re-unification. One way to view the self as other is to see the self as the thinking mind. William James calls this dimension of mind the “the inner ‘state’ in which the thinking comes to pass” (James 387). He explains, as we argued earlier, how “the inner state is our very experience itself; its reality and that of our experience are one” (387). James emphasizes how the self is a vital part of experiencing the other, yet allows that such experience is possible only through simultaneous identification with it (387). Such identification requires one to relinquish such a strong hold on logic.

Story, as we argued earlier, with its metaphors, is key here. The “death” that is a separation from thought is accomplished primarily through the embodiment of metaphor, which is the essence of art therapy methodology. Joseph Campbell calls this loss of thought “the artist eye,” which he attributes to the world of “as-if,” where “there has been a shift of view from the logic of the normal secular sphere, where things are understood to be distinct from one another, to a theatrical or play sphere, in which they are accepted for what they are *experienced* as being and the logic is that of ‘make believe’” (Campbell, *Mask*, 21-22). In the experience of play, which mirrors the structure of ritual itself, one becomes something else, thereby dying to a previous state, in order to try on other selves. Through this experience, one is able to incorporate seemingly separate aspects of her self, into a unified identity. It is in this way that play informs re-unification and re-birth.

This re-defining of one’s unified being must be arrived at. Campbell refers to Leo Frobenius who explains: “inasmuch as the idea *is*, it must have *become*. The process is creative, in the highest sense of the word” (22). This creative process can only happen once one is in liminality between their previous and future “selves,” which is arrived at through play, metaphor embodied. Campbell stipulates that play cannot be undertaken by the “advocates of Aristotelian logic,” meaning that “such heavy thinkers are to remain without,” pointing to the interfering nature of rational thought (25). He justifies this, explaining how the whole point “is that one should be overtaken by the state known in India as ‘the other mind...’ where one is ‘beside oneself,’ spellbound, set apart from one’s logic or self-possession and overpowered by the force of a logic of ‘indissociation,’” (25). He supports his case by citing Kant, who “in his *Prolegomena to*

*Every Future System of Metaphysics*, states very carefully that all our thinking about final things can be only by way of *analogy*” (28). Pure logic will only cause further fracturing of the self. Campbell acknowledges the imagination as a tool in deconstructing logic, and entering into the world of pretend. It is “the spontaneous impulse of the spirit to identify itself with something other than itself,” which Campbell claims “transubstantiates the world--in which,” he points out, “actually, after all, things are not quite as real or permanent, terrible, important, or logical as they seem” (29). Therefore, through the embodiment achieved with play, which stimulates death of full identification with the self, and simultaneously promotes “seizure,” or identification with the ultimate other, one may arrive at a perspective of the world that is more tolerable, and thus easier to be a part of.

This ability to bypass rational thought in order to access that which lies beneath is exactly why art therapy is so powerful. The ArtReach foundation explains:

Very often we are not able to grasp or resolve difficulties with our most advanced mental functions, such as rational, conceptual thought and problem solving. Instead, the first attempts emerge as images that capture feelings and the earliest glimmers of understanding. When we take our imagination seriously and give it concrete expression we encourage and set into motion a process of understanding and of integrating even the most difficult and problematic experiences. (Kempner 2)

Through employing Campbell’s idea of “play,” through several different formats, expressive arts therapies echo ritual structure in offering the means by which to confront and, subsequently, to incorporate the invisible world. This is precisely why tools such as ritual and creativity are beneficial in promoting healing. The latter offers the participant a safe way to access the psyche. This is why it is so effective in the re-writing of story; it is an inherent part of the very narrative that is developing from it. It is at the same time



both the source and the author. This significance appeals to its ability to access and incorporate that which is already present within the self. Michael Samuels, and Mary Rockwood Lane, in *Creative Healing: How to Heal Yourself by Tapping Your Hidden Creativity*, support the symbiotic relationship between self, creativity, and health:

Art frees the healing within so you can heal yourself of an illness. Art frees your spirit so your mind and body are in harmony, Art frees your immune system to work at its optimum and help you heal. Art helps you conquer disease by freeing you inner healer to work at its optimum. (Samuels and Rockwood Lane, 38)

It is on this basis that creativity appeals to “the wisest and deepest aspect of who [we] are” (38-39). Through identifying this, they are able to point to the benefit in re-connecting through their assertion that it is this deep place “within [the] body that is the source of...life” (39). So the disconnections, what we earlier called the shadow, which ritual and art therapy both seek to alleviate are also the source of healing. It is from within the self that the force of creativity comes, so it makes sense that it is through connecting with it that healing is accomplished. Samuels and Rockwood Lane point to the ability of jump starting creativity as the means to this end. “All you have to do,” they say, “is allow yourself to be more creative, to move sing, write, dance, and do so spontaneously, without censorship,” for if you “allow your creativity to be seen, it will liberate you so you can get in touch with the healer within” (39-40). This echoes Campbell’s emphasis on the action of becoming, which is reflected throughout the expressive arts therapy process. Cat Bennett also confirms this in her book, The Confident Creative, in which she notes that it is in the process of “making marks that we can begin to discover metaphor and make meaning,” thus confirming the importance of embodiment in the presence of process (Bennett 27).

It is its use of metaphor that makes expressive arts therapy so beneficial. Ritual likewise uses metaphor and symbolism to connect the ritual experience to the self and to the world outside. Art therapy uses symbols self-created by the initiate to create connection with “the three others” we described earlier: invisible and visible aspects of the self, with others, and with external reality, including the mysterious other. Without this continuum, the purpose of ritual, and art therapy, would prove null and void. Metaphor is such a valuable tool in this process, because “in the subjective world, literal meaning...is senseless. The psyche’s response to events is often non-verbal” (Singer 11). Expressive arts therapy provides access to metaphor, which allows articulation of that which is beyond words.

The communication with metaphor depends on the creation of it, a process that is initiated in art therapy and which, in itself, can be deconstructed along the lines of ritual. In fact, creativity arises in the in-between space of ritual that Turner calls liminality. This is so because once one dies to his previous conceptions, and steps back from his self, there is room for the spontaneous power of creativity to arise. Creations may seem to come out of the cracks. Reciprocally, engaging in creativity influences this loss of self and subsequent liminal state. Creativity does not stop there, however, for it is then used as a tool to re-orient one in the process of re-aggregation. The act of creating, and re-creating, engages multiple senses, depending on the scenario and the tools being used. This makes the experience memorable and present. It makes reality immediate, alluding to the ability to create reality. When used in collaboration with creativity, the production of metaphor becomes such a birthing of reality through

process. Turner refers to Robert A. Nisbet who acknowledges the role of metaphor in the *becoming*:

Metaphor is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown...It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us. (Turner, *Dramas*, 25)

When used in collaboration with other tools of creativity, the production of metaphor becomes a birthing of unified process. Turner speaks to this ability of metaphor to unify, acknowledging that “metaphor is, in fact, metamorphic, transformative” (25). He refers again to Nisbet to say that “metaphor is our means of effecting instantaneous fusion of two separated realms of experience into one illuminating, iconic, encapsulating image” (25). Therefore, through creating metaphors, one is able to join previously separate aspects into one coherent whole, which is then able to be understood, and can exist as is in the *limen*, where questions can be asked of it, so that ultimately it may enter into the singularity of identity.

Ritual and art therapy both utilize the power of metaphor, but in the case of the latter, the tool is applied in a way intended for conversation, rather than solely contemplation or direction. Bennett explains the conversation between the visible and invisible that is facilitated through the use of drawing:

Suddenly in the midst of a drawing, it no longer seems random. We begin to perceive our relationships among marks, to see what they might express--by the qualities in them, by the way they relate to each other, and by how they are situated in space. This magical moment occurs right in the midst of drawing and is creative intelligence at work, making order of out chaos. (Bennett 27)

It is in this way that the tools of expressive arts therapy enhance the use of metaphor, and thus allow art therapy to achieve more effectively the communication that ritual

likewise aims for. This results from the use of the special language provided by art to first elucidate and identify the “previous state,” in order that it may then be released. Both ritual and art therapy serve to help us to live life forward and understand it backward, as Tyson showed us, to bring the past into the “now” where it can be acknowledged as having power in the present moment.

Rituals generally delineate this previous state initially, whereas the ritual of art therapy incorporates first finding it. It must be found because it is not immediately apparent, sometimes lurking in the shadows of our unconscious. Through the use of the unique language tools offered by art therapy, the soon to be “previous state” is identified, after which the same language is applied to guide one through a death to it, just as ritual does. Paul Fink, in his article “The Dynamics of Creativity,” confirms that this death is not easy, but is necessary, for “there must be conflict and turmoil that allows the mind to process something and come out with that new, unique phenomenon” (Fink 4). It is in this way that death promotes the communication that continues until re-birth. The products of art therapy, through their use of creativity and metaphor, are therefore “patterns of tension and discharge--the vicariously experienced substitutes for the actual discharge of tension” (4). Through first identifying and subsequently challenging such tensions with the tools provided by art therapy, one is able to go “beyond the stereotypes and restrictions of his background and break through the barriers of limitations of his past by utilizing the same stimulus and the same background of educational and developmental factors, and then changes the metaphors or the paradigm so that enhanced perception can be passed on to others” (5). In this way, the specific tools of art therapy that enhance the function of

metaphor and creativity serve to identify previously hidden conflicts in order that they may be confronted and communicated to the self and others, resulting in a new relationship among the integrated self.

The space created by the nature of this work allows one to address feelings and thoughts previously avoided due to the perceived threat that they carry, a threat “too close to home.” At the distance created through metaphor and creativity, however, such fears can be seen through a different lens, which colors feelings and thoughts in a way that is accessible to the previously identified self. Rainer Maria Rilke refers to the value of this space:

Allow your judgments their own silent, undisturbed development, which, like all progress, must come from deep within and cannot be forced or hastened. *Everything* is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one’s own understanding, and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born: this alone is what it means to live as an artist: in understanding as in creating.  
(Rilke 24)

In this way, the space necessary for creative growth mirrors the liminal space of ritual transformation and the personal space of solitude. This exploration within the *limen*, however, is only possible if the separation is facilitated in a gentle way that allows accessibility. This is the function of both ritual and expressive arts therapy.

This is especially important for victims of trauma, who are especially in need of this protective distance in order to articulate, and relate to, their traumatic experiences. Everyone experiences trauma: it is present from the day we are born, and some would even argue it as present in the process of birth itself. However, trauma does acutely affect many individuals in specifically heightened ways. Lisa M. Hathaway, Adriel Boals,

and Jonathan B. Banks, in a brief report found in *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, note that, according to APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR)...a traumatic event is currently defined as one in which the individual "experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of others," and that the individual's response to the incident involved "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (Hathaway 119). The authors note that while this is certainly the case, "traumatic events can elicit a myriad of emotions other than fear, such as anger, guilt or shame, sadness, and numbing," responses that exist independently of the "conditions [that] are necessary for a diagnosis of PTSD to apply (119, 120). PTSD, or *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, "is a debilitating condition characterized by persistent-re-experiencing of trauma, persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with a trauma, and overall increased physiological arousal for at least one month following a traumatic incident" (119). While trauma does not always indicate PTSD, the two often go hand-in-hand, revealing the haunting emotional impact of experiencing trauma.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, the symptoms of PTSD can include: "re-experiencing symptoms," where one may have "flashbacks--reliving the trauma over and over, including physical symptoms like a racing heart or sweating--bad dreams, or frightening thoughts," as well as Avoidance symptoms, which include, "staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the experience; Feeling emotionally numb; Feeling strong guilt, depression, or worry; Losing interest in activities that were enjoyable in the past; [and] having trouble remembering the dangerous event" (National Institute of Mental Health 1-2). One may also experience

“Hyperarousal symptoms,” which refer to: “Being easily startled; Feeling tense or on ‘edge’; having difficulty sleeping, and/or having angry outbursts” (2)., Simply put, trauma and PTSD can severally affect one’s ability to live a happy, healthy, productive, or even functional life.

The ArtReach Foundation refers to the constructive self-development theory to acknowledge how trauma affects multiple parts of the self, which are always developing. They identify several components of the self effected by trauma: Frame of reference, which includes identity, worldview, spirituality, and all beliefs used to interpret the world; Self capacities, which enable maintenance of sense of self; ego resources that refer to self-awareness and inter-personal protection; psychological needs and cognitive schemas; and memory and protection. The many ways that trauma can affect a person demonstrates why treatment of trauma and PTSD is so important, which explains the recent increase in related research of treatment techniques.

One of the leading fields in the development of successful treatment of trauma and PTSD is art therapy (The ArtReach Foundation, *Healing*). Stephanie Wise from the ArtReach foundation acknowledges the neurological basis for this effectiveness. She recognizes that traumatic experience, and PTSD, shut off communication between the frontal cortex and the rest of the brain. This is meaningful because the frontal cortex is the area of the brain responsible for language. When traumatic experiences deny access to the function of language, those who experience trauma are no longer able to be dealt with using language. In order to address trauma then, the brain must use other pathways to communicate. The creation of other pathways is the substance of creativity, and art therapy provides metaphor and embodiment as tools which

communicate across different pathways in the brain from language, allowing access to communication with traumatic experiences in a way that influences unification and not isolation (The ArtReach Foundation, *Workshop*).

Grief and unresolved pain, while different from trauma in intensity, source, and form, nonetheless are moments of pain, and without guidance, they can seem too terrifying to confront. Material from a conference held by The American Academy of Bereavement, in a paper called “Experiencing the Power of Expressive Arts Techniques,” Tana Slay offers that “through the use of expressive techniques this apprehension has the opportunity to be expressed creatively instead of painfully” (Slay 5). This facilitates the ability to “become more secure within [the self] and [its] ability to deal with death and loss,” as it offers a safe way to “challenge... beliefs, thoughts and fears concerning...loss and pain” (5). Slay attributes this to the specific ability of expressive arts therapies to “allow clients to process their grief experiences at a more core experiential level, instead of only sending the experience through the cognitive processing pathways which can keep them stuck in the pain” (5). Instead, they are empowered through being “provide[d] [with] a safe environment to move into a more natural healing experience by using methods which help minimize clients’ fear of the natural pain involved in grief work” (5).

In this way, expressive arts therapy echoes the function of ritual in easing one through transition and into meaningful wholeness. Every ritual transgression leaves one marked in some way, but the journey facilitated by expressive arts therapies has the potential to leave one with a physical object that can be “powerful in developing maintenance programs for the clients,” through serving to remind individuals that they



are capable of surviving the journey (7). This promotes a continued exploration of grief, which “provide[s] [them with] a most intimate look at themselves” in a way that empowers them “in transforming grief into love for both themselves and others” (7). This effect is present in the context of all ritual and art therapy journey, but it is specifically obvious when a specific grief is the darkness through which one must keep moving.

The specific tools of art therapy that contribute to this function also appear in ritual. One example of this overlap is the use of tool of embodiment. The idea behind embodiment that is enhanced in art therapy mirrors play, a form of embodiment in which direct experience overcomes thought. Thoughts, associated with the ego, tend to obscure underlying realities. Embodiment is helpful because there is so much frozen in the body, and movement of the body awakens it, unlocks it, getting it to move (The ArtReach Foundation, *Healing*). Physical movement in art therapy can take various forms, including dance therapy, theatre activities, and metaphorical uses of the body, or active engagement in creating art or music, among others. This movement is paired with the intention of unlocking, which brings awareness to the process in a way that supports identification of the previously unidentified, in turn fostering the intentions of then working with it in order to establish connections, and through connections, wholeness.

Another specific way in which art therapy utilizes the combination of these tools is with sound. This signifies the familiar function of language, which is what metaphor and embodiment try to bypass. Their success at doing this does not, however, devalue the common use of language, and in fact can flourish when paired with it. Language can

be very powerful. This is why it is sometimes difficult to use, yet also why it can influence greatly. The use of language is essentially the creation of sound. Guy L. Beck, in his article "Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound," points to Walter J. Ong, who comments on the power of sound: "the inherent power of the spoken word: ' Sound signals the present use of power, since sound must be in active production in order to exist at all...Words are powerful'" (Beck 2). In this way, sounds, like all metaphors, are an act of creation, an act of making real, and therefore important, demanding respect or what we have called reverence. Sound is considered the most immediate of our senses. This is because sound is vibration, and according to physics, vibrations are the agents of form. This has a powerful implication, for if everything is made of one single fabric of vibration, then one both influences and is influenced by everything else in the fabric. This understanding leads to a feeling of connectedness in itself, which is, we have argued, the goal of healing. The power of sound has been a vital tool throughout the history of religion. Religions use sound in the form of liturgical recitation, reading of texts, music, teachings (such as sermons), and in other ways that "guide, signal, and accompany a range of ritual practices" (Riedl, "Buddhist Ritual"). Acknowledging this marks the importance of both hearing sound and creating sound and designates it as a tool for achieving healing.

Art therapy utilizes sound by incorporating the traditional use of language, yet doing so in an indirect way. It uses language alongside metaphor and embodiment to direct participants in creating a safe space in-between where questions can be asked. Metaphor and embodiment in art therapy manifest in various ways. They are both present in the creation of anything visual, as well as anything acted out, as with drama

and role-playing, and function also in music and writing. While language can sometimes be a barrier, it can also be taken advantage of and is actually commonly thought of with the concept of “metaphor.” One effective way this occurs in the ArtReach model is through the creation of metaphor poems. This tool asks one to address his or her identity with metaphor, thus encouraging new language of talking about self, and thus new perspective (ArtReach, “Workshop”). All expressive arts therapy utilizes language, incorporating it with multiple forms of metaphor and embodiment in order to provide a comprehensive, whole, connected experience.

This experience reflects the process of “re-storying,” as Carolyn Medine calls it, which is the ultimate end goal of both ritual and expressive arts therapy. Art therapy uses creativity in combination with metaphor to help accomplish this, which is meaningful, for, as the ArtReach perspective demonstrates, metaphor helps one tell his story without actually telling his story. This is valuable due to the seeming impossibility a task like testimony is often perceived to be without these tools. This is especially valuable when working with individuals who have experienced trauma and PTSD and who cannot face the reality of what they have experienced. Other instances employ the same tools to create a meta-story with the intention of unifying multiple disjunctive tales, such as traumas, in a coherent whole. In reference to this, the ArtReach methodology upholds the following:

the expressive arts provide a way to connect one’s past experience and emotions, in an affirmative way, to their present circumstance, surroundings, and community. In other words, the participant constructs his or her own ‘narrative’...as a way to understand the conditions leading to the trauma and the lingering impact. (The ArtReach Foundation, *Healing*, 4)

This demonstrates the ability of art therapy to lead one through the re-storying process by metaphorically working with the lingering pieces of the past, in order that they become integrated into a unified narrative situated in the present. This parallels the way that time functions in ritual.

The accomplishment of art therapy in using many means to help one write her story reflects the stabilizing effect of such integrative methods, as that developed by The ArtReach Foundation. By this I mean that they are “grounding,” or “centering.” Both of these terms imply the perspective of “the big picture” we discussed earlier, in which power reclaims its proper attachment. When one sees the big picture, she becomes aware of the ultimately small role her seemingly big issue actually has in the scheme of things. This is humbling, and takes power away from the issue that was previously inhibiting. By offering one this stabilizing point through a creative method, she is provided with a home base of sorts. This method serves to maintain one’s focus, which prevents the mind from running all over the place. Instead, it is able to clear obstructions and to hone in on one area, which can then be investigated specifically in a way that influences re-conceptualization (Riedl, “Buddhist Ritual”). While this “one area” may seem separate from other areas, it is actually part of the entire invisible realm, which is why it is within this realm that we can find stabilization in our own center.

Samuels and Rockwood Lane acknowledge this:

Deep within all of us is the place of perfect beauty from which we all come. It is the same place from which we are born. It is the same place to which we will return. In that place, we will find our deepest peace, our most profound memories of who we are. In our lives, this is the place of the memory of our brightest moment. It is tied to our vision of being touched, being nurtured, being loved perfectly, being in the presence of something greater than ourselves. And it is tied to our own memory of our greatest sadness, of our losses, of our fears of

our own death. In the center of this place of beauty is the energy that heals us. This is also the energy of our own passionate creativity. (Samuel and Lane 40)

It is in this way that the center of our being serves to simultaneously ground us and project us forward through discovery of our invisible unconscious. From centering comes the ability to balance between a new point of focus and its relevance in the world by providing context from within our own grounding experience. This gives us the courage to continue on the quest and continues to serve as a safe place, like William James's sense of solitude, to which we can return at any point throughout the process.

Having a contextual home base is important when the survivor is making unpredictable connections. Such connections can be seen, primarily, through observing the role of the other in both ritual and art therapy. One of the reasons ritual is unifying is that it facilitates the re-connection between self and the "the three others": 1: other as self, 2: other as ultimate "super empirical" other, and 3: other as secondary other, or anything perceived as external (Shillbrack, "What Isn't"). The label of "other" functions to create categories, so that we can set them down and step back to see them fully, though in reality they are three parts of a whole. This perspective is accomplished through the power of witnessing.

As with ritual, the relationship between these "three others" is equally essential to the methodology of expressive arts therapy. Witnessing allows connection. When I speak of connection, I am truly calling on resonance, which holds the power of connection. The etymology of the word "resonance" indicates a sounding back; an echo; a sounding simultaneously, in harmony. Each of these understandings indicates a wholeness of sound, of vibration. In consideration of this, resonance can be seen as the harmonious, simultaneous, reverberation of vibration (Partridge 640-42).

There is something very powerful about resonance. Through finding a balance of energies, one feels truly witnessed, both by self and by others, as a result of feeling the wholeness reflected through the harmonious energy of vibration. When one comes into contact with vibration, she influences its subsequent pattern. It is in this way, resonance, promoted through witnessing, creates and validates reality, for it contributes to the *becoming* of the process. Through being witnessed, then, one's process is honored as real, upholding the reverence of it as necessary for work with it to be possible. Therefore, reverence and resonance are in a cyclical relationship. The word "relationship" implies connection, which is what both these tools fuel, thus helping to accomplish the re-connection necessary for healing to occur.

Such re-connection is the result of witnessing, both in ritual and expressive arts therapy alike. Witnessing of self as other, and other as mysterious other, provides big picture perspective that offers reassurance and affirmation. The witnessing of and by others is no different. In reference to the value of witnessing and being witnessed by others, we quote again Marshall B. Rosenberg, who refers to Carl Rogers, who emphasizes that "when I have been listened to and when I have been heard [witnessed], I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and go on. It is astonishing how elements that seem insoluble become soluble when someone listens. How confusions that seem irremediable turn into relatively clear flowing streams when one is heard" (Rosenberg 113). The invisible becomes visible and coherent.

The ArtReach foundation incorporates this important tool of witnessing into the narrative of the entire healing experience. In their workshops, there is no agenda. The work together is just as much healing regardless of individual tasks. This is so because

the witnessing of others, and self, in a safe space is intrinsically healing. The ArtReach method seeks to go farther, as it centers around creating a story, with the process of the healing experience being done together, in *communitas*. There is no rigid structure that has to be followed for every workshop; instead, “the model is based on the belief that healing comes from the story that develops out of the experience of the group” (The ArtReach Foundation, *Healing*, 4). Each workshop evolves on its own accord, in response to the needs of each individual group. This kind of witnessing is powerful, and it immediately informs the process in a way that is more suitable, and ultimately more meaningful and productive, for the participants. Just as the ArtReach model allows for adaptability, it also fosters flexibility in the movement between connection with self and interconnectedness with the rest of the group. This stems from the acknowledgment that, as we argued previously, collective experience and individual experience influence each other. This also speaks to ritual, for while the experience of ritual is communal on one level, it is ultimately individual, and will be experienced differently for each participant. This points to the importance of witnessing the creation of a story out of both individual and group experiences.

The ArtReach foundation acknowledges the power of story as so strong that, in circumstances of trauma, re-living or re-telling it may be experienced as harmful, and in respect for this, their model “creates a healing experience through a creative group process” (The ArtReach Foundation, *Healing*, 4). Through interaction within the group, liminality is made a safe space that continues to offer support throughout the process of growing into healing together. In this safe space, art therapy group participants often find what Turner calls *communitas*: the bond between ritual participants that

spontaneously forms during liminality. This camaraderie arises in-between the reality of society, where all are brought to the same level of play. Turner signifies that this experience of general “humankindness,” results from the ability of *communitas* to liberate the human structural propensity and give it free reign in the cultural realm of myth, ritual, and symbol” (Turner, *Ritual Process*, 133). It is apparent, then, why in the framework of art therapy, where the use of these tools is accentuated within the establishment of a safe space, *communitas* would occur readily. It is especially prominent in the ArtReach model, as the experience of the group defines how the rest of the process will unfold. This shared experience of diving into solitude instigates what the subsequent experiences will be. In this way, the group gains power simultaneously to affect and be affected. In a way, this acts as glue, strengthening group bonds of the whole (The ArtReach Foundation, *Workshop*).

This approach incorporates the other, both as fellow participant and as therapist. Having a leader is important in both ritual and art therapy, for it is a source of direction and encouragement. We spoke earlier of ritual leaders, elders. Turner explains how initiates must obey everything the ritual leader asks of them, which directly shapes the experience. The presence of a guiding force in art therapy is especially important, as the work is so close to home, and the narrative writing has the potential to get stuck or go astray. The ArtReach Foundation incorporates adult learning theory, which argues that “adults learn more effectively if they have a measure of control over the circumstances of their learning” (The ArtReach Foundation, *Healing*, 4). This control is maintained by the therapist, signifying the importance of having a trained practitioner guide one through the process. Judith Rubin identifies the role of the therapist who



“helps the patient understand and gain control over previously unknown sources of distress through questions, clarifications, confrontation, and other forms of intervention--especially interpretations, in which possible connections may be tactfully proposed” (Rubin 18). Rubin, however, does clarify that “contrary to the popular caricature of the analytic art therapist arbitrarily imposing meaning on the patient or the art, this method is in fact highly respectful, and the goal is always to help the patient make his or her own discoveries or ‘interpretations’” (18). So, while the witnessing by a facilitator is important to maintaining control over the process, this is due to the ability of the therapist to act as an “other” who witnesses and, at the same time, to guide participants into witnessing of their own selves.

The process of healing enacted by both ritual and expressive arts therapy cannot exist forever, and ultimately the participants must exit the process to re-incorporate their newly unified selves back into the profane or socially-structured world. This re-entry, one hopes, will be accomplished with a solid center of support within the self, fueled by one’s newfound comfort in solitude, as well as by the memory of *communitas*. Such re-incorporation is accompanied by realization of the big picture unity that existed all along. Rituals mark this transition with rites of exit, something that expressive arts therapy also does. The ArtReach model specifically ends workshops by bringing the shared experience of everyone to the forefront of attention through a group activity, where it can be honored and acknowledged for its role in healing. The participants are then sent out in the world, accompanied by the fresh memory of the strength of their healing, a memory that will continue to inform. By re-entering the world in such a way, the

participant will likely fit into the whole easier than when they left (The ArtReach Foundation, *Workshop*).

Unification is the goal of healing, and is arrived at through the methods of both traditional ritual and art therapy. By examining how these two methods overlap, it becomes apparent that art therapy generates success by fleshing out the backbone of ritual structure with its specific toolbox of metaphor, embodiment, and creativity. This is significant, for it is essential that we all, as individuals and groups, face our invisible internal shadows, in order to avoid spontaneous conflicts that come from them and, rather, to facilitate integration, thus serving the purpose of healing. In seeing how the specific tools of art therapy enhance the structure of ritual that is already within it, it becomes possible to see how other tools may be incorporated intentionally within ritual structure to achieve healing on both the individual and community levels.

## CHAPTER 5

### REASONS FOR RITUAL: CONCLUSIONS

#### The Role of Ritual in American Culture Today

The discussion so far has examined ritual from an indigenous perspective in order to identify its consistent structure continuous in modern day examples. Eliade points out how “every ritual has a divine model, an archetype...We find the theory among so-called primitive peoples no less than we do in developed cultures” (Eliade, *Myth*, 21). The example of expressive arts therapy provides a glimpse into how the structure of ritual hides underneath and within other modern structures. This signifies the possibility of further identifying other such manifestations of ritual structure, in order that they may be utilized in combination with other specific tools to promote healing. The potential of this modern use of ritual is exponentially valuable considering the state of ritual in its traditional form today. Unfortunately, ritual structure has diminished greatly in modern American culture. The results are already evident, and if not paid attention to, the consequences will only continue to grow. Culture in America today, however, does not correspond well with traditional ritual. It is therefore important to identify where ritual is missing, along with where and how it may be re-incorporated in an accessible modern way.

We cannot deny that transitions are ever present, and perhaps even more dramatic, yet simultaneously seemingly subtle, today than in indigenous cultures. However, without the aid of ritual to help us through such difficult initiations, there is

danger of getting lost in our shadow sides. The current prevalence in Western culture of violence, depression and anxiety, poverty, disease, and homelessness, among other ailments, reflects the fast pace of life, the pervasiveness of the machine, the lack of community and interconnection, and overall brokenness. This reality is reflective of an underlying disconnection between people and their selves, each other, and an ultimate other. Such an evaluation reveals overarching poor health of Western culture, and the grim reality is that as the process of degradation continues, ritual loses its efficaciousness.

According to Malidoma Patrice Somé, a bridge between primitive Africa and the mechanized West, this separation from ritual is the root of our problems in the western world of the machine. In our world today, human beings are largely separate from the earth, the ultimate other, each other, and their individual sense of self. This is influenced by the ever-present machine. Somé exclaims that reaching out to the spiritual is absent from the Western experience due to the influence of technology, which is what he calls the machine. He notes that the machine “has overthrown the spirit and, as it sits in its place, is being worshipped as spiritual” (Somé 59). Nature, and sense of self could seamlessly be substituted for “spirit” here, naming the increasing disconnect between human beings and “the three others.” This fissure is prominently visible in the increasingly rapid environmental change of the planet and the consistent elevation of violence. In consideration of this destruction, Somé admits his temptation “to think that when the focus of everyday living displaces ritual in a given society, social decay begins to work from the inside out” (14). Without the guidance of ritual, people are left up to their own devices when dealing with change and learning

how to be in the world. This enhances the largely individualistic, and subsequently self-centered, attitude already promoted in the West, which, in turn, raises difficulties for people attempting to relate to each other. The whole of community is shattered. The whole of the individual also remains in pieces, as one must find her own way through major transitions, both mental and physical, without guidance or support.

Somé attributes the decay of ritual presence to the western need for speed. He argues that:

speed is not necessarily so much a movement towards something as it is a movement away from something...Thus speed is a way to prevent ourselves from having to deal with something we do not want to face. So we run from these symptoms and their sources that are not nice to look at. To be able to face our fears, we must remember how to perform ritual. To remember how to perform ritual, we must slow down. (Somé 16-17)

This is important, he says, because “any repair of our fractured world must start with individuals who have the insight and courage to own their own shadows” (27).

Ritual, as we have argued, helps us to take this ownership, and without it, the affirming power of empathy that results from witnessing does not occur. Ritual is necessary for it forces us to slow down and gain the big picture perspective through ritual guidance into the darkness of the unavoidable transitions in life. Stillness is concurrent with reverence, and reverence humbles, resulting in connection with self and others. In this way, simply by slowing down, healing is allowed to occur. In light of this, Somé offers the following:

The elder sees those in constant motion (going places, doing things, making noise) as moving away from something that they do not want to look at or moving away from something that others do not want them to look at. When you slow down, you begin to discover that there is a silent awareness of what it is that you do not want to look at: the anger of nature within each of us. (17)

Ultimately, Somé is pointing to the reality that without ritual and ritual specialists to help us slow down and face our shadows, individuals and society are in danger of deterioration.

The need for speed that has replaced the reverence of ritual has subsequently informed the growing lack of community. Without community to witness transition, one is left invalidated and unsure. Courage becomes close to impossible, as there is no guiding affirmation to verify the process, and to stand as light at the end of the liminal tunnel of darkness. This lack of community is reflected in the numerous categories imposed on identity by the meta-narrative of American culture at present. Such categories can be helpful in defining identity, but they can be equally, if not more, inhibiting to the ability of different categories to relate. The lack of community reciprocally makes it more difficult for community to be re-established. This is not to say that community is entirely absent. There are many different types of communities, such as those found in institutionalized religions, that attempt to offer an appropriate avenue for guidance through transitions via ritual, but the lack of reverence and intention, along with the perceived lack of relevance to modern life, accompanied by the increase of pluralism and the hybridization of belief systems, has left the ritual function of religion far from prominent. Turner echoes, identifying how,

with the increasing specialization of society and culture, with progressive complexity in the social division of labor, what was in tribal society principally a set of transitional qualities 'betwixt and between' defined states of culture and society has become itself an institutionalized state. But traces of the *passage* quality of the religious life remain. (Turner, *Rites*, 107)

While a glimmer of hope shines through Turner's acknowledgment that such ritual does still exist, at least in theory, it is the unfortunate reality that effective ritual continues to

become significantly absent in accordance with the diminishing state of community in our Western world. This surely continues to the increase of difficulties in transitioning and, thereby, to the ailments of society.

One causal factor of this deterioration is the lack of respect held for elders in the West. It makes sense that we are losing ritual, for we hide our elders in nursing homes and, with them, the ritual wisdom they hold. Their absence is reflected in the lack of ritual leadership, which directly influences the lack of community. Somé affirms this:

The fading and disappearance of ritual in modern culture is...expressed in several ways: the weakening of link with the spirit world, and general alienation of people from themselves and others. In a context like this there are no elders to help anyone remember through initiation his or her important place in the community. Those who seek to remember have an attraction toward violence. They live their life constantly upset or angry, and those responsible for them are at a loss as to what to do. (Somé 14)

The absence of community means the absence of support, and without ritual to maintain cohesiveness, communities will continue to fall apart, piece-by-piece, resulting in fractured identities on the individual as well as social level.

In a society that emphasizes individuality, it is easy to understand why community is at the bottom of the list of our priorities. In order to take a closer look at this paradoxical dilemma, I offer insight into the “New Age” movement, which emerged in the 1980s as an incoherent and thus, pseudo group, of mostly “white affluent suburban and urban middle-aged-baby-boomers,” looking for ways to fill their spiritual gaps resulting from the asserted lack of cultural identification and community in mainstream white culture (Aldred 1-2). Lewis and Melton explain how “a significant proportion of New Agers are baby boomers, people who two decades earlier were probably participating,

at some level, in the phenomenon known as counterculture” (Lewis and Melton ix). They continue by explaining how “as the counterculture faded away in the early seventies,” it gave rise to a “rather sudden appearance of large numbers of unconventional spiritual seekers.” The media identified this emergence in the 1980s, resulting in the formation of a “fairly substantial spiritual subculture,” which became “an integral part of a new, truly pluralistic, ‘mainstream’” (xi-xii). Susan Love Brown summarizes this transition as “a shift from a social view of self to a psychological view of self, but [which] now implies a further shift from a psychological model to a spiritual model” (77-87). In consideration of these analyses, it can easily be assumed that the 1980s, fed by the previous counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, produced a movement towards experimentation with various non-Judeo-Christian religions and spiritualities, which resulted in a prolonged mainstream trend towards pluralism. This movement is referred to as the “New Age.”

The “New Age” movement, despite its name as a movement, does not imply cohesion among its members. Lisa Aldred notes that: “the New Age is thus not a strictly defined community headed by formally recognized leaders with an articulated dogma. Rather, it is a term that is applied to a heterogeneous collection of philosophies and practices,” demonstrating the individual character of the movement (Aldred 2). This being said, for the most part, “New Agers” are “white, middle-aged, and college educated, with a middle-to upper middle-class income” (2). Richard Kyle argues that “the New Age does not draw its clientele from the lower classes. Its followers are middle and upper class people, even celebrities and opinion makers,” who are “upwardly mobile, and not particularly alienated from society, a demographic of high



percentile within the baby boomer generation (Kyle 201, 10). Love Brown discusses the various ways American culture of the 1950s and 1960s had an impact on the large number of new children, now referred to as the baby boomers, in a manner which ultimately facilitated change in American consciousness. She explains how the baby boomers were “influenced by an unprecedented period of economic prosperity, a child-centered society with more permissive childrearing practices, and the peer-oriented nature of the generation,” as well as the intersection of their coming of age with a time in which “the United States was trying to solve some of its most serious moral problems” (Lewis and Melton 92). She notes that consequently, “when the babyboom generation began reaching adulthood, its sheer size meant that the changes it sought were inevitable, and these changes entered the scene not with a whimper but with a bang” (92).

The change she is referring to is the emergence of “the self-fulfillment paradigm, in which material rewards have been replaced with intangible ones...In other words,” she details, “the new model places a premium on spiritual rather than material rewards” (93). This paradigm shift was the result of a “radical difference in dominant value orientations” from the previous generation, and according to Love Brown, it “indicated a motivation for breaking away from the larger society to attempt to form a ‘more satisfying culture’” (94). Love Brown points out that “what is distinct about the baby boomers in general and New Age religion in particular is the dual emphasis on self and experience,” which she attributes to “the new awareness of altered states of consciousness ushered in by the drug culture of the sixties.” According to her, this new exploration “led to a reacquaintance with the mystical elements of religion as well as to

curiosity about the spiritual ideas...and techniques...through which other states of consciousness could be safely achieved and retained by those who mastered them” (94-95). In this way, drugs, among various other distinct influences, urged the baby boomer generation into a search for new spiritual meaning.

It is this search that gave way to the “New Age” movement which, as Kyle notes, is now categorized as “the quest for personal fulfillment as a matter of individual experience [that now] is widespread in American Religion” (Kyle 46). This definition places an emphasis on the priority of the individual within the movement. Aldred elaborates on this by pointing to the tendency of “New Agers” to “focus on what they refer to as personal transformation and spiritual growth” (Aldred 2). She proposes that many “New Agers” “envision a literal New Age, which is described as a period of massive change in the future when people will live in harmony with nature and each other.” She contends that, for most, “this transformation will not take place through concerted political change directed at existing structure and institutions. Rather, it will be achieved through individual personal transformation” (2). According to Kyle, this transformation is the result of the “work[ing] out, from the available resources, [of] a system of sacred meanings and values in accord with personal needs and preferences” (Kyle 45).

Lewis and Melton explain the effect of such a transformation: “Exponents of the New Age have undergone a personal transformation which changed their lives. They have witnessed a similar change in others and believe it possible that every person can also be transformed,” which in turn suggests that “if personal transformation on a large scale is possible...then social and cultural transformation is also possible.” This is the

reasoning behind the “New Age” idea that “The world can be changed from the crisis-ridden, polluted, warlike, and resource-limited world in which we live into a New Age of love, joy, peace, abundance, and harmony” (Lewis and Melton 19). Such a longing for transformation and growth towards this ideal stems from feelings of disconnection from “cultural traditions, community belonging, and spiritual meaning” that persists in our current world (Aldred 1). Lewis notes how “for the New Age...it can be said that...transformation and healing are more or less equivalent to what is usually referred to as spiritual growth” (Lewis and Melton 7-8). This being so, it appears that New Agers are looking for ways to heal the gaps existing within their spiritual lives.

In order to fill these gaps, “New Agers” have looked toward all sorts of practices, especially those that offer spiritual experience. Essentially, their search began with the introduction of Eastern religions in the United States, which prompted their attempts to find a point of convergence between the East and West. Kyle expresses how this evolved into a “‘cafeteria, ‘grab bag,’ do-it-yourself‘ approach to religion,” which has led to an increase in the number of people who “see themselves as ‘spiritual’ or ‘religious,’” and who believe that “you can have a deep relationship with God or the divine force however defined, without attending religious services” (Kyle 200). This means, “there are lots of believers but few belongers,” as “people have their own private do-it-yourself religions” (201). This speaks to the many individual attempts being made to fill the gaps left by the disappearance of ritual and community, but it does not speak to the success of such attempts. Rather than establishing new communities surrounding these acknowledged issues, the search has only become more isolated, which has fueled the simultaneous growth of the gap.

The state of pluralism today suggests that people are not finding what they are looking for, and, in an attempt to do so, they are picking and choosing from various religions and traditions as they attempt to create a religion that will satisfy their needs. This has been largely unsuccessful, however, for without the support of community, ritual, and leadership, individuals can only get so far in their spiritual growth. This reality is sad, but identifying it demonstrates the current failure of ritual and offers affirmation that the re-incorporation of ritual would be well received.

A look into the New Age movement demonstrates the search to fill the space left empty by ritual. This, however, does not always happen consciously. Ritual structure surfaces in unexpected places as it emerges from natural human experiences of transition that must be accounted for somehow. This is often accomplished secondhand, the result of other intentions. These manifestations are both positive and negative, but, in totality, lack the intentional reverence that brings the healing effect of ritual home. Examples of this include initiation through drugs, tattoos, and sex, as well as the ritual experience of *communitas* that likewise appears spontaneously in unexpected places like concerts and music festivals. The in-between place of liminality that is so productive in ritual occurs where art happens, as well as when any group of people turn their attention and energy in the same direction, in Durkheimian effervescence. While something is certainly gained in such ritual-esque manifestations, the opportunity for growth and positive transformation offered by intentional ritual is lost. Perhaps these appearances offer insight into where and how ritual can be successfully re-incorporated in the our modern world, but as it stands, initiation and ritual are far too

often absent, and in their absence grows un-initiated leaders, confused identities, and dangerous attempts at self-initiation and ritualization that only further feed the problem.

Concurrent with this reality is the vantage point from the present moment in the culture of the “West” of ritual as tradition that belongs only to those of the past. In fact, the cultural depiction of traditional ritual is often a cause for people to consider such societies as maintaining past, or so-called primitive, lifestyles. This encourages the separation of “us” and “them.”

Ronald L. Grimes acknowledges that the average American’s primary epistemological source for ritual is the media. Grimes analyzes the ability of such a method to achieve the transmission of ritual knowledge in an accurate, relevant way. He points to standard ritual representation in the media and highlights how it goes against this goal. The media, he credits with “package[ing] rites into saleable, consumable, products” (Grimes, *Rite*, 15). Such products are at a distance, other; therefore, rituals and those performing them, become others as well. Grimes acknowledges that, “any filming can make participants seem other...But one can choose whether to heighten or dampen this othering effect” (25).

In analyzing how this is actualized, Grimes reviews “Sacred Rites and Rituals,” a film produced in 1996 by “FilmRoos for A&E’s *Ancient Mysteries* series,” which implies rites are outdated (16). Grimes notes that the film implies this through its “tendency...to count as ancient or mysterious things from non-Euroamerican cultures. Thus,” he continues, “exotic implies ancient; and ancient, exotic” (17). Exotic also implies other, as “anonymous people are generalized into ‘others,’ ‘over there’” (25). This implies that the other is to be observed as exotic, rather than considered as a one that leads to

understanding. Grimes documents how the film achieves this through the use of language, such as referring to ritualists incorrectly and calling Allah, ““*their god*”” (20). He likewise speaks of “a kind of evolutionary superiority,” implicit in this: “We can explain what *they* do (but not vice versa), so we are superior to them” (21).

Those that participate in such “ancient” rituals, therefore, are made other and inferior, and the ritual they are participating in is made that way as well. Grimes further supports this point by pointing to the attitude of the narrator, Leonard Nimoy, who, at the end of the film, “looks up at the stars as he links space with the future, implicitly consigning ritual to the past” (21). In this way it is implied that ritual is so other, that it is no longer relevant. The effect of this “othering” is substantial. Grimes argues that:

By being rendered other, ritual...is not quite human. By being portrayed as either more than human or less than human, ritual is made alien. Viewers are led to watch ritualists the way they watch animals in a zoo--with fascination at occasionally seeing their behavior aped but comfortable in the knowledge that they inhabit a plane of being that is different from that of animals. (22)

The essence of ritual, however, is just the opposite. Instead of distancing, ritual unifies. It facilitates smooth(er) transitions. Yet this is not the message viewers of ritual on television arrive at. Grimes argues that “they participate now not so much in the rites themselves but in the ritualization of television viewing.” This he names the “tourist” style, and he says that, “in the end...viewers return with mere souvenirs, the trinkets of pilgrimage, not the transforming knowledge imparted in an initiation” (22). This is because the only way to gain ritual knowledge is through experiencing it. The way “tourists” experience ritual in the media, however, is through “eye catching phenomenon” (21). This means that, “to warrant inclusion on the ritual tour, a certain size, scale, or grandeur is essential” (21). When this is the case, however, a ritual’s

“connection with ordinary life is severed,” and “both religion and ritual are reduced to one dimension: mystery” (21). This makes ritual more than inaccessible.

In addition, Grimes argues, the “tourist” approach ignores “rites that are domestic, local, or improvised [as being] unworthy of sustained media attention” (26). This further feeds the idea that ritual can only exist as other, and, as a result, the possibility of incorporating ritual into everyday life is obscured. Grimes sees the reason for this as dependence, which he explains by pointing to the fact that “they could not possibly understand performances so exotic and impenetrable without experts, narrators, and filmmakers. Viewers would not perform such rites, because they are too ‘mysterious,’ and viewers could not make intellectual sense of the rites without assistance” (26). This reality effectively amputates the possibility of ritual integration in the current world.

Grimes strictly points out the failure of the media to teach ritual in order to offer a more effective approach that he calls “contemplative.” He explains: “in a contemplative approach experts...would be inquirers, people who do not know but are interested in learning” (Grimes, *Rite*, 25). This approach he advocates as having a more effective impact on the viewer, because it fosters real understanding by engaging viewers in the process, creating a liminal space in which “us,” and “them,” can become “we.” This process is greatly needed in our Western world today, but if people continue to be pushed in the opposite direction by the media, it is unlikely to be implemented. This suggests the importance of influencing the media to take a “contemplative” approach to portraying rites.

Even if the media succeeds in encouraging people to implement rites in their own lives, will these be done in a successful way? What I mean by “successful” is connection through the process of making something real with ritual, in a way that does not offend or devalue another culture or rite, yet promotes beneficial healing. In order to assess this aspect of rituals, Grimes addresses the concept of “ritual criticism.” While he notes that while it is by no means a fleshed-out field, ritual criticism remains essential. He refers to the taxonomy of ritual criticism developed by Northrop Frye, which he expands upon himself. Through identifying many categories that address ways in which a ritual could develop, Grimes provides a framework through which to compose and to assess the success of rituals.

Grimes’s taxonomy provides room to identify how a ritual affects others who have their own connection to it. In this perspective, Grimes notes the possibility of cultural misappropriation, which refers to the “stealing” of rituals from already established traditions and cultures. This can have a profoundly negative effect on the victims, as is the case with Native Americans today, as they attempt to re-define their culture. This is difficult for them to do when others are doing it for them, incorrectly, through appropriating their rites whether sincerely or in money-making schemes. Not only are such rituals invalid, as they are not performed by an authorized ritualist, but they are insulting to the ritual and culture of origin and deceitful to innocent people searching for a way to fill their needs. Cultural mis-appropriation implies pretending to be an other, without actually understanding that other. This not only discredits the ritual, but it fails to honor the other, and the self. Many people believe that it is acceptable to use bits and pieces from different rituals re-molded into a new cohesive rite. When this does occur,



however, how those illicitly performing the rite are supposed to act towards the other they are trying to emulate becomes obscured (Grimes, *Criticism*).

### Using the healing power of ritual

Some scholars, in speaking on the situation, encourage creating new rituals. This is likewise what Grimes suggests. He points to “ritual creativity” as essential in light of this reality. He encourages people to “use [their] imagination[s] to choreograph what [they] are driven to enact” (Grimes, *Rite*, 85). While he admits that this can result in a feeling of awkwardness, he validates this, explaining that “yes, when we first construct rites, invent a tradition, if you will, it seems silly, and we all become self-conscious. But rites start somewhere” (85). In this way he encourages the use of creativity to generate and establish new rituals, and urges us through the inevitable discomfort associated with newly creating anything with such intended power.

Both cultural appropriation and othering, fail to provide a place at the table for all people. As we move into an increasingly pluralistic age, it is essential that we learn how to create meaningful experiences of ritual and religion that are inclusive. The introduction of active ritual implementation has the potential to be incredibly powerful both for individuals and communities: either in a way that heals or in a way that destructs. Echoing Edward Said, I must note that as scholars, it is our responsibility to reveal the hidden truths and call out the lies, even as we encourage the potential for the imaginative creation of new rituals. This will not always be easy, and most often will be difficult. One reason for this is the central role played by the media. This identifies the media as a means to both ends, and thus as a tool and possible starting point.

The disparity between modern American culture and ritual action reflects the poor state of health in the West. This evolution has not gone unnoticed however. Somé identifies that the lack of initiation has left the West crowded with people who want healing; “people who know that somewhere deep within is a living being in serious longing for a peaceful and serene life” (Somé 96). He acknowledges that the lack of ritual reflects how “modernity sees death as an end while the traditional world sees death as a transition” (96). This suggests that what traditional societies who employ have to teach us is that, through shifting concepts, we can see death as process, which would not only reduce fear and anxiety about the end of life, but would create healthy ideas about the death of different stages within life.

Framing the process is exactly what ritual does. It achieves this by facilitating the processes of death and re-birth, in order to promote movement out of one’s previous identity and into her new one. I use the word “facilitate” here, in order to attribute ownership to the intrinsic process that already exists, yet which ritual structures. I say that this process is intrinsic, meaning that it already exists, whether or not it is identified. This is important to realize, because transition and change are processes that everyone experiences constantly. They exist on both a macro- an micro-scale, and they can happen unnoticed or can feel immensely heavy. Focusing on this consistent aspect of human experience, ritual provides a way to honor the process by bringing awareness to it. In this way, the one in the process moves towards reverence, and reverence demands attention, which, in turn, demands acceptance of what is, promoting integration.

Learning to accept the previously intolerable, and thus ignored, as not only that which is, but as that which asks reverence, is powerful. It slows one down and places one face to face with exactly that which one does not want to look at. Victor Turner acknowledges ritual's ability to accomplish this by de-constructing the painful into an understandable process. His relatively simple ritual structure underlies all other attempts at understanding ritual. Turner's structure essentially addresses ritual's ability to affect as resulting from its removal of one (or many) from the broken realm of the everyday in the service of maintaining it. This simultaneously elucidates the function of ritual as unifying, and thus healing, and identifies the need for ritual intervention in order to accomplish such a goal. All parts of this intervention process are important, and each part is dependent on the others. While there are cases in which one may not fully exit the process, as in the case of trauma, ritual strives to prevent such getting stuck by offering facilitation and guidance throughout. In this way, ritual is an important tool in framing transitions: it helps people move through into wholeness.

"Moving through," in a guided way, is essential for healing, as one must move away from the old in order to embrace the new. The initial stage of ritual death, the crossing of the threshold into the *limen*, initiates subsequent growth. Ritual accomplishes this by focusing and framing intention, and maintaining reverence to the transformation, all the while offering guidance through a contained experience of death, into ambiguity and through, to re-birth. This does not usually happen in a literal way which is why ritual uses symbolism and metaphor to facilitate movement and to allow communication and unification.

Such unification as that accomplished through ritual is the essence of health. This connection is powerful to make when the world seems more divided daily and as the prevalence of mental afflictions such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and others are on the rise. The brief individual experience of existing outside social structure, yet within the safe space of ritual, urges one to look at, and then embody, the whole self. The connections forged in the in-between space of ritual between self and the “three others,” grow common experience and, thus, a unified group, before leading one back into society in a newly informed way that serves to maintain the wholeness of the social structure and individual identity. The archetypal structure of an internal process revealed in ritual has the potential to be implemented as an intentional tool with which to frame the organic evolution of human experience in a way that supports healthy unification of the sacred, the self, and the community, thus functioning to weave together all the seemingly separate parts of living a human life into a healthy unified work of art.

Perhaps the path to ritual re-incorporation is not, now, under the name of ritual, but camouflaged in other operations that the intention and reverence of ritual can be brought to. Perhaps the language of ritual either needs to change in accordance with modernity, or perhaps it simply needs to be remembered with the help of our elders. It is useful to identify this in a world, our world, where disjunction appears in a growing number of circumstances and is highlighted as what demands healing. We must acknowledge this especially among victims of trauma, an increasingly frequent occurrence in our unstable and shifting political climate. The large range of broken

persons and communities in the Western world today demand ritual healing which creates connections between the realms of the personal, inter-personal, and public.

Ritual is a process of releasing and of recollecting. Throughout the course of a ritual, one becomes connected simultaneously to that which they released and to that which they have feared to embrace. The structured *limen* allows reflection on the big picture issues of human life. While rituals traditionally mark life changes, it seems that, in order to be relevant here and now, rituals must begin to be implemented in a more accessible form. Art therapy, as we have seen, is one of those new forms.

Understanding how ritual functions and subsequently applying its strengths to specific needs, it is possible to utilize its benefits in a subtle, yet powerful way, in order to offer healing to people experiencing brokenness across the board of experience. Healing on the individual level will simultaneously promote healing on the level of society, which, we hope, will influence healing in other societies throughout the world.

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