Logan Sparks & Paul Post (eds.)

The Study of Culture through the Lens of Ritual

Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy 15

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PREFACE

Logan Sparks & Paul Post

This book project has a twofold background.

First of all, this text is connected to the First International Istanbul Ritual Studies Symposium, held at Süleyman Şah University in Istanbul, on the May 27th and 28th of 2014. This symposium was a cooperative initiative of the Department of Sociology in Istanbul and the research group 'Ritual in Society' of the Tilburg School of Humanities. The plan was to present and discuss case studies in the field of ritual studies. International and multi- or interdisciplinary perspectives were centered, along with the creation of a space for both junior and senior scholars to interact.

Ritual studies is a multidisciplinary platform or podium that emerged in the mid-1970s in the US.[1] In the beginning we especially saw cooperation between religious studies, anthropology, liturgical studies, and, in the US, also theatre studies. Later the podium developed more and more into an open multidisciplinary field where one can find a sort of canon of themes and topics. In that there was, for instance, a strong interest in theory. Some of the central themes were (just to mention a few): initiation, pilgrimage, sacred place, ritual experts, ritual transfer, embodiment and, more recently, ritual failure, authenticity and cyber ritual. There are also the 'usual suspects' in Ritual Studies like Grimes, Bell, Rappaport, Douglas, Staal, Whitehouse and so forth. In the new millennium we see a tendency for innovative research to be increasingly done in interdisciplinary thematic clusters. Not only is present-day Ritual Studies a cluster, as such, but we see also that Ritual Studies is part of other larger clusters. Among these are important clusters such as (again mentioning only a few): gender studies, urban studies, cultural memory studies, cognitive studies (of religion), cyber studies.

What we did in the symposium and in this book is challenge the Tilburg-Istanbul network to enter this Ritual Studies platform and present work where cultural and social phenomena and practices are approached through the lens, the entrance point of ritual. This emphasis can be translated into an approach to ritual

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[1] See for an overview of the domain of ritual studies: P. POST: 'Ritual Studies', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (2015), available at http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-21 (accessed September 2015).

as an analytical concept that brings in certain theoretical and methodological dimensions. We see that, for instance, in the contribution of Scarboro via theoretical elements of ritual space, or Salazar and Beck via Turner's theoretical work on pilgrimage and his concept of *communitas*. But the accent can also be on ritual practices as a thematization of cultural and social dynamics. That we find in the contribution on hair removal in Arab culture (Elayan) and the study on the *n'deep* ritual in the work of the Senegalese-Italian migrant author Pap Khouma (Bianchi).

The book has, in this way, a very open character. Various disciplines explore cultural practices through the lens of ritual and ritual is itself, in turn, conceived of in an open way. We did not presuppose a more or less fixed definition of ritual or vision on ritual repertoires. For example, we encountered forms of traditional ritual repertoires like death and burial ritual (Nugteren) and rain rituals in Africa (Van Beek). Simultaneously we have authors who work with what Grimes would call ritualizations (such as music festivals, medical screening, gardening).

The case studies show some preferences that very much are in line with Ritual Studies generally. All articles have a contemporary character. Furthermore, there is the dominance of the theme of sacred place and space (Schippers, De Ruijter, Alonso, Nugteren, Scarboro & Husain, Beck, Faro, Cirianni Salazar). Music is the thematization in two studies (Hoondert, Wijnia), and two are on cyber ritual (Alonso, Carvalho). We are also glad to have a broad spectrum in religious perspective. There is traditional African religiosity, the institutional religious contexts of Christianity and Islam (along with encounters between both of them in the Beck article on an Indonesian place of shared pilgrimage), but also the more diffused religious contexts of neo-paganism, and cultural practices with religious-ritual dimensions (the city garden of Schippers).

It bears articulating that we have made the conscious choice here to allow these interesting perspectives to stand alone in their diversity rather than bringing in any comparative ambition via, for instance, this preface, an introduction, or a final chapter.

Regarding the order of the articles we opted for a rather general and open framework based upon the basic dimensions of ritual: act/performance and place/space. We open with an Introduction part (I) with the article of Post which presents some historiographical and programmatic notes on the general use of ritual in studying culture. Not only are the advantages and perspectives of this way of working discussed, but explicitly also the dangers and pitfalls of the approach.

After that there are two parts (II-III) with articles where ritual acting and performance are central. A first subpart (II) deals with practices in a general way and in a second (III) the focus is more on art performances.

The next two sections (IV-V) deal with explorations chiefly thematizing place and space. Again, in the penultimate section we look at ritual from a more general gaze (IV) and then re-focus via the theme of pilgrimage (V) in the last section.

A second background is that we dedicate this book to our colleague Walter van Beek who is retiring from the chair of anthropology of religion in the Tilburg School of Humanities, November 2015. We present this book to him in the retiring ritual in November as a form of what Dutch scholars refer to as a *Festschrift* although it is not a traditional *Festschrift*, strictly speaking. That is because there is an article of Walter in this book, and normally one does not contribute to one's own Festschrift or *liber amicorum*. Nevertheless the book is dedicated to Walter (Wouter in Dutch), it is a gift (a strong ritual practice) marking his farewell from the university (but not from academia) and thanking him for his enormous engagement both in education and research. Walter introduced not only many students and colleagues to the world of Africa, but also that of ritual and religion.

The broad and diverse character of the book is very much in line with Walter's way of teaching and researching. He has an interest in almost everything, and not only that, but he also is able to connect all the different themes and subjects that he works with (religion, ritual, sport and tourism, to give one set as an example). But nevertheless, both Africa and ritual have his special attention. In this book, both colleagues he worked together with and students he has supervised present their work. And as so often, the article with most pictures in this book is the article on the Kapsiki rain ritual by Walter. As usual, Walter did not only present his field work in words!

We very much thank Karin Berkhout for her contribution to the editing process.

Logan Sparks (Istanbul) and Paul Post (Tilburg),
summer 2015

Wouter van Beek at the center of the Bloemfontein/Tilburg research group 'Sacred caves in the Eastern Free State' engaged in local fieldwork (© Paul Post 2008)
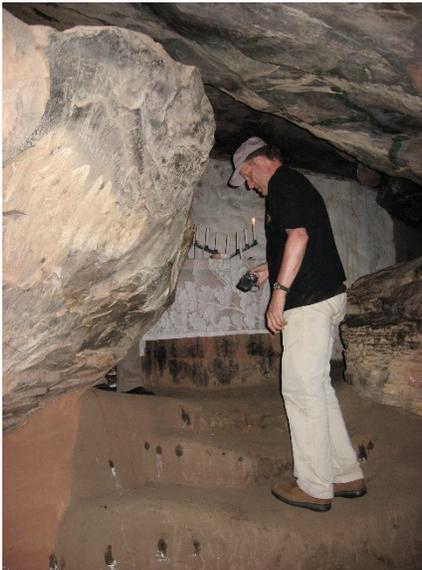
Walter van Beek in Modderpoort sacred cave (Mantsopa's cave or 'Rose Chapel'), Eastern Free State, South Africa (© Paul Post 2008)

Part I

INTRODUCTION: RITUAL AS A LENS

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RITUAL AS A LENS FOR STUDYING CULTURE: DANGERS AND PERSPECTIVES[1]

Paul Post

1. Introduction

When I look back on my work in the area of Ritual Studies I see how I argue again and again for ritual as a way into, or as providing access to, cultural phenomena, even for ritual as a 'royal road' for cultural studies.[2] As far as I am concerned, this volume is yet another indication of the validity of my approach, although I no longer speak so emphatically of 'via regia'. In this contribution I will illustrate my argument once more and outline perspectives that come into view with that approach. But I also want – perhaps more than in earlier contributions – to point now, as well, to pitfalls and dangers in using ritual practices as an approach to cultural studies.

I will constantly refer in this contribution to research that has been done and published or is still under review and also to research that is still in the planning stages. I will start with an historical sketch.

2. A short historical sketch

There is a long tradition in academia of viewing ritual as a lens for studying culture and cultural elements. This tradition has moved often from one discipline to another and has been used in very different ways.

Thus, from the 19th century until the middle of the 20th, ritual was a core element in religious studies in academic areas that would later become established as comparative religion or phenomenology (of religion). This tradition continues

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[1] This sketch is partly based on earlier overviews of Ritual Studies: P. POST: 'Vom religionsphänomenologischen Erbe zum E-Ritual. Trends und Themen der aktuellen Ritual Studies', in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 55 (2013[2015]) 139-181; P. POST: Encyclopedia article: 'Ritual Studies', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York/Oxford 2015): http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-21.

[2] I am borrowing the notion of 'royal road' from Martin Scharfe, who thus presents religion, in M. SCHARFE: *Über die Religion. Glaube und Zweifel in der Volkskultur* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2004) 5-8, referring again to Freud here: S. FREUD: *Die Traumdeutung* (Frankfurt aM 1991 [orig. 1900]) 595.

to have an undeniable influence in theology and religious studies, the social sciences, and primarily anthropology. It involves generations of scholars that influence one another in a complex combination of adopting insights and distancing themselves from those same insights. I am thinking here of scholars like William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), Friedrich Heiler (1892-1967), Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950), Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), and Söderblom (1866-1931), all of whom represent a more phenomenological line. And, on the other hand, there are scholars like Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957), Alfred Radcliff-Brown (1881-1955), James George Frazer (1854-1941), Edmund Leach (1910-1989), Victor Turner (1920-1983), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), Erving Goffman (1922-1982), and Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) who stand more in the tradition of the social sciences and anthropology.

In the study of religion and culture, a selection of ritual repertoires or themes are often central. One can think here of initiation rites, pilgrimage, feasts, processions, sacral space, and temple worship.[3] A later generation had a critical view of parts of these research traditions. Thus, the first, more phenomenological, approach was focused more on the phenomenon of religion as a kind of meta-concept (without full recognition of contexts), and the second, more social-scientific, line was marked by the colonial context and was decidedly strongly Eurocentric. Both traditions had, moreover, grand, high-liturgical ritual in mind when talking about ritual: the temple worship of Greeks and Romans, the veneration of the gods in ancient Egypt, pilgrimages, the Old Testament worship, or prominent rites of passage such as initiation and death rites.

The palette became more and more varied in the course of the establishment and evolution of (sub)disciplines. In philosophy, ritual plays a key role in all kinds of ways, but primarily when symbolism is a central concept for the scholars concerned. This would be the case, for example, with John Austin (1911-1960), Susanne Langer (1895-1985), and Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) and among semiotic scholars like Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and Algirdas Greimas (1917-

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[3] I will only give a few references for feasts and sacred/ritual space. On feast, see P. POST ET AL. (ed.): *Christian feast and festival* (=Liturgia condenda 12) (Leuven, etc. 2001) esp.: P. POST: 'Liturgical movements and feast culture. A Dutch research program' 3-43; IDEM: 'Introduction and application. Feast as a key concept in a liturgical studies research design' 47-77; on ritual space/place, see: P. POST [composition]: 'Bibliography on the triad Space – Ritual – Religion', in P. POST, A.L. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern Western culture* (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA 2011) 329-348; P. POST: [composition]: 'Selected bibliography on sacred space and place', in P. POST, PH. NEL & W. VAN BEEK (eds.): *Sacred spaces and contested identities. Space and ritual dynamics in Europe and Africa* (Trenton 2014) 361-367.

1992). A separate but very influential position is taken by the historian of culture Johan Huizinga in his 1938 *Homo Ludens*, in which play and ritual are central.[4]

Connected to this is the remarkable absence of ritual as an important research theme until 1950/60 in theology. It was only later that attention grew for the sub-discipline of Liturgical Studies, under the influence of the Liturgical Movement and with a strongly historical and practical theological accent. The general background here has been repeatedly indicated.[5] On the one hand, in church circles, primarily in the Roman Catholic context, there was hardly any need for ritual reflection. The ritual repertoires were established and were viewed in a general sense as unchangeable and preset. On the other hand, there was little affinity with ritual acts. There was even often forthright talk of suspicion. Language, word, a strong focus on rubrics, the content of beliefs, and piety pushed the dimension of ritual acting among Catholics and Protestants to the margin.

As a lens in academia, since the 1960s, ritual moved into a new phase. Also, as a result of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), ritual came into full view in church contexts. But ritual was given a key position in a much broader way by two cohering developments: New research lines within the history of culture especially were an important stimulus here. The so-called French Annales School was influential. Here, culture with a small 'c' came into view, but now also including small rituals. Ritual practices like feasts, house rituals, exorcisms, and devotional ritual were now used to gain access to a broad analysis of culture. It was primarily diachronous and comparative in character. This new approach went hand in hand with a multidisciplinary way of working. Historical studies, anthropology and ethnology worked together. It was in this context that the platform of Ritual Studies emerged in the 1970s with Ronald Grimes as its founding father.[6] Some speak in

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[4] J. HUIZINGA: *Homo Ludens. A study of the play-element in culture* (London 1944 [orig. Dutch ed. 1938]).

[5] P. POST & M. BARNARD: 'Nogmaals: de Liturgische beweging voorbij. Enkele kritische kanttekeningen bij de historiografie van het zogenoemde tijdvak van de Liturgische Beweging', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 24 (2008) 7-22; P. POST, L. VAN TONGEREN, M. BARNARD & G. ROUWHORST (eds.): *Patterns and persons. A historiography of liturgical studies in the Netherlands in the twentieth century* (=Liturgia condenda 25) (Leuven, etc. 2010); in that work see: P. POST: 'A different story. The development of Roman Catholic church architecture in the Netherlands after ca. 1850 from a ritual-liturgical and ritual-material perspective' 169-213; P. POST & M. BARNARD: 'Balance and perspective. Some critical observations regarding the historiography of the era of the Liturgical Movement in the Netherlands' 469-485; P. POST & L. VAN TONGEREN (eds.): *Voorbij de liturgiewetenschap: Over het profiel van liturgische en rituele studies* (=Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy 12) (Groningen/Tilburg 2011) daarin: P. POST & L. VAN TONGEREN: 'Ter inleiding: liturgiewetenschap in Nederland op het breukvlak van twee eeuwen' 7-23; P. POST: 'Met het gezicht naar de cultuur: liturgiewetenschap als studie van ritueel en cultuur' 37-61.

[6] R.L. GRIMES: *Beginnings in ritual studies* (Washington DC 1982; revised ed. Columbia 1995/2010; 3rd ed. Waterloo 2013); IDEM: *Research in ritual studies. A programmatic essay and bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ

this connection of a 'ritual turn', which indicates that there was not only a new focus regarding the object of research but also a new medium of knowledge and research.[7]

With this, a new generation of researchers took over, using ritual for studying religion and culture on that podium of ritual studies, with separate attention now for the theory and method of ritual. In addition to Grimes, there were also Catherine Bell, Mary Douglas, Roy Rappaport, Jonathan Smith, Frits Staal, and, recently, Harvey Whitehouse.

Ritual is used now widely as a way of accessing cultural studies outside the narrower platform of ritual studies as well. This also obtains for historical studies, as we will see. Strangely enough, this is much less the case for digital humanities and studies into online culture that have been gaining interest for some time already. We will come back to both areas later in this contribution.

A final important tendency is the interest that has grown in what has come to be called 'ritual criticism'. Ritual is not only 'holy', beautiful, beneficial, and pure but can also have diabolical traits, can fail, can manipulate. And there are also 'dangers' involved, particularly in using ritual as a heuristic instrument.

I will now explore those dangers, citing a number of forms and areas where those dangers and pitfalls are present, and illustrate them as much as possible. The underlying conviction and message here is that I do not want to close the road of ritual as impassable by putting up a series of emergency triangles, but I do want to get past the lack of restraint that was characteristic for a long time of the use of ritual in studying culture. I will once again state my conviction more explicitly that we have now arrived – after a phase of multi- and interdisciplinary research – at a new academic phase where relevant, innovative research happens within multi- and interdisciplinary thematic clusters. Ritual can continue to play an important role there. I can see this happening in areas like urban studies, spatial studies, cultural memory studies, online culture studies, disaster studies, etc.

I will now discuss in succession three clusters of dangers: (a) the definition of ritual and well-worn concepts of and approaches to ritual, and, in connection with that, I will briefly look at the hermeneutical position of the researcher, (b) the snags that accompany the use of ritual in historical and comparative research, and finally (c) some critical considerations from the above-mentioned field of ritual criticism.

1985); IDEM (ed.): *Readings in ritual studies* (Upper Saddle River, NY 1996); IDEM: *Deeply into the bone. Reinventing rites of passage* (Berkeley 2000); IDEM: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014).

[7] D. BACHMANN-MEDICK: *Cultural turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbek 2006) 26; cf. B. KRANEMANN: 'Theologie nach dem Ritual Turn. Perspektiven der Liturgiewissenschaft', in J. GRUBER (ed.): *Theologie in Cultural Turn. Erkenntnistheologische Erkundungen in einem veränderten Paradigma* (=Salzburger interdisziplinäre Diskurse Bd. 4) (Bern 2013) 151-173.

3.   The definition of ritual and related dangers

A first general danger is that it is insufficiently clear in the use of the concept as to what it is that ritual is taken to mean and not to mean. Not only can there be a lack of clarity regarding which concrete repertoires and practices come into view here, but certain choices in theoretical perspectives and approaches can also play a role, implicitly and explicitly.

I am thus not arguing for searching for a comprehensive, cut-and-dried definition of ritual. I gladly leave that quest to the area of theory in ritual studies where, for that matter, the limits of such a search have, in the meantime, become sufficiently clear. One can speak, at most, of working definitions and of listing the qualities of ritual acts. I refer to Grimes' recent book *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, with an extensive overview of existing descriptions and definitions in an online appendix.[8]

What I do argue for is an indication of a working definition if ritual is being used as a central concept in research. That will make clear in how broad and open or narrow and limited a way the concept of ritual can be used. We have indicated above how scholars in phenomenology and anthropology often saw ritual primarily as 'high cultural' and 'ceremonial liturgical'. It is also good to see how ritual studies experts like Rappaport and Staal viewed ritual in primarily 'high liturgical' forms – in contrast to Grimes who holds, in an open and broad way, to a spectrum of ritual modalities. In that connection, Grimes likes to speak, as is well known, of "ritualizations" and "modes of ritual."[9]

A point that is directly connected to this is the (presupposed) relation of ritual to sacrality and religion. The problem is still present here of course, for the question of what is understood by 'sacred' and 'religion' always arises. Here as well it is not so much a matter of seeking a final definition but one of directing attention to the question of how religion is seen and used. Is religion connected primarily with institutional forms of religion? Or is it broader and does it also include various forms of religiosity and spirituality. References to relevant positionings or explorations can prove to be of good service and be sufficient. I think here of studies by Mathew Evans and Martin Stringer.[10]

I do not want to hide behind references here but would rather lay all my cards on the table once more. I have done that previously on other occasions, sometimes in various formulations. I did that most recently in my entry 'Ritual studies' for the

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[8] GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies*, Chapter 7 and Appendix 1, available at: http://ronaldlgrimes.twohornedbull.ca/twohornedbull.ca/public_html/ronaldlgrimes/ronsuploads/grimes-craft-appendixes.pdf (accessed May 2015).

[9] T. SWINKELS & P. POST: 'Beginnings in ritual studies according to Ronald Grimes', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 19 (2003) 215-238.

[10] M. EVANS: 'The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts', in *Review of Religious Research* 45/1 (2003) 32-47; M. STRINGER: *Contemporary Western ethnography and the definition of religion* (London 2008).

Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion. I will take up that definition here in the same two steps.

The first step is a reference to a – what I consider to be – accurate description of ritual by Grimes. In 2000, he gave a threefold description of ritual, spirituality, and religion:[11]

> Ritual: sequences of ordinary action rendered special by virtue of their condensation, elevation, or stylization. Spirituality: practiced attentiveness aimed at nurturing a sense of interdependence of all beings sacred and all things ordinary. Religion: spirituality sustained as a tradition or organized into an institution.

My own working definition links up with his:

> Ritual is a more or less repeatable sequence of action units which, take on a symbolic dimension through formalization, stylization, and their situation in place and time.
>   On the one hand, individuals and groups express their ideas and ideals, their mentalities and identities through these rituals. On the other hand the ritual actions shape, foster, and transform these ideas, mentalities and identities.

It is also important to understand that there are always certain approaches and theoretical insights behind definitions and characterizations of ritual. As indicated, they can be connected with form and, for example, be or not be directed exclusively at high and grand repertoires as well as more fundamental dimensions. Thus, there are scholars whose work is strongly based on the presupposition of the referential, the symbolic character of ritual. For them, ritual is primarily referential and connected with the language of symbols. And there is, at the other end of the spectrum, the view that ritual is 'meaningless'. An extreme but influential advocate of this ritual nihilism is Frits Staal, but Wouter van Beek also follows this line with his emphasis on the self-referential character of ritual.[12]

It may be clear that these working definitions and the approaches behind them influence the use of ritual as a lens in cultural research. It is still primarily a question of making it more explicit.

I will now discuss in some more detail the three 'dangers' in this context of definition which I will subsequently demonstrate through the ritual of pilgrimage, a very dominant repertoire in both ritual studies and cultural studies.

First of all, there is the tendency to place theoretical models and insights that are known and widely used on top of cultural practices like a blueprint. Looking through the lens of ritual then quickly becomes a question of modelling or framing

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[11] GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone* 71.
[12] W. VAN BEEK: *De rite is rond. Betekenis en boodschap van het ongewone* (=Inaugural lecture Tilburg 2007); IDEM: 'Heeft ritueel dan toch betekenis?', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 24 (2008) 23-49.

the practice. Doing justice to the cultural phenomenon in an open, contextual way is then made subordinate to the theoretical model. Pilgrimage is a striking example here. Victor Turner's all too well-known theoretical framework with liminal phases and *communitas* pops up almost immediately.[13] The casualness with which this happens is dangerous. It is not only that we have come to realize in the meantime that Turner's liminality view needs to be adjusted in many respects and that we have gone beyond the Turnerian concept of liminality.[14] Rather, much more fundamental is the fact that the concepts of ritual process, liminal phases, and *communitas* were developed in the very specific context of Christian pilgrimage. It is not a straightforward, obvious matter to separate this approach from that ritual setting and apply it in a general way to all kinds of rituals concerning sacred places and shrines, to put it mildly.

I realized this recently in a research project on cyberpilgrimage. When studying online and offline ritual, Suzanne van der Beek and I stumbled on the small niche of cyberpilgrimage research.[15] What struck us immediately was the broad use of the approaches of the 'usual suspects' of pilgrimage research, in particular, Turner's theoretical framework as well as Eliade's view of sacred sites and Durkheim's view of the functions of ritual. Thus, the attempt was made to fit the very diffuse phenomenon of cyberpilgrimage into existing frameworks and to understand and interpret them that way. We came to a different conclusion, namely, that cyberpilgrimage and, more generally, online culture are perhaps such new and different forms of ritual that it is not obvious that previous offline frameworks should be applied at the start. Rather, it should be kept in mind that sacred places online are of an entirely different nature, that ritual concerning these places has completely new characteristics than offline ritual and needs other concepts and paradigms. In the meantime, from the large amount of available research on ritual and religion in cyberspace other themes for a heuristic, analytical framework emerge. The central themes here are the virtuality/reality debate, the role of embodiment, reproduction, identity, community, authority and authenticity.[16]

A second note in this first cluster of dangers concerns a phenomenon being designated as pilgrimage in the first place. I also became aware of this danger via

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[13] V. TURNER: *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* (Harmondsworth 1969, 1995).

[14] C. BELL: 'Ritual tensions: Tribal and catholic', in *Studia Liturgica* 32 (2002) 15-28.

[15] Cf. P. POST & S. VAN DER BEEK: *Doing ritual criticism in a network society. Offline and online explorations into pilgrimage and sacred place* (=Liturgia condenda 29) (Leuven, etc. 2015) [in print], Ch. 5 'Cyberpilgrimage: The phenomenon and the research'.

[16] Cf. the work of Heidi Campbell: H. CAMPBELL: 'Considering spiritual dimensions within computer-mediated communication studies', in *New Media & Society* 7/1 (2005) 110-134; IDEM: *When religion meets new media* (London 2010); IDEM (ed.): *Digital religion. Understanding religious practice in new media worlds* (Abingdon 2013); IDEM: 'A new forum for religion: Spiritual pilgrimage online', in *The Bible in Transmission* (Summer 2001) 1-2. Accessed October 2013 via http://www.academia.edu.

my own research. I recently took part in an international research project on sacred caves in Eastern Free State, South Africa.[17] Together with the University of Bloem-fontein (University of the Free Sate), we researched the remarkable popularity of a number of sacred places (caves) in a valley in the border area of South Africa (the Free State) and Lesotho. From the beginning, when setting up the parameters of the project, we spoke of pilgrimage. The whole project thus, from the start, fell under the paradigm of pilgrimage, with, again, often the 'usual suspects' such as Eliade and Turner as well as more recent authors like Coleman, Morinis, and Eade. During one of the fieldwork campaigns, however, it became clear to me that the people the project was concerned with, the 'pilgrims', did not refer to their devo-tional coming and going as a pilgrimage. Even more importantly, there was no word at all for pilgrimage in the languages in question. After years of research, I think that, instead of our concept of pilgrimage, other concepts and supporting themes do more justice to the ritual phenomenon there in the caves. Ancestor wor-ship is central, but perhaps appropriations of 'land', ownership of land, the land of the ancestors, the land of salvation and healing, holy ground, are even more fun-damental. Here, I think, the perspective of those directly involved, the so-called native's point of view, is of great importance. Ritual is, first of all, what those in-volved as such see and name. That is not to say that paradigms and concepts from outside should never be applied. But they are relativized beforehand; there is never a truly one-to-one correspondence. They are instruments by which one can attempt to understand the phenomenon. Pilgrimage can be used in that relative way as a heuristic and analytical instrument in the study of those sacred caves or cyber-pilgrimage. That is how I also use pilgrimage: as a lens to look at, for instance, the ritual that has been formed to commemorate deceased cancer patients by planting trees, the 'Trees for Life Day' in the Netherlands.[18]

   This brings me to a final remark in this first cluster, namely, the hermeneutical position of the researcher. The critical remarks just made here concerning the use of ritual essentially touch on the role of the researcher in the research process. This is, as is well known, a classic theme in anthropology and ethnography, the well-known dilemma of distance and commitment.[19] Inevitably, researchers always

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[17] POST, NEL & VAN BEEK (eds.): *Sacred spaces and contested identities*; in this see S. DU PLOOY: 'The making of Eastern Free State pilgrimage' 117-131.
[18] P. POST: 'The "Trees for Life Day" in the Netherlands and the ritual reference of pilgrimage', in *Mortality* 10/4 (2005) 251-261; IDEM: 'The "Trees for Life" Day: A new ritual for memorial and rec-onciliation. Some ritual-liturgical observations on an emerging ritual to commemorate victims of can-cer in the Netherlands', in *Studia Liturgica* 36 (2006) 94-108; IDEM: 'The pilgrimage to the "Cancer Forest" on the "Trees for Life Day" in Flevoland', in P.J. MARGRY (ed.): *Shrines and pilgrimage in the modern world. New itineraries into the sacred* (Amsterdam 2008) 281-297.
[19] Cf. STRINGER: *Contemporary Western ethnography*; IDEM: *On the perception of worship* (Birmingham 1999) esp. in Part I 'On ethnography' 42-60.

bring in their own world. That needs to be constantly taken into consideration and emphasizes the importance of an open descriptive attitude in the first phase of research. The well-known 5 P's (Performance, Place, Persons, Paraphernalia, Period) provide purchase here. The naming a phenomenon as ritual, as pilgrimage, etc. guides the research. But those terms bring with them entire worlds. Again, that is also inevitable and crucial for analysis and interpretation. The awareness of that process, along with the role of the researcher and her conceptual academic and cultural baggage play in that process, is important.

4.   Ritual in historical, comparative research

The multidisciplinary phase beginning in the 1960s, which we mentioned in the historical sketch above, primarily expresses a productive interplay of historical studies and the social sciences. Ritual repertoires like pilgrimage, initiation, feast, processions, exorcisms, etc. were favorite themes here for exploring popular culture. This resulted in trendsetting studies by celebrated authors like Michel Vovelle, Carlo Ginzburg, Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Willem Frijhoff, Robert Muchembled, Peter Burke, and Anton Blok. But criticism could also be heard at the time. In the Netherlands, there was an intense debate between historians and anthropologists who ventured into history.[20] Philippe Buc recently published an essay – actually a book – with the suggestive title: *The Dangers of Ritual*,[21] in which he warned against the casual wielding of the concept of ritual in the past. In particular, he saw clear dangers when historians eagerly embraced the social sciences and used their concepts in their own work. Buc points to what we already stated above, namely, that a concept brings with it its own self-evident academic baggage. His thesis is that ritual in the past – he has the Middle Ages specifically in mind – is very difficult to access. The sources are scarce and often lapidarian, and the context is completely different than the contemporary one. All in all, that makes a historical study of ritual an extremely dicey and complex undertaking. A large part of his argument is constituted by a sketch of the historical development of the concept of ritual since the Reformation.[22]

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[20] Introductory: W. FRIJHOFF: 'Inleiding: Historische antropologie', in P. TE BOEKHORST, P. BURKE & W. FRIJHOFF (eds.): *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland 1500-1850* (Meppel/Amsterdam/Heerlen 1992) 11-38; A. BLOK: 'Inleiding: Themanummer historiserende antropologie in Nederland', in Themanummer *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 18 (1980) 101-113; for recent positions, see: H. ROODENBURG: *Antropologen, historici en de hartslag van het archief* (=Inaugurele rede VU Amsterdam 2009); Y. KUIPER: *Van de berg der waarheid naar de vlakte van het individualisme. Een historisch- en religieus-antropologisch perspectief* (=Inaugurele rede Groningen 2007) m.n. 21-28.

[21] P. BUC: *The dangers of ritual. Between early medieval texts and social scientific theory* (Princeton 2001); cf. G.M. SPIEGEL: in *The American Historical Review* 108/1 (2003) 148s.

[22] On this, see also T. ASAD: 'Towards a genealogy of the concept of ritual', in T. ASAD: *Genealogies of religion* (Baltimore 1993) 55-82.

Directly opposed to this position is a large project under the supervision of John Harper. Since 2010 Harper has been supervising *The Experience of Worship in late Medieval Cathedral and Parish Church Project*,[23] attempting to trace the experiences of late-medieval liturgy by recording re-enactments on film. As I have laid out elsewhere, I have major questions about this project, questions that are inspired precisely by Buc's points with regard to theory and methodology.[24] The distance between now and then, past and present, is too great; we have only a few texts and buildings and a few attributes and artefacts that have survived down through time. For the rest, with the re-enactments we find ourselves in a morass of uncertainties and incongruities.

But that is not to say that I consider the study of ritual to be a mission impossible. To the contrary, I see many good studies, provided that the limitations are recognized.[25] Those limitations and dangers are, in my view, connected primarily with the often dominant and candid comparative perspective. Through the use of specific concepts like ritual, pilgrimage, etc., a relation is often quickly drawn between the phenomenon then and now. One must also keep in mind that that comparison often plays a role of its own. The past is often cherished and studied for the sake of the present. That was the eye-opener of the extremely influential volume by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in which various historians show that many rites and traditions presented as very old were in fact 'invented traditions'.[26]

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[23] See http://www.experienceofworship.org.uk   and   http://www.bangor.ac.uk/music/AHRC/index.php.en (accessed January 2015); Harper allowed me access to an unpublished paper: J. HARPER, *Investigating Medieval ritual through liturgical enactment* (9pp).

[24] See the two articles mentioned in note 1.

[25] Examples are: E. MUIR: *Ritual in early modern Europe* (=New Approaches to European History) (Cambridge 2005 2nd ed.); G. ALTHOFF: *Die Macht der Rituale. Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt 2013 2nd ed.); Fr. LURZ: *Erlebte Liturgie. Autobiografische Schriften als liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen* (=Ästhetik, Theologie, Liturgie 28) (Münster 2003); St. BÖNTERT: *Friedlicher Kreuzzug und fromme Pilger. Liturgiehistorische Studien zur Heilig-Land-Wallfahrt im Spiegel deutschsprachiger Pilgerberichte des späten 19. Jahrh.* (=Liturgia condenda 27) (Leuven, etc. 2013); M. SCHRAVEN: *Festive funerals in early modern Italy* (Farnham 2014).

[26] E. HOBSBAWM: 'Introduction: Inventing traditions', in E. HOBSBAWM & T. RANGER (eds.): *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge 1983) 1-14; cf. P. POST: 'Rituals and the function of the past: Rereading Eric Hobsbawm', in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 10/2 (1996) 91-108; IDEM: 'De creatie van traditie volgens Eric Hobsbawm', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 11 (1995) 77-101; IDEM: "'God kijkt niet op een vierkante meter..." of Hobsbawm herlezen,' in C. VAN DER BORGT, A. HERMANS & H. JACOBS (eds.): *Constructie van het eigene. Culturele vormen van regionale identiteit in Nederland* (=Publikaties van het P.J. Meertens-Instituut 25) (Amsterdam 1996) 175-200; IDEM: Ch. 3: "'God isn't concerned with trivial details," or, Rereading Hobsbawm', in P. POST, J. PIEPER & M. VAN UDEN: *The modern pilgrim. Multidisciplinary explorations of Christian pilgrimage* (=Liturgia condenda 8) (Leuven 1998) 89-120; IDEM: 'The creation of tradition: Rereading and reading beyond Hobsbawm', in J.W. VAN HENTEN & A. HOUTEPEN (eds.): *Religious identity and the invention of tradition. Papers read at a Noster conference in Soesterberg, January 4-6, 1999* (Assen 2001) 41-59.

We see something similar with the current booming of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, the *Camino* where each modern pilgrim sees him- or herself as walking in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims. That is also a contemporary construction, for we have scarcely any idea of the experiences of the medieval pilgrim.

Another example links up directly with this. The Santiago Camino revival has caused great interest in pilgrim accounts. They are generally seen as a good source for the study of the profile or, better, profiles of the modern pilgrim.[27] Here relations are usually drawn quickly to historical pilgrimage reports from the early Christian period to the Middle Ages. Closer inspection shows that such comparison is dangerous. The functions of those reports can, thus, greatly diverge. The contemporary pilgrim who keeps a report of his/her trip in a notebook, a book, or a blog is decidedly "modern"; these are, in an important way, forms of self-presentation and cannot be transferred back to the past. Pilgrimage accounts had various functions and thus various meanings. They were initially primarily guides for other pilgrims who ventured on the dangerous and often unpaved roads. Or they were the basis for a mental or spiritual pilgrimage, a way to reproduce the sacred journey, or primarily often even a means for *propaganda fide*.[28]

Nonetheless, I see, as stated above, certain perspectives for historical ritual research. The constant flow of what I see as good historical studies into ritual in the Middle Ages, the early and late modern period, confirms this.[29]

At this time, I also see a kind of 'ritual turn' in classical studies. 'Cultus' is being seen more and more as a good concept for access to the culture of antiquity.[30] After the so-called mystery cults, cultus or worship and rite, are now used as access

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[27] P. Post: 'The modern pilgrim: A study of contemporary pilgrim's accounts', in *Ethnologia Europaea* 24/2 (1994) [1995] 85-100; Idem: Ch. 9: 'The modern pilgrim. A study of contemporary pilgrims' accounts', in Post, Pieper & Van Uden: *The modern pilgrim* 221-242; Idem: 'Pelgrimsverslagen: verkenning van een genre', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 8 (1992) 285-332; N. Frey: *Pilgrim stories: On and off the road to Santiago* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1998); S. Coleman & J. Elsner (eds.): *Pilgrim voices: Narratives and authorship in Christian pilgrimage* (New York 2003); A. Peat: *Travel and modernist literature: Sacred and ethical journeys* (=Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature 15) (New York, NY 2011); P. Post: 'Pelgrimsverhalen – pelgrims verhalen. Mapping the field', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgieonderzoek/Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies* 31 (2015) [in print].

[28] Post: 'Pelgrimsverhalen.'

[29] See note 25.

[30] Some recent examples are C. Ambos & L. Verderame (eds.): *Approaching rituals in ancient cultures* (=Rivista degli studi orientali, suppl. 86/2) (Rome 2013, proceedings conference 2011); M.A. Guggisberg (ed.): *Grenzen in Ritual und Kult in der Antike, Internationales Kolloquium (2009)* (=Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 40) (Basel 2013); A. Chaniotis (ed.): *Ritual dynamics in the ancient Mediterranean: Agency, emotion, gender, representation* (=Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 49) (Heidelberg 2011); O. Hekster, S. Schmidt-Hofner & Chr. Witschel (eds.): *Ritual dynamics and religious change in the Roman Empire* (Leiden 2009).

points across the whole of culture. A striking exponent of this is the large international project *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquarum (ThesCRA)*. Eight volumes contain material collected from a large spectrum of ritual repertoires: processions, offers, libations, purifications, prayer, banquets, oaths, divination, temple cults, death and burial rites, festivals, and contests, etc.[31]

Finally, I will give one more example of this cluster of dangers in connection with historical ritual studies from my own research: In research and teaching on sacred place and ritual space I liked to refer to the oldest documented space of Christian worship – the so-called Christian house in the Syrian fortified city, Dura Europos, which we can date to around 240. Following many others, I saw this early cultic space as a good example of a house church (*domus ecclesiae*), within the tradition of Christians meeting in homes in the first few centuries. This also permitted the conception of relatively informal rites. A few years ago I decided to study the whole file on the Dura cultic space thoroughly once more, now in the context of the cultic spaces of Jews and adherents of the Mithras cult (synagogue and *mithraeum*) found nearby.[32] The conclusion of this revisit to Dura was sobering. There was no such thing as the homely and cosy atmosphere of a house church. Rather, it turned out to be an extremely sacred cosmic cultic place that had to have been surrounded by apotropaic and prophylactic practices. The parallels in particular with the *mithraeum* are remarkable. What was first seen as a house church was, in fact, a set apart extremely sacred cultic place. The notion of a house church had been imposed by Christian liturgists who, strongly oriented to the present, worked with a certain typology of ritual spaces.

5.   Ritual criticism

A final, relatively heterogeneous cluster of dangers and ambivalences can be grouped around the strongly emerging concept of 'ritual criticism'.

I worked this concept out in more detail elsewhere.[33] It will suffice here to indicate that ritual criticism is concerned with critical reflection with respect to ritual acts. That can involve the performance and active dimension itself, as well as normative frameworks that are at stake or theoretical reflections on ritual acts (such as the example cited above of invented tradition). I am referring here in particular

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[31] *ThesCRA*: Vol I-VIII (Los Angeles 2004-2012).

[32] P. POST: 'Terug naar Dura: een herinterpretatie van het christelijk huis in Dura Europos', in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 66/1 (2012) 33-46; IDEM: 'Dura Europos revisited: Rediscovering sacred space', in *Worship* 86/3 (2012) 222-244.

[33] P. POST: 'Ritual criticism. Een actuele verkenning van kritische reflectie ten aanzien van ritueel, met bijzondere aandacht voor e-ritueel en cyberpilgrimage', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgieonderzoek/Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies* 29 (2013) 173-199.

to the last two dimensions of ritual criticism that were mentioned and especially to the area of memorial ritual.

Within the broader area of Cultural Memory Studies, research into memorial ritual of various kinds is especially flourishing.[34] Ritual has been dominant here for a long time – one can think here of commemorative rituals, disaster rituals, monuments and commemorative places, online memorials, etc. But people are becoming increasingly aware that the interest in ritual also brings with it specific ideas about ritual: ideas on the value and necessity of rituals, on their presentation and performance. Thus, questions can be posed about the idea that rituals should always be beneficial, that leaving ritual out of consideration in certain circumstances is a bad idea, and that the absence of rites should be made good or be compensated for. It is thus being increasingly pointed out that, in certain circumstances, it may be better to forget and that not having memorial rites and monuments is more beneficial than keeping the memory alive.[35] Rituals, memorials, and the marking of events are not always good.

Fortunately, research on the politics and dynamics of memorials has recently emerged. At issue here is a very complex spectrum of memorial modalities. There are grassroots rites, rituals that are still wet behind the ears, immediately after an event.[36] There is petrified memorial ritual, seen by many as a routine that needs to be brought again to life or else stopped (one can think here of forgotten statues in cities referring to forgotten pasts).[37] In between the two is postponed memorial

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[34] A. ERLL & A. NÜNNING (eds.): *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (Berlin/New York 2008); IDEM (eds.): *A companion to cultural memory studies* (Berlin/New York 2010); A. ERLL: *Memory in culture* (Basinstoke 2011); A. ERLL & A. RIGNEY (eds.): *Mediation, remediation and the dynamics of cultural memory* (Berlin/New York 2009); K. FOOTE: *Shadowed ground: America's landscapes of violence and tragedy* (Austin, TX 2003 (revised and updated ed.)); IDEM: 'Shadowed ground, sacred place: Reflections on violence, tragedy, memorials and public commemorative rituals', in P. POST, A.L. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Holy ground. Re-inventing ritual space in modern Western culture* (=Liturgia condenda 24) (Leuven, etc. 2010) 93-11; P. POST, R.L. GRIMES, A. NUGTEREN, P. PETTERSON & H.J. ZONDAG: *Disaster ritual: Explorations of an emerging ritual repertoire* (=Liturgia condenda 15) (Leuven, etc. 2003).

[35] N. HEWITT: '"Anything but monuments?" The changing nature of Second World War commemoration in Britain 1945-2000', (=[unpublished] Paper conference *The Re-siting of memory: Remembering WW2 in the New Europe.* University of Portsmouth 12-13 Nov. 1999) (with thanks to Tony Walter (Bath)); W. FRIJHOFF: 'Traumatische herinnering. Bij wijze van inleiding', in *Leidschrift* 28/3 (2013) 7-24; J. BARSALOU & V. BAXTER: *The urge to remember. The role of memorials in social reconstruction and transitional justice* (=Stabilization and reconstruction series no. 5, Jan. 2007) (Washington DC 2007).

[36] P.J. MARGRY & CR. SÁNCHEZ-CARRETERO (eds.): *Grassroots memorials. The politics of memorializing traumatic death* (New York/Oxford 2012).

[37] P. POST: '*Living memory* tussen *Zivilreligiös* herdenken, kunst, *healing* en attractie. Over de meervoudige identiteit van een Holocaustmonument', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgieonderzoek/Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies* 27 (2011) 87-111.

ritual: years after an accident or event, a memorial ritual comes into being.[38] And there is also absent ritual. The latter can arise from various backgrounds: it can be suppressed or forbidden ritual, or the beneficial forgetting cited above. When there is a focus on ritual acts in the study of memorial cultures, it is important that this dynamic and stratification be kept in view and that we be constantly aware (again!) of presuppositions with respect to the function of ritual.

In our Tilburg research group 'Ritual in Society' we have started researching ritual practices after atrocities, and in our preliminary explorations we have already encountered the points for attention just mentioned about ritual. Right now, I myself am studying rituals concerning the many so-called border deaths, migrants who have died in the Mediterranean Sea on their journey to Fortress Europe organized by human traffickers. The small island of Lampedusa is a macabre and heart-rending point of concentration here.[39]

An interesting dynamic came to light in my first exploration of the ritual repertoires that also yielded perspectives for the role of ritual in research into migration streams in Europe. On the one hand, there is a great deal of absent ritual. Much ritual that one could expect is not present. After a dramatic shipwreck there are no funerals or cremations, there is no grave with names and dates, no relatives who mourn. Border deaths in Lampedusa are buried anonymously elsewhere in Italy (mostly in Sicily), at most with a number; in the home country, people are often unaware of the fate of the one who has died. There are also hardly any public memorials or monuments for the dead. But, on the other hand, there is a new repertoire that is not perhaps immediately recognized as ritual, but does possess ritual potential. Together with Grimes we can see these as ritualizations. Here we are challenged, in my view, to let go of classical views of ritual. If we do not do so, we will encounter the danger of not having a true picture of the complex culture of these migrant flows. I see all kinds of art projects emerging here: monuments and memorial rituals, book and literature projects, photo projects, film projects, documentaries, and documentation projects. It is interesting to see how often objects left behind by the refugees play a role as 'relics' in many projects: remainders abandoned on the beach and in the sea, letters, bottles, reading materials, music cassettes, etc. are used in the art and book projects. In large-scale documentation projects, the intention is to keep the anonymous dead present as much as possible, with a date and place of death, an indication of the place of burial, if possible the country of origin, and age. That there is a ritual dimension at stake is confirmed not only through various statements by people involved in these projects (who

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[38] L. FARO: *Postponed monuments in the Netherlands. Manifestation, context, and meaning* (=PhD thesis Tilburg 2015).

[39] P. POST: 'The Lampedusa tragedy. Chronicles of absent and emerging ritual', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgieonderzoek/Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies* 31 (2015) [in print].

speak of a way of saying farewell to the anonymous dead) but also by the remarkable fact that there are more of such large-scale documentation projects being carried out. As is well known, repetition, parallelism, transfer, and reproduction are an important characteristic of rituality.

6.   Coda: The craft of ritual studies

Looking at culture through the lens of ritual takes us into the area of ritual studies. In that looking, analysis, and interpretation there is the danger that ritual becomes 'only' a heuristic tool, accompanied by an underestimation of the craftsmanship of doing ritual studies.[40] The danger of theoretical and methodological 'laziness' or lack of restraint is lurking here. Grimes pointed repeatedly especially to the shortage of attention for method, for application, and the research practice.[41] We gave a few examples of this above.

Nonetheless, ritual remains a good form of access for studying culture. The dangers should not lead to retracing our steps, but it should lead to continuing critical reflection on the concept of ritual in relation to the cultural phenomenon to be studied in context.

In addition, ritual studies scholars readily point to the fact that ritual acting is deeply anchored in humanity. Harvey Whitehouse is very explicit on this:

> Ritual is popularly misconstrued as an exotic, even quirky topic – a facet of human nature that, along with beliefs in supernatural agents and magical spells, is little more than a curious fossil of pre-scientific culture, doomed to eventual extinction in the wake of rational discovery and invention. Nothing could be further from the truth. Humans are as ritualistic today as they have ever been. This is not a comment on the changing fortunes of organized religion in different parts of the world (growing and spreading in some places while undoubtedly declining in others). It is a point about the profoundly ritualistic character of all human cultures, whether in families, schools, workplaces, governments, or international relations.[42]

Studying human acting and culture is therefore a rather obvious path in humanities and social sciences. Ronald Grimes is very outspoken when he tries to answer the question 'Why study ritual?':

> I study ritual because I don't quite get it, but apparently some other people do. For that reason, studying ritual forces me to pose a double-edged question: How come they get it and I don't?

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[40] GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies*.

[41] IDEM 3-8. Grimes starts his book with 'Method' (Part I) and ends with 'Theory' (Part III).

[42] H. WHITEHOUSE: 'Human rites', in *Aeon Magazine* 12 December 2012, online available at http://www.aeonmagazine.com/being-human/harvey-whitehouse-ritual/.

How is it that ritual, which can appear so natural in some settings, seems so contrived in others? How can it seem so utterly essential even to people who don't get it? One can study ritual either because it makes so much obvious sense or because it makes no sense whatever. Either motive will do. If something seems not only foreign, but alternately weak and powerful, as is the case with ritual, this combination should alert us that studying diligently is imperative. In a technocratic world, ritual can seem disabled, a mere dependent variable, and yet ritual also is said to marshal enormous power. It keeps Toyota factories running. It enabled Christendom to rule much of the world. It empowered the terrorists who took down the Towers. We hear that it keeps the Dalai Lama from being consumed with rage in China. We are told that it transformed young Germans into Nazi soldiers. So we had better study ritual; our humanity depends on it.[43]

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[43] GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* 5s.

Part II

RITUAL PRACTICES

2

THROUGH A WET LENS:
THE KAPSIKI AND THEIR RAIN RITUALS

Walter E.A. van Beek

For a completely blind person, James Hull wrote from his own experience, there is one way he can perceive the world as a coherent whole and a landscape as a totality. Based on acoustic signals only, the outer world is discontinuous, temporal, and fragmented, but when it is raining the world becomes a coherent whole, for someone without sight:

> Rain has a way of bringing out the contours of everything; it throws a colored blanket over previously invisible things; instead of an intermittent and thus fragmented world, the steadily falling rain creates continuity of acoustic experience… This is an experience of great beauty.[1]

Rain, also, is a phenomenon we perceive with at least three senses at the same time, sight, hearing and tactility; the weather is not something out there, we are a bodily part of it, pure synaesthesia.[2]

For an Africanist, the fundamental role of rain in human life is recognizable but the phenomenon is different. The rain Hull describes is a gentle one in a moderate climate, in fact an English rain, steadily falling with nuances to be heard, like the muffled sounds of cars moving over a wet surface. A tropical rainstorm would be quite another experience for a blind person, since for a seeing perceiver it is already an overpowering event. An impression from the Mandara Mountains in North Cameroon.

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[1] J. HULL: *On sight and insight: A journey into the world of blindness* (Oxford 1997) 26-27, cited in T. INGOLD: *The perception of the environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill* (London 2000) 271. Also INGOLD: 'Footprints through the weather-world: Walking, breathing, knowing', in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (May 2010) 121-139.

[22] INGOLD: *The perception of the environment* 268; W.E.A. VAN BEEK: 'Eyes on top? Culture and the weight of the senses', in A. STORCH (ed.): *Invisible Africa, Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika* 21 (Köln 2010) 245-270.

After a hot and sweaty day, I was enjoying a slightly cooler afternoon, when the east-
ern horizon turned a dark grey, with a slight wind rising. Around me I saw my neigh-
bors come back from the fields, a woman hurrying with a pail of water on her head,
right from the well. Quickly I gathered my things, notepad, chair, camera and re-
corder, and went inside. I meticulously shut all the widows of our little house – no
Kapsiki had ever understood why we needed that many windows for a spot to store
one's stuff, or for a place where you just sleep in a few months a year. The wind
strengthened, and a last peek out of my window showed a jet black sky: Yes, rain,
wonderful! The wind became a gale, whistling around the corners of the house, buf-
feting the roof. With some concern I saw the corrugated iron of the roof move up
and down, and hoped that the nails would hold; each storm removes at least some of
these 'modern roofs'. The first drops fell, each one a distinct tap, resounding on the
corrugated iron; then the volume increased, it rained, it poured, the iron roof became
a drum played by a master drummer with me inside; the noise was overwhelming, as
the din of the whistling wind and the creaking tortured roof were almost wiped out
by the fierce drumming of the torrential rain. I could do nothing, and just had to wait,
ears covered; with door and windows closed I could not see anything in the pitch
dark. Nothing else could be heard in the village, the world had been engulfed by the
rain, all other signs of life annulled by the racket of rain. It lasted for an hour, and
welcome though the rain was, this was long enough, this lashing by rain: this was not
rain, these were 'the elements'.

The rain was welcome, in this case, very welcome indeed. It had not rained for
eight months, and the wells were running dry; the women had to wait for some
water to ooze into the deep layer of the well. That, also, is different from the North
Atlantic experience of rain: I was reduced to a non-seer, and the rain was eagerly
awaited for. The third difference was that here in Kapsiki country we had duly
performed our rituals to procure this downpour, and that is the topic of this chap-
ter.

Rain and its many rituals

Dry Africa, outside the rainforest zones, is obsessed with rain and for very good
reasons. Life in the savannah and Sahel zones is basically a simple equation: if it
rains well life is good, if it does not rain well, life if at risk. Raining well means
raining as expected, with rain storms and showers coming in time, with the right
duration and at proper intervals, and procuring enough precipitation to last through
the rest of the year. Nobody wants the rain system of another latitude, as the aim
is 'normalcy', rains should behave in accordance to the climate – a word also mean-
ing latitude. And normalcy is what rain rituals are for, just trying to make things
happen the way they are supposed to do. The rituals we will see aim at procuring
rain, but only during the rainy season; no rainmaker will ever try to score a shower
in the dry season. Only when the first rains are severely overdue, or when after the

first rainstorm the second series of rains is slow in coming and the young seedlings are in danger, that is when rain rituals are called for.

Rain rituals very widely, between culture areas, between individual cultures and even between villages of the same ethnic cluster;[3] we will see this among the Kapsiki too. They range from regular sacrifices to public shows, from manipulation of objects to incantations and invocations, from intensely private acts to collective feasts, and from involvement of power holders to delegation to strangers; no scholar has as yet tried to write a synthesis of African rain rituals. This huge gamma of ritual variation implies that rain rituals are quite ethnic specific, and thus a good arena for the main thrust of this volume, to see the culture through the lens of ritual. So we will look at Kapsiki culture through a wet lens, at least wetness is what these rituals hope to bring about.
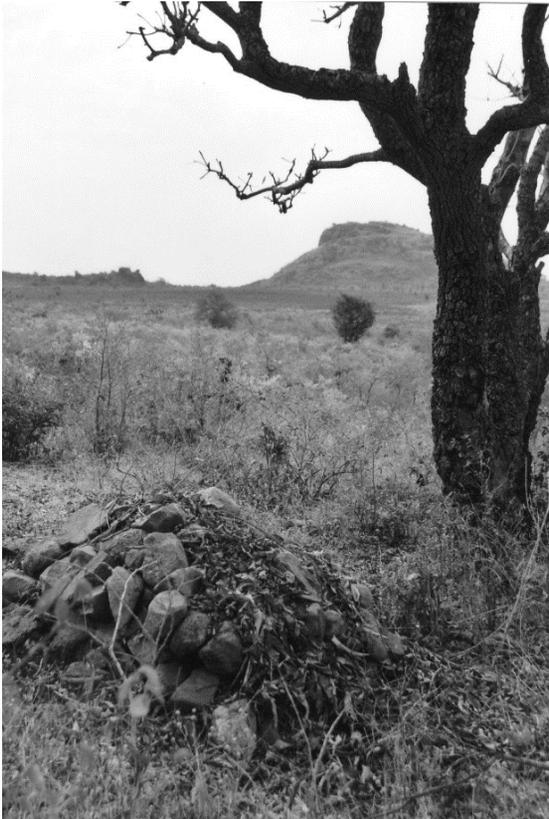
Grave of Hwempetla
(© W.E.A. van Beek)

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[3] For an incisive study from another African culture area, see S. SIMONSE: *Kings of disaster: Dualism, centralism and the scapegoat king in Southeastern Sudan* (Leiden 1992).

These are rituals that have a very distinct goal, direct and practical, and often done alone, with a projected outcome that might even be measurable. The old literature would have called them 'magic', and have opposed them to 'religion'; Frazer, Tylor or Söderblom – just to mention a few –, would have had no compunction in separating these practically oriented rites from the 'real religion'. However, that distinction proved untenable as a closer look at so-called 'magical rites' brought out their religious character[4], with an improved ethnography stressing the fact that they are rituals before anything else. Rain rituals aim at an effect, sure, but so does any ritual. Even if many rituals seem more up front in what they express than what they 'do', Grimes insists that "… the expressive/pragmatic dichotomy is not as clean as it appears;"[5] as rituals are acts with actors, "whatever a ritual … causes, influences, or facilitates its part of its work, or function."[6]

Of course, the classic functionalist distinction between the manifest function of a ritual (its emic aim, the goal the participants expect) and its latent function (the side effects, 'placebo-like' as Grimes calls them), does work well for rain rituals: the participants expect rain, the anthropologist sees group cohesion and comfort in stress as well as the play of power. That is, as long as one assumes that rituals do not actually bring along moisture; after all we as researchers start from an agnostic methodological perspective, not basing our analysis on any purported on supernatural interventions. One of the oldest theoreticians in our field, James Fraser, surmised that magic was a 'false science as well as an abortive art,' and surmised that when people got smarter, they observed that magic did not work, thus coming to the notion of supernatural beings with their own agency. That theory is thoroughly disproven, by a host of fieldwork data. A major argument is that these rituals already incorporate the possibility of not achieving their goal, but another rebuttal is that magical rituals often do bring forth the results they aim for. In a surprising number of reported cases, rain did follow on the rituals, close enough to be considered *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. So we are dealing with rituals here, just rituals with some specific characteristics.

For the notion of ritual I follow Grimes' minimal definition "Ritual is embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment,"[7] a definition short enough to generate a lot of secondary questions. This chapter zooms in on Grimes' last notion: enactment – of what? To answer that question, we have to have a close look at the varieties of Kapsiki rain rituals, and then glean what we can learn from them about Kapsiki culture.

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[4] W.E.A. VAN BEEK: 'The religion of everyday life: An ethnoscience investigation into the concepts of religion and magic', in W.E.A. VAN BEEK & J.H. SCHERER (eds.): *Explorations in the anthropology of religion: Essays in honor of Jan van Baal* (Leiden 1975) 55-70.

[5] R.L. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) 297.

[6] IDEM 298.

[7] IDEM 196.

The Kapsiki rain hunt

The Kapsiki have in principle two kinds of rituals for rain: 'buying' rain and 'hunting' rain. Many Kapsiki villages have a rain maker, a *melu* (non-smith) claiming direct descent from Gudur, the mythical place of origin of the Kapsiki and many other groups in the region. On demand he will perform rituals to procure rain for which he will expect remuneration; hence this ritual is called 'buying rain'. Mogode does not have its own rain maker, since Hwempetla, the culture hero of this village, discouraged his descendants from 'buying rain'. But the neighboring villages of Guria, Sirakuti, Gwava, Wula, Garta, Kortchi, Tlukwu, and Muzuku do have them, the most famous being those in Tlukwu, Sirakuti, and Muzuku. Some 23 (out of 33) villages 'buy rain', while the others, like Mogode, perform a communal ritual to get rain. The Mogode variant is a 'rain hunt'. Rain rituals are done when a dry spell occurs after the first rains, when the first sowing is at risk. Usually one of the old men takes the initiative and suggest to the village chief that the time has come for the *peli va*, the rain hunt.

In 1989, it was Deli Maze, one of elders of the *maze* clan, who told the chief that the time was ripe. That evening the chief shouted everywhere in the village that the next day nobody should "touch his hoe": no one was to cultivate, everyone had to participate in the ritual. Some 50 young men assembled the next day and set out hunting, meaning that they visit a string of sacred spots, the most important the graves of Hwempetla and his wife. The hunt has a festive, relaxed atmosphere, with people traveling in a loose group, like a collective hunt. It is a surprisingly boisterous affair. Any game the men spot is enthusiastically run after, with loud shouting and yelling, while brandishing their throwing clubs. Needless to say, the catch was almost nil. But this way of happy hunting was a ritual way to get from one ritual spot to the next. The first stop was the abandoned house of someone who was, indeed, a *ndemeva* (rain maker) in Mogode in the past. Few people know his name but his clan is well known: he was a *makwiyɛ*. It was he who came with the first migration from Gudur to Mogode, carrying a jar for rain rituals with him, a *melɛ va*. When he fled the village during the Hamman Yaji wars and the jar fell into disuse, the people of Mogode harked back to their Hwempetla tradition, since the old *melɛ* was nowhere to be found.[8]

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[8] The *melɛ* consists this time of a grind mortar in the abandoned house of this Kweji Kwakwene, since the jar has gone. If asked by the village chief, a representative of Kweji's lineage washes that mortar with beer, and later sacrifices a chicken inside it, just before the *peli va*. Kweji, so the story goes, had a red stone, which attracted and produced water: wherever one put it on the ground, the soil became soaked. The provenance of that particular stone is not known, and it was lost when Kweji moved to a Nigerian village fleeing Hamman Yaji, but its properties still cling to the grind mortar where Kweji had kept it. Another story, reminiscent of Old Testament tales, links Kweji Kwakweme with water as well. Reputedly, he also had a stick that parted the waters: when he struck a river, a throughway appeared in the water, which closed after he had passed. For Hamman Yaji see W.E.A. VAN BEEK:

The ritual action was standard in all cases: the hunting party took branches with leaves from the bush and ran toward the spot, shouting: "*a 'ya ndere 'ya, a 'ya ndere 'ya*" (I am thirsty, I am thirsty) and then covered the object in question with leaves. After covering, they danced around it, playing their open reed-flutes, singing *Kwaftsa Magweda* (real Mogodian who cultivates yellow sorghum). The first leg was the ruins of the rain maker's hut, the second was toward the northeast in the ward of Devu where an old grind mortar was washed with beer, a recent addition to the ritual. In this ward, a certain Perete started washing this mortar with beer at the start of the season, 'amusing himself', but, lo and behold, rain followed so his descendant kept up the good work, and it is now part of the program.

The hunt then moved off toward the southeast in the direction of the Nzambe outcropping, where close to the mountain a two-meter-high boulder is split vertically. Chanting and dancing, the party pulled out the old leaves from the crevasse, and filled it with fresh leaves, meticulously chasing all the male lizards out of the area. It is believed that these lizards can stop rain if they climb on the rock and looked in the direction the rain is coming from. One guilty lizard was killed and buried at the foot of the rock. Just a few hundred meters away a 60cm oblong granite rock is deemed to have fallen out of the sky; shot through with a small layer of yellow, it looks like sideburns, so it is indeed called *Kwabelcha* (sideburns) and was now covered with leaves.

After taking care of the lizard, the party turned to the south and southwest toward the empty compound of a certain Mata Kweji Yarhwé, who has no connection with rain but in the past, reputedly, performed a ritual against the parasites that ate sorghum leaves. This particular parasite has become rare and the ritual has been abandoned, but his house has become a stopover in the rain hunt. His personal stone still stands in the abandoned forecourt, and was the object of attention. Now the party was close to the main goal of the hunt, the tombs of Hwempetla and his wife. These are recognizable as small earth mounds covered with old leaves, surrounded by quite a few grind mortars. Now all mortars were washed with beer, the graves were cleaned and recovered with fresh leaves, and the singing became more intense: "I am thirsty, I am thirsty." Some people had made the shortcut from the village, so the crowd was much larger here; a flute group brought their reed flutes, *zuvu*, and now played while dancing around the tomb. This main part of the ritual completed, the whole party returned to the village, stopping at the sacred mountain where the village started and Hwempetla lived, the mountain of the village sacrifice. After singing and dancing at the foot of the ancestral mountain, the whole group returned to the village just after noon.

'Intensive slave-raiding in the colonial interstice. Hamman Yaji and the Kapsiki/Higi of North Cameroon and Northeastern Nigeria', in *Journal of History in Africa* 53 (2013) 301-323.

Covering the grave. The man with the club is the village chief, on the center background the ancestral mountain (© W.E.A. van Beek)

The rain hunt described above was not a great success: the wind was quelled but no rain came. After a week without rain, the chief asked Lèwa, the *mnzɛfɛ* (ritual elder of the *ngacɛ* clan), to wash the grind mortar on the ancestral mountain, but Lèwa refused, afraid of falling down the mountain. In itself this is not a high risk, since the mountain is easy to climb, but he was afraid anyway. Indeed, his father had done this but not he himself, and the mountain is a scary place. Respecting his fear, the chief asked Teri Kuve. The choice seemed strange, since Teri is not an autochthonous Mogodian, but his lineage does stem from a rain maker in Wula, so 'he has business with Rain', and his ancestors even came from Gudur, the ultimate source of rain making power. One early morning a week after the hunt Teri Kuve performed the ritual and when indeed rain poured down the next day, Teri walked through the village a very proud man. That is exactly how it should be, people explained to me: anyone who washes the stone will not return home dry. Teri's success here not only meant rain at that time, but also implied that the next year he and later his descendants will continue this ritual.

Buying rain in Kapsiki: Rain and the power of the 'Other'

Buying rain means paying a rain maker to perform the ritual he is in charge of. The ritual itself is not overly complicated, resembling more than anything else a home sacrifice: a private ritual inside the compound of the rain maker. My example took place in Guria, the southern neighbor of Mogode. I had already contacted the rain maker Cakereda long before then and knew him well.

Cakereda keeps the *melɛ va* (the jar of the rain) in his home in a separate little hut with a diameter of 70cm that was made just for the jar, an abode built in a communal working party by the whole village. Its roof is repaired after each rainy season, again by the whole village. This year the first rains were early but then a dry spell set in. Some Guria notables suggested to the village chief that it might be a good idea to sacrifice for the rains, so he warned Cakereda that evening to be ready. In the morning the chief brought a chicken, a red one just as the crab has indicated. Cakereda made some objections, one of them being that a stranger was present – me – but eventually he gave in. Making objections is a normal way of stressing one's own importance in Kapsiki, and many tales circulate of rain makers who had to be beaten before doing the job. During the long day together Cakereda told me with some pride how the elders used to have to beat him before he budged. An additional reason for negotiating the ritual is that it might give the rain maker some leeway in choosing a day with more chance of rain.

The ritual elders in the village, the chief, the *mnzefɛ,* and the chief smith of Guria assemble at the rain hut. The *ɛ va* houses a collection of objects which together are indicated as *melɛ va*, though only one of them is a real jar, a small one in the form of a rugby ball and without decorations. The other objects are a small round bowl, six pieces of clay of indefinite form, plus a few special stones, mostly quartz or flint. The jar is crucial because it stems from the ritual center of Gudur, through the lineage of Cakereda, who claims that he is a lineal descendant from the chief of Gudur, the main rain maker in the Mandara Mountains.

All the objects were taken from the small hut and spread out on the ground, one of the clay pieces serving as a seat for the rain maker. At noon the red rooster was sacrificed: the village chief held its feet while Cakereda cut off its head and made sure that all the blood dripped on all the objects. "*Shala* in heaven, I suffer from thirst, now I give you food. I ask you now: give us water to cultivate sorghum, do not thrust your knife [lightning] into anyone, I do not want the jealousy."

All the objects were put back in the hut and it was closed. With some sesame twigs and water, the rain maker washed a few grind mortars lying next to the rain hut and sprayed some water on the *ɛ va,* saying "We are thirsty, we are thirsty" to conclude the ritual part of the morning. All the mortars were then washed with water and sesame in the presence of the remaining notables. Cakereda's compound is close to the market and people flocked around the house, busy with the market

but much more interested in the – slightly illicit – gambling game that was going on, than in the rain ritual. The ritual elders quickly left the compound to join the market.

Just before sunset, when the women of the house had made mush and cooked the rooster, Cakereda and I concluded the *melɛ va*. The rain maker got all the objects from the hut again and put some mush, sauce and chicken liver on each of them, first on the *melɛ va:* "*Shala*, I am thirsty, here is food for you, let us be healthy, give us water for the sorghum." As a conclusion he put a piece of a ritual plant (*Cissus quadrangulatus*) on the *melɛ* and then ate the rest of the food himself.
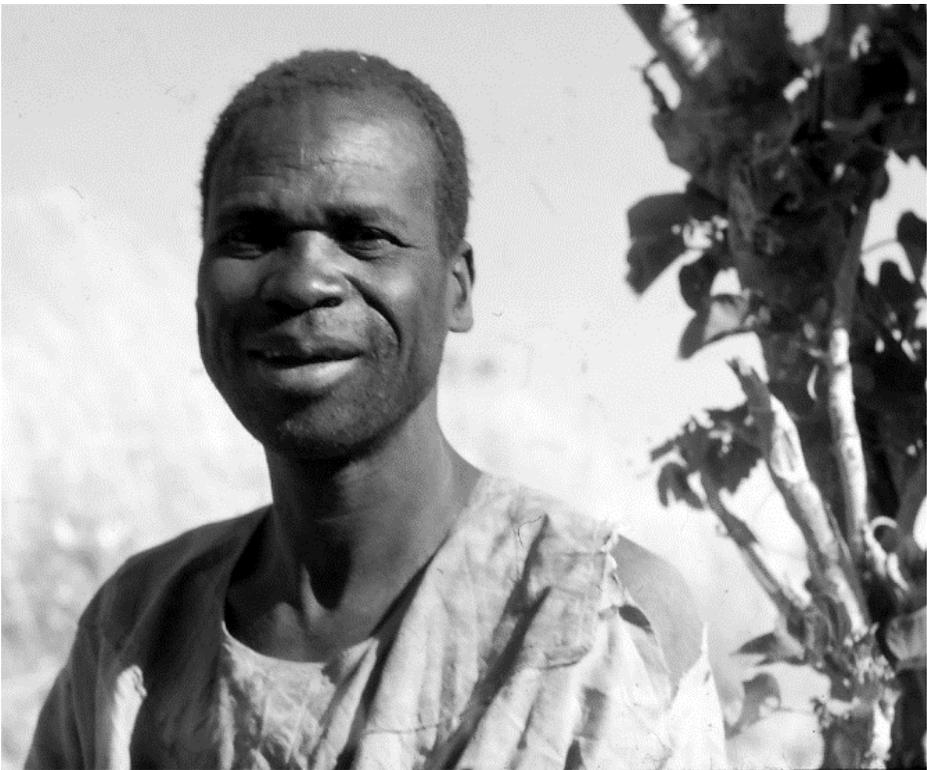
Cakereda, rainmaker of Guria (© W.E.A. van Beek)

And now for the rain. Before, there had been a little shower in Mogode, just to the north, but not a drop in Guria. The people who had been enjoying themselves at the market without paying any attention to the ritual, were confronted on their way home with its results: visitors from Mogode were soaked by the time they arrived in their village because of a heavy rainstorm that swept over Guria. A huge success for the rain maker and a minor one for me, as the Guria people later said: "*Shala*

has respected the white man in the *melɛ va*; from now on he has to help our *ndemeva*."
For Cakereda I was henceforth the 'son of his father,' since I had shown myself to
be 'family of Rain.' My skin helped here because *Va* (rain) is considered to be red
as well (Europeans are considered red in Kapsiki; they usually are in the savannah).
A year later people invited me for another rain ritual but I was preparing to leave
the area, and furthermore my confidence in my own ritual prowess and relationship
with Rain was not sufficient to run the risk of failure.

Reading the rituals

Rituals are in principal strange acts, and here we are in a cultural landscape that for
most will be quite uncharted as well. So we will have to 'read cautiously', and on
several levels, contextualizing wherever we can. First, this is a predominantly
imagistic religion, with little exegesis, systematization of belief, or systemic coordi-
nation of belief and ritual.[9] Second, this is part of a culture that 'dwells' deeply in
its environment,[10] its religion part of an ecological adaptation that has shaped both
the cultural forms and to some extent the mountain environment itself. So in these
rituals we are in a deeply unfamiliar symbolic universe, with jars, mortars, stones,
and guilty lizards. Yet, some general principles of rituals hold very well. Ritual is
way of 'giving attention' Jonathan Smith insisted, and the first attention is evidently
to rain itself, which makes excellent sense in this ecology. Rain is crucial, and in
Kapsiki thought rain is not just a phenomenon, it is 'someone,' a supernatural be-
ing, *Va* (also the word for rain). Actually, it is thought to be a couple, and more or
less white (or red) – like Europeans. Cakereda explains:

> There are two persons, *Va*, both long, white skins and with long blond hair, male and
> female; the rain couple lives in heaven like *shala*, just clothed in their long white hair.
> Both hold a white stick in their hand. If anyone takes an oath on the knife of Rain ('If
> I am wrong, may the knife of *Va* strike me'), the couple of *Va* will follow that oath;
> if the oath is broken, they will strike the culprit with their stick, which marks the way
> for a later bolt of lightning to strike. Both *Va* roam the earth, and if it has to rain the
> male Va shakes himself like a porcupine and then rain will fall. Husband and wife *Va*
> are together only when they have to kill someone; normally the man is alone. When-
> ever *Va* goes out to kill someone, he first appears as a ram in the house of the victim,
> his loins tied with a goatskin, his wife with a cache-sexe. Those who spot him call out
> 'let him go, let him go' (*pelakɛ, pelakɛ*). Sometimes they renounce their plans, throw
> off their clothing, and go.

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[9] W.E.A. VAN BEEK: *The dancing dead. Ritual and religion among the Kapsiki/Higi of North Cameroon and Northeastern Nigeria* (New York 2012).

[10] INGOLD: *The perception of the environment* 185-187.

According to informants, someone who has been hit by lightning is not immediately dead: others have to dance around him and whip him with *kwantereza* branches (*Cassia singuena Del.*). They told me how one of Teri Baja's children was once struck by lightning; its mother wanted to pick it up, but bystanders kept her away, shouted "let it go, let it go," and struck the child with the branches until it regained consciousness.[11] Any rain maker, who has the rain jar in his care, is respected by *Va* as long as the rain maker shows his deference to *Va* and asks politely with a proper sacrifice. When *Va* is resting in the dry season, he is not to be bothered by any sacrifice and the rain maker has to respect that request.

The rain sacrifice by Cakereda follows the usual liturgy for a home sacrifice, which is the basis for all sacrifices; effectively it is a family meal with meat. Additional items are the various objects, the grind mortars, the clay objects, the stones and especially the jar, I will come back to these. Surprisingly, the sacrifice seems not to be directed to *Va*, but to *Shala*, god, as that is what the invocation says. The notion of *shala*, in Kapsiki, is complex and very flexible, as more or less the supernatural pendant of any social presence on the earth;[12] *shala* is always defined in relation to a specific social group or natural feature – 'the *shala* of …' – except in the case of '*Shala* in heaven' for whom the whole world is the respondent. As the latter is indeed invoked in the rain ritual, for any Kapsiki that is close enough, as *Va* also is 'up there'. And, crucial detail, his knife is mentioned, so the sacrifice is for *Va* as well, inasmuch as they, *Shala* and *Va*, are considered different anyway. The second focus of attention is clearly on the knife, on lightening. People are scared of lightening, as they well should be in this savannah environment. For them it is the inherent risk of an abundant rain, so asking for rain plus safety from the 'knife' is logical, and the risk is even internalized: it follows oath takers who renege on their oath.

Then the objects. The crucial one is the jar, not because it is the oldest one – the mortars might well be much older – but as it represents ritual power. The jar has to come from the village of Gudur, the quasi-mythical point of origin of the migrations. Gudur is an actual village, at the entrance of the Mandara range, home to the rituals against some other major threats, namely locusts and leopards, but rain is by far the most important. Thus Gudur's power base resides in rain, in locusts, and in leopards – all of which underwrite its importance. Possibly, its ritual eminence might be a reason why many villages do trace their origin to this place. The rain jars form in fact one of the few interethnic links between the autonomous

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[11] The direct family of someone killed by lightning – his children and siblings – tie on special mourning bands just before the first rains arrive, plaiting twigs of a tree around their left wrist to avoid being taken by Rain as well.

[12] VAN BEEK: *The dancing dead* 101-103.

mountain settlements in the Mandara area, together with a few other rituals, like against locusts and epidemics.[13]

The clay forms were the new ones, four found by the rain maker, two he made from a dream he had had. More recognizable are the small stones, quartz and flint. In Kapsiki culture quartz is considered *nhwene gela*, 'tears of the rock', and special quartz crystals are sought after as harbingers of luck and wealth.[14] The flint is another matter, as they are Neolithic remains, but not recognized as such. Throughout the mountains the small bifaces that are found, are considered to be 'rain stones', that have come down with lightening, little emissaries of the knife of *Va*. They are collected, put away in a pot, and figure in various rituals. The village officiator has a vase full of them, so here in our rain sacrifice some flint axes are fully at home. Similar stones are central in the rain rituals of other groups as well. For instance, among the Mofu-Diamaré, their neighbors to the east, such stones ('children of the rain') are oiled by the village chief to procure rain,[15] as the very core of the rain ritual.

Of all objects, the grind mortars form the most visible connection with the past. The volcanic stones of the area are hard to work, so a suitable grinding stone will last very long, gradually getting deeper with extended use. Some of the mortars have been dated right back to the Neolithic, 1½ millennium ago,[16] and they figure in a host of rituals, usually linking the present with the deep past. Washing, finally, with water and sesame has a very direct symbolism, sesame being the plant that binds the sauce as well as an early crop. In daily life, the old and deeply worn out mortars lie at the low side of the compound entrance and are used just to water the goats, a fitting reminder that attribution of symbolic meaning is very flexible. Nevertheless, these grind mortars are everywhere, as a very familiar feature in the landscape.

In the rain hunt there is some overlap in symbolism with the sacrifice. The mortars are definitely there with the same treatment – even if they are in fact washed with beer, but that is not fundamentally different in Kapsiki. This rain hunt is very much a 'Lego ritual', to which any element can be added without changing the format. The legs of the hunt and the ritual spots form an open system into which new elements are easily fitted, either from local history or from other groups, an agglutination of ritual elements which may come just as easily from outside the

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[13] J. STERNER: *The ways of the Mandara Mountains: A comparative regional approach* (Köln 2003).

[14] W.E.A. VAN BEEK: *The forge and the funeral. The smith in Kapsiki/Higi culture* (East Lansing 2015).

[15] J.-F. VINCENT: *Princes montagnards du Nord-Cameroun* (Paris 1991) 621-626.

[16] N. DAVID: 'The ethnoarchaeology and field archaeology of grinding at Sukur, Adamawa State, Nigeria', in *African Archaeological Review* 15/1 (1998) 13-63.

area, as the various groups in the Mandara Mountains to some extent share a 'ritual reservoir'.[17]

The general course of the hunt conforms to the direction of the rain itself, east to west, similar to the ritual that chases the epidemic, but the whole hunt addresses two problems, to ask for rain, and the elimination of all obstacles against rain. It is only after quelling the wind and avoiding wayward lizards that they finally ask the cultural hero for rain. A lack of rain often means that something is blocking the natural cause of things, and the rituals aim to restore the natural order. For the Kapsiki religion is a way into normality, not abundance and certainly not excess.

Leaves are an important item, to cover holes in a rock as well as to tidy up the graves. The first surprise is that the culture hero actually does have a grave and that the founding myth has such a material referent, but of course there is no guarantee than someone is actually buried there; also the graves are not proper tombs, lacking the stone walls Kapsiki tombs have. The symbolism of leaves is straightforward, the association is with the cool freshness that is highly wished for in a hot climate; rain is cool. Both uses of the leaves zoom in on the main impediment of rain, which is wind, an association that can be found throughout the savannah zone: wind prohibits rain. So the crevasse has to be plugged and any other reasons for the wind to blow have to be removed.

Finally, that lizard. Why would a lizard stop rain? My own explanation – but definitely my own – is color: male lizards have a fierce red head, and if anything evoke the very natural phenomenon which will stop all rain: a rainbow. Rainbows prohibit rain, not just in Kapsiki thought, but also elsewhere.[18] As an example may serve the way a rainmaker can stop rain – since anyone who can produce rain can also prohibit it. This is the recipe of Cakereda, a ritual that he – of course – never implemented …:

> He takes a piece of flint and puts stripes on it of beans, ochre and a rooster's tail feather. This will produce a rainbow which in turn halts the rain. One reason for halting rain could be that rain is too plentiful. Conjuring a rainbow alone will not be enough, however; an additional ritual is called for. He takes all sorts of ashes from his compound, mixes them with melon and millet flour, and puts this mixture at the *pulu* in his forecourt. When the time comes and the rains have to fall, he kills a rooster, mixes its blood with water and ash, and puts this on the *mɛlɛ va*. Then no rain will fall, surely. To start it again, he simply performs the sacrifice described above, which I participated in.

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[17] S. MacEachern: '"Symbolic reservoirs" and inter-group relations: West African examples', in *African Archeological Review* 12 (1994) 205-224.
[18] Vincent: *Princes montagnards du Nord-Cameroun* 625-634.
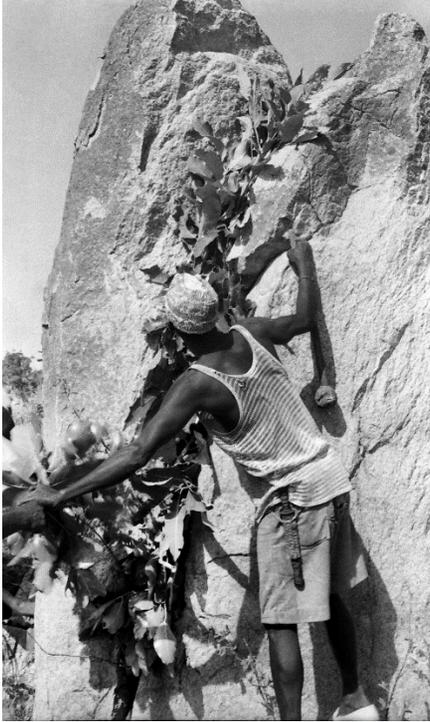
Looking for a guilty lizard
(© W.E.A. van Beek)

It is the external connection with the quasi-mythical village of Gudur that is crucial in procuring rain; all villages with a residing rain maker proudly claim such a direct link. In fact, Hwempetla's refusal to acknowledge the authority of rain makers (or rain sellers) in other villages is a clear expression of village autonomy. Not buying rain means not bowing to the authority of Gudur, that is, not recognizing the ritual dominance of the ancestral point of origin. The discourse on rain is a discourse on power and autonomy.

Marrying Rain

Whether rituals are collective and festive, like the rain hunt, or intensely private like the halting of rain, a meta-message can be construed from them. After all, these rain rituals show an intense preoccupation with the phenomenon of rain itself, acknowledging the deep dependence of humans on the ultimate gift of rain; thus *Va* get all the attention the couple vies for. On the other hand, the rituals exude the confidence that we humans can do something about it, that we are partners in a relation with the other world, a skewed relation maybe, but not without some kind of balance. So the rituals not only give attention, but also define agency; this world

and the other one are joined at the hip, and that is the aspect I want to highlight with a final story about Rain.

Hwempetla's is not the only mythical story about rain, and here we come back to my opening pastiche of the rainstorm. Kapsiki folk stories often contain mythical elements, in fact myths and stories form one corpus, and Rain, *Va*, does feature in these tales. The hero of these so-called *rhena heca*, old stories, is the squirrel, the quintessential trickster in the folktales of this area.[19] Squirrel has a number of encounters with supernatural beings, like Rain and Death, which do resemble stories of Hwempetla, so here follows the story of Squirrel and the – undoubtedly very desirable – daughter of Rain.

> *Squirrel and the daughter of Rain*
> It came about… Squirrel wooed the daughter of Rain, and went to her father, Rain.
> 'I want to marry your daughter.'
> 'Will you really be able to pay the bride wealth?' Rain asked.
> 'I am a tough one.'
> 'Your really are?'
> Squirrel told his future father-in-law: 'If I really hide myself, you cannot find me.'
> Rain did not believe him: 'I cannot find you? I am the one who comes everywhere!'
> 'No, you will not be able to find me.'
> 'OK. We will see tomorrow,' answered Rain.
> Back home Squirrel asked his fiancé, that when she went back to her father, she would take a pot with sesame and put it in her father's house. Unknown, he crept hid in the pot, under the sesame. His fiancé took the pot, and went to her father's home.
> The next morning Rain descended in all his fury on the compound of Squirrel, but could not find him. Later his daughter came, and took the pot back to the ravaged court.
> Squirrel went to his father-in-law: 'Could you not find me?'
> 'No, you are really though, but tomorrow we shall see.'

The story takes the theme up one notch: Squirrel uses the same trick, and now Rain lifts all the roofs of the huts, and still does not find Squirrel. Finally, Rain acquiesces and states his demand for a bride wealth: a whole elephant. Squirrel finds a way to get Elephant up into heaven, and with the help of his old enemy Hyena even succeeds in getting most of the meat of Elephant himself, while making Hyena suffer for it. Rain gives his daughter in marriage, and then advises his son-in-law Squirrel, that henceforth Rain will descend on the earth not in storm fashion, but as a gentle rain for everyone, in due time and just enough. Squirrel is content, and promises not to try to outwit Rain any longer.

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[19] W.E.A. VAN BEEK: *Tales that go, tales that stay: The dynamics of oral transmission among the Kapsiki/Higi* (New York 2016).
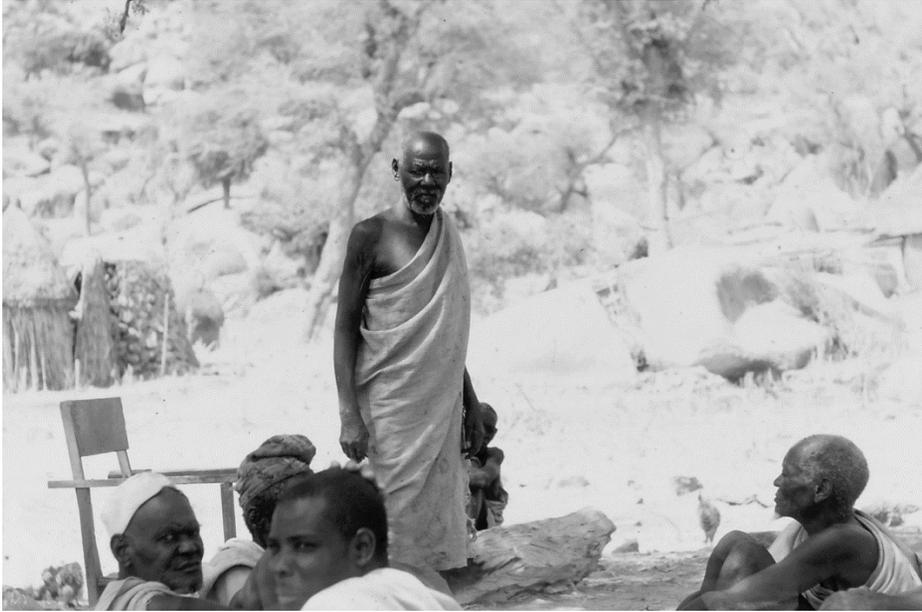
The chief of Gudur, master of locusts, leopards and rain (© W.E.A. van Beek)

This *rhena heca*, old story, contains a lot of familiar motifs in Kapsiki culture,[20] but for us here highlights our human condition between a desire for normality and our awe for formidable supernatural partners who are thoroughly ambivalent,[21] a precarious balance setting the limits of human agency. The need for humans to 'do something' resonates with the need of the gods for attention. Rain is not to be trifled with, but we do have our wits (*ntsehwele*, an important concept in Kapsiki) to cope with the challenges that are thrown on our path. And finally, the story neatly encapsulates my experience: the first rains are fierce and fearsome, threatening to take off the roof of my house, scourging my compound, the village, the mountain-side. Only when we have performed our rituals and have given the other world all possible attention, thus paying our dues and handing over the symbolic bride wealth, only then we will have properly married the daughter of Rain, and only then rain will fall gently in the Mandara Mountains of North Cameroon.

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[20] VAN BEEK: *Tales that go, tales that stay.*

[21] W.E.A. VAN BEEK & W.C. OLSEN: 'African notions of evil: The chimera of justice', in W.C. OLSEN & W.E.A. VAN BEEK (eds.): *Evil in Africa: Anthropology of the everyday* (Bloomington 2015) 1-31.

3

THE IMPORTANCE OF WEB 2.0 FOR JIHAD 3.0
FEMALE JIHADISTS COMING TO GRIPS WITH RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE ON FACEBOOK

Claudia Carvalho

The Jihadist movement sets great store by the possibilities offered by present-day technology. They have at their disposal the World Wide Web 2.0 as a convenient platform for creating, distributing and exchanging content. As a result of Internet services being available almost everywhere nowadays and huge numbers of people owning smart phones, established and emerging Jihadist organizations can reach people in virtually every corner of the globe and thus expand and diversify their audience.

By manipulating sacred Islamic texts and thereby framing their interpretation of Jihad as an 'authentic' religious discourse, Jihadists have fabricated a divine justification for the (religious) violence perpetrated in their performance of this 'divine war.' It is a performance characterized by ritualized acts, including newly invented ones, making full use of the available cyber tools, and it has managed and still manages to allure individuals into engaging in and/or participating in Jihadist acts, both online and offline. In the light also of the Jihadist warfare in the Middle East and its terrible consequences, this article draws attention to the e-Ritualization of Jihad as an important cornerstone in the building of a world-wide Jihadist community, both offline and online.

1.   e-Jihadism, *embedded, embodied and everyday*[1]

Recently, the members of the Association for Internet Researchers held an online academic discussion on the fourth age of Internet Studies, more particularly on how to update the scope of the discipline and eventually modify its name. Barry Wellman, a household name on the matter of Internet research (networks, digital communities, communication, computers, methods) advanced the idea that instead of Internet Studies we might call it Digital Media Studies in order to integrate in it the studies of the 'Internet of Things' and of all things connected with the 'Mobile' world.

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[1] A reference to the book by Christine HINE: *Ethnography for the Internet, embedded, embodied and everyday* (Huntingdon 2015).

The digital space we find ourselves in today has expanded tremendously, having spread from the main arteries to even the tiniest capillaries of our everyday lives. Mobile devices provide instant access, and M2M (machine-to-machine) applications are no longer a thing of the future. As a result, communication networks are no longer bound by time, space, location or accessibility.

Back in 2005, O'Reilly coined the expression Web 2.0[2] to explain the World Wide Web as a social platform. Later Fuchs[3] would add an important perspective to the understanding of the Web 2.0, a perspective that hits a higher note when we look at it in the context of online Jihadism, namely that of surveillance:

> One important characteristic of many contemporary web platforms is that they store, process, assess and sell large amounts of personal information and usage behavior data. It is therefore important to theorize web 2.0 surveillance and conduct empirical research about the surveillance and privacy implications of web 2.0.

Online Jihadism is a cultural, political and religious phenomenon embedded in Web 2.0. Web 2.0 could be said to be the 'new media ecology'[4], a platform where individuals create their own content, where ownership of data is substituted by sharing data, where collaboration, cooperation and establishment of networks are vital components. While this article concentrates on female Jihadists and their response to and/or involvement in religious violence on Facebook, Web 2.0 has obviously also had harmless positive effects for women in the Muslim community, benefitting as they do from the social networking capacities involved and particularly from the physical mobility that it offers, freeing them from religious restrictions in this regard (no longer any need for a male companion, *mahram*, for instance).

I carried out my investigation of Jihadism[5] by conducting interviews on the subject (via instant messaging) with online informants. The aim of my research was to come to understand these women's interpretation of and their views on Jihadism and Jihadism online. For the present study I have selected one of the most recent definitions of Jihadism, given by by Fawaz Gerges, who reckons that

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[2] T. O'REILLY: 'What is *Web 2.0?* Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software' (2005), available at http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html (accessed May 2015).

[3] C. FUCHS: 'New media, Web 2.0 and surveillance', in *Sociology Compass* 5/2 (2005) 137.

[4] A. AWAN, A. HOSKINS & B. O'LOUGHLIN: *Radicalisation and media: Connectivity and terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London 2011); V. SISLER: 'Cyber counsellors: Online fatwas, arbitration tribunals and the construction of Muslim identity in the UK', in *Information, Communication & Society* 14/8 (2011), available at http://www.digitalislam.eu/article.do?articleId=7895 (accessed May 2015).

[5] Y. AL-QARADAWI: 'Extremism', in C. KURZMAN (ed.): *Liberal Islam: A source book* (Oxford 1998); K. ARMSTRONG: *Holy war/Jihad* (London 1988); D. COOK: *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley 2005); B. LAWRENCE: *Messages to the world: The statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London 2005).

the Jihadist movement has entered its third wave with the emergence of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Gerges relates the evolution of Jihadism to the tactical approach adopted by ISIS: "ISIS's swift military expansion stems from its ability not only to terrorize enemies but also to co-opt local Sunni communities, using networks of patronage and privilege."[6]

To properly grasp the ideological positions taken by Jihadism, and more particularly by Salafi-Jihadism[7], we need to turn our attention to the Sunni theological school of Salafism.[8] Etymologically speaking, Salafism derives from *al-salaf al-salih* ('the pious predecessors who were contemporaries of the Prophet'). It defends the strict observance of the Sunna, rejecting theological innovations (*bid'a*), standing by the proclamation of the unity of God (*tawhid*), endorsing the traditionally declared grounds for excommunication (*takfir*), and adhering to the purification of practices.

The practical, easy, and accessible mechanisms of Web 2.0 offers Muslim women an online role equal to that of men. Online they have the same power of creating content, of collaborating, participating and designing their own social networks. However, being Muslim women, their online freedom, mobility and interaction are still restricted by the rules of moral religious behavior. What the observance of these rules means for their online behavior can be read in the numerous posts on this, for instance on they are not supposed to put up personal photos, more particularly photos of their own faces (unless they are covered by the *hijab*, the Islamic head cover on), and on not accepting men in their Facebook accounts. By sticking to these moral fundamentals in their online behavior they feel they are making 'sacred' use of the web. Another way of making sacred use of the web is to use it as a means to spread Islamic knowledge, more specifically Salafi-Jihadist knowledge. The task of disseminating Islamic knowledge (*da'wa*) goes together with the task of also giving advice (*nasiha*) on religious matters to other sisters. The two tasks are part of daily practice for online female Jihadists, to the extent that they even include it, in parentheses, in their profile names[9]: *Maryam maryam (Salafism counsellor).*

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[6] F. GERGES: 'ISIS and the third wave of Jihadism', in *Current History* 113/767 (2014) 339-343, p. 340, available at http://currenthistory.com/Gerges_Current_History.pdf (accessed May 2015).

[7] G. KEPEL: *Muslim extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA 1985).

[8] R. MEIJER: 'Salafism: Doctrine, diversity and practice', in K. HROUB (ed.): *Political Islam: Context versus ideology* (London 2010); J. WAGEMAKERS: '"Seeders" and "postponers"? An analysis of the *khawarij* and *murji'a* labels in polemical debates between quietist and Jihadi-salafis', in J. DEOL & Z. KAZMI (eds.): *Contextualising Jihadi thought* (London 2012) 145-164; Q. WIKTOROWICZ: 'The new global threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad', in *Middle East Policy* VIII/4 (2001).

[9] Spanish Muslim women use fake names as their profile names. The fake names represent religious expressions, for example, 'Muslim by the Grace of God', or refer to their motherhood, for example, 'Umm Amin'. Although the names are fake, I still use names for the participants that are different from their real profile names to preserve their anonymity.

Facebook has become the location *par excellence* for the promotion of Jihadism among women. The female participants in this study have this to say about how others see their online performance: "Violent, us? That makes me *furiosa* ('furious' in Spanish). If by defending Islam, the Prophet (PUB) and Jihad we are violent, well so be it, then we are violent women!"

2. *Furiosa* – Digital research(er) on Facebook

I first started my online fieldwork on Facebook in 2012 with an open profile and a direct link to my university webpage. A couple of months later I had a network of more than 50 'friends' or informants and I was joining groups under the Jihadist theme. My first methodological step to collect meaningful data was to monitor Spanish Muslim women producing open source Jihadist content, to subsequently add them as friends or follow them, map out their connections and finally to establish contact with them in writing.

I used the following criteria to select my participants: They were to be female[10] Spanish-speaking individuals, indicating that they lived in the area of Catalonia, claiming to be Muslims (born-Muslims and/or converted Muslims) and producing violent content online. I traced their connections and established their social networks through their shared interested in Jihadism, which yielded the following selection:

- Female participants who are from and/or have relatives in Morocco;
- Female participants who live in Morocco, The Netherlands, Belgium and/or France;
- Female participants who communicate in Spanish, transliterated Arabic and French.

This part of my research lasted until February of 2015, when my Facebook account was blocked as a consequence of my online activities, reflecting as they did according to the administrators, 'my sympathy for Jihadism'. This time it was my turn to be *furiosa*, because I had invested much time and effort in constructing a relationship with these women, to line up their networks, to collect and select relevant data for my research.

As we saw, academia is still in the process of exploring and defining digital space. In exploring the digital territory researchers are faced with a number of obstacles, which include the problem of the authenticity of sources, the irregular

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[10] To have a comparative measure I also investigated male Facebook accounts. The result was interesting. The Spanish-speaking Muslim males retain their Jihadist profile on Facebook. Some of them are even reporting directly from Syria, posting pictures of their daily lives.

working times involved, the immediacy of the data, and in our specific case of Jihadism research, the sensitivity of the subject of religious violence.

As a digital space, Facebook is paradoxical in the way it formulates violent content and consequently also in the criteria adhered to in deciding what can be defined as violent content. The consequent acceptance or refusal of certain contents without there being an observable, explicit and coherent pattern underlying these decisions makes one question what Facebook administrators define as violent content. When conducting ethnographic research online my aim is to analyze the meaning that individuals attribute to their performances online. I did not quite know how to formulate my activities on Facebook being blocked. Was I to say 'I was blocked', or should I rather say 'my account was blocked'? As I will argue further on in this article, this doubt on how to phrase it really revolved around the physical element involved in being online.

While there are restrictions on content, Facebook for Jihadist individuals constitutes an interesting open space because the platform allows them to act as if they have religious authority, or as Nico Prucha[11] observes, "within these Online Territories of Terror, the jihadists assume the role of authoritative religious scholars, who define what is legal and who the 'enemies of Islam' (...) are."

Facebook thus offers to Jihadists a suitable platform to disseminate their distorted religious Islamic values and to wave violence as an Islamic sword. In the words of Hans Kippenberg: "The change from toleration of the unbelievers to violence against them is a central theme of Islamic theology. Some Muslim scholars hold that the 'sword verse' has replaced other revelations that sound a different note."[12]

Contemporary Muslim scholars have the digital techniques at their disposal (simple, clear theological messages) that grant them 'celebrity sheikh'[13] status. Anwar al-Awalaki (1971-2011) was and still is a celebrity Salafi-Jihadist sheikh, capturing the global attention of Jihadists. In this article I consider the significant theological model in which Awalaki presents Islamic migration (*hijra*) and violent Jihad as the educative (*tarbiya*) guidelines[14] that could foster the identity of the Islamic community (*umma*).

After a while I opened up a new account on Facebook and partially restored my former network of informants, being more careful this time and giving pref-

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[11] N. PRUCHA: 'Online territories of terror – Utilizing the Internet for Jihadist endeavors', in *Orient IV* (2011), available at http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Article_ ORIENT _IV_NicoPrucha.pdf (accessed May 2015).

[12] H. KIPPENBERG: *Violence as worship: Religious wars in the age of globalization* (Stanford 2011) 175.

[13] J.M. BRACHMAN & A.N. LEVINE: 'You too can be Awlaki!', in *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 35/1 (2011) 30.

[14] A. MELEAGROU-HITCHENS: *As American as apple pie: How Anwar al-Awalaki became the face of Western Jihad* (London 2011) 40.

erence to open source Jihadist contents in the form of images, photos or texts. My choice of method to collect and select the data once again reflects the sensitivity of the subject of religious violence as well as the vulnerability of the digital researcher investigating it.

The present article addresses the question: How are the Spanish-speaking Muslim women using both Jihadism and Web 2.0, more particularly Facebook as the preferred social networking platform[15], to create a sacred space that reinforces the ritualization of online Jihad and at the same time the acceptance of religious violence as a mandatory ritual?

In Section 3, I will present a more detailed definition of online ritualization of Jihad, fundamental to comprehending the promotion of religious violence.

3.   Online ritualization of Jihad

In this study I draw on the ritualization notion developed by Catherine Bell as "(…) a way of acting that specifically establishes a privileged contrast, differentiating itself as more important or powerful."[16]

Jihadist scholars aim at establishing themselves as having the most powerful extremist ideology and one of the strategies they employ to attain their goal of domination is online ritualization of religious violence, i.e., "(…) a ritualistic innovation that allows its agents to establish, structure and control all activities that occur in cyberspace in the name of Jihad."[17]

To understand the online ritualization of Jihad, it is important to grasp the notion of the 'ritualized body' and of 'embodiment' in cyberspace. The 'ritualized body' was defined by Catherine Bell as "a body invested with the 'sense' of ritual."[18] In her vision, it is a product of the dynamic relationship between ritualization and the 'structuring environment.'[19]

Online space is the 'structuring environment' where ritualization occurs and it produces the online 'ritualized body'. The task of describing online embodiment, however, is quite a theoretical challenge. It was a challenge that Christine Hine faced in her most recent work, *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*.[20] The author considers that 'being online' is another example of the

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[15] D. BOYD & N. ELLISON: 'Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship', in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13/1 (2007) 210-230.

[16] C. BELL: *Ritual theory, ritual practice* (New York 1992).

[17] C. CARVALHO: '*Okhti* Online. Spanish Muslim women engaging online Jihad: A Facebook case study', in *Online Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* (2014) 32.

[18] BELL: *Ritual theory* 98.

[19] IBID.

[20] HINE: *Ethnography for the Internet.*

'embodied ways of being and acting in the world'[21] and therefore 'the Internet user is an embodied user.'[22] David Bell in his book on cyber culture addresses the online body presence using the terms 'digital meat' and 'the flesh made code.'[23]

Following online body representations and the communication through physical manifestations, Nanako Hayami addresses the question of "the significance of the ritualized body in the contemporary society."[24] In this he points to applications such as the "emotion icons" ('emoticons') that represent "human facial expressions of feelings"[25] because: "Even in the absence of the physical human face, the importance of the face remains."

The main categories of Islamic rituals are the *shahada*, or the declaration of faith by which one officially becomes a Muslim, the *salat* or prayer (performed five times a day), the *zakat,* the act of giving to the poor people of the Muslim community, *sawm*, fasting, and *hajj*, the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

The Islamic rituals can be studied on three principles: spiritual submission, body conformity, and purity. According to Islamic dogma the performance of the rituals is anticipated by the act of voluntarily submitting them to the will of Allah, in other words, the believer engages in the worshiping activities with the feeling of wanting to obey the divine laws. The feeling of obedience and respect for the rituals is succeeded by the physical ability to perform all the five pillars of Islam. The believer needs to be of sound body, Islamic jurisprudence granting dispensation to people with physical disabilities or problems. The bodily discipline required to execute the prayers is at the same time an instrument to concentrate one's mind and spirit fully on the faith. The respect for and of the body is injected and incorporated in Islamic living through the Qur'an and can be seen in themes such as funeral rites or the covering of intimate parts of the body (*awra*).

The last principle, that of purity (*tahara*), concerns mind, body and environment, more specifically it involves that all Muslims should have pure intentions (*niya*), pure bodies (*ghusl*) and be members of a pure Islamic community (*umma*). In fact, Jihad and martyrdom, due to their features and as commands of Allah, belong to the 'ritual-purity' themes[26]. Kippenberg concurs with the idea that in order for an act to be considered an act of jihad, the individual needs to act in (good) conscience when inflicting death 'against the impure'.[27] The linkage be-

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[21] HINE: *Ethnography for the Internet* 14.

[22] IDEM 43.

[23] D. BELL: *An introduction to cybercultures* (London 2001) 156.

[24] N. HAYAMI: 'Ritualized body: Goffman's theory derived from Durkheim and Bateson', *CDAMS Discussion Paper* 04/16E (2004) 5.

[25] HAYAMI: 'Ritualized body' 6.

[26] R. GAUVAIN: *Salafi ritual purity: In the presence of God* (Abingdon/New York 2013) 169.

[27] KIPPENBERG: *Violence as worship* 65.

tween purification rituals, blood, and Jihad shapes the justification that Salafi-Jihadist scholars needed to promote religious violence.

Women initialize the process of online ritualization of Jihad employing the same methods of theological purification as presented above. First, they consider the online space as a sacred space that they need to respect in the same way as they respect the mosque. The online intentions (*niya*) need to be pure and for the benefit of God, the guiding principle justifying the legitimization and acceptance of violent jihadist performances.

In Section 4 we see how Facebook surveillance and censorship features are carving the new phase of online Jihadism.

4.   Jihad 3.0 – 'Boiling the frog'[28]

The development of a Jihadist Global Communication strategy has its roots in the activities undertaken by Al-Qaeda to disseminate their messages throughout the world. In fact, Al-Qaeda understood very well the strategic value of the web as a vital way to attract more adherents to its cause.

ISIS is Jihad 3.0, as the North-American newspaper *The New York Times* pointed out in August 2014.[29] The Jihadist organization took Al-Qaeda's online project further down a notch by guaranteeing a continuous stream of contents to flow in cyber space. Moreover, Jihadist ISIS contents are found in all forms of social networking, chatting, blogging, messaging available online. The contents are well thought-out, and well worked-out, using simple texts combined with powerful imagery to appeal to the largest possible audience. Most importantly, they are translated into a variety of languages. The contents are also tailor-made, according to gender, generation and geographical location of the audience. ISIS has been aiming especially at winning the hearts and minds of the youth, working on closing the gap that Al-Qaeda failed to bridge, not paying any attention to it, power being in the hands of its senior elements.[30]

Last but not least, the online jihadist contents put up by ISIS are produced professionally, employing cutting-edge cyber tools to reach an ever-expanding

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[28] In the popular story of 'Boiling the frog', a frog that is placed in hot water jumps out immediately, while a frog that is placed in cold water that is slowly heated fails to register the alarming signs that will lead to his death. Surveillance and censorship are the hot water that made Jihad 3.0 jump to other forms of online identification. The same analogy was used in regard to the question of computers, privacy and personal data protection in the business world by the Advice Project. I apply it here as the image of frogs was actually used in the context of representing Jihadism.

[29] *New York Times*: 'ISIS displaying a deft command of varied media', available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/world/middleeast/isis-displaying-a-deft-command-of-varied-media.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&smid=tw-nytimes&_r=0 (accessed May 2015).

[30] M.R. TORRES SORIANO: 'Jihadist propaganda and its audiences: A change of course?', in *Perspectives on Terrorism* 1/2 (2007) 1-3.

audience. They also have enough readiness and preparation to quickly adapt, to move and settle into new cyber scenarios. Indeed, the Jihadist phenomenon is continuously evolving within the 'new media ecology' space that characterizes the Web 2.0. One of the main factors promoting online evolution and modification of the Jihadist landscape is the topic of 'trust and privacy'.[31] The efficiency and efficacy of the Facebook censorship program are causing Jihadist individuals to act online in a more precautionary fashion. Facebook administrators are particularly effective and fast in detecting Jihadist contents. Once the Facebook administration signals Jihadist contents ('activation of all types of alarms' as I was told in my case by an internal source) the corresponding accounts are cancelled. For a comparative analysis of censorship exercised on online social networking, I refer to fieldwork I did on Tumblr, where Jihadist users, on a daily basis, blog Jihadist-related contents (photos, images, texts). The violent contents on Tumblr are graphic; the names of the users and their comments clearly indicate their Jihadist affiliations, yet censorship in this social platform is less effective than on Facebook or even on Twitter.

Aware of the censorship measures, online Jihadist users are in the process of transforming all the elements that gave away their online Jihadist identity. Black horses, banners, lions and other images commonly associated with Jihadist content are now being replaced by a 'gentle Jihad'.[32] The details of the profile photos show good indicators of how the individual wants to be perceived online, from the close-up photo, to the use of well-known Jihadist pictures, or symbolic representations of their current feelings on a certain theme, which only a trained audience will be able to recognize. For example, since Mohammed Morsi (former head of the Muslim Brotherhood and former President of Egypt) was condemned to death many Jihadists have chosen the image/photo of a frog as their profile. The frog represents the first fatwa issued after Morsi was installed as president of Egypt and refers to the need to protect the frogs as they were special creatures to God, 'a frog's croaking is praise [to Allah].' The profile picture in this case is a clear indication of where one stands politically and religiously, and expresses the person's solidarity with the members of the network members and their allegiance to the Jihadist cause represented by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite all censorship online to control, filter or block Jihadist contents, Jihad 3.0 has been resistant to all these obstacles. Instead it is thriving with an ever-stronger and ramified online presence. Section 5 takes a closer look at the role of imagery in the new online Jihadist female profile.

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[31] C. Dwyer, S. Hiltz & K. Passerini: 'Trust and privacy concern within social networking sites: A comparison of Facebook and MySpace', in *Proceedings of the thirteenth American conference on information systems* (Keystone, CO 2007) 339.
[32] B. Barber: *Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's challenge to democracy* (New York 1996) 171.

5.   Black butterflies: Imagery, meaning and communication

The increasingly rigid norms for surveillance and censorship (employed both by Facebook administration and by police and security forces) has made Jihadist women more careful in their online activities and less available for interviews. They have changed their profile pictures from photos with classic Jihad symbols to (seemingly) 'harmless' pictures such as those of flower compositions, birds, or short texts ('I love my prophet'), or to generic photos representing Muslim women. They seldom post selfies, or self-portraits. In this day and age, however, selfies and social media platforms are inseparable components of the embodied online being. Muslim women are directly affected by the posting online of personal photos/selfies because it is an offense to their honor (*ird*) in the strictest sense of Islamic precepts. While this new form of self-representation clashes with the Islamic jurisprudence on photography (*taswir*)[33], it does not stop Jihadist individuals from posting personal profile photos online. There is debate among Muslim scholars and Muslim believers whether sharing personal photos online should be permissible (*mubah*) or prohibited (*haram*). An informant of mine just recently posted a fatwa that she found online on putting up personal pictures on websites, especially on Facebook and Twitter:

> Abdillah Ubayd Sheikh bin al-Jabiri: I say that the images of souls are *haram* and *kaba'ir* (grave sins). The Messenger (PUB) said: Those who will be most severely punished on the Day of Judgment will be those who make images. (…) And by this we know that it is not allowed to publish photos (pictures) of people on Twitter, Facebook or other networks.[34]

As we saw, apart from religious reasons, self-censorship also take place for security reasons (so as not to attract attention in surveillance activities). This may be a reason for Jihadist women to change their names from '*Umm*' into 'Black butterfly', for instance, where the imagery enclosed in the name hides its deepest symbolism (death). The contents they produce no longer present a direct, obvious link to Jihadism or to the Jihadist fight in Syria. They do however continue to disseminate the Salafi-Jihadist doctrine and the passages from the Qur'an and from the Sunna that according to the Salafi-Jihadi doctrine justify violent Jihad. The themes associated with Salafi-Jihadi theory and eschatology, references to salvation and Paradise, either through images or through texts, are as frequent as ever.

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[33] Photography and statues as well, the legal framework on the matter is related with ISIS destruction of Human Heritage sites and with the attacks on cartoonists who depicted images of the Prophet.

[34] Transcriptions will be directly translated into English due to the limitations on the number of words.

Jihadist videos are an equally vital source of Jihadist embodied online performances, be it those of executions or those showing war scenes. Violent footage continues to be widely accepted within the online Jihadist community, although it is gradually being replaced by other types of videos that highlight the soft Jihadist lifestyle.

As we saw in the introduction, Facebook has a 'complicated' relationship with Jihadist content, and videos are no exception in this regard. Knowing that the videos are the first items to be reported or blocked by Facebook administrators, part of the thrill for the producers of using this online space to publish videos lies in the online chase, in whether or not they will be able to get it out in digital space long enough for it to be viewed, while for the consumers and analysts the thrill is whether or not they will be able to watch the content before it is taken down by the administrators.

In a Facebook community account entitled 'Meaning and Understanding of Jihad' that I had access to via an informant, the administrator explains the goal of the page: "This Page is to Enlighten those About The Greater Jihad which is in the Battlefield for the sake of Allah and True Islam. May Allah guide us!!!" The core of his or her productions is a set of elaborated compositions of images with small poignant sentences. On May 17th, 2015, a new video was put up under the title: 'Mujahideen's response to the HATERS, Speech by Muhammad bin Abid.' The speech is in English and is uttered by a male voice adopting a sermon-like tone. Its main message concerns the qualities it takes and the sacrifices it requires for *Mujahedeen/Mujahidun* (Jihadist fighters) to protect the *umma*. The narrator also has a rather unpleasant message for those Muslim listeners living comfortably in the Western nations, eating fast food and not supporting the Jihadist fighters: 'they should get ready to embrace their near future, which is death without salvation.' His speech is emotionally charged, with nothing but positive feelings for the Jihadist fighters, who deserve nothing but admiration, sympathy and gratitude from his listeners. It ends with an appeal for a change of heart among those who so far have not supported the Jihadist fighters, to please God and guarantee His forgiveness. The most interesting aspect of this video is the comments made by the followers of this page, who merely mention it and notify a friend (placing the name of the friend in blue letters). The name notifications are a Facebook interactive tool linking the post to the friend's page and thus spreading the content to and subsequently through multiple recipients. The interactive tools have a direct impact on the construction of social networks: suddenly participants without any previous connections to each other are marked together in the same post. Thus, if a person likes a post and marks, let us say, four other persons (as a woman in the example actually did), we therefore need to multiply these four participants by the number of women that they are 'friends' with to get an estimate of how many women are now aware of the existence of the video aimed at giving meaning and

value to the role of Jihadist fighters. In these circles of communication on Facebook, in spite of efforts to keep genders separated (and thereby respect Islamic rules), these attempts are sometimes frustrated, causing men and women to become associated to the same content. Suffice it here to make just a quick remark on gender online coexistence: the concern of respecting and keeping gender separation as an online behavioral principle only reinforces the sacred value individuals attribute to the online space. In the offline world, Muslims follow and respect the rules of gender separation and if they extend this Islamic principle of conduct to the online space it is because in their perspective, the digital space has a sacred value.

Back to the circles of communication; they broaden women's understanding of online Jihadist contents, being exposed as they are to information that would not normally be accessible to them in the offline space.

In Section 6, I will deal with my online and offline case study of female Jihadism in Spain.

6. Immigrants in digital space

Spain and Morocco have a historical connection that goes back many centuries. Geographically located on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar, the two countries share important experiences linking the populations of both nations.

During the 1970s, the first Moroccan immigrants began to arrive in Spain, initially as guest workers, mainly men, travelling alone and returning to their homeland after a short period of time.[35] A decade later, Madrid signed the agreement to become a member of the European Community (a name that was changed to the European Union after the Maastricht Treaty in 1993), after which the country's economy entered a phase of exponential growth and development. Labor was in great demand and workers were given legal permission to extend their stay and bring along their families.

Catalonia likewise pursued this open-immigration policy, encouraging North African people from across the Mediterranean to work and live in this province of Spain. Catalonia these days is home to about 226,321 Muslims,[36] an estimated 20 percent of whom follow the precepts of Salafism. The contours of the lines shaping the integration of Moroccan immigrants in Catalonia is determined by the contrasts involved in ethnicity, identity and religion. Much has been said about the general struggle of the diasporic groups to adapt to the new living and

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[35] N. EMPEZ VIDAL: 'Social construction of neglect: the case of unaccompanied minors from Morocco to Spain', *Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research Working Paper* 7 (2007) 9-10, available at http://www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/working/wp-2007-007.pdf (accessed May 2015).
[36] UCIDE: 'Estudio demografico de la poblacion musulmana', (2015) 9, available at http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf (accessed May 2015).

working conditions and to 'gain access to the culture of their host societies'.[37] Family life among the Maghreb population in Catalonia is pretty much what it would be like if they were still living in Morocco. Men are in charge of the family's earnings and take the decisions, while women occupy themselves with domestic chores and the raising of their children. This situation implies "a reinforcement of a traditional stereotype that connects women to the sphere of care and affection."[38] The women are also in charge of maintaining international contacts with the rest of the family, keeping in touch, either with relatives in Morocco or with those who have emigrated to other places in the world. Next to any Jihadist-oriented use, Facebook offers these women a suitable social networking platform to reach family members, and to keep in frequent contact with them by sharing family photos, special moments or to exchange traditional Moroccan recipes.

While Facebook offers them an easily accessible opportunity to stay in contact with relatives, the common denominator that draws them into the Jihadist networks is the wish to gain Islamic knowledge (*ilm*). The former administrator of a Facebook page called *Muyahidines los guerreros de Allah* ('*Mujahedeen/Mujahidun* the warriors of Allah') explained to a woman the purpose of his page: "Alhamdulillah sister, that is what this page was made for, to teach about what is going on in the world and that Jihad is also Islam, even if some do not agree (…)."

The Internet is fairly accessible to my informants, many of whom already own smartphones, allowing them to be connected anytime, anywhere. The older informants demonstrate a certain resistance to adapting to new social networking tools. One of the informants complained about what she feels is an excessive use of Facebook compared to the time devoted to praying:

> And what hurts the most is that when one sees the register of Facebook, one sees that he/she has sent more than 5000 messages, and if you compare that with how many verses of the Qur'an you have read …'wallah'… I cry.

The use of Whatsapp is viewed differently by different generations. To the younger ones it is a valid tool of communication while the older ones consider it a possibly harmful tool to the community, as an older informant asserted:

> The new updated version of Whatsapp [the double check symbol] is creating *fitna* (division) among Muslims because you know when the message was read. Fear Allah, do not let the devil whisper into your mind and do not judge your Muslim brothers/sisters.

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[37] D. CONVERSI: 'Irresponsible radicalisation: Diasporas, globalisation and long-distance nationalism in the digital age', in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38/9 (2012) 1357-1379, p. 1371.
[38] Y. MARTÍNEZ & A. HUERTAS: 'Las adolescentes migrantes ante las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TICs): Prácticas mediáticas y relaciones socio-afectivas', in A. HUERTAS & M. FIGUERAS (eds.): *Audiencias juveniles y cultura digital* (Barcelona 2014) 175-189.

To that a younger informant replied: "Each one of us must know how to organize herself with the social networks, but Whatsapp is more practical, easier and simpler."

As a matter of fact, the younger ones, who have access to longer and better education, profit from the fact that they have access to Internet services at school to create and manage different web accounts (Twitter and Instagram, for instance).

With regard to women's radicalization in Spain, I have come to the conclusion that there are two distinctive web layers within the same 'community of practice'[39] that play a significant role: the digital (Internet) and the mobile (smart) phones.

A 'digital media community' shifting its space from what we might call 'stationary' connections to mobile ones is especially crucial for the Spanish Muslim women who wish to accomplish their radicalization process. In a recent Skype interview with a Muslim Spanish-Moroccan leader of an Islamic Organization in Catalonia (whom I cannot name for privacy and security reasons), the man pointed out that the process of women's radicalization is migrating from a virtual community on Facebook to a mobile community on Whatsapp and/or Skype (online communication software product). This move, so he explained, takes place when the phase of radicalization enters a deeper level of commitment and the sources of communication can no longer be open ones. This different layer of online space, which is shielded from the public eye, has been referred to as the 'Invisible Web'.[40] As a result of it being secret the mobile relationship is more individualistic and intimate and most importantly free of all features that make operating on the open source internet so dangerous: control, lack of privacy and exclusion. This is what Nour Nour has to say about this:

> Salam aleikum sisters. I would like to communicate to you that you are added to certain groups, do not accept this, and if you are already in them, get out of them, because the TAGUT pass themselves off as Muslims so that they can locate where you and all of us are, to search for us, to calumniate us, and thus to arrest us, because to them, the TAGUT, it is important to have more security that Jihad will not be accomplished… (…) I tell you this because there are many brothers in Morocco that have been arrested because of this…the location of their data. I know of sisters whose husbands have been arrested because of this and have asked me to get this

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[39] E. WENGER: 'Communities of practice a brief introduction' (2006) 1, available at http://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/06-Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice (accessed May 2015).

[40] M.K. BERGMAN: 'The deep web: Surfacing hidden value' (2000), available at http://brightplanet.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/12550176481-deepwebwhitepaper1.pdf (accessed May 2015).

message across to all Muslims. Do not publish your authentic data, we are here for one cause only, and that is the cause of ALLAH (…)

According to the male informant mentioned earlier, the process of mobilization, radicalization and recruitment is quick (eight weeks maximum, including logistic arrangements) and aims at very young women, more vulnerable and eager to abandon their lives in Spain. The speed of the process is related to the need of 'sending them there, before they change their minds.' "And what if they change their minds?" I asked him.

> You know, they just say to the girls that their families will be informed of their acts, bringing dishonor upon them and the families will also pay the price. Summing up, if they change their minds they are violently threatened so they have no other alternative but to go to Syria.

Samir Yerou, a Moroccan immigrant in Rubi (Catalonia) was travelling together with her three-year old son to Syria when the Turkish authorities arrested her and sent them back to Barcelona.[41] There the Minister of Internal Affairs accused her of having Jihadist affiliations, an accusation that was formulated after the police intercepted conversations between her and a Jihadist fighter in which she confirmed her adherence to the cause with sentences defending violence: "(…) he [three-year old son] only wants the knife of the beheading."[42] Samir's husband in December of 2014 had reported them as missing to the Spanish police. The husband suspected that Samir was keen on migrating to Syria, having noticed a marked change in her behavior since her last visit to Morocco.

In May of 2014, I was in the Islamic Center of Rubi, Catalonia, where I interviewed 20 women (including a female scholar) precisely about these subjects: Jihadism, online radicalization and *hijra* to Syria. I asked them: "What would you say if your son were to ask your permission to become a Jihadist fighter in Syria?" Their answer was a unanimous: "No!" The female scholar agreed and entered on a lengthy theological explanation why all those subjects were not part of the Islamic doctrine. However the voices of reason at the local mosque have little impact compared to the online radical networks. According to the court, Samir is indeed responsible for a Jihadist recruiting network taking women from Europe and Morocco to Syria.

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[41] *El Pais:* 'El viaje radical de Samir Yerou y su hijo' (2015), available at http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/03/10/actualidad/1425998844_927245.html (accessed 2015).

[42] *El Confidencial*: 'Una yihadista a su hijo de tres anos dile deguello al policia y voy' (2015), available at http://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2015-03-10/una-yihadista-a-su-hijo-de-tres-anos-dile-deguello-al-policia-y-voy_725520/ (accessed May 2015).

In the following section, I will present my concluding remarks, inviting further studies on the new digital landscapes of female Jihadism and the new challenges for digital researchers.

7.   A new digital Jihadist female landscape? – Concluding remarks

Due to the effectiveness of Spanish Security and Defense institutions and their active collaboration with similar European and International institutions, particularly the Moroccan Counter Terrorism Institute, the number of apprehended Jihadist individuals and the amount of Jihadist material confiscated or removed has increased significantly over the last few years (28 individuals in 2015, compared to 11 in 2013).[43] This increase is directly connected with the increase in online radicalization and recruitment. As we have seen, female Jihadist individuals are aware of counter terrorist activities and of the need to adopt a more discrete online profile as a result. The process of online ritualization of violence that they are involved in is changing into more subtle Jihadist performances that require from the digital researcher sharper observation skills, edgier analysis and faster adaptation to new digital landscapes.

A final example to illustrate this change are the new Jihadist landscapes being proposed online to attract female individuals to perform the *hijra* to Saudi Arabia and/or Morocco and Algeria. In fact, I analyzed two Facebook pages (which I had access to via an informant) offering their services for those who wish to live in a proper Islamic land. The distinctive feature of the Facebook pages whose purpose is to facilitate the *hijra* is their mentioning 'Salafiya', or as can be read on the *Hijra* Algerian page: "Information Page for *hijra* in Algeria, according to the Qur'an, the Sunna and the understanding of the pious predecessors." Here the reference to Salafism is implicit in the reference to the 'pious predecessors' or 'salaf', one of the core foundations of the Salafist doctrine. Another very interesting fact is that when I clicked on the link leading to their blog, I noticed that the cover image is a passage of the Qur'an, more exactly Sura Al-Nisa, aya 97-100, which narrates the reward of Allah to those who complete the *hijra*. At the end of the quote and in orange letters, one can read: "reserved for women only."

The pages are fed daily with new tips and recommendations and there is a monthly lengthy post where one of the sisters that have already performed the *hijra* tells her sisters online about her experiences. One of the migrants (*muhajirun*),

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[43] *El Mundo*: 'Los presos preventivos por yihadismo en España superan ya a los de ETA' (2015), available at http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2015/04/26/553ccd61ca47414e0d8b4571.html (accessed May 2015).

as they call themselves, had this advice (originally written in French and Arabic) to the women thinking of performing the *hijra*:

> Also to live in a country that does not insult our Beloved Prophet Allah (PUB) is more rewarding than the opposite. May Allah grant to all of those who have *niya* (intention) to make *hijra* and allow us *mouhajirouns* (migrants) to prolong ours until we die *Inscha'Allah*.

The cycle of events is similar to that in the female online radicalization route (exposition and acceptance of the Salafi-Jihadist fundamentals), migration to Syria (transfer of the acquired cognitive skills to the offline space) and then return to the online space to report back on their *hijra* experiences (making use of one's authority gained from first-hand experience to get other women to embrace *hijra*). The critical difference when compared to the online ritualization of Jihad is the absence of the practice of ritualization of violence in the *hijra* performance.

In conclusion, the complexity of this brand new phenomenon, the female Salafist (Jihadist?) migration, its insertion in the new concept of Jihad 3.0 and its possible proximity with more deeply rooted Jihadist goals constitute an important novelty within the online-offline Jihadist space research, which, also because of its profoundly disquieting aspects for the world at large, deserves future and further study.

4

PRENATAL SCREENING: A PRODUCTIVE RITUAL?

Diane Doehring & Logan Sparks

Ritual as a porous and wide concept, although at times criticized as an excessively broad category, has a hermeneutic value that allows for new emergences in the analysis of what might otherwise seem to be socio-culturally straight-forward or relatively opaque: The following further expansion into the field is the result of a collaboration. Diane Doehring is an activist and an independent scholar specialized in the area of disability theory. Logan Sparks is a specialist in the study of ritual, affiliated to Süleyman Şah University's Sociology Department as an assistant professor and a research fellow at the Netherlands Institute, Istanbul. The findings and review of literature are primarily that of Doehring. In concert, we have taken on the project of examining the ritual elements of medical practice and the discourses within which the practice is embodied. In the field of the study of ritual there are of course many antecedents, particularly in anthropology and psychology, for a study of the therapeutic value of ritual and its use as a process for integrating and healing trauma. What we examine here, by contrast, is the epistemic foundation, the discursive system by which the health care system (particularly in New Zealand, in the case under consideration) seeks to prevent trauma, in what can be described as a ritualized form. The intention is to look at the ways in which prenatal screening, geared towards early detection of Down syndrome, as a ritual, comes imbedded in larger discourses around labelling 'unwellness' and 'care'. One of the broader elements of ritual as described by Rappaport, is the concept of a meaningful "performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers…"[1] Beginning from this angle we look at the socio-medical construction of disability as a relatively modern phenomenon. Once out current practices are seen as less universal and absolute, this then opens up a possibility of re-imagining the place of the ritualistic elements present in prenatal screening through a reconsideration of the discursive regime that has produced the current status quo. It is precisely our acting out of and doing of disability that constructs, performs and inhabits our contingent agreement on what disability is, as

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[1] R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (Cambridge 1999) 27.

Butler's[2] insights can be applied to the matter of disability. One of the least examined aspects of this construction is the ritual of prenatal prediction, a sort of modern divination that is both formed by discourses of disability and formative of them, while simultaneously producing experiences for expectant mothers and families. This is consciously multi-vocal and draws on Foucauldian discourse analysis as its basis. While this lens has, perhaps ironically, developed into something of a normative postmodern paradigm or topos, here it seems to be particularly helpful and even essential to a ritual analysis of this particular script.

The hermeneutic here will include a selection of elements to convey both the specificities of the practice of prenatal screening for Down syndrome and something of lived experienced interwoven with theory. The primary voice, in the first person, is that of co-author Diane Doehring. What follows is a contextualization of the issue including an explanation of both prenatal screening and Down syndrome, a brief discourse analysis and explanations of the process itself, in addition to some personal narratives around the screening process and the parenting of children and adults with Down syndrome.

Jager and Maier, foundational thinkers in their critical theoretical work, explain that, "Discourses exercise power in society because they institutionalize and regulate ways of talking, thinking and acting."[3] Rituals form an intimate part of the process of knowledge, power, and discourse production, particularly as seen in the realm of political ritual.[4] Whereas in state and revolutionary ritual, there may be some degree of transparency in the process, therapeutic and medical ritual is considerably less self-conscious or transparent in its employment of ritual. More precisely, the use of the term ritualization, *senso* Grimes, as it emerges dialectical with the work Davis-Floyd, is of interest. Grimes indicates a distinction of formal ceremony and traditional ritual (rite), from the often more secular and routine-in-appearance acts (ritualizations) as he grapples with Davis-Floyd's approach to seeing the birthing process as ritual.[5] These ritualizations, as so redefined, are amongst the practices likely to be part of a semi-consciousness grammar employed by medical establishments, a subject that has been explored in connection with the birth process by Davis-Floyd, extensively.[6] And yet, as can be seen in the less examined case under consideration, ritualized discourses have implications not only for conceptualizations of the nature of well-being and quality of life, but decisions around life

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[2] J. BUTLER: *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York 1990).

[3] S. JAGER & F. MAIER: 'Theoretical and methodological aspects of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and dispositive analysis', in R. WODAK & M. MEYER (eds.): *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (London 2009 2nd ed.) 35.

[4] C. BELL: *Ritual theory, ritual practice* (Oxford 1992); F. JAMESON: *The political unconscious* (New York 2013); D. KERTZER: *Ritual politics and power* (New Haven 1988).

[5] R. GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone. Re-inventing rites of passage* (Berkeley 2000) 24.

[6] R. DAVIS-FLOYD: *Birth as an American rite of passage* (Berkeley 2003).

and death itself for expectant mothers and families entering into the process of pre-natal screening for what are labeled 'defects' by mainstream medicine.

Prenatal screening

Down syndrome is one of a group of conditions associated with intellectual impairment that is able to be detected prenatally. Recent advances in screening techniques have made routine screening for the presence of Down syndrome in the unborn baby, affordable. Screening is different to diagnosis. Screening provides information about the likelihood/risk/chance that a condition is present. It does not prove that the condition is present. To ascertain the absence or presence of a condition, a diagnostic test is required.

The technology is developing all the time with options providing increased ease of administration and increased levels of certainty of results. The option in this example involves the combination of the results of blood test, and measurements taken during an ultrasound scan, performed early in the pregnancy. This provides the parents with information about the likelihood of the unborn child having Down syndrome. If an increased likelihood (risk) is indicated, women are offered a diagnostic test (amniocentesis). This will give a positive or negative result. Where the result is positive for Down syndrome, women are offered the options of "continuing with the pregnancy" or "termination of the pregnancy."[7] Statistics for New Zealand are not known but, worldwide, termination rates are reported as ranging between 60% and 93%.[8] Although abortion is illegal in NZ, it is allowed where there is information that "that there is a substantial risk that the child, if born, would be so physically or mentally abnormal as to be seriously handicapped."[9]

One of the key factors, then, that undergirds much of the discussion is the often unarticulated, but clearly essential and unpleasant fact that children with Down syndrome are largely unwanted, if abortion statistics are in any way representative of reality. In fact, it becomes fairly self-evident that this is the also the

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[7] NATIONAL SCREENING UNIT: *Antenatal screening for Down syndrome and other conditions: Guidelines for health practitioners* (Wellington 2012). Available at http://www.nsu.govt.nz/system/files/page/antenatal_screening_for_down_syndrome_and_other_conditions_guidelines_for_health_practitioners.pdf (accessed June 2015).

[8] F. BUCKLEY & S. BUCKLEY: 'Wrongful deaths and rightful lives - screening for Down syndrome', in *Down Syndrome Research and Practice* 12/2 (2008) 79-86; J.L. NATOLI, D.L. ACKERMAN, S. MCDERMOTT & J.G. EDWARDS: 'Prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome: A systemic review of termination rates (1995-2011)', in *Prenatal Diagnosis* 32/2 (2014) 142-153.

[9] New Zealand Crimes Act 1961, Statute number 187A. Available at http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1961/0043/latest/DLM329364.html?search=sw_096be8ed81087bc6_handicapped_25_se&p=1&sr=0 (accessed June 2015).

underlying assumption with which prenatal screening is undertaken, problematically, on behalf of mothers and it is this epistemic assumption that is at the heart of the question as to the productivity of prenatal screening rituals, rituals intended to "provide equality of access and safety for mother and fetus."[10]

Pregnancy itself, as well, is embedded in a ritualistic framework. In New Zealand, maternity services are funded and overseen by the Ministry of Health. The services are provided by Lead Maternity Carers, who are usually midwives. In this sense, pregnancy and childbirth has becomes part of a medicalized ritual, with a safe birth and 'healthy' baby, the desired outcome.[11] This can be seen as a ritualization (even perhaps a healing ritual) for its tendency towards a sense of wellness and meaning beyond the merely physical aspects of basic biological care for mothers. This is embedded in a sense of the ideal birth, beyond mere survival, when one looks more closely at the discourse and practice as a whole. In other words, there is an assumption of what the ideal baby should be like, as a part of the screening and delivery and this ideal is followed to its, in a sense, logical end by the offering of abortion services should the baby not fit the definition of 'healthy' as encoded in the discourse.

The screening for Down syndrome is offered to every pregnant woman along with other routine aspects of prenatal care, such as monitoring weight gain, screening for a range of infectious diseases, blood group, diabetes, etc.… Thus, the law and the prenatal screening programme introduce a practice in which it is considered desirable to determine if the baby is 'healthy' and 'normal' and sanctions the discarding of 'unhealthy' or 'abnormal' babies. In this way, prenatal screening constructs a 'disabled' identity for the unborn child based on a physical characteristic and maintains the stigma associated with people with Down syndrome as unworthy of life and unwanted.

Disability advocates challenge this view, arguing that 'disability' is part of human diversity and should be valued and protected as such.[12] A government funded programme of this sort is seen as detrimental to people with disabilities.

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[10] R. COLE & G. JONES: 'Testing times: Do new prenatal tests signal the end of Down syndrome', in *Journal of New Zealand Medical Association* 126/1370 (2013) 96-102.

[11] D. PAYNE: *The elderly Primagravida: Contest and complexity. A Foucauldian analysis of maternal age in relation to pregnancy and birth* (Palmerston North 2002).

[12] R. GARLAND-THOMSON: 'The case for conserving disability', in *Bioethical Inquiry* 9 (2013) 229-355.

Down syndrome

The syndrome was first described in the landmark publication of Langdon Down's paper in 1866.[13] It is the result of the most common chromosome abnormality, (occurring in about 1 in 1000 births) results in recognizable physical characteristics, and is associated with intellectual impairment.

Berg and Korossy[14] comment on the anomalous fact that something as distinctive and common as Down syndrome was only recognized in the mid-nineteenth century. Several possible explanations for this have been put forward: One is that the prevalence in late childhood and adulthood would possibly have been low due to shortened life expectancy. Life expectancy for women was much reduced at the time, which would reduce the number of late pregnancies that are more likely to produce a child with Down syndrome. Further, many other diseases and disorders were more prevalent in pre-industrial times and, prior to the eighteenth century, few physicians were interested in children with intellectual disabilities.[15]

Given that the syndrome is visually recognizable from the facial features, it is no surprise that cultural artifact such as paintings and statues might provide the first clues to the way people with Down syndrome were seen and treated. An examination of the evidence of the syndrome before 1866 finds possible examples in art (paintings and figurines) over several centuries.[16] The reliability of this evidence has been debated and few have expanded the search to explore the stories of the people depicted. However, Nicol quotes the work of Brian Stratford, an English pediatrician who was convinced by the distinctive features of the Christ child in a painting attributed to the Italian Renaissance painter, Andrea Mantega. This instance is of particular interest because of the meaning that Stratford attaches to this example: He reports that the painter and his sponsor were reported to have children with a 'similar sickness'. Nicol quotes him thus,

> Perhaps Mantegna saw in this child something beyond the deficiencies which now so occupy our attention and perhaps then, the qualities of love, forgiveness, gentleness, and innocence were more readily recognized. Maybe Mantegna saw these qualities as more representative of Christ than others we now regard so highly. [17]

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[13] L.J. DOWN: 'Observations on an ethnic classification of idiots', in *London Hospital Records* 3 (1866) 259-262.

[14] J.M. BERG & M. KOROSSY: 'Down syndrome before Down: A retrospect', in *American Journal of Medical Genetics* 102 (2001) 205-211.

[15] J.M. STARBUCK: 'On the antiquity of trisomy 21: Moving towards a quantitative diagnosis of Down syndrome in historic material culture', in *Journal of Contemporary Anthropology* 2/1 (2011).

[16] BERG & KOROSSY: 'Down syndrome before Down' 205-211.

[17] C. NICOL: *At home with Down syndrome* (2008). Available at http://www.thenewatlantis.com/docLib /20080523_TNA20Nicol.pdf (accessed June 2015).

While hard evidence cannot be found, it is logical that, from early history, children with the syndrome must have been born and even possible that some may have survived to adulthood despite the many medical factors that would have contributed to a shortened lifespan.

So, without clear identification as a distinct group we have to look to the history of people with intellectual disability for a history of Down syndrome. Although disability has been present throughout human history, there is no universal definition or understanding.[18]

In an analysis of 'the stare' (or gaze) as an 'exchange that carries complex cultural and historical meanings', Garland-Thomson notes that from antiquity to modernity, 'unusual and inexplicable bodies'[19] have been displayed, inspiring wonder and awe in a pre-scientific world, or presented as performers in public displays. She argues that it was the clinical gaze that classified them as pathological rather than revelatory. Here again, medical discourse is fundamental.

Goodey argues that discourses around intelligence and intellectual disability are a modern construction.[20] Prior to the Enlightenment, intellectual disability received very little attention in medical texts.[21] Modern medical discourses about intellectual disability can be traced to the mid eighteenth century, with their roots in the Enlightenment. The statistical notion of 'normal', and its binary value, 'abnormal', comes out of the growth of and confidence in the sciences. Following on from this, it is possible to see how scientists in general, and the medical profession in particular, began to be seen as the holders of the 'truth' about disability. It is in this context that the medical profession embarked on a classification of people who were seen to fall outside the normal.[22]

This has led to a reliance on diagnosis, or labeling, in the medical approach to a person with a disability. In this instance the individual becomes identified with a diagnostic group: the Blind, the Deaf, the 'physically disabled', the 'learning disabled.' It is interesting to note that terms for Intellectual disability are loaded with pejorative meaning (idiot, cretin, retarded) and there is no internationally consistent term. Terms such 'mental retardation', 'intellectual disability' and 'learning disability,' are all employed.

In recent years, the World Health Organization has recognized that the medical classification of diagnosis alone does not provide a sense of the person. In

[18] J. SMART: *Disability, society and the individual* (Austin 2009 2nd ed.).

[19] R. GARLAND-THOMSON: 'Staring at the other', in *Disability Studies Quarterly* 25/4 (2005).

[20] C.F. GOODEY: *A history of intelligence and 'intellectual disability'* (Farnham 2011).

[21] BERG & KOROSSY: 'Down syndrome before Down'; D. WRIGHT: *Downs. The history of a disability* (Oxford 2011).

[22] D.I. BROMAGE: 'Prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion: a result of the cultural turn?', in *Medical Humanities* 32/1 (2006) 38-42; L.J. DAVIS: *The end of normal. Identity in a biocultural era* (Ann Arbor 2013); SMART: *Disability, society and the individual.*

seeking to gather information required for 'health planning and management purposes'. It has developed the ICF, a scientific tool to identify kinds and levels of disability.[23] Included in this is classification according to impairment: physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual mental illness and chronic disease. But, the focus remains on a deviation from normal functioning. Davis notes that the word 'normal' only entered the English language around 1840. He argues that prior to that, there was no universal concept of 'normalcy' and the concept that preceded it was that of the 'ideal'.[24] The ideal is a standard that is linked to the divine and is not considered attainable by a human. In this way, humanity is forever considered imperfect and comparisons are not made between men (and women). So in this world view, ability is part of a continuum – there is no point or cut-off at which a judgement is made about normalcy.

So what happens to those individuals who have limitations in cognitive, intellectual or mental functioning? Philosopher and physician, John Locke (1632-1704) is one of the first to be associated with discourses about intellectual disability as 'other' that persist. He distinguished between 'idiots' (not able to draw conclusions from their perceptions) and 'lunatics' (having a temporary inability to join concepts) and placed 'idiots' on a par with 'beasts', thus classifying people with intellectual disability as 'non- human'.[25] This, of course, shows a certain consistency with the Enlightenment view that inevitably would tend to stigmatize those with limited intellect and, for example, colonial subjects who in not having a written language, did not meet the requirements of what Enlightenment Europeans saw as signs of intellectual capacity, an approach most have since abandoned. In making these observations the intention is not idealize the pre-Enlightenment West as necessarily an ideal setting for those with disability, nor to ignore the positive aspects of the Enlightenment, but simply to point out that what is taken for granted is a product of current discourses.

This view of disabled people as a distinct social group, constructed as 'other' with the associated experience of exclusion and discrimination persists today.[26] *The Social Model of Disability*[27] is widely used to explain this aspect of the experience of

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[23] WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION: International classification of functioning, disability and health (Geneva 2001). Available at http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/ (accessed June 2015).

[24] L.J. DAVIS: 'Introduction: Disability, normality and power', in L.J. DAVIS (ed.): *The disabilities studies reader* (New York/London 2013 4th ed.).

[25] L. CARLSON & E.F. KITTAY: 'Introduction: Rethinking philosophical presumptions in light of cognitive disability', in E.F. KITTAY & L. CARLSON (eds.): *Cognitive disability and its challenge to moral philosophy* (Chichester 2010); WRIGHT: *Downs. The history of a disability.*

[26] B. HUGHES & K. PATERSON: 'The social model of disability and the disappearing body: Towards a sociology of impairment', in *Disability and Society* 12/3 (1997) 325-340.

[27] M. OLIVER: *Understanding disability: From theory to practice* (Basingstoke 1996).

disability and to reverse the gaze in order to present an entirely different perspective. Put simply it can be illustrated thus: while a person may have an impairment (e.g. leg paralysis that prevents them from walking) it is society's lack of accommodation to their needs (e.g. provision of a wheelchair and accessible architecture) that creates the barriers to participation and thus, the disability. The disability is constructed in this process, just as it is in the case of screening as it is being discussed here. While the Social Model explains the experience of disability, it is inadequate in explaining the identity of Disability, how it is formed and maintained.

Disability as identity

Disability can also be framed as one of several identities (race, religion, gender and sexual identities) within diversity. Postmodernity holds that identity is not fixed or rigid but complex, intersectional and socially constructed.[28] This opens up the possibility that rather than being seen as a fixed, medically determined 'abnormality', disability can come to be seen as simply a form of diversity in the human experience.

While the Social Model sheds light on the effects of society's failure to make accommodations to include the disabled person, it does not explain how the disabled identity of 'the other' is maintained. Seeking an explanation, scholars have looked to women's studies and queer theory. Corker (1999) deploys Judith Butler's performative theory, to equate 'sex' with 'impairment' and 'gender' with 'disability'.[29] She argues that while the body may be impaired it is the enactment of disability that creates the identity. We are taking the position then, that, in the context of prenatal care, it is the act of screening for Down syndrome that creates the identity of 'other'. It is this initial ritualization that sets the foundation, encourages the discarding of pregnancy and which is imbricated with disability discourse.

Disability and ritual

Having this as a significant background to the production of therapeutic practice, it remains to look at the actual process of prenatal screening. The official process is something like the following…

At the time of implementation, the NSU instructed providers thus: "The Ministry of Health recommends that all pregnant women are offered antenatal screening for Down syndrome and other conditions either in the first or second trimester

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[28] DAVIS: *The end of normal.*
[29] BUTLER: *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*; M. CORKER: 'Differences, conflations and foundations: The limits to "accurate" theoretical representations of disabled people's experience', in *Disability and Society* 14/4 (1999) 627-642.

of pregnancy."[30] However after strong objection from a group of parents this was revised to… "Practitioners are required to advise women less than 20 weeks pregnant about the availability of antenatal screening for Down syndrome and other conditions."[31]

In practice, the offer needs to be made as early as possible (to meet the timeframe required for the tests) so that women are informed about the tests at their first appointment when other information (weight, dates) are being taken. Because of the emphasis on informed consent, women are given a pamphlet with information about the screening. This decision is one of many that have to been made, e.g. where the delivery will occur (home-birth being an option) and options for the care and disposal of the placenta (the *whenua* has particular spiritual and physical significance to Maori).

While the purpose of the ultrasound scan is to gather information about the pregnancy (confirm gestational age , examine the fetal anatomy, position of the placenta and take measurements for computing the risk of Down syndrome) women report that they approach this as an opportunity to 'see' the baby and get a 'photo' of the baby. The possibility of finding, or ruling out, an 'abnormality' is not their primary motivation. However, if something is detected, the medical discourses about what constitutes 'normal' and the 'othering' of 'disability' are brought into play.

If an increased risk of DS is detected at screening, women are offered the option of invasive tests amniocentesis or CVS which carries a risk of miscarriage of up 0.5% to 1%.[32] Where it is confirmed that the baby has DS, the couple are provided with information about 'the condition' and offered counseling to consider what they wish to do. Implicit in this is the option of a 'therapeutic termination' of the pregnancy.

My experience

I am the mother of a man with Down syndrome and was relatively young (and therefore considered at low risk) when he was born. Despite this, the thought that I might be carrying a child with a disability did cross my mind when I was pregnant – I was working as a speech therapist in a preschool for children with intellectual disabilities at that time. This was the early 1980s, institutional care was in decline,

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[30] ROYAL NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (RNZCGP): 'Antenatal screening for Down syndrome and other conditions - Guidelines now available*' (2013), available at http://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/3814.aspx (accessed June 2015).
[31] IBID.
[32] AUCKLAND DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD: '*Prenatal testing information booklet*' (2013), available at http://nationalwomenshealth.adhb.govt.nz/Portals/0/A%20to%20Z/M%20to%20S/P/P%20Prenatal%20testing.pdf (accessed June 2015).

and rather than discarding a disabled child in an institution, early intervention was being promoted by the medical profession. I was part of this movement, and the school that I worked in provided intensive 'intervention' to a small group of children in a segregated setting.

During my pregnancy there was no need for concern. I was young (24) and healthy. I took care not to expose myself to any diseases or contaminants that might put the baby at risk. I did at one point idly consider that in a class of 25 speech therapy graduates (all women) it was statistically likely that one of us would have a disabled child. I even considered that Down syndrome would be 'better than autism'.

However, when my baby son was born and the delivery room suddenly went quiet, and the obstetrician came to me with tears in his eyes and told me that he thought that my baby had Down syndrome, my reaction was one of shock and grief. This was not the baby that I planned. His life flashed before as I lay receiving postnatal care. All of the images and messages that I had received about the 'tragedy' of disability informed my fears, the same underlying assumptions that inform much of the ritualistic approach to prenatal screening.

Andrew was taken home and cared for as any other baby. He was an 'easy' baby who despite having frequent ear infections, thrived and made his milestones in his own time. Looking back, I regret the stress and pain I felt at those delayed milestones. As a therapist I was trained to see being as close to 'normal' as possible as the goal and proof of good mothering. The medical discourses obscured the person behind the label.

By the time he was 2 years old and I was pregnant with my second child, I was sure that Down syndrome was not the tragedy that I had been lead to believe and although I was offered the option prenatal diagnostic testing (amniocentesis, a procedure that did carry some risk to the life of the child, at that time), I chose not to have it. I was anxious about this second pregnancy but I did not feel that a diagnosis of Down syndrome would be enough to end the pregnancy. (The risk increased to 1/100 having already had a child with DS). This did not mean that I was free from comment or pressure from medical colleagues who disapproved of my choice. In contrast, other parents of babies with DS understood, supported and shared my position.

I am grateful that Andrew pushed past the screen medical and societal identities and, a mother's love has allowed me to see him for all his unique humanity: A man of 30, with challenges like all of us but with his own gifts and personhood and story to tell even though he does not have the words.

My family (including his two younger siblings) can see the growth and gifts that we have been given by having him as part of our family. Skotko, Levine, and

Goldstein (2011)[33] report that the 'overwhelming majority' of parents are happy to have their child with Down syndrome and that they are a source of pride and joy.

For people who have not experienced this love of someone who is devalued by society it is easy to dismiss the profound learning as sentimental, subjective or mistaken.[34] However this is what disability theorists are calling for when they write about the need for inclusion of the lived experience of disabled people and their families in bioethical debates.[35]

The institutional field

A few further details may be of use to understand the macro issues that were in process parallel to my personal experience. Over the years I became involved in various levels of advocacy for children and people with disabilities, including being asked to represent the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) on the National Screening Unit's advisory group for the implementation of the new programme for Prenatal Screening for Down syndrome and other conditions.

It is my view that the advent of this 2010 programme represents a fracture in the way in which prenatal screening is framed and delivered. From the first meeting it was evident that that this event, the implementation of a new prenatal screening programme, made visible a range of tensions, debates and conflicting discourses about pregnancy, screening, disability and abortion.

Even the name of the initiative was contested. It started off being referred to as a 'screening programme' but ended up being referred to as 'quality improvements' in public documents. Dr. Peter Stone, an early advocate for the programme is quoted as saying,

> There will in effect be national screening but due to complex sensitive political factors the advice from the national screening unit and the Director General of Health to the past and current Ministers of Health was not to call this a national screening programme but 'quality improvement'.[36]

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[33] B.G. SKOTKO, S.P. LEVINE, & R. GOLDSTEIN: 'Having a son or daughter with Down syndrome: Perspectives from mothers and fathers', in *American Journal of Medical Genetics* 155 (2011) 2335-2347.

[34] A. HO: 'The individualist model of autonomy and the challenge of disability', in *Bioethical Inquiry* 5 (2008) 193-207.

[35] HUGHES & PATERSON: 'The social model of disability and the disappearing body' 325-340; E.F. KITTAY: 'At the margins of moral personhood', in *Bioethical Inquiry* 5 (2008) 137-156; S. TREMAIN: 'The biopolitics of bioethics and disability', in *Bioethical Inquiry* 5 (2008) 101-106.

[36] TVNZ: 'National Screening for Down Syndrome on the way' (2009), available at http://3news.co.nz/nznews/national-screening-for-down-syndrome-on-the-way-2009110815#axzz3m2ZvcCEq (accessed June 2015).

Some things were 'allowed' to be said and others were not. For example, we were immediately informed that the decision to proceed with the programme had already been taken and no further debate on the topic would be permitted. The advisory group's input was only in helping the NSU to implement the 'quality improvements'. Diverging values, ideas and knowledges were not treated in the same way. It was my sense that the voices of the Down Syndrome Association, other disability advocates and women's groups were given limited authority.

The project focus was largely on the technical aspects of the screening process (laboratory and ultrasound quality management and processes). Little attention was given to: the funding being allocated, how the tests were to be offered, the skills and knowledge of the Lead Maternity Carers (LMCs) in facilitating the consent process, and the actual experience of women whether or not they chose to go ahead with screening and then possibly diagnostic testing. Despite strong advocacy to the contrary, this aspect of 'quality' was dismissed as too difficult to measure and not affordable. But, with matters as serious as establishing the value of a life, it certainly seems indispensable to look at the ways in which the procedures for informed consent and detection are undertaken. By making this a significant rite of passage, a conscious ritualization of the process can be called for, rather than that current positivist approach that does in fact ritualize, but without clear acknowledgement of the lived reality.

During the project, reference was made to some enquiries and complaints that the NSU had received from a group of families of children with Down syndrome (Saving Downs) about the proposed implementation of the programme. They were presented as representing an extreme point of view. This led me to wonder why it was that one knowledge (the scientific, medical knowledge) was privileged over the narratives and knowledge of lived experience of the disability community.

My thinking on prenatal screening had been challenged earlier in my life (before the birth of my child). I had a cousin with a rare recessively inherited condition (epidermolysis bulosa) which causes extremely painful skin lesions and deformities and ultimately caused his early death. Several years before his death we had a conversation about prenatal and pre-implantation screening. Despite a life of pain and physical challenges he was adamant that he did not support selective abortion or embryo selection in order to preserve 'quality of life'. He challenged me with the comment "How can anyone else make a judgment about my quality of life and my will to live?"

My life experience as someone growing up in South Africa during the Apartheid era leaves me with an insight and experience of how discourses (such as those present in Apartheid ideology) can be dominant and go unquestioned and unchallenged as 'just the way the world is ordered' for many years, by many people. Questioning the epistemic foundations of what we do from our fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality is essential.

Wider contemporary fields

In the wider field of the encounters with mothers and those affected by this stand-ardized screening process, I have had the privilege of familiarizing myself with the experiences of women who have undertaken it in recent years. Currently, screening for Down syndrome is offered along with other tests and measurements at the first meeting with the midwife (and thus framed as part of the 'routine testing' to ensure a healthy pregnancy and birth). Women are given a range of pamphlets to assist them with the choices that they need to make for the pregnancy and birth, apart from the decision to have the screening for Down syndrome. These choices include deciding on where they want to give birth and if they want to keep the placenta and chord, in keeping with the customs of Maori culture of New Zealand. In other words, there is also an explicitly ritual element to this, one which is closer to the concept of 'rite' than ritualization, following Grimes.[37]

Most women with whom I have interacted report that when they go for the ultrasound, they are not thinking of the practice in terms of the screening purpose of the activity but see it as the opportunity to 'see the baby for the first time.' That is to say that the ritual element of the procedure is, in fact, more prominent than practical concerns, according to many expectant mothers. Ultrasound is used to measure the size of the baby (to check dates), placenta previa, as taking the meas-urements that are used as part of the screening for Down syndrome as well as to screen for other problems. Often is it also possible to identify the sex of the baby at this stage. Taken as a whole, it is understandable that there is a form of ritualistic power to this stage of pregnancy. Grimes indicates the importance of the birth process as a time in which cultural values are impressed upon women (due to their openness and vulnerability) along with acknowledging the agency that women do have in choosing their approach to reproduction.[38]

From my encounters with mothers, I have made the educated assumption that it is likely only when screening produces information that there is something un-usual about the baby or the pregnancy that women are confronted with the mean-ing of that information. It is commonly reported that women feel pressure to ter-minate a pregnancy where the baby is considered to have a severe abnormality that will produce a 'poor quality of life'. Yet, many do choose to have babies that are labelled as ill. It was related to me by one family there their child was prenatally diagnosed with anencephaly. They described being pressured to abort but pro-ceeded with the full pregnancy in any case and reported being grateful to have the short time with daughter before she died. While these sorts of significant narratives do exist, there does not seem to have been, yet, any real incorporation of these

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[37] GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone* 24.

[38] IBID.; DAVIS-FLOYD: *Birth as an American rite of passage* 40.

realities into the discourse out of which prenatal screening ritualizations are being produced.

If one can truly conclude anything from this, and endings are most likely not the direction in which this discussion is going, it is that this particular birth process has not yet been sufficiently examined through a cultural and ritual approach, that this is merely a beginning. Undoubtedly, for some in the medical profession this may not yet seem like a high priority or may not have come clearly into view at all. And yet, as seen, there are unique arguments that emerge when combining data with both lived experience and a critical genealogical approach to the current practices of the medical industry, particularly in the case of New Zealand. The nearly invisible discursive assumption, treated largely as a universal, is that the birth of a child with Down syndrome (or other conditions seen as defects) is a tragedy. Upon this scaffolding an edifice of ritualized practice is built, via a screening procedure which offers possible termination of pregnancy, an option popularly taken. The argument here has not been, in any way, to argue for or against reproductive rights, as such. Rather, what is established is that, by taking a wider view there is the potential to dig further and open a wider range of options for encountering the diversity in the human experience of ability. The resources for an innovative epistemology of birth and disability are vast, though overlooked. In this case we have examined lived alternative experiences, the historical development of concepts of 'imperfection,' and the ways in which a routinized structure transmits a message that, while institutionally supported, could be and is benefiting from a layman-lead critique, one that can fruitfully spring from a perspective rooted in cultural and ritual scholarship.

5

FROM HAIRY TO HAIRLESS:
BODY HAIR REMOVAL AS A RITUAL AMONG WOMEN IN ARAB CULTURES

Suzanne Elayan

Arab women writers have been concerned with using their fiction in relating their culture and exploring the theme of self-fulfillment as a means of combating patriarchal values – some of which are still prevalent today – since the 1950s.[1] Although there are over twenty Arab countries, each with its own traditions and customs which have been around for centuries, there are certain similar cultural elements that bind Arab countries together. Because of the shared language, the fiction that is published in one Arab country can gain popularity in various other Arab-speaking countries, which is a tool that has enabled Arab women writers to reach out to one another since the beginning of the Arab Woman's Liberation Movement that began in 1919. Writers from many different Arab countries have discussed urgent feminist issues that are specific to their region often, even at times of political instability. Since the end of the Cold War the area has been the most militarized in the world, and there is little 'cold' about the intractable feuds that are enacted there. Amid the flux and political turmoil, the struggle of Arab women for political recognition and equal rights is too often on the backburner, which has prompted women writers to become bolder in their portrayal of female characters and their lives. As a result, the reader is now given a glimpse of the previously unknown female-only spaces that the Arab woman privately occupies, with the focal point being women's lives and daily rituals – almost always with political havoc and uncertainty in the background.

Contemporary Arab writers such as the Jordanian novelist Fadia Faqir, the Lebanese author Hanan al-Shaykh and the Lebanese screenwriter Nadine Labaki are some of those who have touched upon more than a few of the controversial issues relating to the Arab female and her body. In this paper, I will discuss the ritual of body hair removal, which is an age-old ritual that continues to thrive among women in the Arab world today. Through its depiction in contemporary Arab women's fiction, I will examine the taboos associated with the female body in Arab culture. Using a cultural and religious perspective, I will also attempt to decipher the motives behind this traditional ritual. Additionally, I will explore

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[1] J. ZEIDAN: *Arab women novelists: The formative years and beyond* (New York 1995) 157.

various definitions of the study of ritual and attempt to justify my classification of body hair removal among Arab women as a socio-religious ritualistic practice.

David Kertzer described ritual as "action wrapped in a web of symbolism."[2] Understanding and deciphering ritual is of particular importance in the Arab region because of the markedly religious nature of its inhabitants. The birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; religious symbolism, archaeology, and habits are deeply rooted in the Middle East. The common person's every day comings and goings can be traced back to their ancestors – starting with the way prayers and ablutions are observed, to families' customs during different religious holidays. Talal Assad discusses ritual's role within any religion. His assertion is that ritual is an essential part of a religion, since he regards it as "a type of routine behavior which symbolizes or expresses something […]."[3] Looking at Islam in particular, the universality of what Assad refers to as 'routine behavior' is certainly evident in both the private and the public sphere. For example, on an individual level there is a private connection between the person praying and their God, but at the same time, there is a unity in the performance of prayers – each practicing Muslim prays at the same time, facing the same direction, reciting the same words, and executing the same movements. This sameness in actions symbolizes that there should be a sameness in all Muslim behavior. The sameness begins at birth, with the words uttered into a newborn's right ear and it ends with how the dead are buried and how their wakes are held. The sameness and unity in Muslim conduct can be observed in many examples, not merely in acts of worship, but in other seemingly mundane tasks, mostly as a reminder that in the end all Muslims are equal. Thus, because ritual is an integral part of the daily behavior of the practicing Muslims of the Arab world in particular, within this context, Kertzer's conception of the tangled metaphoric tendency of ritual seems especially pertinent, and where better to foster and nurture such a tendency than in fiction?

According to Susan R. Bordo, "the body – what we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body – is a medium of culture."[4] Hanan al-Shaykh demonstrates this in her novel *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (1989). The novel tells the stories of women from different countries, generations, and walks of life: Suha (Lebanese), Nur and Tamr (desert locals), Taj (Turkish), and Suzanne (American), but whose circumstances bring them to the same nameless, oil-rich, desert country. The novel illustrates how these women finally rebel, each in her own way, using their bodies as a medium to break away from the culture in which they live in, and by opening a shop for women, they succeed in construct-

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[2] D.I. KERTZER: *Ritual, politics and power* (New Haven 1988) 9.

[3] T. ASAD: *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore 1993) 79.

[4] A.M. JAGGAR & S.R. BORDO: *Gender/body/knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing* (New Brunswick 1992) 13.

ing a new culture with norms and practices which are distinctive to women's culture.

The rotating first person narrative begins with Suha, a twenty-five-year-old woman who leaves her country because of war. The unnamed country is a place where there is plenty of work for men, but not much to be done by women except domestic chores. On a superficial level, the culture of the females living in this nameless desert is simple; the following passage is Suha's description of it:

> Everyday life existed in the desert, but it was the daily routine of housewives and didn't go beyond the smell of coriander, the neighbor who only half-opened her door because she had wax on her thighs, fortune-telling in coffee grounds, food on the stove, and gossip and knitting and babies' nappies.[5]

For the outsider looking in, the cooking, the waxing, the fortune-telling, all seemingly trivial elements are particularly related to the male construction of the female. This has become these women's culture because the males in the society have banned women's participation in the outside day to day life. Nawal El Saadawi, Egyptian author and activist, explains that the patriarchal society has imposed passivity on the Arab woman through limiting her participation in the public sphere, the consequence of that is

> Woman, thus discharged of her inner core, is left only with her exterior physical frame. She therefore has no alternative other than to occupy herself with this outer bodily envelope, to massage it, to ensure that it remains smooth to the touch, to remove the rough hair that grows on it".[6]

Al-Shaykh mentions the waxing in passing, using it as an analogy for women's oppression, illustrating El Saadawi's theory that female body maintenance is the direct result of women's mental capacity being relinquished. Western feminists such as Karin Lesnik-Oberstein view female hair removal practices as an "oppressive patriarchal ideal which regulates, controls, or produces the female body,"[7] which if it were limited to women only, would also apply to Arab women. The practice of hair removal dates back to prehistoric times,[8] different cutting, plucking and shaving tools were used for depilation in Ancient Egypt by both men and women, which partially explains the reason behind this practice's predominance in the area. The prophet Mohammed was quoted in both *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* by several narrators, including Abu Huraira, Jabir bin 'Abdul-

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[5] H. AL-SHAYKH: *Women of sand and myrrh* (New York 1992) 9.

[6] N. EL SAADAWI: *The hidden face of eve: Women in the Arab world* (London 1980) 110.

[7] K. LESNIK-OBERSTEIN (ed.): *The last taboo: Women and body hair* (Manchester 2006) 2.

[8] V. SHERROW: *Encyclopedia of hair: A cultural history* (Connecticut 2006) 180.

lah, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Anas bin Malik among others, mentioning hair removal. Abu Huraira's version does not give a time frame:

> I heard the Prophet saying. 'Five practices are characteristics of the tradition of prophets: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, cutting the moustaches short, clipping the nails, and depilating the hair of the armpits.'[9]

Anas bin Malik repeated the Prophet Mohammed's instructions giving a forty day time period to perform these tasks. Because Islam administers great emphasis on physical cleanliness for both men and women, personal hygiene is seen as an important aspect of the religion. External cleanliness of the body is also symbolic, as it reflects internal cleanliness and hence highlights the importance of purity of the soul. Because Islam's approach is to advise (and at times even dictate) when and how personal hygiene should be tended to, depilation is viewed as a compulsory practice by the predominately Muslim population of Arab countries. In regards to female body hair, there is nothing in the Quran, *Sahih Bukhari,* or *Sahih Muslim* that stresses the need for women to remove body hair from areas other than the underarms and the pubic area. However, several versions of an unauthentic *hadith* promoting hairlessness in women are widely spread. The following is one of the most common versions narrated by Al Sayuti: "God loves the hairy man and was silent about him and hates the hairy woman"[10] (my translation).

   Origins of this unauthentic saying are unknown, however, it confirms Lesnik-Oberstein's views that female body hair removal is a practice instigated by patriarchal values and that hairy females are generally viewed as 'monstrous'.[11] Since the love of God is what every practicing Muslim seeks, the belief that the very creator of a hairy female does in fact hate her for her hairiness is an alienating notion that can be extremely damaging to the female psyche. Hairless bodies belonging to women, which are seen as youthful and feminine, are an extreme binary opposite to a man's body, which, as soon as he hits puberty, becomes hairy (and according to Al Sayuti's saying, becomes loved by God). Similarly, males who are not hairy may also experience alienation, since the unauthentic, yet popular *hadith* also excludes them from the love of God. Alice Macdonald explains that the function of body hairlessness in women is to amplify the contrasts between men and women.[12] When a woman does not fit the hairless criteria, she is seen as manlike and unfeminine – characteristics that are frowned upon in an Arab fe-

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[9] *Sahih Bukhari* Volume 7, Book 72, Number 779.

[10] Comprehensive Encyclopedia (Islam Port) *Hadith* 767, p. 292. Available at http://islamport.com/d/1/krj/1/75/813.html (accessed 25 May 2014).

[11] LESNIK-OBERSTEIN: *The last taboo* 21.

[12] A. MACDONALD: 'Hairs on the lens: Female body hair on the screen', in LESNIK-OBERSTEIN (ed.): *The last taboo* 68.

male. El Saadawi explains that a young Arab girl is encouraged to be "an instrument of sex, a mere body which should be adorned and made beautiful so as to attract men and arouse their desire."[13] These pressures placed on Arab females by the patriarchal values they grow up with have transformed hair removal from a mere religious hygienic obligation (originally limited to be attended to areas prone to sweating in the hot desert climate) to a popular regular ritual in the Arab world.

It is Bruce Kapferer's opinion that ritual is among the most "overused sociological categories" yet he maintains that it is the most "resistant to adequate definition."[14] I agree to some extent with Kapferer's statement about the difficulty in sufficiently defining ritual, however through examining various anthropologist's conditions to what constitutes a ritual, I have found that there are different components that are focused on. For example, Roy Rappaport insists that in order for a practice to be classified as a ritual, it must have structural elements such as symbols or what he refers to as 'performatives'.[15] This condition can certainly be applied to female depilation, since conducting it does require one to perform specific actions such as heating the sugar or wax, spreading it on the desired area, and pulling it off. On a symbolic level, these performative actions symbolize rebirth; a hairy female is reborn as a hairless one. Renewal is another metaphor that hair removal evokes, the old hair that has been yanked away will eventually be replaced with new hair. Since symbolic performative actions are undertaken when a woman undergoes hair removal, it is my opinion that the practice of hair removal can be classified as a ritual.

Don Handelman believes a ritual to be a distinct type of event.[16] While depilation in itself is not necessarily an event per se, it is performed *before* significant events, such as weddings and burials. Prior to wedding ceremonies in many Arab countries, it is still customary for both Christians and Muslims to have a bridal bath for the future wife, and a groom bath for the future husband. In these segregated events, family members, close friends and neighbors gather to wash the future bride or groom and remove their unwanted body hair, often these sessions are accompanied by music, singing, dancing or ululating. Similarly, in Islamic traditions, preparing a body for burial (also a segregated event where female family members or friends tend to the body of a deceased female, and male family members tend to the body of a deceased male) the body of a Muslim should be washed three times and any visible pubic or underarm hair should be shaved off.

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[13] EL SAADAWI: *The hidden face of eve* 46.

[14] B. KAPFERER: 'Ritual dynamics and virtual practice: Beyond representation and meaning', in D. HANDELMAN & G. LINDQUIST (eds.): *Ritual in its own right: Exploring the dynamics of transformation* (Canada 2004) 35-54.

[15] R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (Cambridge 1999).

[16] HANDELMAN & LINDQUIST (eds.): *Ritual in its own right*:

Considering that the practice of hair removal adjoins such major events, it is my contention that this further aids my argument that it should be considered a ritual.

Tying all these different definitions of ritual together, Andre Iteanu, points out that anthropologists have yet to study rituals in much further detail in order to determine their common attributes. He argues that "the variability of ritual is so great, […] that these common features end up by amounting to but a single one, that of repetition."[17] It is this corresponding attribute that I wish to focus on. It is not merely the repetition of removing unwanted hair off the body, waiting up to forty days for it to grow back, only to remove it again that I wish to emphasize. It is the action of spreading almost scalding hot wax or sugar on the skin and then yanking it off, over and over again until the hairy area becomes hairless. Michael Wood explains that the action of repeating "includes the idea of anticipation as well as the idea of return."[18] There is a certain anticipation that accompanies the repetitive actions of hair removal, the anticipation of the pain that brings with it the anticipation of the skin looking smooth and youthful, hence desirability. The manner in which that is done, traditionally using hot sugar or wax, evokes an image of pain and punishment; as though administering repetitive punishment on a hairy female body atones it into becoming hairless, time and time again. The anticipation of pain brings with it the promise of becoming sexually desirable. Al-Shaykh illustrates this anticipation in her short story 'Cupid Complaining to Venus' featured in the collection of short stories *I Sweep the Sun off Rooftops* (1986). The title of the short story is that of the 1525 painting by Lukas Caranch depicting Cupid holding a honeycomb, covered in bees and looking up at Venus. The moral of the painting is that 'life's pleasures are mixed with pain' according to the commentary provided by the National Gallery, London, where the painting now hangs. Interestingly, Al-Shaykh chose a work of art that expresses the anticipation of pleasure mixing with pain, a title fitting for a main character who puts her body through pain in hopes of finally finding pleasure. The first person narrator, whose name remains unknown throughout the narrative, is a writer who seeks to find sexual fulfilment. Al-Shaykh uses provocative and explicit language to express the feelings of frustration and anticipation the nameless narrator experiences while making love with her nameless partner.

The anticipation of satisfying copulation, which the narrator refers to as 'liberating [her] body'[19], only occurs to the narrator 'after a long day's prepar-

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[17] A. ITEANU: 'Partial discontinuity: The mark of ritual', in HANDELMAN & LINDQUIST (eds.): *Ritual in its own right* 98-116.

[18] M. WOOD: 'Beginnings again', in A. ISKANDER & H. RUSTOM (eds.): *Edward Said a legacy of emancipation and representation* (California 2010) 63.

[19] H. AL-SHAYKH: 'Cupid complaining to Venus', in H. AL-SHAYKH: *I sweep the sun off rooftops* (London 1986) 197.

ation'[20] of her body with her friend. The narrator describes this preparation in detail, it includes:

> stretching [her body] out under a layer of hot wax that picked up even the downy lit-
> tle face hairs so the surface of the skin was smooth as pearls, surrendering [her
> body] to the masseuse's hands, soaking [it] in frangipani milk, giving [it] a siesta,
> dressing [it] in underwear so soft it almost slipped off the skin, then sitting [her
> body] down to wait and enjoy more conversations about sex, and fidget with lust.[21]

The process begins with inflicting her body with pain first, the hot wax does its work so efficiently that it picks up 'even the downy little face hairs' transforming her skin from natural human skin into unnaturally smooth skin, using the simile of pearls to describe its new texture. Pearls are a metaphor of flawless, pristine beauty – since they are gemstones; hence objects worthy of being desired. The narrator objectifies herself, allows her human skin to be peeled away and replaced with unhuman pearl-like skin that is now worthy of being seen and touched by her lover. After inflicting the punishment of hot wax on her body, it becomes ready for its reward, which includes massaging it, resting it, and so on. The very preparation for the narrator's attempt to 'liberate' her body encompasses punishing her body for its hairiness first, only to reward it once it is hairless, all done in anticipation of giving and receiving sexual pleasure. Curiously, the wording detailing this 'preparation' is very similar to the previously mentioned description El Saadawi's uses to discuss the standard Arab female whose 'inner core' has been discarded of. Here, body hair removal reinforces the notion that a female body should undergo many hours of preparation before it is deemed ready to be revealed to the awaiting man.

The narrator of this short story, a talented writer herself who participates in public readings of her work, is clearly not a woman who has been 'discharged of her inner core' as El Saadawi states. Yet she finds pleasure in preparing her body for her lover to enjoy, although she knows that he is incapable of fulfilling her sexual needs. She decides to find a pink nightgown because the color 'promises uninterrupted passion'[22] and she sets out to explore different methods that may bring her sexual satisfaction. After trying several methods, her lover fails in giving her the fulfilment she needs. The story ends with the narrator participating in a reading of an erotic story that leads to her finding a better lover. The message of sexual emancipation is clear, and interestingly, for a woman to reach it, she must undergo pain first. In this example, hair removal is used as a means to aid in liberating a woman's body, while at the same time objectifying it.

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[20] AL-SHAYKH: 'Cupid complaining to Venus' 197.
[21] IDEM 197.
[22] IDEM 196.

In both of Al-Shaykh's narratives, the use of wax to remove women's body hair is mentioned as man-pleasing tool. Religion is not the agenda behind this ritual, but rather the societal expectation of what women's bodies should look and feel like are. Elizabeth Pleck shares Asad's views in regards to the inextricable link between religion and ritual. Pleck claims that religion is often a "driving force behind ritual,"[23] and perhaps it is so in regards to the practice of hair removal, since it is often done within the forty-day period as per the instructions of the Prophet Mohammed. It is my argument, however, that female body hair removal is so deeply embedded as a norm in Arabic culture, that the religious reasons behind the practice have been somewhat lost. Hair removal has become a secular ritual, since it enacts, as Lisa Schirch explains, "some aspect of people's values and beliefs without explicitly referencing religious beliefs"[24] The ritualistic symbolism it conjures, however, is a cultural one, as Faqir demonstrates in her novel *My Name is Salma* (2010). Originally Jordanian, the main character, Salma, gets pregnant and is nearly killed by her brother Mahmoud for tarnishing the family's honor. She is placed in a prison for protective custody until she has her baby. Once her baby girl is born she is immediately taken away. Salma is rescued by nuns who arrange for her escape to Britain. Faqir uses a non-linear narrative to portray Salma's internal conflict. Once in Britain, Salma completely ignores the Arab traditions that she grows up with, "with a lubricated razor, I shaved my legs and underarms carefully. […] The painful and sticky sugaring belonged to the past".[25] The image of hair removal represents the practicality of her life in Britain, it is quick, painless and effortless. As for Salma's past, it is difficult, painful and tiresome. Faqir's comparison emphasizes that there are rituals in the Arab world that are lengthy, but are part of the Arab culture. Schirch explains that "improvised rituals often blend old or familiar symbols in new ways to create a new ritual with a familiar feel."[26] It is curious that Faqir's protagonist does not discard her hair removal ritual altogether, rather she modifies it, and adopts new Westernized means to the same ends, which also suggests a similar ideal of how woman should appear in both cultures.

Faqir's novel *Pillars of Salt* (2007), similar to *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, also mentions hair removal in passing. Based in Jordan, the first person narrative shifts between a storyteller and two women; Maha, a desert local, and Um Saad a city woman. Both Maha and Um Saad end up in a mental asylum for defying their families' attempts to enforce tight control over them. Laying in their hospital

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[23] E. HAFKIN PLECK: *Celebrating the family: Ethnicity, consumer culture, and family rituals* (Massachusetts 2000) 162.

[24] L. SCHIRCH: *Ritual and symbol in peacebuilding* (Connecticut 2005) 19.

[25] F. FAQIR: *My name is Salma* (London 2007) 11.

[26] SCHIRCH: *Ritual and symbol in peacebuilding* 21.

beds, the two women discuss their pasts with each other. Um Saad complains to Maha:

> We wax our legs, cut our hair, line our eyes, paint our lips. The problem is men never notice the change. Um Gharib, may Allah reward her, used to say that we are just vessels. That is how men see us.[27]

Again, here hair removal conjures an image of oppression and conformity to patriarchal values. It shows the lengths that women go to in hopes of pleasing men.

The short story and three novels portray a similar theme: the heroines are imprisoned by their families and their societies' traditions and cultural values – man is the oppressor and the enforcer of these traditions, and woman's every day actions, even the mundane (and often painful) task of hair removal are instruments to capture the interest and secure the affection of man. As Um Saad illustrates, men do not necessarily even notice.

This is where Lebanese screenwriter Nadine Labaki's film *Caramel* (2007) differs. Unlike the previous four narratives in which hair removal is used as one of many other tools to exhibit the oppression of women, and showcase the differences between the slow painful Middle Eastern and the quick painless Western methods, *Caramel,* is a film which revolves around the concept of women's body hair removal. The Arabic title of the film can be literally translated as *Girl Sugar* which is the melted sugar used to yank unwanted hair away from women's bodies.

The introduction displays the ritualistic making of the sugar. The preparation is portrayed as sensual; a woman's hands are shown, expertly fixing the mixture. Different senses are engaged in order to test the sugar's consistency, the sizzling, the stirring, and finally the touching and tasting through affectionately placing some caramel into each other's mouths, accompanied by chatter and soothing music. Comparable to *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, the film follows the lives of five women, Layale, Nisrin, Rima, Jamal, and Rose. The beauty salon is the space where these women tend to each other and support each other. They are seen as discussing feminist issues, such as the loss of virginity before marriage and undergoing a hymenoplasty in order to fake virginity for a wedding night, the difficulties of loving unattainable men, and family obligations. Hans Georg Soeffer states that "Ritual uses symbolic actions to communicate a forming or transforming message in a unique social space."[28] The ritual of sugaring (epilation) shown in the film is the symbolic action; however, it is used as an excuse for women to meet and talk in a safe female only space. Unlike the narratives mentioned earlier,

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[27] F. FAQIR: *Pillars of salt* (Canada 2007) 159.

[28] H.G. SOEFFER: *The order of rituals: The interpretation of everyday life* (New Jersey 1997) xii.

the hair removal itself is not discussed – it is simply done. It is not portrayed as a tool that oppresses women, but rather it is a ritual that the women bond over.

In the second scene of the film, a woman in her underwear is shown screaming in pain during a hair removal session – illustrating the women's intimacy and ease with each other even as one is inflicting pain on the other, since with this pain comes the pleasure of knowing that the unwanted hair is being yanked away. In the film, the body hair is not shown, which returns us to the taboo of female body hair – that it can be discussed, its removal can be shown in a film, but as Lesnik-Oberstein points out, female body hair itself is something not to be seen and that it is "surrounded by shame, disgust and censure."[29] The woman leaving the salon has been reborn, the unwanted hair no longer on her legs and face, she walks out radiating confidence and femininity, as if the ritual of depilation of body hair is a part of an initiation that brings a hairy female back to womanhood.

Eventually, Rima arranges an appointment at the salon enabling Layale to meet her lover's wife face to face. Layale is forced to epilate the woman's legs and is shown spreading the hot melted sugar on her thighs and yanking the sticky mixture off. The woman yelps in pain and Layale apologizes for heating the sugar too much and continues to repeat the motion almost vindictively. As previously discussed, this repetitive motion that brings with it anticipation of return, is one of the features that ritualizes this practice. The performative action of applying the sugar, pulling it off, over and over again, until every last hair is gone, almost as though Layale is inflicting punishment on the woman to whom her lover is legally wedded to. The woman compliments Layale on her hair, and admits that she would love to change her own hair, but her "husband loves [her] the way [she is]" (my translation) which provokes Layale into yanking the caramel away harder, causing the woman to scream louder. The woman is in a vulnerable position, in her underwear, exposing her body with its hairiness to a woman who inflicts physical pain on her, the very woman who has an intimate relationship with her husband, although that fact is unknown to her. Similar to the nameless narrator in al Shaykh's short story, a major part of preparing the body involves pain. The cheating man's wife, in anticipation of becoming sexually desirable to her husband, lets Layale's inflict repetitive punishing movements on her body. Guilt and misery begin creeping into Layale's face as she starts slowing down her movements, lessening the pain of the other woman in the process.

In another scene the policeman who is owed a favor by these women is allowed into their salon. The scene shows that he is out of place, being the only male among curious females, he is leered at as Layale removes his unwanted facial hair. Although previous scenes show women asexually touching each other in

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[29] LESNIK-OBERSTEIN: *The last taboo* 2.

intimate ways, this particular scene conveys the sexual tension, highlighting the reversal of traditional roles – the police officer is going to painstaking measures to get the beautiful Layale to notice *him*. She stands over him, inflicting pain on him in the name of grooming while the other women watch. This powerful scene is of particular importance to the development of Arab women's fiction, which often shows brief moments of female empowerment that end in tragedy. In this scene, however, female solidarity and empowerment is rewarded by the policeman leaving the salon, also walking out reborn, showing that the transformation is not necessarily unique to females.

I have explored body hair removal's portrayal in Arab women's fiction, which often is a reflection of reality and a portal which women use to illustrate feminist issues. The women who have written about epilation in their fiction did so deliberately, in order to display a ritual that is followed by women of all social classes in the Arab world. Even now, at a time of such political uncertainty and upheaval in the region, women's hair salons and beauty clinics are thriving in Al Zaatari, the Syrian refugee camp in the north of Jordan.[30] Al Zaatari has quickly gone from a place of refuge to a slum-like place where children have met their death of cold, where young girls have been prostituted, and women have been raped and beaten.[31] Yet the women there have managed to create a relatively safe, female only space that does exactly what the salon in *Caramel* does – it is a safe haven for women to meet and discuss feminist issues, a place for women to find solace in each other, under the umbrella of body-hair removal and other types of grooming.

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[30] R. ABOUZEID: 'Living in Limbo: The women of Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp', in *Marie Claire* (February 2014), available at http://www.marieclaire.com/world-reports/women-jordan-zaatari-refugee-camp-living-in-limbo (accessed May 2014).

[31] J. BINDEL: 'Women come last in Syrian refugee camps', in *Standpoint Magazine* (April 2013), available at http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/4917/full (accessed May 2014).

Part III

ART PERFORMANCES

6

REWORKING THE SENSE OF BELONGING:
THE RITUAL OF N'DEEP IN *NONNO DIO E GLI SPIRITI DANZANTI* BY PAP KHOUMA

Raffaella Bianchi

> *Griots* play in the shadow of a mango tree in the courtyard of Aby Mané, where *tur* or *khamb* are built: a structure made of dry tree branches on which roots, herbs and shells wrapped in pieces of cloths or in animal skins or inserted into rams' or goats' horns are hung. Also plastic bottles full of *safara*, a magic filter, *calebasse*, carved pumpkin filled with mysterious substances. These are the instruments of the auntie to cure the possessed.[1]

This description of the *n'deep*, a traditional ritual, narrated in Pap Khouma's novel *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* (*God Grandpa and the dancing spirits),* seems stereotypical of what a Western reader would expect from an African ritual *Voodoo*-like; from drums to evocative tools. At first sight, the book deals with a traditional type of healing ritual; it sounds like one setting of an ethnographic exploration of Victor Turner.[2] However, there is a substantial difference. Rituals analyzed by Turner took place in traditional societies; while Khouma's novel is set in a different environment. The ritual is performed amidst cultural tensions typical of the contemporary world where ethnicities, identities and traditional values are mixed. The chapter analyses this narrative that challenges the traditional concept of 'authenticity' and replace it with a multicultural perspective. By doing this, it highlights the function of the ritual for the solution of the novel's vis-à-vis the plot and the sense of belonging to a community.

At the time of writing, with the Syrian war pushing refugees around the borders and new walls of Europe, multiculturalism is a crucial theme that seems to be central to our future. This is a theme that has been largely explored by Italophone

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[1] P. KHOUMA: *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* (Milan 2005) 111. "I *griot* suonano all'ombra di un mango nel cortile di Aby Mané, dove sono piantati i *tur* o *khamb*: una struttura fatta di rami secchi dai quali pendono radici, erbe, cortecce, conchiglie racchiuse in pezzi di stoffa o in pelli di animali o infilati dentro corni di montone e di capra. Penzolano anche bottiglie di plastica piene di *safara*, un filtro magico, *calebasse*, zucche secche svuotate e riempite con sostanze misteriose. Questi sono gli strumenti invisibili della zia per curare i posseduti". All translations of this novel are mine.

[2] V. TURNER: *The ritual process. Structure and antistructure* (New York 1969).

literature. Khouma is considered one of the most authoritative voices of this liter-
ary current, also called the Italian literature of migration.[3] This literary stream
emerged in the 1990s and has produced around five-hundred texts. These are writ-
ten by new Italian citizens who migrated in Italy and choose Italian language as a
mean for their literary and poetic expression.

In particular, Pap Khouma is native francophone. Khouma is famous because
of his first novel which was one of the first examples of *récits de vie* of a migrant in
Italy, and recounted the experience of whose street sellers that were labeled "*vu'
cumpra*".[4] Raffaele Taddeo defines Pap Khouma as a migrant writer, in the sense
that the experience of migration has been fundamental as inspiration for his writ-
ings.[5] Indeed, *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* recounts another fundamental experi-
ence of migration, namely a journey back home. The author's experience of migrant
is still relevant for this novel; however this is not as a source of inspiration for the
plot. Khouma's second novel is not an autobiographical account. Indeed, it re-
counts a more universal experience that migrants encounter: the tension of reli-
gious and cultural traditions, habits and perspectives of their world of origins and
of the new world they have settled in. In this changing cultural context, what is the
place for a traditional ritual?

1. Rituals and belonging

Turner highlights how rituals are intertwined with values and power-structures of
the traditional societies where they take place. As Jeffery Alexander puts it:

> Rituals are episodes of repeated and simplified cultural communication in which the
> direct partners to a social interaction, and those observing it, share a mutual belief in
> the descriptive and prescriptive validity of the communication's symbolic contents
> and accept the authenticity of one another's intentions. It is because of this shared
> understanding of intention and content, and in the intrinsic validity of the interaction,
> that rituals have their effect and affect.[6]

Belonging to a community that 'share a mutual belief' and understand 'communi-
cation's symbolic contest' is a precondition for the ritual's power. Participants to
rituals belong to the same imagined community. During rituals takes place what
Turner termed 'liminality', namely a state of fusion. According to Turner, all rituals

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[3] A. GNISCI: *Creolizzare l'Europa. Letteratura e migrazione* (Rome 2003); R. TADDEO: *Letteratura nascente*
(Milan 2014); G. PARATI: 'Italophone voices', in *Italian Studies in Southern Africa* 8 (1995) 11-15.
[4] P. KHOUMA & O. PIVETTA: *Io venditore di elefanti* (Milan 1990).
[5] TADDEO: *Letteratura nascente* 12.
[6] J.C. ALEXANDER: 'Cultural pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy', in J.C.
ALEXANDER, B. GIESEN & J.L. MAST (eds.): *Social performance: Symbolic action, cultural pragmatics and ritual*
(Cambridge and New York 2006) 29.

have liminal spaces in which traditional status distinctions dissolve, social con-
straints suspend, and a special form of solidarity, which he called *communitas*, takes
place. In liminal spaces, social distinctions gave room to egualitarianism.[7] There-
fore, through rituals the individual experiences a profound sense of belonging to a
community. In turn, the community is strengthen through rituals.

Is this sense of belonging to a place re-enforced in Khouma's novel? The
context in which the *n'deep* of this novel takes place is far from being a traditional
society where there is a clear set of shared values, and all the participants and the
audience accept the authenticity of the ritual's intentions. Written in Italian and
enriched by words in French and *Wolof*, the novel is set at the intersection of dif-
ferent cultures and geographies. In traditional societies, rituals solidified collective
identities and embedded the cultural system in individual actions. However, later
on, Turner notes that as social forms of organization became more complex and
cultural systems more heterogeneous, collective rituals have grown more contin-
gent.[8] This chapter explores the significance of the shifted function and meaning
of the ritual in the novel vis-à-vis this shift in the community system. As we will
see below, the ritual of *n'deep* is recounted with multiple perspectives, in a challeng-
ing globalized world in which there are many contradictions at the level of the
individual and of the community.

2.   Multiple perspectives of belonging

The ritual of *n'deep* takes place in a global community. This is narrate through mul-
tiple perspectives. The story develops in the imaginary city of Taagh, which could
be anywhere in Western Africa. The city and its inhabitants have a choral voice.
This is expressed by a sort of community narrator. Like in Giovanni Verga's novel,
this 'collective omniscient narrator' sees characters and events with the common
sense of the community. Thus, everybody provides unwanted advice typical of tra-
ditional common sense; for instance, every illness should be cured by a brood of
boiled beef's knees. Common sayings repeated in the text provide a fresh and ironic
gaze on some Occidentalisms. These are stereotyped notions of the West which
are supposed to be common in Africa. This stereotypical 'African gaze' looks to-
wards the North to those whites with a weak complexion: '*Ils sont fragile les Toubab*'.
According to the perspective of those who belong to this African community,
Europe becomes the land of *Toubab*, the land of whites.

Yet, this collective narrator is not the only perspective of the book. In partic-
ular, points of view pertaining to the main protagonists are also presented. All the
main characters of this novel visiting Taagh, are coming from Italy. Apart from

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[7] V. TURNER: *Dramas, fields, and metaphors. Symbolic action in human society* (Itaca, NY 1974).

[8] ALEXANDER, GIESEN & MAST (eds.): *Social performance.*

Øng there are other people whose destinies cross in Taagh. In particular, these people live in Lombardy, a region in the North of Italy where the higher percentage of migrants from Senegal live. These characters, are either migrants, or are Italians visiting the family of one of their relatives. Gork Mark and his wife Elena Rossini have a male child and they are visiting Gork's family of origin. Sensitive issues of hybridization and cultural cross-contaminations are expressed by their perspectives. Their mixed identities generate a cluster of diverse perspectives. The novel expresses feelings and sentiments of a universal experience of transformation that occurs to migrant subjects, which will be re-worked by the ritual. Sociologist calls this process secondary socialization. If family, schools and institutions of the country of origins have contributed to the primary socialization process of the individual; the experience of moving to a new country with a new set of norms and institutions generate a process of 'secondary' process of socialization. When coming back from 'where they belong', migrants are confronted with the world 'back home': new values acquired by migrants clash with the perspectives and informal rules of their world of origins.

The process of going back to the country of origin, and to one of the main institutions of primary socialization, such as the family, challenges subject's identity and values. This is because norms and values pertaining to the two processes of socializations are confronted. This might generate confusion and identitarian crises. This is the case of the other male migrant character of this novel, Gork who is described as torn between the values of his country of origins represented by his mother and the values of the country where he has established his family represented by his wife. These are two worlds that might want to meet, but found fundamental differences in some habits, ways of life and relevant issues. For instance, Gork's mum think is time to take steps to organize the party for his grandson circumcision; while Gork's wife is horrified by this practice. Gork does not seem to have a clear opinion or to have made a choice about the circumcision of his son. Going back has put him in a state of identitarian crises between his two worlds of affects. He is not able to make up his mind on what is right. He sees the reasons of both parts. This conflict is expressed by his headache. Gork's headache represents the painful indecision of cultural belonging.

Indeed, the originality of this novel lays on the lack of a clear border that set one world against the other. Here, Orientalisms and Occidentalisms are not depicted as opposite.[9] This creates a shared space in which identities and expressions of different languages melts. Here, characters are on the move, namely migrants and travelers who do not belong to a specific culture. In addition, the multi-perspectivity of the book generates multiple-Others. This is paradigmatically expressed in the protagonist's double name Øng/Dawala. Øng is the name used by

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[9] E.W. SAID: *Orientalism* (New York 1978).

the narrator of the novel to introduce this character. However Øng's mother would call him Dawala. The first name was chosen by the protagonist's father and the mother refuses it. Øng stays at his mother's place and his name in the local community will be Dawala, although he calls himself Øng. These multiple-Others are the conflicted senses of belonging of migrants.

Precisely, it is the multiperspectivity[10] that blurs borders of a world that is not depicted as black and white. Therefore, the encounter between African culture and European-*Toubab* culture is not situated on a clear binary opposition between 'us' and 'them'.

This novel situates itself beyond the narrow borders of a national literature,[11] and expresses with its multiperspectivity voices and identities which do not belong anywhere in particular. They express the universal sufferance of identities in flux.

3. Places of belonging versus interconnected space

Identities do not belong anywhere specifically, and also places are no longer defined by clear cultural borders. In other words, there is no longer a 'specific' place and culture where to belong. This is because space is depicted as interconnected. Taagh is not described as a closed traditional community. Pieces of news arrive from other parts of the country and from abroad, sea traffic mix waters, goods and morals. In addition, events happening long-distance are influencing directly lives of characters over there. Taagh is an imaginary African city clearly situated in the contemporary global world. Pap Khouma's gaze is a view coming from Africa, and yet clearly situated in Northern Italy. The author has migrated from Senegal thirty years ago, and he has become a well-known Milanese intellectual, also his characters are coming from the same region.

Øng's point of view, the ways he describes things is not connected with memories of the past. By contrast, the space that he sees from the plane's window is displaced and associated in his imagination to Italy: "Taagh's airport looks like plants of Bergamo's firms."[12] Since the very first gaze from the plane's window, Øng sees the space of Africa with the eyes of a person from Lombardy; and the word he uses *capannone* and *ditte* stroke me as a typical word used in the North of Italy to define factories and companies.

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[10] M. HARTNER: 'Multiperspectivity', in P. HÜHN ET AL. (eds.): *The living handbook of narratology* (Hamburg view date: 25 May 2015), available at: http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php?title=Multiperspectivity&oldid=1857.

[11] On this topic see U. FRACASSA: *Patria e lettere. Per una critica della letteratura postcoloniale e migrante in Italia* (Rome 2012).

[12] KHOUMA: *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* 11: "L'aereoporto di Taagh assomiglia ai capannoni delle ditte bergamasche."

The relation of the subject with the globalized world is complex. Since the first few lines, space is narrated as displacement. The narration's space opens up in the sky, in between countries. The plot begins and ends in a circular way: with a flight of the protagonist. Interestingly, Øng is not in control of the space. The migrant could be seen as the epitome of the traveler at the time of globalization. Øng is a good example of this, as he does not master the means of transports he is taken around with. The journey by taxi from the airport to his mother's home becomes a disaster, and at the end of the novel he is forcibly taken back to Milan. This is because he is accused by the police of having assaulted his partner, Federica Colombo. In addition, also the other characters have difficulties in going back and forth. What is narrated here is not the story of a nineteenth century traveler who dominates the world, opposite to the modernizer *Faust*.[13]

Travel literature is a genre that has passionate readers for centuries. Interestingly, the characters or this novel do not move around easily. Despite the great narration of globalization, migrants and travelers are not described as conqueror of space. Obviously, this is relevant for those migrants that cross the desert and the Mediterranean and do not survive the journey, as it is evident for Syrian refugees currently persecuted in Hungary. However, this seems also to be the case for more fortunate expats. In my novel, *15 Kg* the sense of displacement of identity shifts are symbolized in the struggle to move stuff around in luggage.[14] Paradoxically, travel has become easier; however, it has lost its positivist flavor. Moving is no longer an adventurous discovery, planned in beautifully drawn maps of the world. Now a journey is represented in small screen of phones that show the contingency of where one is, rather than providing an idea of the context of the space of travel. Rather than being a decision planned head, sudden circumstances force the novel's characters to move across space. There is a parallel with the findings of a recent study on drain-brain in Italy. Italian researchers working abroad rarely talks about the decision of leaving Italy as a strategy of movement carefully planned. Rather, their decision of moving is associated to the words: 'randomness' and 'circumstances'.[15] This relation with space, of the postmodern subject living in a globalized era, is a characteristic that is well portrayed in this novel.

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[13] M. BERMAN: *All that is solid melts into air* (London/New York: 1982) 37-86.

[14] R. BIANCHI: '15 Kg', in *El-ghibli rivista online di letteratura della migrazione* 10/40 (2013), available at http://archivio.el-ghibli.org/index.php%3Fid=1&issue=10_40&section=2&index_pos=2.html (accessed May 2015).

[15] J. GROVE: 'Study reveals misery of overseas scholars "living the dream"', in *Times of Higher Education* (21 May 2015), available at http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/study-reveals-misery-of-overseas-scholars-living-thedream/2020276.article?utm_content=buffer71eb7&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer#.VWOQVU-_rpM.facebook (accessed May 2015).

4. The sound of belonging

As we have seen, he novel highlights how Taagh (and the world) has mutated, and there is no place that has a clear set of original and traditional values. Modernity has brought change. The place where things have not mutated is only the space of memory. In the novel, the sense of belonging to the country of origin is articulated within multiple identities. These mirrors the diverse points of view expressed by a narrator who shifts perspectives. In this context, the binary opposition between 'us' and 'them' takes place only in memories of childhood. In these memories, drum rolls become a signifier of difference:

> 'Can't they play an instrument less boring than the harp?' they asked the Fathers. 'Only harp and not even one little drum? How sad! This is why no black child would like to go to the Heaven of Whites; not to get bored with the harp!'[16]

This sentence expresses a soundscape of difference. Drums are musical instruments used in Senegal in the traditional spiritual ritual of the *n'deep*, and are signifiers of African musical traditions; while the harp is an instrument associated with the music of angels in Christian iconographic tradition. The binary opposition is between blacks and whites angels. The latter play the harp on walls of Christian missions that Øng attended when he was a child, with the aim of playing and watching films with other children. These memory cutaways are presented with a subtle humor. The *locus* of a defined identity is the space of memory placed in the migrant's subconscious.

However, as it has been noted elsewhere, the present tense makes this book not a novel of memories.[17] The novel is recounted in a present tense and, although the plot is set in an imaginary city, all references are to present conditions of Africa and Lombardy. Thus, the present tense used in the text highlights the present time we are living in, namely our globalized societies characterized by mixed identities. In addition, the present is the time for action. *Io venditore di elefanti*, the first book by Pap Khouma, was written as a political document and was full of autobiographical elements; while this second book is an action novel. The plot is set in motion. First, Øng is in a plane, then he gets into a car, different mean of transports are displacing the subject. The protagonist is involved in a plot of action with sexual intercourses, traffics and even a murder. Moreover, the novel presents some international mafia characters that are acting in the background and are dealing with weapons and boats, while even a civil war is coming closer to Taagh. The book expresses the

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[16] KHOUMA: *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* 62: "Non potevano suonare uno strumento meno noioso dell'arpa?" aveva domandato ai Padri. "Solo arpa e nessun tamburino, che tristezza!" Ecco perché nessun bambino nero vuol andare nel paradiso dei bianchi, per non annoiarsi con l'arpa!"

[17] LA TENDA: 'Nonno Dio e gli spiriti', available at http://www.latenda.eu/index.php?option= com_content&view=article&id=159 (Milan 2 December 2005).

dynamism of contemporary globalized life, memories are just a sound from the past chanting in migrants' heads; sounds of past belonging.

5.   Coming back to where one belongs

In this word of displacement, does the novel express the need to go back to the roots? Is a journey back home a quest to find again the place where one belongs and settle in nicely?

The impossibility of return for a migrant is a popular topic dealt with by the Italian literature of migration. According to the literary analysis of Raffaele Taddeo, in novels and short stories of the literature of migration one of the main reasons migrants cannot go back is the refusal of the community of origins.[18] This impossibility of going back where one belongs to is also well-expressed in *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti*. Since his arrival, Øng's mother welcomes his son; however she keeps denying his identity as migrant. In particular, she seems not keen to learn in which country of Europe her son lives, and what his profession is. These are essential characteristics of a personal identity. Øng's new identity is refused by his family of origins. To come back does not necessarily mean to find a community of affects. The experience of migration of one family member has changed perspectives, and transformed the sense of belonging also inside the community of origins. The family of origin is not a welcoming community. The migrant has been transformed by the experience of migration; in addition, the family of origin is not like the one the migrant has left before. Not only place is seen as dis-placement; also time had an impact on migrant's belonging. The community distanced itself from migrant's memories of belonging.

It is important to highlight how processes of development and transformation took place also in the original community. This makes the community of origin different from memories which are stuck on the mind of migrants. Taagh is conceptualized as community of origin only on memories, and on the subconscious of the migrants. Øng's wife, his son and a choral character named the 'gossiping tongues' (*les mauvaises langues*) do not accept his return. Life of affects developed when he was away. Øng's son was born and grew up without seeing his father, and he is afraid of him. Øng's wife is with another man, although she keeps appearance by still living in the house of Øng's family with the child. Øng and his wife have been apart for longtime and they did not shared a great deal, so they have in common old memories and a child; however they seems incapable of affection and do not share a common project or a similar gaze on life. Øng's effort to come closer to his son and wife are not successful.

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[18] R. Taddeo: *La ferita di Odisseo. Il ritorno nella letteratura italiana della migrazione* (Nardò 2010).

Gork Mark and Elena Rossini are challenged as a couple by the return of Gork. Gork Mark is torn between the values of his wife Elena, and the principles of his mother. As Pap Khouma highlighted, these characters question the very concept of 'mixed couple':

> What is a mixed couple? Is it a union between two people who were born in the same ethnic group? And what happens if, then, they have different life experiences in culturally diverse countries? Or could be defined a mix couple, a couple made up of people who have different ways of life? Where's the accent when we focus on 'mix'?[19]

Khouma believes that culture held a stronger power than ethnicity. According to him, a mixed couple is a couple with heterogeneous values and experience of belongings. Øng and his wife who remained in Senegal are a mixed couple despite belonging to the same ethnicity group. Gork and his wife have different skin colors, but they both belong to Lombardy. However, this is true until they get to Taagh, and Gork's sense of belonging is challenged. The *deus-ex-machina* of the novel that reworks 'affective belongings' and identitarian headaches is the ritual of the *n'deep*.

6.   *N'deep* and conflicts of belonging

Tensions of changes in the sentimental way of life of visitors of Taagh are interrupted by the sounds of drums; the *n'deep* is the moment of boiling of these tensions. Here, the ritual exposes the contradictions of the plot, making tense situations to explode, and changing migrants' loving life. More precisely, with the ruling of drums of the *n'deep* there is an acceleration of events that will make a shift on the relationships of migrants with belongings to places, cultures, and affective groups. Gork Mark has been having a migraine since he came back to Taagh. He goes to the *n'deep* only because of his Toubab wife, Elena, who is curious about it. However, the unexpected happened: he is possessed. He spends days in a state of trance. During these days, things develop in his life. Elena has to go home to Gork's family alone with their child, and she is lost in cultural differences of everyday life. Firstly, she is not able to get used to a house always full of guests, which make it difficult for her to use the bathroom, and to eat. She does not belong to this crowded house. In addition, her mother in law insists on practicing circumcision on Elena's and Gork's child. Elena decides to send her child home to Bergamo, where he belongs. Then, she moves out from the family's house, and chose to stay in a hotel. Moreover, Elena does not belong to the culture of Taagh; thus, she does not believe in spirits. This makes it difficult for her to understand what is happening to Gork. She distances herself from the country of her husband. She feels isolated and one night she has sex with Øng.

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[19] R. BIANCHI: Interview with Pap Khouma, 30 March 2013.

This change also Øng's family life, as his wife found out and leaves him. In the meantime, rebels and a war are increasingly coming closer to Taagh. This pushes Elena towards the decision to go back where she belongs in Bergamo, with or without Gork who is still in trance. Although she is still his wife, the journey and the ritual have changed their relationship. Yet, she does not want to become Øng's partner (there is a funny scene of pursuit in the market that is a *topoi* of many Orientalist movies). This is not an African version of the plot of the movie *Casablanca*. The focus is not on romance, but on belonging to a world of emotions in motion. Here, the *n'deep* works on stuck emotions; reworking affective belongings according to emotions, rather than restructuring the subject within traditional family and community values. This is in contrast with Turner's understanding of the role of rituals in traditional societies. This might be because, as we said above, Taagh is no longer a traditional society, so the function of the ritual is more contingent, like the community where it is performed.

7. Belonging and moving

This is clear also if one analyses the role of rituals in reference with the values of the local community. Paradoxically, both Aunty Mané, who performs the *n'deep*, and the migrants of the novel, have controversial relations with the community of origin. They both struggle to be accepted. In the novel they are both a reality of the past; they do not fit in Taagh's social life. The ritual of *n'deep*, is far from strengthening community values; by contrast, it no longer belongs to the community. In particular, Aunty Mané is challenged by two different male authorities: the elderly of the mosque, and a Western doctor.

Firstly, the group of elderly men meeting at the mosque opposes the *n'deep* and tries to stop Aunti Mané healing practices. They go to Aunty Mané's home and she meets them in a studio that is decorated with posters of Sofia Loren (written with a 'ph', *Sophia*), Zeudi Araya, Giuliano Gemma's horse, Mandela and Claudia Cardinale. This would be an unusual environment for a healer of a traditional community; the space suggests that this is a globalized space. Aunty Mané offers her guests some drinks and keeps wishing peace to everybody, and every living creature. Men interrupt her abruptly: "Aby Mané you have to stop with the *n'deep* and with your mania to bother spirits. *N'deep* is a mortal sin."[20] Aunty Mané explains that she works with spirits (*rap*) who are part of their traditional myths in order to alleviate the suffering of people, as it had always been done in that place. Elderly men, reply accusing her of being pagan. According to their views, pagans and

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[20] KHOUMA: *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* 136: "Aby Mané, la devi smettere col *n'deep* e con la tua mania d'infastidire gli spiriti. Il *n'deep* è peccato mortale."

masons are similar as they both will go to hell. It seems that also the *n'deep* struggle to belong in Taagh.

At this point, the dialogue takes a twist. Aunty Mané invites elderly men to leave her house, and to deal with the devastating political situation of Sahaél, instead of worrying about spirits. She says that they are governed by corrupted autocrats who are all male; she defines them as 'impaired' (*carenti*) male. Young male are at war, and the people are tired. She menaces to take lead of Sahaél's women in order to give a positive destiny to the country: "to save it from you men."[21] This can be seen as a variation from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*.[22] Indeed, elderly of the mosque represents the conservative patriarchy that blocks political development of Taagh, and healing through the ritual. This is the aspect of the novel which has been more discussed in book launches. This gendered political dimension is intentional, and in line with the author's thought. Pap Khouma underlines how positive work for development of countries in Africa is usually carried out by women; while men are dealing with power, strange traffics, war and corruption.[23] His views on gender and development have close affinities with Vandana Shiva's concept of ecofeminism.[24]

In addition, another man challenges Aunty Mané's practices. This represents two relevant powers, namely the power white colonizers who have superimposed "modernization" and Western medicine to traditional societies. The doctor is an important character in the novel Professeur Jean Dumaison, director of the psychiatric hospital of Taagh, wants to close the *n'deep*. His behavior typifies the attitude of the West towards traditional medicine and rituals. At the beginning Western colonizers tried to suppress the. Later on, an anthropological and medical interest became predominant and rituals were studied. So, also Professeur Jean Dumaison starts to study the *n'deep* like Turner.

In my opinion, shifts of behavior of this character are key to understand the role of the ritual in this novel, as well as its positive message of hope. Also the surname of the doctor is significant: '*maison*' means house/home and Professor is '*Du' maison*, someone at home, familiar. Thus, one needs to deal with presences that have made home of your country. His character mirrors our work as Western interested in the Other, and yet provided with imperfect tolls.

Or, the doctor's name could be a signifier that one could be at home everywhere if s/he is able to rework emotional and cultural belongings, by accepting practices of reconciliation of cultural conflicts like the *n'deep*. Surprisingly, Dumaison does something more radical than just studying. He asks Aunty Mané

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[21] KHOUMA: *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* 137: "[...] per salvarlo da voi uomini."

[22] ARISTOPHANES: *Lysistrata* [411 BC] (Oxford 1987).

[23] BIANCHI: Interview to Pap Khouma, 30 March 2013.

[24] S. VANDANA: *Staying alive. Women, ecology and development* (New Delhi 1988).

to perform the *n'deep* in his hospital. This is deeply significant as a way to reconcile medical with traditional knowledge in a dialectic relationship. It is also significant of a mutate relationship of power between male and female, as well as of ex-colonizer and ex-colonized subjects. Through the ritual, the space of medicine is made sacred again, and sacred and science meet. In dealing with the relation between medicine and traditional healing practices, the novel also stages what Kenneth Thompson defined as the dialectic between sacralization and secularization. [25]

The *n'deep* transforms itself situating its healing power in a special space across boundaries of medical/traditional knowledge, as well as across power boundaries of colonized subject/colonizer. In other words, not only disenchantment but re-enchantment characterizes post-traditional societies.[26] The multiple perspectives, the diverse gazes of the characters and the diverse space is the space of narration between Europe (or Italy) and Africa (or Senegal). The *n'deep* helps these perspectives and these contradictions to emerge. There is no belonging: there is no return for the migrant to a reality of the past that exists only in sound memories. There is no return to pre-globalized traditional communities. However, there is the possibility of making science and traditional knowledge both as instruments at the service of a shared common space of encounter. The *n'deep* shows a possibility of a dialectic relationship.

Migrants passing across situations of micro-conflicts have the possibility to change and to heal; then, they are suddenly drown elsewhere. They cannot belong, they have to keep moving. All the characters are displaced again back to Italy for different and contingent reasons. In the case of the protagonist Øng/Duwala, the accusation of having assaulted his partner in Milan, Federica Colombo, would take him back to another trouble to face. We do not know what will happen to him and we are not hoping for a second book that will explain. The final is open, and yet, somehow, it closes in a perfect circular way: from plane to plane. This movement across space and cultures is not ending with a settled finale, like the movement of people across our global world. Characters are always on the move. However, as the novel shows, sometimes there is a space that becomes a sacred space of sharing. There, a new form of liminality is possible: liminality across cultures. In this space, the ruling of drums can be heard in hospitals with angels drawn on walls. Their sound have healing powers for the global community and the individuals belonging to it.

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[25] T. KENNETH: 'Secularization and sacralization', in J.C. ALEXANDER & P. SZTOMPKA: *Rethinking progress: Movements, forces, and ideas at the end of the 20th century* (Boston 1990) 161-181.

[26] S.J. SHERWOOD: 'Narrating the social: Postmodernism and the drama of democracy', in *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 4 (1994) 69-88; Z. BAUMAN: *Postmodern ethics* (Cambridge, MA 1993).

7

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTTOMAN PUBLIC SOCIABILITY THROUGH RITUALISTIC FORMS IN FESTIVALS AND DRAMATURGICAL PERFORMANCES

Uğur Kömeçoğlu

The Ottoman festivals according to Metin And, the eminent historian of Turkish folklore, were outright 'total theatre' where diverse activities such as story-telling, singing, dancing, clowning were their integral parts. There was no fixed featured space, no play-house or stage; complete dynamic informality prevailed and there was free communication between the actors and spectators with repeated inter-change of their respective roles; to such an extent that

> the *tulumcu*s, whose function was signaling the boundary between the acting area and the auditorium, had a very intimate rapport both with the spectators and performers as if they were representatives of both sides, jesting and clowning body-to-body with them.[1]

In this article, before starting to discuss theatre in the Ottoman coffeehouses with diverse forms of carnivalesque practices therein, I would like to survey the major characteristics of real Ottoman carnivals, and examine the ways in which they created a resonant public domain. Mikhail Bakhtin believed that carnivals are creative theatrical expressions of revealed life experiences in the practice of ritualistic performances.[2] In fact, as a 'total theater', Ottoman festivals/carnivals were conducive to micro examples of performances found in Ottoman coffeehouses. The reason to dwell firstly on real Ottoman carnivals is to reflect theoretically on Bakhtin's logic of carnivalesque which is well applicable to coffeehouse performances. Bakhtin derives the term carnivalesque from the carnival as every individual is influenced in it and turned to be a participant of the carnival. He uses this concept in a wide array of contexts to refer to the mélange of different people who are encouraged for the free interaction and expression that behavior can be manifested without strong restrictions. Although carnivalesque first refers to a subversive literary mode it also becomes applicable to the many subversive social events, settings and performances in the hands of Bakhtin. Below I will try to

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[1] M. AND: *Culture performance and communication in Turkey* (Tokyo 1987) 178-179.

[2] M.M. BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world* (Bloomington 1984).

show that many analytical characteristics of Bakhtinian carnivalesque can be found in Ottoman coffeehouses especially in the more theatrical ones which will be explained throughout the text. Yet I prefer to depart from real Ottoman carnivals and then proceed towards the minor examples of coffeehouse performances as both real and metonymic functions of the carnivalesque. Because I want to create a link between pervasive social settings like Ottoman carnivals and less pervasive closed spaces like Ottoman coffeehouses which yet perform more continuous effects over the society compared to only periodical tactics of the carnivals. But I believe the power of the carnivalesque in the coffeehouses stem from the power of the metis known in the real carnivals.

I approach the carnivalesque as ritual culture, partly taking into account the great overlap between theatrical performance, the ritualistic and the carnivalesque. In looking specifically at approaches to the definition of ritual, I find many to be of help and to have some piece of the story of what ritual is. An inclusive and recent definition is given by Post, which builds upon Grimes in an expanded direction:

> Ritual is a more or less repeatable sequence of action units which, take on a symbolic dimension through formalization, stylization, and their situation in place and time. On the one hand, individuals and groups express their ideas and ideals, their mentalities and identities through these rituals, on the other hand the ritual actions shape, foster, and transform these ideas, mentalities and identities.[3]

Looking at theatre and carnival draws our attention to the stylized nature of the ritual and semi-ritual acts of performers and participants, although, of course they also include a great deal of spontaneity within the frame of carnival and dramaturgy. Proceeding on, we will see the way in which carnivals in the Ottoman context both express culture and form it, as Post notes in his definition of ritual.

Carnivalesque culture was rich in Ottoman lands. Especially the religious holidays of peoples belonging to diverse faiths were festive occasions. Elaborate rituals and ceremonies accompanied the rites of passage. Public festivities were also held to celebrate victories and other occasions. Alongside the court festivals, there was a rich folk culture of festivities. Festivals were occasions where everyday restrictions were temporarily suspended. Compared with their European equivalents Ottoman public festivals were much more civilized occurrences:

Their gaiety is little enough like the uproar of a European carnival. Even in the busiest centers of amusement, where a carriage or even a man often finds

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[3] P. POST: 'Ritual studies', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*. Http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/ 10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-21. Publication online: Sep. 2015.

difficulty in passing, there is none of the wild hilarity whereby an Occidental must express his sense of the joy of life.[4]

But this did not mean that Ottoman festivals did not involve a relaxation of constraints and an indulgence in Dionysian pleasures. From the eyewitness reports it is possible to gather that even during the great festivals ordered by the sultan, the prohibition against the consumption of alcohol was disregarded: During these festivals the male residents of Istanbul entertained themselves in the taverns of Galata without any precautions taken to keep out Muslims.[5]

Alternatively, against activities not organized by the authorities, sultans and officials have been suspicious and even apprehensive. As Faroqhi demonstrates the festivals as public performances celebrated by the sultan's subjects sometimes "gave rise to real or alleged disorder and incurred the wrath of authorities."[6] Thus, in the mid-sixteenth century, in a number of Anatolian towns the parades of the artisans greeting the return of pilgrims from Mecca were prohibited by a sultan's decree. The conversions of non-Muslims to Islam were marked by similar processions. Even though such and similar occurrences were performed with religious aims, the manner "the artisans literally beat their own drum, against a backdrop of flags and festive illuminations, seems to have made the authorities in Istanbul wary."[7]

Festivals were banned for religious reasons especially when they were perceived as heretical by the Sunni establishment, even if the participants themselves were not of the same view. For example, at the end of sixteenth century, there were attempts, on the part of authorities to ban the festival taking place in the central Anatolian town Seyitgazi, attended by the janissaries and prospective janissaries, often recent converts to Islam. An annual fair accompanied the festival, which was loosely linked with the local dervish convent. It was the playing of the music by the dervishes who escorted the participants even in the courtyard of the mosque that was especially unbearable for the authorities.[8]

Festivals not ordered by the governing elite, those taking place beyond their supervisory gaze, reflected the conflict between the centralizing policies of the state and the defiance of them by the public. Whereas the former tries to preserve the absolute, the latter distrusts and intends to deconstruct it.

The folk culture exhibited on feast days was often in disharmony with the high culture of the ruling establishment. It substituted established traditions and rules with a "free and familiar"[9] social interaction based on the principles of mu-

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[4] H.G. DWIGHT: *Constantinople: Settings and traits* (New York 1926) 268.

[5] M. AND: *Osmanli Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları* (Ankara 1982) 38.

[6] S. FAROQHİ: *Subjects of the Sultan, culture and daily life in Ottoman empire* (London 2000) 182.

[7] IDEM 182-183.

[8] IDEM 183.

[9] M. GARDİNER: *The dialogics of critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the theory of ideology* (London 1992) 52.

tual cooperation and equality. In 1572, the Ottoman authorities believed they had brought to light another form of heretical festivity. In a small town of Thrace, an annual fair was organized which was accompanied by a church ceremony:

> In the sultan's decree the annual fair is mentioned before the ceremony; a European observer would doubtless have seen the things the other way around. Both Christians and Muslims took part in a procession, which involved exhibiting a board (probably an icon), decorated with silk and silver, presumably in honor of the local church's saintly patron. However, the participation of Muslims suggests that a fertility ceremony for cattle and land was also involved. For the Ottoman authorities, the idea of Muslims taking part in a Christian ceremony was as objectionable as the festival which marked the occasion, in which Sinti or Roma were also involved and which was doubtless not always very restrained. The Christians were instructed to restrict their worship to the confines of their church. However, the real threats were directed at the Muslims, who were to be referred to Istanbul for punishment if they did not comply with the directives of the ruler.[10]

As this case demonstrates any kind of activity that could upset the traditional order (*nizam*) encountered the opposition of the center. Festivals were occasions undermining and trespassing the boundaries of civil life that were framed by the state. They were forms of public expression of inappropriate sociabilities, forms of publicness emerging outside the arrangements of the state. They represented the constant battle between 'monologizing', centralizing official forces and the 'dialogizing', diversiform unofficial popular culture of the common people; in short, they were expressions of the carnival logic in the Bakhtinian sense.[11]

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, carnival celebrates the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order."[12] The spirit of the carnival presents the opportunity to have a novel "outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things."[13] It was the transformative potential of the carnival life evolving from its capacity to interrupt ordinary life and power relations by way of overlooking social distance, building new forms of relations, redefining the relations between high and low culture, subversing the established hierarchy and transgressing the official order of reality that provoked negative reaction and incited censorious response from the authorities.[14] The carnivalesque with "its joyful relativity is opposed to that one-sided and gloomy official seriousness which is dogmatic and hostile to evolution and change", which attempts "to absolutize a given condition

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[10] FAROQHÏ: *Subjects of the Sultan* 183.
[11] BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world.*
[12] IDEM 11.
[13] IDEM 34.
[14] IDEM 123.

of existence or a given social order" and although the carnival sense of the world liberates people from exactly this sort of seriousness, according to Bakhtin, "there is not a grain of nihilism in it, nor a grain of empty frivolity or vulgar bohemian individualism."[15]

As so-called 'heresiarchal' occurrences, carnivals liberally and irreverently combine "the profane and the sacred, the lower and the higher, the spiritual and the material"[16] and thus emphasize the inevitability of change and transformation. As such they are potentially disruptive.

Some Ottoman festivals were perceived as detrimental to moral norms by the authorities due to their potential to offer public opportunities transgressing the state-determined positions. There were sporadic directives banning,

> on the grounds of public morality, the swings which were exceptionally popular at festivities of every kind. These may have represented attempts on the part of the sultan to strengthen his political position by espousing the beliefs of a radical religious group known in the early seventeenth century as Kadızadeli(s).[17]

The exploitation of radical groups by the authorities for purposes of bolstering their control and domination of the public life is not a modern phenomenon. The Kadızadeli(s) were involved in vandalism and violence for bringing about the closure of the coffeehouses during the reign of Murat IV. Whereas the concern of the Kadızadeli(s) were religiously-inspired, that is they were against the so-called impious activities taking place in the coffeehouses, the sultan's concerns were mainly political: It was their critical political stance in the public sphere that enlisted the support of the sultan for such violence which ended up in the short-term ban of the coffeehouses. The subversive potential of the carnivalesque forms of public expressions present in the coffeehouses were also responsible for provoking the negative reaction of the authorities.

The public visibility of women in the festivals was an important concern relating to public morality. Their presence in public spaces stirred considerable reaction. However such restrictions were loosened when it was the sultan himself who staged the festival. Women had been present as spectators in such festivals:

> Mehmed III is said to have positively demanded that they witness the celebrations marking his return to the capital after the victory of Mezökeresztes (1596). Similarly, at the circumcision festival of 1720 a large terrace was made available to allow women to take part in the public banquets organized by the ruler.[18]

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[15] BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world* 160.
[16] IDEM 285-286.
[17] FAROQHİ: *Subjects of the Sultan* 184.
[18] IDEM 184.

That they were spectators did not mean that they were reduced to passivity and silence. "Carnival," according to Bakhtin, "is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people".[19] The people in the carnival are both actors and spectators concurrently.

The court festivals, that is, the festivals organized by the sultan were the most spectacular among Ottoman festivals. They may also have provided a release for tensions between the ruling classes and the subjects. Since both Ottoman and foreign observers always accepted, indeed sometimes exaggerated, the sultan's projection of himself, traces of such conflicts are rather hard to find; however it would

> be naive to assume that all the subjects of the empire – slaves, women, or country people regarded as heretics, for example – accepted unconditionally the official version of the social hierarchy as it was presented in the sultan's festivals.[20]

This is not to say that carnival is pure negation. According to Bakhtin, carnivals are "essentially ambivalent", closely combining "praise and abuse", they "glorify and humiliate"[21], "deny but revive and renew"[22] at the same time.

The sultan's festivals were public celebrations observing every important event in the life of the sultan and his household: Besides the rites of passage – births, marriages, circumcisions – such events as the ascension of a new sultan to the throne, his victories, departure to war, the reception of a foreign ambassador were accompanied by public festivities. The festivals while entertaining the courtiers and people had also served the purpose of impressing the world by exhibiting the sultan's grandeur, might and glory.

Carnivals were not mere reflections of reality. According to Metin And, through multiple and ambivalent representations and dramatizations carnivals not only created their own social reality, but also inverted or distorted it: From time to time when they were defeated in the battle, Ottoman sultans "with the idea of falsifying the reason for their defeat and retreat, and to erase from people's minds the sad impression left thereby, ordered great rejoining and merriment on an unheard-of scale".[23] When Mehmed II had to withdraw from Belgrade in 1457, and when Süleyman the Magnificent from Vienna in 1530, they attempted "to throw dust in the eyes"[24] of their subjects by making them believe that they had not really suffered defeat. Such and similar attempts "impinge upon symbolically

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[19] BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world* 7.

[20] FAROQHÏ: *Subjects of the Sultan* 184

[21] BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world* 418.

[22] IDEM 11.

[23] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 131.

[24] IBID.

loaded and contested arenas of meaning"[25] As Bakhtin suggests, carnivals that are less the province of everyday life and more something of the authorities are associated with "crisis time", "moments of change and renewal".[26]

One can argue that the court festivals were functioning to control and manipulate the public, to maintain the state-determined hierarchies that were highlighted during the sultan's festivals. One can also claim that they served an integrative function in the Durkheimian sense: Taking into consideration the fact that all ranks of society had been represented there, the court festivals served to unite the nation, binding its members together. These celebrations brought together the subject and the sovereign "in a mystic communion", serving a vital political function "by the physical manifestation of the Sultan's person to his subjects."[27]

However, as Faroqhi claims it would be simplistic to presume that all the subjects of the sultan's realm accepted unreservedly the official version of the social hierarchy as it was presented in the sultan's festivals. The transgressive and regenerative vitality of Bakhtinian carnival was a feature of even the Ottoman court festivals:

> The melange of simultaneous events and media of multiple communications, occurrences of unexpected events in an unpredictable succession creates an apparent disorder. [Even] the court festivals were marked by deliberate departure from the ordinary rules of propriety. Though the use of wine was normally prohibited, during these festivals the restriction was withdrawn and licentiousness was extreme.[28]

The 'monstrous jumble' of the carnival indicates a hybridization, a fusion of contradictory elements, rendering possible insecure boundaries, impossible identities and unofficial truths.[29] As sites of hybrid ambivalence the court festivals also defied the distinction between various arts by wedding the various genres into one organism. For Metin And they corresponded to a cross-section of temporal and spatial arts. There was an integral blending of all the diverse art media, with non-artistic technologies and materials amalgamating into a single super-art, – a mixture of art with crafts. Craftsmen and artists were banded together in a variety of fields. Departing from the European method of "oversimplification that results in separating one art from another, the fine arts from the applied arts by

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[25] A. AMANATIDIS: 'Comic antiphony in satirical performance: The trata of Skyrian carnival', in *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9/2 (1998) 127.

[26] BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world* 9.

[27] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 133.

[28] IBID.

[29] BAKHTIN: *Rabelais and his world* 109.

compartmentalization, the Ottomans in those festivals dismissed these distinctions as insignificant."[30]

Although the court festivals largely succeeded to represent the existing public hierarchies – for instance, by ensuring that seating arrangements were made to suit the spectator's social status, kiosks and pavilions were erected in various sizes and styles – such distinctions were eliminated between overlapping territories.[31] M. And argued that the symptoms of apparent disorder in the court festivals in fact "acted as a safety-valve for an austere and puritanical society"[32], that the sovereign was permissive of disorder, which could not have been experienced otherwise. According to foreign observers, freedom of speech and action was permitted, police restrictions were withdrawn and all was required to rejoice.[33] If rejoicing was a requirement and disorder was a permission, then it is possible to argue that subjects were not the creators of freedom but the actors of an illusive, temporary and given freedom. However the issue is still debatable. M. And's argument would also be considered as naive. To conceptualize festivals merely as means of relaxing an austere and puritanical society requires little sociological imagination. Why should an austere and puritanical person engage in licentious activities and consume alcohol in the festival? It seems more plausible to suggest that activities that were perceived as immoral or inappropriate and thus confined to the secrecy of the private sphere were carried to the public space by way of the festivals.

Both Terry Eagleton and Umberto Eco are suspicious of the transformative and subversive potential of the carnivals. "Carnival," says Eagleton, "after all is a *licensed* affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art."[34] In a similar manner Eco asserts that carnivals are merely "authorized transgressions" because what they ridicule must previously be endorsed as "rules and rituals."[35] Rather than real transgressions carnivals symbolize the existence of the rule and instances of lawful reinforcement. However as Hwa Yol Jung states, even as a *licensed* event, carnival is a two-sided weapon: although one side is authorization or permission, the other is action unrestricted by law or established rules: "It is then 'licentious' in every sense, indeed: it is, in other words, capable of trans-

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[30] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 134.

[31] IDEM 135-136.

[32] IDEM 133.

[33] IBID.

[34] T. EAGLETON: *Walter Benjamin or towards a revolutionary criticism* (London 1981) 148 (italics in original).

[35] H.Y. JUNG: 'Bakhtin's dialogical body politics', in M.M. BELL ET AL.: *Bakhtin and human sciences* (London 1998) 106.

gressing or reversing the repressive *status quo* by playing out fully what Arthur Rimbaud called the aesthetic 'licentiousness' of all the senses."[36]

Instead of seeing carnivals either as inherently transgressive or as licensed affairs in every sense, carnivals are best grasped as contested territories, where rival discourses and institutions strive to control the practice of carnival.[37]

The historical material pertaining to Ottoman festivals demonstrates well the relationship between the carnival and the public sphere. Carnivals were sites of public representation for ordinary people. In his approach to the public sphere Habermas considerably simplifies the intricacies of carving out social space for the different strata of society. Carnival culture presents an opportunity for exploring dynamic relations between popular-culture forms and the court society. Ottoman carnivalesque expressions in the public sphere were bringing together different strata into a common ground. They enhanced the public life and created a cultural space experienced by the different sectors of society. The court festivals where almost all social groups were represented enabled ideas circulating in different circles to cross over boundaries. (Folk and court) many festivals in different ways transgressed accepted social and political norms. Their satire, ridicule, playful and freer forms of expression promoted critical reflection on social relations. This was observed not only in the Ottoman festivals but also in the carnivalesque expressions found in the Ottoman coffeehouses. The theme of theatricality and ritualism found in the large open-air spatiality of festivals can also be examined at the small closed spaces of the traditional coffeehouses.

Theatrical and carnivalesque forms of public sphere in the Ottoman coffeehouses

The performances of *meddah*s (story-tellers or public mimics) were common in the coffeehouses. The *ortaoyunu* (theatre in-the-round), which was generally performed in large coffeehouses, was characterized with sharp satire of the well-to-do and the ruling classes. So did the *Karagöz* shadow plays, which were popular in the coffeehouses. *Karagöz*, literally meant 'black-eye' in Turkish, is the hero of this show popularized during the Ottoman period and spread most prominently in Turkey and Greece. Hacivad is the second lead character. Karagöz, uneducated but with plenty of native wit outdoes Hacivad's superior education. For centuries this *zill-i hayal* (shadow of imagination) entertained coffeehouse audiences.

The performances of *Karagöz* and *Meddah*, were full of political and social criticism, teasing and imitation of high officials. Karagöz was commonly em-

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[36] JUNG: 'Bakhtin's dialogical body politics' 105 (italics in original).

[37] C. LEWIS & P. STEVE: 'Women, body, space: Rio carnival and the politics of performance', in *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 3/1 (1996) 23-42.

ployed as a political weapon to criticize the corruption in politics and public administration. The satirical Karagöz type of shadow play, and performances that ridiculed the European dress and manners were also popular,[38] and from time to time Karagöz shows were banned due to various reasons, including political lampooning.[39] Being the product of anonymous tradition rather than having an author was a liberating factor since allocation of responsibility for what is said is more difficult.

Obscenity and extreme licentiousness were also permanent features of Turkish popular theatre in the coffeehouses including Karagöz, a fact that has been confirmed by the accounts of numerous foreign observers. Featuring the phallus was a regular part of not only Karagöz shows but also of rural rituals and even of public festivals. For example, during the festival accompanying the circumcision ceremony of Mustafa, son of Mehmet IV, a western observer states that,

> a jester attired in a costume made of straw and paper, rode on a donkey, carrying a giant size of phallus. With this he saluted the onlookers, while lady spectators, modestly shrouded behind their veils, or hiding their faces in their hands, stared at the sight between their fingers.[40]

Gérard de Nerval was shocked when he saw children watching the obscene performances of Karagöz: "It is incredible that this indecent figure be put without scruple at the hand of the youth. This is however the most frequent present that a father or a mother gives to their children."[41]

Obscenity, from late nineteenth century onwards, lost its prominence because of the state restrictions imposed over the Karagöz performances.[42] Although Karagöz could not regain his past character, its political essence was carried on to the newspapers many of them carrying titles borrowed from Karagöz. The Ottoman comic strips have often resorted to this eternally satirical character to fulfill their function of political opposition. The significance of Karagöz with respect to public sphere lied in its ability to cross over boundaries of class, religion and status.[43] It was performed in the city, in the village, at public festivals and popular celebrations. Its oral form enabled the ideas and grievances of the common people, who were less literate, less well-to-do and simply less welcome in higher circles, to be heard by the ruling elite. The blurring of boundaries

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[38] R.S. HATTOX: *Coffee and coffeehouses, the origins of a social beverage in the medieval near east* (Seattle/London 1996) 106.

[39] M. ÖZHAN: 'Karagöz', in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* 4 (İstanbul 1994) 449.

[40] M. AND: *Karagöz, Turkish shadow theatre* (İstanbul 1979) 86.

[41] G. NERVAL: *Voyage en orient*, *Vol 2* (Paris 1862) 192.

[42] AND: *Karagöz, Turkish shadow theatre* 86.

[43] P. BLUMMERT: 'Açgözlülük, Kolera ve Moda: Osmanlı Karikatür Aleminde Kültürel Emperyalizm', in I. FENOGLİO & F. GEORGEON (eds.): *Doğuda Mizah* (Istanbul 2000) 140.

among social groups have also been reflected upon the public realm through the coffeehouses which embodied Karagöz and other theatrical performances.

Ritualistic forms of talk in Ottoman and European coffeehouses

In the coffeehouse any subject under discussion could turn into a common agenda; one could communicate with anyone, take part in any conversation whether one personally knew those who chatted among themselves or not, whether one was asked to join in or not. Whereas social status outside the coffeehouse was of paramount significance, in the coffeehouse a high civil servant and an idle man, a religious functionary and a fake mystic sat side by side.[44] Any allusions to the social origins of those present was not only considered bad manners but also impeded the smooth flow of information.[45] The socializing role of the Ottoman coffeehouses served the temporary eradication of social distinctions. According to Peçevi, the coffeehouses were crammed with pleasure-seekers, men of letters and literati, idlers, judges and corner-sitters with nothing to do to such an extent that there had remained room neither to sit nor even to stand.[46] Thus keeping social distance between individuals of different status was virtually impossible. Thévenot, writing in 1665, insists that all sorts of people without distinction of religion or rank came to the coffeehouses and that there was "not the slightest bit of shame in entering such a place."[47] The coffeehouse and its theatricality allowed encounter and encouraged dialogue even among strangers. That is, 'anonymous intimacy'[48], to use the term of Christensen was a characteristic of the coffee-houses.

Interestingly, such comments of Ayşe Saraçgil of Ottoman Istanbul coffee-houses in which social rankings were temporally abolished are virtually identical with those of Richard Sennett concerning the early eighteenth century cafes of Paris (and also London). Sennett has perfectly drawn a ritualistic form of talk and communication in the settings which he called theatrical coffeehouses. At this point it is helpful to quote Sennett in length:

> As information centers, the coffeehouses naturally were places in which speech flourished. When a man entered the door, he went first to the bar, paid a penny, was told, if he had not been to the place before, what the rules of the house [as a form

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[44] İ. PEÇEVİ: *Peçevi Tarihi Vol. 1* (Ankara 1992) 258.

[45] See A. SARAÇGİL: "Kahvenin İstanbul'a Girişi, 16. ve 17. Yüzyıllar', in H. DESMET-GREGORİE & F. GEORGEON (eds.): *Doğuda Kahve ve Kahvehaneler* (trs. M. Atik and E. Özdoğan) (İstanbul 1999).

[46] PEÇEVİ: *Peçevi Tarihi Vol. 1* 258.

[47] J. THEVENOT: *L'empire du grand Turc vu par un sujet de Louis XIV* (Paris 1965) 96.

[48] J.C. CHRİSTENSEN: *The nursed passage: A theoretical framework for the nurse-patient partnership* (PhD Thesis, Massey University, New Zealand 1988) 310.

of civility] were and then sat down to enjoy himself. That in turn was a matter of talking to other people, the talk was governed by a cardinal rule: in order for information to be as full as possible, distinctions of rank were temporarily suspended; anyone sitting in the coffeehouse had a right to talk to anyone else, to enter into any conversation, whether he knew the other people or not, whether he was bidden to speak or not. It was bad form even to touch on the social origins of other persons when talking to them in the coffeehouse, because the free flow of talk might then be impeded. The turn of the eighteenth century was an era in which outside the coffeehouse, social rank was of paramount importance. In order to gain knowledge and information through talk, the men of the time therefore created what was for them a fiction, the fiction that social distinctions did not exist. Inside the coffeehouse, if the gentleman had decided to sit down, he was subject to the free, unbidden talk of his social inferior. This situation produced its own speech pattern... As men sit on the long table, telling stories of great elaborateness, describing the wars of demeanor of leading citizens with rodomontade and flourish, they have only to use their eyes and tune their ears to place the stories or descriptions as coming from one with the point of view of a petty-minded petty clerk, an obsequious courtier, or a degenerate younger son of a wealthy merchant. But these acts of placing the character of the speaker must never intrude upon the words these men use to each other; the long periodic sentences flow on, the familiar descriptive phrases which everyone has heard a hundred times before are invoked once again, and a frown goes round the table if someone makes an allusion that may be applied to the person of any of his hearers. *Coffeehouse speech is the extreme case of an expression with a sign system of meaning divorced from symbols of meaning like rank, origins, taste, all visibly at hand.*[49]

Sennett also analyzed the theatre in order to emphasize this public significance of the European coffeehouse. For him conceiving society as a theater has been one of the oldest western ideas of human society: "Human life staged by the gods was Plato's vision in the *Laws*; society as a theatre was the motto of Petronius' *Satyricon*." By the nineteenth century in referring to the world as theatre people began to imagine a new audience for their posturing – each other. The theme of divine anguish present in the medieval and Renaissance image of the *theatrum mundi* (the world as a theater) gave way to the sense of an audience desiring to enjoy, perhaps somewhat cynically the 'playacting and pretenses of everyday life'. More recently this identification of society and theatre has been carried on in Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, in Baudelaire, Mann, and, 'curiously' Freud.[50]

Sennett asks, "How do experiences an audience of strangers have in the theater or music hall compare with the experiences they have on the street?"[51] Expressions in both domains, take place in an environment of relative strangers.

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[49] R. SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* (London 1977) 81-82 (Emphasis is mine).
[50] IDEM 34-35.
[51] IDEM 37.

Affinities between the domains of stage and street should exist in societies with a viable public life; "there should be something comparable in the expressive experience crowds have had in these two realms."[52]

It was not unusual to find members of the audience to be seated on and wandering across the stage and from time to time intervening freely in the play. A clear distinction between actors and audiences did not exist, rather they participated in the same world. Between theatre and the real life a sense of continuity rather than separation existed. Sennett states that before the second half of the eighteenth century

> the task of all theater is the creation of an internal, self-sufficing standard of believability. In societies where expressions are treated as signs rather than symbols, this task is most easily achieved. In such societies, 'illusion' has no connotation of unreality, and the creation of theatrical illusion is simply the realization of a certain power of expression in, rather than a forgetting, an obscuring or a retreat from 'real life' [from the street].[53]

Since the spoken word in theatre was real at a given moment, people did not at every moment have to engage in a practice of decoding in order to understand what was really being said to them behind the gesture. A play rather than symbolizing reality generated reality through its conventions.[54] Young men and women having seats on the stage felt no discomfiture at being themselves in full view of the audience, mixed with the actors. The sincerity and spontaneity of audience reaction were based on their awareness that the performer and the spectator were in the same realm, that it was real life, and what was taking place was something very familiar to the audience. "No matter that Mithridates falls down dead at the foot of one's next-door neighbor sitting up on the stage. The death provoked a display of emotion in the audience that would embarrass a modern spectator."[55]

Following Sennett's line of argument it can be argued that the blurring of social distinctions was related to the permeability of boundaries between actor and audience. Since the person addressing those in the European coffeehouse was taking the role of an actor on the stage, irrespective of his social class he would be listened to and if he were to be ridiculed this would not originate in any reason different than the ridiculing of an actor. This system of speech between stage and real life made 'the bridge' between the people of different status in the coffeehouses. Sennett clearly states that the coffeehouse in the early eighteenth

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[52] SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* 37.

[53] IDEM 80.

[54] IDEM 179.

[55] IDEM 75.

century apart from the theatre was the foremost urban institution where the system of spoken signs governed.[56]

People experienced sociability in these coffeehouses without revealing much about their personal history. "Tone of voice, elocution, and clothes might be noticeable, but the whole point was not to notice."[57]

In mid-eighteenth century Paris or London people who went to the theater spent an enormous amount of time in the coffeehouses near the theatre building. The conversation in these coffeehouses was general and lengthy, the speakers sedulous in their style. Memoirs from the period verify that 'versions of pointing and settling' were exercised in these cafes;

> a man standing up suddenly when he had a 'point' to make (colloquial usage dates from this practice), and that calls for repetition of phrases were taken as quite proper. A speaker was 'settled' by sheer noisemaking on the part of the others when he became tiresome.[58]

These were 'theatrical cafes', Sennett wrote. From Sennett's perspective we understand that although the recognition of such expressive and theatrical side of the public sphere is missing in Habermas' account, in reality, the public sphere in Europe encompassed vivid social performances in certain important aspects. Alongside rational debate the public sphere involved the development of a convivial sociability to be detected in such activities as public eating and drinking, fashion, theatre-going, clubbing, masquerade balls and the like.[59] Theatre in the eighteenth century Paris and London was a microcosm of the conventions of dress and rules of comportment of the street and the coffeehouse, and sociability was facilitated through common conventions, in part learnt from observing public performances.

The particular form of interaction found in the Ottoman coffeehouse rendering obsolete social distinctions, was reminiscent of Sennett's theatrical coffeehouses. Even in the early twentieth century etiquette of the Ottoman coffeehouse, especially 'of those coffee-houses which have not been too much infected by Europe', required a newcomer to

> salute one after another each person in a crowded coffee-room, once on entering the door, and again on taking his seat, and be so saluted in return – either by putting his right hand on the heart and uttering the greeting *merhaba*, or by making the *temenna*, that triple sweep of the hand which is the most graceful of salutes. I have al-

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[56] SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* 80.

[57] IDEM 82.

[58] IDEM 83.

[59] K. HETHERINGTON: *The badlands of modernity heterotopia and social ordering* (London 1997) 81.

so seen the entire company rise on the entrance of an old man, and yield him the corner of honor.[60]

The rules of civility and conviviality were observed. Thus, the coffeehouse allowed encounter and encouraged dialogue even among strangers. That is, as noted above, the social relations in the coffeehouses were characterized by anonymous intimacy. The institutionalization of coffeehouses in Ottoman Istanbul took place nearly a century before the period Sennett has described European "theatrical coffeehouses". But in the city of Istanbul theatre with its stage and setting, did not develop, rather theatrical performances took place in the coffeehouses.

The lack of theatres in the western fashion with stages and sets has been noted for Muslim societies. Then how the early presence of theatre in Ottoman coffeehouses, and communications as depicted by Sennett for European coffeehouses, could be accounted for? The answer lies in the fact that in Muslim societies theatrical performances took very different forms than their western counterparts. It is necessary to look at the types of publicness produced by these different forms. Hence the question to be analyzed is 'How and where these different forms produced publicness?'

In Muslim societies if there were no specific spaces with stages for theatrical performances creating a viable publicness, where did they show up? As noted before the great majority of theatrical performances took place in the coffeehouses. In fact western observers repeatedly point to this fact in Ottoman society. These places were not as much as theatrical coffeehouses as they were theatre-coffeehouses. They were widespread not only in Istanbul, but also in the other major cities of the empire. For example, according to Evliya Çelebi, in the city of Bursa in the mid-seventeenth century it was in the coffeehouses story-tellers performed their art. Their performances were evidently of sufficient quality to attract even learned, sophisticated and well-to-do men to the coffeehouses. In Bursa, he notes, even the *boza* taverns, serving a lightly fermented millet beer, were regarded as *mekteb-i irfan* (the school of knowledge). This for him was an indicator of the high level of sophistication among the people. He mentions the story-teller Kurban Alisi Hamza. The latter, according to Evliya, had no equivalent throughout his lifetime. The narrator Şerif Ali, on the other hand, was renowned for his account of the classical Persian epos of *Firdevsi*. Dance performances were also held in the Emir's coffeehouse, which was the most prestigious one in Bursa at that time.[61]

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[60] DWIGHT: *Constantinople* 26.

[61] FAROQHİ: *Subjects of the Sultan* 219.

The form of public communication in Ottoman theatre-coffeehouses had both similarities and differences with that described by Sennett. But in order to understand those differences between the East and the West in public communication through Muslim theatrical performances, first the major characteristics of the Ottoman theatrical performances has to be accounted for.[62]

It is possible to start with the reasons for the lack of great Islamic 'drama on the stage'.

In one of his short stories famous author Jorge Luis Borges, describes how Averroes (Ibn Rushd) had been unable of grasping the meanings of the words tragedy and comedy in the translations of Aristotle. In this historical story, Ibn Rushd thinks that Aristotle names *kaside* as tragedy, and *hiciv* or *taşlama* as comedy. Metin And also mentions of similar confusion:

> Though Arabs translated or summarized the Greek *Poetics*, for example Al-Farabi's *Canons of Poetry* and there were interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics* by Ibn-i Rushd (Averroes), these not only showed misunderstandings of their Greek model, but the clumsy terminology to which they had to resort and the utter unrelatedness of the material from which Aristotle deduced his views with that at the disposal of the Arab, led to failure in their efforts to influence the Arabs in creating a drama. For instance, they translated tragedy with the term *medh* (eulogy) and comedy with *hicv* (satire) since they had these forms in their literature. [63]

In Borges's historical story, the misunderstanding of these two theatrical forms by Ibn Rushd leads him to state that although the Koran is replete with tragedies and comedies, Muslim scholars' lack of response to the real meaning and function of these major dramatic forms made them blind to the dramatic legacy of the Greeks. Ibn-i Sina (Avicenna) wrote: "When composing a musical tragedy they used to do other things as gestures (*isharat*) and mimesis (*al-akhd bi'l-vujuh*) by way of imitation (*muhakat*)."[64] Another instance, in the poem of Tunisian poet Muhriz Ibn Halef, while contemplating the Carthaginian ruins he makes a eulogy of the majestic view of an old Roman theatre, but misunderstands its function and *raison d'etre*.[65]

The opposition of Muslim legists against the potential harmful moral effects of public shows and spectacles, their perceived affiliation with pagan religious ceremonies, and the segregation of women were other probable factors that had inhibited the development of theatrical arts in playhouses in Muslim lands.

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[62] In the following pages, I have largely drawn on METIN AND (1979; 1987) for historical information pertaining to theatrical performances.

[63] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 55.

[64] IBID.

[65] IBID.

In Ottoman Turkey, Muslims accepted live dramatic representation to maintain itself under some religious pretext or other. From the Ottoman *fetwas*, it is possible to comprehend the attitude of the authorities towards theatrical shows. The law's aim was to prohibit only particular forms of mimicry, enforcing censorship on any performance that might denigrate such honored institutions as law, religion or education. Representation or imitations of living figures were allowed. The *fetwas* were designed to limit the nature of the performance, rather than banning performance altogether.[66] That even the theatrical performances themselves did not aim to create a real illusion is manifest in these *fetwas*.[67]

Those violating the *fetwas* became *kafir* (infidel) and for redeeming themselves they had to renew their faith and their marriage vows. There existed other basis for disapproval, not only by religious but also by civil authorities, for the licentious and lascivious conduct of some characters during performances. The coffeehouses that housed these players and especially the political performances were detested by the authorities and there followed the persecution by Murat IV who was responsible for a hundred coffeehouses being razed to the ground.

The political significance of the theater lies in the possibility of actor-audience reversibility, that is, the possibility that audiences might imitate the actor and become actors on the political stage. Nevertheless, the state pressure could not prevent the dissemination of political criticism in the coffeehouses whether in the form of theatrical performances or the disparaging talks dubbed *devlet sohbeti* (state talk). As noted before, following the death of Murat IV in 1640, the ban lost its impact on everyday life.

For a long time the situation performances of the Ottoman story-tellers (*meddah*s) constituted the most important theatrical acts in the Ottoman society. *Meddah*s did not only impersonate people belonging to different ethnic and religious groups; the metaphoric stories that they were narrating with their political content were, especially at times of repression, the only sources of information for the men on the street. Due to this *meddah* tradition, theatrical speech blurring social distinctions in the coffeehouses -as depicted by Sennett- was not unknown to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman Istanbulites, a century before the period Sennett has described. The *meddah* and the diverse forms of *ortaoyunu* performances were surrounded by spectators and the distance between the actor and spectator was almost non-existent.

Similar to Sennett's statement illusion had no implication of unreality.[68] Theatrical illusion – in Ottoman society too – was basically the realization of spirit of expression in real life, rather than means of forgetting, obscuring or re-

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[66] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 56-57.

[67] These religious judgments are compiled by AND: *Culture performance and communication* 56-57.

[68] SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* 80.

treating from it. Performance, for a long time, was one of the main forms of communication. In the Ottoman theater-coffeehouses, the patrons or organizers of dramatic performances expected that particular emotions, opinions and concepts should be conveyed to their spectators, who, for their part, showed up in the anticipation of comprehending the motif of the play; the players, also, expected their audiences to be able to pursue what they were presenting. While it was the owner or the patron of the show who decided what plays will be performed, and an official censor might forbid certain themes or scenes, the actor had a most significant communication function, he determined at least part of what will be communicated. The specific character of this genre gave the actors opportunities to communicate their own ideas, and politically oriented performers could convey their message to the audience. For the player to establish rapport with his patrons and thus communicate easily, it is essential for the audience to be well-acquainted with the patterns of the specific genre of the performance. This created an unusually flexible medium of communication. Public mimics or story-tellers did not only satirize the administration, but also some official messages were transmitted through the public mimics or story-tellers who, as the following quotation from James Dallaway implies, were employed as new agents in the early days:

> For the graver sort, most coffeehouses retain a raccontatore, or professed story teller, who entertains a very attentive audience for many hours. They relate eastern tales, or sarcastic anecdotes of the times, and are sometimes engaged by government to treat on politics to reconcile the people to any recent measure of their sultan or *vezir*. Their manner is very animated, and their recitation accompanied by much gesticulation.[69]

In those popular performances the action gains in naturalness by spontaneity, language is simple, direct and strong, no theatre building or playhouse is used, performances generally held in the coffeehouses at ground level, "and this level-ground acting has a flexible character and helps in creating close ties between the actors and the audience."[70] The performances were merged with 'real life' to such an extent that the call for the theatre to function as a bridge, as described by Sennett, was less obvious in Ottoman Istanbul. In this regard the traditional Ottoman theatrical performances had a far more important public significance compared to its European counterpart. Let's see how we can support our argument.

As noted before, coffeehouse participation and the theatrical performances in the coffeehouses are important with respect to the creation of the public sphere. Accordingly Sennet's approach to the public sphere and his conceptual-

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[69] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 175.
[70] IDEM 101.

ization of Man as Actor, although do not form a clear-cut systematic theory as Habermas', provide us with more insight for our case of theatre-coffeehouses.

The mixing of the actor and the spectator, like the displays of feeling, as Sennett argued for London and Paris theaters, was not a ritual in which the actor and the audience became one person in the observance of a common rite.[71] Rather the audience was willing to interfere with the actor directly. In Ottoman theatrical performances the presence of information-giving process and the composition contributed to a player spectator transaction.

> Then the spectators assume the role of transmitter of signals to the performers – laughter, boos, shouts, applause, silences and other signals audible as well as gestural. Both the performers and spectators themselves will interpret the performance in terms of hostility, boredom, astonishment, approval and so on.[72]

The audience's response and its signals are a critical input to the construction and progress of the performance, and have a significant bearing upon textual form.[73]

Instead of talking of a single theatrical message in the theater-coffeehouses, it is more appropriate to identify multiple messages the intricacies of which will be deciphered by the audience by a mental construction according to the cultural, dramatic and theatrical knowledge at his disposal. Besides sharing the theatrical and dramatic conventions, the actors and spectators, as soon as the latter entered the performing area, which was a common practice, partook in the performer-spectator exchange. In addition to these formal theatrical conventions, general cultural, ideological and ethical rules that were valid in the lived public sphere were given due consideration in theatrical performances in the coffeehouses. The latter were definitely based on the cultural codes of society without which the messages would not have been intelligible. The traditional Ottoman performances in the coffeehouses inevitably rested on "the behavioral, gestural and linguistic patterns, the characteristics of Ottoman society shown in the modes of design, postures, voice production, the etiquette system."[74]

Hence in contrast to its European counterpart, in the Ottoman coffeehouses the specific type of communication between actor and audience was to such an extent embedded in real life that there was no need for this interaction to form a bridge between the stage and the street. This effective publicness in the coffeehouses, which combined the real life with the performance, would be better understood by investigating the internal dynamics of those places. Ever-shifting

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[71] SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* 75.
[72] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 177.
[73] IBID.
[74] IBID.

relations of distance and proximity characterized the social communication in Ottoman coffeehouses as theater spaces:

> The process of intercommunication occurs in a series: between a performer and his role, between performer and performer, between performer and spectator, between spectator and spectator, to the degree of body-to-body use of space where actor becomes spectator and spectator becomes actor. There are ever-shifting relations of proximity and distance.[75]

The other genres of traditional performance were more or less fixed, but casual. A foreign eye-witness, R. Walsch when depicting a *meddah* show taking place in a large coffeehouse frequented by janissaries and others, also emphasizes the rapport of performer and spectator.[76] The audience was present in the play in more than one way. The collection taken during the pauses was a means by which they could show the degree of their approval or disapproval of the play with the amount of money they contributed. But it was also possible for a rich person to change the story line and particularly the end of it according to his whim: for example, if it was a sad story "he might ask for and be granted a happy ending, or if the story was about a battle or contest, then the winning party had to be the one the wealthy listener favored."[77]

In the *ortaoyunu*, where the performing area was cleared from the spectators on all sides, and was conceived as not being disassociated and separated from the audience, both the performers and the audience being on the same ground level. There existed no setting to hinder the view of the audience, "only two empty frames, one higher representing a house, the other a lower one representing a shop or workshop."[78] After quoting the descriptions of Baron de Tott, I will once more attempt to link the historical information on Ottoman theatrical performances to the interpretations of Sennett who used theatrical forms to analyze the forms of publicness:

> … a kind of cage … hung round with a curtain represents a house, and contains … one actor dressed like a woman. Another in the habit of a young [man], and supposed to enamored with the lady of the house, a valet pleasantly absurd, another man dressed like a woman, and acting the part of a gallant, a husband, who is imposed upon … the characters which we see everywhere … *everything is acted, and nothing left to the imagination of the spectators* … and if the summons of the *müezzin* is heard

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[75] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 178.
[76] IDEM 179-180.
[77] IDEM 181.
[78] IDEM 182.

during these interludes, the Musulman turn their faces towards Mecca, while the actors continue each to play his part. [79]

When the actor was over with his part, instead of completely disappearing from the scene, he sat close to the spectators. The actor, having gone through his part, steps aside and sits down closer to the audience, remaining in full sight. When not performing, these performers including the musicians behaved like spectators, giving the same reactions as the spectators, or inciting responses from the audience, and as such, they functioned as a kind of intermediary between the play and the audience. The proxemic relationship and the interaction was not only side by side but also face to face, save the female spectators who sat on one side, either behind temporary lattices or if there were no lattices covered their face with veils. Compared to men they were in a more privileged position for they could "see the men in the audience without being seen."[80] It is possible to call *ortaoyunu* presentational or non-illusionistic because of its form of expression and the specific kind of its rapport with the audience. The audience does not completely regard the actor as pretending.

According to Sennett, in Paris and London while the performer moved audience's feelings without disclosing to them his own character offstage, "the same codes of belief he used served his audience to a similar end;"[81] they animated each other's emotions without having to strive to define themselves to each other, a definition the material circumstances of life would have made 'difficult, frustrating, and probably fruitless'. This bridge, in turn, furnished people with the means to be sociable, on impersonal basis.[82]

One of the ways in which eighteenth century urban Western European society rendered social encounters meaningful was via codes of belief that operated in both the theater and in the life quotidian:

[Henry] Fielding in 1749 spoke of London as having become a society in which stage and street were literally intermixed … In retrospect, it would be better said that a bridge between what was believable on the stage and what was believable on the street.[83]

Since Ottoman traditional performances did not even use a playhouse or stage, the intermixing of actors and audiences was carried to its extreme, which has greatly facilitated the formation of the codes of belief bridging the performance

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[79] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 182. (Emphasis is mine).

[80] IDEM 182-183.

[81] SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* 64.

[82] IBID.

[83] IBID.

and society. In the Ottoman folk performance tradition, plays seek to effect a communal spreading of the magic of a ritual act by drawing the spectators into the action, or engaging the onlookers in improvised scenes. "Here we find body-to-body use of space where performer and spectator exchange their roles."[84]

In a similar manner Sennett notes that when one looks at the stage in mid-eighteenth century Europe, one sees not only actors but also numerous spectators. Moreover

> these 'gay bloods' parade across the stage as the mood takes them; they wave to their friends in the boxes … The openness and spontaneity of audience response are based on their sense that the actor and the spectator are in the same world, that it is real life.[85]

Therefore, even if the intermingling of the actor and the audience materialized in different cultural and civilizational forms, both European and Ottoman theatrical traditions served the same end: to produce publicness through ritualized forms of theatricality, to shape the public sphere through performative expressions. Because the audiences were able to detach behavior with others from individual attributes of social or physical condition and so had made a move in fashioning a sociable spatiality of "out in public".[86]

Examining the introduction of ritualistic theatrical culture into studies of the public sphere has been instrumental in showing the link between the political and the social role of popular agency in creating the forms of cultural and political communication. It was fetes, festive culture, satire and theatrical performances that connected the social with the political. As shown in this chapter the carnivalesque and expressive side of the public sphere and its realization in festivals and performances in coffeehouses were conducive to the formation of ritualized sociability that makes up the public sphere. Looking, then, at the Ottoman scenario, with its historically rich cultural and religious diversity, we are able to detect certain patterns in the ritualistic worlds of formal celebration and performance. These enrich our understanding of the, as Post notes[87], interrelated process whereby ritual impacts society and society, in turn, reflects itself within ritual and performative space. Here we see an apt case in which this dynamic can be a key analytical lens for looking at the emergence of public social space and its associated consciousness.

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[84] AND: *Culture performance and communication* 178.
[85] SENNETT: *The fall of the public man* 75.
[86] IDEM 65.
[87] POST: 'Ritual Studies'.

8

A Jewish Requiem commemorating the Second World War:
The performances of the Requiem by Hans Lachman

Martin J.M. Hoondert

1.   Introduction

On May 4th, 1960, the *Requiem* by the German Jewish composer Hans Lachman was broadcast on Dutch national radio. Lachman composed his *Requiem* in memory of father Henri Vullinghs, the parish priest of Grubbenvorst (in the province of Limburg, the Netherlands). Thanks to Vullinghs, Lachman – together with his wife and son – survived the Second World War. Vullinghs himself, however, did not survive the war. He was arrested and later died on April 9th, 1945, in concentration camp Bergen-Belsen.

Composer Hans Lachman (1906-1990) worked for Dutch national radio and scored (arranged) music for various ensembles. He grew up in Berlin, but moved to the Netherlands in 1933, after the Nazis had taken over in Germany. He worked as a pianist and arranger, and was leader of a number of ensembles, the *Melodia Sextet* being one of them. Besides this he was also a composer. More than 60 of his compositions have been preserved. One of these is Lachman's *Requiem*, quite a remarkable composition, if nothing else because he, as a Jew, made use of the traditional Roman Catholic Latin texts of the requiem. He used Christian form and content to express his gratitude to the Roman Catholic priest.

For a long period of time the *Requiem* by Lachman was forgotten. Only recently, a copy of the *Requiem* was discovered in the shed of his son's house.[1] Thanks to Agnes Music Management it was performed again in 2015, on April 9th, in Grubbenvorst, to commemorate the day that father Vullinghs died in the concentration camp, 70 years ago. Both performances, in 1960 and in 2015, were part of practices of memorialization, commemorating the victims of the Second World War. Music, in this case, was not mere entertainment or meant to induce aesthetic experiences,[2] but a ritual practice.[3] In defining ritual, I concur with Richard

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[1] The original score has been included in the collection of the Muziekbibliotheek van de Omroep (Broadcasting Company's Music Library, Hilversum, the Netherlands).

[2] J.E. KAEMMER: *Music in human life: anthropological perspectives on music* (Austin 1993) 58vv.

[3] M.J.M. HOONDERT: *Muziek als rituele praktijk. Gelineau herlezen* (Heeswijk 2007); C. SMALL: *Musicking. The meanings of performing and listening* (Middletown, CT 1998).

Schechner, professor of performance studies at the Tisch School of Arts (New York University). He defines rituals as follows:

> Rituals are collective memories encoded into actions. Rituals also help people (…) deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies, and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life.[4]

In his way of thinking, Schechner, as a performance studies scholar, always combines ritual and play, which together underlie performance. In his definition, performance is "[r]itualized behavior conditioned and/or permeated by play."[5] Both ritual and play, according to Schechner, lead people into a 'second reality', separate from ordinary life. I will use his approach to defining ritual, linking it to performance and play, because this fits the characteristics of a requiem concert remembering the victims of the Second World War: it is collective memory encoded in and expressed in terms of action,[6] expressed in musicking – to use Christopher Small's concept intended to stress the performative character of this kind of commemoration.[7]

In this chapter, I will first describe and analyze Lachman's *Requiem*. After that, I will describe the context of the performances in 1960 and 2015. Finally, I will discuss the performances of the *Requiem* as a lens through which we are able to understand the cultural changes in the practices of memorialization related to the Second World War. The research questions posed in this chapter are: By whom, where, how and why was Lachman's *Requiem* performed in 1960 and 2015? What do the performances of this *Requiem* teach us about the memorial culture regarding the Second World War?

2.   Hans Lachman and his *Requiem*

In this section, I will present Lachman's biography and analyze his *Requiem* in the context of his oeuvre.

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[4] R. SCHECHNER: *Perfomance studies. An introduction* (New York 2002) 52.

[5] IDEM: *Perfomance studies. An introduction* 52.

[6] For the relation between collective memory and ritualizing, see: A. ASSMANN: 'Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past', in K. TILMANS, F. VAN VREE & J. WINTER (eds.): *Performing the past. Memory, history, and identity in modern Europe* (Amsterdam 2010) 35-50.

[7] SMALL: *Musicking*.

2.1 Biography

Heinz Adolf – Hans – Lachman was born in Berlin, on March 7th 1906.[8] He studied mathematics and physics at the University of Berlin under such celebrities as Albert Einstein and Max Planck. However, he was also a gifted musician, playing several wind and keyboard instruments, and decided to pursue a career in music. From the 1930s he was a member of the *Sid Kay's Fellows*, the first jazz band in Berlin.[9] He also worked as a musician and arranger at the Nelson Revue,[10] at the Lindström Recording Company[11] and the film production company UFA.[12]

Shortly after the Nazis came to power, he and his wife Tea Warszawski left Germany and in the fall of 1933 settled in Amsterdam. Here Lachman worked in mainly Jewish milieus. He was employed as a trombonist and arranger in the Tuschinski[13] orchestra of violinist and conductor Max Tak.[14] Thanks to Tak, Lachman got commissioned to compose and arrange music for several movies. Besides this, he arranged music for several ensembles and cooperated in the famous Dutch *Snip and Snap Revue*. After the anti-Jewish measures taken by the German occupiers, he became a member of the Jewish Entertainment Orchestra ('Joods Amusementsorkest') and the Jewish Symphony Orchestra (1941-summer 1942). Under threat of deportation to Westerbork Transit Camp,[15] he went into hiding in the south of the Netherlands, together with his wife and son Michael, until that part of the country was liberated in 1944.

After the war, he joined Dutch national radio as an arranger, pianist and leader of various ensembles. While he started out as a composer of easy listening music he gradually developed a taste for more classically oriented music. His classical works include the cantata *Amsterdam* (lyrics by Evert Werkman), five songs to lyrics by Baudelaire, a concertino for cello and orchestra, five string quartets, two violin

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[8] Lachman's biography was compiled by his grand-daughter Shirah Lachman in R.G. FUKS-MANSFELD (ed.): *Joden in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw: een biografisch woordenboek* (Utrecht 2007) 177. See also: S. LACHMAN: 'Verborgen muzikale schatten', in *Joods nu* 5 (November 2014/5775) 18-19.

[9] Sid Kay's Fellows was founded in 1926 by Sigmund 'Sid' Petruschka (Sigmund Leo Friedmann, 1903-1997) and Kurt 'Kay' Kaiser (1906-1972?), available at http://grammophon-platten.de/page.php?286 (accessed 19 February 2015).

[10] Rudolf Nelson (1878-1960) was a German composer of hit songs, film music, operetta and vaudeville, and founder/director of the Nelson Revue, a significant cabaret troupe in the 1930s Berlin nightlife scene. In 1933 he fled Germany and settled in Amsterdam. He was interned at the Westerbork Transit Camp but survived the war. In 1949 he returned to Berlin. A reconstruction of a performance by the Nelson Revue took place in the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, 1982.

[11] The Lindström Recording Company was founded in Berlin in 1893.

[12] UFA is one of the main motion-picture companies in Germany. It was established in 1917 and is headquartered in Potsdam.

[13] Tuschinski is a cinema in Amsterdam, established in 1921 by Abraham Tuschinski.

[14] FUKS-MANSFELD: *Joden in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw* 309.

[15] http://www.kampwesterbork.nl (accessed February 2015).

sonatas, a sonata for flute and a quintet for four brass players and piano. In the Dutch Music Institute ('*Nederlands Muziek Instituut*', The Hague), 63 compositions of his have been preserved.[16]

From 1958 to 1968 Lachman was a member of the Liberal Jewish Congregation Amsterdam,[17] playing the organ and leading the choir. He died in Amsterdam, on June 27th, 1990.

2.2 The Requiem

We do not really know when exactly Lachman composed his *Requiem*. What we do know is that it was first recorded on December 24th, 1959, in NCRV studio 2.[18] It was performed by the *Klein Radiokoor* ('Small Radio Choir'),[19] Cornelis Kalkman, tenor; the *Radio Kamerorkest* ('Radio Chamber Orchestra'), under the direction of Maurits van den Berg. The *Requiem* was broadcast on national radio, on 4th May 1960, from 8.04 PM to approximately 8.30 PM.[20] May 4th is Memorial Day in the Netherlands, the official day (since 1946) on which the victims of World War II are commemorated.[21] The next day, Liberation Day, the recording was broadcast again from the church of Grubbenvorst. In a portrait of father Vullinghs, written by Fons Hermans, we read the following lines:

On Liberation Day in 1960 people flooded into the church at Grubbenvorst, filling it to capacity. The Jewish composer and his wife and family were also there. In and outside the church, the KRO network had set up its broadcasting equipment, and a little while later, in commemoration of father Henri Vullinghs, the *Introitus* (entrance song) of the Mass '*Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine…*' (…) sounded.[22]

The *Requiem* by Lachman is remarkable for three reasons. First, it is striking that a Jewish composer should have used a Roman Catholic text. Second, the style of the *Requiem* differs considerably from other compositions by Lachman. Lachman used to compose in a jazzy style or would apply twelve-tone serialism (also known as dodecaphony, a technique devised by Arnold Schönberg in the 1920s of

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[16] The Hague, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, archive no. 464.

[17] http://www.ljgamsterdam.nl (accessed February 2015).

[18] Email by Ria Raven, office manager of the Groot Omroepkoor, to author, 21 January 2015.

[19] The 'Klein Radiokoor' was part of the 'Groot Omroepkoor' (Big Broadcasting Company Choir). Rehearsals were led by Carel Laout.

[20] See e.g. *De Waarheid* 3 May 1960, 2. The radio broadcast was aired by the NPC, the National Programme Committee, representing the joint broadcasting companies. Information by Ria Raven (Email to author, 21 January 2015).

[21] M. VAN DE REIJT: *Zestig jaar herrie om twee minuten stilte. Hoe wij steeds meer doden gingen herdenken* (Amsterdam 2010) 15-23.

[22] F. HERMANS: 'Op een dorpspastorie in Limburg', in M. SMEDTS (ed.): *Den Vaderland getrouwe. Een boek over oorlog en verzet* (Amsterdam 1962) 100-109, p. 109.

the twentieth century).[23] Particularly in comparison to these, his *Requiem* in a way is old-fashioned. Lachman used modal scales and the composition is written in a polyphonic style. It seems that Lachman intended to compose a requiem that fits the Roman Catholic identity of the parish priest, using techniques from Gregorian chant. Although his *Requiem* does not sound like Gregorian chant, we do recognize certain fundamental characteristics that it shares with this type of musical expression: the text is the leading element and determines both rhythm and tempo, and the intervals are small as in Gregorian chant. Besides this, Lachman wrote in a neomodal style and the polyphony is the result of writing strong melodies, which leads to a kind of coincidental harmonies. Third, although it is clear that Lachman was inspired by Gregorian chant, he does not make use of melodic motifs of the Gregorian requiem, nor does the structure of the separate parts of his *Requiem* correspond to the structure of the Gregorian requiem. An exception is the *Dies irae*-motif, played by the organist in the *Dies irae* (part E, e.g. measures 130-131, 155-156, 238-239). Lachman composed a full requiem, including the Gradual and the Tract, but without the *In paradisum* (as we find it in the *Requiem* by Fauré, to give an example) and the *Libera me* (as we find it in the *Requiem* by Verdi, for instance). In overview, the *Requiem* is structured as follows:

Part	Title	Measures	Remarks
A	Introitus	1-43	The chromatic motif on 'requiem' (measure 12) recurs in parts C and I.
B	Kyrie	44-67	Parts A and B are linked by the organ part.
C	Gradual	68-83	The structure of this part does not correspond to the structure of the Gregorian gradual.
D	Tract	84-107	The structure does not correspond to the structure of the Gregorian tract.
E	Sequence	108-283	Lachman used the Gregorian *Dies irae*-melody in this part.
F	Offertory	284-364	The structure does not correspond to the structure of the Gregorian offertory.
G	Sanctus	365-401	The 'Benedictus-part' is remarkably short, in many mass and requiem compositions, this is an extensive part sung by a soloist.
H	Agnus Dei	402-427	This part is sung by a tenor soloist, dissenting from both Gregorian chant and many mass and requiem compositions.
I	Communion	428-457	--

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23 Information by Patrick van der Linden, conductor. Interview, 5 February 2015.

3.   The performance of the *Requiem* in 1960

For many years after the war, the commemoration of the Second World War was a commemoration of those who died fighting for the freedom of the Netherlands. This mainly concerned the heroes of the resistance movement, who were remembered and honored. Remembering the victims that fell in the resistance for many years made up the core of the Dutch commemoration of the Second World War. Immediately after the war a true 'resistance myth' came up, although only a small percentage of the Dutch people had actually been active in the resistance.[24] The six million Jews and the 500,000 Roma and Sinti who were killed by the Nazis were not even mentioned as victims of the war, let alone them being commemorated. This changed in 1960-1961 as can be traced in for example the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool*: on 4th May 1960 a journalist pointed out that the names of the Jewish compatriots that had been killed in the war were lacking at the national commemoration.[25] In the sixties of the 20th century the resistance myth came under pressure and a growing awareness of the role of the Dutch in the deportation of so many Jews developed and became part of Dutch commemoration culture.[26] A crucial turning point in this was the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, in 1961.[27] Attention began to be focused more and more on the terrible fate the Jews had suffered. In the Netherlands the Anne Frank House had been opened to the public in 1960; in 1965 historian Jacques Presser published his book on the persecution of the Jews, titled *Ondergang* ('Destruction').[28] During the sixties the resistance myth was replaced by the memory of the suffering of the Jews. In the seventies the commemoration of the Second World War had virtually become a commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust.

When Lachman's *Requiem* was first broadcast on national radio, there was as yet hardly any awareness of the suffering of the Jews, nor did the performance do much to awaken this. The resistance myth was still the core of the collective memory regarding the Second World War. Unfortunately, we do not know if Lachman's *Requiem* was commissioned, and if so, by whom. Was it meant to be a statement, a way of presenting the Jewish victims of the war in a context in which until that moment hardly any attention had been paid to the Jewish victims of the war?

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[24] REIJT: *Zestig jaar herrie* 23-28, 29-30; L. HOEVEN: *Een boek om in te wonen: De verhaalcultuur na Auschwitz* (Hilversum 2015) 27-30; R. VAN GINKEL: *Rondom de stilte: Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2011) 726-733.

[25] *Het Parool*, 4 mei 1960; mentioned in VAN DE REIJT: *Zestig jaar herrie* 28; See also: IDEM 43-44.

[26] IDEM 43-57.

[27] H.A. ZEIGER: *The case against Adolf Eichmann* (New York 1960). H. ARENDT & H. MOMMSEN: *Eichmann in Jerusalem: Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen* (München 1998).

[28] J. PRESSER: *Ondergang. De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom, 1940-1945* ('s-Gravenhage 1965).

In the Dutch newspapers in the days before and just after the broadcast of Lachman's *Requiem* no comments or reviews appeared. In the announcement of the broadcast both the Jewishness of the composer and his reason for composing this requiem were mentioned, as was the case for example in the (communist) daily newspaper *De Waarheid*, of 3rd May 1960:

> There will be a performance of a Requiem by Heinz Lachman, written in recognition of the help he received as a Jewish person in hiding [during WWII - MH].[29]

I found one review, in the (social-democratic) weekly magazine *Vrij Nederland*, titled: *In memoriam van een onverzettelijke held* ('In memory of a die-hard hero'), written by Jesuit and musicologist Jos Smits van Waesberghe.[30] Smits van Waesberghe was positive about Lachman's music, but the focus in his review is not on the Jewishness of the composer, but on the Reverend Vullinghs' heroic activities in the resistance. If anything, his review confirmed the resistance myth.

The fact that Lachman used the Roman Catholic requiem to honor the Reverend Vullinghs was criticized in Jewish media.[31] Reviewer Leo Hoost writes in the *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* of May 13th, 1960:

> Another thing is that – to our taste – he would have done better to honor the Reverend Vullinghs by composing a synagogue service for instance! Even more so because in terms of religion and attitude to life Hans Lachman feels no kind of bond whatsoever with Roman Catholicism, and instead is very positively aware of his being Jewish.[32]

In the next edition, this remark provoked discussion. A reader of the newspaper wrote a letter to the editor, defending Lachman's *Requiem*:

> I would say that it shows great sensitivity on the part of Lachman, on this occasion of commemorating also this hero of the resistance, to put himself entirely in the other man's shoes and honor the deceased with something out of the man's own sphere of life, which must have been dear to the deceased above all else.[33]

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[29] *De Waarheid*, 3 May 1960.

[30] J. SMITS VAN WAESBERGHE: 'In memoriam van een onverzettelijke held', in *Vrij Nederland* 21 (1960-1961).

[31] See for a broad discussion of contested identities in the context of ritualization: P. POST, PH. NEL & W. VAN BEEK: *Sacred spaces and contested identities. Space and ritual dynamics in Europe and Africa* (Trenton, etc. 2014).

[32] *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad*, 13 May 1960.

[33] S. KLEEREKOPER in *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad*, 20 May 1960.

Despite this critique, reviewer Leo Hoost sticks to his opinion and in the next edition of the *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* repeats his preference for Jewish music to honor the Roman Catholic priest Vullinghs.[34] He appears to be an exception in a culture that was preoccupied with rebuilding the country and reestablishing an identity that confirmed the courage, strength and resilience of the Dutch people. Although Hans Lachman was a Jewish composer, his *Requiem* confirms and thereby becomes representative of the resistance myth. It was first and foremost an 'In memoriam of a die-hard hero'.

4.   The performance of the *Requiem* in 2015

Seventy years after the Reverend Henri Vullinghs died in the camp, the *Requiem* by Lachman was performed again. The performance took place on 9th April 2015 in the parish church at Grubbenvorst, where Vullinghs had served as a priest from 1939 until he was arrested on 1st May 1944. The day after, on April 10th, this performance was repeated. The performance was produced by Agnes Music Management in cooperation with the Van Limburg Requiem Foundation.[35] Performers were the Ars Musica chamber choir and orchestra, Stephan Adriaens, tenor, Gerben Budding, organ. Director was Patrick van der Linden.

In 1960 the *Requiem* was broadcast on national radio as part of the National Remembrance ceremony. As far as I have been able to find out, it was broadcast without interruption or further clarification. In 2015, the component parts of the *Requiem* were alternated with music by other Jewish composers, Gregorian chant and other music composed in commemoration of the Second World War. Besides this, David Henri Lachman, grandson of the composer, delivered a speech[36] and the performance was accompanied by pictures and videos projected on a large screen. According to conductor Van der Linden and producer Agnes van Haaften, the *Requiem* by Lachman was too complex and abstract to be performed without interruption. To produce an attractive program there was a need for other, more romantic and appealing music.[37] The overview of the program is as follows:

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[34] *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad*, 27 May 1960.

[35] See http://www.agnesmusicmanagement.nl and http://www.vanlimburgrequiem.nl (accessed June 2015). Hans Lachman sometimes wrote articles under the pseudonym H.J. van Limburg.

[36] This speech, announced as a *drasha* (sermon), is published at http://www.vanlimburgrequiem.nl/nl/nieuws/52-drasha-2 (accessed June 2015). On April 10th, 2015, this text was read by David Lachman', Shirah Lachman.

[37] Interview with Patrick van der Linden, 5 February 2015.

Composer	Title	Remarks
Gregorian chant	Misericordias Domini	The Reverend Vullinghs was a promotor of Gregorian chant. In 1928 he established the Ward Institute where, among other things, Gregorian chant was taught.
Hans Lachman	Requiem: Introitus and Kyrie	
Felix Mendelssohn	Opus 78, no. 3	Psalm 22, which reminds us of the crucifixion of Christ
Hans Lachman	Requiem: Graduale and Tractus	
Max Bruch	Kol Nidrei	Instrumental composition, played by cello and orchestra. Title and the melody refers to the Jewish prayer *Kol Nidrei*. This composition is often used in movies and documentaries on the war.
Hans Lachman	Requiem: Dies irae	
--	Speech by David Lachman	
Harald Saeverud	Kjempeviselåtten	A piece for piano solo, composed in 1942 as a 'ballad of resistance'.
Hans Lachman	Requiem: Offertorium	
Maurice Ravel	Kaddish	Jewish prayer for the dead, performed by piano and soprano solo.
Hans Lachman	Requiem: Sanctus and Benedictus	
Ernest Bloch	Prayer (from Jewish life)	Instrumental composition for cello and orchestra, making use of Jewish liturgical melodies.
Hans Lachman	Requiem: Agnus Dei and Communio	
Peteris Vasks	Dona nobis pacem	An expressive composition, consisting of three words: Give us peace.
Gregorian chant	Credo quod redemptor	A text from the Roman Catholic funeral liturgy, confirming faith in the resurrection.

Besides the program, there are more differences between this performance and the one in 1960. First, the 2015 performance was a live performance, taking place in a parish church and staged as a multimedia event. This event attracted attention in the national media and was attended by both visitors from the region and visitors coming from other parts of the country and even from abroad. The performance

was broadcast on national radio and television in May 2015.[38] Second, a documentary was made by Rick Roos, broadcast by the regional broadcasting company and on national television.[39] This documentary goes into the history of the war, the activities in the resistance of Henri Vullinghs and Lachman's going into hiding. Third, on the website of the Van Limburg Requiem Foundation attention was paid not only to the music, the biographies of Lachman and Vullinghs, and the documentary by Rick Roos, but also to the local catering industry, ready to serve dinner to the members of the audience before the concert and open for drinks afterwards.

The performance was more than a requiem concert, being, as said, a multimedia event of both local and national interest. Focus was not on the commemoration of the dead and those who suffered in the war, but on the activities by the Reverend Vullinghs and the inhabitants of Grubbenvorst and the surrounding area. The restaging of the *Requiem* accommodated a variety of seemingly conflicting interests, which were harmoniously united in the event: honoring the Reverend Vullinghs and all those who resisted the terror by the Nazis, welcoming the Jewish survivors of the Second World War, performing interesting unknown music, and stimulating local industry.

5.   Discussion

The comparison of the 1960 and 2015 performances of Lachman's *Requiem* provides insight into the way culture has changed in the past few decades. I will reflect on the performances and the differences between them that are indicative of these changes and I will do so from three perspectives: listening attitude, commemoration of the Second World War, and functions of the *Requiem* as a musical memorial.

5.1 Listening attitude

There is a striking difference between the listeners in 1960 and those in 2105 in their capacity to listen to modern music or at least in their capacity to do so as assumed by the organizers. In 1960, Lachman's *Requiem* was broadcast without interruption. It seems that his composition, which we *now* describe as abstract and difficult to access, was not considered as problematic at the time, at least according to the programmers of the National Memorial Day broadcast.

It is true that the *Requiem* is a complex piece. On hearing it for the first time, one is likely to find the composition difficult to understand. Devotees of Gregorian chant do recognize the way melodies develop, but otherwise the *Requiem* does not sound like chant at all. Experts of the requiem considering the composition from

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[38] Broadcast on 2 and 3 May 2015 by EO radio, *Musica Religiosa.*
[39] Broadcast on 28 April 2015 by RKK, *Katholiek Nederland TV.*

the traditional characteristics of the genre might be puzzled by its abstract character, the lack of emotional appeal and the sometimes deviating structure It is not a comforting or consoling composition, like the requiems by Fauré (1893) and Rutter (1985) for example, nor is it a political statement against war or violence, like the requiems by Britten (1962) and Penderecki (1980).[40]

Both the conductor and the producer of the 2015 performance insisted on embedding the *Requiem* in a musical environment that is both easy to access and that relates the *Requiem* to a broader musical discourse on music and death, music and violence, music and the holocaust. Would Lachman's *Requiem* have been restaged if the historical link to the Reverend Vullinghs had been lacking? In other words, to state it rather bluntly: we appreciate this composition, not primarily because of the music, but rather because of the reference to the heroic deeds of Henri Vullinghs. The surrounding composition in the program are there to invite (or even seduce) people to listen to Lachman's *Requiem.* These compositions are mainly romantic in character and fit the tendency to program concerts with romantic music from the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. This tendency is part of what Gerhard Schulze, already in 1992, referred to as the 'Erlebnisgesellschaft'.[41] We have come to live in a culture of experiences, in which products, services and places are no longer evaluated for their functional importance, but for their symbolic value, identity and amenities. They should be exciting, offer variety or, by contrast induce a feeling of peace, a sense of originality, or give one a kick. The central question is: 'What does this do to me?' The romantic compositions by Mendelssohn, Ravel, Bloch and Vasks might be compared to the sweets you give to children as a kind of reward after they have eaten an apple that they did not really want to eat at all.

5.2 *Commemoration of the Second World War*

"Remembering is never just about the past. It's always about the present." This quote by John Bodnar, cited in Rosenfeld's book on the representation of the Holocaust in books, films and other artistic expressions,[42] clearly points at the tension in practices of memorialization: how is history represented, who is telling the story, to what aim is the story told? In the first few decades after the Second World War the focus in practices of memorialization and collective memory was on resistance, on the heroes who fought against the evil. This representation of the past only focused on part of the story; its aim was not to present a faithful picture of the recent past, but rather to give courage to the Dutch people in rebuilding the

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[40] P. BERGÉ (ed.): *Dies Irae. Kroniek van het requiem* (Leuven 2011); W. MARX: '"Requiem sempiternam?" Death and the musical requiem in the twentieth century', in *Mortality* 17/2 (2012) 119-129.

[41] G. SCHULZE: *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt/Main 1992).

[42] A.H. ROSENFELD: *The end of the Holocaust* (Bloomington 2011), quote on p. 16.

country. This changed, as said, in the sixties of the twentieth century, resulting in one dominant master narrative, summarized in the slogan: 'Auschwitz, never again'.[43] That this master narrative is not as dominant as some scholars claim, however, is proved by the 2015 performance of Lachman's *Requiem*. On the one hand, this performance is about a Jew writing a requiem in honor of a Roman Catholic priest; on the other it is about a Christian rescuing a Jew from the concentration camp. The performance does not represent the Holocaust as a story of victims, but as a story of survivors and rescuers. In my opinion, there are two ideologically motivated dynamics that underlie this performance and that have, presumably implicitly, motivated programmers, producer, performers, sponsors and audience to be part of this performance.

The first dynamic is represented by Vullinghs. Although the performance is about two people, Lachman and Vullinghs, the framing of the story, particularly by the pictures and movies showed during the concert, stressed the role of the Reverend Vullinghs. His heroic deeds can be compared to those of German industrialist Oskar Schindler, figuring in the movie *Schindler's List*. In his book *The End of the Holocaust*, Jewish studies scholar Alvin Rosenfeld analyzed the blockbuster *Schindler's List*, directed by Steven Spielberg.[44] I quote him at length here, because his analysis is useful to the understanding of our case.

> *Schindler's List*, after all, is a Holocaust film that focuses chiefly on the Jews who do *not* die at the hands of the Nazis but who, on the contrary, are actually saved by a Nazi who undergoes a moral conversion to goodness. (…) In their viewing of this film mass audiences are exposed to a version of the Holocaust that originates in long-standing American preferences for 'heroes' and 'happy endings', preferences that *Schindler's List* satisfies through its artful employment of tried-and-true Hollywood conventions of cinematic storytelling.[45]

Within a frame stressing Auschwitz as the unbearable and almost inconceivable dark side of humanity, a frame that has been with us as part of the (TV) news for many decades now, people are hungry for inspiring examples of moral courage. While genocide, racism and anti-Semitism are still part of our everyday reality and – what is worse – show no signs of being on the way out, people need to feel that the heart of man is not irreparably black. The 2015 performance of Lachman's

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[43] HOEVEN: *Een boek om in te wonen* 22-23, 39-76.

[44] ROSENFELD: *The end of the Holocaust* 78-85.

[45] IDEM 81.

Requiem balances a history of unbearable suffering with affirmative stories and images of hope.[46] This dynamic is understandable, but it is also dangerous, as Rosenfeld points out: there is a definite risk of obscuring the history of human betrayal and destruction.

The second dynamic is linked to the local character of the 2015 performance. The performance took place in the south of the Netherlands, in the province of Limburg. The performance put Limburg, especially Grubbenvorst in the North of this province, in the spotlight (due to the attention in national media), revealing the resistance as it occurred in this part of the country, personalized in the Reverend Vullinghs. By once more giving prominence to the resistance 'myth',[47] the 2015 performance corrects the lack of attention for the role of Limburg in resisting the terrors of the Nazi regime. For many years, the popular view was that the resistance in Limburg during the Second World War did not amount to much. This 'myth' went all the way back to the war itself when some of the resistance fighters who made it over to England – where the Dutch queen and government were stationed – to continue fighting the Germans from there, declared that they knew nothing of the resistance in the South or had never heard of it, more or less implying that it was absent or negligible. This view was strengthened by the authoritative study on the Netherlands during the Second World War by Lou de Jong.[48] Although this view had already been corrected in several studies, especially by the dissertation by Fred Cammaert in 1994,[49] the 2015 performance of Lachman's *Requiem* seems to indicate that the people of Limburg, or at least some of them, still feel the need to once more stress their heroic role in resisting the Nazis.

5.3 *Functions of a musical memorial*

The last perspective to reflect on in the 1960 and 2015 performances of Lachman's *Requiem* is that of the requiem as a musical memorial. Memorials and monuments, in general, have three functions.[50] First of all, a memorial is founded in the public domain and refers to the past. The memorial is there to keep the remembrance of

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[46] ROSENFELD: *The end of the Holocaust* 86-93.

[47] In my opinion the resistance myth is still alive, as is proved by, among other things, the recently published (online) memorial book of the resistance during the Second World War (http://www.lo-lkp.nl) and the erection of a monument honoring those who provided hiding places during the War (Kamp Amersfoort, March 2015).

[48] M. PAUMEN: 'Erkenning voor het Limburgs verzet', in *NRC Boeken*, 7 May 1994.

[49] A.P.M. CAMMAERT: *Het verborgen front. Geschiedenis van de georganiseerde illegaliteit in de provincie Limburg tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Leeuwarden 1994).

[50] L.M.C. FARO: 'Van een glimlach die voorbijkwam en het stille verdriet: Plaats en betekenis van monumenten voor levenloos geboren kinderen', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 27 (2011) 7-28, pp. 22-23.

the past alive. Second, memorials aim at healing and dealing with emotions. Practices of memorialization are essential to collective mourning, grief and dealing with loss. Third, memorials embody the indictment, the rejection of what happened in the past; they embody the 'never again'. Rituals and performances like requiem concerts[51] bring these three functions to life. In the 1960 performance of Lachman's *Requiem* the function of this musical memorial is clear. The performance served the commemoration of Vullinghs – the title of the review by Smits van Waesberghe also clearly illustrates this – and through him of all the compatriots who resisted the Nazis. The functions of the 2015 performance are less clear. We might consider this performance as a restorative ritualization, referring to Schechner's definition of rituals as collective memories encoded into actions. Indeed, memories are restored by retelling the story of Henri Vullinghs and the inhabitants of Grubbenvorst. But also without this story, we can hear collective memories reverberating in the performance of the music. Peteris Vasks's composition *Dona nobis pacem*, for example, Rosenfeld in my opinion one of the highlights of the concert – expresses an intense longing for peace. This prayer for the impossible or unattainable transcends the (conflicting) interests and intentions of those attending the concert. The longing for peace, expressed in the *Dona nobis pacem*, is a transpersonal value. The musical expression of this longing not only unites all the participants of the 2015 performance, but also constructs a bridge between the world and times of the Reverend Vullinghs and our world and our times.[52] We recognize this longing in his heroic deeds and we share this longing, while listening to the music, together with Vullinghs and with all the participants, performers and members of the audience alike. The longing for peace and justice, represented by the heroic deeds of Vullinghs and evoked by the music, make us look forward to a peaceful 'future past'.[53]

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[51] M.J.M. HOONDERT: 'All Souls' Day Requiem concerts as civil rituals', in *Questions liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy* 94 (2013) 330-346.

[52] IDEM: 'Muziek en beleving', in *Speling* 63/1 (2011) 76-80; IDEM: 'Presentie van het heilige in muziek', in P. VERSNEL-MERGAERTS & L. VAN TONGEREN (eds.): *Heilig, heilig, heilig. Over sacraliteit in kerk en cultuur* (=Meander 14) (Heeswijk 2011) 115-127.

[53] HOEVEN: *Een boek om in te wonen* 71; Liesbeth Hoeven refers to S. STEWART: *On longing. Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection* (Durham 2005).

9

'DOING IT FOR THE RIGHT REASONS':
THE RITUAL DIMENSIONS OF FESTIVAL *MUSICA SACRA MAASTRICHT*

Lieke Wijnia

1.   Introduction

Every year in the third weekend of September, the Dutch city of Maastricht houses a music festival in many of its historic buildings in the old center. Given the city's rich religious heritage, the majority of these buildings are churches, former monasteries, or chapels. The many religious ritual practices performed there on a daily basis are in that third weekend of September accompanied by the practice of musical performance. During the festival *Musica Sacra Maastricht*, about ten thousand visitors attend concerts of predominantly Western classical music ranging from Gregorian chant to contemporary art music. It is a festival that has a fair share of returning visitors who mark this weekend in their annual calendars. Consisting of about sixty activities each year, the festival program is filled with performances from which the visitors have to make their own selections. While the reception of the performances can vary considerably, the majority of the visitors remain loyal to the festival. Under the name of *musica sacra*, they maintain that this festival presents music that is hardly staged elsewhere and that this annual event deserves to be cherished.

This chapter explores how a ritual studies approach can be beneficial for an appraisal of the significance of musical performance for those engaging with this Dutch festival.[1] In exploring this question, I will look at several performances from festival editions of *Musica Sacra Maastricht* between 2012 and 2014. The performances will be looked at from the perspectives of the program committee, audience members, or performers, in order to explore the significance of their ritual dimensions. The overall question is whether the theoretical frame of ritual is helpful for understanding what it means to engage in musical performance.

The question of how to properly study ritual has been subject to fierce debate, which in turn has resulted in a variety of approaches. Therefore the first section of this chapter is dedicated to outlining the theoretical approach to ritual

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[1] This theoretical understanding of ritual in the context of musical performance is more extensively discussed in the author's forthcoming PhD dissertation (Tilburg University, 2016), notably in Chapters 4 and 8.

as employed in the analysis of the festival performances. The second part consists of a brief introduction to the festival *Musica Sacra Maasticht*. Subsequently, I present the case studies forming the ritual continuum ranging from musicalization of religious rituals[2] to ritualization of musical performances. The final section of this contribution will be dedicated to theoretical reflections on the relationship between ritual and music. In particular, I discuss the questions of how participants relate to musical performances as meaningful and fulfilling practices and how this process of meaning making can be understood in terms of ritual. By approaching the concerts for their ritual dimensions but explicitly not treating them *as* rituals, I hope to be able to add to the discussions on how the concept of ritual can be of use for the theoretical understanding of musical performances in contemporary Western culture.

2.   Theoretical approach

Music matters in the lives of many people. It creates opportunities for making sense of one's life, to make sense of the world, and to make sense of one's position within this world. In short, music provides meaning to life. It is therefore often referred to as "a way of knowing the world."[3] Furthermore, ritual behavior is regarded as behavior that is performed in order to give shape to dynamics meaning making. Many scholars approach ritual as a fundamental aspect of human behavior.[4] It is behavior through which people make sense of their lives. Therefore it seems useful to employ a ritual studies approach in order to grasp the practice of musical performance. I want to explore the lens of ritual as a theoretical focus for understanding musical performance as a meaning-making activity for its participants, whether these are festival programmers, musicians, or audience members.

According to musicologist Christopher Small ritual is the "mother of all the arts."[5] For him all artistic forms owe to ritual and all artistic practices have a ritual-like character. He defines ritual as:

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[2] The theme of religious rituals staged as concerts has been previously explored in: L. WIJNIA: 'Religious rituals as festival performances at *Musica Sacra Maastricht*', in *Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies* 29 (2013) 99-111.

[3] N. COOK: *Music. A very short introduction* (Oxford 1998), foreword; A. ROSS: *Listen to this* (London 2010) xiv.

[4] See for instance: É. DURKHEIM: *The elementary forms of religious life* (translated by K.E. Fields) (New York 1995 [1912]); R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (Cambridge 1999); R.L. GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone: Re-inventing rites of passage* (Berkeley 2002).

[5] C. SMALL: *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening* (Middletown 1998) 105.

a form of organized behavior in which humans use the language of gesture, or para-language, to affirm, to explore, and to celebrate their ideas of how the relationships of the cosmos (or part of it), operate, and thus of how they themselves should relate to it and to one another.[6]

Small coined the verb *musicking* to emphasize the requirement of participation in order for music to have meaning. He regards music primarily as an activity, through which relationships amongst the participants, and between the participants and the world at large, are established. For Small, the rituality of music is realized by means of its relational character.

Similarly, ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell emphasized not only the ritual-like character of all artistic practices, but even more so that of behavioral performance in general. She stated that:

> The ritual-like nature of performative activities appears to lie in the multifaceted sensory experience, in the framing that creates a sense of condensed totality, and in the ability to shape people's experience and ordering of the world. In brief, performances seem ritual-like because they explicitly model the world.[7]

As a reflection of the one-liner that music is a way of knowing the world, I surmise that both ritual and art shape and translate ideas into actions about the world and how it should ideally be structured for its participants and performers. This occurs mainly through the relationships established during the performance and how each participant takes up a, pre-assigned or not, particular role. In this way, participants do not only learn about these relationships, rather they actually constitute and experience them on their own.

According to Small, the ritual potential of art is located in the active engagement with works of art and musical performance. He even goes as far as to state that:

> The meaning lies not in the objects themselves but in the viewing of them, and the lining-up and viewing are themselves ritual acts with a wealth of social and political meanings. (…) Properly understood, then, all art is performance art, which is to say that it is first and foremost activity. It is the *act* of art, the act of creating, of exhibiting, of performing, of viewing, of dancing, of wearing, of carrying in procession, of eating, of smelling, or of screening that is important, not the created object.[8]

While this approach is predominantly favorable of the engagement to art, it should not be applied at the cost of the actual works themselves. Without a par-

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[6] SMALL: *Musicking* 95.

[7] C. BELL: *Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions* (New York 1997) 161.

[8] SMALL: *Musicking* 107-108.

ticular work of art there is nothing to engage in in the first place. Composers and performers have particular intentions with their pieces. To a certain extent they attempt to shape the experiences of the listeners.[9] Thus the *act* of art is strongly dependent on the work that calls for engagement. However, Small's formulation draws welcome attention to the fact that the meaning and function of music do not solely rest in the composed notes as written down on a piece of paper, but even more so in its performance, of which in turn the score is a vital part.

The theoretical understandings voiced by Small and Bell demonstrate that the relationship between art and ritual is an intricate one. It is of no use apply a ritual model on a 1:1 basis to musical performances, to study concerts *as* rituals. Rather, rituality has a presence in the performance of the music. It is argued here that musical performance fulfills particular needs and meanings for those who participate in them. To understand this role of fulfillment a ritual studies approach may be advantageous. As such, I will explore the concerts and the festival as a whole with a primary focus on their ritual dimensions.

I approach these ritual dimensions as forming a continuum. The one end of the continuum is constituted by originally ritual practices from religious traditions, which are staged during the festival as performances of classical music. The other end is constituted by classical music concerts that have a highly ritualized – not to say, sacralized – character. Between these two forms, there are many types of performances in which rituality comes to the fore in smaller or larger degrees. By distinguishing between these two manifestations of rituality in musical performance, the rituality of the festival and its consequential meaning-making processes are explored.

3. The festival

Now known as *Musica Sacra Maastricht*, the festival started in 1983 as *Festival for Religious Music*.[10] That year the director of the Maastricht Cultural Center was asked to deliver a contribution in the form of a cultural activity to the seven-yearly procession, the *Heiligdomsvaart*, through the city. The *Festival for Religious Music* took place over two weeks and each day saw a luncheon- and evening concert. After the first editions the change was made to focus on the weekends, because the span of two weeks proved too long to attract sufficient audiences. When the name change to *Musica Sacra* became definitive in 1988, the festival period was simultaneously reduced to a weekend. This increase of compactness

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[9] C. KOOPMAN: 'Muzikale ervaring tussen overgave en distantie', in E. HEIJERMAN & A. VAN DER SCHOOT (eds.): *Welke taal spreekt de muziek? Muziekfilosofische beschouwingen* (Budel 2010 [2005]) 67.

[10] The festival has been organized under the following names. Between 1983-1984: *Festival religious music*; 1985-1987: *Euro Festival Religious Music*; 1988-2001: *Musica Sacra*; 2002-present: *Musica Sacra Maastricht*.

and intensity was met by higher numbers of visitors. Since the beginning, the festival committee worked on originality in the musical programming, the festival locations, and the invited performers.

The name change in 1988 provided a broader programmatic scope, from religious music to sacred music. The relationship between sacrality and music is formulated in both religious and secular terms. For the program committee the notion of the sacred incorporates but is not limited to the notion of religion. This notably expands the kinds of music that may be possibly programmed. To offer some direction for both the committee and the festival audience an annual theme was installed in 1990. These themes are always derived from institutional religious vocabulary, but are simultaneously related to current social affairs and a more secular vocabulary. During the period of my fieldwork the themes were *Rites and Rituals* (2012), *Transformation, Turn-Around and Conversion* (2013), *The Awe-Inspiring* (2014).

Since 2013 the festival is promoted as an *arts festival*. In addition to the musical core of the program, performances in other artistic disciplines are selected as well. Film, dance, theatre, and visual arts are all represented in the annual program. It complies with the idea underlying the festival name: the combination of *musica*, ultimately a derivative of the ancient Greek term for the arts, and sacrality, referring to that which is valued as sacred.[11] The festival locations consist of both religious building, such as churches or chapels, but also secular heritage sites, as the city hall and theatres.

Furthermore, the program committee has a two-sided concern in producing the annual festival program. On the one hand, the committee is concerned with programming qualitatively high, seldom performed, and original and new classical music. On the other hand, there is the concern with how this music engages with the tastes and predilections of those attending the festival performances. This concern is mainly reflected upon through the central notion of sacrality, as indicated by the festival name *Musica Sacra Maastricht*. It lies at the heart of the festival. In line with this point of departure pertaining to the notion of the sacred, the committee comes up with an annual theme: a theme that relates to existential questions as well as biblical references. British composer and festival participant Michael Finnissy described the duality of the committee's concern in creating the festival program as follows:

> To have a festival that is concerned about how people live their lives and the meaning of people's lives is so much better than having just another contemporary music festival. (…) There is a reasoning behind it, and people believe it. They are doing it for the right reasons and that communicates.[12]

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[11] Meeting with Program Committee, 09-01-2012.
[12] Interview with Michael Finnissy, 19-09-2014.

This reasoning behind it, the commitment to the relation between the performed music and those experiencing it, is approached here as rituality. The departure point is that the festival committee is actively concerned with the ritual dimensions of the concerts. The larger question is brought to bear on *how* it communicates when a festival takes its possible ritual dimensions into account. In other words, does the festival make the music matter more when in the programming process the question of *why* music matters is already taken into account? This will be explored by means of the theoretical continuum used to grasp how rituality has a presence in musical performance. First, I shall examine the musicalization of religious ritual and proceed to discuss the ritualization of musical performance.

4.   Musicalization of religious ritual

During the 2012 edition, themed *Rites and Rituals*, there were at least two instances of religious rituals that were staged as festival performances. The first was the performance of Roman Catholic rituals traditionally performed as part of the liturgies on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. A selection of ritual acts and chants was made and performed by the local ensemble *Schola Maastricht*.[13] The ensemble entered the church singing, walking through the nave to the altar and the church choir. The singers were dressed in traditional white habits. The performed ritual acts were amongst others the washing of the feet, the veneration of the cross, the lighting of the light, the baptism of the catechumens, and a closing procession during which the *Schola* walked down the nave in the direction of the church doors.

The ritual acts were surrounded by or accompanied by chanting. The acts took place on and around the altar. They were best visible for the audience members sitting in the first rows. After the performance finished the applause was hesitant; it started a little while after the singers had left the nave and stopped singing. People grouped together afterwards, and the most heard comment was that the performance made the, mostly elderly, visitors relate to their childhoods. Moreover, a younger visitor, by profession an actor, recounted how during the lighting of the light part all the lights went off in the church, and the *Schola Maastricht* reentered the nave with candles in their hands. He was impressed by the theatrical effect and stated that this kind of effect should be used more often in contemporary theatre.

The second prominent ritual performance in the festival program was that of a Japanese ensemble of Buddhist monks, called *Kashôken*. They performed a ceremony called *The Large Sutra of the Transcendental Wisdom*, which is one of the

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[13] Performance: Schola Maastricht, *Ritual elements from the Sacrum Triduum Paschale,* 07-09-2012, Martinuskerk, 22:00-23:00.

most frequently performed ceremonies within Shingon Buddhism.[14] This performance was the first of three that were performed during consecutive nights. As soon as the thirteen monks entered, each sound they made was part of the performance. The different parts of the ceremony were indicated on flat screens placed on both sides of the nave. The many small, delicate acts taking place on the central altar close to the ground were only visible for those sitting in front. The first part of the ceremony consisted of many of these acts that constituted the cleansing of the space.

The main and longest part of the ceremony consisted of the symbolic reading of six hundred holy books, the sutras. The monks lifted one end up in the air, letting the harmonica unfold. During the reading they recited the book title, the name of the translator, the title of the specific part, the first seven lines, the middle five, and the last three of each book. This central part was enlisted by traditional *shômyô* hymns praising Buddha and other gods. During one of the hymns before the symbolic reading, pieces of colored paper representing Lotus flowers were scattered all over the floor. In addition to the chanting, several sound objects were used, amongst others the conch shell horn. After the final hymn, sung while walking down the nave towards the church entrance, the doors were closed behind the monks. Members of the audience looked around somewhat puzzled, exchanged looks with neighbors, and slowly got up from their seats. People clustered together in small groups and talked about the performance. The most uttered responses were characterized by the thoughts how "very different" this was, that it was hard to find words to describe the experience of this performance, and that the ceremony had such a meditative character. Most of all, people commented on the fact that this Buddhist ceremony took place in a Protestant church.

In the concert booklets it was communicated clearly for both performances that the chants and ritual acts were rooted in particular religious traditions. Especially the responses afterwards demonstrated that this fact confused the visitors. It is not deemed appropriate in traditional Christian settings that religious ritual is followed by applause; while after concert performances the audience usually demonstrates appreciation for the performers by means of applause. After the performance of *Schola Maastricht* the applause was belated and a little hesitant. Yet, the audience felt comfortable enough to show their appreciation. This strongly contrasted the response after the performance of *Kashôken*. It was apparent how the audience members did not feel enough comfort to show their appreciation for the performers, as after some initial moments of confusion, people got up from their seats to leave the church. It could be argued that because of the applause, or lack thereof, the performance of *Schola Maastricht* was interpreted as

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[14] Performance: Karyôbinga Shômyô Kenkyûkai (*Kashôken*), *Buddhist Ritual Ceremony I: Day-hannya-tendoku'e*, 06-09-2012, Sint Janskerk, 21:00-22:00.

both ritual and concert, while the performance of *Kashôken* was primarily regarded as ritual. Visitors did not feel comfortable enough to also recognize a concert layer in this performance and act accordingly to that, as they did do after the performance of *Schola Maastricht*.

5.   Ritualization of musical performance

In addition to the performance of rituals on the festival stage, the concert itself has become increasingly ritualized since the late nineteenth century. In his study on the emergence of a classical music scene in North America, historian Lawrence Levine has called this ritualization a process of 'sacralization'.[15] A classical concert takes place in a designated space that bears temple-like qualities. In the specifically designed space particular codes of conduct regarding applause, photography, silence, and even dress code are prevalent. The contemporary performance practice of classical music dictates when to applaud and, more importantly, when not to applaud. During performances of classical pieces that consist of several parts, no applause is to occur in between the different parts.

    Contrary to the performance of popular music, the audience in a concert hall preferably does not make any sound. In order to be listened to and properly engaged with, this music requires silence. This in turn is supposed to result in feelings of reverence, contemplation and reflection.[16] It parallels what religious studies scholar Christopher Partridge calls 'a sacralization of subjectivities'. There has been "an increasing focus on states of consciousness, emotions, passions, sensations, bodily experiences, dreams, visions, and feelings. There has been a turn within."[17] This turn within led to a particular code of conduct in the concert hall. Mostly, coughing and other expressions of physical sounds are saved up for the intervals between the different parts, but preferably not while the music is played. Also, the use of mobile equipment such as phones or cameras is prohibited. While the audience is supposed to be in a state of contemplation, also the focus that is required of the performers should go undisturbed.

    Even during *Musica Sacra Maastricht,* where most people can be classified as frequent visitors of classical concerts, the rituality of the musical performance does not always go as planned. It is exactly the disturbances of the implied concert behavior, creating dimensions of contestation, which demonstrate the presence of a ritual dimension in the performance.

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[15] L. LEVINE: *Highbrow/lowbrow. The emergence of cultural hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA 1988) 83-168.

[16] S. VAN MAAS: *Wat is een luisteraar? Reflectie, interpellatie en dorsaliteit in hedendaagse muziek* (Utrecht 2009) 12.

[17] C. PARTRIDGE: *The lyre of Orpheus. Popular music, the sacred & the profane* (Oxford 2014) 180.

These dimensions of contestations were detected during several performances. During a performance of flamenco music in one of church buildings,[18] one of the visitors could not prevent himself from, to a certain extent, moving along the rhythms of the music. At one point during the performance, this man started to move his hands and slowly but steadily he started to stretch his arms into the air, to move along with the flamenco dancer. However, the venue of the church was not necessarily equipped for this, and before he knew it, his hands encountered the chandeliers that hung above him.

Terry Riley's piece *The Cusp of Magic* (2008) was written as a contemporary ritual, but during the concert the performers spent much time to tune their instruments in between the different parts of the piece.[19] This removed the rhythm and the dynamic of the piece as a whole, and as a consequence the audience members started to become a little restless during these long intervals.

During the performance of traditional South Korean *P'ansori* music, the clash of different concert cultures caused an area of contestation.[20] In Korea, the audience shouts encouragements for the singers. These are encouragements formed by a particular code of conduct, just as much as the singing itself is. However, this is completely opposite of how a Western audience behaves during a classical concert. Thus even after instructions of the singer, the festival audience at *Musica Sacra Maastricht* remained silent as usual. This in turn confused the singer greatly. He had already expressed his nerves because this was his first time performing for a Western audience. Thus to him the silence of the audience was a sign of disapproval, while for the audience being silent was a sign of interest and respect. To make things worse, the nerves became overwhelming and the singer forgot his lines. He had to run off stage to get the text, after which he calmed down a little and finished the performance in more or less good order.

In the performance of classical music, rituality can be discerned in the context held to be a prerequisite for a proper experience of the music. Both the setting of the concert hall and the implied codes of conduct constitute this context for the audience and the performers. This rituality is derived from the idea that classical music requires a listening modus that allows for introspection and contemplation. The music is thought to evoke this state of mind, which is only possible in complete silence with an utter focus on the performed sounds. The lack of applause in between different parts of the music is an attempt to retain this focus for both the audience and performers. Alternatively, it offers a moment to

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[18] Performance: Ana Gómez Torcuato and others, *De Cobre Y Lunares*, 08-09-2012, Sint Janskerk, 14:30-15:30.

[19] Performance: Matangi Quartet and Liu Fang, *The Cusp Of Magic*, 09-09-2012, Theater a/h Vrijthof, 13:00-13:45.

[20] Performance: Yongseok Choe and Byungtae Kim, *P'ansori*, 21-09-2013, Theater a/h Vrijthof, 19:15-20:15.

reflect on the previously heard music and the emotional states this evoked, before continuing to the next part of the performance.

6.   Understanding musical performance through the lens of ritual

However briefly described, these different examples demonstrate the two tendencies present in the performance of Western art music. In the context of this festival, its musical practices, and its relation to the continuously transforming religious landscape, official religious rituals are increasingly approached for their musical character. Regardless of the metaphysical, religious messages underlying them, these rituals obtain an additional musical value and become subject to additional frames of meaning making. The rituals are increasingly, what I have termed, musicalized. In turn, since the nineteenth century musical performances are characterized by a high degree of ritualization, in both the compositional character and performance practice. People seem to increasingly turn to music for its capacity of being a meaning-making factor in their lives. This role coincides with the ritual character of music. Whereas rituals become musicalized, the music becomes ritualized. People negotiate their own meaning through these different kinds of performances. These negotiations result in a continuum with each of these two forms at one end.

Due to the subjective character of these negotiations and the focus on inwardness and individual reflection, it greatly differs between audience members whether one experiences a performance primarily for its ritual dimensions. However, an indicator might be found in the uncertainties that can arise around the question of applause. Traditionally ritual does not receive applause, whereas entertainment does. But when entertainment is regarded as ritual or vice versa, confusion emerges. This in turn might also say something about the effect of the performances on the audience. Interestingly, during my fieldwork interviews, festival visitors stated how they preferred some moments of quietness after the music had finished instead of being snapped out of the atmosphere conveyed by the music by a loud applause. It might be argued that when a concert is appreciated for its ritual dimensions, people prefer to engage with it even after it has finished. The music has then succeeded in establishing this, in Bell's terminology, 'sense of condensed totality' in which the listener finds a way to position him/herself. Even after final sounds have faded away, the listener feels the desire to continue to this positioning and relate to the ordered totality that was realized during the performance. Immediate applause does not allow for this continued engagement.

However, the lack of applause does not always indicate effective rituality. After the Roman Catholic rituals there was a hesitation but eventually applause followed. One of the visitors said how much she had appreciated that there was no immediate applause, because she desired to remain in the sacred atmosphere

that was evoked by the religious character of the performance.[21] When these kinds of rituals are performed during liturgy, applause is not an option. With this frame of reference in mind, the audience members at the performance by the Shingon ensemble did not applaud after the ceremonies. Due to the fact that people were largely unfamiliar with this ritual, it was primarily felt that it was not appropriate to applaud after a liturgical act. This again occurred after the second performance. Before the third and final festival performance, the monks told their liaison at the festival that they would appreciate some kind of applause after the performance as a token of gratitude. Before the start of the final performance, the project leader expressed this wish to the audience and afterwards applause indeed occurred. The hesitation here resulted from the apparent opposites of liturgy and entertainment. While for most of the audience members the performance was unknown, exotic, 'different' entertainment, they did not want to insult the religious roots of the performers by treating it as such. Yet, the performers were well aware of this frame of reception and had adjusted their expectations to this as well, which is why they indicated applause was welcome after the final performance.

In the ever-changing religious landscape in the Netherlands, the dominance of liturgy in the current age seems to be decreasing, while the ritual role of entertainment such as music and theatre is continuously increasing. Therefore it could be argued that ritualized performances of music as well as musicalized performances of ritual possibly serve similar purposes. However, due to their different origins and the variety of reception modes they result in, these different types of performances can confuse visitors with respect to the expected codes of conduct.

In the theorization of ritual and entertainment, there is still a strong division between ideas on what entertainment and ritual does. Performance studies scholar Richard Schechner formulated this difference in the effects of play and ritual as the difference between entertainment and efficacy.[22] The term efficacy indicates the more serious and transformative consequences that ritual can have for its participants. However, in the practices studied at *Musica Sacra Maastricht* this rigid distinction does not seem applicable. In order to provide a theoretical understanding of engagement in musical performance, whether grounded in a ritual tradition or not, it is not the most useful approach to designate particular musical performances as ritual and others as entertainment. Rather, it is argued here that concerts and music festivals consist of particular ritual dimensions and fulfill similar transformative and meaningful functions for its audiences as religious ritual might do within the context of liturgy.

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[21] Email correspondence, 25-09-2012.

[22] R. SCHECHNER: *Performance studies: An introduction* (New York, London 2013) 79-81.

In addition to their subjective character, musical experiences can also be of influence in the realization of a sense of collectivity. Anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport argued in the wake of his famous predecessor Emile Durkheim that people participating in rituals form a socially tight congregation, whereas those attending in a musical performance merely remain an audience consisting of individuals.[23] For him, the crucial difference is that rituals demand participation, while concerts only require listening and watching, that is, the role of the passive observer.

However, if one follows the line of Small's thinking about *musicking*, audience members become just as much participants as the musicians in the performance of music. Even more so, both types of participants are contributing to the meaning that is produced through the performed music. Through the production of meaning, there are both individual and collective sides to the performance of music, just as there are to the participation in rituals. As demonstrated above, through the different types of performances rituality and entertainment are not as easily distinguished in practice as they might be in theory. Even more so, this might not be desirable at all. In changing the perspective from treating them as two binary opposites to the detection of ritual dimensions in performances with the purpose of entertainment (such as festival concerts), the ritual potential of these performances much more clearly comes to the fore.

In studying the possible collective effects of musical performances, several layers need to be distinguished. There is obviously the difference between a possible sense of collectivity during and after the performance. Moreover, the context in which the concert takes place is of relevance as well. In this case, the field of *Musica Sacra Maastricht* has realized a fair share of returning festival visitors, who over the years have come to share a large body of collective experiences. People share the feeling that it has become *their* festival. It could be argued that during the festival weekend the audience forms something comparable to a congregation, but not afterwards. However, this preliminary hypothesis would deserve further discussion.

7. Discussion

The more general dynamic underlying rituality in these types of musical performances needs to be related to the context of the decline of institutionalized religion's social and cultural dominance. This decline has a two-fold character. On the one hand, because institutional religion's prominence is decreasing other platforms for the performance of religious rituals are sought. To a certain extent this search transforms the content of these rituals. However, while looking for ways

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[23] RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* 39.

to make these rituals appealing to a contemporary audience, certain core values need to be retained. On the other hand, the decrease in the dominance of institutional religion creates room for other forms of existential meaning making. Forms of entertainment are increasingly subjected in order to see to what extent they can take up the role previously filled out by religious traditions. While many might increasingly question the content of religious traditions, the ritualized form is still relevant in contemporary meaning-making practices.

At the beginning of this paper, I posed several questions that drive this research project: How does the concept of ritual relate to the practice of musical performance? Do ritual dimensions of musical performances contribute to the understanding of existential matters? Does rituality make the music matter even more for its participants? As explored above, the program committee of *Musica Sacra Maastricht* is in its approach to the annual festival program deliberately take existential questions into consideration. The festival is related to the city's religious heritage and offers an exploration of what has been termed here the full continuum that constitutes the relationship between ritual and music. Furthermore, the notion of ritual has been useful for not only appraising the responses of audience members, but also for posing the question how they might possibly regard attendance of musical performance as a meaning-making activity.

Overall, I have argued that when rituality is taken into account during a concert or a festival it offers room for reflection and contemplation about the link between one's own life and the larger context in which this life is conducted. *Musica Sacra Maastricht* is very deliberately concerned with this subject matter. It even led Finnissy to state that the program committee is organizing this festival for the right reasons. He implied that music has the potential to relate to existential questions, so therefore it should be used to this end. This leaves the question how the notion of ritual could be beneficial for understanding other kinds of musical performances or festivals, in which existential features have a less formulated presence. Events like *Lowlands, Rock Werchter*, or *Roskilde Festival,* to name a few, could be expected to be able to fulfill similar aims of meaning making for its participants. Although completely different in appearance, programs, and target audiences, I think it could be arguable that similar ritual dimensions are detectable in these events. Yet the roles of participation are of a very different nature: singing and dancing along with the performers provides for yet another dimension to meaning-making practices in addition to those described at *Musica Sacra Maastricht.* This makes musical festivals in general sites of importance in the study of what matters in contemporary culture.

Part IV

RITUAL SPACE AND PLACE

10

MONUMENTS FOR STILLBORN CHILDREN IN THE NETHERLANDS:
THE EXPERIENCES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PARENTS

Laurie M.C. Faro

Introduction

Not allowed to see their stillborn child

In the eighties of the twentieth century, the death of children around their birth (stillborn children) was 'handled' by health care professionals in a very detached manner. The testimony of a mother of a stillborn child illustrates how she was not allowed to see nor to touch her child: "They did not tell me why I was not allowed to see her. It was my child, our child, there was no explanation nor any comfort."[1]

Besides the absence of intimate contact between child and parents, stillborn children were not given a funeral with the traditional funeral services. The hospital, or others, took care of the burial and nobody ever spoke again about what had happened, as another mother testifies:

> And that was is it! I was only twenty-two years old at the time and let it all happen because I thought that was the way it ought to happen. You came home empty-handed and the child's bedroom had already been cleared and everything was soon business as usual.[2]

Most of the time, these stillborn children were commemorated within the family and in private places and were not commemorated in public ceremonies The dedication of a monument for stillborn children in 2001, in the Dutch village of Reutum in the eastern part of the Netherlands, caused an avalanche of attention in the public media. The affair was thus taken from private commemoration, to commemoration in the public area.

A Roman Catholic Deacon in Reutum, Jan Kerkhof Jonkman, took the initiative to create this monument. He remembers that when he was still young, his

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[1] L. FARO: *Postponed monuments in the Netherlands. Manifestation, context, and meaning*. Dissertation Tilburg University (2015).
[2] L. FARO: 'Van een glimlach die voorbij kwam en het stille verdriet. Plaats en betekenis van monumenten voor levenloos geboren kinderen', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 27 (2011) 7-29, p. 7.

father had to go to the unconsecrated grounds of the graveyard to bury his still-born sister himself. The Roman Catholic priest did not care for her because she had not been baptized. He still remembers the sorrow of his parents. At All Souls in the catholic Holy Year 2000, which carried the theme *mea culpa*, Deacon Kerkhof Jonkman decided to consecrate the place where stillborn children had been buried at the time. While he was doing so, a woman stepped forward and put a burning candle in the ground stating that this apparently must be the place where her stillborn child was buried a long time ago. Others soon followed her and Kerkhof Jonkman thought it was more appropriate to have a monument erected at this particular place; it would be impossible to reverse the past but it would be possible to do justice to the grief. He thought that a monument would act as a symbol to the injustice done to parents of stillborn children.[3] In July 2001, the monument was dedicated and at December 28, the Roman Catholic day of 'Innocent children', Cardinal Simonis paid a visit to the monument. He named this monument: 'a monument of sorrow and pain, a sign of collective incapacity following narrow views of human beings.'[4] He did not bring up the idea of a *mea culpa* of the Roman Catholic Church, although he declared that if people wished, they could ask their local priest to consecrate the unconsecrated ground.

The monument has generally been indicated to be the 'first monument to stillborn children' in the Netherlands and meant the start of a public debate about the practices around stillborn children at the time. Since that time, in many other cities and villages people took the initiative to erect monuments. It is difficult to determine the number exactly because there is no central organization or system keeping track of the number. However, the Dutch anthropologist Janneke Peelen stated in 2009 in a very detached manner that in total the number of monuments in the Netherlands must be around 160.[5] Although it seems as if this number at present has not grown considerably, the matter is still of topical interest and was only recently extensively presented and debated in a Dutch television soap series called *Goedenavond dames en heren* ('Good evening ladies and gentlemen').[6]

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[3] 'Deze kinderen zijn naamloos, dat mag niet', interview with Jan Kerkhof Jonkman, http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/archief/article/detail/2529428/2000/06/30/Deze-kinderen-zijn-naamloos-dat-mag-niet-.dhtml (accessed August 14, 2013).

[4] Kardinaal Simonis: 'Het vroegere denken over kinderen die ongedoopt zijn stierven', in *Op Tocht* (October 2001), http://www.geschiedenis24.nl/geschiedenis/andere-tijden/afleveringen/2001-2002 (accessed August 14, 2013).

[5] J. PEELEN: 'Reversing the past: monuments for stillborn children', in *Mortality* 14 (2009) 173-186, p. 51.

[6] http://www.omroepmax.nl/pers/tv-programmas/goedenavond-dames-en-heren/ (accessed May 28, 2015).

Setup of this contribution

In this contribution, I will focus on function and meaning of monuments for stillborn children. These issues will be discussed with an accent on experiences of Roman Catholic parents in the (mainly catholic) province of Noord-Brabant.

I will first present my research methods and some theoretical notes. Next, I will discuss relevant issues within the individual, social and ritual context of these parents, like mourning practices, ritual practices, and medical practices regarding stillborn children in the years 1950–1990 and I will consider how they relate to the erection of monuments and ritual commemoration practices much later, that is to say as of the year 2001. The results of the empirical data, collected by means of semi-structured interviews with parents will be presented and analysed.

The contribution will be rounded off with a conclusion and discussion on the results.

Methods

Theoretical notes on ritual, memory and place

This contribution is based on the results of the PhD project of the author.[7] In this project the 'phenomenon' of so-called 'postponed' monuments in the Netherlands has been studied. Nowadays a variety of events from the, sometimes suppressed or forgotten, past are recalled in memory by means of a public monument. The core of these monuments lies in the apparent 'need' to create a public memorial place relating to persons or events from the past. Often these memorial places are the end of a process of obliteration, ignoring or suppressing and have the objective to capture a place in public memory. Apparently, there was no ritual commemoration repertoire for these events at the time, like we have today when sites of disaster and trauma turn almost immediately into sites of mourning, remembering and honoring the victims.

Less attention is paid to the question of form, ritual practices, and meaning of 'postponed' monuments as a separate category. The project had a case study approach and consequently four 'postponed' monuments in the Netherlands have been studied in particular: the Monument Vrouwen van Ravensbrück in Amsterdam, the Digital Monument to the Jewish Community in the Netherlands and the Jewish Monument Community, monuments to stillborn children, and the Harmelen railway disaster monument. These monuments have been considered within the triad of place as initiation to ritual practices, and the monument itself. The focus was on the meaning of this triad to people who hold commemorations at the monument.

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7 Faro: *Postponed monuments in the Netherlands.*

The research results illustrate that monuments offer a stage where the viewer will engage with his or her memories. Monuments 'work' and create meaning throughout form, symbolism, and text, but in the same time also by ritual practices.

Ravenbruck monument, Museumplein Amsterdam. The monument as a place to relax (© Michiel J. Faro)

This exploratory and qualitative project has primarily been embedded in the field of ritual studies. Within this field, ritual commemoration practices, closely connected to a monument, belong to "an emerging ritual repertoire".[8] A ritual is a "more or less repeatable sequence of action units which, take on a symbolic dimension through formalization, stylization and their situation in place and time."[9] One of the pioneers in ritual studies, Ronald Grimes, holds the opinion that "the meaning of 'ritual' depends on the context."[10] Scholars usually distinguish between meaning and function, and they currently debate whether rituals mean anything as well as whether they 'do' anything, that is whether they have a function. According to Grimes, rituals both do and mean something: they 'work' by

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[8] P. POST, A. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern Western culture* (Leuven 2011) 8, 36-37, 45-46.

[9] IDEM 18.

[10] R. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) 185.

making meaning.[11] People who participate in the context of commemoration of a person or an event may feel that this is a meaningful process to them personally. Besides this personal aspect, rituals may "bear, carry, or conjure meaning" to a wider audience.[12]

In his seminal work in the field of cultural memory studies *Multidirectional Memory,* the American scholar Michael Rothberg explores the 'minimalist' definition of memory as proposed by Richard Terdiman in *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis:* "memory is the past made present."[13] Rothberg comments that the notion of a 'making present' has two implications. A first one is that memory is not something of the past but a contemporary phenomenon: while concerned with the past memory happens in the present. The results of my research show that the connection between persons or events of the past and remembering them in the present is made by means of erection and commemoration rituals at the site of a monument. A second observation is that memory is 'a form of work', a process, people who remember act through interventions and ritual practices at particular places, for instance by means of erecting a monument and commemoration rituals at the site of a monument.

As acknowledged by the Dutch ritual specialist Paul Post, and in line with the American religious scholar Jonathan Smith, 'place matters', very often it is place that directs rituality and in our contemporary society, ritual place has become an important theme.[14] In addition, the American philosopher Edward Casey emphasizes the relationship between 'memory' and 'place': "a memory is often either of a place itself or of an event or person *in* a place […]."[15] Casey holds the opinion that memory is naturally 'place-oriented' or at least 'place-supported' and that memory itself is a place wherein the past can revive and survive.[16]

Casey declares place to be "the first of all things" which seems to be in line with the mentioned relevance of place regarding ritual practices. The actual location, the place, of a monument constitutes the connection between a person or an event in the past, and 'place' in the present. In addition, ritual practices reinforce this bond between memory and place.

Casey states that through the 'work' of commemoration the past does not just disappear in the present, but instead only traverses the present on its way to becoming future: "[…]. It is the creating of memorializations in the media of

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[11] GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* 325-328.

[12] IDEM 318.

[13] M. ROTHBERG: *Multidirectional memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization* (Stanford 2009) 3-4.

[14] P. POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein* (Heeswijk 2010) 76-83; J.Z. SMITH: *To take place. Toward theory in ritual* (Chicago 1987).

[15] E. CASEY: *Remembering. A phenomenological study* (Bloomington 2000) 183.

[16] IDEM 187.

ritual, text, and psyche; it enables us to honour the past by carrying it intact into new and lasting forms of alliance and participation".[17]

In this respect, the past, present and the future of the memory of a stillborn child seem to be connected by means of a monument and ritual commemoration practices at these sites.

Purpose of the research

The focus of this research in the field of ritual studies was on parents who have kept commemoration of their stillborn child within a private context for a long time. With the emergence, as of 2001, of monuments to stillborn children, they now have the opportunity to enact commemoration rituals in honour of their stillborn child in public and to share their individual memories with a wider audience.

The purpose of the research was to study how collective and individual commemoration rituals enacted by parents at the site of a monument create meaning in coming to terms with the, often long time ago, loss of a stillborn child.

Data collection and analysis

Qualitative methods of data collection have been used in this research. In total twenty five interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2011 with parents, initiators to monuments, artists, health care professionals, undertakers and employees of graveyards, representatives of the church and local municipality.

Through analysis of the empirical data acquired by these interviews, the behaviour, goals, habits and context of parents of a stillborn child have been explored thereby focusing on how they communicate, what information they impart, and use, what decisions they make, and which emotions are involved regarding commemoration practices.

Grief and mourning practices over stillborn children

Children who die around their birth are usually called 'stillborn' children.[18] Accordingly, in this contribution stillborn children are children who died before, during or shortly after birth.

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[17] CASEY: *Remembering* 257.

[18] In this contribution, I will follow the definition of stillbirth as currently used by the *Nederlandse Vereniging voor Obstetrie en Gynaecologie* (Society of Dutch obstetricians and gynecologists) in their patient education brochure on the loss of a child during pregnancy or during birth. In this brochure stillbirth is defined as: 'the birth of a child who died during pregnancy (so called intra- uterine death of fetus) or around birth'; '2.1 Doodgeboorte', in 'Het verlies van een kind tijdens de zwangerschap

Up to the mid-eighties of the twentieth century, health care professionals like doctors, midwives and nurses determined routines around birth. As a consequence and according to the protocols at the time, stillborn children were immediately taken away after birth. Mothers most often did not get a chance, nor were they allowed seeing their child. Fathers sometimes were able to catch a glimpse before the child was taken away.

Gynaecologists in hospitals were taught during their training that it was best not induce emotions by acquainting the parents with their stillborn child because it would be more difficult for them to handle their loss once they had become attached, seen and held, their child. Other doctors like general practitioners, who attended deliveries at the residences of parents, adopted these routines. The American scholar Linda Layne in her account on pregnancy loss in America cites Doctor Michael Berman who reports in *Parenthood loss: Healing the pain after miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death* how he was instructed during his obstetrical training in the years seventy of the twentieth century:

> […] that if a child was stillborn or with a serious, 'unsightly' birth defect, the physician should attempt to protect the parents from the 'shock' of seeing their dead child by covering it with a blanket, quickly removing it from the delivery area, and sending the body to the morgue to be buried in an unmarked grave.[19]

The words of a mother about her stillborn child: "and that was it", cited in the introduction, indicate that parents were not openly allowed to grieve and they were almost 'forced' to 'deny' and 'ignore' their stillborn child as if it had not existed at all. Health care professionals as well as family and friends thought it was best to silence the stillborn child.

At the end of the sixties of the twentieth century, attention was given for the first time to the process of grieving of stillborn children.[20] In the Netherlands, the first results in scientific research concerning the best way to take care of parents of stillborn children were published in the eighties of the twentieth century.[21] It was at that time that health care professionals started to be aware of the fact that the relationship and bonding between a parent and a child already started before birth. New approaches were developed to take care of the parents and their still-

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of rond de bevalling'. Available at http://www.nvog.nl/voorlichting/NVOG+Voorlichtingsbrochures/default.aspx (accessed August 14, 2013).

[19] L. LAYNE: *Motherhood lost. A feminist account of pregnancy loss in America* (New York 2003) 223.

[20] S. BOURNE: 'The psychological effects of stillbirths on women and their doctors', in *The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* 16/2 (1968) 103-112.

[21] K. LAMBERS: 'Rouw bij perinatale sterfte', in *Tijdschrift Verloskunde* 12 (1980) 351-357; B. HOHENBRUCK, M. DE KLEINE, L. KOLLEE & L. ROBBROECKX: 'Rouwverwerking en begeleiding bij het overlijden van pasgeborenen', in *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 129 (1985) 1582-1585; E. KEIRSE: *Eerste opvang bij perinatale sterfte. Gedragingen en attitudes van ouders en hulpverleners* (Leiden 1989).

born child and parents were informed about these approaches by means of patient education materials.[22] It was advised not to take away the child immediately after birth. Intimate confrontation and acquaintance with their child became part of the mourning process. It meant that parents were allowed to see their child, to hug it and to take care of it. Organizing a funeral with accompanying rituals also became part of the bereavement and mourning process. Coming to terms with the loss should be done by going through remembrances of the child. For that reason it was considered important to actually 'create' remembrances in the short time between the child's birth and its funeral and thus nowadays pictures and footprints are made, or a piece of hair is kept. All matters are extremely relevant later on to comprehend that the child had actually been there and is their child. These are exactly those matters doctors, midwives and nurses were opposed to until the mid-eighties of the previous century because they thought the emotional effects would be counterproductive to the emotional wellbeing of the parents. The loss of a child at birth was considered at the time to be a medical setback or complication instead of a human tragedy.[23]

Analysis of the interviews with Roman Catholic parents in the province of Noord-Brabant

Introduction

In particular a great number of monuments has been erected in the southern provinces of the Netherlands: Noord-Brabant and Limburg. From way back, these provinces hold a catholic identity.[24] More than eighty five percent of the monuments, around 135, have been erected at Roman Catholic graveyards or near Roman Catholic Churches in these two provinces. For reasons to explain later, the monuments were erected honouring stillborn children who were buried anonymously at these cemeteries at hideaway places, like under a hedge or at the unconsecrated grounds.[25] Without any doubt the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on parents of stillborn children has been important. For this reason I conducted interviews with parents (two widows, one single mother and one cou-

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[22] http://www.nvog.nl/voorlichting/NVOG+Voorlichtingsbrochures/default.aspx (accessed Aug. 14, 2013).

[23] A. LOVELL: 'Some questions of identity: Miscarriage, stillbirth and perinatal loss', in *Social Science & Medicine* 17/11 (1983) 755-761.

[24] T. BERNTS, G. DE JONG & H. YAR: 'Een religieuze atlas van Nederland'*,* in W. VAN DE DONK, A. JONKERS & R. PLUM (eds.): *Geloven in het publieke domein. Verkenningen van een dubbele transformatie* (Amsterdam 2006) 89-111, p. 92-93.

[25] PEELEN: 'Reversing the past'; L. FARO: 'Monumenten voor overleden kinderen', in *In Brabant. Tijdschrift voor Brabants heem en erfgoed* 1/0 (2009) 30-44; J. PEELEN: *Between birth and death. Rituals of pregnancy loss in the Netherlands* (Nijmegen 2011).

ple) who experienced the loss of their child and were not allowed to have a catholic funeral for their child. My focus during these interviews was on the consequences of not knowing of the whereabouts of their child, and on the (emotional) impact of burial of the child in hideaway places and on the significance of a monument.

But first I will start with a short introduction on the applicable Roman Catholic rules and regulations on stillborn children.

Sign indicating the place where stillborn children ('levenloos geboren kinderen') had to be buried (collection Nederlands Uitvaart Museum 'Tot Zover', Amsterdam)

Baptism

The rules of law of the Roman Catholic Church, the Code of Canon Law, of 1917 determined that people who had not been baptized could not have a religious funeral.[26] It may be deduced from this rule of canonical law that people, who had not been baptized, like stillborn children, were not entitled to a grave in the consecrated grounds of a catholic graveyard. Consequently, these little children had to be buried secretly and anonymously in the unconsecrated grounds of the graveyard. It was doubted by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church whether the souls of these children could go to heaven. The traditional Roman Catholic doctrine regarding this matter was based on the theory of the so called '*limbo*' which refers to a sort of 'space in-between' where these children would go to. In 2007, the International Theological Commission, one of the Pontifical Commissions of the Roman Curia, explains the concept of *limbo* as follows:

> a state which includes the souls of infants who die subject to original sin and without baptism, and who, therefore, neither merit the beatific vision, nor yet are subjected to any punishment, because they are not guilty of any personal sin.[27]

Children who have not been baptized are in a state in which they have no access to the blessings of heaven and the vision of god. Because of their very young age,

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[26] Code of Canon Law 1917; CIC 1239 par. 1.

[27] INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION: *The hope of salvation for infants who die without being baptised*. Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en (accessed August 15, 2013).

it is impossible that they have committed any individual sin. It may be assumed for that reason that they will go without punishment and will not have to go to hell. However, they will have to remain in this 'space in-between'. The concept of *limbo* does not have a clear foundation in the bible, but has been used for ages by the Roman Catholic Church as a doctrine.[28] In 2007, the Roman Catholic Church officially discarded the concept of *limbo*. As a result it is now assumed that God will save these children, exactly because it has not been possible to do what was necessary to do for them, that is, to have them baptized.[29]

Around the mid-fifties of the twentieth century, observance of the rules of baptism became less strict. Many priests began applying the principle of the so called 'baptism of desire' which meant that if they considered the parents of the stillborn child to be 'good Catholics', and they would for sure have had their child baptized had it stayed alive, the child could be considered to have received the baptism and thus it was allowed to have the child buried in consecrated ground.

Only in 1983, the Code of Canon Law was changed and an article was admitted about the burial of un-baptized children: a local priest may allow children who died without having been baptized a religious funeral if their parents had the intention to have them baptized.[30]

This means that 'officially', as of 1983, stillborn children were allowed to be buried in the consecrated ground. In the period between the mid years fifty of the twentieth century and 1983, a burial in consecrated ground depended on local priests and their opinion on the catholic practices and attitude of the parents with regard to any application of the 'baptism of desire'.

Many parents must have been hurt by these 'rules'. On top of the emotions caused by the death of their child, they were touched by the fact that their un-baptized child would not have access to the blessings of heaven and could not have a religious funeral with the accompanying rituals.

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[28] INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION: *The hope of salvation for infants who die without being baptised.*

[29] This report received the approval of the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, on January 19, 2007 and accordingly the text could be published. The conclusion of this report was as follows: "The conclusion of this study is that there are theological and liturgical reasons to hope that infants who die without baptism may be saved and brought into eternal happiness, even if there is not an explicit teaching on this question found in Revelation […] Rather, there are reasons to hope that God will save these infants precisely because it was not possible to do for them that what would have been most desirable – to baptize them in the faith of the Church and incorporate them visibly into the Body of Christ."

[30] Code of Canon Law 1983: CIC 1183 par. 2.

Results of the interviews

One of the parents I interviewed, a Roman Catholic widow, eighty-three years old at the time of the interview, told me about the delivery of her first child in 1953:

> It was a terrible delivery. They had to push on my stomach to get the child out. When he finally came out, he was dead. He had the umbilical cord around his neck, they told me. The doctor and a nun, who was a nurse, told me that they thought it was better if I did not see the child. At that time you did not dare to ask why. You looked up to doctors and nuns. Maybe we listened too much to them. My husband has regretted that very much, but that is how it was at that time. I was crying very much and they thought I could not handle it. My husband finally got a glimpse of the child. He told me that it was a boy and that he had beautiful hair and little nails.

She has never been able to learn what happened to the little boy. A nun told her that the boy had received the baptism of desire and had been put in a coffin with a mother who had just died. They were buried at a catholic cemetery: "But I doubt that. Could that really be true? Does the family of that mother know that our boy was put in her coffin?"

She had to stay in the hospital for six days and she was put on a ward with all happy mothers with healthy children. Afterwards nobody wanted to talk about it anymore. She had other healthy children afterwards. When the children were young she had been too busy to give it much thought but nowadays she thinks of the little boy a lot. She regrets that they did not give him an official name. Every time she visits her husband's grave she wonders where the little boy is and she would very much like to know what happened. She thought that she had come to terms, after fifty-six years, with the loss but she starts to cry when she tells me:

> It returns every time. I get very sad and I have to cry even after such a long time. It comforts me a lot that this issue gets much attention now and that I am able to tell you the story. I visited the monument at Orthen;[31] very nice, it offers support.

Her testimony is supported by other parents. A woman (eighty-seven years old at the time of the interview) told me about her first child which was stillborn in 1951:

> Unfortunately it had already died and was in a state of decomposition. They would not allow me to see it but I insisted and they finally let me see it. At night my husband put the child in a shoe box and he took it to the verger. The verger buried the child under a hedge at the unconsecrated ground of the cemetery. That's how things were at that time. Of course I was feeling sad. It happened to everybody but you never talked about it.

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[31] Orthen is a local cemetery in the Dutch city of Den Bosch.

In the years after, they had two healthy children and then she got pregnant again. This child, a little girl, was born in the hospital and died soon after birth:

> The nuns took care of the burial. They told me they put her in a coffin with some-
> body else. We did not worry about anything. It was like that at the time, you had to
> go on. We were busy at home, there were other children and we had a successful
> business. The nuns made us pay for the burial.

In 1960 she lost one of the twin boys that were born prematurely. She has ac-
cepted the loss of their three children although she had been sad at the time: it
was very normal at the time; every week, a child died somewhere.

They were present at the dedication of a monument for stillborn children in
their village and considered this monument as a kind of 'closing' of the loss of
their un-baptized children.

Another parent (a single woman, age sixty-nine at the time of the interview)
told me that when she was nineteen years old she was living in a home for orphan
girls. In 1958, she met a boy and she got pregnant. They planned to marry and
she would have the child in a catholic home for unmarried pregnant women. Due
to complications, she had to go to hospital for the delivery of her child. Unfortu-
nately the child died during a Caesarean section. Her future mother in law got to
see the child, but did not allow her to see the girl:

> She told me it would be better if I did not see her. She said that the child was muti-
> lated by the section, although the nurses offered to let me see her. They told me
> they put her in a coffin with another dead body. I did not have the money to give
> her a funeral and my parents in law did not want to pay. Nobody told me anything
> and there was no one to speak to.

Afterwards she had two healthy sons. She finally broke up with her husband and
she was never really capable of coping with the death of her first child. She re-
grets the fact that she did not insist to see her. Now she has no material memo-
ries of her:

> I kept thinking that maybe she was not dead at all. Maybe they handed her over for
> adoption? I think this happened before in that home when parents did not want
> their child. A couple of years ago, my youngest son wrote a letter to the hospital and
> asked for the medical file of Peggy. Now I have the proof that she existed and that
> she died.

She has her own little 'monument' and her own rituals which bring her a lot of
comfort. She put a little statue on the cabinet, next to a sculpture of Joseph,

Maria and Jesus. She gets very emotional when she explains: "They watch Peggy and they will guard her."

Another parent, a widow, sixty-nine years old, told me that in May 1961, when she was twenty-one years old, her first daughter, Marion, was stillborn:

> After nine months pregnancy I told my husband that I did not feel the child anymore. I thought that was normal and the doctor also told me everything was okay. I had contractions from Tuesday till Thursday when finally Saturday the child was born. But it had already died. They let me see her and it was with us for another hour. I was not allowed to touch her because that was contagious they said. We did not know what to do. The doctor told us to put it in a box. It stood till Monday at the neighbours' when it was finally buried secretly, like a dog, at the place where they put all stillborn children. My husband did not go, he did not want to leave me alone.

She feels that, even after all those years, she has not coped with her loss. A lot of times she has to cry and also when she is telling her story:

> I do not know exactly where Marion was buried. They indicated the place but I do not know exactly. I could not hold my little child and I mind that a lot, also that it did not have a proper coffin but only a box.

She is very disappointed in the Roman Catholic Church and its priests. She thinks that both she and her husband were good practicing parishioners but neither when Marion died, nor when her own husband died, did she get any support from them.

She feels very comforted by the monument at the graveyard of the village of Erp. She thinks it is a beautiful place: "I go there regularly to put flowers, and then I think of her, and also on Marion's birthday I think of her."

Regrets, worries, anger

In this research, parents mention the fact that they were not allowed to hold nor even see their stillborn child. They have no material memories of their child and they blame the (catholic) doctors and nurses (mostly nuns) for not allowing them to attach themselves to their child. On the other hand: they also blame themselves for not having objected and for resigning themselves to the situation. This anger and regret still upsets them all.

Parents mention that they find it extremely difficult not to know what has happened to their child. They keep worrying and wondering what happened at the time of the stillbirth: has the child really been buried in a coffin with someone else? They find this hard to believe. The fact that they do not have a place to go

to, to visit and to pay respect to their child, makes it difficult, even after such a long time, to come to terms with the loss.

Parents are hurt by the fact that nobody wanted to talk about their stillborn child. Nobody supported them in their grief except their close relatives.

They felt that representatives from the Roman Catholic Church disregarded the child. Parents are still very emotional and they do not seem to have coped with the loss of their stillborn child. It seems, now that they have become older and life has become less busy, everything, so to say, 'comes back' and causes a lot of emotions. They are still very emotional about the disrespect they all felt at the time from the Roman Catholic Church.

A place to commemorate, either a public or private space, seems to bring comfort. Public debate also offers support, and monuments to stillborn children are considered as justice and honour being done their children.

They do not make up for all the harm that has been done; the parents who participated in this research continue to blame the Roman Catholic Church very much for the shame done to children, in particular when they have been buried in unconsecrated ground.

Orthen cemetery, Den Bosch, province of
Noord-Brabant
(© Laurie Faro)

Conclusions

The focus of this contribution was on parents who have for a long time kept commemoration of their stillborn child within a private context. With the emergence, as of 2001, of monuments to stillborn children, many of them have begun to enact commemoration rituals at a monument.

The results of the exploration of the individual context of these Roman Catholic parents show that most of them still very much regret that they were prohibited by medical and religious practice at the time from creating an emotional bond with their stillborn child. They blame themselves for not having strongly objected to this denial of the parent–child relationship.

Most of them still worry about what has happened to their stillborn child who, most of the time, was anonymously buried at an unknown place. They had been denied any commemorative (religious) ritual ceremony.

They all feel that their stillborn child has been silenced and disregarded because at the time it was thought best never to speak about the child again, and instead focus on other children who could be born in good health in the years after. The social context was thus one of ignoring, in particular emotional, issues with regard to stillborn children.

Regrets, worries, silence and disregard of their stillborn child, all contribute to a release of emotions, even many years after the stillbirth of their child. In particular when their own children start to raise families, the memories of their worries during pregnancy and birth seem to return. Moreover, emotions are unlocked when they experience the difference regarding the current approach to stillborn children: why were they not allowed to bond with their stillborn child and give it a proper farewell ritual?

Regarding the function and meaning of monuments to stillborn children, the following may be concluded: The results of the research show that a ritual place, like a monument, may 'work' in the process of coming to terms with the loss, even long-time ago of a stillborn child.

This might explain why, in my research, one of the parent's main worry was about the whereabouts of their children. They were searching for a place "where the past could revive and survive," in Casey's terms.[32] When no tomb stone is available, a monument may offer such a place instead, a place for ritual commemoration practices, which may accordingly help out in the process of handling the loss, even many years after the stillbirth of the child.

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[32] CASEY: *Remembering* 187.

11

SPACES, PLACES, TRACES:
AN AFTERLIFE FOR THE BODY IN NATURAL BURIAL PRACTICES

Tineke Nugteren

1.   Introduction

Sometimes the site[1] is pure magic, at other times it is merely a rather desolate wooded patch off a country road. Mature trees, a diverse undergrowth, a sandy deep-lying path dividing the two main parts. It is only after a closer look that a casual stroller or jogger would become aware that this is a natural burial ground. In some spots a surface of around two square meters appears to have been disturbed rather recently. Instead of green growth it shows grey earth, covered with an occasional twig, cone or shriveled leaves. It takes a while before one finds similar spots, but those may already be in the process of being overgrown again. And spots where an almost imperceptible marker indicates a particular location as being home to a corpse, albeit almost completely taken over by ferns and brambles now. It is only after repeated visits that one begins to 'feel' and 'read' the site, and detect traces of other recent visitors: a heart-shaped collection of berries here, a couple of snow-drops peeping between the clumps of dried grasses there, and occasionally the light shock of a decaying wreath on a newly opened-and-then-covered patch of earth.

　　After heavy rain one hesitates to venture off the path. On a sunny day one strolls freely over the mossy forest ground and greets old whereabouts, hard to locate, or an occasional newly occupied patch. One sits on a bench, sees how the light slants through the trees, hears a bird rustling through the leaves on the forest cover. Very rarely one meets another visitor. They don't come with boxes full of

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[1] My academic engagement with natural burial sites is not focused on one particular place. My occasional visits are determined by other factors than strict ethnographic sampling through pre-scheduled visits, interviews and participant observations. This way of engaging with a particular topic as well as with particular sites is only partly a matter of time limitations inherent in the multidirectionality of longer-term research and writing commitments. Random visits to the sites in my vicinity, where I stop for a walk whenever I happen to pass by, could be classified as convenience sampling. This may have its limitations in a time-defined research project, but in this case I could argue that serendipity has brought me some arguable advantages. Although I have visited most of the existing natural burial grounds in the Netherlands at least once, and some of those in the neighboring countries, the three sites I happen to visit regularly are: Bergerbos (best documented so far), Venlo-Maasbree, and especially Weverslo.

colorful annuals from the local garden center or foil-wrapped hothouse flowers. They know exactly where to go, and yet they take in the entire site, the collectivity of trees, mosses, fallen branches. And the dead, yes, scattered over the terrain, barely discernible, yet they are there, very much so. But it is not the human drama alone that is being narrated here. It is the ongoing interconnected story of the body, soil, rain, sunshine, roots, seeds, beetles, rodents. Spring, summer, fall, winter, and yes, spring again[2] … all revolving in the deep time processes of that precious living green skin, the earth that covers our planet.[3]

Sense of place, sense of earth indeed: what makes our relationship with nature an emotional one? In this article I set out to explore how deep affinity with the earth, the image of ongoing life, and 'place attachment' may determine the location where individuals wish to be buried or to have their ashes scattered. I particularly focus on a tendency – still modest, but growing significantly – to explicitly link death practices with environmental concerns, deep affinity with the biotic community, and awareness of one's dead body as humble participatory earth. Instead of a focus on culture-specific, transcendent 'elsewheres', those individuals who opt for a green burial tend to be down to earth, literally so. Culturally constructed notions about the final order of things in terms of otherworldly glories are losing their currency or at least changing their vocabularies.

The funeral experience in most cases today is an occasion for reworking memories of the deceased's life story. Symbolic immortality, in secular society, then means: being celebrated, remembered and memorialized by one's significant others. Instead of seeing death as the end, many find consolation in what Dennis Klass and other bereavement scholars call 'continuing bonds'.[4] In most contemporary societies such continuing bonds are interpreted as social bonds: the vague belief that physical death does not put a definitive end to a loved one's existence, at least as understood in a psychological sense. Instead, by continuing to involve the beloved dead in the ongoing emotional and social life of the survivors, death is merely a matter of degree and not an ontological rupture. In contemporary death culture much emotional energy is invested in such continuing connections: grave culture, celebrations, repeated memorial services, symbolic involvement of the deceased in ongoing family life, references to post-death forms of presence, communication and dialogue.

There is, however, an edge to the maintenance of such bonds. Instead of breaking the bonds by surrendering the dead to God or the 'hereafter', there is a prolonged anthropomorphic and anthropocentric re-appropriation of those who

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[2] As in the South Korean film of the same name (2003). It was released in the US in 2004, in subtitle format, by Sony Pictures Classics.

[3] W.B. LOGAN: *Dirt: The ecstatic skin of the earth* (New York 2007).

[4] D. KLASS, P.R. SILVERMAN & S.L. NICKMANN (eds.): *Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief* (Abingdon/New York 1996).

admittedly are no longer on the same plane of existence, but are still somehow involved in 'our' matters. In some traditional cultures it has been argued that it is to the benefit of the dead that we leave them as they are. This may imply that all their material possessions are destroyed, that their names are never mentioned again, or even that not a single trace of their bodily existence should remain in the form of graves or ashes. In such cultures disposal rites tend to be fully focused on the deceased instead of on the survivors or even on their memories of the deceased's life. It is of utmost importance that disposal rites settle the newly deceased as ancestors.[5] Such a transition and settlement in a new 'safe' ontologically distinguished status is considered the main purpose behind post-death rites. It is obvious that the paradigm underlying those post-death rites differs dramatically from what we see in individualizing societies today.

In the vastly varying attitudes towards the deceased we detect keys to cultures, civilizations, and Zeitgeist. In my own focus on natural burial practices and the dispersal of ashes in 'scapes' of affinity I focus loosely on what are generally called Western cultures even when they may be as far apart as North America and Australia or as Scandinavia and South Africa. What may justify their clustering here is not so much Christianity or post-Christianity, but rather a number of common patterns in their multiple modernities.[6] Exactly because of the acknowledgement of such multiple modernities I prefer to highlight the 'greening' of death practices as a subcultural tendency rather than a countercultural one. Only the 'darkest green' version[7] of the biocentric worldview underlying green disposals could rightly be regarded as a countercultural movement: at odds both with Christian ideas of the afterlife and the anthropocentric alienation from 'other-than-human' life forms. This earth-based view of death is an explicitly earth-bound view of the afterlife. It is sober but never somber. It sees a burial ground as a decomposition site rather than an eternal resting place. And in this it concurs with scientifically informed ecological values.

As I hope to show below by distinguishing various shades of green in the Green Death Movement, the phenomenon in all its nuances may provide a lens to Western cultures precisely through calling attention to what happens mostly below the radar and in the margins. I also argue that the study of death rituals such as burial and cremation would benefit from an awareness and acknowledgement of

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[5] A. ITEANU: 'Why the dead do not bear names: The Orokaiva name system', in G. VON BRUCK & B. BODENHORN (eds.): *The anthropology of names and naming* (Cambridge 2006) 51-72.

[6] This term is derived from the work of S.N. EISENSTADT, such as in the article 'Multiple modernities', in *Daedalus* 129 (2000) 1-29, and the book *Comparative civilizations & multiple modernities* (Leiden/Boston 2003).

[7] In using the term 'shades of green' I refer to B. TAYLOR: *Dark green religion: Nature, spirituality, and the planetary future* (Berkeley/London 2010), especially page 13.

what sub- and countercultural tendencies in Western societies critique in main-stream practices.

2.   'Greening' death rituals

Most public 'deathscapes' in the Western world reflect some form of mitigation, some common phrases of hope and consolation. This response to death may be considered as yet another trace of the Christian heritage, as a 'typically Western' way of 'engineering' alternatives in a much better 'elsewhere', or as universal coping mechanisms common to all mankind in the face of death. My own extensive study of South Asian worldviews, and in particular Hindu and Buddhist funerary practices, warns me here. Consolation and distraction of attention may be a reflex, but it is a culturally specific reflex. Death could be looked straight into the eye if that is considered as both more realistic and more wholesome. Death rituals may even be intentionally straightforward and dramatic. Especially for Hindus, thorough and complete destruction on a blazing pyre opens a path for release (*mokṣa*) as well as new life. In order to become totally de-linked from this Earth, fire is considered essential: it is beautiful, it is dramatic, and it drastically destroys the ties. Many Hindus appear to need this direct and extremely confrontational drama of burning bodies in full view. This may also be one of the reasons why they object to its tamed rationalized version in ovens, furnaces and braziers. Some myths are quite enduring, and some images are so compelling that they re-emerge at crucial moments. The dramatic scenario of a cremation pyre may well be such a compelling image: an image not lightly, easily and almost frivolously erased by the logic of energy-saving, hygienic and cost-effective technological innovations.[8]

Much of contemporary memorial culture in the West celebrates personal details of the deceased's life story and continuing bonds with ongoing social reality. This may be seen as a secularized individualized version of the same culture-specific reflex indicated above: efforts at consolation not so much by indicating better 'elsewheres' such as heavens and hereafters, or at the very least star-dusted 'aboves' and tailor-made personal paradises, but by denying the ontological gap between oneself and the deceased. This implies that by psychologically keeping the deceased here – available and involved – almost the exact opposite is happening: instead of mitigation by imagining the dead in a much better place elsewhere we now have mitigation by holding on to the bonds and keeping the deceased with us. This is certainly interesting as cultural oscillation: the pendulum appears to swing to its other extreme.

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[8] See A. NUGTEREN: 'Wood, water, and waste: Material aspects of mortuary practices in South Asia', in F. FERRARI & T. DÄHNHARDT (eds.): *Roots of wisdom, branches of devotion: Plant life in South Asian religions and culture* (London 2015, in press).

A clearly distinguishable grave, natural burial site Maasbree, the Netherlands (© Tineke Nugteren)

The success of emerging natural burial sites has been superficially regarded as one more trend within a greater cultural tendency towards individualization and personalization of 'death-styles'. I have argued in other publications that, on the contrary, green burial practices may even present the opposite of a personalized death.[9] Those who pre-register for a natural burial site even intentionally want to become de-personalized. They prefer to go simply, namelessly, tracelessly, and in the long run even placelessly. They find elation in the perspective that they will be buried without being confined by a coffin: not too superficial to be exposed to dogs or swine, but un-deep enough to let natural processes of decay optimally do their work. They welcome time and all the tiny organisms to process the body into earth and provide the humus for new green growth, from weeds, grasses and ferns to brambles, bushes and full-grown trees. No engraved tombstones for them, in many

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[9] A. NUGTEREN: 'Troost en "troosteloosheid" op natuurbegraafplaatsen', in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijd-schrift* (Themanummer 'Dood en troost', onder redactie van Christoph Jedan en Eric Venbrux) 68/1&2 (2014) 83-100; A. NUGTEREN: 'A darker shade of green? An inquiry into growing preferences for natural burial', in A. PANAGAKOS (ed.): *Religious diversity today: Experiencing religion in the contemporary world. Volume 2: Ritual and Pilgrimage* (Santa Barbara 2015, in press).

cases not even names, merely a tiny pin with a number, or not even that.[10] And everything prepaid, including the trust fund that will guarantee nature reserve status 'in perpetuity'.

Where did this green death movement come from, and with what characteristics does it emerge as an alternative to current mainstream disposal practices? The catalysts may be threefold. First, the environmental consequences of contemporary death industries become untenable to those who consciously choose for green, environmentally friendly life-styles. Raising alarm about the 'unnatural' and often toxic state many corpses are in today, they fear for the environmental consequences of both burial and cremation. In a similar way they reject the 'aesthetics' and 'cosmetics' of mainstream funerary businesses: conservation fluids, lacquered plywood caskets full of chemical glues, expensive hardwood coffins made of rare imported types of wood, synthetic textiles, etcetera. In their view our ways of life are disastrously resource-intensive, but increasingly our deaths are so as well. Based on these objections they plead for greener death-styles, and increasingly various such options have become commercially available.[11]

The second motivation for choosing greener options may be less explicitly based on environmental activism, and more on a general urge to 'get back to nature'. Driven by a positively phrased need to reconnect themselves to the foundations of their existence and life in general, they express a spiritual need to let themselves go in a natural way. This may involve decisions about the limits of technical life-prolonging measures just as much as end-of-life plans concerning actual death, disposal and detachment. In a preference for an earth-to-earth attitude they decline mainstream practices of undertakers and clerics alike. They prefer to go simply, without fuss. Imagining vaguely and in soft focus that their body would be reunited with the earth, gradually decompose, and nurture new life forms, gives them a deep and often romantic sense of solace and beauty. In a rejection of consumer excess as well as a critique of the soulless municipal cemeteries they downsize both the drama and the bourgeoisified dignity of the dead. Nature, for them, is nature-light: a place replete with positive emotions.

Thirdly, and more radically, the 'greening' of disposal practices may be a fundamental rejection of religiously inherited ancient divides between body and soul, and between humans and nature. Beyond the individual self, there is a deeply ecological self: when human society has lost this connection it is at our own peril and

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[10] At the moment there is no uniform guideline for name markers yet. The tendency is: the deeper shade of green a particular site is ascribed, the more invisible the names of the dead.

[11] In the US there is a tendency to see this as a European phenomenon which had started in the UK. Indeed, natural burial grounds may number close to 300 in the UK by now, but many other countries offer similar forms of green or natural burial. In the US the movement is referred to as Green Death Movement, see S. MCFARLAND TAYLOR's entry of the same name in B. TAYLOR (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (London 2005) 722-723.

that of the entire animate and inanimate world. The natural environment is crucial to human meaning and fulfillment at both the individual and societal level. The future of the planet is at stake, and instead of the usual self-related hope of survival green radicals express the earth as the location of their hope: let our final footprint be a green one. Those who intentionally choose to be interred in nature reserves do so in a pledge of kinship and a gesture of ultimate concern about the planet. In ritual terms they express elation in becoming embedded in the biotic system in a soberly physical, 'earthy' and self-effacing way.

More or less in line with these three types of motivation I distinguish three shades of green in burial practices. Numerically, most of those who opt for a green burial prefer a 'hybrid' form: the person of type-two motivation – that of a vaguely romantic or aesthetic 'back to nature' inclination – would normally opt for a burial ground rated as hybrid (ranked as one star, or alternatively, one green leaf). Such a place is often part of a conventional cemetery in which a designated corner is used for less-regimented more eco-friendly burials. Such a section may be at the periphery of the usual plots, and may consist of a greener, less cultivated edge where graves may follow the natural lay of the land, or be situated in the shade of full-grown trees. In contrast to higher-ranking eco-sites, hybrid or 'moderately green' burial grounds allow mourners the entire range of material expressions of grief and remembrance without restricting them to bio-degradable markers or indigenous plants.

Green burial grounds deserving two stars or two green leaves are those where nature is emphatically perceived as participatory rather than merely decorative. Such places can be accorded a 'deeper shade of green' for at least two reasons. The first is the cluster of motives for pre-registration as well as for the descendants, and, in extension, all who benefit from a vibrant stretch of natural growth. The predicates accorded to such two-star natural burial grounds were empirically collected and categorized by, among others, Hannah Rumble.[12] These go deeper than the merely aesthetic: a natural burial place for them is authentic, cathartic, therapeutic, and cyclical. Users, both those who preregister and those who come to visit the site where a dear one is buried among grasses, brambles and tree roots, are sensitive to the rhythm of the seasons, the deep flow of time, the earth story. They celebrate ongoing life among other things by the phrase 'giving something back to nature' by way of their body: new life forms. Death is not predominantly an enemy, an opponent, or a failure of the system. In such sites the vision that our bodies are

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[12] H. RUMBLE: *'Giving something back': A case study of woodland burial and human experience at Barton Glebe* (Durham 2010; available as Durham E-thesis online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/679). See also D. DAVIES & H. RUMBLE: *Natural burial: Traditional-secular spiritualities and funeral innovation* (London/New York 2012), especially pp. 45-55 and 94.

entering a new cycle, tenderly embedded in the soil where eventually other organisms will erase our individuality, dominates over the sense of desolation. The second cluster of characteristics of such a site refers to a stricter regime regarding maintenance, use and ritualization. Individual grave culture will be kept to a minimum, in some cases actually discouraged or even forbidden. Instead, mourners may be invited to get involved in collective activities such as communal planting days, the setting up of wooden benches in scenic spots, and possibly a collective memorial in which all individual names will be engraved, one by one. Through a 'perpetual care fund' 99-year grave tenures are secured. In their self-presentation such sites tend to promote both natural peace and habitat restoration.

A grave on the point of being overgrown, natural burial site Weverslo, the Netherlands (© Tineke Nugteren)

A third category (three stars/three dark green leaves) is formed by conservation burial grounds. Here the individual traces will be even less: it is not the human drama that stands center stage but the wilderness. The interment procedures will be as basic as possible, graves will ideally be hand-dug, bodies will be buried directly in the earth, and no name markers will indicate the individual graves. Apart from the poetic expressiveness of such wilderness areas, these burial grounds are attrac-

tive to certain types of nature activists as well as to public bodies of nature conser-
vation associations and national trusts. The sites guarantee long-term stewardship
and further the cause of habitat conservation in the long run. Many who opt for
this possibility see it as a privilege to become part of their favored ecosystem. More-
over, as such lands are often protected by land trusts, the contractual gifting of
their dead body may even be conducive to re-wilding. Death, then, is merely a
transition: the dead body functions as a full-spectrum nutrient source for the soil,
and this vision may overwrite the usual fear of death in those who pre-arrange their
death scenarios as well as the sense of grief in those who remain behind. In terms
of individual markers and other traces of personal life stories, such green-space
conservation areas are extremely sober. This may seem shockingly indifferent to
some, but to others the prospect of being obliterated amidst the slow but steady
cycles of compostation and renewal feels like going home.[13]

3.   What is nature, what is natural?

It is obvious that what some people call natural is artificial, superficial, fake and
make-belief in the eyes of others. I indicated this by distinguishing three types of
motives for choosing natural burial sites, and again three shades of green in the
ranking of such sites as moderately green (*), a more intense shade of green (**),
and deep dark green (***). Although some national overarching representative in-
stitutions are emerging, the phenomenon is still too young to conform to uniformly
accepted standards. Moreover, the word 'natural' has no legal definition. In daily
speech habits nature is often conventionally understood as the opposite of culture.
The term natural burial evokes at least two sets of questions: what is meant by the
adjective 'natural', and what does this adjective imply about the usual burial prac-
tices?

The concept Nature, as a cultural construct, has become a powerful rhetorical
tool. It is an attempt at representation: a symbolic form of a final and all-encom-
passing category. The imagination of Nature ('Natura') as an ultimate and only re-
sort that rests in itself – self-sufficient and just what it is, totally indifferent to what
we may think of it or how we may make use of it – evokes feelings of both surren-
der (to something inhering and at the same time vastly transcending us) and un-
bridgeable alienation. The idea of Nature simultaneously embeds us and throws us
humans out. Nature may make culture-, artifact- and meaning-producing humans
look futile and silly in comparison. The human mind may make its loops and las-
soes around reality, it may construct fantastic edifices of meaning, yet it always

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[13] For a deeply poetic, but to others rather shocking, imagination of his preferred way to go, through
exposure in the wild, see R. FEAGAN: 'Death to life: Towards my green burial', in *Ethics, Place, and
Environment* 10/2 (2007) 157-175.

finds its counterpoint in Nature. Well aware that we have created this category ourselves, some admit that we may have created it out of the need for a continuous sparring partner, a self-corrective mirror image, something to fight as well as hold on to, a resting place for both the mind and the body.[14] And indeed it appears that Nature has its final say when it silences the mind and takes dead matter as composting material for the ongoing life story, just as it has been doing for millions of years.

In its fragmented and framed form we call it nature, in lower case, but often the word land-scape, green-scape, sea-scape, even sky-scape would be more fitting. Such 'scapes' indicate a cultural imagery, it frames the image that humans make of their direct surroundings.[15] As soon as we interject ourselves as viewer, let alone active participant and co-producer, nature's autonomy is gone. And yet, it was exactly this attributed imagined autonomy which initially made us search for a term that would encompass it all. By separating ourselves, as thinking, aspiring and reflective human beings, from a category we have self-created in the first place, we have maneuvered ourselves in an impossible position, not unlike Baron von Münchhausen.

In much the same way, natural burial sites are merely managed landscapes, tamed and framed, "molded into entities to do our bidding".[16] Their so-called natural surroundings are merely co-produced nature-culture, relational, processual.[17] The consolation people find in natural beauty, the solace that is derived from surrendering to something greater and beyond them: these are processes that take the sting out of the defeat, the ugliness, the utter desolation. The person pre-registering for a self-selected spot under a tree may make peace with his own mortality by gradually developing an affinity with that place. The persons left behind may find solace in the continuing life around the grave, life that springs up spontaneously or is induced by ritualizing grievers who plant and sow, sprinkle and fertilize. Or, in the case of wilderness conservation, they may find dignity and even elation in the idea that the final footprint of the deceased may not only be a neutral one, it may actually contribute to a greener planet.

Nature, in the form of a particular landscape, then functions as a commodity: it provides a preferred setting. The depressing feel of conventional, crowded, sanitized and manicured burial sites may be counteracted by deliberately choosing sites of natural beauty, by rejecting non-biodegradable materials, and by paying into a

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[14] H. FROMM: *The nature of being human: From environmentalism to consciousness* (Baltimore 2009).

[15] The creative play with 'scapes' in all kinds of word combinations derives from Arjun Appadurai, but for a more directly related sense, that of the Dutch word 'landschap' (Middle Dutch 'landscap'), and for the way in which the English term 'landcape' was derived from the typically Dutch scenic paintings, see S. SCHAMA: *Landscape and memory* (London 1995) 15.

[16] W.B. WILLERS: *Unmanaged landscapes: Voices for untamed nature* (Washington 1999) 3.

[17] G. GIANNACHI & N. STEWART (eds.): *Performing nature: Explorations in ecology and the arts* (Bern 2005).

trust fund that guarantees land conservation. In all three shades of green and in all three types of motivation we find a form of biophilia. The natural environment informs people about who they are or who they want to be. Nature acts as an important symbolic, physical and political reference point. Biophilia, or love of life, has been defined as "the innate tendency to focus on life and natural processes".[18] The human tendency to relate with natural processes may seem a romantic idealization of nature, at times, but may as well express a biological need: we affiliate with other organisms because the natural environment is crucial to human meaning and fulfillment. In that deep affiliation with nature may be the key to our species' most fundamental yearnings for a meaningful existence. And in that same affiliation with nature may be the key to wiser ways towards death.

Nature, thus, can be an attractive screen on which elderly or grieving humans project their desire to transcend the inadequate self. By imagining dissolution into a pure, vast, unending-yet-always-in-transition natural cycle they tap into the great outdoors that not only soothes their grief but teaches them to re-learn the world in terms of continuing bonds with the other-than-human world. Nature – as a term it is a pre-encoded narrative – may thus be isomorphically concordant with human emotions: it is good for grieving, it gives solace and comfort, it provides a sense of belonging and of hope that life goes on, and may even evoke a sense of self-respect and triumph over adversity. But just as much, nature is unyielding and shockingly indifferent to us: rather than consoling it may pierce the protective mechanisms on which the dying and the grieving rely. The outdoors may serve coping functions, but through the sublimatory it is and remains a cultural symbol. At the same time, it is not merely cultural, and neither is it purely 'there'.[19] The pastoral and managed landscapes we visit and live in may be likened to domesticated animals: they are tamed and tended to do our bidding, and yet their wildness, animalness and otherness break through and speak to us. Our domesticated landscapes likewise mirror human conceptions, culturally acquired and sedimented: when we see landscapes we in fact see ourselves.

4.   From anthropocentric to biocentric thinking

Many urban persons today are construed in economic and cultural rather than affective terms. And even when they are portrayed as caring for the environment this is couched mainly in terms of resources. The innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms is often sniggered about: tree-huggers, dolphin-swimmers, panda-savers. In a similar way natural burial is often associated

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[18] E.O. WILSON: *Biophilia: The human bond with other species* (Cambridge 1984).

[19] WILLERS: *Unmanaged landscapes* 1-4.

with neo-pagans and eco-terrorists. Empirical research on the Green Death Movement in various countries, however, shows a different picture. Some churches may raise objections to nameless wood-burial or the scattering of ashes in the wild based on a religion-specific sensitivity about (baptismal) names and ideas about resurrection at the end of times. Others complain about the lack of facilities at natural burial sites; the dismal look of unadorned untended graves; the horror that dogs or other animals could desecrate the corpses; the cold bleak earth without the comfort of a satin-lined coffin; the strictness with which vases, foil-wrapped hothouse flowers and plastic butterflies are removed; and the indignity of being buried 'anonymously'.[20]

Such reactions show how much Western death industries have played into the increasing disembodiedness of death. They also show how radically the dark-green thinking about death differs from mainstream preoccupations. When, in 1973, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1912-2009) coined the term 'deep ecology' he challenged one of the fundamental assumptions of Western philosophy: an anthropocentric myth underlies our current view of the world.[21] Naess criticized 'shallow ecology' for its utilitarian and anthropocentric attitude to nature, and for being based on a materialist and resource-oriented reasoning. As an environmental philosophy Deep Ecology is characterized by its advocacy of a democracy of all beings: all living entities have an inherent worth independent of their utilitarian instrumental benefits for human use. According to him, what is required is an ontological shift to a non-anthropocentric humanity. Human centrality represents a flawed value structure, which, however, does not mean that Deep Ecology is misanthropic. It merely yet penetratively wants to question the centrality of the human drama within the interconnectedness of the living world, or what Aldo Leopold famously called the biotic community. In various degrees persons who opt for natural burial may be touched by that call for a non-anthropocentric humanity, its advocacy of wilderness preservation and its caution to tread lightly on the planet.

Humans make use of their symbolizing abilities. Nature, with capital N, may be one of those meta-representations that draw an affective response, but its insights are hard to process. Nature, in lower case, has become a locus through which people project an alternative sense of the sacred: a sense of kinship with the other-than-human world. The result, a re-imagining of intimacy with other life forms, helps to relocate the sacredness in the natural world. In matters of death this implies that the dignity of the dead person, traditionally walled away from natural cycles of decay through layers of cloth, wood, veneer and even concrete, may rather

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[20] On the fear of anonymous death and anonymous graves, or its reverse, the right to be forgotten, see NUGTEREN: 'A darker shade of green?' where Marc Augé's concept of oblivion is linked to obliteration.

[21] A. NAESS: 'The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: A summary', in *Inquiry* 16 (1973) 95-100.

be celebrated at the moment of his return to earth. The term 'worm food' – with its long history in macabre jokes – may thus gain a new currency. For 'greenies', however, the prospect of acting as worm food, taken literally, may further maximize meaning in the face of potentially meaningless death. Such an embodied sense of self in death is not necessarily secular or a replacement for a religiously informed eschatology. For a convential burial, nature is decoration rather than participant. Having become sensitivized by the idea of ecological immortality in a self-effacing 'earthy' way, the ritual acting out of holistic relationships in the landscape, especially in a natural burial ground, may show us fascinating new dimensions of the biotic post-self.

5.   Earth: An affinity space?[22]

My own empirical research in natural burial grounds in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and the United Kingdom shows that many 'death aesthetics' center primarily on human imageries and needs, even when a natural setting is preferred over the manicured ambiance of conventional cemeteries. The centrality of human preferences and human symbolism marks this aesthetically driven and perhaps vaguely romanticist type of natural burial as a light shade of green. There may be uneasiness about one's final footprint, but the glowing fervor to re-green and re-wild the globe is relatively rare in this densely populated part of the world. Yet in their low-key burial ceremonies some do express hints of a more biocentric affiliation. The vocabulary and imagery used in front of a grave between the trees, ferns and mosses is hardly ever religion-specific.[23] It speaks of affection for the deceased, but not of gods, angels or paradises. It takes in the surroundings by poetic allusions to soil, plants, birds, seasons and light. And occasionally, indeed, it is courageous enough to 'entrust' the body to the earth in a perspective of all the organisms with which the deceased will be connected and through which he/she will be transformed into new life forms. Direct reference to the corpse and the processes of decay is rare, however. Speakers are necessarily reticent when standing by an open pit, but regular visitors do have their ways to cope with the physical realities of death. The dead are buried in a relatively shallow grave without a coffin. This intimacy with the earth may be frightening to some, but other visitors express deep affinity. The 'cold black soil' holds no terror for them.

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[22] See J.P. GEE: 'Affinity spaces: From age of mythology to today's schools', available at http://www.jamespaulgee.com/sites/default/files/pub/AffinitySpaces.pdf (accessed May 31, 2015).

[23] In Weverslo, a Dutch natural burial ground that I would qualify with 2,5 stars or green leaves, there is an unobtrusive place amidst the trees where a modest memorial service could be conducted. On rough wooden poles emblems of various religions are displayed, although wind and weather have made those almost indistinguishable by now. One pole is purposively left empty.

In fact, some are surprisingly candid. They derive deep consolation from the 'earthy' settings as well as from the larger surroundings. They know it takes time before the disturbed top soil will become green again. On the wrong day the grave may look desolate, abandoned, ugly. On other days, in another season, the site becomes a therapeutic landscape, an affinity space, a tender embedment for the loved one.[24] A biocentric orientation consoles and comforts by knowing that the dead are slowly, slowly being woven into the ongoing fabric of life. No souls on wings or memorial embellishments are needed then: the scientific certainty that the deceased partakes in the earth's narrative is good enough. Coping, by a grave, and in relation to the larger landscape, appears to be 'scoping': the scope with which a mourner can gradually, processually, relate to ongoing reality, and particularly to ongoing nature. Burial without the usual words and practices 'against death'[25] may look coldly comfortless to many, but to others there is comfort and even elation in going 'along with death'.

Embracing the earth story may thus turn out to bring a consolation of its own: from small signs of new life forms emerging around the grave to all-encompassing Nature, life obviously continues right then and there. Beneath the surface, one imagines all those micro-organisms, the tree roots, the rain water, decomposing leaves, industrious tiny workers, and the proverbial worms indeed. The young indigenous bush or tree planted by the grave may shower its first blossoms over it. A bird may sing and help widen the narrow circle of human grief into renewed awareness of the biotic community. A squirrel may hide its newly found treasure in the soft earth. The earth then, is not the final destination, it is just a transition space, it is the storehouse of new life. It is that precious living breathing skin around the planet to which we all owe our existence, and to which we will return at death. Death is participatory rather than final. Particle by particle the dead are being written into deep time, the earth script, the narrative of Life itself.

6.   Further perspectives

Ritualization helps to avoid or regulate awkward idiosyncratic responses to death. The familiar flow of an almost depersonalized mourning service in a traditional church, mosque, synagogue or temple may, to some, even come as a relief after so many personalized, informalized, secularized forms of grief current today. In an extension of that, graves are increasingly used as cult places or even altars. Rituals bring a cultural frame to moments of extreme emotional complexity, but in view

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[24] W. GESLER: 'Therapeutic landscapes: Medical issues in light of the new cultural geography', in *SocSciMed* 34/7 (1992) 735-746.
[25] D.H. DAVIES: *A brief history of death* (Malden 2005) 110.

of all kinds of societal changes a collectively shared code can hardly be taken for granted anymore.

In the margins of Western societies nature has become one of those mirrors on which individuals project their renewed sense of the sacred. Environmentally sensitive practices often show low-level ritualizing, but for a patient researcher a natural burial site may be a key to tendencies that may now be marginal but could well turn into a vector of change. Instead of being fixated on natural burial as yet another weird and excessive expression of individualism or even consumerism, researchers would do well to do some deep listening: what is it that moves some people to opt for these alternatives? How do they experience their pre-registered place? And how do visitors perceive the site, especially through the seasons and in various weather types?

New vocabularies are emerging. In a disenchanted, demythologized world, when all we have left is our body, how do we relate to the dead body? Most people who die today have a toxic rather than a sacred body. Their decomposing corpse may as well be a source of woodland pollution. How to avoid an idealized role of the dead body in natural burial? How to be courageous enough to speak of transitive decay in the most literal terms? How to avoid the common pitfall of culture-specific or fashionable rhetoric in order to soothe the raw realities? Standing by a standard grave is already complex enough, in spite of the wealth of mitigating scenarios undertakers and clerics have to offer, but how to behave when all those cultural and commercial buffers have been radically downsized or left out completely? Ultimate ambiguities lie bare right in front of us.

Natural burial calls for a new poetry. The naturalistic self needs a fresh vocabulary of reality-based solace. Even in the great outdoors there is the need to nurture the mind and the senses with images that celebrate life and emphatically include death. It is exactly because of this spatial interaction between religion, nature and culture, that green burial sites may provide us with a new lens.

12

LAST RITES:
PUTTING DEPENDENT ELDERLY IN THEIR PLACE

Martijn de Ruijter

Introduction[1]

A ritual is an activity unlike any other. But what differentiates it exactly will always remain point of debate. One such debate, a famous one, occurred between Ronald Grimes and Jonathan Smith.[2] The first emphasized action as the main component, the latter claimed that component to be place. In my opinion they are both right. Like any other activity, ritual has to be localized. It is impossible to perform an action outside of a material environment. And like any other action, ritual is directly and indirectly influenced by the milieu in which it is set. On the other hand, every activity always impinges on its direct surroundings. And here too, directly and indirectly. Ritual forms no exception to that. It is therefore not *just* the place that makes an act ritual, nor *just* the act that makes a place sacred. It is the way in which act and place relate to one another that sets *both* apart. Instead of creating a smaller space of focus within the larger concrete surroundings, which is what happens in purely functional activities, a ritual expands the place of action into a more abstract space of meaningful relations. In this article I aim to expose how such expansion may be the crucial way to re-envision the ways in which we house and treat our dependent elderly in contemporary rest and nursing homes.

To define or not to define

Defining ritual is not easy. Many have tried.[3] Some have succeeded better than others. The core of the problem, as I see it, lies in the variation of manifestations.

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[1] This article is a condensation and simplification of the forthcoming dissertation *Confining Frailty. Making place for rituals in rest and nursing homes.*

[2] For the larger context and content of this debate, see R. GRIMES: 'Jonathan Z Smith's theory of ritual space', in *Religion* 29 (1999) 261-273; also republished in 2006 as 'Putting space into its place', in R. GRIMES: *Rite out of place. Ritual, media and the arts* (Oxford 2006) 101-113.

[3] An impressive overview of these attempts can be found in the first appendix of R. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014). These appendices can be found online at http://oxrit.twohornedbull.ca/volumes/craft-of-ritual-studies/.

To some, the lighting of a candle by a grandmother, for a successful school-exam of her grandchild, is ritual *pur sang*. To others it needs to have a more religious, or at least spiritual, context. They would rather draw the line with lighting a candle for a deceased loved one in a church or a chapel. And then of course there are those that use the word in its most secular sense. For them even brushing ones teeth or the shaking of hands are activities that deserve the relegation.[4] The sheer amount of definitions that has accumulated with this variation is dazzling and has led more than a few experts to abandon the search for an all-compassing one altogether. Instead they refer to a 'heuristic formula' to try and list characteristics, qualities, functions and dimensions. I have created my own 'heuristic formula' within and for the rituals I have encountered in care facilities for the elderly. As such they specifically need to direct attention to three dialectical facets of symbolical activities. They may be quotidian as well as 'once-in-a-lifetime' events, individual as well as collective and last but surely not least, highly religious as well as completely secular.[5]

My definition

Ritual, to me, is 'a symbolical act that breaches the routine of functional behavior in which it is embedded.' I will break this formula down into four pieces to clarify more precisely what I mean and how that is manifested in everyday life.

First and foremost, a ritual, and I dare say, *any* ritual, is a symbolical act. A symbol 'throws together' two (or more) previously unrelated things to generate new significance.[6] And to make it even more complex, the relation between the form and the content of a symbolical act, or ritual, seems completely arbitrary. When carefully placed on a specific finger, a little metal hoop suddenly marks the eternal bond of love and companionship. When attached to a wooden stick and ostensibly waved around, an even white cloth becomes the promise of non-violent negotiations.

Secondly, a ritual is an act that breaches routine. This may seem a vast leap away from 'traditional' definitions that include repetitiveness or repeatability as a

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[4] Consider for instance the famous article on American culture by H. MINER: 'Body ritual among the Nacirema', in *American Anthropologist New Series* 58/3 (1956) 503-507, and the focus on everyday symbolic behavior by E. GOFFMAN: *Interaction ritual* (Chicago 1967).

[5] See P. POST, A. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern western culture* (Leuven 2011) 18; M. EVANS: 'The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying, and extending concepts', in *Review of Religious Research* 47/1 (2005) 51-69; R. GRIMES: *Beginnings in ritual studies* (Washington 1982) 36-39; IDEM: *Ritual criticism: Case studies in its practice, essays on its theory* (Columbia 1990) 9-15. Cf. C. BELL: *Ritual theory, ritual practice* (Oxford 1992) 74; and M. GLUCKMAN: *Order and rebellion in tribal Africa* (London 1963).

[6] From the Greek: *sym-ballein*.

primary characteristic, but it is not.[7] The weekly Eucharist itself, for instance, is undeniably a fixed routine. The smallest of changes in its performance may well lead to the largest of upheavals.[8] But even as such, I would argue, it breaches another routine, more specifically, that of the 'normal' or mundane week-to-week functional behavior.

Thirdly, in breaching that routine, a ritual defies (the logic of) functionality. Much has been written about the efficacy of rituals and whether or not they should even be considered in such a sense.[9] I think it would be utterly strange to maintain that rituals sort no effect of any kind. That would render them obsolete altogether.[10] With Boyer and Van Beek, I assert that ritual entails a certain amount of contra-intuitiveness. Much of that contra-intuitiveness coincides with non-functionality, with a tendency to not sort a directly noticeable effect. Sharing a meal with invisible dinner guests, for instance, is not usually aimed at achieving any tangible result, nor is conversing with a statue or, maybe, even the activity of painting to 'stay of the streets' for someone who isn't the least bit mobile.

And lastly, the routine that is breached is always the same routine in which the ritual itself is embedded. It is the inescapable consequence of the fact that no human act takes place in a vacuum. For each example of ritual that I have mentioned here it is easy to see how it is rooted in and 'emerges' out of a very specific context. The waving of a white flag needs war, or at the very least a war-like atmosphere, the sliding on of rings becomes useful only in an environment in which relationships are fleeting, the weekly Eucharist requires a mundane flow of life and the painting of Mary would not have taken place so easily outside of the everyday turmoil of the rest and nursing home.

In this definition, ritual and non-ritual behavior are clearly not considered to be different *kinds* of behavior but rather different *degrees*.[11] Literally any event, act,

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[7] Such persistence in defining, spanning a period of twenty years, can be found with an author like Gerard Lukken. Cf. G. LUKKEN: *Geen leven zonder rituelen. Antropologische beschouwingen met het oog op christelijke liturgie* (Baarn 1984), IDEM: *Rituelen in overvloed. Een kritische bezinning op de plaats en de gestalte van het christelijk ritueel in onze cultuur* (Baarn 2003), and IDEM: *Rituals in abundance. Critical reflections on the place, form, and identity of Christian ritual in our culture* (=Liturgia condenda 17) (Leuven 2005).

[8] The best example here of course being the changes set in motion by the second Vatican Council which remain criticized to this very day and in some cases have even been counter-acted.

[9] See for example and further literature J. PODEMANN SØRENSEN: 'Efficacy', in J. KREINATH, J. SNOEK & M. STAUSBERG (eds.): *Theorizing rituals: Issues, topics, approaches, concepts* (Leiden/Boston 2006) 523-532.

[10] A very helpful definition here was construed by Robert Cortesi. To him ritual is an action that is performed 'at least as much for its symbolic and emotional value as for its practical value.' See R. CORTESI: *Secular wholeness: A skeptic's paths to a richer life* (Victoria 2001) 61.

[11] As seen with B. MYERHOFF: 'We don't wrap herring in a printed page', in S. MOORE & B. MYERHOFF: *Secular ritual* (Assen 1977) 200.

person, place or object can, at one time or another, attain (or lose) symbolical and even sacred value.

Types of care facilities for the elderly

Home

If we may believe the advertising strategies of modern day rest and nursing homes, this first type is by far the most desired one. It is also the least attainable. Advertisements and commercials for elderly care may be filled with references to a new homestead but, unfortunately, that is where it stays. Putting together a large number of people to better care for the needs of an even larger group of elderly residents implies structure and organization that automatically brings along an un-homely ambience. There are some trends, like that of small assisted-living groups and of 'cosification' that try to call forth a more homely atmosphere. Such trends are also noticeable in the naming of spaces. The rooms where people converge for breakfast, lunch and communal television watching are called living room, the room where they sleep is their own (private) room and the whole facility is often referred to as a house or home. Such trends function as a mirror; they show us how we would like to perceive as home that which we actually understand to be a facility.[12]

Inn/hostel/hotel

This second type seems more attainable than the previous type. But because of ever occurring changes in care-policies and governmental subsidies, it is now hardly any less of an ideal.[13] Its characteristics are a blend of those of the home ideal and more practical applications. When it comes to safety for instance, it is more about the prevention of or fast reaction to in-house accidents than shelter and defense. Many activities that are known to take on a ritual form in one's own home, like breakfast, dining, bathing or going to bed, quickly turn practical and instrumental in a hotel or inn. And much of that alterity is connected to the interior design of the place.

Hospital

Early blueprints of contemporary nursing homes confirm that they were often set up as a hospital. Nowadays such a set-up is unimaginable. Similar changes of

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[12] For a nice overview of relevant literature on the subject of house/home see G. JUCHTMANS: *Rituelen thuis: Van christelijk tot basaal sacraal* (=Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy 8) (Tilburg 2008) 3.

[13] Renée Shield already provides ample examples of such occurrences. See R. SHIELD: *Uneasy endings: Daily life in an American nursing home* (Ithaca/London 1988) 72-74.

care-policies and individual situations as mentioned in the previous type here constitute a change that moves toward the ideal of a home or at the very least a temporary place of residence or recovery. Though this type is outdated, many of the facilities that once started out like this still bear its marks. Those marks are best localized where hygiene and medicine are of significance.

The super-type: Center

Most present-day care-facilities for the elderly are a blend of two or more types. Because of this, and because such a merging of types creates a whole new dynamic of its own one could easily present it as a category in itself, with its very own characteristics. Both locations of my research nowadays present themselves as centers. One of the most striking feats of such a center is the overwhelming presence of signposting. The actual building in which a center resides is usually extremely large or in fact a cluster of buildings. The different parts each have their own designated function. To be able to get where you need to go it is therefore thought necessary to clearly post what can be found in which direction. With this development the care facility steadily transforms into another type of transitional space. Was it first a place *for* transition, where people (were) prepared for their final 'journey', it now, more and more, resembles a space *of* transit itself, like an airport or railway station.[14]

The forgotten dimension: Workspace

Although emphasis is normally put on the life of the residents it would be unwise to ignore the fact that rest and nursing homes are always also workspaces. It is most helpful to note the characteristics of this type as they convey that many facilities of care lean heavily towards workspace while the image they present to the outside world is that of a home, hostel or center. These characteristics include the ever-presence of staff and personnel, an interior design based on practicality (safety and hygiene) rather than aesthetics and the presence of receptions, meeting rooms, offices for administration, coffee-machines etc. Every ritual performance in rest and nursing homes is, by necessity, always directly influenced by these characteristics.

Rituals in rest and nursing homes

In advance of my fieldwork some 'experts' had warned me that, when it comes to ritual, old people's homes would contain very little of interest, if anything at all. I disagreed. I was convinced to find all the recognizable or commonly accepted forms of ritual such as birthdays, church visits, Christmas celebrations etc. But I

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[14] Cf. M. AUGÉ: *Non-places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London/New York 1995).

found much more. Rest and nursing homes are rife with ritual and ritualizations. Because of the unique context where leisure, residence and labor are thrown in the mix, even the most quotidian activities can beget symbolical value. In my research I have focused on rituals of the residents themselves but, this does not at all exclude other participants. I have divided them into eight categories or 'genres'. They are:

- Wining and dining
- Watching television
- Individual ritualizations and (personal) hygiene
- Entertainment and recreation
- Birthdays
- Official adherence
- Large festivities
- Passing away

This division into eight genres serves three purposes. First of all it is, in my opinion, a fair representation of the broadness of ritual(-like) behavior in facilities of care. Secondly, it enables us to understand that in the day-to-day lives of the inhabitants, small, individual, personal and natural (also known as *secular* or, more to my own preference, *profane*) ritualizations are, at the very least, as commonly present and of equal value as large, collective, institutional and religious rituals. Thirdly, it serves as a way to better understand the changes that occur in the relations between rituals and daily routine when one moves to a rest and nursing home.

The perks of environmental anthropology

I performed my fieldwork in two locations for elderly care. About halfway my research, I desperately started looking for a bridge. The more I studied my objects of research the more I became aware of a peculiar abyss. It separated not one but two important factors in the life of the aged. First of all it parted the general images of old age and the elderly as presented in the media from the real lives of older individuals. Secondly, it harshly divided those individuals from the very surroundings they resided in. I found this bridge, rather serendipitously, in the works of a scholar who wrote very little about the lives of elderly people, and even less so about rituals: Tim Ingold. During his career Ingold has developed a specific focus on bringing together the themes of environmental perception and

skilled practice.[15] Exactly that focus, refined and explicated in many of his following works, enables me to bridge the gap between image and reality and put dependent elderly firmly in their own place. It does so in a fourfold manner.

History

To Ingold, history is evolution, in which nature and nurture form equal parts. This vision creates leeway to perceive any 'person-organism' as a process of becoming rather than a point of being, no matter what phase of its life it has reached. In this view, the old man in a wheelchair differs little from the middle-aged man in a car or the small boy on his tricycle. If an individual organism, like the older man in the wheelchair, is not just the output of his genetic blueprint but an instance in a much more complex process of development within a specific context, then that instance itself is no longer directly defined by a physical ailment. To put it in other words, in this view, riding a wheelchair is a useful, environmentally specific required skill instead of a loss of bipedal movement.[16]

Dwelling

To better understand the intricate entanglement of a human being and his surroundings, Ingold proposes to reintroduce the Heideggerian perspective of *dwelling* in contrast with the presently still dominant one of *building*.[17] It is a perspective that regards the human species as one that first inhabits and only then, and because of that, builds. No environment is ever objective or neutral but always already lived and experienced. A care facility isn't built anew with every new inhabitant. It is always already a dwelling, and as such saturated with images and beliefs.[18] These images and beliefs, on what old people are like and how they should act, get materialized in architecture, interior design, furniture, hierarchy, organized

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[15] Which he presented at various conferences and symposia, among which the World Archaeological Congress in Southampton (1986), the Fourth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies in London (1986) and the conference 'Tools, language and intelligence: evolutionary implications' in Cascais (1990). See also T. INGOLD: *The perception of the environment: Essays in livelihood dwelling and skill* (London/New York 2000); IDEM: *Lines: A brief history* (London/New York 2007); IDEM: *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description* (London/New York 2011).

[16] A strong argument for this view is made by South African athlete Oscar Pistorius. Pistorius, also known as the 'Blade Runner' because of his two carbon fiber prosthetic limbs, is a sprint runner with a double below-knee amputation. In 2012 he was the first ever para-lympic athlete to compete in the regular Summer Olympics. His participation in regular competitions is cause for ongoing debates as several experts consider his prosthetics, without any muscle tissue or blood vessels, an unfair advantage on the other athletes.

[17] INGOLD: *The perception of the environment* 172-188.

[18] Cf. M. DE CERTEAU: *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley/London 1984) 91-114; E. RUPPERT: 'Henri Lefebvre. The urban revolution', in *Canadian Journal of Sociology Online* (September-October 2003), available at http://www.cjsonline.ca/reviews/urbanrev.html (accessed September 2015).

activities and so on. They greatly direct what new residents are supposed to act like.

Lines

In their famous book, *Milles Plateaus,* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe life, as well as living organisms, as entanglements of lines of flight and lines of becoming.[19] To explain this, they use the image of a river.[20] Our normal way of looking at things is represented by a road-bridge that crosses that river. The bridge functions as a connector between two immutable and static points. It is a transitive connection from starter to end, or in a production analogy thereof, from an image of what is to be made, to the form of a completed object.[21] "But the river, running under the bridge in a direction orthogonal to the road, does not simply connect one thing to another. Rather it just flows, without beginning or end, scouring the banks on each side and picking up speed in the middle."[22] According to Ingold, that intransitive perspective of the river is the one that should be regained in anthropology. "Whether our concern is to inhabit this world or to study it…our task is not to take stock of its contents but to *follow what is going on,* tracing the multiple trails of becoming, wherever they lead."[23]

Wayfaring

This wayfaring is contrasted with 'navigating'. When navigating, all facts are immediately clear, enabling a quick selection of what's relevant and the plotting of a course to reach a previously designated end goal. When wayfaring, in contrast, the traveler (or reader) remains mostly passive. He is taken on a journey along road signs, markings and barriers of all sorts. Only when the journey ends can these different aspects result into a previously unknown coherence. In relation to elderly people this wayfaring concept elucidates the importance of their personal idiosyncrasies, or, anthropologically speaking, of the emic perspective. Studying elderly people remains a form of navigating, right until it is no longer a collection of facts but a continuing journey, of which much must remain unclear by necessity. To speak with Sharon Kaufman, the elderly "do not perceive meaning in aging itself; rather, they perceive meaning in being themselves in old age."[24] It is not age that defines who they are but their own integration of "… a wide range of experi-

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[19] G. DELEUZE & F. GUATTARI: *A thousand plateaus* (London/New York 2004).

[20] IDEM 28.

[21] INGOLD: *Being alive* 14.

[22] DELEUZE & GUATTARI: *A thousand plateaus* 28.

[23] INGOLD: *Being alive* 14.

[24] S. KAUFMAN: *The ageless self. Sources of meaning in late life* (Wisconsin 1986) 6.

ence – unique situations, structural forces, cultural pathways, [and] knowledge of an entire lifespan …"[25]

The roundabout way of rituality

As said, Ingold is not interested in ritual or religion. The aforementioned concepts circumvent age old imagery, present a new way of looking at elderly citizens and re-connect them with the environment of the care facility. That still leaves the role of rituals in all of this to be elucidated.

Not every action is ritual. Doing the dishes, for instance, isn't. But it could be. On many occasions, rituals are understood in terms of particular displacement, and that in the most literal sense of the word: to perform a ritual one needs to step unto 'other ground'. This includes the obvious rituals, like going to church. Mosque or temple, but also less evident ones, like the laying of flowers on a gravestone.[26] I do not dispute this factor of displacement, but emphasizing or ignoring it too often becomes a way of giving prominence to only one set of characteristics. Historically, such emphases have been employed to prove the efficacy of ritual or, to the contrary, to make a point of its "other-worldliness."[27]

But the performance of ritual (co-)creates 'otherness' of space (and also time) as much as it is construed by it. The ties between material place and symbolical activity are quite essential but vary greatly in actual influence. They can intensify or contradict.[28] That act of doing the dishes, for instance, could be ritualized just as well by performing it in an 'other-than-normal' setting (i.e. contradiction) as by transferring it to a specifically crafted place that stresses the act rather than the outcome (i.e. intensification).

Furthermore, as a ritual has the most significant value to those involved, I suggest it makes more sense to at least start its analysis with the ideas and ideals that are contained in and expressed by it than on what places it may or may not separate from one another.[29] In the case of laying flowers on a gravestone I would point out, not that the grave is in a scarcely visited place or that laying flowers applies only to memorial sites, but rather that the gesture itself suggests an active and reciprocal relationship between individuals that have been separated

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[25] KAUFMAN: *The ageless self* 187-188.

[26] T. QUARTIER: 'Memorializing the dead', in POST, MOLENDIJK & KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern Western culture* 78.

[27] Such opposition can be found between Durkheim and Eliade or Staal and Malinowski or, even more present, Smith and Grimes.

[28] That rituals are rife with such ambivalences is conveyed wonderfully by Grimes in his latest work, GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* 297-317.

[29] A functional addition to a descriptive definition, as seen with Post, seems especially useful here. See POST, MOLENDIJK & KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern Western culture* 18.

by the gorge of death. In reference to my earlier stated working-definition, this means that in the process of 'breaching' it is not what is breached (i.e. the functional routine) nor what that breach is caused by (the symbolical counterpart of such a routine) but how this happens exactly, in its inter-relatedness, that should be the focal point of attention.

Let us return to the dishes. To determine whether or not washing the dishes has become something of a ritual, one thus better investigates if it contains or expresses any relations to 'non-dish-washing' ideas or ideals. It can become a remembrance of the 'good old times' when dishwashers did not yet exist. It can also transform into an act of recreation that involves singing and dancing. And it can even turn into an activity of meditation that enables the participants to temporarily escape their day-to-day struggle. In all these cases it has gained symbolical value. Such attentive escapes, transformations or commemorations expand on the actual material place in which the activity is performed. The focus no longer lies on the practical outcome but on other places, times and people that may be represented by it. And herein lays the important difference with non-symbolical actions. Where a non-symbolical action condenses a certain place to what is of immediate use, a symbolical activity expands on it, often even to counterproductive extent. That expansion is not without order but rather of a very different order. It is an order that is similar to that of children's play, where a parental bed turns into a pirate ship or a left-over card wood box into a space craft.[30] In this order, the relation of the act to its material and temporal surroundings is highly important yet very subtle. Only with mom and dad in the bathroom, away but still in close proximity, can their bed become a pirate ship; only in familiar settings and without any visible other purpose will the card wood box turn into a space craft. Like children's play, a ritual can take place just about anywhere but **never** just anywhere at any time.

Activities that are inefficient, let alone counterproductive, cannot be employed with the intention to reach a single desired effect. That would be a *contradictio in terminis*. For this reason alone rituals should never be put to use as mere instruments. To put it more bluntly: a ritual that is utilized only to achieve a pre-

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[30] Here I take my inspiration from the final sentence of the famous radio broadcast by Michel Foucault. In a later version of this text, one that Foucault agreed to publish only shortly before his death, the image of the parental bed and the colorful descriptions of policemen and freebooters were left out. See M. BISCHOF & D. DEFERT: *Die Heterotopien. Der Utopische Körper* (Frankfurt am Main 2005) and M. FOUCAULT: *Dits et écrits 1954-1988 IV 1980-1988* (Paris 1994) 360. Cf. the famous idea of the *Homo Ludens* as presented in J. HUIZINGA: *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture* (London 1949).

viously set goal is, in fact, not a ritual at all.[31] To acknowledge this bears significant consequences for residents of rest and nursing homes.[32] Using symbolic activities as therapeutic devices immediately diminishes their symbolic character. Therapy is pragmatic while rituals can never be. That is not to say that one should give up on that kind of therapy *per se*, but it does imply that such activities are taken away from the symbolic/sacred side of the continuum. They will no longer function as a breach of daily functional routine as easily as before. And there is one other objection, perhaps even the most important one, against commodification in facilities of care. A strictly instrumental focus takes away any possibility of occasionally creating more space than there is place, of expanding the material room into an immaterial home, haven or sanctuary. It turns space for living into a place of work.

Present innovations

For the past couple of years many innovations have been introduced in the domain of elderly care. In the context of the above some are particularly noteworthy. In their own way they are all bent on the creation of more dignified forms of care. Although none of them consider the role of ritual therein, the observations they have made and the responding alternatives they have come up with, clearly breathe a similar message as the one I am presenting.

Habion

Habion discriminates three groups of elderly: the traditionally oriented, the modernly oriented and the post-modernly oriented. Consequently it develops three forms of housing that would best fit those groups. All of these forms combine the needs and wants of that particular group of elderly with consumerism, education or healthcare. The actual buildings that go together with these forms, house the elderly in private quarters that are part of a much larger structure that also harbors markets and shops, schools and conference centers or apothecaries and doctor's practices. Many facilities of care try to implement factors of consumerism, education and healthcare when they renovate or rebuild their current structures. Whether or not these implementations result into better care or create a higher degree of well-being of the residents is hard to determine. Its effectiveness remains to be seen

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[31] The nuance should be well understood here. Of course a ritual has effect, and of course that effect can be desired beforehand. It is the way in which that effect gets established that is different. That way is one of impracticality.

[32] Cf. R. BUTLER: 'The life review: An interpretation of reminiscence in the aged', in *Psychiatry* 26 (1963) 65-75; R. BUTLER: 'The life review: An unrecognized bonanza', in *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 12 (1980) 35-38.

No more protocols

The second alternative was initiated by care institution *De Hoven* in Groningen. Under the heading *Zorg zonder regels,* this institution started a project to do away with unnecessary rules and protocols that had slowly become a blockade between the providers and the receivers of care.[33] As an existing company they could not just revise the architecture of their institution and thus focused almost solely on the conceptual part of the demands in care of the present and coming generations of elderly. In practice it simply means that nurses and other staff are free to judge what needs to be done and have far less paper-work to secure that they made the right choices. Both residents and their families signed declarations of agreement. This project is still ongoing but has already received very positive evaluations. Much to everyone's surprise it did not only lead to a higher quality of life for the residents, which was the primary goal, but also to a much higher work satisfaction among the nursing staff.

Neighbourhood care

A third example of care 'outside the box' can be found in the so called *Buurtzorg* ('Neighbourhood care') as introduced by Jos de Blok in 2006.[34] Although this is a type of care intended for people at home, the concept may well be transferred to institutions of all kind. Like the *zorg zonder regels* project this care concept tried to get rid of all the managerial fuss that had cluttered around elderly healthcare. *Buurtzorg* works with small, self-sustaining teams of up to twelve people. There are no managers or assessments. Every team answers directly to the director and founder. Since the start in 2006 *Buurtzorg* has grown into the largest facilitator of home care in the Netherlands, with no less than 5800 employees. On top of that it has been declared best employer of the year in 2011 and 2012.[35] When asked about their thoughts on the concept, many employees praised how they regained their freedom of choice and individual responsibility. They feel as if they finally got their job back and are once again capable of truly helping people that are in need of it.

Future possibilities

All these examples of re-inventing elderly care strike a chord. Yet, in my opinion they still lack one elemental acknowledgement. 'Care that is overly self-critical at

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[33] *De Hoven* was one of twenty-eight institutions that were given permission to partake in the project *Regelarme Zorg* by the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports in 2011.

[34] http://www.intermediair.nl/vakgebieden/zorg/buurtzorg-geen-functionerings-gesprekken-geen-uitstroom (accessed June 2015).

[35] http://www.zorgvisie.nl/Personeel/Nieuws/2012/10/Stichting-Buurtzorg-weer-Beste-Werkgever-2012-ZVS015006W/ (accessed June 2015).

the one hand while indolent at the other will eventually turn into its worst form.'
In every facility of care I have encountered something of a crusade for self-improvement. Every employer and focus-group is confronted with learning curves and education purposes, with novel demands of service and accountability structures, and all to ensure that the care they provide will surpass any other. This, of course is the vanity of self-critique. The focus in care should always be on the people involved. When one truly directs his or her attention to the needy individual, good care will follow automatically. By purely focusing on the providing of care itself, the individual to receive that care becomes subordinate or even accessory. In *The Government of Self and Others* Michel Foucault states that proper morality demands both an unmasking of existing inconsistencies and the courage of free self-legislation.[36] For the context of rest and nursing homes I suggest this entails that the people involved unmask rhetorical embellishments (like the ideal of a homey atmosphere) and freely commit themselves to what they truly want their facility of care to be like (a leisurely retreat, reactivation facility or even work-space or educational institute). If you want to offer dependent elderly an opportunity to retreat from society and spend the remainder of their lives in idleness, then you should provide the necessary structure and routine to do so. Festivities that, in their present form, function as a bridge to the rest of society, like Sinterklaas or Carnival, are redundant here.[37] The influence of a work force can be minimal. Efficiency of care plays no role for those who are preparing to leave their mortal coil. All should be invested in the creation of a fitting departure from this worldly life. Small and personal ritualizations should be encouraged and facilitated.

If however you want dependent elderly to further play a role within society, then make sure the functional routines and breaching activities are in line with that ideal. Here the focus lies not on retreat and departure but on participation and integration. A working force should be facilitating in that aspect but preferably in a cooperative or even co-inhabited role. Large celebrations and festivities should answer to the same dynamics to, at the very least, provide a practice of reciprocation and intermingling among residents that was so dearly missed by Shield in her investigations.[38]

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[36] M. FOUCAULT: *The government of self and others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983* (trans. G. Burchell) (New York 2010); IDEM: *The courage of truth: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984* (trans. G. Burchell) (New York 2011); and T. FLYNN: 'Foucault as Parrhēsiast: His last course at the Collège de France (1984)', in J. BERNAUER & D. RASMUSSEN (eds.): *The final Foucault* (Cambridge 1988) 102-118.

[37] Both Sinterklaas and Carnival receive ample attention in T. DEKKER, H. ROODENBURG & G. ROOIJAKKERS (eds.): *Volkscultuur. Een inleiding in de Nederlandse etnologie* (Nijmegen 2000) 212-222.

[38] SHIELD: *Uneasy endings*.

And thirdly, undesirable as it must seem, if you want rest and nursing homes to function as a work-space, you will have to make sure that the working force is the primary factor of determination. In this case the residents should be instrumental to the needs of both education and ambition of the staff. Rituals would have the sole purpose of breaching the everyday routine of the personnel. It would need only the same shape and content of those rituals that can be found in any other work-space, from the likes of insurance offices to factory floors, from supermarkets to law firms, etcetera. As undesirable as it may be, my fieldwork pointed out that many rituals in rest and nursing homes today, are in fact already quite similar in character.

And then there is the educational institute. Most contemporary facilities of care have already implemented a plan of education where students learn 'by doing'. It seems logical and, more importantly, cost saving, to have students work along with registered nurses. In my opinion this is paving the road to damnation. The sole difference between residents being instrumental to education and their participation within a learning society may very well be the degree of self-worth they are able to maintain 'along the way'. For this reason alone it would serve facilities of care well to think twice about inviting students as part of their work-force. Only in the least moral of societies can a dependent elder take on the role of a crash-test dummy.

13

CONSTRUCTING TRANSIENT SACRED PLACE: THREE CASES

Allen Scarboro & Jonelle Husain

This paper explores the social construction of sacred space. We briefly introduce three sets of actors engaged in activities which transform everyday profane geography into realms separate from the bustle of their surroundings, into areas that permit self-transformation and empowerment, the identifying and restricting of moral vacuums, and the reconfiguring and consolidating the normative rule of the everyday world. We place these activities into a theoretical model that contrasts social production and social construction and argue that social construction, inherent in its ephemerality and emphasis on human agency, provides venues for standing over and against a world seen as inadequate for meaningful action.

1.   Casting the circle: Playing for empowerment

The late October moon casts shadows across the large back yard of the brick rancher in suburban Atlanta. Inside the house, more than forty people sit quietly in the basement game room, meditating, rehearsing, and anticipating the ritual about to unfold. At a silent signal, the men and women, led by Lady Devyana, the High Priestess for the Hallomas ritual, rise and walk into the dark yard. Lady Devyana and Lord Dorian, the night's High Priest, stand beside a pre-arranged table. They move to a point in the east of the gathered Witches and raise their right hands, which hold ritual daggers, their *athames*. The priestess calls in a loud voice: "Hail, Guardians of the Watchtowers of the East, Powers of Air! We invoke you and call you…." The assembly joins its voices to that of Lady Devyana. The priestess and priest move in turn to points in the south, the west, and finally in the north of the gathered initiates; at each place, they invoke the spirits and gods associated with that compass point. As the priestess and priest end the invocation to the north, they turn and, with their *athames* pointed to the ground, move clockwise to the points they had previously visited, 'cutting' or 'casting' an imaginary circle which enfolds and protects the ritual being enacted. Inside the safety and power of the circle, the High Priestess invokes the Goddess and in turn the High Priest invokes the God who each join the ritual, embodied in the priestess and priest. Inside the

circle, the gods and the Witches convene, dance, call forth power, cast spells, direct energy to heal or protect or enable, practicing the craft which is Witchcraft.[1]

As the ritual ends two or more hours later, the circle is undone, the gods and spirits are bade farewell, and the back yard reemerges in its quotidian usualness.

2.   Marking the moral: Making boundaries

The early morning street near the center of a large urban area in Mississippi lies tranquil, its silence broken by the noise of traffic on a nearby interstate highway. Soon after 9:00 AM, however, the right of way and the clinic it borders become scenes of increasing activity. An eight-foot wooden fence surrounds the abortion clinic; a security guard keeps the gathering protesters off clinic property as the first clients arrive in their cars and hurry into the building. As a borderland between public and private, the fences encircling the abortion clinic represents the moral and legal boundaries that govern and restrict pro-life activism. Limiting activists and activism to the area outside the fence, the physical construction designates the clinic as a space beyond the reach of activists. Activists understand abortion clinics as places where private decisions and problems are addressed and acted upon, places where moral decision-making is suspended, as places forbidden to the activists and their moral claims. The fence signals the outer limits of life and death to pro-life activists. The fence barricades activists from clinic patients and insulates patients from activists. The fence, then, identifies a contested space where activists jockey to be heard, to make a difference, to intercede, to make moral what is constructed as immoral.[2]

The fence also symbolizes a border between sacred and profane worlds. The area lying outside the fence extends into the secular, into the arena 'of the world.' Moral order exists in the secular world although activists denigrate its morality and complain of the assaults against those moral foundations that undergird the secular world. The area inside the fence, however, is constructed not as profane: the profane world while under moral assault is, for activists, nevertheless a world under moral sway. Rather, the clinic is a morass continuously being defiled, an abyss of

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[1] This description of a Wiccan Sabbat ritual is based on an extensive participant-observation study of a large coven in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1991-1992. See A. SCARBORO, N. CAMPBELL & S. STAVE: *Living witchcraft: A contemporary American coven* (Westport, CT 1994), for a more extensive analysis of the coven and its members and for a fuller discussion of our research design.

[2] This description of pro-life activists is drawn from a larger participant-observation study in a major urban area of Mississippi, in 2003-2004. See J. HUSAIN: 'Race, gender and abortion protest in Mississippi' (Unpublished manuscript. Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, Mississippi State University, Mississippi, 2005) for a fuller description and analysis of these activists and for a statement of the research design. The sections of this paper describing the pro-life activists is drawn from Prof. Husain's observations, analysis and writings.

evil, a 'killing' place obeying no moral rules. When clinic patients and staff move inside the fence, activists see them moving into a moral vacuum, where anything is possible, a moral chaos swirling with both the absence of good and the active presence of evil. Those clients and staff who enter through the gate move into the presence of evil and their entry presents activists with a moral imperative to act.

Activists respond to the moral abyss of the clinic through their presence outside the fence by creating a sacred space between these two spaces – the profane world where moral action is possible and the chaotic realm of the clinic where moral action is impossible. Activists pray, recite religious homilies, read the Bible, and sing hymns in attempts to reorder that space of demonic possibility into one of moral possibility. Their actions create a sacred place confronting the fences and opposing those forces active inside the fences. The crafting of this sacred space encircling the clinics then stands in tension not only with the abyss inside the walls but also with the secular, profane worlds stretching into the city and state. Their actions and the space that emerges with their acts serve as a physical reminder that the moral order of secular world is also flawed and decaying. Their actions point out the decay they see in the profane world – it is after all a secular world that permits the clinics to exist. Their actions and the sacred geography their actions evoke actively symbolize the transgression of the staff and clients who enter the clinic. Their construction of the boundary marks those crossing that space as plunging them into a place of depravity.

As patients move through the sacred place toward the moral abyss just beyond the fence, activists see opportunity, hopefulness, and the potential to change the course of events looming just beyond their reach. They call on individuals to accept responsibility and to reconnect with the moral sphere. The sacred space becomes not only a place where activists defend the innocent, seek to protect the unprotected, speak for the silent, and advocate for the powerless, but also a location for assumption of responsibility by the patients and employees. Activists rally not only for the fetus, the unborn, the potential human being for whom the probability of death awaits beyond the fence, but also for the individual actors involved in the abortion process and for a disinterested public. Just as the space beyond the fence symbolizes the place where blood is shed, where choice triumphs over responsibility, and where evil trumps good, the sacred space represents as well a place of possibility – possibility to act in ways that will preserve the potential of human life.

By early afternoon, the last client and the staff have left the clinic. The gate into the clinic parking lot is padlocked. The activists gather their signs and brochures, the folding chairs where they rest between direct actions, and the coolers which hold water and cola, and leave to resume their ordinary day's activities. The noise of traffic on the interstate has reached a quiet roar and the street in front of the clinic shows only a few pieces of discarded paper to mark the events of the morning.

3.   Reconstructing the profane as sacred: Crafting *communitas*

The busy business street in a Cairo suburb is packed with cars, donkey carts, scooters, and pedestrians on this Wednesday mid-afternoon. A man manages the parking of cars in front of a silver shop, three handcraft stores, and a greengrocer. The stores are separated from the street by a patio that creates an unanticipated open space in the busy district. Shoppers cross the patio to the shops while shopkeepers sit on a low wall in the warm sun as they await customers. Without announcement, a man emerges from one of the handcraft shops. He carries a large green rug, which looks as if it were made of Astroturf. The man unrolls the rug on the patio, then reenters his shop and returns with a second one that he unrolls next to the first. A second man brings five low sawhorses from another shop and sets them along the periphery of the two rugs. Both men return to their stores. A third man comes out of his shop. He holds a microphone connected to an unobtrusive loudspeaker attached to the awning of the silver shop. The man begins to call familiar words over the loudspeaker: "*Allahu Akbar…Hayya 'ala-s-Salah...*" He returns to his shop. The rugs are vacant for several minutes. First one then four more men approach an opening between two of the sawhorses. They remove their shoes and then move onto the rug to begin their prayers.[3]

Within twenty minutes the rugs are empty again. The men, who earlier had prepared the place for prayer, return, gather the sawhorses, re-roll the rugs, and take the rugs and sawhorses back to storage. The patio soon sees more shoppers cross the area, seemingly unaware that the place they are traversing had only moments before been set aside for a special purpose.

4.   Constructing ephemeral sacred space

These three vignettes, from widely scattered locales and with variant legitimating narratives, differ in many ways. They are interesting to us, however, in a trait they share: the construction of ephemeral sacred spaces. In this paper we argue that space, however else it may be understood, should be seen primarily as a product of human action, that space is a social construction. As with space in general, sacred space is especially noteworthy as socially constructed: without the human agency in constructing space, the human intentionality in transforming a location to sacred space, neither the sacredness nor the space emerge. Ephemeral sacred spaces are particularly useful for examining this characteristic: their very ephemerality – the movement of sacred space into and out of being – highlights their construction.

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[3] This account is based on an informal observation of the construction of a temporary 'sidewalk mosque' in a large suburb in the Cairo, Egypt, metropolitan area. The observation was conducted in the fall of 2004.

All too often, as Margaret C. Rodman notes,

> Places in anthropological writing have been equated with ethnographic locales. As such, they could be taken for granted. They were just space, 'the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile' [here she quotes Michel Foucault].[4]

In this commonsense understanding, space becomes identified when it is found or located. Mapping, in this sense, brings the unknown but already there into the realm of the known. That is, mapping a locale serves a function much like that of the Platonic 'remembering' as a way of knowing. Mircea Eliade's notion of *kratophany*[5] – that the sacred shows itself, under its own initiative and under its own power, in sacred spots – that the human response is but to recognize that sacred and to heed its demands – is a classic formulation of this conception of sacred space.

However, a major theme in sociological and anthropological work offers a very different construal of place and sacred space. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson remind us that, "from at least the time of Durkheim, anthropology has known that the experience of space is always socially constructed."[6] Human agency is a central component of the emergence of space. In her 'Spatializing Culture', Setha M. Low differentiates between two modalities of the experience of space as "always socially constructed": she terms these two modalities 'social production' and 'social construction'. She limits the social production of space to "those factors – social, economic, ideological, and technological – the intended goal of which is the physical creation of a material setting."[7] A socially 'produced' space, then, might be a building reserved for religious purposes, a covered market, a town square, a government office, or a highway. 'Social construction', on the other hand, she reserves:

> …for the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict, and control. Thus, the social construction of space is the actual transformation of space – through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting – into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning.[8]

The three spaces described in the introduction of this paper – the Witches' circle, the activists' boundary between the profane world and a moral abyss within that

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[4] M. RODMAN: 'Empowering place: Multilocality and multivocality', in *American Anthropologist*, *New Series*, 94/3 (1992) 640-656, p 640.

[5] M. ELIADE: *Patterns in comparative religion* (Santa Barbara, CA 1958).

[6] A. GUPTA & J. FERGUSON: 'Beyond "culture": Space, identity, and the politics of difference', in *Cultural Anthropology* 7/1 (1992) 6-23, p. 8.

[7] S. LOW: 'Spatializing culture: The social production and social construction of public space in Costa Rica', in *American Ethnologist* 23/4 (1996) 861-879.

[8] IDEM 861-862.

world, the Muslims' temporary place for prayer – illustrate socially 'constructed' spaces.

The meaning-making inherent in the social construction of space implies as well that such construction is particularly wrapped up in the affective power of space.[9] Socially constructed space involves not only the cognitive realms of the actors but the realm of feeling as well – socially constructed space pulls at both heart and mind. Meaning orients actors and provides a ground for ordering life morally, for crafting nomic universes that permit human agency.

The social construction of space implies as well human subjects, actors building, maintaining, restoring and renewing the social worlds in which they live:

> Without subjects, there can be no theory of place. For place is the fusion of space and experience, a space filled with meaning, a source of identity. It is outside and inside us, objective and subjective, universal and particular.[10]

Space then should be seen as dynamic rather than static, as always emerging rather than always already there. Space means what the constructors of that space cause it to mean:

> [Since]…notions of locality or community refer both to a demarcated physical space *and* to clusters of interaction, we can see that the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural constructions as a community or locality.[11]

Agency then is irretrievably intertwined with space.

As Gupta and Ferguson point out, since meaning making must be understood as a practice, central questions about space must include: "[H]ow are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?"[12] Gupta and Ferguson argue: "we can see that the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural constructions as a community or locality."[13] Here, Low agrees. She argues that, "space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations," relations that always reflect both "the agency of individuals and of forces beyond individual control."[14]

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[9] Low: 'Spatializing culture' 863.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Gupta & Ferguson: 'Beyond culture' 8.
[12] Idem 11.
[13] Idem 8.
[14] Low: 'Spatializing culture' 863.

Space then always expresses its constructors, their intentions, their goals, their biographies and histories, the cultural tools available to them, and their location in social structure. Space, then, is multivocal: it speaks with the multiple voices of its constructors. The narratives of space then have multiple meanings, 'overlapping narratives' that are themselves constructed and expressed spatially.

The multivocality of space and the contestation of the narratives that are fundamental to the construction of space highlight two important features: first, space must be seen then as an expression of differential power contesting for grounding, and, second, the narratives that localize and actualize space are themselves rooted in people's biographies, cultural and structural contexts, and intentionalities. Space then is inextricably enmeshed in story and memory, in purpose and the differential exercises of power.[15] As Rodman concludes: "Places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions."[16]

Next we turn to the narratives and meanings intertwined with the emergence of space in our three vignettes.

5.   Intentionalities and sacred space

Our three accounts of the construction of sacred space speak of different expressions and intentionalities of sacred space. We select from their multivocality several themes that distinguish each scene.

For the Witches, the circle denotes narratives of sanctuary, of empowerment and embodiment, of secrecy and safety, of play undertaken in both seriousness and lightheartedness – the creation of possibilities and imagination, of recovery and of celebration. The circle is a site of invocation and enactment.

For the pro-life activists, front-line activism denotes a process of identifying evil and of witnessing to its depravity, an attempt to mark and contain wickedness, a place of moral engagement and intervention, a locale for educating a too-disinterested world. The boundary is a place of surveillance and identification, a place where sight serves to name and point out, a place of witness and exhortation. The space they create sets a boundary around the impermissible, the irresponsible, and the wanton and seeks to limit and extinguish the moral outrages committed in the clinic.

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[15] P. DUARA: 'Remapping memory: The politics of timespace', in *Journal of Asian Studies* 56/1 (1997) 141-142.

[16] RODMAN: 'Empowering place' 641.

For the men creating the temporary prayer space and those men who enter that space, the temporary mosque[17] reminds the faithful, that according to the Hadith that says, "The whole world's earth is a mosque," a Muslim can pray anywhere[18] – that Allah's presence is omnipresent, that one is never outside His sway and command. Space is sacred by its creation by Allah and through His providence – the temporary mosque's ephemeral character denotes its extension throughout the profane: the sacred interpenetrates the profane. The central activity in the temporary mosque is the recitation of prayer, to cite and re-announce Allah's power and grace and to reinscribe the faithful's submission to the word of Allah. The boundaries of the sidewalk mosque are permeable; prayer extends endlessly. Distinctions between public and private are eroded and erased; everyday life in embedded in the sacred.

6. Sacred space, power and self-transformation

The Witches' circle is a secret sanctuary characterized by play, empowerment, and self-transformation. Neo-paganism is a recreation [Witches would say 'restoration' or 'reinvigoration'] or "revival of pre-Christian pagan gods, goddesses and spirits, their worship and ritual manipulation,"[19] of the Goddess-centered fertility religions of Neolithic Europe. Neo-pagan practices have spread over much of the United States and Europe over the last fifty years. Witchcraft is distinguished from other neo-pagan expressions by its insistence that the neophyte Witch learn an oral tradition and undertake initiation under the guidance of another initiated Witch. Wicca as a particular form of Witchcraft can be traced back to the work of Gerald Gardner, Madeline Murray, and other authors and scholars who claimed to have identified covens that had continued underground since time immemorial.[20]

Wiccans may practice the Craft alone, as 'solitaries', but more commonly they convene at the equinoxes and solstices (referred to as *sabbats*) and at full moons (referred to as *esbats*) for collective rituals. The rituals are critical to the practice of

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[17] The author cannot locate a specific Arabic term describing 'temporary mosques' like the one described here. Dr. Ali Jomaa', Mufti of the Azhar, Cairo, suggests *mousallah* – 'a place for prayer,' although that term more usually refers to a place set aside in an otherwise secular building for prayer (H. FATFAT, Telephone interview, Cairo. 17 March 2005).

[18] H. FATFAT: Telephone interview with Dr. Ali Jomaa', Mufti of the Azhar, Cairo (17 March 2005).

[19] L. JENCSON: 'Neopaganism and the Great Mother Goddess: Anthropology as midwife to a new religion', in *Anthropology Today* 5/2 (1989) 2-4.

[20] See G. YATES, 'Spirituality and the American feminist experience', in *Signs* 9/1 (1983) 59-72; T.M. LUHRMANN: 'The magic of secrecy', in *Ethos* 17/2 (1989) 131-165; C. BRIGGS: 'The politics of discursive authority in research on the "Invention of tradition"', in *Cultural Anthropology* 11/4 (1996) 435-469; T. FOLTZ: 'A community of Witches: Neopaganism and witchcraft in the United States', in *Contemporary Sociology* 29/6 (2000) 840-842; and, M. MESSINEO: 'Earthly bodies, magical selves: Contemporary pagans and the search for community', in *Contemporary Sociology* 31/4 (2002) 443-444.

the Craft, for "Ritualism produces, or helps to produce… [the Witches'] construction of a second 'world,' parallel to but distinct from the mundane."[21] Beliefs are made believable in the circle; their enactment embodies and reinforces those narratives of power, of connectedness to the natural world, of orienting oneself to the divine and to magic which in the profane world seem unsupportable.[22] In this second world, with what Messineo calls 'the architecture of belief', the sustainability of a set of commitments that otherwise seem in the world outside the circle senseless and childish "are constructed in physical and ontological space" through "the use of festival space, and the activity of the individual and collective body within this space."[23]

In Luhrmann's lucid analysis of neo-pagan groups, she argues that 'secrecy' is critical to Wiccan practice and to sustaining belief and commitment.[24]

> The secrecy facilitates the "circle around the ritualist… [which creates the]… 'boundary between the worlds,'" so that Witches "literally live between two worlds, and switch their beliefs accordingly." It is the ritual itself and the sacred space invoked and created in the ritual that "permits a kind of experiential knowledge of the unknown."[25]

The counter-world constructed by Witches serves several purposes: two are central to our argument. First, that counter-world is a locale for self-knowledge, self-transformation, and self-empowerment. Second, that counter-world depends for its construction on a playful suspension of the everyday and its restricting habits and beliefs. As Luhrmann states it, "To turn the 'possibility' of belief into active commitment demands that the subject is comfortable with the 'let's pretend position'" [emphasis added].[26]

First, then, for Witches the Craft is primordially a process of centering the self onto a cosmic scheme dominated by the Goddess and her consort, the Horned God. "So mote it be," is the phrase that best captures the essence of Witchcraft. That which the Witch wills will be. Magic itself is an act and process of willing. In the circle, the Witch's will is made most present and most powerful and to its greatest effect. The circle itself is a product of willful, knowledgeable action and the Witch is most fully herself when she embodies the Goddess in ritual.[27]

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[21] LUHRMANN: 'The magic' 159.

[22] MESSINEO: 'Earthly bodies' 443.

[23] IDEM 444.

[24] Luhrmann groups neo-pagans, Witches, Wiccans, and other groups such as the Golden Dawn in the category of 'magicians'; the practice of magic is central to all these groups. LUHRMANN: 'The magic'.

[25] IDEM 140-141 and 153.

[26] IDEM 142.

[27] Or, for males, when he embodies the Horned God. Both men and women are initiated into Wicca as Witches. While Wicca is determinedly woman-centered, Wiccans argue that the divine expresses

Second, this self-transformation and self-empowerment is made possible by a suspension of the demands and doubts of the taken-for-granted everyday world. The suspension occurs through a playful 'let's pretend' that is enacted in deepest seriousness. The ritual creating the Wiccan circle is a costume party, a masquerade, undertaken freely, whose maintenance is made possible by co-players and settings where everyone plays his or her roles and recognizes in their peers the divine at work. At this point, the work of Johann Huizinga in his *Homo Ludens* is useful. Huizinga recalls Plato's argument that religion is "[p]lay consecrated to the Deity, the highest goal of man's endeavor [and that… [t]he ritual act, or an important part of it, will always remain within the play category."[28]

Huizinga's analysis of play starts with its voluntary character – that it is 'free' action, initiated by the player – and continues with its creation of a world separated from the world of everyday earnestness and its practical demands: "First and foremost, then, all play is a voluntary activity….By this quality of freedom alone, play marks itself off from the course of natural process."[29] Resulting from these two characteristics comes a third: "its secludedness, its limitedness. It is 'played out' with certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning."[30] Play, in Huizinga's thinking, is the expression at its most fundamental of the possibility of building counter-worlds, of the construction of sacred space. With this characteristic comes the possibility of constructing new systems of meaning: "Play lies outside the great antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil."[31] Within the play world of ritual, within spaces constructed by human agents, are the freedom and the actualization of challenges to and constructions contrary to the secular. And the main character of these sacred spaces is ritual with its "matter of shows, representations, dramatic performances, imaginative actualizations of a vicarious nature."[32] Witches construct sacred space through ritual as a site for the actualization of the possible but improbable. The site comes to be through the Witches' actions and clears an arena in which the play of possibilities comes to fruition, to the transformation of the Witch to a more potent, more fertile, more effectively willful person.

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both male and female principles. Although the Goddess is the most important expression of the divine, the divine itself is sexless and genderless. See FOLTZ: 'A community'; SCARBORO, CAMPBELL & STAVE: *Living witchcraft*; and A. SCARBORO & P. LUCK: 'The goddess and power: Witchcraft and religion in America', in R. WARMS, J. GARBER & J. MCGEE (eds.): *Sacred realms: Essays in religion, belief, and society* (Oxford 2004).

[28] J. HUIZINGA: *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture* (Boston 1950) 27.

[29] IDEM 7, 8.

[30] IDEM 9.

[31] IDEM 6.

[32] IDEM 15.

7.   The profane, the sacred, and the wicked

Pro-life activists construct a sacred boundary between abortion clinics and the secular world outside the clinics. This sacred boundary serves multiple intentionalities and represents multiple narratives, but here we focus on two. First, activists construct a sacred boundary to identify, circumscribe, and attempt to contain a place of moral irresponsibility. The boundary is a place for naming a moral evil and for working to stop actions possible in a 'godless realm'. Witnessing and surveillance are central to the space as a locale for sight. Second, the boundary intends to collapse the possibility of an inappropriate idea of privacy, to bring the hidden and inexcusable into the public realm of moral discourse so that it may properly be judged and eliminated.

Pro-life activists see the area inside the fence as a place of ritual defilement, uncleanness, damage, and intentional wounding for women and for feti. Therefore, the area stretching from the fence into the profane world are contested spaces that call out to activists as arenas for activists to act on moral imperatives. Accordingly, activists claim to understand each person who passes through the sacred space into the awaiting abyss as moving beyond the realm of moral possibility: inside has no possibility for goodness. Thus, as persons leave the clinic, they are again susceptible to moral claims and one hears impassioned voices of the activists shouting pleas to, "Accept, repent, ask God for forgiveness!" These pleas are hurled both at those crossing into the dark space inside the fence as well as those who emerge from the darkness back into the light as they cross back outside.

In her study of pollution and defilement and those strategies employed to combat ritual contagion, Mary Douglas returns to the notion of 'dirt' as 'matter out of place.' Dirt, however, simultaneously points both to "a set of ordered relations and [to] a contravention of what is order."[33] Defilement indicates "there is system" while "our pollution behavior is the reaction which condemns any object of idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications."[34] Boundaries are particularly arenas of tension, negotiation, and conflict since" [i]f they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins."[35] The boundaries constructed by pro-life activists then can be seen as bulwarks working both to eliminate the polluting activities taking place inside the clinic as well as to shore up the secular world outside the clinic. If the defilement is ignored, then its contagion will further erode an already fragile moral universe under attack from a multitude of profane sources.

The crises of the clinic as space for pro-life activists are multi-dimensional: saving souls, saving lives, ending the availability of abortion, and making the secular

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[33] M. DOUGLAS: *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (New York 1966).
[34] IDEM 36.
[35] IDEM 121.

world more moral. Within multiple strategies, each has at its core the reconstruction of private problems into social problems that can be resolved only through individual repentance and through public attention. Pro-life activists, then, work from the "…perception that public intervention into the maternal-fetal relationship on behalf of the fetus is socially, medically, and legally justified."[36] The private, they would argue, ironically echoing many feminists, is political.

Pro-life activists state that the boundary between the clinic and the secular world marks a mis-drawn line between a public realm of responsibility and moral claims and a private realm characterized by personal irresponsibility and heedless hedonism. Space thus marks a divide between public – thus under the rule of a nomic universe – and private – outside the rule of God's law. In her 'Cartographic convulsions,' Diane Coole notes the effect of boundaries as sacred divides between these two arenas:

> Public and private are not inherently spatial terms, yet they have been consistently presented through a series of spatial metaphors that play on two figurative models. In one, a line divides space in two; in the other, a circle is drawn, its circumference marking a boundary between inner and outer. But the separation and identification of these areas make no sense unless they are internally as well as hierarchically related: each is defined by not being its other. In political theory, such spaces are normatively interpreted – in terms of higher and lower or inclusion and exclusion – on the basis of certain metaphysical judgments about what it means to excel as a human subject. The distinction then works politically because it excludes the ethos or practices associated with one realm from the other. It yields a barrier used both to prevent contamination and to protect and insulate. The location and permeability of this boundary, as well as the association of the spaces it divides with particular groups or qualities, is not about geography but power.[37]

Pro-life activists equate a moral culture to a godly culture.

8.   Part and whole: Anchoring the profane in the sacred

Muslims constructing sacred space must negotiate a specific tension: if the whole world is a mosque and prayer needs no specific locale for its efficacy, then why construct particular locales for ritual activity? Although collective prayer is held to be more meritorious and efficacious than individual prayer, nothing in the Qu'ran or Hadith requires special buildings for prayer. According to Hasan-Uddin Khan,

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[36] L. OAKS: 'Smoke-filled wombs and fragile fetuses: The social politics of fetal representation', in *Signs* 26/1 (2000) 63-108, p. 100.
[37] D. COOLE: 'Cartographic convulsions: Public and private reconsidered', in *Political Theory* 28/3 (2000) 337-354, pp. 338-339.

> The notion of a fixed sacred space is not inherent in Islam. The individual can pray anywhere, as can a group, and the chosen place of prayer is sacred for the duration. What is prescribed is the ritual: the need for a clean surface and the acknowledgement of a physical direction.[38]

Martin Frishman states this most emphatically:

> If it should be a Muslim's wish to pray in a particular room, then that room becomes his mosque for the duration because his personal belief makes it so, and nothing more is needed to effect the transformation.[39]

Nevertheless, cities in Muslim countries are seeded heavily with mosques, mosques rise along country roads and stand in fields and throughout villages. Worldwide, wherever a sufficient number of Muslims can be found, so also can mosques be found. Particularly noteworthy are monumental mosques, such as those of Ibn Tulun or Al Azhar in Cairo, which are large, ornate, splendid buildings that anchor centers of power and learning.

Monumentality is one pole of an opposition; at the other pole one finds the temporary mosque. Monumentality serves several purposes but, in whatever guise, the construction of monuments is an attempt to bring stasis to the activity of social construction. Monumentality, to echo Low's term, exemplifies 'social production' rather than social construction. Monumentality anchors a specific narrative to a locale. For monumental mosques, that narrative may inscribe dynastic or despotic claims – attaching legitimacy and continuity to the sacred. One finds this most concretely in mosques built to make or endorse claims to the caliphate, such as the reconfiguration of the Great Mosque at Cordoba attendant to Abd ar-Rahman III's proclamation of himself as Caliph in 929.[40] On the contrary monumental mosques may be built to attest to claims of autonomy. In these productions, the sacred is routinized and tamed in service of profane as well as religious grounds.

The elect status of the ruler may be expressed through the building of palaces adjacent to mosques, often sharing a wall (such as the mosque at Samara) or a private passage connecting mosque and palace. The ruler's exalted status is equally proclaimed through the erection within the mosque of special chambers for the local ruler or imam, who was in early times also the ruler.[41] These *maqsuras* came to be prominently located, elaborate, richly decorated enclosures that set those praying inside it off from those praying outside the *maqsura*. The social production of

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[38] H. KHAN: 'An overview of contemporary mosques', in M. FRISHMAN & H.-U. KHAN: *The mosque: History, architectural development and regional diversity* (Cairo 1994) 267.

[39] M. FRISHMAN: 'Islam and the form of the mosque', in FRISHMAN & KHAN: *The mosque* 32.

[40] A. FERNANDEZ-PUERTAS: 'Spain and North Africa', in FRISHMAN & KHAN: *The mosque* 103.

[41] FRISHMAN: 'Islam and the form of the mosque' 37-38.

the *maqsura* was first justified as protecting the ruler's safety. All three of these examples – the adjacent palace, the private passageways, the *maqsuras*, however, denoted as well status differences among believers – thus contrary to the belief that all Muslims are equal in the eyes of Allah, the social production of monumentality suggests a countervailing narrative.

The narrative of monumental mosque production may offer a claim to orthodoxy or orthopraxy: the mosque encodes theological claims and expresses the power of those claims in stone and gilding. For example, many monumental mosques in Cairo contain four *iwans*, one for each of four schools of Islamic law. In addition, mosques with prestigious theological faculty embraced monumentality to underscore their claims to potency and authority.

The history of Muslim places for prayer can be traced back to the area used for prayer in Mohammad's house in Medina. The square, sand-covered courtyard, inside the house walls, opened off the rooms of Mohammed and his wives. To shield the worshippers from the sun, a portico – which also indicated the direction for prayer – covered with palm trunks was built on the side of the courtyard.[42] The courtyard also included a small building in which travelers and guests might stay overnight. Note that the area for prayer coexisted with multiple other purposes.

> Due to the traditional integration of the sacred and secular in Islam the place of prayer never stood alone, but was complemented by the other spaces catering for general social needs.[43]

The simplicity of the sand-covered courtyard within the enclosed walls set the 'ideal' pattern for subsequent mosques.[44] However, the history of mosque development and the multiple uses and voices of monumental mosques lie outside our inquiry.

What is more central is the issue of the tension of Muslims constructing sacred spaces in specific locales. If the ambiguity of the 'social production' of large and awe-inspiring buildings for prayer – setting a place apart as sacred even though all places are sacred – then the ambiguity of how the sacred space is constructed and construed is also laced with ambiguity and tension. Orthodox Muslim belief and practice reiterate that the sacred is not connected to human actions and is not a product of human agency. Further, as do other monotheistic religions, Islam finds Allah's presence everywhere and at all times. Since the idea of sacred denotes something set apart – in Durkheim's classic formulation – which compels both affective states and moral actions in those in the presence of the sacred, then Muslims

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[42] D. KUBAN: 'The central Arab lands', in FRISHMAN & KHAN: *The mosque* 77.
[42] KHAN: 'An overview' 267.
[43] IDEM.
[44] FRISHMAN: 'Islam and the form of the mosque' 30-32.

sharply restrict the realm of the sacred to the 'recitation' not just the 'place' where the recitation occurs:

> For Muslims the concept of the sacred is linked directly to the word of God, the revelation of His commandments and teachings, as well as to the *hadith* of the Prophet and the interpretation of their meanings.[45]

The primary action for the construction of sacred space is thus citation: repeating and proclaiming the word of God and submitting to the demands of those words. Nevertheless, the space within which that recitation occurs compels the worshipper, shapes his actions, molds his feelings, and orients him morally.

A striking character of the construction of sacred space in the sidewalk temporary mosque is its public and transparent character. The boundaries of this socially constructed space are permeable rather than concealing or containing. Here the boundary connects the inside of the temporary mosque and the profane world. The profane world is visible to the sacred arena and the sacred space is visible from the profane: a relationship of continuity is enacted: that which is inside the temporary mosque extends into the encompassing wider secular field. The sidewalk mosque anchors the profane world and announces that the same commands legitimate inside the temporary mosque are legitimate outside the sacred space.

Thus the activities within the construction are especially interesting. We find the work of Victor Turner on structure and anti-structure helpful here. Turner describes "two major models for human interrelatedness." Within the first model lie the actions of the everyday world, governed by practical norms and instrumental ends. Within the second model are found actions in the sacred realm, governed by a set of practices that suspend or erase practicality, economic activity, rational discourse, and common sense. He describes the two models:

> The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men [sic] in terms of 'more' and 'less.' The second…is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to general authority.[46]

Monumentality, while it may proclaim the equality of worshippers, in fact, inscribes hierarchy and difference. *Communitas*, that association of equals detached from hierarchically ordered relations, is in a dialectical relation with *societas*: it calls *societas* into question and offers a possibility of relationships unshaped by power, status,

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[45] M. ARKOUN: 'The metamorphosis of the sacred', in FRISHMAN & KHAN: *The mosque* 269.
[46] V. TURNER: *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* (Chicago 1969).

prestige, inheritance, or other differentiating structures. *Communitas* enacts a moral community that subverts the practical ends of the society of difference.

The temporary mosque can be seen as an alternative to the socially produced monumental mosque as well as to another variety of mosque, the local mosque under state control. In Egypt, for example, the Nasser revolution replaced state custody of mosques for the earlier custody by endowment, where a mosque was endowed with income-producing property to assure the maintenance and staffing of the mosque. The endowments permitted a degree of independence and multi-vocality that is muted when mosques become expressions of the apparatus of the bureaucratic state. The state, like religious institutions, stakes moral claims on the citizenry and, again like religion, seeks allegiance from persons in its realm. "Both," according to Friedland, are "models of authority, imaginations of an ordering power," and both offer, as well, "understandings of how one should relate to forces upon which one depends, but over which one does not exercise control."[47] These competing claims have become more pressing as the state extrudes more extensively into social, civic and personal life.

The temporary mosque, we argue, functions as a *communitas*. In constructing the temporary mosque, believers embody and enact a narrative of equality of all Muslims under Allah and the equal distribution of the demands of faith among all believers, regardless of station. The message is one of inclusiveness; however, the 'practice' is one that excludes women categorically. This exclusion is found as well in monumental and state-controlled mosques where women are either excluded from prayer or corralled into screened sections separate from the men. This is particularly ironic given the history of the mosque: the prayer area in Muhammad's home in Medina was open to his wives' apartments.[48] The openness of the temporary mosque, its visibility and contiguity with the world outside its inconsequential barriers, its audibility and frank presence in the midst of a busy sidewalk, mark its claim that sacredness is not limited and moral obligations have no bounds.

9.   Ordering a life of moral consequence

We have argued for the social construction of sacred space. We suggest that space is fruitfully viewed, neither as a mute inert spot of geography nor as an actor that compels the human standing on or in it, but rather as the consequence of human agency. We find that collective human action is particularly potent in bringing space into presence and that collective human action in the form of ritual is especially

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[47] R. FRIEDLAND: 'Money, sex, and God: The erotic logic of religious nationalism', in *Sociological Theory* 20/3 (2002) 381-425, p. 390.

[48] KUBAN: 'The central Arab.'

generative, not only of sacred space but also of the moral claims emanating from sacred space.

We have discussed three examples of the construction of sacred space. We find that while the intentionalities of the actors in the three examples may differ, the sacred spaces they construct are similar in setting off scenes with powerful moral effects. In all three examples, the actors find themselves energized or transformed by the acts of construction and leave the constructions with moral reinvigoration. Further, in each of the examples, the actors find the effects of constructing and participating in their constructions provide nomic orientation for the profane world.

The three vignettes share as well an ephemeral character. The actors gather and collectively engage in practices that call the sacred space into active engagement. They construct a locale for moral naming, for collective definition and for empowerment. Then the actors disperse and the space is dismantled, relapsing once again into the secular everyday world.

The actors in the three vignettes act on their own authority, outside the legitimating power of the state. Their goals and intentions are often at variance with or in opposition to the routine structures of *societas*. As James C. Scott argues, the modern nation state has emerged through a series of 'schemes' that work through practices of 'legibility' and 'simplification,' through authoritarian collectivization and mapping and surveillance and naming.[49] In the realm of moral claims, Friedland echoes Scott, noting that the modern state's claim to "represent the collectivity" is itself a totalizing strategy. Friedland poignantly calls our attention to "those who do not want to be named,"[50] who find the state's master narratives out of step with their goals and biographies. Few arenas of modern life are outside the state's purview and those islands of opacity to state surveillance and supervision are increasingly under siege. The threads of multiple narratives are increasingly woven into a fabric of uniformity. Those who challenge the regularizing forces of modernity have fewer and fewer locations from which to offer alternative narratives. But, as Friedland also argues, "Religion is perhaps the only language in which ordinary people can reach the public sphere."[51] The constructors of ephemeral sacred spaces are marked by their otherwise 'ordinariness': they need no state-sponsored portfolio nor documentation nor certificate for their work. Their legitimacy arises from their ritual activity.

The ephemerality of their constructions remind both the actors and those who view their actions that sacredness is not a quality of the everyday world and that it

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[49] J. SCOTT: *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven 1998).

[50] FRIEDLAND: 'Money, sex, and God' 391.

[51] IDEM 393.

cannot be contained within routinized productions. Rather, these ephemeral con-structions of the sacred present a compelling moral order that stands against the secular world and its turgid regularity. These temporary sacred spaces show tellingly that sacredness adheres not to things but to persons' responses to things and they show as well an alternative to the profane for those questions of deep concern of how one orders a moral life of consequence.

14

THE GARDEN AS A SACRED PLACE IN DUTCH SUBURBIA[1]

Inez Schippers

Since a majority of its inhabitants live and work in its cities, and the bulk of the country is located in the sphere of influence of a city, the Netherlands is considered to be a city-country. There is no metropolis, but there are several medium-sized cities and a large number of small ones. My field of research, the suburb of Leidsche Rijn, is currently being constructed as part of the city of Utrecht. Utrecht, with its 300,000 inhabitants, is one of the largest cities in the country. The suburb in question is part of a proposal of the Dutch ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Ministry of VROM); the so-called VINEX-plan. The term VINEX stands for *Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening Extra* ('Fourth Memorandum Spatial Planning Extra').

The plans were drawn up in the 1990s and they delineated the preferred outlines of the urbanization of the Netherlands for the period 1995-2015. In this time period the Dutch government wanted to construct around 835,000 new houses.[2] The aim of the VINEX-plans was to build the majority of the houses within existing cities as well as on their outskirts. The suburbs would be made easily accessible via public transportation.

As stated, Leidsche Rijn is being constructed on the west side of Utrecht, a city located in the middle of the Netherlands. The new neighborhood incorporates the two villages of Vleuten and De Meern with their traditional infrastructure. The plans state that once the neighborhood is finished it will consist of approximately 30,000 houses and between 80,000 and 100,000 urban dwellers; a large extension in a city the size of Utrecht. And whereas for centuries church buildings have functioned as the center of all Dutch cities, villages, and even neighborhoods, in the urban plans of Leidsche Rijn the traditional religious buildings are left out of the equation. Instead of surrounding a church and accompanying churchyard, the

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[1] Part of this chapter is based on the article: I. SCHIPPERS: 'Trees of Birth. Rituals and the emergence of sacred space in Dutch VINEX-areas', in *FORUM. University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts* 17 (December 2013), online available at http://www.forumjournal.org/article/view/686 (accessed June 2015).

[2] H. VAN DER CAMMEN & L. DE KLERK. *Ruimtelijke ordening: Van grachtengordel tot Vinex-wijk* (Houten 2008) 348.

eighteen different sub-neighborhoods in the design are built around a large park, several historical heritage sites, a sculpture garden, and a singing glass tower.[3]

In addition to these publicly accessible places a second selling point of this newly built suburb is the fact that most of the houses include some form of 'outside', either a garden or a balcony. This feature is often used to promote suburban life and 'lure' people to the VINEX-areas. Living in a large Dutch city such as Utrecht, a private garden is a difficult thing to find. Sure, a lucky bunch will have a garden but most residents only have a balcony, or go to a public park if they want to enjoy the sun on a summer day. Hence, the prospect of having an affordable house with a garden is what made a large number of the current residents Leidsche Rijn decide to move to this new suburb.

Defining sacrality

Using an urban triad, this chapter attempts to show how gardens (*urbs*) function as platforms for ritual practice (*civitas*), thereby changing those elements or parts of them into sacred places for certain groups or individuals (*genius loci*). The foundation of this triad was described by Henry Lefebvre in his book *The Production of Space* and it has been interpreted and used in various ways ever since. In my studies, I came across a Dutch interpretation of this theory in the book *Nederland Stedenland*, which can be translated as 'The Netherlands, a city country'. This book was published in 2012 as the outcome of a large-scale research project on urbanism and city culture in the Netherlands. The chapters of the book are divided into three parts, *urbs, civitas,* and *topos,* referring to three dimensions of an urban triad.[4]

As I was working with this triad I found the term *topos* too fixed to describe the soft city it refers to. During the writing process I came across the Latin concept of *genius loci* that can be translated as spirit of place thereby referring to its atmosphere. The description of the triad below will show how the meaning of *genius loci* fits into this chapter.

The first aspect, *urbs*, refers to both the physical city, which is envisioned by the urban planners and architects, and to the knowledge of the spatial structure and built shape of a city or neighborhood. The *urbs* have a strong public character and are influential: when it comes to urban planning this aspect is specifically interesting since it not only provides the residents of the area with their daily living environment, but also determines what is included within it. In this way, the lives of the

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[3] I. SCHIPPERS, 'Sacraliteit in de Suburbs: De veranderende positie van de sacrale ruimte in de Nederlandse stedenbouw', in P. VERSNEL-MERGRAETS & L. VAN TONGEREN (eds.): *Heilig, heilig, heilig. Over sacraliteit in kerk en cultuur* (Heeswijk 2011) 147-150.

[4] E. TAVERNE, S. DEMBSKI & L. DE KLERK ET AL. (eds.): *Nederland Stedenland: Continuïteit en vernieuwing* (Rotterdam 2012) 13-15.

VINEX-residents are influenced by the role planning plays in determining their living environment.

The second pillar is *civitas*, the city as a place in which political, economic, social, and cultural developments come together and whereby space and place play an increasingly important role. It "denotes the ways people generate, use and perceive space. It structures all aspects of daily life and urban living, from minute, repeated gestures to the rehearsed journeys from home to work and to play."[5] This pillar refers to a broad spectrum of human actions, including walking, gardening, and recreation, but can also – particularly interesting for this subject – include ritual practice. It needs to be emphasized, though, that there is nothing intrinsically sacred or religious about these practices. Of course, the people using the space are influenced by the way the area was planned, but they also have the power to create their own stories within the framework they have been offered; these stories are 'inaccessible for planners and scientists'.[6] The planting of the birth trees is an example of such a practice. *Nederland Stedenland* refers to this pillar as the 'hard city', that is, the dimensions of the city that can be mapped or shown in statistics.[7] It is this specialness overlaying ordinary places and actions with a sacred value that will be further explained in the third element of the urban triad, the *genius loci*.

The Latin term *genius loci* here refers to the rhetorical side of the city, the way it functions in texts, images, and representations. The *genius loci* functions separately from the two other dimensions, while simultaneously encircling or overlaying them.[8] The term can be used to describe the ideals, ideas, dreams, and visions of people, among which religion and other sacred perceptions should also be placed. *Genius loci* attempts to explain the way in which people understand space, as well as the associations, feelings, and symbolic meaning they attach to it. People often describe a park using terms such as 'oasis' or 'paradise'; this does not mean that the park is actually a paradise or that it was at all designed to be a paradise. The word paradise is used to describe the way in which this person experiences the park. New York is metaphorically represented as 'the Big Apple', but other representations such as maps are understood to be realistic images for every city. In everyday life we fashion and receive countless representations. Of course we all realize that a totally accurate representation… is impossible.[9]

[5] K. KNOTT: *The location of religion: A spatial analysis* (London 2005) 39.

[6] IBID.

[7] TAVERNE, DEMBSKI & DE KLERK ET AL. (eds.): *Nederland Stedenland* 15.

[8] KNOTT: *The location of religion* 37-38; E.W. SOJA: *Thirdspae. Journeys to Los Angeles and other reals-and-imagined places* (Malden/Oxford 1996) 67.

[9] R. SHIELDS: 'A guide to urban representation and what to do about it: Alternative traditions of urban theory', in A.D. KING (ed.): *Re-presenting the city: Ethnicity, capital, and culture in the twenty-first-century metropolis* (London 1996) 228.

In short, it is possible to capture this triad as follows: the imagined and artistic representations referred to by the term *topos* comprise, as it were, a symbolic layer spread out over the physical environment (*urbs*) in which we live and move around (*civitas*). Since cities are the result of the continuous correlation of places, players, and practices, it is this multiplicity of interactions between the social (trade, production, politics, and institutions), the physical (places, landscape, buildings, and artworks), and the symbolic (representations, artifacts, myths) that make cities 'work' in a literal sense.[10]

The terms 'sacred' and 'sacrality' play an important role in this chapter. Therefore a clear definition is needed. I interpret the term 'sacred' in a broad sense, in line with American scholar Matthew T. Evans, as: 'set-apart with special meaning'. This more situationalist approach is inspired by the ideas Emile Durkheim explains in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).[11] In this work, Durkheim states that sacred things are those things protected and isolated by prohibitions; profane things are those things to which such prohibitions apply and which must keep their distance from what is sacred. This means that Durkheim did not use the sacred simply to describe something that we would conventionally refer to as 'religious', nor did he claim that there should be a connection between what is sacred and the supernatural in any form. The sacred 'should not be taken to mean simply those personal beings we call gods or spirits.' He said, "A rock, a tree, a spring, a stone, a piece of wood, a house, in other words anything at all can be sacred."[12] Those ordinary – or sometimes not so ordinary – objects become sacred as they are 'treated with great care and respect and preserved from any profanation', making them 'set apart' and 'radically different from any other aspect of the mundane human life.'[13] Hence, Durkheim defines the sacred by the way in which people experience and behave in relation to it.

Evans elaborates on this theme of the 'set-apart sacred' in his article, 'The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts.' As with the ideas set out by Durkheim, Evans states that everything and anything can be sacred. The concept is not bound to the religious or the transcendent, nor is it determined by a set of rules or regulations.[14] This chapter will follow this broad interpretation of the sacred, thereby strongly emphasizing that sacrality is not the same as the religion. Religious places and objects can, rather, be seen as part of a broad sacred field, meaning that not everything that is religious can by definition be called sacred. In my opinion, every individual and every group can have its own opinions about

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[10] TAVERNE, DEMBSKI & DE KLERK ET AL. (eds.): *Nederland Stedenland* 19-21.

[11] Original title: *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse.*

[12] É. DURKHEIM: *The elementary forms of religious life* (Oxford 2001) 35-46.

[13] G. LYNCH: *On the sacred* (Durham 2012) 23-24.

[14] M. EVANS: 'The sacred: Differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts', in *Review of Religious Research* 45/1 (2003) 32-47.

sacrality: 'As with beauty, what is sacred, lies – at least to some extent – in the eye of the beholder'.[15] Evans goes along with Durkheim's statement that there are sacred things of every degree and that there are variations in sacred types. This leads him to agree with Durkheim's idea that 'the circle of sacred objects cannot be determined, then, once for all. Its extent varies infinitely.'[16]

How does this theory relate to the emergence of sacred space a Vinex-area? A newly built suburb is the ideal place to see how sacred space emerges in line with the changing dynamics in this field as well as the repercussions these changing dynamics have on both the built environment and the lives of the people in it. As traditional religion and its accompanying sacred places disappear from Dutch society, the demand for the sacred remains unchanged, shedding light on a broad and changing sacred panorama reaching beyond religion to fields of memory, leisure, and culture.[17] The emergence of the sacred is all about the way in which people use the space offered to them by urban planners as their ritual practices overlay the physical environment with a symbolic layer, making this specific place set apart with a different meaning.

The garden

From the research I have conducted in Leidsche Rijn, I will present one of my case studies, the garden, as an example to illustrate the previously explained theory regarding the emergence of sacred places.

> The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden. We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of

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[15] A. MOLENDIJK: 'The notion of the 'sacred', in P. POST & A. MOLENDIJK (eds.): *Holy ground. Reinventing ritual space in modern Western culture* (=Liturgia condenda 24) (Leuven 2010).

[16] MOLENDIJK: 'The notion of the 'sacred' 38.

[17] P. POST: 'Fields of the sacred: Reframing identities of sacred places', in P. POST, A. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern Western culture* (Leuven 2011) 13-61.

gardens (the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space). The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity (our modern zoological gardens spring from that source).[18]

In the above citation, French philosopher, social theorist and historian of ideas, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) explains the garden in light of his heterotopia theory as a contradictory site which throughout history has had 'very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings.'[19] The garden can be referred to as a sacred space in which, small as it can be, it is possible to capture the whole world. The old Persian gardens Foucault uses as an example were the first to include forests, orchards and hunting reservations. We know of the gardens of Cyrus the Young, King of Sardes (424-401 BCE), through the descriptions of Xenophon in which he first used the term *paradeisos*. The Persian paradises were meant for relaxation and pleasure: their rich owners used them to escape everyday life and find peace and cool. The gardens evolved to be scale landscapes shaped like idealized perceptions of the vicinity and usually entailed a center that was even more sacred than the rest. Here all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together.[20] Ever since this period the garden has been a sort of happy and universalizing heterotopia. In the context of this chapter the role of the garden as heterotopia in Foucault's 'other space' theory is especially interesting since it places the garden outside everyday reality. He refers to it as a sacred space and this chapter will try to see whether this is applicable on the people of Leidsche Rijn.

When giving a historical overview of parks, the gardens of Eden and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon are often the first examples to be mentioned. And also in later times, parks were usually part of abbeys, estates, or castles and only accessible for the owners or small privileged groups. I think it is possible to say that only after the emergence en rise of the popularity of public parks, the meaning and use of the words 'garden' and 'park' changed. Compared to parks, gardens are in general more private and they usually also have clearer boundaries. In my definition parks are more spacious and have a public character.

For a long time untamed nature was seen as the opposite of the godly paradise: the Gardens of Eden. Our paradise is a garden and via the Greek word *paradeisos*, the term was derived from the Persian word *paradaeza* that stands for an enclosed area or courtyard. Untamed nature with its storms, colds, floods, thistles, and pred-

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[18] M. FOUCAULT: 'Of other spaces' (1967) text published on http://www.foucault.info (9 August 2012).

[19] FOUCAULT: 'Of other spaces'.

[20] C. DE GROOTE: *Van Eden tot vandaag. Geschiedenis van de tuin* (Leuven 2000) 26-28.

ators from which one needs to be protected was the punishment from God following the Fall of Man. For generations people were able to tell stories of the places in the woods or under the rocks, in pools of mud and wells: places where evil resided. In this line throughout the centuries gardens have been laid out not only as an expression of man's love of nature but especially as a means to avert nature. In the garden, the wishes of its owner are enforced. The peace and quiet of paradise is recreated and the fear of the whimsical and unknown character of nature can be tamed.[21]

It is possible to give an elaborate description of the history of the garden and garden designs in the Netherlands but this is probably not of additional value to the point this chapter is trying to make. It is clear that since the late Middle-Ages, gardens and garden designs have developed in the Netherlands following various trends from classicism to the landscape style in the late 19th century to the cottage and farm style after 1860 and etc. Where at first, gardens were a privilege for the rich nobility, in the last two centuries 'green' becomes increasingly important in town planning. At the same time the shape of city parks, but the popularity of private or shared gardens also grew. It was in the early 20th century that copied from British example so-called 'garden villages' made their entrance in city planning.

Gardens commercialized

In general it can be said that gardens or the private outside areas are very important for people in the Netherlands. Recent sales numbers from the garden center branch confirm this assumption. Despite the economic crisis, in the year 2011, the Dutch spend over 4.1 billion euro's on garden products varying from plants to maintenance equipment, and furniture. This is 0.7 percent less than the year before but it touches upon the record years of 2008 and 2009 (4.2 billion).[22] As soon as the first glimpses of sunshine peek through the clouds (which is not very often considering the rainy and grey Dutch sea climate) people want to go outside into their garden or onto their balcony or roof terrace.

These 'garden lovers' can be roughly divided into two categories. The first group consists of the true gardeners with the green fingers, who like to get their hands dirty in the soil and they mainly visit the smaller garden centers or a nursery garden to find specific plants and materials. The second group can be found in one of the large chains of garden centers such as *Intratuin* that has over fifty centers

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[21] A.M. BACKER (ed.): *De natuur bezworen. Een inleiding in de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse tuin- en landschapsarchitectuur van de middeleeuwen tot het jaar 2005* (Rotterdam 1998) 9-10; C.S. OLDENBURGER-EBBERS, A. BACKER & E. BLOK: *Gids voor de Nederlandse Tuin en Landschapsarchitectuur. Deel Oost en Midden. Gelderland. Utrecht.* (Rotterdam 1996) 11.

[22] Ed.: 'Ook tijdens recessie mag de Nederlandse tuin geld kosten', in *Trouw* (05-03-2012).

spread throughout the country. When visiting a garden center like this, I have noticed that besides plants and bushes, they sell pretty much everything you could possible place in a garden. Most of these products are not related to nature but focus on spending as much time outdoors as possible. A short tour through one of the garden centers took me past an extensive collection of Buddha sculptures, barbeques, garden furniture and fences, everything one could possibly need for their cat, dog or goldfish, pots and other ornaments, a coffee corner, a landscape assortment for indoors, and a variety of other products without a clear relation to the garden.[23]

The assortment of such garden centers has been slightly improving over the last few years. Most centers have started selling more permanent plants instead of the 1-year specimen and in addition they also emphasize specific characteristic of plants and flowers that attract butterflies and bees. Also the herbicides and artificial fertilizers appear to have moved to the background a little. They have not gone as far as to banning those from the garden centers. But there is a gradual tendency toward more ecological and natural forms of gardening.[24]

Both types of gardeners but maybe more specifically the latter category, view their garden as an extension of their home. It functions as an element of personal territory and provides the opportunity to express and display one's personal taste. This makes the home garden not only a site for interaction with nature but also a place to express personal needs.[25] In an interview, the communication advisor of the national organization for hobby gardeners: *Algemeen Verbond van Volkstuinders Verenigingen in Nederland* (AVVN),[26] Herman Vroklage confirms this assumption. "I think that a lot of people don't have nature friendly front and back gardens, we see a lot of pavement and fences," he says.

> The specific furniture people buy and the barbeque or pool they put up in the summer, it cannot be called gardening. It is more about being outside and enjoying the

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[23] Impression based on a visit to the *Intratuin* garden center in Leidsche Rijn (15-08-2012) and various previous visits to similar garden centers.

[24] Information confirmed in interview with Herman Vroklage communications advisor of the AVVN (09-08-2012).

[25] GROSS & LANE: 'Landscapes of the lifespan' 227.

[26] The AVVN or national organization of hobby gardeners functions an organized interest group or union. They assist in negotiations, represent the hobby gardeners, give (legal) advice for allotment complexes and they have an advisory function. Moreover they publish an informative magazine: *De Tuinliefhebber* and offer hallmarks to allotment complexes practicing according to the natural gardening rules and regulations. Their headquarters is surrounded by a beautiful garden and based in Leidsche Rijn.

sunshine. It often does not include the sacredness I experience with allotment gardeners: they get their hands dirty and they always have sandy nails. (…) Most people however want their garden to look nice but be low in maintenance.[27]

These large garden centers also play an important role in a popular genre on Dutch TV: the garden make-over shows. In collaboration with home improvement centers and various other companies focusing on gardening, the garden centers actively sponsor these makeover shows. The trends currently on sale in the area of gardening, and depending on the show also home decoration, are promoted in the program almost changing it into one long advertising film. Currently at least two of these makeover shows are aired on Dutch television: *Eigen huis & tuin* ('your own home and garden') and *Rob's grote tuinverbouwing* ('Rob's large garden make-over').

The impression of the growing popularity of gardens and gardening is reinforced by the broad collection of garden magazines available at bookstores. Contacting one of the main bookstores in Leidsche Rijn via twitter to ask them about their collection of garden magazines I got an immediate reply including a picture of at least eight different magazines of which *Home and Garden* is the most popular.[28] The cover of *Home and Garden* tells me that it is a magazine on garden trends and ideas. It is interesting to see that the content of the magazine shows strong resemblance with the assortment of the *Intratuin* garden center. Of course there is some attention for plants, bushes and trees but a large portion focuses on the design of various types of gardens, decoration by means of furniture, pillows, candles, and the like, and often also food and cooking. Sometime a specific country functions as the theme of the magazine and the context will be inspired by that theme. The garden is the central feature in the magazines but nature is not necessarily always involved. Therefore it is possible to position these magazines in the lifestyle category. [29]

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[27] Information derived from interview with Herman Vroklage (09-08-2012). Original text: "Ik vind dat een heleboel mensen de achter en voortuin niet met alle respect voor de natuur bewerken er is meer sprake van een verstening en verschuttinging (…) ik vind dat de tuin een verlengstuk is van de woning. En als je dan ziet de meubelen die je kunt kopen, van die plastic meubelen, van die lounge banken en een vaste barbecue, een bad in de zomer in de tuin. Maar dat is niet echt tuinieren, het gaat meer om het buiten zijn en lekker in de zon zitten dan tuinieren. Het sacrale, wat ik wel zie bij de volktuinders: Dat ze niet bang zijn om vieze handen te krijgen. Ze hebben ook altijd zwarte randjes onder hun nagels. (…) De meeste mensen willen echter dat de tuin er leuk uit ziet maar arm in onderhoud is."

[28] Twitter conversation between @ischippers and @boekenkado on 16-07-2012 and 17-07-2012. @ischippers: verkopen jullie veel tijdschriften over tuinen/tuinieren? Welke is het populairst? #dtv #VINEXonderzoek #natuur; @boekenkado: Zie foto!! Home & Garden populairste!! (last tweet included a picture of 9 different magazines that are sold at this particular bookstore).

[29] *Home and Garden* no. 05 (2012); *Seasons* no. 04 (2012).

As with the garden centers, in addition to the glossy garden magazine, we also find more specialized publications in the bookstores, and online via garden associations. The quarterly *De Tuinliefhebber* ('the garden lover') published and distributed among its members, by the previously mentioned AVVN, focuses on ecological and natural gardening. The magazine is themed according to the different seasons. Most readers of *De Tuinliefhebber* probably fit into the first category of green-fingered garden lovers. Most of its readers are owners of an allotment garden, but also people with a different type of private garden who would like to know more about natural and ecological gardening.[30] A similar magazine is *Tuin & Co* ('Garden & Co') that is available at the regular bookstores. Glancing through it, the magazine seems to focus on practical gardening tips and tricks. What kind of plants can I combine in my garden? How do I plant and grow roses? And what kind of plant diseases do I see in my garden and how do I treat them. Furniture, accessories, and the like are largely left out of the equation.[31]

Not specifically focusing or gardens but more on nature in general from a spiritual perspective are lifestyle magazines such as *Happinez* and *Flow*. An article on the garden as an artwork uses the Giverny gardens that served as an inspiration for the world famous paintings of Claude Monet to describe the power, beauty and options of nature. Monet 'painted' his garden not only on canvas, but in an earlier stage also by planting the trees and flowers, combining colors and using the light and atmosphere to create a living palette.[32] A second article explores India in Buddha's footsteps. The beauty of the landscape, the sacred bohdi tree, and a pilgrimage place at the shores of the Ganges River dominate the piece in pictures and writing. The article ends with an advertisement offering a similar pilgrimage trip to India organized by the Dutch travel agency SNP nature travels.[33] The articles show that obviously nature appeals to ones imagination since it appears to be a returning topic in other such magazines. A binding factor seems to be the spiritual power of nature and the meaning giving abilities nature has.

Private gardens in Leidsche Rijn

'Paradise' is a term often used to describe the garden. Whether this term is also applicable to the private gardens in Leidsche Rijn is probably a matter of taste. However, in general, it can probably be said that the outdoor areas of the houses and apartments, whether they are gardens or balconies, are important. The modern garden or balcony can be seen as an extension of the house. In a variety of popular

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[30] *De Tuinliefhebber* nr. 3-4 (2011); no. 1 (2012).

[31] *Tuin & Co* no. 5 (2012).

[32] M. MEIJER: 'Een tuin als kunstwerk', in *Happinez* 6 (2010) 108-113.

[33] D. MULDER: 'In het voetspoor van Boeddha', in *Happinez* 8 (2010) 34-47.

garden magazines, people can look at garden furniture, flowerpots and dinner advice. An additional tip on how to grow a certain plant or flower completes the magazines. All of these articles are for sale in the different garden centers which unavoidably have to start looking more and more like department stores selling a wide range of products sometimes only slightly related to the garden or gardening.

By various respondents and in informal conversations the private garden was referred to as a special place. One respondent[34] explains how when she moved to Leidsche Rijn, a lot had to be done to the house but the garden was the first project they took up.

> First we finished the garden that was the first thing we finished. Q: that was the most essential part? Yes, euhm no because we wanted to be able to sit in the garden straight away and put the plants in it so they could start to grow. (…) Most people only started on their garden after more than a year. This was really funny. We had a lawn with trees and the gardens of the neighbors were still sandboxes.[35]

A respondent on twitter shows me how he grows so called 'city vegetables' in old wooden fruit crates. The two reasons that made him decide to grow at least part of his own vegetables are first of all because they just taste better than the ones you buy in the store and secondly to show the kids where vegetables come from.[36]

In an informal conversation with one of the volunteers of the annual *Dag van het Park* ('Day of the Park') she tells me about the vegetable garden she has together with a friend. In a part of the building area on which construction had not started yet, the municipality had decided to start a very successful vegetable garden project. Residents were given the opportunity to enroll in the project and all the empty spaces were filled up quickly. The idea was so successful that some people even ended up on a waiting list. She and her friend used the garden to plant a variety of vegetables and she gave part of the garden to her young daughter. The child grows, among other plants, sunflowers and tomatoes. "She really likes working in the garden and it is good for her to see where vegetables come from," my respondent says. They have to cycle to their garden at least once a week but usually more often. "I really enjoy going there," my respondent says, "we go in the evening after dinner

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[34] Respondent A is a columnist who lives in Leidsche Rijn with her husband and 4 little children. She writes and tweets about life in the VINEX-area Leidsche Rijn (books, columns and tweets) under the pseudonym VINEXvrouwtje (www.vinexvrouwtje.nl) (Utrecht, 27-01-2011).

[35] Original text derived from interview with Respondent A (27-01-2011): "En we hadden als eerste de tuin af, dat was het eerste wat af was. Q: Dat was het meest essentiële? Ja, nee want we wilden gewoon meteen in de tuin kunnen zitten en meteen planten erin dan kunnen ze meteen gaan groeien. (…) Nou ja de meeste mensen zijn daar echt pas een jaar later mee begonnen. Het was heel grappig wij hadden echt al een grasveld en bomen en naast ons was het allemaal nog zand."

[36] Twitter conversation between @ischippers and resident of Leidsche Rijn: @lipari_andre (26-07-2012).

or sometimes on a Wednesday afternoon." In a more recent conversation she tells me that they have to move the garden. It is the risk that comes with projects like this in an area that is still under construction. As soon as the building starts the gardens have to make way.[37]

The allotment gardens

In addition to the home gardens and the semi-official vegetable gardens there is a third category of private gardens deserving attention in this chapter: the allotment gardens. In Dutch these gardens are named *volkstuin* which refers to a privately owned or rented garden which is not connected to the house or located in the direct vicinity of the house. The popularity of this type of gardening is growing in the Netherlands and for that reason the city council is looking into the options to create a *volkstuin-complex* in the Leidsche Rijn area.[38] Some of the residents of the area make use of one of the complexes located nearby in other parts of the city.

The first allotment garden complex was to emerge in 1838 in the northern city of Franeker. Originally the gardens were primarily meant for the less fortunate. They offered the working classes the opportunity to grow their own fruits and vegetables on a piece of land. This would hopefully prevent them from demanding a raise in their income because it offered them an opportunity to partly provide in their own needs. The gardens could be rented from the municipality, an organization, or in some cases from their employer.[39] Nowadays the approximate number of allotment gardens in the Netherlands is 240.000 and they are spread over 1000 complexes and parks. These gardens can be broadly divided in two categories: the gardens in which the gardeners are allowed to spend the night in the garden season and the more 'usefull' gardens which are mainly used to grow fruits, vegetables or flowers, which are not meant for inhabitation in the summer. In addition to these types of gardens a wide range of variations of the two types is possible.[40]

This rather dusty connotation of the term seems to have vanished into thin air in the past decade and a great diversity of people now inhabits the complexes. They enjoy their gardens for different reasons. Some of them enjoy being outdoors they describe their garden as their piece of paradise. Others think it is a great place for their children or grandchildren to play outside and at the same time they can teach them about the vegetables and the plants: how do they grow, and how does it taste? Another nice aspect of the allotment garden is the fact that it does not have

[37] Information derived from informal conversations on 03-06-2012 and 20-09-2012.
[38] Information derived from interview with Herman Vroklage (09-08-2012).
[39] K. DEN OUDEN: 'Op vakantie in je eigen (volks)tuintje', in *Nederlands Dagblad* (20-08-2012).
[40] M.H.G. CUSTERS & A.E. VAN DEN BERG: *Natuur, stress en cortisol. Experimenteel onderzoek naar de invloed van tuinieren en activiteiten in een groenkamer op het fysiologisch, affectief en cognitief herstel van stress,* Alterra rapport 1629 (Wageningen 2007) 41-42.

to be finished all at once. It is a project where you can, but also have to, work on frequently which you can shape along the lines of your own dreams and wishes.[41]

Also, the allotment gardens play an important role in integration. Whereas the majority of its owners used to be white, middle-aged and male, this has been changing in the past years as I mentioned earlier. In addition to young people, families with children and the like, a large number of immigrants are the proud owners of an allotment garden. In 2008, the Dutch government even decided to financially stimulate the allotment garden complexes for this reason. The 'immigrant gardens' are usually easy to recognize by the vegetables they grow: beans, cabbage and unions for Turkish people and lots of coriander for the Moroccans. They provide these population groups with an opportunity to grow their own food, as they might have been used to in their home country and at the same time the allotment complex functions as a meeting ground. The gardeners from various backgrounds get in contact due to their shared interest in gardening and they look after each other's gardens when they go on vacation. Contacts more complicated to establish in the neighborhood they live in.[42]

Respondent B[43] is the proud owner of a 60 square meter allotment garden right outside of Leidsche Rijn. When I go to her house for the interview, the first thing she does is to show me the little plants she is growing in her living room. I see pumpkin, zucchini, and turnip cabbage. Once the plants are tall enough she replants them in her allotment garden. The majority of this garden consists of vegetable plants and she buys the seeds for those plants in her home country of Slovakia.

> I am from Slovakia and every time I go there I take seeds from there. And then I have something special, like special pumpkins. A different sort then they have here. They are very tasty and nice pumpkins. Then, my neighbors also enjoy the garden, because I always share with them.[44]

When I ask her whether she uses the Slovakian seeds in order to bring a bit of her home country to the Netherlands, she answers by saying:

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[41] DEN OUDEN 'Op vakantie in je eigen (volks)tuintje' 2-3; M. EGGENHUIZEN: 'Home sweet second home', in *Buitenleven* 10/5 (July/August 2012).

[42] Episode of *Netwerk* (15 July 2008).

[43] Respondent B is a 66 years old Slovak lady who moved to the Netherlands over 40 years ago. Her daughter and granddaughter live in the same street in Leidsche Rijn. She has an allotment garden and likes to travel. When she travels she attends the Catholic Church (Utrecht, 11-04-2011).

[44] Original text derived from interview with Respondent B (summer 2011): "Ik kom uit Slowakije en iedere keer als ik daarheen ben gegaan dan neem ik ook weer zaadjes van daar mee. En dan heb ik toch iets speciaals. Zoals speciale pompoenen. Een andere soort dan hier en dat zijn eetbare en lekkere pompoenen en dan hebben mijn buren ook plezier op de tuin want die deel ik dan uit."

> I used to eat all those things as a child and therefore the taste is attractive when I eat it again and I would like to share this with my daughter. When my daughter comes with me to Slovakia she loves the food there. And when we are here I also make Slovakian dishes and she likes it a lot. Also the soup that I make. I make it myself from beef that I boil for two hours, and vegetables from the garden. Add at those in the end. My granddaughter really likes this as well. She thinks it is lovely, lovely, lovely![45]

Growing up in Slovakia, she was always surrounded by nature she says: "we did everything in nature. We searched for mushrooms, we went skiing, hiking, bird watching, we worked in our vegetable gardens." Those aspects she greatly misses from her childhood, she tries to find back in her allotment garden. Here, she surrounds herself with her Slovakian plants and vegetables; the nature from her childhood. A childhood she would also like her granddaughter to have, so she takes her to the garden every now and then so she can help her water the plants and watch the vegetables grow.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the role of gardens in urban planning in general, and more specifically in the newly built suburban area of Leidsche Rijn. The growing popularity of garden magazines, TV shows and garden centers show that people pay interest in their garden and are willing to spend time and money on it. Some use their garden to 'be outside' others also use it to grow plants and vegetables. This is also shown by the growing popularity of allotment gardens and other vegetable garden projects.

Gardens are important in a newly built suburb such as Leidsche Rijn and they are often one of the main selling points: living close to the city in a larger but affordable house with a garden or at least a large balcony. It is easy to make plans and build 30,000 houses; to make people feel at home in their new living environment, to make them care about and for it, is much more difficult. Special places with additional value, such as private gardens and more publicly accessible gardening projects help create a soul or content for the neighborhood. This is something that cannot be planned on the drawing board as it strongly depends on the way in

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[45] Original text derived from interview with Respondent B (summer 2011): "Ik at die dingen vroeger als kind dus de smaak is aantrekkelijk voor mij om opnieuw te proeven en om aan mijn dochter door te geven. Als mijn dochter mee gaat naar Slowakije dan vindt ze daar het eten zo lekker. En ik kook thuis ook wel eens Slowaakse gerechten en dat vind ze heel lekker. Ook de soep die ik maak. Ik maak het zelf uit rundvlees dat kookt dan 2 uur lang. En groenten uit de tuin. Dat gaat als laatste erin en mijn kleindochter is er ook gek op die vindt het heerlijk, heerlijk, heerlijk."

which people perceive and use the space. Moreover, the use of space alters the way it is perceived.

This process demonstrates the working of the urban triad as it shows the correlation between the *urbs* (referring to the physical aspects of the neighborhood), the *civitas* (as the residents choose to make use of this design in a certain way, they shape their garden, work in it and cherish the plants, flowers, and vegetables in it), and, by these practices overlaying the physical place with their imaginations and so attributing a special meaning to it, the *genius loci*. By decorating, gardening and using the gardens as a means to escape the daily life for a moment of peace and quiet or relaxation, the place has come to influence the senses, the memory, and the future practices of its users. A symbolic layer overlays the physical environment, setting gardens apart by virtue of their own special meaning.

Part V

PILGRIMAGE

15

SENDANGSONO REVISITED:
CENTRAL JAVA THROUGH THE LENS OF A MARIAN PILGRIMAGE SITE

Herman L. Beck

1.   Introduction

Early in the afternoon of Sunday, 11 January 2015, we arrive at the Sendangsono car park. Sendangsono is the oldest and most famous Our Lady of Lourdes pilgrimage site in Indonesia. It is my first visit to Sendangsono since 1993. To my recollection, the 42-kilometre journey from the center of Yogyakarta to Sendangsono, that belongs to the municipality of Kalibawang in the Menoreh Hills of Central Java, used to take much more of an effort. The road from Yogyakarta to Sendangsono is much better now than it was 22 years ago, when I made the journey on the back of a friend's moped and felt every hole in the road, that was in a bad state of repair. That friend came from a Javanese family living in the countryside near Yogyakarta and almost every member of which practiced a different religion. The parents were Hindus, some children had become Muslims while others had chosen for Roman Catholicism or had remained true to their parents' religion. My friend became a Roman Catholic because she had been educated at a Roman Catholic school.

My friend mentioned various reasons why I should come with her to Sendangsono. As the oldest and most famous Our Lady of Lourdes pilgrimage site in Indonesia, Sendangsono played an important devotional-spiritual role in the lives of Roman Catholics in Central Java. Moreover, since it is an area of great natural beauty, Sendangsono was a highly suitable destination for a relaxing day out. As a third reason, she mentioned the fact that Sendangsono was interesting because it was also visited by Muslims and other non-Catholic Javanese. That latter motive inspired me to write an article about the Muslim perspective on Our Lady of Sendangsono.[1] In that article, I concentrated on the worries of modernist Muslims in the Muhammadiyah movement who feared that visiting such a Roman Catholic pilgrimage site dedicated to Mary might be attractive to uneducated fellow believers

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[1] H. BECK: 'Onze Lieve Vrouwe van Sendangsono. Een Indonesische Mariabedevaartplaats door moslimse ogen', in M. VAN UDEN, J. PIEPER & P. POST (eds.): *Oude sporen, nieuwe wegen. Ontwikkelingen in bedevaartonderzoek* (=UTP-Katernen 17) (Baarn 1995) 203-231, p. 226.

with little knowledge of their own religion, and might lead them to thoughts and actions inconsistent with orthodox Islam.

2.   Focus and central question

From the car park, we head to the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto of Sendangsono. The four of us, two anthropologists, a historian, and a scholar of religious studies, are visiting four state Islamic universities in Indonesia on behalf of the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies. Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, one of the four institutions to be visited, is closed on Sundays. Since I am 'knowledgeable' about Yogyakarta, my colleagues have asked me to organize an instructive outing on this day off. My proposal to balance our activities in the area of Islam with a visit to a Roman Catholic shrine in a Muslim environment is met with approval. I personally want to visit Sendangsono again because I want to know whether and, if so, with what result, a pilgrimage site can serve as a lens through which to observe the surrounding culture. This leads to the following research question for this contribution: what can be said about the Central Javanese culture of the Provinsi Daerah Istemewa Yogyakarta (the Special Region of Yogyakarta) when perceived through the lens of the pilgrimage site at Sendangsono?

It is only a few hundred meters from the car park to the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto at Sendangsono. First we pass under a gate that was completed in 2007 and follow the road that is lined with the familiar shops and *warungs*, eating houses, omnipresent in Central Java around cultural attractions, places of pilgrimage, and monuments like the Borobudur and the Prambanan. A relatively large number of those shops specialize in Marian devotional items. In 1993, this was not yet as prominent. We enter several of the shops to look at the replica statues of Our Lady; some are as tall as we are, and some are small, while others can serve the purpose of a bidon. On closer inspection, most of these devotional items prove to have been made in China. They do not differ from the Chinese products sold in Lourdes or any other Marian shrine anywhere in the world. Thus, the Marian shrines are linked not only because of Our Lady but also because of the devotional items originating from China.

This thought brings to mind the three women – a mother and two daughters – from Jakarta whom I met in the Netherlands in 2013. They had come to Europe to visit some of the most important Catholic shrines, naturally including famous Marian shrines like Lourdes, Fatima, and Banneux. When I asked them whether they had been to Sendangsono, they answered that the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto in Sendangsono had naturally been the starting point of their pilgrimage expedition. Their reaction seemed to imply that for them, as Indonesian Roman Catholics, Sendangsono formed part of a worldwide network of shrines dedicated to Our Lady. A tangible physical and spiritual bond between Lourdes and Sendangsono

had already been forged by a group of students who visited Lourdes in 1954 to celebrate the centenary of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The students brought back from Lourdes a stone on which Mary allegedly stood when she appeared to Bernadette Soubirous and, in 1956, they placed the relic at the feet of the statue in the grotto at Sendangsono.[2]

Having passed the shops and *warungs*, we cross a small bridge and an open space and come to the stairs that we need to descend to get to the site of the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto. At the top of these stairs is a sign, requesting visitors to observe silence from this point because it is a sacred place. At the foot of the stairs is an open space between the statue of Our Lady in the Lourdes grotto and two huge trees. Twelve people are seated on low stools or cross-legged on the ground, absorbed in prayer or meditation. Now and then someone lights a candle and places it before the statue of Our Lady in the grotto. In 2008, this grotto was restored to its original state of 1929.[3] A few steps lower down, another two men are praying, cross-legged in front of the spring in which the first inhabitants of Kalibawang were baptized. The reason for the limited number of pilgrims on this particular Sunday is that the pilgrimage season at Sendangsono does not officially start until 11 February. Things will certainly be different in the months of May and October: the crowds of pilgrims will be so large that as many as fifteen masses will have to be celebrated every Sunday.[4] As I sit on a stool in the serene atmosphere near the people in front of the statue of Our Lady, I reminisce about the history of the pilgrimage site.[5]

3. Establishment and development of the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto at Sendangsono as a pilgrimage site: The master narrative

From a religious point of view, Sendangsono has of old been a special place. The name Sendangsono is a combination of the two Javanese words *sendang*, 'spring; small lake', and *sono* or *sana*, a type of tree (*waringin* or ficus tree) and means something like 'the spring of the *waringin*'. In non-Muslim and non-Christian Javanese religious perceptions, both springs and trees are considered to be the haunts of

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[2] *Ziarah ke gua Maria Lourdes Sendangsono* (Yogyakarta 2010) 29.

[3] *Idem* 65.

[4] See, for instance: G.P. SINDHUNATA S.J. (ed.): *Mengasih Maria. 100 Tahun Sendangsono* (Yogyakarta 2004) 68.

[5] The next section, Section 3, is the English translation of the thoroughly revised version of BECK: 'Onze Lieve Vrouwe van Sendangsono', 205-213. Cf. also: I. COURTENS: 'Mary, Mother of All: Finding faith at the sacred source of Sendangsono, Indonesia', in A.-K. HERMKENS, W. JANSEN & C. NOTERMANS (eds.): *Moved by Mary. The power of pilgrimage in the modern world* (Surrey and Burlington 2009) 101-115; A.B. LAKSANA: *Muslim and Catholic pilgrimage practices. Explorations through Java* (Surrey and Burlington 2014) 112-121.

nymphs and other supernatural beings.[6] Such sites therefore easily develop into places of pilgrimage.

Sendangsono was one of three springs in the water-scarce part of the Menoreh Hills in the Kalibawang area. The majority of the people of Kalibawang are Muslim but, in their day-to-day lives, most of them hold on to religious perceptions and religious practices not belonging to 'orthodox and orthopractical' Islam. A case in point is the role which the spring and the two ficus trees played in their lives. Before the spring became Christian site, following Father Van Lith's dedication in 1904, both the spring and the two *waringins* were closely associated with the goddess Dewi Lantamsari. Although she had always remained a virgin, Dewi Lantamsari had a son, called Raden Bagus Samijo, commonly known as Den Baguse Samijo. He and his mother inhabited and protected the spring and the two *waringins*.[7] This was the reason, according to the people of Kalibawang, that the spring water had magical powers and brought luck.[8]

The spring was also very important for teachers of the *Ilmu ghaib*, 'Secret knowledge; gnosis; mysticism'. They used the water of Sendangsono in teaching their followers. For instance, ritual ablutions of adepts of the Secret knowledge taught by Pak Grudug, called Dawud Tadikromo after he converted to Christianity, took place at the spring. The spring was also important to ascetics who engaged in their exercises there. In pre-Islamic times, Sendangsono was a resting place for Buddhist monks, who halted at this spring – located halfway between the Borobudur and their monastery in Bara – to rest and refresh themselves in its waters. Moreover, Sendangsono was visited annually by people in the region, who swore their oaths there, made promises, brought sacrifices, and held *slametan*s, 'joint, ritual meals', to placate and honor the local gods and spirits. Furthermore, there was dicing going on at the spring and dancing girls, who were also prepared to provide other services, gave performances there.[9] These religious practices and other customs continued to exist despite the islamization that gained momentum in this part of Central Java in the seventeenth century under the Muslim Mataram dynasty.

In the nineteenth century, Dutch Protestant missionaries attempted to Christianize Central Java. Initially, the Javanese seemed to take to Protestantism in the form of Sadrach's community. Sadrach (d. 1924), a Muslim who had converted to Christianity, felt that Christianity and Javanese *adat*, local customary law, were not

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[6] Cf. also: A. C. KRUIJT: *Het animisme in den Indischen Archipel* ('s-Gravenhage 1906) 504.

[7] S. FANANI: *Sendangsono (sebagai Tempat Ziarah Umat Katholik)*. Unpublished MA thesis, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga (Yogyakarta 1985) 35.

[8] See: P. SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono. Promasan Kalibawang 8 Desember 1929* (Magelang 1976) 33.

[9] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 34ff.; For the gamblers and the 'dancing girls', cf.: KOENTJARANINGRAT: *Javanese culture* (Singapore, etc. 1985) 200 *et passim*.

incompatible. In his opinion, Christians in the closed, largely Muslim rural community of Central Java, where life as a member of the community is central and where one good turn always deserves another, cannot exclude themselves by avoiding to comply with *adat*.[10] Sadrach's view was adopted by the Javanese, but was unacceptable to most Dutch missionaries. They wanted the Javanese to model their lives on the Dutch ideal of the typical Protestant Christian. As a result of this rigid point of view and the mission's overbearing attitude towards Sadrach and other prominent Javanese Christians, Protestantism lost much of its appeal and most of its members, including the above-mentioned Dawud Tadikromo.[11]

The Roman Catholic mission in this part of Central Java was based in the town of Muntilan. One of the Catholic missionaries, the above-mentioned Jesuit priest Frans van Lith (1863-1926) from Oirschot in the Netherlands, worked indefatigably for the Christian faith.[12] Van Lith knew Sadrach personally.[13] Because he visited Sadrach at his home and attended meetings led by Sadrach, Van Lith knew his views on what would now be called the 'inculturation' of Christianity.[14] Van Lith's own mission methods may have been influenced by Sadrach's conflict with the Protestant mission. Whatever the case may be, Van Rijckevorsel summarizes Van Lith's approach as follows: 'Father Van Lith applied the two important principles of adaptation and elite formation. Adaptation to the nature and needs of the Javanese in those days; elite formation, that is to say: cultivating powerful men, leaders.'[15]

Van Lith seems to have used the principles of adaptation and elite formation in Christianizing Kalibawang and the surrounding area. As concerns elite formation, it is interesting to note that Dawud Tadikromo, the former Secret knowledge guru and Sadrach's former pupil, was indirectly involved in winning a powerful man for the Christian faith. It was he who brought Barnabas Sarikromo, the later catechist of Kalibawang – who received a papal medal for his efforts in

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[10] P.S. SUTARMAN: *Sadrach's community and its contextual roots: A nineteenth century Javanese expression of Christianity* (Amsterdam-Atlanta 1990) 58, 132, 145.

[11] F. VAN LITH: 'Mijn eerste bezoek aan Kalibawang. Uit nagelaten aantekeningen van Råmå F. van Lith S.J., Z.G.', in *St. Claverbond* 42 (Nijmegen 1930), 255-261, 283-299, p. 256 and p. 258.

[12] For F. van Lith, see, for instance: L. VAN RIJCKEVORSEL S.J.: *Pastoor F. van Lith S.J. De stichter van de missie in Midden-Java 1863-1926* (Nijmegen 1952); K. STEENBRINK: *Catholics in Indonesia. A documented history, 1808-1942*. Volume 2: *The spectacular growth of a self-confident minority, 1903-1942* (Leiden 2007) 370-405 *et passim*; M.J. KRUITHOF: *'Shouting in a desert'. Dutch missionary encounters with Javanese Islam 1850-1910*. PhD thesis Erasmus University (Rotterdam 2014) 96-98, 352-366 *et passim*.

[13] SUTARMAN: *Sadrach's community* 143.

[14] On the use of the concept of 'inculturation' see, for instance: A.A. ROEST CROLLIUS (ed.): *What is so new about Inculturation?* Series Inculturation. Working papers on Living Faith and Cultures, V. Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome 1984).

[15] VAN RIJCKEVORSEL: *Pastoor F. van Lith* 77.

1929 –[16] into contact with the Jesuits in Muntilan. When Dawud Tadikromo was a Secret knowledge guru, Barnabas Sarikromo had sought his help to cure his seriously injured foot. At first, Dawud Tadikromo had given him an ointment, but also advised him to have his foot regularly treated by the Jesuits in Muntilan, where he had procured the ointment. After some time, Barnabas Sarikromo became so interested in the church that he began to attend the Sunday services. Finally, on 20 May 1904, he was the first Catholic in Kalibawang to be baptized by Father Van Lith. After further education, he developed into the successful local catechist, who devoted his life to preaching the Christian gospel in this region.[17] As an inhabitant of Kalibawang and former student of the Secret knowledge, Barnabas Sarikromo was well placed to advise Van Lith on the strategy to be adopted in Christianizing this part of Central Java. The same was true of Dawud Tadikromo himself, who told Van Lith that he wanted to become a Catholic and, in the presence of four village chiefs, also informed him that a number of people from Kalibawang and surrounding area were prepared to become Catholic.[18] Some time later, Van Lith, Dawud Tadikromo, and Barnabas Sarikromo visited the villages of the four chiefs, namely Kajoran Wetan (Lukas Suratirta), Kajoran Kulon (Markus Sukadrana, Lukas' brother), Semagung (Abraham Dipadangsa), and Tuksångå (Jokanan Surawidjaja).[19] During Van Lith's first journey around the Kalibawang area, Dawud Tadikromo informed him about the local customs and practices and thus preserved Van Lith from behaving in ways that the people or their chiefs might consider improper or offensive.[20]

In his notes about this tour of the villages in Kalibawang, Van Lith explicitly mentioned the spring at Sendangsono near the hamlet of Semagung:[21]

> We then came to ancient Semagung and, as the first Catholic priest ever, I stood on the spot where, a few months later, I was to baptize the first 200 people from Kalibawang, in the same spring where formerly Buddhist monks in their yellow robes used to quench their thirst on their journey from one Bårå to the other.

However, before Van Lith baptized the villagers of Kalibawang at Sendangsono spring on 14 December 1904 – incidentally, although he mentions 200 people, other sources state a number of 171 or 173 – ,[22] he had baptized Barnabas

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[16] G. VRIENS S.J.: 'O.L. Vrouw van Kalibawang en een 25-jarig jubilé', in *St. Claverbond* 42 (Nijmegen 1930) 97-119, p. 108.

[17] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 16ff.

[18] VAN LITH: 'Mijn eerste bezoek' 258.

[19] For the names of the village chiefs: SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 23ff.

[20] VAN LITH: 'Mijn eerste bezoek' 289ff.

[21] IDEM 293.

[22] For instance: A. HEUKEN S.J.: *Ensiklopedi populer tentang Gereja Katolik di Indonesia* (Jakarta 1989), s.v. 'Sendangsono': 171 people; SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 35: 173 people. By way of comparison, it is

Sarikromo and Dawud Tadikromo as well as the four village chiefs, Lukas Suratirta, Markus Sukadrana, Abraham Dipadangsa, and Jokanan Surawidjaja, at Whitsun (20 May 1904). The Christianization of the Kalibawang area clearly shows that Van Lith indeed practiced the principle of elite formation.

That Van Lith applied the principle adapting the Catholic faith to the nature and needs of the Javanese in those days is clear from his choice to place a statue of the Virgin Mary at the Sendangsono spring and the subsequent development of the site as the 'Lourdes of Indonesia'. Given the quotation in the previous paragraph, Van Lith immediately realized that the spring at Sendangsono had a special religious significance for the people in the area. In the months between his first visit to Sendangsono and the baptism of the 173 villagers with water from the spring he had previously dedicated, Van Lith may have made further inquiries among the recently baptized leaders as regards the religious perceptions of the local people. That Van Lith chose a statue of the Virgin Mary to place at the spring, removing her non-Christian connotations and thus safeguarding her future from all forms of traditional, non-Christian religious perceptions, may be connected with the date on which he administered baptism. On 8 December 1904, it was 50 years ago that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary had been proclaimed. The baptismal ceremony at the spring took place six days later, on 14 December 1904. Van Lith may have chosen to install the statue of Our Lady to commemorate the proclamation of the dogma. This would be consistent with the Marian devotion that had been prevalent since the second half of the nineteenth century, and was considered to be a viable missionary method. With his choice, he may have taken into account the religious perceptions of the local Javanese population concerning the virgin goddess Dewi Lantamsari and her son Den Baguse Samijo.[23]

Other considerations may also have played a role for Van Lith. He knew how important growing rice, maize, cassava, and fruit like mangoes was to the people in this region[24] and, consequently, what meaning they attached to fertility. Since he was knowledgeable about the Javanese language and culture, he was aware of what Dewi Sri stood for.[25] In Hinduism, Dewi Sri, also called Lakshmi, is the goddess of vegetation, fertility, prosperity, and wealth. She is also the wife of the supreme god Vishnu and the mother of all creatures.[26] In Javanese religious perceptions, Dewi

worth noting that, according to the *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, second edition, s.v. 'Kalibawang', the number of inhabitants of Kalibawang in 1905 was estimated to be 27,000.

[23] In the multitude of publications on the subject, a good starting point for studying Marian devotions is the *Handbuch der Marienkunde*, edited by W. BEINERT & H. PETRI (Regensburg 1984).

[24] VAN LITH: 'Mijn eerste bezoek' 294.

[25] Cf.: R. MADINIER: 'The Catholic politics of inclusiveness. A Jesuit epic in Central Java in the early twentieth century and its memory', in M. PICARD & R. MADINIER (eds.): *The politics of religion in Indonesia. Syncretism, orthodoxy, and religious contention in Java and Bali* (London and New York 2011) 23-47, p. 32.

[26] M. APPEL: *Dewi Sri und die Kinder des Putut Jantaka. Beziehungen zwischen Mensch und Reis in Mythologie und Brauchtum auf Java und Bali* (München 1991) 28.

Sri continues to function as the goddess of fertility and rice. Finally, in Javanese folklore, Dewi Sri is one of the heavenly nymphs that are associated with water, vegetation, and fertility. As a heavenly nymph, Dewi Sri is known for her kindness and benevolence. She protects home, hearth, and children and provides guidance and assistance in difficult situations. People bring Dewi Sri all kinds of sacrifices, and she rewards them with honor, prosperity, and a long life.[27] Although Van Lith has never, to my knowledge, explicitly stated it, it is possible that, in this rural community where women played such an important economic role,[28] he saw so many connections between Dewi Lantamsari, Dewi Sri, and Mary, that he considered the latter to be an excellent channel, via associations of religious perceptions, to gradually make the inhabitants of the Kalibawang area familiar with the Catholic faith. In addition, Van Lith may have sought to link up with the ideas in Islam with respect to Mary (in Arabic: Maryam). Given the Muslim reverence for Mary as the mother of Jesus, Van Lith may have believed it suitable to introduce her in the religious lives of the Javanese Muslims.

As a result of his many other activities, Van Lith was not able to be actively involved in developing the Catholic faith in the Kalibawang area after the baptismal ceremony. He did, however, help Barnabas Sarikromo in 1914 to set up a popular mission school, first in Sarikromo's own home and, in 1919, in a larger building close to Sendangsono. This new building also served as a church.[29] Through Barnabas Sarikromo, Van Lith continued to be involved in Kalibawang and was able to give advice on missionary tactics. Being native to Kalibawang, catechist Barnabas Sarikromo was aware of the locals' need for entertainment and recreation on the traditional holidays. He knew that, on these occasions, they loved to hear gamelan music and enjoyed the *selawatans*, the Islamic performances with prayers and stories about important events in Islam and in the lives of the prophets. Sarikromo wanted to make use of the Kalibawangese fondness of these things for the purposes of the Catholic faith and informed Van Lith to this effect. Van Lith then ordered some Javanese staff members to create 'Catholic *selawatans*' based on Old and New Testament stories and the catechism. He also commissioned research into the suitability of other forms of Javanese art and music for missionary purposes.[30]

Thus, Van Lith was clearly alert to the importance of adapting the Catholic faith to the mind and needs of the Javanese. Placing a statue of the Virgin Mary near a spring that had traditionally been linked to Javanese religious perceptions concerning vegetation, fertility, prosperity, wealth, spirits, the virgin goddess Dewi Lantamsari with her son Den Baguse Samijo and Dewi Sri as a heavenly nymph

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[27] APPEL: *Dewi Sri* 29 ff.
[28] Cf.: Y. BOELAARS: *Kepribadian Indonesia Modern. Suatu penelitian antropologi budaya* (Jakarta 1984) 93.
[29] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 28.
[30] IDEM 29.

and mother of all creatures may therefore be interpreted in the light of the adaptation strategy referred to above. However, the person who promoted Mary even stronger and used the fact that Sendangsono, as a place of pilgrimage, had long had a certain appeal for the inhabitants of Central Java was J.B. Prennthaler (1885-1946). In 1923, this Austrian Jesuit priest, pastor of the neighboring village of Mendut, also had to undertake the pastoral care of Kalibawang.[31] Prennthaler was of the opinion that Sendangsono continued to be associated by its visitors with the old 'superstition' and a belief in all sorts of spirits and that the character of the spring therefore had to be completely changed. In his view, this change of identity could be achieved by placing a larger than life-size statue of Mary of the Immaculate Conception in a specially built Lourdes grotto, that would function as a refuge for people from Kalibawang seeking protection.[32] The Lourdes grotto could be constructed thanks to the financial donation from the congregation of St. Canisius in Maastricht, while the large statue of Mary Immaculate, weighing 300 kilos, was sent to Central Java as a gift from an anonymous benefactress in Europe.[33]

It is impossible to establish what motives inspired Van Lith to place the statue of Our Lady near the spring, and it is similarly hard to determine why Father Prennthaler opted precisely for Mary Immaculate and the Lourdes grotto associated with her. Did Prennthaler have thoughts similar to Van Lith's, i.e., that Mary, on the one hand, as a mother and as a giver of fertility, wealth, and prosperity paralleled Javanese religious perceptions concerning Dewi Lantamsari and Dewi Sri and, on the other hand, that her immaculate conception completely corresponded with the Muslim view of the mother of Jesus and with the respect in which she is held in this religion? On Mary as a mother, all manner of expectations could be projected that the faithful also attribute to the ideal mother, who always answers the supplications of her children.[34] Mary immaculately conceived could be a stimulus to Muslims to change faith. In short, in Prennthaler's view, Mary may have formed the ideal identification object for Javanese Muslims. The devotional, ritual opportunities offered by Sendangsono as a pilgrimage site may equally have been an important motivation for him to choose this particular spot: a replica of the Lourdes grotto might have a similar appeal as the original. Lourdes' popularity – everything that happens there can also be experienced right here at home on Central Java; no need for a far, costly, and dangerous journey for the same purpose

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[31] VAN LITH: 'Mijn eerste bezoek' 293.

[32] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 36.

[33] VRIENS: 'O.L. Vrouw van Kalibawang' 98; In the literature, there is some doubt as to the European country from which the statue of the Virgin Mary originated. COURTENS: 'Maria' 108, argues on the authority of Ludovikus Wiryanto, the son of Barnabas Sarikromo, that the statue is from Denmark. This country is also mentioned in SINDHUNATA: *Mengasih Maria* 15. According to the authors of *Ziarah ke Gua Maria Lourdes Sendangsono* (Yogyakarta 2010) 10, and *85 Tempat Ziarah Maria gua Maria se Nusantara* (Yogyakarta 2013) 16, the statue originates from Switzerland.

[34] Cf.: J. TENNEKES: *Volkskatholicisme in Latijns-Amerika* (Amsterdam 1986) 8.

– combined with Sendangsono's traditional pilgrimage practices could attract many believers and sightseers. Subsequently, Catholic pilgrimage would slowly but surely push the old religious perceptions connected to pilgrimage to the spring into the background and ultimately be entirely eliminate. Also through the installation and the ringing, three times a day, of the Angelus bells – a rather bold step in an Islamic environment, where the faithful were called to prayer five times a day – Prennthaler hoped to achieve that "... the cheerful ringing of the bell would open all Javanese hearts to the grace and the love of the Heavenly Mother, who is also given to them as a Mother!"[35]

Whatever the considerations, Prennthaler dedicated the Lourdes grotto and the Mary Immaculate statue on 8 December 1929, exactly 75 years after the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary had been proclaimed. That day was also the 25th anniversary of the Kalibawang mission and therefore Barnabas Sarikromo's silver anniversary as a catechist as well.[36] The words that, according to Vriens, Prennthaler spoke when he dedicated the Lourdes grotto and the Mary Immaculate statue at least partly revealed his intentions:

> When everyone, approximately 700 people –...–, had assembled in front of the grotto, P. Prennthaler S.J., the current shepherd of Kalibawang, addressed his flock ... He reminded them that the spring of Sendang Sånå, welling up at his feet, had long been considered a special place because – it was believed – it housed devils and evil spirits, which had to be placated by offerings and sacrifices. Fortunately, this spring had later been used to baptize people. Now all those gathered, strengthened by baptism and enlightened by faith, knew that there are no evil spirits in Sendang Sånå. And the devil? Yes, he had dwelt here in earlier times, when the village was a notorious haunt of gamblers and dancing girls. But that was in the past! Here, too, Mary, through whose intercession they had obtained all graces, had crushed Satan's head. To show their great gratitude, they had built their grotto, which was to be solemnly consecrated today. Finally, the reverend urged everyone to come frequently to the grotto of Sendang Sånå to pray, to thank God and Mary for all the benefits they bestowed, and also to unburden their hearts.[37]

In his account of this ceremony, Soeradjiman states that Prennthaler admonished those present not to expect a miracle from God or an apparition of Mary. They should merely request Mother Mary to protect the community of Kalibawang as a whole and in particular its Catholic inhabitants and the pilgrims journeying to this

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[35] L. ROOD S.J.: 'De Angelus-klokjes in Kalibawang', in *St. Claverbond* 42 (Nijmegen 1930) 121-126, p. 123.
[36] VRIENS: 'O.L. Vrouw van Kalibawang' 98.
[37] IDEM 102 ff.

place. To that end, they should all undertake a pilgrimage to this place to thank God through Mary for all good things.[38]

Prennthaler thus not only considered Mary as banning all evil from a pre-Christian 'superstitious' belief in spirits and devils, but also as providing all that is good because of her intercessory role with God. By making a pilgrimage to Sendangsono, the faithful can address Mary in her position of mediator. The fact that Van Lith and Prennthaler made Mary central to the religious practice of Sendangsono seems to have resonated well with the Javanese of Kalibawang and surrounding area from the very beginning. After all, as stated in the quoted account, 700 people graced the dedication and blessing of the spring and the Mary Immaculate statue with their presence. Seven months later, on Sunday, 13 July 1930, the number of those attending a Catholic religious ceremony in Sendangsono was even larger. The occasion involved a procession celebrating the 'Blessed Sacrament of the Altar': 450 school children and 1300 adults from Kalibawang are said to have participated. Moreover, 300 Catholic Javanese from various Central Javanese towns were present, but it was also stated – not without pride – that 80 Europeans, including five people all the way from Surabaya, thirty soldiers headed by an army chaplain, and Professor Brom from Nijmegen, The Netherlands, with his wife attended.[39] In the eyes of many Javanese, the interest shown and the actual participation of various prominent non-Javanese considerably increased Sendangsono's prestige as a place of pilgrimage and boosted its popularity.

In the years after the dedication of the Lourdes grotto with the Mary Immaculate statue, the religious structure of Sendangsono as a pilgrimage site was further enhanced. In 1940, building work started on Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Promasan (Kalibawang).[40] This Western-style building forms the starting point for the pilgrims who journey to Sendangsono via a Way of the Cross with fourteen stations, completed in 1958.[41] The annual procession on 11 February to mark the beginning of the pilgrimage season also starts at the church of Promasan.[42] In the Marian year 1954, a chapel and a main altar were dedicated in Sendangsono, so that pilgrims would be able to celebrate the Eucharist.[43] Also, space for overnight stay and little restaurants were realized to accommodate the growing numbers of pilgrims.

History has shown that Van Lith's and Prennthaler's missionary strategy of adaptation and elite formation among Javanese Muslims has been successful. In

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[38] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 38.
[39] G. VRIENS: 'Nogmaals de processie van Kalibawang', in *St. Claverbond* 42 (Nijmegen 1930) 232-238.
[40] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 47.
[41] IDEM 42.
[42] IDEM 48.
[43] H. RZEPKOWSKI: 'Indonesien', in R. BÄUMER & L. SCHEFFCZYK (eds.): *Marienlexikon* (St. Ottilien 1991) Band III, 301.

1904, Van Lith baptized 173 people from Kalibawang, i.e., approximately 0.6% of the local population; in 1976, the number of Catholics in this area was estimated at approximately 10,000.[44] In 1990, up to 30% of the people in some hamlets belonging to Kalibawang were Roman Catholics whereas, in Indonesia as a whole, only 3% of the population is Roman Catholic.[45] In Van Lith's and Prennthaler's conversion strategy, great importance was attributed to Mary. Whether deliberate or intuitive, the choice to build an Our Lady of Lourdes grotto that developed into a Marian pilgrimage site was a fortunate one. It did not only mesh well with pre-Islamic and pre-Christian Javanese religious perceptions and practices, but also with religious perceptions and practices in Islam.

4. New emphases in the 'master narrative': The further Javanization of Sendangsono

Having finished my reminiscences on the origin and history of Sendangsono's Our Lady of Lourdes grotto, I wander around the Sendangsono complex. I am struck by the sight of something I do not remember having seen in 1993: a large tomb with the text "Barnabas Sarikromo, the first catechist of Kalibawang, died 15 July1940; [and his wife] Adriana Sarikromo, died 6 May 1966." Behind this memorial are a few more graves of other Javanese people who worked as catechists in the Kalibawang area. I go back to my three colleagues. We continue our walk together and then decide to have coffee or tea in one of the *warungs*. Our *warung* is part of a small shop that not only sells Marian devotional items but also 'devotional literature'. Three booklets draw my attention. One was published in 2004 to commemorate the centenary of the baptism of the first people from Kalibawang at Sendangsono;[46] the second is a kind of manual and historic guide from 2010 on pilgrimage to Sendangsono;[47] in the last of the three, Sendangsono is discussed as the place of pilgrimage with the oldest Our Lady of Lourdes grotto of the 85 now existing in Indonesia, according to its author.[48]

The three booklets seem to reveal new accents in Sendangsono's 'master narrative'. Where Western Jesuit priests like Van Lith and Prennthaler used to play the leading roles, there now seems to be more of a focus on the role and input of the

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[44] SOERADJIMAN: *Sendangsono* 48.

[45] SUPARYANTO: *Makna dan Fungsi patung Ibunda Maria dalam agama Katolik Romawi (Studi kasus di Gua Lourdes Sendangsono Kalibawang)*, an unpublished MA thesis (IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta 1990, 19), states that, in 1990, Desa Banjaroya had a total population of 8,372: 5,757 Muslims, 2,599 Roman Catholics, and 16 Protestants. For figures relating to the religions, see H.J.W.M. BOELAARS: *Indonesianisasi. Het omvormingsproces van de katholieke kerk in Indonesië tot de Indonesische katholieke kerk*. PhD thesis Tilburg University (Kampen 1991) 153ff.

[46] SINDHUNATA: *Mengasih Maria*.

[47] *Ziarah ke gua Maria Lourdes Sendangsono*.

[48] TIM CHIVITA BOOKS (ed.): *85 Tempat Ziarah Gua Maria Se Nusantara* (Yogyakarta 2013).

Javanese, both lay and clergy. Next to Barnabas Sarikromo, the name of the Javanese author, architect, and priest Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya (1929-1999) crops up, better known to many as Romo Mangun. From 1969, Romo Mangun was actively involved in developing Sendangsono as a place of pilgrimage.[49] His design and layout of the complex gave Sendangsono an additional, highly valuable dimension: the place is the three-dimensional, solidified ideal of Romo Mangun. As an architect, he based his work on the principle that the interests of the less advantaged should always predominate. As a priest, he was convinced that, in a religious building, the sanctity of worship and rituals should form a unity with people's day-to-day lives. The sacredness and ritual purity of a religious building must never lead to a person feeling unfit to enter as a result of his sinfulness. Architecture must provide harmony between the world within and the world outside a religious building.[50]

In designing and laying out the Sendangsono complex, Romo Mangun was inspired by the traditional Javanese vernacular and palace architecture. One the one hand, this allowed him to harmonize the design with that of the Tri Tunggal Mahakudus chapel, that had been built in 1959 next to the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto. Just like the Javanese *joglo* house, this chapel had a three-tiered roof, symbolizing the Christian dogma of the Trinity. On the other hand, in this way, Romo Mangun was able to recreate the Sendangsono complex as a harmonious unity that was clearly Roman Catholic in character, but breathed a truly Javanese atmosphere and serenity. He built not only two additional chapels, the Mother Mary or Our Lady chapel and the chapel of the Twelve Apostles, for the celebration of the Eucharist, but also four covered seating areas, where visitors to Sendangsono could rest and relax. Characteristic of Romo Mangun's work is the use of natural and locally available building materials, as a result of which the Sendangsono complex forms a unity with its environment. This ecological building method, integrating nature and religion, won Romo Mangun a prestigious architectural prize in 1991.[51] Admiring Romo Mangun's work thus became one of the reasons – in addition to all the other ones – to visit Sendangsono.

Having refreshed ourselves with coffee and tea in the *warung*, we head to the exit to return to our hotel in Yogyakarta. We opt for the path that runs between the stream and the taps where the pilgrims drink water from the original spring of Sendangsono. There we meet six young people, three boys and three girls, who have come to Sendangsono by moped from Muntilan, Father Van Lith's parish. We start to talk and the youngsters confide to us that – given their age – none of

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[49] *Ziarah ke gua Maria Lourdes Sendangsono* 14-17.

[50] R.G. SUNARYO: 'Mengikuti Langkah Pikir Romo Mangun. Sebuah Tinjauan Mengenai Metode Perancangan Arsitektur Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya', in *Dimensi Teknik Arsitektur* 35/1 (July 2007) 41-45.

[51] IDEM 45.

them are allowed to ride a moped, but it is the only way for them to get to Sendangsono. For them, Sendangsono is an agreeable Sunday outing, because their Roman Catholic parents never object to their visiting this place of pilgrimage, the cradle of Roman Catholicism on Central Java. They enjoy being together in a calm atmosphere and to relax far from their parents' watchful eyes. However, they state that the most important reason for their visit is that they feel Sendangsono is one of the few places where you can experience 'real' Javanese culture.

5.   Concluding reflections

Experiencing 'real' Javanese culture as the motive of the six youngsters to come to Sendangsono brings us back to the central question of this contribution: what can be said about the Central Javanese culture of the Provinsi Daerah Istemewa Yogyakarta when perceived through the lens of the pilgrimage site at Sendangsono?

The 'master narrative', as set out in Section 3, shows that Van Lith tried to win over the predominantly Muslim population of Central Java to Roman Catholic Christianity by means of an adaptation strategy. He worked with religious perceptions and ritual practices focused on Mary which, in his opinion, linked up with the religious and cultural lives of the inhabitants of Central Java. In that way, he effected a "Javanization of Catholicism", that led to "a spiritual identity broader than just Catholicism, and even than monotheism," thus enabling the inculturation of "Christianity in local spiritual cultures."[52] Prennthaler thought Van Lith's adaptation strategy too radical and tried to mitigate and refine it by building a typically Western-style Our Lady of Lourdes grotto. In Prennthaler's eyes, the Angelus bells also served that purpose. After Prennthaler's death, this policy was continued with the building of the church of Promasan and the Way of the Cross, both totally non-Javanese in character.

The 1959 Tri Tunggal Mahakudus chapel heralded the further Javanization of Sendangsono. Catechist Barnabas Sarikromo now plays a much more prominent part than he ever did earlier in the 'master narrative'. In Section 4, Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya's role is highlighted. With his redesign and renewed layout of Sendangsono, he made the pilgrimage site – perhaps *nolens volens* – a place where the people of Central Java again experience their 'shared sacred space'. They rediscover Sendangsono as a holy place for all Javanese, because – in Maria Couroucli's words – it is a place with a "… long tradition of cultural pluralism characterized by the coexistence of more than one symbolic system within a relatively loosely organized society, a social order maintained for centuries over vast territories."[53]

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[52] MADINIER: 'Catholic politics' 43.
[53] M. COUROUCLI: 'Chthonian spirits and shared shrines: The dynamics of place among Christians and Muslims in Anatolia', in G. BOWMAN (ed.): *Sharing the Sacra. The politics and pragmatics of intercommunal relations around holy places* (New York and Oxford 2012) 44-60, p. 45. Besides this work

Thanks to Romo Mangun's efforts, Sendangsono again reflects the structure of Javanese society.[54] This explains why the Our Lady of Lourdes pilgrimage site is not only visited by Roman Catholics, but also by Protestants, Muslims, Hindus, and believers of other persuasions from Central Java: they all celebrate their 'Javanese culture as the Common Bond' there.[55] Through the lens of the Marian pilgrimage site of Sendangsono, the people of Central Java from the Provinsi Daerah Istemewa Yogyakarta seem to find the shared feeling of solidarity, social harmony, and mutuality a more important characteristic of their culture than a belief in Mary who coincides with Maryam, Dewi Lantamsari, or Dewi Sri.

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of BOWMAN, three other works referring to the wider world of shared pilgrimage as an emerging element of pilgrimage studies deserve to be mentioned, the edited volumes by D. ALBERA & M. COROUCLĪ (eds.): *Religions traversées. Lieux saints partagés entre chrétiens, musulmans et juifs en Méditerranée* (Arles 2009), and E. BARKAN & K. BARKEY (eds.): *Choreographies of shared sacred sites. Religion, politics and conflict resolution* (New York 2015); the monograph by A. BIGELOW: *Sharing the sacred. Practicing pluralism in Muslim North India* (Oxford, etc. 2010).

[54] This idea is suggested by LAKSANA: *Muslim and Catholic pilgrimage practices* 170.

[55] LAKSANA: *Muslim and Catholic pilgrimage practices* 195.

16

Secular shrines and sacred cyberspaces:

An overview of the spaces and faces of (neo)pagan ritual in Lima, Peru

Diego Alonso Huerta J.

Between 1972 and 2007, censuses in Peru showed a decrease in Catholicism from 96.4% of the population to 89% and a dramatic increase in non-Christian religions from 0.7% to 2.8% and in 'no religion' from 0.4% to 1.4%.[1] This accounts for a drastic change in religiosity in a country that has always been traditionally Catholic. Lima, its capital, is also its principal node of telecommunications with the outside world, which makes it in turn the country's main gate for globalization. An interesting phenomenon to analyze amidst this context is the emergence of New Religious Movements, out of which one that has not been studied in much detail is (neo)paganism. I suggest that this new form of spirituality constitutes an important element to observe since it incorporates the use of technology and media in order to facilitate both 'spiritual' and 'political' rituals. I call these the 'faces' of ritual, while the 'spaces' would be either physical or virtual.

The data that I will discuss is the result of fieldwork conducted between 2010 and 2012 in Lima, including semi-structured and structured interviews and participant observation both in physical and virtual spaces. Such virtual spaces were the Facebook groups known at that time as *Paganos en Lima* and *Perú Wicca*, which were the most popular according to my informants. Throughout this document, I draw on this information in order to argue that 'political' rituals have developed more efficiency in virtual spaces, while 'spiritual' ones have thrived more in physical spaces instead. In order to do so, I give an account of what I have categorized as '(neo)paganism', as well as a definition of my understanding of the concept of ritual and how to approach its 'faces' and 'spaces'; after which I analyze examples for each aspect.

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[1] M. Marzal: *La religión en el Perú al filo del milenio* (Lima 2000); R. Webb: *Perú en números 2011: Anuario estadístico* (Lima 2011).

1.   (Neo)paganism

The term 'paganism', as described by anthropologist of magic Susan Greenwood,[2] is an umbrella concept that encompasses many different traditions historically attributed to Western Europe, which although do not share a mythology, do indeed believe in communication with an 'otherworld'. Greenwood continues her description of this phenomenon by quoting scholar of religious studies Michael York's approach to what he calls 'neopaganism', which basically consists of a form of Western occult tradition that has drawn on an "Eastern mysticism/human potential and the theosophical-occult/spiritualist-psychic/new thought metaphysics mix."[3] This is consistent with John Godsey's entry in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*,[4] where he states that 'neopagan' includes a spectrum of organized beliefs and practices that ranges from modern-day interpretations of Celtic Druidism to neoshamanism, passing through Wicca and Ceremonial magic; all of this drawing on organizations such as the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society, folkloristic and anthropological research, tarot and astrology, and the counterculture movement of the 1960's.

The extent to which 'paganism' and 'neopaganism' seem to be interchangeable terms is rather problematic, but the complexity continues to increase as York[5] also associates the characteristics he ascribed to the latter with yet a third concept relevant to this discussion: the 'New Age'. Sociologist Steve Bruce[6] summarizes the milieu of this worldwide phenomenon with the following six propositions. First, for a New Ager the self is divine, it is not ontologically evil and only needs to redeem itself in case of environmental or circumstantial variables corrupting its intrinsically good nature. The inner God must be reached, but it is always there, latent. Second, the universe is holistic; everything is one single essence, including the environment and the body. A spiritual connection with the planet thus boosts New Agers' interest in preserving it from what they see as exploitation, and a similar connection with other humans allows healing practices for them to be believable. Third, the individual is the highest form of authority. Fourth, choices from a variety of worldwide traditions allow each individual to create his or her own spiritual path, completely personalized and eclectic. Fifth, New Agers study the way of a particular group until they believe they have learnt all they need and decide to move on, or until they are let down by it. This is also a marketing strategy held by

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[2] S. GREENWOOD: *Magic, witchcraft and the otherworld: An anthropology* (Oxford 2000).

[3] IDEM 9.

[4] J. GODSEY: 'Neopaganism', in L. JONES (ed.): *Encyclopedia of religion* (Farmington, MI 2005) 6470-6473.

[5] GREENWOOD: *Magic, witchcraft and the otherworld*.

[6] S. BRUCE: 'The New Age and secularisation', in S. SUTCLIFFE & M. BOWMAN (eds.): *Beyond New Age: Exploring alternative spirituality* (Edinburgh 2000) 220-236.

the different groups that sell courses and events until the followers are ready to look for the next offer. Finally, New Agers keep in mind the functionality of their beliefs in as much as they grant them happiness, love or success in general; they do not just follow that religion because it is commanded by a higher power.

This vortex of overlapping variables seems to be extremely chaotic, and to an extent it is. During my fieldwork in Lima, I did not find any consensus among the population as a whole as to whether they were pagans, neopagans or New Agers, and they would sometimes even use two or all of these terms to refer to themselves in the same discourse. However, I propose that they can be differentiated to a point, segregating 'New Age' from the other two by means of an etic approach; and 'neo' from 'paganism' with an emic scope. The first distinction lies on the level of abstraction; in other words, 'all pagans and neopagans are New Agers, but not all New Agers are pagan or neopagan'. Ethnographer Maïra Muchnik[7] shows this by observing that the New Age acts as a broader set of ideas and behaviors that influence some emerging New Religious Movements in Argentina, while others were in turn shaped by afro-Brazilian religions like Umbanda and Candomblé. Therefore, she proposes that the New Age could then be understood as one 'global social movement' that allows for a transcendental identity to go beyond national boundaries. It could be added that it is a post-sixties social movement by means of which urban middle classes seek autonomy and stress pacifism, feminism and ecologism, in the words of Argentinian anthropologist Maria Julia Carozzzi.[8] This means that the New Age would be the historical context of worldwide shared conceptions about the cosmos and life that acts as a panacea for the other two terms to come into existence. Drawing on Greenwood's proposition that pagans do not share a mythology, the New Age would provide an adequate substitute: not offering one solid, unquestionable truth, but rather more general blueprints for a 'do it yourself' religiosity.

As for the difference between paganism and its 'neo' variant, I found that the key was not the scientific definition, but rather that it was a matter of identity among my target population. This makes sense under the light of Godsey's allegation that:

> neopagans tend to emphasize newness, creativity, imagination, and invention over tradition, creed, established doctrine, and institutionalized religion, but they also claim ancient traditions as their heritage.[9]

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[7] M. MUCHNIK: 'Nouvelles religiosités Argentines', in *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 118 (2002) 71-84.

[8] M.J. CAROZZI: 'La autonomía como religión: la nueva era', in *Alteridades* 9 (1999) 19-38.

[9] GODSEY: 'Neopaganism' 6470.

Some of my informants stressed this heritage and claimed an unbroken link over the ages with the sages of the past, whilst others took pride on the wit and dexterity by which they or their movements' founders had been able to structure a new, cohesive system of beliefs. This breaking point is of utmost importance to the understanding of this form of spirituality in Lima, as it leads to a subsequent quarrel for power between the representatives of different groups. Therefore, given that although from my perspective they subscribed to the same social phenomenon, the importance it had to their identity and the sociological implications of this sentiment led me to coin the term (neo)paganism in order to refer to a collection of juxtaposed, eclectic systems of beliefs and behaviors devised mostly by urban individuals under the influence of the New Age's broader set of ideas and values, whether they define themselves as 'pagan' or 'neopagan'.

However, as a final remark on this respect I would like to stress that the importance given by (neo)pagans to individuality and eclecticism does not cancel out a desire to share and perform their religion with others. Marion Bowman, a British researcher who focuses on pagan New Religious Movements, calls upon a difference between what could be nicknamed a 'do it yourself religion' and a 'do it by yourself religion', since common elements such as a sacred place for ritual functions (Glastonbury, in her case) act "as a center of inspiration, training, celebration, pilgrimage and *communitas*."[10] In the case of (neo)pagans in Lima, this sense of *communitas* gives rise to the persistence of groups (even if temporarily), which are in turn directed by charismatic leaders. They pursue influence over a greater amount of followers amidst the milieu of a subjacent skirmish between 'pagans' and 'neopagans', as described above. The result is a need not only for spiritual, but also for political rituals, which take place in physical and virtual arenas, and both of which contribute to shape this complex social phenomenon.

2.   The 'faces' of ritual

Ritual, just as much as 'paganism', is a broad concept that could be interpreted in various ways. I will claim that it constitutes the main activity that allows social interaction to take place within religion and spirituality. For this, I draw on Roy A. Rappaport's description of it as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers."[11] This definition shows ritual as a representation with a tendency towards immutability in time, having both input elements from those who interpret them, as well as mean-

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[10] M. BOWMAN: 'Learning from experience: The value of analysing Avalon', in *Religion* 39 (2009) 161-168, p. 167.

[11] R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (Cambridge 1999) 24.

ings passed down through generations. 'Interpretation' or 'performance' thus becomes a fundamental concept to explore, and Richard Schechner claims that it encompasses three actions inherent to those who practice it: 'to be', 'to do' and 'to show do.'[12] 'To be' would be the ontological nature that is at the same time defined and reproduced by rituals, while 'to do' would refer to those actions enacted in a particular time and space, and 'to show do' would emphasize its public sharing. Being that these last two are more closely related to conduct, the author introduces the concept of 'restored behavior'; namely, one that seeks to enact – what has been learnt to be – an 'original' version, the one that started what has later become ritual. Complementarily, Talal Asad claims that a ritual is essentially a form of symbolic behavior, a means to ensure 'proper' ways of acting according to given standards;[13] in such way, it is at the same time a routine and a rule. For instance, in liturgy virtue is pursued under the service of god, for which it demands behavior in accordance with saintly exemplars. This means that imitation becomes an important action, as ritual is encompassed within a disciplinary program that ultimately seeks to accomplish the formation of virtuous selves. In this process, proposes Tambiah,[14] a system of symbols is implied: symbols that are of an indexical nature; in other words, the sign is directly linked to that which it represents. In the case of religious rituals, I propose that symbols representing a transcendental realm work as a conduit that grants the practitioners direct communication with it, according to their beliefs. Such process, moreover, is imbedded within the discourse of tradition. Tradition, for that matter, relies on the understanding of the same past that restored behavior seeks to mimic. Anthropologist Joanne Rappaport[15] proposes that there is not a single history, but rather plenty of 'histories', which are to an extent equitable to 'stories'. These are created upon several forms of discourses (literary, legal, quotidian) that overlap with each other, in a way that she claims to be very similar to a palimpsest where new text is superposed upon previous one. Therefore, different situations in time would permit different interpretations to rise and rituals to mutate, thus accounting for the social constructedness of tradition – or at least the way it is read.

In consequence, I will understand 'spiritual' or 'religious' ritual as a cohesive set of pre-eminently performative practices that draw on the discourse of tradition in order to reproduce and reshape a means of communication with the divine, that is held to be the proper one. Nevertheless, rituals can also serve more mundane purposes, so to speak, and act as a public display of conducts that legitimate access

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[12] R. SCHECHNER: *Performance studies: An introduction* (London 2006).

[13] T. ASAD: *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore 1993).

[14] S.J. TAMBIAH: *A performative approach to ritual* (Oxford 1979).

[15] J. RAPPAPORT: *Cumbe renaciente. Una historia etnográfica andina* (Bogota 2005).

to power. According to cultural historian and theorist of communications James W. Carey:

> such ritual acts are designed to bring on a psychological state of shame and a personal sense of unworthiness, […] socially, they mark an irrefutable demotion in status from a higher to a lower rank: from the respected to the disrespected, the esteemed to the disdained, the sacred to the profane, the normal to the abnormal.[16]

Therefore, I will understand 'political' rituals as strategically orchestrated practices that follow lineaments that portray their performers as legitimate recipients of a powerful position according to a given tradition, as opposed to their adversaries upon whom shame is casted. Throughout this document, I will call these spiritual and political dimensions the 'faces' of ritual, as opposed to the 'spaces' that I will discuss next.

3.   The 'spaces' of ritual

It is hard, if not impossible, to imagine an interaction occurring outside of time; however, the same does not apply for one happening outside of a concrete space. The reason is that the latter falls within the everyday life of many people in the world with access to a computer and an internet connection, while no human has yet experienced reality as independent of the pass of time. Although we must occupy some sort of space as concrete, material beings that we are, it is no longer required for two or more of us to inhabit the same coordinates in order to socialize with each other. Yet, despite having transcended these physical boundaries, we continue to subject ourselves to the concept of space by calling this new realm a 'virtual space'. A phenomenological approach, such as that of Philosopher Edward Casey,[17] sheds light on this as he proposes that beyond its material condition, 'place' has an ideal, imaginary and subjective dimension. For him, the space-time continuum is irrelevant by itself, and only through human perception and experience can it be imbued with culture and transcend this condition. 'Experience', in turn, is defined by Yi-fu Tuan as a set of "modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality,"[18] ranging from a passive, direct sensation to an active conception through visualization. A 'place' then, as opposed to mere 'space', is that region that has been appropriated through experience and through culture; a definition that

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[16] J.W. CAREY: 'Political ritual on television: Episodes in the history of shame, degradation and excommunication', in T. LIEBES & J. CURRAN (eds.): *Media, ritual and identity* (London 1998) 42.

[17] E. CASEY: 'How to get form space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena', in S. FELD & K. BASSO (eds.): *Senses of place* (New Mexico 1996) 13-52.

[18] Y. TUAN: *Space and place: The perspective of experience* (Minneapolis 2001) 8.

could comprehend 'virtual spaces' in as much as they constitute an imagined arena for real interactions to be performed and perceived.

Tuan goes on to suggest that this appropriation consist of the assignation of a symbolic value to the emotional baggage associated with such interactions and experiences[19]. I understand this as the creation of a discourse that is evoked by that 'place', which is then to be regarded as an index. In this sense, inhabiting a place is directly linked to the construction and reproduction of tradition, which legitimates the meanings linked to it. For this reason, I propose that both faces of ritual ('spiritual' and 'political') are the main practices by which religious activities transform a particular space (either 'physical' or 'virtual') into place. In other words, if Marion Bowman[20] claimed that Glastonbury was a center for the creation of pagan *communitas* in England, I suggest that so is the Facebook group *Paganos en Lima* ('Pagans in Lima').

However, we must take into account the power plays intrinsic to this appropriation. Henri Lefebvre[21] affirms that space is socially constructed based on relationships of production. This social space is shaped both by dominant groups and by ordinary people, creating a 'conceived space' defined by the former, a 'lived space' experienced through everyday life by the latter, and a 'perceived space' that spontaneously emerges from the clashes between both groups. It is important to note that authorities are indeed also capable of creating lived space, given that they act as individuals and not as representatives of their positions (i.e. they also have personal lives). David Harvey[22] complements the definition of this perceived-conceived-lived triad by proposing that given social groups reproduce their power over space by achieving social legitimation of their representations of space through access to knowledge (as is the case with urban planners and architects), while those who are dominated rely on their creativity in order to devise so-called 'informal' ways of appropriation. I will propose later on that charismatic leaders of (neo)pagan groups use their knowledge of the traditions they teach in order to compete with each other for followers within the arenas of their political rituals. I will also suggest that (neo)pagans in general have made use of virtual spaces as a creative alternative for physical ones, which are usually out of bounds for them due to regulations regarding public spaces and perceptions against their beliefs among neighbors.

Finally, I would like to discuss the concept of 'media rituals', which were originally televised events that were relevant for a whole nation and thus publicly displayed[23]. This implies that virtual spaces are facilitated by the media, which scholar of communications Nick Couldry defines as the technologies "through which we

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[19] TUAN: *Space and place.*

[20] BOWMAN: 'Learning from experience: The value of analysing Avalon'.

[21] H. LEFEBVRE: *The production of space* (Malden 1991).

[22] D. HARVEY: *The urban experience* (Baltimore 1989).

[23] CAREY: 'Political ritual on television'.

imagine ourselves to be connected to the social world."[24] Additionally, in the words of Carey,[25] the actions need not only to be broadcasted to a large audience in order to be media rituals, but ultimately they must be dramatized actions with a great emotional and symbolic charge, where only a few antagonizing personalities are featured.

It is interesting to note that 'virtual spaces' were hence present before the rise of the worldwide web, and the reason why it was necessary for them to go beyond physical boundaries was that:

> nations consist of peoples who in the main never meet, never know one another in any ordinary sense, but who none the less identify with one another, assume they possess outlooks in common and whose lives flow, by and large, in steady harmony and uncoordinated coordination.[26]

This disembodied *communitas* is very similar to that of the (neo)pagans in Lima, not only because their tendency to an eclectic individual spirituality diminishes the extent to which they integrate cohesive groups, but also because in many cases they keep their spirituality secret from the public eye. Due to this reason, the actual population of (neo)pagans in Lima and its size are impossible to define, making them what anthropologist Merrill Singer[27] calls a 'hidden population'. However, media rituals can reach them, and they know that many others are taking part in them even if they do not know who these others are.[28] Only some identities become relevant, and that happens through the acquisition of fame supported by successfully performing political rituals.

4. Political rituals

As stated above, (neo)pagans in Lima are usually heavily influenced by opinion leaders that make use of virtual spaces to display publicly their knowledge. Elsewhere[29] I have systematized a typology for this concrete population by occupation, leadership and socio-economic level, out of which now is only relevant to discuss the second. Within my informants I found they could be either 'charismatic leaders' or 'followers'. The former would be those who are part of a group and have managed to make use of personal attributes to become the head of it, for which they

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[24] N. COULDRY: *Media rituals: A critical approach* (New York 2003) 2.

[25] CAREY: 'Political ritual on television'.

[26] IDEM 43.

[27] M. SINGER: 'Studying hidden populations', in J.J. SCHENSUL (ed.): *Mapping social networks, spatial data, and hidden populations* (California 1999).

[28] CAREY: 'Political ritual on television'.

[29] D. HUERTA: *De eclécticos e iniciados: Una aproximación etnográfica a la práctica del (neo)paganismo en Lima* (Lima 2012).

are regarded as authorities in virtual and physical meetings. Also, they were initiated in this spirituality during the first years of this century or earlier, and have learnt much about it since then. The second category, the followers, are those who may or may not integrate a group, and dedicate most of their time to find out new information about (neo)pagan traditions, many times seeking a master or guide. They participate in internet forums and want to get to know more (neo)pagans to share knowledge and experiences. They have also been initiated much later than the 'charismatic leaders'.

It is perhaps perplexing to read that the followers may or may not be part of a 'group' but look for others like them. The reason is that the lack of cohesiveness and sense of belonging drives me to believe that they behave more like a 'network' than a 'group'. They do indeed communicate with each other and exchange information, and they also respect the authority of the charismatic leaders, but the boundaries of the network are constantly changing, as is the affiliation of the followers. During my fieldwork, some of them did actually form part of a group, and some others told me that they had done so in the past; yet, as time went by they left those groups in both cases in favor of a more individual and eclectic path.

Precisely due to these ongoing shifts in the (neo)pagans' spirituality that correlates with the New Age influence described earlier, as well as their continuously increasing numbers, it is very important that political rituals take place constantly in order for the charismatic leaders to maintain their authority. In order to explain how they work, I will provide an example of a concrete situation that took place in 2012, guarding the identities of the leaders in anonymity.

Suffice it to say, then, that six of them decided to meet despite their differences in order to devise a strategy against what they considered a threat: the rise of a new leader that did not meet their approval with regards to his knowledge of the matters he taught, but who was however rapidly gaining adepts. Out of these six people, one was the head of a group that had recently lost most of its members, and that stressed the constructedness of neopaganism as a positive characteristic (Leader A). Another one of them had previously told me in an interview that he had been initiated by a distant relative from Spain into a Celtic cult, for which he claimed an uninterrupted lineage with an ancient pagan tradition even though his followers changed constantly (Leader B). The others had different perspectives ranging between these two more defined positions, but they all had in common a mutual rivalry that they had decided to put aside for the time being. They met in a park at night and discussed the matter, agreeing to post on the Facebook group *Paganos en Lima* what they called their 'credentials' – namely, certifications they had for courses and affiliation to greater international institutions – in order to expose the fact that this new leader had none.

Besides this specific case, it was common to see long threads of discussion in which leaders criticized each other's postures and suggested alternative views that

they claimed to be right. Many times Leaders A and B would engage in this kind of public arguments, since they had radically opposing perspectives. However, why should these quarrels be regarded as rituals at all? For the case of the first example I gave, it becomes clear that the discussions were staged and agreed previously; giving rise to a dramatized behavior that drew on means of legitimation based on tradition in order to cast shame upon the new leader. This falls directly into my understanding of the definition of media rituals as discussed earlier, but what about the other more common cases? I propose that they can be understood as more than just simple discussions because they obeyed a pattern. They would start with an attack or a direct critique to what had been said by their adversaries, followed by a justification of their disagreement based on their experience, as legitimated by their record of accomplishments throughout the time since they were initiated in (neo)paganism (their 'credentials', as introduced above). Such arguments often implied mentioning symbols and historical events that were subsequently interpreted in favor of their position with colorful language that evoked emotional responses from their audience. This last idea is crucial: there was an audience, the 'show do' of their discussions can be analyzed as a performance precisely because the point was not to quarrel with the other leader, but rather to do it in public.

This model would also take place during physical meetings (usually concerted through the Facebook groups), but in those cases their audience was limited to the small amount of participants. While it is true that the performative dimension of these rituals was widely enhanced by the display of symbols, clothing styles, gestures and intonations that were made visible during these gatherings, their effectiveness was diminished in as much as the leaders were not able to access the disembodied *communitas* of (neo)pagans in Lima. Moreover, such events were rather sporadic and tended to appeal to more or less the same individuals each time. In the case of the spiritual rituals, as I will show briefly, the situation was not quite the same.

5.   Spiritual rituals

Sure enough, the use of the cyberspace was not alien to (neo)pagan religiosity in Lima: it was intrinsic to its history since the beginning. I have introduced paganism and neopaganism as embedded in the context of the New Age movement, which draws on cultural elements native to Western Europe (including the theosophical interpretation of Eastern traditions). Perhaps it could occur to the reader that Peru's pre-colonial past could offer a rich source for very different beliefs to emerge; nevertheless, and without implying that this could never happen, it is not an essential trait of this form of religiosity. Only one of my informants said he was inspired by local traditions, and even in that case it was an unnamed set of practices that he had observed her grandmother doing, and which were not linked with any

historically known culture of the past. In every other case, names like *Seax Wicca*, Celtic *Wicca* and Chaos *Magick* were invoked during my interviews, as much as they appeared in the discussions online.

In previous work,[30] I have described that (neo)paganism reached Lima through a forum called *Libro de Contactos de Wicca y Paganismo – Perú* ('Wiccan and Pagan Book of Contacts – Peru'), where posts from 1999 suggested earlier interactions that had not been preserved to the time when I conducted my fieldwork. My interviews, however, confirmed that in the early nineties information about this new spirituality was used by its first adepts in order to initiate themselves; as I have stated above, the ones who are now leaders are counted among them. Similarly, the socialization of new practitioners seems also to be deeply associated with media, it appears to be the most common source of information on this religiosity, both through the access to books and manuals as well as to popular culture.

Forums and Facebook groups are thus quintessential for the social reproduction of (neo)paganism, but I believe this is restrained to a mostly discursive dimension. It could be claimed that the political rituals described above also provide information for new followers to assimilate; and in that way they would not be extrinsic to the spiritual domain. Naturally, these act as ideal types devised by scholars in order to organize the data and interpret reality, but concrete situations rarely crystalize them purely. Still, although cyberspaces could be regarded as the arena of a self-initiation, I believe that their performative avail for this matter is rather reduced because this is usually individually constructed. However, they do serve the purpose of diffusing information regarding physical gatherings in which magic or devotional rituals take place.

An example of this would be the Sabbaths or eight yearly rituals performed by Leader A's group. These were public events in which even non-(neo)pagans were welcome to learn more about this religiosity. The group was called a coven, and within it there was a high-priest (Leader A), a priest and a priestess that practiced the Sabbaths. These events usually took place in Leader A's house, although they once carried it away in a public park. The altar was decorated with busts of 'the God' and 'the Goddess', salt and water, a white and a black candle, and wine and cake, as well as a small ceremonial knife or *athame*, a ceremonial sword and incense. Occasionally other elements were also present, but there were the constant ones. Over time, the group started to incorporate music (drums and winds) in different parts of the ritual, a touch of creativity that they added to the rest of the program that was taken from a manual written by the founder of their religion. The performers followed these instructions from what Leader A called 'the *ipad* of shadows', which he held as a more efficient alternative to a 'book of shadows' (or diary, in more mundane terms).

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[30] HUERTA: *De eclécticos e iniciados.*

An invocation of 'the God' and 'the Goddess' is held at the beginning, creating what is called 'the circle', a space within whose boundaries the ritual is to take place and that is deemed sacred until it is 'closed' at the end of the Sabbath. The two busts and the candles represent duality, while the *athame* and sword are also sacrificed with a mixture of salt and water that is also sprinkled around the circumference of the improvised temple. Incantations accompany these actions, while the incense burns and the music plays. These olfactory, visual, and auditory stimuli contribute to create the atmosphere that characterizes the solemn nature of the Sabbath. The cake and wine are shared with the crowd during a moment appointed for that matter in the manual, and conversation takes place for a few minutes. At the end of the ritual, the circle is cast off.

Spiritual rituals, thus, seem to rely heavily on traditionally stipulated ways of performing them if they are to act as conduits that grant communication with the transcendental realm. Even if some innovations are allowed – and technology is definitely not out of the question –, the virtual space alone cannot completely fulfil the effectiveness required by these rituals. It does, however, act as a main means for socialization, granting access to foreign symbols and practices that are by and by adopted and assimilated. Symbols are required not only to be displayed, but also to be manipulated in very precise ways. Sensitive stimuli enhance the experience, which in turn contributes to a cultural appropriation of the space that is rendered sacred only until the ritual is over. This mobility of the 'temple' allows for this and similar rituals to take place in whichever space is required, a trait that facilitates the adaptation of the instructions found in the manuals and books to the new environment.

Finally, I mentioned that a Sabbath was once held in a park. This happened only this one time during the time I conducted my fieldwork, but the meeting of charismatic leaders described above and most of the casual gatherings of (neo)pagans concerted in the Facebook groups were also celebrated in parks. According to misinterpretation of my interviews, this answers to the sense of holistic connection with nature that I introduced as typical of the New Age movement. However, this sense of holism is not shared by non-(neo)pagans. My informants told me that they usually keep their faith as a secret from their families and chose not to make it publicly visible because they fear rejection from a vastly Catholic population. The reason why such performative rituals rarely occur in public spaces is partly because of this, but also because of regulations that prohibit actions such as lighting candles or incense, or even allowing for a small crowd to gather without proper permission. This is why virtual spaces are an effective, creative alternative for social interaction, although the spiritual dimension of the rituals that can happen within them is deeply limited.

6. Conclusions

One of the main ideas that I draw from this analysis is that there are elements of each face of ritual in each other; that is, political rituals have a spiritual connection even if only slightly, and spiritual rituals reproduce the leaders charisma, as is the case of Leader A and his role as high priest of his group. This inspired the title, as shrines can carry out secular functions and cyberspaces can be deemed sacred. Yet, there seems to be a strong association between the effectiveness of spiritual rituals and their performance in physical spaces, just as much as that of political rituals seems to be linked to their interpretation in virtual spaces. The population of (neo)pagans in Lima constitutes a disembodied *communitas* that behaves like a network of individuals crafting their own eclectic, personalized beliefs, and sharing information through the media. It is this way that new adepts get to be self-initiated into foreign symbols and practices, which are adapted in order to fit in a new environment where access to public, green spaces is not always easy. Consequently, virtual and physical spaces dialogue with each other fluently, despite the fact that the former grants access to a wider audience and the latter allows for more stimuli to enhance the performative experience. In this way, (neo)pagans in Lima have creatively constructed a system of ritual practices that draws on technological assets that were present since its origins in this part of the world, appropriating tradition and redefining it in the process.

17

FUSION AND DISRUPTION:
A SUFI PILGRIMAGE TO THE BASILICA OF GUADALUPE

Lucía Cirianni Salazar

On 1987, a *tekke* (Sufi lodge) of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi *tariqa* (Sufi order) was founded in an upper-middle class neighborhood of Mexico City. Since then, some of the dervishes of this *tekke* and their spiritual guide, Sheikha Amina Teslima, perform a yearly pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe. Thus, they join millions of Mexicans who attend the gathering at the Basilica of Guadalupe every 12th of December to celebrate the Virgin of Guadalupe's apparition to Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac and how she ordered the construction of her shrine there. In this paper, I will attempt to analyze the experience of this yearly ritual from the perspective of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi order, whose members claim it to be a form of fusion with the most important expression of popular religion in the country and thus a sacred moment of intense spirituality for the Mexican people, and from the perspective of the Catholic pilgrims who observe the presence of the Sufi pilgrimage with a variety of reactions – from amusement to curiosity and even annoyance – in an attempt to understand this disruption of what they might consider the 'normal' form of pilgrimage to the Basilica. Between these discourses of fusion and disruption, I will reflect on classical concepts of the anthropology of ritual, such as Victor and Edith Turner's understanding of the term *communitas*.

Tonantzin-Guadalupe: A history of hybridity

Widely regarded as the most important religious symbol in Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe summons millions of pilgrims to her Basilica every year. Between the 11th and the 12th of December of 2014, according to estimations of Mexico City's local government, over seven million pilgrims visited the Basilica.[1] The importance of the Virgin of Guadalupe is thus self-evident and most explanations of her role in Mexican popular religion revolve around the subject of symbolical and ritual hybridity, that is, they explain the Virgin of Guadalupe as a combina-

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[1] See: D. DELGADO: *El Universal*, December 12th 2014, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/ciudad-metropoli/2014/arriban-mas-de-7-millones-de-peregrinos-en-la-villa-1061438.html (consulted on May 29th 2015).

tion of Catholicism and indigenous religious beliefs and practices. This blending of cultural traditions is thought to be designed by the Spanish Church as part of a general strategy of syncretism aimed at the religious conversion of native peoples.

Other, more specific, discourses emerge from this general matrix of anthropological and historical explanation of the social phenomenon known in Spanish as *guadalupanismo* – the Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of Mexican nationalism (as used by Father Hidalgo during the War of Independence), the Virgin of Guadalupe as a mother figure (known as 'the mother of all Mexicans' and also thought to represent at least two different indigenous feminine deities: *Tonantzin* and *Coatlicue*), the Virgin of Guadalupe as the feminine face of God, the Virgin of Guadalupe as a representative and protector of her 'race'[2] (*la Virgen morena*, 'the dark skinned Virgin'), etc. In the introduction to her edited book *Goddess of the Americas*, Ana Castillo summarizes some of these interpretations as well as the myth of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe to Juan Diego:

> Most Mexicans and Mexic-Amerindians recognize Her as Tonantzin, 'Our Mother'. Our Mother was every mountain, every summit, sometimes hand built, on which one could climb and pray to Mother Earth. But there was, in fact, one particular summit, the one of Tepeyac, where She appeared to the recently converted Aztec, Juan Diego – Our Lady of Tepeyac – and where She insisted Her temple be built. Four times She appeared, four being a sacred number of completion for indigenous peoples everywhere. It is the total number of the four cardinal points – the elements, air, fire, water, land. And there is one more number, one to make it complete, the center. She appeared, a fifth time, to Juan Diego's uncle, who lay on his *petate*,[3] gravely ill, and who recovered after the visitation.[4]

In this brief account, Ana Castillo also mentions the importance of high places (mountains, hills, and summits) as ancient centers of pilgrimage in the Americas, and Guadalupe's role as a provider of miracles for the sick, another common motivation for pilgrimage that exceeds the local determinations and inserts the shrine of Guadalupe into its wider Christian context.

The very name of the Virgin of Guadalupe has led to another level of speculation on hybridity, this time not only of indigenous and Spanish cultures, but of the hybrid origins of Spanish culture itself due to the history of Muslim-Christian relations in *al-Andalus*. The name Guadalupe resulted from the combination of the Arabic root to say 'valley' or 'river', '*wad*' (واد) and the Latin word for 'wolf',

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[2] While the concept of 'race' has been rejected by anthropology, the word *raza* is still used in Mexico in many ways, one of which is of proud self-identification. I am not using the word as a scientific term, but referring to that popular use of it in Mexican society.

[3] A *petate* is a kind of carpet made of rough vegetable fibers such as that of *Maguey*.

[4] A. CASTILLO: *Goddess of the Americas. La Diosa de las Américas. Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (New York 1996) xvi.

lupus. But, why was this name chosen for the Catholic appropriation of a native deity? Ana Castillo considers the name of the Virgin of Guadalupe to be the product of a mere phonetic adaptation of an indigenous word:

> According to the information given in the *Nican Mopohua* – a post-Conquest Nahuatl account of the Virgin of Guadalupe's five visitations in 1531 – when officials asked Juan Diego's *tío* Juan Bernardino, he may have responded that She had called Herself Tequatlasupe. Effective translation of language only works when you have similar symbols in both languages and, to be sure, a sense of the culture from which the other language derives. The Church officials, therefore, proceeded not to translate at all, but to make Castilian sense of the Nahuatl, and this is how, according to many scholars throughout the ages they came up with Guadalupe, patroness of Extremadura, Spain.[5]

While this may be so, it is also true that the name Guadalupe is the result of a long history of cultural exchange that determined the Spanish imaginary of 'the other' as a *moro*, that is, as an Andalusian Muslim, and they often compared the native peoples of America to Andalusian Muslims. Nevertheless, this level of cultural hybridity lost importance in America, where all specific knowledge of that historical context of Muslim-Christian relations was forgotten and replaced with a vague notion of 'otherness' imposed by the Spanish conquerors on the native peoples of Mexico, and thus Guadalupe came to be regarded only as a 'Castilian' or 'Spanish' name, as we can see in Ana Castillo's text. The name of the Virgin of Guadalupe represents a process in which that which was once a symbol of 'otherness' became a symbol of 'self-ness': *la morenita*, whose name came from a forgotten 'other', became a symbol of a new 'self' – the Mexican people she protects.

Therefore, although we can trace the origins of the figure of Guadalupe to a context of mixed Muslim-Christian presence (*al-Andalus*), its resignification in Mexican lands distanced the phenomenon of the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe from that original context in Spain, which results in a very different case from other Marian pilgrimages shared by Christians and Muslims, such as the pilgrimage to the House of the Virgin Mary (*Meryem Ana Evi*, in Turkish) in Ephesus, Turkey.[6] Revered by Christians and Muslims, it is not strange to find that sites associated to the Virgin Mary become places of shared devotion in regions of the world where these two religions have coexisted for centuries, or, as Robert Logan Sparks points out:

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[5] A. CASTILLO: *Goddess of the Americas* xv-xvi.

[6] On this case, see: R.L. SPARKS: *Ambiguous spaces. A contextualisation of shared pilgrimage in Ephesus* (PhD dissertation, Tilburg University 2011).

> One could say that these ambiguous sites are shared because they are shared (i.e. because they are a priori part of a shared physical and cultural space), at the risk of engaging in what would appear to be a circular tautology. This deeper reality of co-inhabitance culturally and historically, naturally links to a shared and negotiated spatial practice, an *adab* (savoir faire) of hospitality and ritual, when it functions at its best.[7]

However, the same cannot be said for the case of the Jerrahi dervishes' pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe. Muslims have indeed been present in Mexico and Latin America in general since the 16th century,[8] but this presence has always been that of a discrete minority, far from the hegemonic presence of Christianity that was imposed on the indigenous population through evangelization. Here, the common devotion to the figure of Mary still functions as a connecting point for Mexican Muslims to their Christian environment (the element that ultimately sustains their claim on spiritual fusion), but it fails to provide recognition from Christian pilgrims who have never been in direct contact with Islam and Muslims, causing the reaction I refer to as a *disruption* when Muslim pilgrims appear at the hill of Tepeyac.

A Mexican *Laylat ul-Qadr*

I have participated and observed the pilgrimage of the *Nur Ashki Jerrahi* dervishes to the Basilica of Guadalupe on two occasions – one on 2009 and the other on 2014. The comparison of these two experiences, the dialogue on the subject with some of the dervishes of this community, and the reading of Cynthia Hernández's excellent thesis[9] on the history of the Mexican Nur Ashki Jerrahi *tariqa* have provided me with the necessary information to analyze the perspective of these dervishes' participation in the yearly pilgrimage as an experience of *fusion* with Mexico's most visible and massively attended expression of popular religion.

According to Cynthia Hernández, the encounter of this Sufi *tariqa* with *guadalupanismo* first occurred when a member of a group of *concheros*[10] called Mar-

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[7] SPARKS: *Ambiguous spaces* 15.

[8] See: H. TABOADA: *La sombra del Islam en la conquista de América* (UNAM/Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 2004).

[9] C. HERNÁNDEZ GONZÁLEZ: *El Islam en la Ciudad de México: La orden Halveti Yerrahi y su ritual de iniciación a partir de los años 80 del siglo XX* (Unpublished undergraduate dissertation, National School of History and Anthropology, Mexico 2009).

[10] The *Concheros* are the members of a religious tradition in Mexico that claims to keep pre-hispanic rituals and beliefs alive. They identify the Virgin of Guadalupe as the Goddess *Tonantzin* and they perform dances outside the Basilica as well as other Catholic temples built to replace indigenous sacred places in a similar way as that of the Tepeyac. For further information on this tradition, see: S. ROSTAS: *Carrying the word. The Concheros dance in Mexico City* (Colorado 2009).

garita met Sheikh Nur[11] in New York, converted to Islam and became a *Jerrahi* dervish. Margarita would later introduce Sheikh Nur to a family of *concheros* who also became dervishes, thus initiating a history of fusion between the two traditions that went through a *rite de passage* of its own when Sheikh Nur participated for the first time in the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe carrying a relic of the Prophet Muhammad with him.

> *Fueron las obligaciones, las danzas a las que nos acompañó … su visión de armonía, de concordia, de amor hacia todas las criaturas, hacia la creación, hacia el Creador, el respeto de él hacia nuestra tradición, y su profundo conocimiento de las tradiciones indígenas lo que llevó al sheij Nur a acudir a la Villa a honrar a la Virgen de Guadalupe, la 'patrona' del país, con una reliquia del Profeta Muhammad que Muzaffer Efendi había llevado a Estados Unidos, la cual, trajo consigo Nur para que la herencia espiritual del linaje Yerrahi floreciera en la Ciudad de México. Tal tradición se lleva a cabo en la actualidad desde esa primera visita.*[12]

When I asked some of the dervishes about the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe, the explanations varied, but most of them agreed that by joining the pilgrimage of millions of other Mexicans, they were merging with the most powerfully spiritual night in this land, an opinion that was most eloquently expressed on the pilgrimage of 2014 when Sheikha Amina referred to the 12th of December as a Mexican *Laylat ul-Qadr*[13].

The Nur Ashki Jerrahi dervishes who participate in the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe[14] claim that all traditions have in fact the same origin – a

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[11] Sheikh Nur al-Anwar al-Jerrahi, along with Sheikha Fariha al-Jerrahi, founded the Nur Ashki Jerrahi *tekke* in New York after being invested with the rank of Sheikhs by Sheikh Muzzafer Ozak al-Jerrahi who was then Gand Sheikh of the Halveti Jerrahi *tariqa* in Istanbul. Sheikh Nur would later found the *tekke* in Mexico City and, after his death in 1995, he would be succeeded by Sheikha Amina Teslima al-Jerrahi as the head of the Mexican *tekke*.

[12] "It was the obligations, the dances to which he went with us… his vision of harmony, of concordance, of love to all creatures, to creation, to the Creator, his respect for our tradition, and his profound knowledge of the indigenous traditions that led Sheikh Nur to come to the Villa [the Basilica] and honor the Virgin of Guadalupe, the country's 'patroness', bringing with him a relic of Prophet Muhammad that had been taken to the United States by Muzaffer Efendi; Sheikh Nur brought the relic with him so the spiritual heritage of the Jerrahi lineage would flourish in Mexico City. This tradition has been practiced from that moment until today." Fragment of an interview to Sherifa, one of the *concheros* who became Jerrahi dervishes, conducted by Cynthia Hernández. See: HERNÁNDEZ GONZÁLEZ: *El Islam en la Ciudad de México* 345.

[13] *Laylat ul-Qadr* or the Night of Power is mentioned in the 97th Sura of the Holy Qur'an (*al-Qadr*) as the night in which the Revelation was sent down to Humanity through Prophet Muhammad. It is celebrated every year during the month of *Ramadan*.

[14] It is worth mentioning that not all Mexican Jerrahi dervishes participate in this ritual. Some of them converted to Islam as part of a personal process in which they were looking to separate from the Mexican Catholic context, so they show not enthusiasm at the idea of participating in what they

single divinity, God. By acknowledging that traditions are "masks of God"[15], they can honor different traditions emerging from various cultural and historical contexts and even participate in some of their rituals without any contradiction to their beliefs as Muslims. Thus, they associate the Virgin of Guadalupe to Mariam and to all expressions of maternal love (such as the Goddess *Tonantzin*, 'Our Mother') and interpret them through an Islamic lens with the guide of Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak's book entitled *Blessed Virgin Mary*[16].

In two different interviews conducted after my first observation of the pilgrimage,[17] I came across the opinion that these links with local traditions were important 'bridges' to facilitate the experience of conversion to Islam. In this way, conversion is not conceived as a hostile rejection of their religious origins (and often of their family's religion) but as something that enriched and perfected their previous beliefs.

The performance of the pilgrimage itself is characterized by a combination of elements of Turkish Sufism and *guadalupanismo*. On December 11th, the part of the community that will be performing the ritual gathers at the *tekke* and from there they hire a *pesero*[18] to take them as close as possible to the Basilica of Guadalupe. On the way to the Basilica, they start performing *dhikr*, a Sufi ritual of remembrance of God. During the *dhikr*, *ilahis*[19] and *canciones guadalupanas* are sung, accompanied by Mexican and Middle Eastern musical instruments like the *ney* (a flute made of a hollow reed) and the *jarana* (an instrument that looks like a small guitar, typical of the state of Veracruz, Mexico).

Once they reach the Basilica, the dervishes form a line behind Sheikha Amina, and continue their litany on the way to the *tilma*[20]. There, they sing a ver-

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see as a Catholic ritual. In a private conversation, one of the told me that he "just didn't believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe", and he clarified that he had discussed his position on the subject with Sheikha Amina and that she respected it. Although opinions inside the community are divided and the subject has been deemed as 'polemical', nobody is forced to participate in the pilgrimage, so the disagreement is not a cause for conflict. Most of the tension around the matter comes from arguments with members of other Muslim communities in Mexico who have harshly criticized this practice, either because they disagree with all kinds of Sufi pilgrimage or because they see this particular ritual as acceptance of Mexican 'idolatry' of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

[15] An expression used by Sheikh Nur on a letter sent to the Mexican dervishes on 1987.

[16] M. OZAK: *Blessed Virgin Mary* (New York 1992).

[17] L. CIRIANNI SALAZAR: *Vínculo y ritual en la metrópolis moderna. Reflexiones sobre una orden sufí en la Ciudad de México* (Unpublished thesis, National School of Anthropology and History, México 2010).

[18] A small bus, one of the main forms of public transport in Mexico City.

[19] In Turkey, this term refers to religious poetry that is sung in ceremonies such as the *dhikr*.

[20] A *tilma* was an outer garment used by indigenous men in colonial Mexico. According to the accounts of the visitation of the Virgin of Guadalupe to San Diego, she miraculously imprinted her image on his *tilma* as proof of her apparition. The *tilma* is hanged in the Basilica, and all pilgrims attempt to pass under the image, this being the climatic point of their pilgrimage.

sion of the traditional Mexican birthday song '*Las Mañanitas*'[21] whose lyrics have been transformed by the Mexican dervishes to adapt it as an *ilahi*. After passing under the *tilma*, the group chooses a place near or even inside the church and rearrange in three concentric circles (with the *Sheikha*, the *Imam*, the *Murshida* and the musicians at the center, followed by the women and then by the men) to re-initiate the *dhikr*, this time as they would normally perform it in the *tekke*[22]. After this last performance of *dhikr*, the Jerrahi dervishes leave the shrine and look for another *pesero* to go back to the *tekke*, all the time singing *ilahis* or reciting Suras of the Qur'an.

'Where are you from?'

While for the Mexican Jerrahi dervishes there is a rich history of contact between their *tariqa* and *guadalupanismo* that explains their participation in the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe as a spiritual *fusion* of two religious traditions in a single 'night of power', for the Catholic pilgrims who witness the dervishes' presence at the Basilica there is no background to understand the phenomenon. If the perspective of the dervishes is one of *fusion*, the other pilgrims seem to experience the presence of the Jerrahi dervishes as a *disruption,* something that interrupts the landscape of their own ritual by introducing an element of strangeness, something that they cannot identify.

From the moment the dervishes leave the *tekke* in search for a *pesero*, people around them start staring at them with curiosity. Even during the journey, the music coming from the *pesero* calls the attention of those around it, but it is not until the dervishes reach the Basilica that this reaction of curiosity gives way to different forms of interaction. As we walked towards the Basilica, some of the other pilgrims started taking pictures, whispering and pointing their fingers at us; eventually, a few were brave enough to approach the line of dervishes and ask (in Spanish and sometimes also in English) "Where are you from?" Disconcerted, the dervishes usually answered "We're from here, from Mexico City", but the situation did not allow for more complete explanations, so their answer was met with looks of incredulity and giggles.

On December of 2014, as we passed under the *tilma*, singing *ilahis* and the adapted version of *Las Mañanitas*, the staring and the taking of pictures gave way to a few expressions of annoyance at the disruption of what is considered to be the 'normal' form of pilgrimage. Two or three times, a guard addressed the group asking them to lower the volume of their voices and demanding respect for the mass that was about to start, but the dervishes were too deeply engaged in the

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[21] Pilgrims traditionally sing *Las Mañanitas* to the Virgin of Guadalupe.
[22] That is, not constrained by the limited space inside a small bus.

ritual to give an organized response or, in some cases, to even notice the situation.

In both of the times I attended the pilgrimage, the last part of the ritual in which the dervishes were arranged in circles to perform *dhikr* became a spectacle for the other pilgrims. We were quickly surrounded by a crew much larger than us, some of them taking pictures, some of them filming the *dhikr*. Clearly aware that it was not an appropriate moment to ask questions to the dervishes and assuming a position of *spectators*, the pilgrims surrounding us would start talking to each other, speculating about what they were seeing. "They are rabbis," said one, "no, they are from Iraq," said another, "they're *apaches*!" exclaimed someone; every guess was followed by giggles, but some scolded at the ones who laughed, implying a demand of respect for what they identified as a religious ceremony not entirely unlike their own.

Fusion and disruption

So far I have used the concept of *fusion* to refer to the perspective of the Jerrahi dervishes who participate in the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe, but both the idea of a collective fusion and the context of pilgrimage inevitably lead to that milestone in the anthropology of ritual – the Turners' concept of *communitas*. In this section, I will reflect on the uses and the limitations of the notion of *communitas* to analyze the case described above.

Communitas is defined as a transitional state during which a group of people establish egalitarian relations by/after getting rid of all structural[23] determinations that usually differentiate them in terms of status, class or any other form of social organization. This stage of inclusive and egalitarian association is characteristic of collective rituals such as pilgrimages – during the pilgrimage, all of the elements that usually identify the participants within their social environment are relegated to a secondary position and their condition of pilgrims becomes temporarily their only or primary reference for self-definition.

> It is as though there are here two major 'models' for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less'. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, *community*, or even *communion* of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.[24]

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[23] Here the concept of structure is specifically that of the Turners' and not that of Lévi-Strauss, for example.

[24] V. TURNER: *The ritual process. Structure and anti-structure* (New York 1991) 96.

Is the *fusion* we described in any way a state of *communitas*? To answer this question, it is important to distinguish the difference between the discourse of the Jerrahi dervishes and the actual experience of pilgrimage.

On a discursive dimension, the Jerrahi dervishes do claim to blend with the Mexican tradition of performing pilgrimage to the Basilica, they are only 'superficially' different from the other pilgrims since the different religious traditions have the same origin and the same end – the adoration of the one God. Thus, although they belong to a religious tradition unknown to most of the pilgrims who go to the Basilica of Guadalupe, they are *essentially* not different from them. This *communion* with the Mexican tradition is emphasized not only by attending the same pilgrimage but through the combination of cultural elements from both traditions such as songs and musical instruments; discourse is thus *enacted* but again the question arises as to whether this enactment is enough to identify it as an experience of *communitas*.

Here, the matter of the dervishes' presence at the Basilica of Guadalupe being perceived as a *disruption* of 'recognizable' forms of pilgrimage becomes important – it is the strangeness imprinted by the gaze of the other that, in my opinion, prevents the dervishes' enactment of their fusion to be complete and thus to become an experience of *communitas*. In other words, to become the same as the other, the other also has to recognize you as his/her equal. Without this basic element of reciprocity, *communitas* cannot take place. Through the question 'where are you from?', the pilgrims who observed the dervishes were expressing that impression of difference in terms of geographical distance – those who are different must be from another place, an impression reiterated through hypotheses that ambiguously traced the dervishes' different symbols and behaviors to the Middle East ("they are from Iraq"[25]), to Semitic but non-Christian religions ("they are rabbis") or simply to someone exotic and unknown ("they are *apaches*"[26]).

The concept of *communitas* presupposes, then, a rather homogenous cultural context. Even in the structural stage that precedes and follows that of *communitas*, the differences observed are of a nature that can be dissolved during the ritual process because they are not directly involved in the ritual, but the same cannot be said of cultural differences that are at the core of how the ritual is performed.

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[25] After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the constant mention of that country in the media ended up making it one of the few, if not the only, representative of the Middle East for many people in Mexico.

[26] Interestingly, the idea of the *apache*, although it is a reference to native American peoples, is not really associated with local conceptions of the indigenous but with films and comic books about cowboys where the 'Indians' are representative of 'exotic' or 'primitive' cultures. It is also true that the suggestion of the dervishes being *apaches* was no more than a joke that just meant 'we don't know who they are, but they are not like us.'

By combining elements of Sufi Islam and Mexican (implicitly Catholic) *guada-lupanismo* the differences between a group of pilgrims and the other are not erased but actually emphasized.

This is not to say that the perspective of the Jerrahi dervishes is wrong, whilst that of the other pilgrims is right, but to point to the limitations of the concept of *communitas* to completely analyze rituals in multicultural contexts such as metropolis where 'new religious movements'[27] emerge and coexist with long-established traditions.

Criticism of the Turners' classical concepts is not new, as Victor Turner had already recognized in *The Ritual Process*:

> More than once I have been accused of overgeneralizing and of misapplying concepts like 'liminality' and 'communitas'. These terms, it is argued, may adequately describe or account for social and cultural processes and phenomena found in preliterate societies, but have limited use in explaining sociocultural systems of much greater scale and complexity.[28]

Turner's response to these criticisms was to make the concepts more flexible by talking about the 'liminoid' instead of the 'liminal' in contexts such as theatrical representations and games, and by defining different kinds of *communitas*:

> The scattered clues and indications we have encountered in preliterate and preindustrial societies of the existence in their cultures, notably in liminality and structural inferiority, of the egalitarian model we have called normative *communitas*, become in complex and literate societies, both ancient and modern, a positive torrent of explicitly formulated views on how men may best live together in comradely harmony. Such views may be called, as we have just noted, ideological *communitas*.[29]

Nevertheless, this response does not address the issue I have mentioned above-the presence of differences that are impossible to suppress during the ritual because they are constitutive elements of how the ritual is performed. This possibility emerges in what Victor Turner refers to as "modern societies", as we see in the case I have described here, but I would also suggest it exists as a possibility in other kinds of society too, that in fact any society is susceptible of witnessing such disruptions and that, in some cases, these may be important elements of cultural transformation just as they can remain as relatively marginal phenomena.

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[27] Here the word 'new' clearly refers to the context, since Sufi Islam is by no means 'new' but its presence in Mexico City certainly is.
[28] TURNER: *The ritual process* vi.
[29] IDEM 134.

In this sense, my criticism of Turner's concept is closer to that of John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, who understand pilgrimages as arenas of 'contestation'.[30]

Let us take the example of *concheros*. As I explained in the first section of this chapter, *guadalupanismo* emerged as a hybrid of prehispanic religion and Spanish Catholicism. If we were to follow a simple narrative of this process, *guadalupanismo* would appear as a homogeneous blend of two great cultural traditions; that is, indeed, the notion behind the nationalist conception of the 'Mexican' as a *mestizo*[31]. Nevertheless, *guadalupanismo* is not really a single phenomenon, a homogeneous blend. The *concheros*, whose presence in the Basilica is not questioned like that of the Jerrahi dervishes because they are not, by any means, a new phenomenon in Mexico, are in fact a form of contestation to the Catholic narrative. If, for Catholics, Tonantzin is, in fact, Guadalupe, for *concheros* it is the other way around, and this difference of perspectives determines the way they participate in the yearly ritual: they dance what they claim to be a prehispanic dance which other pilgrims do not.

Here, the difference between long established situations of coexistence of different religious groups and the disruptive appearance of an unknown presence arises again. More established traditions of shared pilgrimage imply an instituted procedure of coexistence in the sacred space. As Robert Logan Sparks explains:

> … boundaries are important and this does indeed form an important element of adab and etiquette in the multi-religious or shared ritual site, when determining spatial practice and the very physical construction by those who 'represent space' in Lefebveren terms. As a key example, Couroucli mentions that Muslim and Eastern Orthodox clergy keep a respectful distance from each other and do not conduct rituals at the same time or place at shared sites in Turkey, in the context of a paper delivered regarding the church of St. George on Buyukada, an Island that forms part of Istanbul.[32]

Something similar can be observed in the case of how *concheros* participate in the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe – there is an implied understanding that the place they occupy at the moment of performing their dance is outside of the temple. This arrangement, instituted, accepted by both parties[33] and unquestioned, allows for a peaceful coexistence of two different groups of pilgrims. The

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[30] J. EADE & M. SALLNOW (eds.): *Contesting the sacred: The anthropology of Christian pilgrimage* (London and New York 1991).

[31] The word *mestizo* was used in colonial times to refer to people of both Spanish and indigenous ancestry.

[32] SPARKS: *Ambiguous spaces* 227-228.

[33] In colonial times, the evangelized indigenous population usually attended religious ceremonies held at the yard in front of a church, known in Spanish as the *atrio*, instead of inside the church. The place occupied by *concheros* outside of the Basilica mirrors this colonial organization of space.

situation is again different when the coexistence is not yet socially instituted as part of the 'normal' pilgrimage but is still seen as exceptional. In the case of the Jerrahi dervishes, there is no established place for the performance of *dhikr*, this matter is decided on every occasion. On the first time I attended the pilgrimage (2009), the *dhikr* was performed outside of the temple, half way towards the hilltop of Tepeyac; in 2014, the *dhikr* was performed inside of the temple, which would have been impossible if the space inside the Basilica had been completely occupied by other pilgrims as it had been on 2009 (it was earlier in the day, so many pilgrims had not arrived yet) or if the group of Jerrahi dervishes had been larger. The arrangement for simultaneous presence in the sacred space is, then, in cases like this, not socially established or incorporated in the structure of the pilgrimage but constantly negotiated and crossed by changing criteria.

Therefore, although it is true that a state of *communitas* would require mutual recognition, the fact that there is such recognition, as in the case of Catholich pilgrims and *concheros*, does not necessarily produce *communitas*, that is to say, it is not necessarily expressed in ways that erase structural-social differences but also in ways that acknowledge such differences and arrange their coexistence.

These arrangements are of course determined by instituted forms of power- in this case, the Catholic Church is the dominant institution, and this domain is expressed in their management of the sacred space. Other presences are either incorporated through well-established forms of coexistence or dealt with as they appear as *disruptive* presences. Interestingly, if we observe the testimony on how the Sufi pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe was established, we can see that it was through the already instituted but still relatively marginal presence of *concheros* that this new disruptive presence became possible. This interconnection of variations from the hegemonic discourse and practice of a particular pilgrimage speaks of a constant production of meaning and practice, the arena is therefore not only of contestation but of creative imagination of new social realities.

Finally, what can we conclude about the concept of *communitas* for the analysis of pilgrimages like the one described in this work? The two theoretical approaches I have mentioned earlier – the Turners' concept of *communitas* as a state of anti-structure and Eade and Sallnow's more political approach to ritual as a space for contestation – have been described as different, if not opposed, paradigms in the study of ritual.[34] While my understanding of the Jerrahi dervishes' pilgrimage is closer to the latter, I do not see the two approaches as entirely opposed, nor do I adhere to a progressive narrative of theoretical 'development' according to which the notion of contestation would replace 'outdated' *communitas*. What I have referred to here as an experience of *fusion* is indeed close to the

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[34] See: S. COLEMAN: 'Do you believe in pilgrimage? Communitas, contestation and beyond', in *Anthropological Theory* 2/3 (2002) 355-368.

notion of *communitas* in the sense that, in the dimension of the dervishes' discourse of their experience of the pilgrimage, the elements that separate them from the other pilgrims are indeed 'dissolved' into de essence of a common devotion to the Virgin Mary, Guadalupe or *Tonantzin*, all of these being names to refer to a single quality emanating from a single God, one that relates to femininity and motherly love. While it does not explain the phenomenon of the pilgrimage in its entirety, the concept of *communitas* as a state of anti-structure cannot be taken here in strictly the same sense as that given by the Turners, but it does provide a theoretical support for an *experience* of the pilgrimage that is no less real as a component of the ritual situation analyzed here than the experience of *disruption* expressed by the other pilgrims and which can be better understood from the dynamic and political perspective of contestation. Furthermore, I propose the use of the words 'fusion' and 'disruption' precisely with the intention of approaching the described phenomenon from a perspective that is inspired but not bound by these theoretical paradigms.

If I were to draw any general conclusion from this analysis of the Jerrahi pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe, that conclusion would be that although less ambitious in terms of anthropological theory, concepts like *fusion* and *disruption* can help us to make these parallel perspectives visible as social realities and to deepen contemporary critical analyses of ritual. These are concepts that are not meant to close an explanation of the phenomenon of pilgrimage but to open a discussion on the pilgrims' participation in a process that, when observed from this perspective, appears as an ever-changing cultural context.

18

RITUAL AUTHENTICITY AS SOCIAL CRITICISM

Suzanne van der Beek

1.   Introduction

Authenticity has become an important concept in discussing our contemporary social situation in Western Europe.[1] Especially in discussions on religious identity and other spiritual activities the concept invariably shows up.[2] Despite its ever-presence in both academic and daily conversation, it remains difficult to put the finger directly on the meaning of authenticity. In his study on the subject, the American anthropologist Charles Lindholm argues that "[a]t minimum, it is the leading member of a set of values that includes sincere, essential, natural, original, and real."[3] Among these related concepts, authenticity seems to hold a specialized position: "Unlike its cousins, authenticity stands alone; it has higher, more spiritual claims to make."[4] Why it holds this preferred position, and how it lays claim to it, continues to be unclear. Perhaps it is because the notion is so notoriously difficult to define, and therefore remains a necessarily vague concept, that it so often meets with sighs of exasperation, even contempt. Due to our inability to pin down the notion of authenticity, it is in danger of becoming a hollow concept, vaguely hovering above its neighbors. However, the popularity of the notion points towards a deeply rooted and widespread understanding of who we are, how our spiritual identities are shaped, and how we relate to each other and the world we inhabit. Therefore, it is important to seriously look at this concept and unpack the idea of authenticity.

The present paper will attempt to do so in the context of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. It will intentionally take the shape of an explorative essay,

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[1] See C. LINDHOLM: *Culture and authenticity* (Oxford 2008); L. TRILLING: *Sincerity and authenticity* (Harvard 1972).

[2] See, among many others: J.S. BIELO: *Emerging evangelicals: Faith, modernity, and the desire for authenticity* (New York, NY 2011); R.A. BECK: *The authenticity of faith: The varieties and illusions of religious experience* (Abilene, TX 2012); C. YOUNG: *Authenticity: Real faith in a phony, superficial world* (Downers Grove, IL 2011).

[3] LINDHOLM: *Culture and authenticity* 1.

[4] IDEM 1-2.

in order to follow the meandering thoughts that led up to the conclusions drawn. By analyzing the use of authenticity in contemporary pilgrim discourse, it proposes to show how the notion functions in a ritual setting.[5] After following the pilgrim's use of the concept, we will find that, rather than pointing inwardly, authenticity is used as an opportunity for distancing oneself from society and thereby creating an idealized version of one's identity. The Camino will prove an ideal setting for this process as it provides pilgrims with a surrounding that can be understood as a direct counterpart to their everyday life. The argument will be made that authenticity, rather than seen as an existential core, functions as an important factor in the construction of ritual identity as a process of negation.

2.   Pilgrim authenticity

The Camino is a suitable context for unpacking the notion of authenticity as a result of the way the ritual has developed over the last twenty to thirty years. The history of the Camino can be traced back for over a thousand years, to the moment when the remains of the body of the apostle St James the Elder were discovered in Galicia, a region in the North-West of Spain. After this discovery, Santiago de Compostela quickly became one of the three most visited Christian pilgrimage shrines in Europe.[6] Over the centuries, the popularity of the pilgrimage to Santiago fluctuated as the religious, political, and social climate of Europe changed.[7] In recent history, the pilgrimage had lost most of its initial authority and the numbers of pilgrims remained low, until relatively sudden, at end of the last century, the ritual started attracting pilgrims once more. The official pilgrim office in Santiago has published rapports that show an increase from 2,491 pilgrims in 1986 to 215,880 pilgrims in 2013.[8] These contemporary pilgrims have shaped the Camino as a ritual that befits potential participants from a wide range of (religious) backgrounds and

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[5] A less developed version of this article was presented on the 2nd Global conference on Sacred Journeys, July 3-5 2015, Oxford. I am indebted to all participants of that discussion for their comments and suggestions. See conference proceedings, forthcoming.

[6] M. STOKSTAD: *Santiago de Compostela in the age of the great pilgrimages* (Norman, OK 1987); J. SUMPTION: *Pilgrimage: An image of mediaeval religion* (London 1975).

[7] R.C.L. GONZÁLEZ: 'The Camino de Santiago and its contemporary renewal: Pilgrims, tourists and territorial identities', in *Culture and Religion* 14/1 (2013) 8-22, p. 5-10; S. GRABOW: 'The Santiago de Compostela pilgrim routes: The development of European cultural heritage policy and practice from a critical perspective', in *European Journal of Archaeology* 13/1 (2010) 89-116; S.R. ROSEMAN: 'Santiago de Compostela in the Year 2000: From religious center to European city of culture', in E. BADONE & S.R. ROSEMAN (eds.): *Intersecting journeys. The anthropology of pilgrimage and tourism* (Urbana/Chicago 2004) 68-88.

[8] http://www.peregrinossantiago.es/esp/wp-content/uploads/informes/peregrinaciones2013.pdf

interests.[9] Amid this large amount of possible interpretations of the Camino, notions of identity and authenticity have taken a foregrounded position in the pilgrim experience. Above all, the contemporary Camino is a ritual that is explicitly promoted as an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of one's obstacles in life, one's desires, one's youth, family, and background – in short: one's identity. This opportunity is to a large extend the result of some practical conditions guaranteed by the journey: by distancing oneself from daily life the pilgrim creates a space of contemplation.[10] Therefore, the discourse that surrounds notions of authenticity on the Camino often revolves around notion of separation, introspection, reflection. To illustrate how this concept is discussed, I offer the following three examples:

Example 1
In the popular Dutch television show *Kruispunt*, presenter Wilfred Kemp interviews pilgrims on the Camino. When he asks a 78 year old Australian man for his 'life philosophy', the man answers:

> Well, I can only answer that by telling you what Herman Hesse [said]. He said: 'There is no reality except the one contained within you. That is why so many people lead such an unreal life. They see the images outside themselves as reality, and never allow the world within to assert itself.'

When Kemp then asks him what the Camino has brought him so far, he answers that he's been brought back to his childhood. "That's one thing I'm finding, I sing as I walk."[11]

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9 L. OVIEDO, S. DE COURCIER & M. FARIAS: 'Rise of pilgrims on the Camino to Santiago: Sign of change or religious revival?', in *Review of Religious Research* 56/3 (2014) 433-442; L.D. HARMAN: 'Secularization and the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage', in L.D. HARMAN (ed.):.*A sociology of pilgrimage. Embodiment, identity, transformation* (London 2014) 128-145; M. VAN UDEN & J. PIEPER: 'Pilgrims to Santiago: A case-study of their spiritual experiences', in P. POST, J. PIEPER & M. VAN UDEN (eds.): *The modern pilgrim. Multidisciplinary explorations of Christian pilgrimage* (=Liturgia condenda 8) (Leuven 1998) 205-219.

10 In this condition, one might recognize VICTOR TURNER's famous 'liminal phase', which he argued constituted the defining pilgrim experience. He first formulated this concept in his essay 'Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage' that appeared in his book titled *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual* (Ithica 1967) 93-111. Later on, he expended on the concept in works like *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* (Chicago, IL 1969), especially the chapter titled 'Liminality and communitas' 94-130, and *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society* (Ithaca, NY 1974), especially the chapter titled 'Passages, margins, and poverty: Religious symbols of communitas' 231-271.

11 W. KEMP, pres.: *Kruispunt: Verhalen van de Camino* (RKK 24 mei 2015).

Example 2
One of the most popular series of guide books to the Camino is written by John Brierly. He offers texts to guide the pilgrim along the 'Mystical path' as well as on the 'Practical Path'. In his guide to the Portuguese Way, on the stage from Vilarinho to Barcelos, Brierly provides the following spiritual guidance:

> We have mastered how to travel to the moon but we don't know how to find inner peace. *Charity begins at home* is an old saying containing much wisdom. The breakdown of relationships is endemic in our affluent western world – we don't need to switch on the television to witness war. We are at war with ourselves, with our families, with and between our local communities and within our own country. If we want to create peace in our world we don't need to step outside our neighborhood – we just need to develop an open door and an open-heart right here right now.[12]

Example 3
On her daily blog about her experiences on the Camino, one Dutch pilgrim writes the following:

> Many things are happening to me today. I can see and feel myself change. I keep coming back to thoughts that I had earlier. And every time they become more nuanced. It is true that you start to think differently on and because of the Camino. What seems to be a judgment one day, turns out to be an insight. Everything happens for a reason. I thought that the Camino was a flight. A flight from everything and everyone, but especially from myself. But no matter where you flee to, no matter how far you go, alone or with someone else, you always bring yourself with you. So you can't flee from yourself. The beautiful thing about the Camino is that the opposite happens. You only become closer to yourself. I notice a process of change within me. And the Camino helps me with that.[13]

In these examples, we find the idea of a return: a search for something inside ourselves that makes us human, something pure and whole. A return that can be shaped by going back to our childhood (as in Example 1), our families and local communities (as in Example 2), and ultimately to ourselves (as in Example 3). In these examples, as in many other pilgrim narratives, we find a discourse that tells us to 'find who we truly are' and to 'take the time to really get to know ourselves'. The notion of words like 'truly' and 'really' implies the existence of a core that is ever-present and never-changing. Similarly, the notion of return implies that this authenticity is something we possessed before, the idea of innocence lost. This begs the question: how and why have we lost this? The answer to this question is as

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12 J. BRIERLY: *A pilgrim's guide to the Camino Portugués* (London 2014) 126.
13 M. VAN DER KRAAN: 'Over de Matagrande (1078m)', blogpost on waarbenjij.nu (May 23 2011) http://meldepelgrim.waarbenjij.nu/reisverslag/3884264/over-de-matagrande-1078-m.

widespread as the problem and is most directly addressed in the examples given above by John Brierly when he criticizes "our affluent western world": our true selves have been pushed away and replaced by short-lived and artificial substitutes generated by a late modern and super diverse society that offers easy but superficial satisfaction to our every whim. This speed, which is dictated by societal institutes such as work, family, or government, does not befit our human pace and alienates us from our true rhythm. It leaves us incapable of finding such much sought-after ideals like truth, love, and peace – in short: our lost innocence. This is the discourse that is constructed around the notion of authenticity on the Camino to Santiago.[14]

3.   Contextualizing pilgrim authenticity

This interpretation of authenticity is not exclusive to pilgrims on the Camino. It reminds one inevitably of the philosophies of some of the New Age movements in Western society.[15] British anthropologist/sociologist Paul Heelas points out that the common ground in the many manifestations of the New Age movement is based on the assumption that our spiritual discontent and our consequent inadequacy to cope with existential issues are the result of the culture that we live in.[16] He described this idea as followed:

> Perfection can only be found in moving beyond the socialized self – widely known as the 'ego' but also as the 'lower self', 'intellect' or the 'mind'- thereby encountering a new realm of being. It is what we are *by nature*. Indeed, the most pervasive and significant aspect of the *lingua franca* of the New Age is that the person is, in essence, spiritual. To experience the 'Self' itself is to experience … 'inner spirituality'. … The inner realm, and the inner realm alone, is held to serve as the source of authentic vitality,

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[14] There is another discussion about authenticity that can be found on the Camino that refers to a definite hierarchy in "pilgrim-ness" that can be found among pilgrims. In that discussion, we find reflections on the authenticity of pilgrims who don't carry their own backpacks, take no interest in the historical or spiritual dimensions of the journey, sleep in hotels, etc. For a discussion on this type of pilgrim authenticity, see N.L. FREY: *Pilgrim stories. On and off the road to Santiago* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1998) 125-136; L.D. HARMAN: *A sociology of pilgrimage* 242-261. The present discussion is interested not in how authenticity is distributed among pilgrims, but the dynamics through which people adopt the pilgrim identity to find authenticity as human beings.

[15] The fact that these ideas are present on the Camino does not, I would argue, mean that the Camino has gone 'New Age', but rather that the New Age philosophy has become widely accepted in our society today. In this sense Sutcliffe and Bowman seem to have been correct in their remark that "contrary to predictions that New Age would go mainstream, now it's as if the mainstream is going new Age." S. SUTCLIFFE & M. BOWMAN: 'Introduction', in S. SUTCLIFFE & M. BOWMAN (eds.): *Beyond New Age: Exploring alternative spirituality* (Edinburgh 2000) 1-13, p. 11.

[16] P. HEELAS: *The New Age movement: The celebration of the Self and the sacralization of modernity* (Oxford 1996) 18.

creativity, love, tranquility, wisdom, power, authority and all those other qualities that are held to comprise the perfect life.[17]

Many of the elements in our contemporary lives that we experience as sacred or spiritual pose a challenge to these external influences. According to the American historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith, to engage in rituals (that is: to perform the sacred) ultimately means "the assertion of difference."[18] In earlier work, Smith defined rituals more specifically as "a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tensions to the way things are in such a way that this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things."[19] In this definition we can recognize the idea of ritual as a bridge between what is and want one would like to be, even if this ideal state is never to be achieved. Catherine Bell pointed out that "[m]ost simply, for Smith, ritual portrays the idealized way that things in the world should be organized, although participants are very aware that real life keeps threatening to collapse into chaos and meaninglessness."[20] It seems, then, that the performance of rituals offers a possibility in the search for an authentic return to the inner realm. Through rituals, we escape the alienating demands imposed upon us to survive in daily life and reach out to something true. It is not hard to see how rituals can function as remedies for the influences of a corrupting society: when work rushes us forward, we find quiet in meditation; when online media bombard us with superficial information, we can focus on the intimate relation between ourselves and God through prayer; when tax authorities are solely interested in our financial situation, we find time to explore more profound layers in our live during a pilgrimage. By means of rituals one might attempt to reach a meaningful core within oneself that is usually overshadowed by the more practical side of living in a late modern society.

To understand pilgrim authenticity in this light is not a contemporary quirk in the interpretation of the Camino as some sort of hippie holiday. Pilgrimages have traditionally been understood as metaphors for the spiritual journey the soul undertakes in search for enlightenment, inner peace, and ultimate salvation.[21] In the academic tradition, too, the idea of pilgrimages as journeys towards a sacred center has been frequently formulated. The Canadian anthropologist Alan Morinis, in his introduction to the seminal volume *Sacred Journeys,*[22] argues that pilgrimage finds its origin in desire and belief:

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[17] HEELAS: *The New Age movement* 19.

[18] J.Z. SMITH: *To take place: Toward theory in ritual* (Chicago, IL 1987) 109.

[19] J.Z. SMITH: 'The bare facts of ritual', in *History of Religions* 20/1 (1980) 125.

[20] C. BELL: *Ritual theory, ritual practice* (New York, NY 1992) 12.

[21] SUMPTION: *Pilgrimage* 104-113, 138-140.

[22] A. MORINIS: 'Introduction: The territory of the anthropology of pilgrimage', in A. MORINIS (ed.): *Sacred journeys: The anthropology of pilgrimage* (Westport, CT 1992) 1-26.

> The desire is for solution to problems of all kinds that arise within the human situation. The belief is that somewhere beyond the known world exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now. All one must do is journey.[23]

Here, again, we find the conviction that pilgrimages are designed to free one from the constraints of daily life. But what do we seek outside our everyday surroundings? What is this 'sacred' that we seek in a 'sacred journey'? According to Morinis, the sacred is "the valued ideals that are the image of perfection."[24] Later on in his discussion he uses slight variations on these words, such as "the culturally validated ideal,"[25] or "an intensified version of some ideal that the pilgrim values but cannot achieve at home."[26] His interpretation of the sacred is not so very different from Smith's, although it adds a cultural context to the concept. What pilgrims desire when they set out on a pilgrimage is an ideal that finds its basis within the everyday life, but is magnified, or expended on the pilgrimage. Consequently, Morinis defines a pilgrimage as "a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal."[27] In Morinis' understanding of pilgrimage, then, we find the same notion of authenticity that we found in the three examples presented at the beginning of this text: the pilgrim undertakes a quest in search for an ideal that is born from the culture in which we live on a daily basis, but is denied us by this same culture. Here we find a first important paradox in the pilgrim's authenticity. The pilgrim's daily life both gives her or him this ideal to be strived for, and simultaneously denies the pilgrim access to these ideals to such a degree, that s/he needs to leave home to find her or his true self.

It seems important to stress that the ideal that holds a central temptation for pilgrims, is in this context cultural rather than social. One might be tempted to consider Durkheim's famous claim that any shrine ultimately symbolizes the community itself. ("The god of the clan, the totemic principle, cannot therefore be anything other than the clan itself hypostasized."[28]) However, within Morinis argument, as within the present discussion, what pilgrims seek is not so much a confirmation of the society in which s/he lives in its (condensed) totality, but rather a specific valued ideal that arises from that society's culture. Morinis understandably criticizes Durkheim for overly stressing "the social determinacy of religion" and neglecting cultural factors.[29]

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[23] MORINIS: 'Introduction' 1.

[24] IDEM 2.

[25] IDEM 3.

[26] IDEM 4.

[27] IBID.

[28] Durkheim, cited in MORINIS: 'Introduction' 6.

[29] MORINIS: 'Introduction' 6.

Similarly, the Franco-Yugoslavian sociologist Erik Cohen argues that pilgrims could be identified by their interest in traveling towards their so-called 'center'. In this, they are fundamentally different from tourists, who are mainly looking to escape their center in favor of the exotic and unknown. In his discussion on 'Pilgrimage and tourism,'[30] Cohen argues that "two prototypical, non-instrumental movements can be distinguished: pilgrimage, a movement towards the Center, and travel, a movement in the opposite direction, toward the Other."[31] The sacred center that attracts pilgrims has been traditionally framed within a religious context, but can now be understood in a broader cultural frame. In Cohen's words, we might say it symbolizes 'ultimate meaning'[32] for the pilgrim. This center, interestingly, lies outside of the pilgrim's daily surroundings: "The pilgrim, whose ordinary abode is in profane space, ascends, both geographically and spiritually, from the periphery toward the 'Center out there'."[33] The world that people inhabit on a daily basis can thus be understood as 'peripheral', while the surroundings of the pilgrimage resonate with pilgrims' true spiritual and cultural lives. In other words: the Camino is a more natural home to pilgrims than their daily surroundings. Thus, we arrive at an interpretation of the Camino as nearly a neutral space, a space that naturally befits pilgrims and leaves them free to develop their own ritual identities and desires. As if the Camino environment were the necessary consequence of the absence of a perverse society. As if, by not posing any constrains, the Camino allows pilgrims to develop their own space, and thereby lets them come closer to their true selves.

However, here we begin to find reason to become suspicious of this true identity. Because this identity that we construct during rituals, is judged not only more befitting to ourselves, but also as decidedly superior to our daily identities. Therefore, we might ask ourselves whether it is not more accurate to say that instead of bringing us closer to who we truly are, the Camino brings us closer to who we truly want to be. Perhaps we should think of pilgrimage as an opportunity for externalizing those aspects of our identity that we judge inferior; as an opportunity for us to state that the problems we find in ourselves are not our own, but rather imposed upon us by a corrupting world. It allows us to believe that if we were to inhabit a more suitable world, we would also be better people – the good people that we actually are.

If we accept that analyses, then this personal core that we carry within ourselves takes the shape of a series of negations of those aspects of ourselves and our society that we don't value. Our ritual authenticity, then, stands in many ways in direct opposition to these undesirable character trades: when we see our society as

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[30] E. COHEN: 'Pilgrimage and tourism: Convergence and divergence', in A. MORINIS (ed.): *Sacred journeys: The anthropology of pilgrimage* (Westport, CT 1992) 27-61.
[31] IDEM 50.
[32] E. COHEN: 'A phenomenology of tourist experiences', in *Sociology* 13 (1979) 179-201, p. 181.
[33] COHEN: 'Pilgrimage and tourism' 51.

intolerant, we construct our ritual identity as open and inviting; when we look upon our neighbors as slaves of deadlines, we conduct our ritual identity towards a process of slowing down; when we see our children can't see behind the material value of their possessions, our ritual identity turns to a re-appreciation of our means. To take it one step further still, we might attempt to reverse these steps in order to get an insight into the world in which we do and, even more so, in which we do not want to live. Again, Morinis points in this direction, when he argues that recognized pilgrimage places "embody intensified version of the collective ideals of the culture."[34] Whether these ideals are held by one person (which is rare), or by a group in society, the critique implied is always directed towards the culture in which the pilgrim functions on a day-to-day basis. The pilgrim identity, understood as a sacred and authentic identity, can then be understood as a form of social criticism. It combines a sacred quest with a critique on contemporary culture.

4.   Constructing an authentic world

To understand the social criticism expressed through pilgrim authenticity, we should understand the world that is found on the Camino and how it relates to the world that we actually live in. The characteristics of this ideal world are manifold and operate on many different levels and spheres. We will only discuss some of the most apparent here.

A first set of characteristic of the Camino world is played out on the level of temporality. As the Camino is a centuries old route, a journey that has been undertaken by many, many pilgrims before, the pilgrimage responds to the contemporary nostalgic desire to return to simpler times. In this instance, we find a clear critique on the contemporary obsession with the young, the new, and the ever-changing. People who feel ungrounded in daily life, find roots and a historical frame on the Camino.[35] The Australian cultural analyst Paul Genoni argues that pilgrims "have an intense encounter with a displaced or disrupted sense of time," which induces in them 'the sense that time has been transcended or 'crossed'', and that the traveler has undergone an experience that is seemingly "of another, earlier epoch."[36] In this, Genoni recognizes a "negotiation between the relationship between past and present," whereby "travel is narrated as a nostalgic encounter with a past made desirable by the crippling effects of modernity."[37] This preoccupation with the his-

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[34] Morinis: 'Introduction' 4.

[35] Frey: *Pilgrim stories* 221-222, 242-246.

[36] P. Genoni: 'The pilgrim's progress across time: Medievalism and modernity on the road to Santiago', in *Studies in Travel Writing* 15/2 (2011) 157-175, p. 157.

[37] Ibid.

torical tradition of the pilgrimage, and more personally with the idea of the medie-val pilgrim as a direct predecessor of the contemporary pilgrim,[38] is perhaps the clearest manifestation of social critique in the temporal experience of the pilgrim identity.

However, the temporal dimensions offers pilgrims more possibilities for so-cial critique. Another temporal experience pilgrims have is most often formulated as the possibility to 'live in the now', which describes the sense that Camino time accommodates the pilgrim's pace, as if time and pilgrim were to naturally merge.[39] This is the consequence of the pilgrim's slow pace, the repetitiveness of the pil-grim's actions, the length of the road to be travelled, and the single-mindedness of the days spent on the Camino. As a result, pilgrims note that on the Camino time seems to accustom their need. This offers pilgrims the opportunity to structure their days differently – not to fit the rhythm of external social norms, but to fit their own, personal inclinations: eat when you're hungry, visit a church when you pass it, find a place to rest when you're tired.[40] Here, again, we find a clear critique on the role time plays in our daily lives: the continuous stress on the future, which we encounter in the form of deadlines and appointments, directs our attention away from the time that we experience as our own, that is: the time that we actually, bodily inhabit. The pilgrim's sensation that the Camino allows them to explore their 'own time' provides freedom, where society does nothing but constrain.[41]

A second set of characteristics can be found in the physical dimension of the Camino. This dimension reveals itself to the pilgrim in the shape of impressive Spanish landscapes. The pilgrim's ordinary life, which is often spent in urban sur-roundings filled with days spent in a dark office behind a desk, is countered on the Camino by a life in natural surroundings, supported by the sounds, smells, and views of an outdoor surrounding. In his exploration of pilgrim accounts, Paul Post identifies 'nature' as a 'classical pilgrimage theme':

> Concerning the theme of nature we read digressions which above all verbalize the contrast with the bourgeois existence left behind and sometimes lead to discussions of our estrangement from nature, about nature and the attribution of meaning, milieu, and quality of life coupled with living in harmony with nature.[42]

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[38] FREY: *Pilgrim stories* 41-42.
[39] GENONI: 'The pilgrim's progress across time' 164-165.
[40] FREY: *Pilgrim stories* 72-74.
[41] IDEM 73.
[42] P. POST: 'The modern pilgrim. A study of contemporary pilgrims' accounts', in *Ethnologia Europaea* 24/2 (1994) 85-100, p. 91.

It is perhaps not surprising that many pilgrims resent the encounters with urban environments on the Camino and prefer the days spent in forests, along rivers, or even the difficult crossing of the Pyrenees.[43]

Another form of physicality plays a role in the experience of the Camino as a natural environment: when walking or cycling the Camino, usually with all luggage strapped on the pilgrim's back or to the bicycle, the ritual demands a great deal from the pilgrim's physical body. Pilgrims often note that it is the first time in a long time that they are fully aware of the body they inhabit. It is in many senses our most direct and therefore natural instrument and yet it is put to very limited use in our daily lives. Here again, we find a direct response to the contemporary complaint about the non-physical world we live in, disconnected from our body and dependent upon virtual worlds. On the Camino, the pilgrim depends on nothing but the individual's bodily strength and endurance. As a consequence, the pilgrim adopts the rhythm of the body; a rhythm directed by the steps of the feet and the efforts that can be sustained by the pilgrim's back carrying the pilgrim's belongings. As a result of these bodily demands, it is necessary for the pilgrim to carry as little possessions as possible. This, again, should be understood as a critique on the unnecessarily large amount of value we usually attribute to material belongings in our consumer society, as voiced by a Belgian pilgrim: "In this world of pilgrims, you are admired for being moderate (i.e. carrying a small amount of luggage) which is different from Antwerp, where they only acknowledge you when you have a lot."[44]

A third set of important characteristics of the pilgrim world plays out on a social level. Pilgrims often remark that the interaction between pilgrims on the Camino is much more sincere and free than in daily life, pilgrims open up to each other with an ease and level of comfort that they do not know at home. (In this, it is not hard to recognize a reflection of Turner's famous notion of *communitas*.[45]) In her exploration of contemporary pilgrim stories, the American anthropologist Nancy Frey gives an example of this immediate friendship as told to her by a Spanish pilgrim: "There are times when it is impossible to find the words to express what one feels when someone who you just met treats you like one of his best friends."[46]

What is more, the Camino offers pilgrims the chance to free themselves from repetitive, restricting social circles: the daily demands from colleagues and family,

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[43] FREY: *Pilgrim stories* 81.

[44] 'RUT': 'De eerste twee weken', blogpost on waarbenjij.nu (May 17 2006) http://rut.waarbenjij.nu/reisverslag/1308990/de-eerste-2-weken.

[45] Inseparable from his notion of *liminality*, Turner describes the social situation during a pilgrimage as "a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion (..) which combines the qualities of lowliness, sarcredness, homogeneity, and comradeship"; V. TURNER & E. TURNER: *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture: Anthropological perspectives* (New York, NY 1978) 250.

[46] FREY: *Pilgrim stories* 92.

the keeping up of appearances, the same conversations over and over again with the same people, is countered by the pilgrim's sense of freedom, of taking care of no one but yourself, of speaking to people without pretenses of judgment, and gaining new perspectives from other people. Last year, on the Camino Francés, one pilgrim explained to me:

> Everyone here walks with a story, and everyone has the same type of mind set. Everyone is positive. You speak with each other like you would never do with others. At home everyone has their own story too, probably, even tramps etc., but you never ask them about it. If they were to put on a pilgrim's hat and sleep in an albergue, you would also listen to their story.

The shared experience and surroundings of the Camino connects pilgrims on a social level, which enable them to connect in a manner that is considered impossible in daily life.

A fourth characteristic of the world of the pilgrim relates to a certain outlook the pilgrim has on the significance of the chance experiences s/he has on the Camino. While describing a completely different context, the Franco-Bulgarian literary critic Tzvetan Todorov described this 'pan-deterministic' viewpoint quite accurately as follows: "everything, down to the encounter of various casual series (or 'chance') must have its cause, in the full sense of the world, even if this cause can only be of a supernatural order."[47] This is the difference between the way the pilgrim looks upon chance experiences on the Camino in contrast to these experiences in daily life. In pilgrim discourse, the Camino is understood as a place where all pretense falls away and the notion of coincidence is unmasked as the inability of the ordinary person to oversee her or his life as guided by a greater force. One pilgrim writes on his blog:

> It is a truly extraordinary journey on which I have been impressed by the amount of coincidences that should not be called coincidences. On the most crucial moments solutions arise for some sort of inexplicable reason. Sometimes I think 'Is this fiction?', but it is reality.[48]

These Camino 'coincidences' often revolve around chance encounters with forgotten friends, help offered in a seemingly hopeless situation, or other instances of unlikely good fortunes. The supposed organizer of these experiences is not necessarily identified as God or the apostle. It does, however, indicate a sense that there

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[47] T. TODOROV: *The fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre* (trans. R. Howard) (Ithaca, NY 1975) 110.

[48] J. PRONK: 'Indruk', blogpost on waarbenjij.nu (April 29 2006) http://jacobuspronk.waarbenjij.nu/reisverslag/1291340/indruk.

exists a figure that is benevolent towards the pilgrim. A certain force that, as one pilgrim puts it, performs 'miracles' on their behalf: "In La Souterraine, where I sent my last *Beiaardkroniekje*, something strange happened to me. Pilgrims call this a miracle, because they do not believe coincidences exist."[49] It is not hard to see how this characteristic of the ideal pilgrim world is constructed as a response to one of the most persistent critiques on modern life – a life in which God is dead, everyone is made to survive on their own, and even family and neighbors cannot be relied upon for help or support. The insistence on Camino miracles provides the pilgrimage with an added layer of importance, something Todorov called 'pan-signification': "since relations exist on all levels, among all elements of the world, this world becomes highly significant."[50] The Camino offers a counterpart to a harsh, lonely world by promising that everything the pilgrim does and sees is important and s/he will never be alone.

5.   Conclusion

After exploring the discourse constructed by pilgrims around the notion of authenticity, contextualizing it with research in pilgrimages studies, and a first attempt to make concrete the social criticism that is implicit in the notion of an authentic Camino, we come to this unpacking of the notion of authenticity within the context of the pilgrimage to Santiago. That pilgrims use the concept of authenticity to enable themselves to externalize those aspects of their identity that they find undesirable, by branding them as part of a corrupting society and therefore as un-authentic. In this process of externalization they adopt a different external context, that of the Camino, and in constructing this context as fundamentally pure and open, they are able to find within this authentic world a more suitable, a more desirable identity as pilgrim. This is the final paradox on which the pilgrim's authenticity is based: that they are fundamentally dependent upon exterior circumstances to become aligned with what they often understand as their personal, interior reality.

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[49] 'Het wonder van de Camino,' blogpost on camino-chris-de-saveur.be (May 24, 2004) http://www.camino-chris-de-saveur.be/HET%20WONDER%20VAN%20DE%20CAMINO.htm See also 'The helper and modern miracles', in FREY: *Pilgrim stories* 105-106.
[50] TODOROV: *The fantastic* 112.

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