

Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance: An Introduction

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It will take many more lifetimes to trace out the multifarious and interconnecting ramifications of the stupendous interdisciplinary web of ideas that [Victor Turner] spun endlessly out of himself.

Barbara A. Babcock (1984: 461)

Held by Edward Bruner (1993: 332f.) to be the “archetype of the creative spirit in anthropology,” a prolific contributor to the anthropology of ritual, symbols, and performance, Victor Turner died in 1983 at the age of 63. Yet, as countless graduates and scholars maintained interest in the interstices and margins of (post)modern culture, applying and reworking Turner’s cultural processualism in explorations of manifold cultural performances, his legacy continued, and endures still. Inspired by the results of field research conducted with wife Edith Turner on the rituals of the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia, and by the post-African scholarship, cultural anthropologists, literary theorists and other social and cultural researchers have explored the subjunctive, reflexive, and communal dimensions of the *limen*, that experiential “realm of pure possibility” apparent from “ritual to theatre” and beyond. In the twenty years following his death, interventions on the interconnected performance modes of play, drama, and community, and experimental and analytical forays into the study of ritual and the anthropologies of experience and consciousness (including that conducted by Edith Turner), have complemented and extended Turnerian readings on the moments and sites of culture’s *becoming*. This volume plays host to wide-ranging applications of Turnerian thought in the twenty-first century. Here I provide an extended

introduction to Turner's work before discussing the impact of Turnerian thought and outlining the chapters in this collection.

Turner's ethnographic method—what he called “comparative symbolism”—was shaped by a uniquely poetic sensibility. Few anthropologists, especially those writing between the 1950s and 1980s, made observations on the social relations of their research fields or developed theory with declarations from Prospero, the poetry of Rilke and the work of Melville or in the light of Kierkegaard's philosophy of paradox. Yet this was the hallmark of Glasgow-born Victor Turner, who, prior to entering the Manchester School of British Social Anthropology under Max Gluckman, had studied poetry and classics at University College, London from 1938 to 1941, and was himself a poet and, variously, a Marxist, Catholic, processualist, mystic (see E. Turner 1985b; 1990). While his undergraduate studies in the classics were disrupted by the war, a passion for literature assisted, perhaps compelled, a strategy of repeatedly pulling away from structural-functionalism and the Marxist anthropological script he inherited at Manchester¹ to embrace a more “intuitive” and processual approach to ritual and symbols. A self-proclaimed “incursive nomad” (1974: 18) who taught Blake and Dante alongside anthropological theory, who was renowned for his charismatic oratory in lecture halls around the world (but particularly in the US, where Turner would spend much of his working life), and whose “refusal to abandon the empiricist creed while contributing mightily to the hermeneutic turn” (Frank Manning cited in E Turner 1992b: x), Victor Turner made a prodigious impact across a spectrum of disciplines: from anthropology, sociology, history, and religious and theological studies, to cultural, literary, media, and performance studies, to neurobiology and behavioral studies.² As a tireless interdisciplinary, Turner was instrumental in the formation of ritual studies, a subject upon which he is recognized as the last to “elicit a wide consensus” (Grimes 1995: xvii). One of the principal reasons for this was that while carrying forward the Durkheimian understanding of “ritual” as an efficacious socioreligious phenomenon serving to transfer individuals/groups from the “profane” to the “sacred,” Turner understood symbols, ritual, and indeed religion as processes in which individuals and collectivities were wholly engaged. “After many years as an agnostic and monistic materialist,” he declared, “I learned from the Ndembu that ritual and its symbols are not merely epiphenomena or disguises of deeper social and psychological processes, but have ontological value” (1975: 31–32; also see 1974: 57).

Experimental theater practitioner and leading performance studies proponent Richard Schechner owed a substantial debt to Turner. Indeed, a fruitful exchange developed between the two: while the literary and dramatic arts had become fertile conceptual material for Turner, anthropological mod-

els of ritual would assist comprehension of theater and other performance genres, a dialogue that proved critical to the formation of performance studies (see McKenzie 2001: 36) and indeed, what Ian Maxwell (this volume) calls the “ritualization of performance theory.” This dialogue was particularly evident in Turner’s *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982a) and Schechner’s *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985). Schechner was interested in Turner’s “genealogy of performance,” possibly best articulated in the material presented in a lecture delivered at Smith College in 1982 and published as “Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual, and Drama?” (1985g). This was perhaps the closest to a condensation of ideas, which otherwise lay scattered—often half-unpacked and revealing what Schechner (1987b: 7) referred to as a characteristic “unfinishedness”—within numerous research articles and published compilations of essays and lectures, including those (re)published posthumously by Schechner (1987a) and Edith Turner (1985a; 1992a).³ Trespassing disciplinary boundaries with tireless enthusiasm, Turner rarely paused to galvanize his ideas into a transparent theoretical model. Paraphrasing Oscar Wilde, he remarked that academic clarity “is the last refuge of the Philistines” (Babcock and MacAloon 1987: 19).

While an aggregated model was hardly Turner’s style, and while there is no operator’s manual available for students, key ideas and trends are evident. Comparing Theodor Gaster’s approach to ritual theory with Turner’s, Ron Grimes (1976: 19) identifies a “Janus-like” character to Turner’s work, arguing that methodologically he faced, on the one hand, “towards semantics and semiotics ... and political anthropology or ‘processualism’, on the other.” There is an indelible complexity to Turner’s contribution with which students of ritual and religion have long struggled. But while Turner “tacked” like a “sailboat beating upwind” (E. Turner 1985b: 8) into drama, away from the earlier emersion in the semantic complexity of ritual, process and action appears to have been at the helm all along. Turner strove to grasp and reveal how society (symbols, conflicts, performance) is actually lived by its members, how symbolic units, social “fields” and aesthetic genres condense, evoke, and channel meaning and emotion. The path-breaking analysis of the “bipolar” (sensorial and ideological) character of symbols enabled understanding of how ritual constitutes a “mechanism that periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable” (1967b: 30), and how, for instance, healing cults like those documented in *The Drums of Affliction* (1968) were affective and transformative. His work would eventually convey a fascination with the way sociocultural “structures” are produced or reproduced—the formed, performed. And rather than pursue structural-functionalist or depth psychological analyses of such processes, a concern with the experiential dimensions of symbolic action became paramount, an “anthropology

of experience” that would account for the way rituals—and later ritual-like, or perhaps “rituoid” (F. Turner 1990: 152) performances—are critical to the reflexive (re)production of culture (not simply reflecting/expressing culture/myth, or evidence of ‘cultural defense mechanisms’). In this approach, meaning would be found in temporalized “structures of experience” (the *Erlib-nise* of German philosopher Wilhem Dilthey) rather than formal categories of thought (the “dualistic rigormortis” of the Lévi-Straussians [V. Turner 1982b: 21]). Religion was found in human action, in the expression of experience, and what would become the study of performance and experience “was like catching the electron in motion” (E. Turner 1985b: 11; see also V. Turner 1985d).

Since “normal social science” ignored “at least one half of human sociality,” Turner sought to gaze upon interstices that “provide homes for anti-structural visions, thoughts and ultimately behaviours” (1974: 293f.). As outlined in *The Ritual Process* (1969), society is the product of the dialectical historical relationship between “structure” (society’s status and role differentiation, behavioral norms and cognitive rules) and “antistructure” (those regions of experience in culture—outside, in between, and below structure), between the “fixed” and “floating worlds” (1969: vii, 201), corresponding to “indicative” and “subjunctive moods” (1984: 21). While Turner has been referred to as a “post-functionalist” (Flanigan 1990: 52), his scheme more accurately reveals a *structural processualism* (itself conveying a sophisticated functionalism). That such floating worlds were necessary sources of *resolution* (or redress) is at the heart of this perspective. The explorations in his later work beyond, beneath, and between the fixed, the finished, and the predictable constitutes an extensive journey into such performative moments and spaces, pregnant margins, the cracks of society, necessary thresholds of dissolution through which sociocultural order is said to be (re)constituted.

The processual project recognizes that society is in-composition, open-ended, *becoming*, and that its (re)production is dependent upon the periodic appearance, in the history of societies and in the lives of individuals, of organized moments of categorical disarray and intense reflexive potential. These moments were, of course, “liminal,” a term rooted in the Latin *limen* (threshold) used by Arnold van Gennep (1960) to describe the central phase in his tripartite rites of passage model (separation, transition, reincorporation). Van Gennep’s concept enabled a heuristic for concrete symbolic social action resonating with the world literature to which Turner was exposed. Thus he

had subconsciously recognized rites of passage in the shipwreck on Caliban’s Island, in Rosalind’s sojourn in the forest of Arden, in the quest for the whale, Moby Dick, in the passage from guilt to redemption in *Crime and Punishment*, in Oedipus at Colonus.... In the journey of the Pandava brothers in the *Ma-*

habharata, in Sita's kidnapping and rescue in *Ramayana*, in Tolkien's quest for the ring, in C. S. Lewis's Narnia, in Jack Kerouac and his beats in *On the Road*, in unending passage from one place to another in many of the No plays of Japan, each enacting the passage through violent earthly concerns to Nirvana—let alone *Mary Poppins* and countless children's stories with the theme of passage to adulthood (E. Turner 1990: 167).

Excavating and reapplying this rich resonant concept, Turner understood the *limen* to constitute a universally potent temporality, a “realm of pure possibility” (1967c: 97), a temporary breach of structure whereby the familiar may be stripped of certitude and the normative unhinged, an interlude wherein conventional social, economic, and political life may be transcended. A condition of growth and potential novelty in which individuals, societies, and cultures are periodically implicated, liminality would become the leitmotif in Turner's philosophy. Significantly, liminal conditions would be “provisional of a cultural means of generating variability, *as well as* of ensuring the continuity of proved values and norms” (1985b: 162). Not a “distorting mirror” or a “cloak” for the operations of capital (as dialectical materialists might have had it), antistructural liminality was said to “generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behaviour of those in mainstream social and political roles ... in the direction of radical change, just as much as they can serve as instruments of political control” (1982b: 33). Thus the *limen* would be culture's revolving door—a framework enabling the possibility of more than one exit, a protostructural domain where the abandonment of form, the dissolution of fixed categories, and the licensed approximation of a ludic sensibility or “subjunctive mood”—the mood of *were*, in “if *I were* you” (1984: 20f.)—enables re-creation. Transitional rites would carry “the essence” of liminality since, in these primitive novelty rides liminars may be androgynous, at once ghosts and babies, cultural and natural, or human and animal (1977: 37). And since liminality is essentially an arena of recombinant indeterminacy, “a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibility” (1986: 42), it was understood to be “‘the realm of primitive hypothesis’ (Turner and Turner 1982: 205). As Turner's career became an exercise in enunciating and unpacking this realm, elaborating on the *limen*'s diverse manifestations and implications for diverse audiences, several themes are notable.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DRAMA

“Drama,” as Edith Turner noted about her late husband, “was in his blood.” Victor's mother, an actress, rehearsed lines in front of his high chair: “His

head was full of lines and verses of poetry. . . . He was reared on Shakespeare, Aeschylus, Shaw, Flecker, Ibsen" (E. Turner 1985b: 5). And an enduring fascination with the Icelandic Sagas, Greek tragedies, and Elizabethan stage dramas forms a prologue to the configuration of ritual. While the "form" of social process was identified as agonistic or "dramatic," as is outlined in research on the role of ritual in Ndembu conflict resolution and in affliction cults (notably 1957, but also 1968 and 1975), the redressive nature of such social processes found cultural form in the whole spectrum of performance genres. With their phases of "breach," "conflict," "redress," "resolution," and/or "schism," "social dramas"—such as those apparent in Zambian villages, Brazilian Umbandistas and scandals contemporaneous with Turner's life in the US (such as Watergate)—are given the light of reflexive attention in "cultural dramas." And these performances—from rites and festivals to sports events, theater, film, and television, and indeed literature—in turn provide fuel for renewed social drama. Life and art would imitate each other according to a perpetual cultural feedback mechanism (1985g). The redressive phase in the life of social drama is seen to have evolved as a "eu-functional" attribute of aesthetic genres, which like "ritual frames" (Bateson 1958) or "metasocial commentaries" (Geertz 1972: 26), are thought to facilitate investigation, collective inquiry, especially into the historical and daily exigencies, conflicts, and contradictions of social existence. The "sacra" that are "shown," "done," and "said" to initiates in passage rituals (1967c: 102), Icelandic Sagas (1971), Japanese Buddhist Theater (1984), for instance, are observed in this light. Variant fields of performance from tribal ritual to global leisure genres demonstrate the perennial reliance of culture upon frameworks of meaningful action through which individuals—or "Homo Performans" ("man the self performing animal" [1985c: 187])—relive, re-create, retell and reconstruct their culture (Bruner 1986: 9). And the Turners would be enthusiasts of global sites for the expression of experience. As Edith conveys:

[I]n various contexts and countries, Vic and I witnessed or participated in the Yaqui Deer Dance, Suzuki's Japanese postmodern theatre, a Brooklyn gospel-singing healing service, the Manhattan Pentecostals, Japanese Noh plays, and other performances such as Kabuki, Bunraku puppet theatre, the Kagura dance of divinity, and popular festivals, Indian Kutiyattam, and Kathakali temple theatre, Wole Soyinka's Yoruba theatre, Korean shamanism, Eskimo dance, Indonesian Wayang and Topeng, postmodern Off-Off Broadway theatre, Carnaval, Umbanda, and the Kardecism spirit cult in Brazil, the Jewish Purim and Passover, the Samaritan paschal sacrifice, Easter at the Holy Sepulchre, Indian tribal marriage, the Indian Sariswati, the Ik theatrt production in the USA, and *Chorus Line*—the list goes on. (E. Turner 1985b: 8f.)

In such performances, where individual subjects may become the object of their own awareness, action is evaluative of social systems, and through “collective reflexivity” society is imminent. Performances may then themselves be active agencies of change, representing, thought Turner (1987a: 24), “the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting ‘designs for living.’”⁴

COMMUNITAS

For Turner, *communitas* was the (re)formation of affectual relationships with co-liminals. In “spontaneous *communitas*,” individuals interrelate relatively unobstructed by sociocultural divisions of role, status, reputation, class, caste, sex, age, and other structural niches (1982b: 48). Interaction is characterized by personal honesty, openness, a lack of pretensions or pretentiousness. A term borrowed from Paul and Percival Goodman (1947) and configured to signify “a relatively undifferentiated community, or even communion of equal individuals” (V. Turner 1969: 96), *communitas* designates a feeling of immediate community, and may involve the sharing of special knowledge and understanding—“a flash of mutual understanding on the existential level, and a ‘gut’ understanding of synchronicity” (1982b: 48). This immediate and “total confrontation of human identities” occurs between fixed social categories (in liminality), on the edges of structured social life (in marginality), and beneath structure (in inferiority).⁵ The theme evolved out of the life experiences of the Turners. Edith (1990: 168) notes how her Glaswegian partner envisioned *communitas* in “Robert Burns—‘A man’s a man for a’ that,’ between Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer, and Jim the slave, in Bakhtin, in Chekhov, Jorge Amado, St. John’s Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount, and above all, Shakespeare.” But there was also the camaraderie experienced in the Royal Engineers defusing unexploded bombs with fellow conscientious objectors during WWII (Turner 1975: 21), the impact of the American counterculture of the 1960s, the influence of Catholicism, and the communion with Edith herself. It is clear from interviews with Edith conducted by Matthew Engelke (2004, and this volume) that the long and intimate dialogue between the Turners (who shared a marriage, parenthood, fieldwork, and a religion) was indispensable to the forging of theory. This is apparent in Edith’s *Spirit and the Drum* (1987: 141), where, in a kind of communion unlooked for, it is conveyed how she and Victor hit upon extraordinary insights following their participation in the Ndembu “shit ritual” *Chihamba*, intriguing because they appear to be insights about the universal

quality of revelation itself. Critical to Turner's theory of religion, *communitas* was thoroughly grounded in experience, receiving its most effusive application in the study of (Christian) pilgrimage, a field upon which both Turners made a substantial contribution (Turner and Turner 1978). Itself approximating a "religious experience," it was "almost everywhere held to be sacred or 'holy' [since] it is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency" (V. Turner 1969: 128).⁶

In work published posthumously, *communitas* was discussed as the "matrix of individuality," a realm in which the "social persona" dissipates (1992: 149). As the "open morality of the individual," this represents a challenge to Durkheimian thought, which regards religion in a way recalling Bergson's concept of "closed" morality and religion—what is directed to strengthening moral obligations. Adopting the more dynamic view, in a process wherein the moral attributes of social personhood have been suspended, following Kenelm Burridge (1979), Turner perceived the individual as a "moral innovator" asserting autonomy, creating and destroying vested mores (1992: 159, 147). Evidence of the dialectic informing Turner, *communitas* was regarded as an experience that "liberates from conformity to general norms" (1974: 52), and normal structural activity becomes "arid" and a source of conflict if those in it are not "periodically immersed in the regenerative abyss of *communitas*" (1969: 139). In this scheme, *communitas* may become "normative" (and/or "ideological" or prescriptive), historical eventualities that may trigger further episodes of spontaneous *communitas*.⁷ It was observed that while "pathological" manifestations of such episodes "outside or against the law" (e.g., rebellion) can transpire if "structure" (institutionalism, repression, etc.) is "exaggerated," if *communitas* is itself exaggerated, in for instance religious or political movements, there may ensue "despotism, overbureaucratization or other modes of structural rigidification" (as in totalitarianism) (1969: 129).

FROM LIMINAL (RITUAL) TO LIMINOID (LEISURE)?

In the seminal essay "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual" (1982b, originally published in *Rice University Studies* in 1974), Turner sketched a "comparative symbology"⁸ that, he argued, should be "wider" than symbolic anthropology since it proposed ethnography not only of small-scale cultures, but of the "symbolic genres" of postindustrial societies (1982b: 23). In this project, evidence for which can be found in *The Ritual Process* (1969), anthropologists were to harness "the methods, theories and findings of history, literature, musicology, art history, theology, the history of religions, philosophy, etc." The ambitious project would look to the past—such as the "honor-

able tradition” of predecessors like Durkheim and the *Anée Sociologique*, and Kroeber and Redfield (1982b: 23f.)—in order to comprehend emergent symbolic genres. “Liminality” was to undergo a conceptual transition of its own, one aptly characterized by uncertainty. While the concept had been applied to illuminate the central phases of transition rites common to small-scale and agrarian societies (life crisis, affliction and initiation rites) and seasonal and calendar rites, gazing upon the “floating worlds” of (post)modernity, Turner detected the presence of “quasi-liminal,” or “liminoidal” elements. Often unacknowledged by scholars of performance, the liminal/liminoid distinction, was, like much of Turner’s work, provocative and insightful, albeit speculative. Liminal cultural phenomena reveal the collective, integrated, and obligatory ritual action of premodernity. While they are concerned with calendrical, biological, and social structural rhythms or with crises in social processes emerging in feudal, industrial, and predominantly capitalist societies with a complex social and economic division of labor, liminoid-entertainment genres are shaped by new media technologies, rationalization, and bureaucracy. Liminal symbols often possess a common intellectual and emotional meaning for all participants (1982: 53f), and while liminal events contain the potentiality for the formation of new symbols, models, and ideas, they generally involve the “the work of the gods” (where work and play are “intricately intercalibrated,” *ibid.*: 32). The liminoid, on the other hand, occurs within *leisure* settings apart from work, is voluntary, plural, and fragmentary, with liminoidality associated with marginality, conditions fomenting social critique, subversive behavior, and radical experimentation.

Some have acknowledged (see Lowe, and St John, this volume) the problematic nature of these categories in Turner’s historical exegesis. Whatever their value, it appears that they are underpinned by contradictory dispositions illustrating a Durkheimian legacy. The first disposition involves the loss, or attenuation, and the second the resilience, or rebirth, of *the sacred*—especially as it is transparent in “the orchestrated religious *gestalt*” of ritual (V. Turner 1982c: 85). These are the tragic and heroic narratives. First, in modernity, the “religious sphere” has contracted, and, as a consequence, Turner speaks of “the decline of ritual” (1983: 105), “deliminalization” (1982c: 85), the exaltation of the “indicative mood” (*ibid.*: 86), and the loss of ritual’s “cultural evolutionary resilience [which ceases] to be an effective metalanguage or an agency of collective reflexology” (1985b: 165). As an apparent manifestation of what Catherine Bell (1997: 254) identifies as the kind of “sociological truism” that, since the mid-nineteenth century, would crystallize from a “popular contention that ritual and religion decline in proportion to modernization,” aesthetic media like song, dance, and graphic, and pictorial representation were said to have “broken loose from their ritual integument”

(V. Turner 1985b: 166). In modern times, where societies have grown in scale and complexity, as the division of labor has increased, and as work and leisure spheres are more clearly demarcated, the argument follows that ritual's power and potential for transformation has been denuded. It is largely the perceived shift from collective, obligatory social bonds—as seen in rites of passage—to individual voluntary association, which has foreshadowed and accompanied the emergence of aesthetic, fragmentary, liminoid genres (*ibid.*). However, despite lengthy ruminations on 'the Fall', Turner was keen in later writing to demonstrate that 'traces of the original' are found in the modern world, that the symbolic action of premodernity can be observed—albeit through a miasmatic ensemble of magnifying and distorting lenses such as film and sports events. While ritual perishes as the mother genre, "it dies *a multipara*, giving birth to ritualized progeny" (1982c: 79). At another point, it was claimed that "free liminoid experiences are the cultural debris of forgotten liminal ritual" (1982b: 55).

Not only was this essential social performance frame *residual* in fragmented memories, strong pockets of *revival* were detected. Assuming the task of plural cultural reflexivity, "a multiplicity of desacralised performative genres" (1985b: 165f.) (particularly new theater, to which the Turners themselves were committed)⁹ were thought to be emergent in the postmodern world (1985b: 165f.), illustrating a re-turn to subjunctivity and a "rediscovery of cultural transformative modes" (1982c: 86). There are signs, it was declared, "that the amputated specialized genres are seeking to regain and to recover something of the numinosity lost in their dismemberment" (1986: 42). Indeed in liminoid genres ritual saw undergoing revitalization, and it is probable that Turner saw himself witness to the actualization of Durkheim's prophecy: "A day will come when our societies will know again those hours of creative effervescence in the course of which new ideas arise and new formulae are found which serve for a while as a guide to humanity" (Durkheim 1976: 427f.). The tragic *decline* of ritual (the sacred) remains a key intellectual investment, forming the necessary background to its *resurgence*—its heroic renewal in performance genres. For Turner, the depiction of modern secularization becomes a strategic narrative—a condition out of which the sacred (the authentic liminal) is rediscovered or relived. As he pointed out, "dismembering may be a prelude to remembering" (1982c: 86). While modern history appeared to be the stage for an epic drama of the kind where performance itself was performing tragic and heroic roles, in Turner's ontohistorical melodrama, in one way or another—in fragmented and/or resurgent forms—the sacred persists. As Grimes wrote, "the liminoid is sacred to members of a secular society." The remnants of liminality are now everywhere: in the arts, politics, and advertising (Grimes 1990: 145).

THE TURNERIAN IMPACT

During the 1980s and 1990s, on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere, Turner's ideas were received with a mix of enthusiasm, ambivalence, and caution. Commenting on Turner's waning influence on American studies, Donald Weber (1995: 533) stated that "Turnerian models of social analysis appear less helpful, less compelling than they once did." We could look to several problems and tensions to explain this.

To begin with, Turner possessed an ambiguous status as a cultural theorist. Acknowledging, somewhat regrettably, that "the modern is now becoming part of the past" (1985c: 177), late in his writing, and independent of the continental paradigms which would gain wide currency, he suggested that he was inclined towards "postmodern ways of thinking" (*ibid.*: 185). Given what Foster (1990: 133) identified as Turner's concern for "straightening out" complexity or "getting to the bottom of [it] so that an orderly and satisfying analysis could become feasible," and his "somewhat mechanistic, constricted, and impoverished" method of "decoding" the symbolic worlds of others (*ibid.*: 125), objections are understandable. The continuing quest to comprehend the 'total' constituents of experience (cognition, affect, volition), a "unified science of man" (Babcock 1987: 40) drawing him to Freud (1978), Jung, and even sociobiology, seems consistent with a modernist project. As Turner stated himself, while "prejudiced against system building," he was "not prejudiced against attempts to find the systematic in nature and culture" (1985d: 206). Despite this "prejudice," the ambiguity inhering to this statement appears symptomatic of a postmodern turn, cues for which are plentiful. Speculation about the experimental liminoidal cultural products and commodities proliferating in leisure and lifestyle spheres and in the media and arts of post-industrial societies was consistent with post-structuralist trends in the anthropological understanding of culture, ritual, and religion. An implicit challenge to the modernist preoccupation with consistency, congruence, and cognition, processual analysis forged a path beyond British and French structuralisms. While recognition of the polysemous and "multivocality" of symbols in groundbreaking work on ritual analysis (see 1967a) represent early cues on the trajectory, an anthropology of experience, he contended, amounted to "the processualization of space, its temporalization," as opposed to the spatialization of time (what he called "spatialized thinking" [1985c: 181]). Furthermore, there were allusions to "a multiperspectival consciousness," and reference to society as "an endless crisscrossing of processes" (*ibid.*: 185). The championing of disciplinary cross-fertilization and recognition of the fragmentation of liminality into aesthetic genres, especially what he deemed the "hall of magic mirrors," were influential leads.

The semiotic, subjunctive, and reflexive characteristics peculiar to ritual, festival, and narrative genres alike would provide fuel for literary criticism (see essays in Ashley 1990), and the contention that religion has generally “moved into the leisure sphere” (Turner and Turner 1978: 35) would attract students of religion, tourism, popular culture, and media. As Bennetta Jules-Rosette (1994: 178) observes, with his later work forecasting “the advent of postmodern culture, the dissolution of old cultural narratives, and their re-configuration into heteroglossic performances,” Turner is a “genuinely transitional figure” working within a significant period of colonial/ethnographic change. With his *oeuvre* serving as a “bridge between the past and the future in anthropological theorizing” (ibid.: 162), it appears that Turner occupied the threshold between modern and postmodern thought.

While Turner’s structural processualism buckled from growing impressions of culture as an “endless crisscrossing of processes,” a “eufunctional” (V. Turner 1982b: 54) script prefiguring an “immortal antagonism” (an evolutionary dialectical structuralism) persisted because, despite fragmentation and attenuation, the liminoid (and play) performed the necessary ritual (or “rituoid”) role in history’s drama. Thus, conveyed in essays collected in *From Ritual to Theatre*, ritual remained an essential antistructural condition albeit diversified and renewed in a complex grid of genres. And as this background noise informed, for instance, the analysis of “social drama”—considered to be “to the last simple and irradicable” (1982c: 78), or demonstrative of ritual’s agency and telos—challenges would arise. Thus according to the “performative dimension” of history particular to Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004) “cultural pragmatics,” Turner’s scheme does not address “post-ritual” cultural performance, the elements of which have become differentiated, separated, and “de-fused” with the growth of complex societies. In other critiques, the resolutionary process implicit in “social drama” contrasts with instances where rituals fail or become illogical, or where meaning remains elusive, as in Erica Bornstein’s (2006) interpretation of a World Vision prayer meeting in the development context of post-1990s Zimbabwe as an enactment paralleling the “theatre of the absurd.”

To the disquiet of recent commentators, even while ritual was functionally absent, or served as the context for meaningless activity, it (or drama as ritual) remains a driving force in Turner’s historical scheme. The fanciful particularity of this perspective was that ritual liminality (evolved as liminoid) appeared to be both everywhere (in a vast range of cultural performances) and nowhere (as “quasi,” perhaps not-quite-ritual, or once were ritual). And since the sacred, the transformative, the transcendent, could be simultaneously present/absent, possible/diminished, real/virtual, we encounter a particularly challenging layer in Turner’s narrative. The problem

was observed by Grimes (1976: 23) who, researching Theodor Gaster and Turner's categories, questioned the view that contemporary symbolic acts are best regarded as either "survivals" or "liminoid," "since both concepts seem to locate the primary phenomenon elsewhere," being a "function of their study of ritual in ancient and pre-industrial contexts from whose perspectives contemporary symbolic acts must be viewed as reflections, likenesses, or remnants of earlier or simpler ones." In this model, while perhaps ritual-like, commodified *communitas* and increasingly mediated events could be evaluated as contexts for inauthentic, un-real sociality, "deprived of direct transcendental reference" (Turner 1992: 160). Yet how would such logic be reconciled with the advent of global media technologies (from satellites and mobile telephony to virtual digital media) and consequential mediascapes transforming the daily lives of global populations, enabling and enhancing the very immediacy, social spontaneity, identification, and sacrality that Turner embraced as a human necessity?¹⁰

Perhaps the latter demonstrate the resurgence of the *limen* in the present, or that it never actually ebbed? Whatever the case, critics have noted that the *limen* (especially as spontaneous *communitas*) seemed to be more a utopic description of being than a heuristic device. Echoing Bakhtin's utopianism, social liminality "acquired transcendent value and became depicted as what was quintessentially real, a kind of primal unity" (Flanigan 1990: 52). It has been recognized that the 'vibe' of the American 1960s—the romanticism and millenarianism of the expectant counterculture—had facilitated the conceptual birthing of *communitas* (see Grimes 1990: 21). As Vincent Crapanzano observed (1984: 475), the concept had a "hippy ring to it." Moreover, because *communitas* was also derivative of the Turners' Roman Catholic faith, and was in turn a cornerstone of their approach to Christian pilgrimage, they were reproached for interpreting performance (pilgrimage) from a theological position, faithful commitment to which appears to have motivated Turner's late quest for a unitary "neurosociology."¹¹ Indeed, in the introduction to a special edition of *Zygon* dedicated to Turner, and addressing his interest in the role of biogenetic processes in the *ekstasis* of *communitas*, Edith (1986a: 8) states: "Vic was a religious man, a Catholic; and I think it was a delight to him before he died to know that God—Providence—had indeed provided in the human brain an arrangement of organs with which to experience Him." If the *limen*—in this case the "cerebral commissure ... limen or threshold between the brain hemispheres" (V. Turner 1985f: 288)—held more design than chance then there is little doubting that most scientists (social or otherwise) were loath to accept such faith. But such disciplinary skepticism also reveals the atheism endemic to anthropology (and cultural studies, etc.),¹² itself mirroring a Western prejudice in favor of rationalism. So when Turner

gave credence to visionary, mystical, or “Orphic experience” (1992: 154f.) within marginal Western cultural realms (e.g., the transpersonal experience of mystics, communards, and other experimentalists), he was a liminoidal agent mounting, from within the privileged interstices of academia, a challenge to “normative” cultural frameworks that routinely delegitimize and outlaw extraordinary experience transpiring beyond authorized religio-cultural frameworks, political arenas, and entertainment venues (from church to parliament to sports stadiums and dance clubs).¹³

This matter aside, critics would see the Turners’ Christian pilgrim *communitas* highlighting an ideal and homogeneous experience at the expense of complexity and power contestations. According to John Eade and Michael Sallnow’s influential approach (1991), as a “realm of competing discourses” a pilgrimage may accentuate prior distinctions between pilgrims as much as it dissolves difference (see also Sallnow 1981; Wheeler 1999; Coleman 2002). Competing with or complementing the limen’s implicit consensuality, there emerged innovative approaches to modified or new pilgrimage sites (see Coleman and Elsner 1998; Coleman and Eade 2004). Referring to real and present sites of “otherness” and implying multitudinous discourse and practice, Foucault’s loosely defined “heterotopia” would be adopted as a designation for contemporary sites existing in a problematic or antithetical relationship with structure, although retaining the efficacy/potency inscribed in *communitas* (see Hetherington 2000; St John 2001a; and see Gilmore this volume). Others, notably Don Handelman (1993: 121), expressed reservations about the “ontological implications” of *communitas*, the potential dark side of which (e.g., Nazism) he thought “frightened” Turner, who “avoided confronting” such implications (see also Maxwell, this volume).

Weber has pointed out that the potency and ambiguity of the “border” (and those subalterns occupying it) has, within American studies at least, made the transcendent and apolitical *limen* something of a questionable model. Indeed, the optative marginality implicit in Turner’s later digressions is ill-suited to perspectives on colonial history and gender politics. Yet, while an approach thought to privilege a sense of “social leveling and attendant cultural bonding over what we now recognise as an encounter with identity politics” (Weber 1995: 530) would offer a dissatisfactory heuristic for some, illuminating rock concerts (Sardiello 1994), folk and countercultural gatherings (Newton 1988; Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993; Hetherington 2000; St John 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c), hip hop (Maxwell 2003: 214f.), raves (see Takahashi and Olaveson 2003; Gerard 2004; and St John in this collection), and Jamaican dancehall (Stanley-Niaah 2006), *communitas* would continue to provide an apposite conceptual framework for extraordinary social experience. In a period when youth formations self-identify as “tribes” and fans

of popular media icons as “cultic,” observers returned to Turner’s insightful efforts to retrain the anthropological gaze upon Western culture. Theory would be applied to elucidate “symbolic pilgrimage” (Aden 1999) and the office workplace (Letkemann 2002), to comprehend “emergency structures” arising in the wake of natural disasters (Jencson 2001), and be instructive to developing “strategic family therapy” (Holle 2000), “rituals of impartiality” (D’Agostino 2001), and as Jencson suggests, “culturally appropriate” disaster responses.¹⁴ With varying faithfulness to or comprehension of the intended logic, researchers have located an almost ephemeral liminality: in sex (Moore 2003), illness (Dumit 2005), consulting activity (Czarniawska and Mazza 2003), narrative genres (Ashley 1990), “media events” (Dayan and Katz 1992), and sites of media production (Coudry 2000), in consumption behavior and shopping malls (Zukin 1991, and Cusack and Digance this volume), in “cyborg” subjectivities (Gough 2005), and in the cybercommunication of digitally virtual spaces (Shields 2003; Barbatsis, Fegan, and Hansen 1999; Sant 2001). It is not only the digitally virtual that is considered liminal. As “a threshold between at least one immediate lived milieu and the distant ground of the other(s),” actualizing the ideal, realizing the possible, and anticipating the ability of information and communication technologies to “make present what is both absent and imaginary,” according to Rob Shields, liminal rituals have been *virtual worlds* all along (2003: 49, 11).

It is something of a paradox that, holding the logic of temporality, the limen would become recognizably pervasive, so much so as to even possess its own journals—*Limen: Journal for Theory of Liminal Phenomena*, and the more recent *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*.¹⁵ The theme’s currency and circulation within performance studies and media studies would see it become detached from its theoretical origins (e.g., Broadhurst 1999), developing a life of its own as an all-purpose tool. And, appropriated by New Age ritual and theater practitioners, counterculturalists, Catholics, ravers, and other popular music fans, liminality (and ritual generally) would break free of its academic moorings. As Bell conveys, among all the significant theorists of ritual, Turner has been adopted as “the authority behind much American ritual invention,” legitimating ritual “as a universal process that authenticates changes in traditional rites or empowers people to invent new ones” (1997: 263). As “belief in ritual as a central dynamic in human affairs,” as opposed to a belief in Christian liturgical traditions, for instance, provides ritualists with “the authority to ritualize creatively and even idiosyncratically” (ibid.: 264), a new paradigm is thought to have emerged. Applying these academically authorized accounts of ritual theory to ritual practice, practitioners believe that “their rites participate in something universal. They consider what they do as fundamentally symbolic and having

much in common with the equally symbolic practices of Chinese ancestral offerings, Trobriand garden magic, or Turner's accounts of Ndembu healing" (ibid.).

Critical scrutiny of Turner's work demonstrates how, not long after his death, the academy would develop an institutionalized mistrust of transcendent principles and universal absolutes, triggering a decommissioning of essentialism. Yet, as Jon McKenzie conveys in his groundbreaking *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001: 50), poststructuralism provided a platform for the (re)invigoration of what Philip Auslander (1994) identified as the "transgressive" or "resistant" theme inscribed in liminality—an approach said to have constituted something of a "liminal-norm" in performance studies (thus often denying the either/or pivot central to Turner's thesis). While the conflation of liminality with "resistance" within American performance studies led to its representation as that discipline's "metamodel of cultural performance" (McKenzie 2001: 90), the indeterminacy at the root of the Turnerian perspective appeared to preclude its entry into British cultural studies of the 1970s and 1980s. If the cultural-Marxist scholars at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (see Hall and Jefferson 1976) saw working-class youth's subcultural "rituals" and symbols (styles) deployed to resist (re)incorporation or "recuperation" (see Hebdige 1979), the redress/resolution of conflict integral to Turnerian "ritual" process would appear undesirably neutral.

Setting aside the fact that the CCCS offered little definition of "rituals" themselves, part of the problem was that the ontologically privileged status Turner afforded liminal ritual removed "indicative" events and processes from focus. Thus, what Handelman calls "events of presentation" (ceremonial forms like state funerals, royal pageants, and commemorative days), whose contemporary predominance, he argues, has culminated in a hegemony over the transformative work associated with rites of passage (1990: 79), were effectively dismissed from analysis. Resembling Michel Maffesoli's (1996) influential attention to an "underground centrality" or *pouissance*, which is—by contrast with institutional power or *pouvoir*—the "inherent energy and vital force of the people," Turner's fixation with antistructure generated models of transformation/integration uninterested in ways the "symbolic means of production" is controlled and managed (Alexander 2004), or how the "indicative" or "fixed world" (capital, morality, the state) is mirrored in special ritual/ceremonial frameworks, and in processes of commodification and self-governmentality that may alter the *limen* itself. Since, as John Sherry (2005) recognizes, liminality—or what Sherry calls "the liminate"—is at the "absolute centre of economic and political processes" and not, as Turner (1982b: 54) had it, at the "margins" and "interstices of central and

serving institutions,” a need arises to observe branded subjunctivity, normalized performance, and domesticated virtuality. While critics might overlook how “normative” and “ideological” *communitas* assists understanding of processes of sociocultural institutionalization, this is far from the critical heuristics in models addressing, for instance, hegemonic, patriarchal, or disciplinary power, or indeed what might be deemed the politics of performance. In an effort to reevaluate liminality (or at least how this trope has become complicit with liberation), McKenzie suggests that “the subjunctive mood of the ‘as if’ [...] must be understood not in opposition to an indicative mood of ‘it is,’ but as ultimately related to an *imperative* mood which commands ‘it must be’” (2001: 168). This mood is indeed observed to feature strongly in, for instance, “filmic rituals” (Westerfelhaus and Brookey 2004), the analysis of which seems to recognize the persistent power of liminal conditions to affirm the *sacra*, and to reinforce normative, or in the case of *Fight Club*, heteronormative, values.

Cultural theorists have begun making qualified rereadings and renovations of the *limen*. Setting aside the unified approach to the individual, ritual, and drama, liminality has been found to resonate usefully with Felix Guattari’s ethico-aesthetic paradigm. Perhaps this is resultant of a “philosophy of immanence, for which the primordially of Being and Subject are brought into question and overturned in favour of what we can best term a processuality which is univocal, in the sense that no categories or conceptualizations fall outside its scope” (Arnott 2001). As a consequence, the creative possibilities inscribed in spontaneous *communitas* render it compatible with the language of “territorialization,” “ecologies of the virtual,” and “schizophrenic escape,” thus describing “the advent of a line of flight which leads away from the plane of organization towards the non-hierarchical and relatively disorganized plane of immanence” (ibid.). Inspired by Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari to submit a theory of “global performance,” McKenzie himself reconfigures liminality in the digital age as “liminautical,” which while retaining the efficacy of the original, jettisons the liminal/liminoid distinction. The distinction is assumed untenable since, for one thing, occupational performance management has sought to infuse the workplace with elements of play, and for another, with increased digitization (mobile phones, faxes, computers, and handheld information devices), business and work activities penetrate homes, cars, and vacations, to create circumstances dissolving work/play, labor/leisure distinctions, and giving shape to postindustrial liminality. For McKenzie

[l]imenes remain sites of passage and transformation, but these sites are now themselves in passage, their transformation becoming networked over many dif-

ferent borders: geopolitical, societal, institutional, paradigmatic, generational ... At the turn of the twenty-first century, the citationality of discourses and practices is passing across an electronic threshold, a digital limen. Words and gesture, statements and behaviors, symbolic systems, and living bodies are being recorded, archived, and recombined through multimedia communication networks. Liminal and liminoid genres are becoming cyberspatial, flighty, liminautic. (McKenzie 2001: 94)

McKenzie argues that these “liminautical” trajectories, or “machinic performances,” are, in classic Turnerian, either “normative or mutational” (ibid.: 197). While a Deleuzoguattarian account of the production of subjectivity contemplates a different “becoming” from that of Turner, and while a critical lens on “the age of global performance” contributes to advanced debates about knowledge/power, Turner’s insistent, though for many invisible, paradox seems to have provided fertile grist for McKenzie’s conceptual mill.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

Despite the challenges from poststructuralism and postcolonial studies, as is evident in interdisciplinary applications, this collection demonstrates that the Turnerian model remains as compelling today as it was in earlier decades. Investigating how the perspective has been reanimated, renovated, and repurposed in studies of contemporary cultural performance and experience, the volume presents chapters in four parts.

Part One, “Performing Culture,” attends to reconfigurations of Turnerian theory in response to contemporary cultural performance with particular attention to the intersections of ritual, drama, and media. In Chapter One, “Toward a Unified Theory of Cultural Performance,” J. Lowell Lewis undertakes a productive revision of Turner’s ideas in the light of shortcomings and inconsistencies identified in the Turnerian approach. While Lewis follows Turner, suggesting that the duality of *special events* vs. *everyday life* is central to understanding cultural performance, some “special events” serving to reinforce structural conditions (e.g., ceremonies) are conveniently excluded from Turner’s dialectic, while others arise “as exercises in enjoyment, excitement, and illumination” (e.g., festivals) rather than as responses to dramatic crises, and others still (e.g., games and sports) cannot be adequately interpreted according to the rites of passage model. Simultaneously reinforcing/contesting normativity, Lewis considers play (a different order of experience than ritual) to hold greater explanatory power for many special events than Turner’s enduring passage/redress perspective. Desiring a balance to the “liberatory, redemptive strain” of Turner’s approach, it is

further suggested that some events create “obfuscation, mystification, confusion, sensational excess, or rampant escapism.” Arguing that *communitas* may be the context for “rejection” and “revulsion” rather than liberation, Lewis presages the approach taken by Ian Maxwell in Chapter Two. Though not explicitly stated by the author, in “The Ritualization of Performance (Studies)” Maxwell offers something of a response to Ron Grimes’ prefaced question in his revised edition of *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (1995: xxii): “how are ritual processes manipulated for the purpose of abuse and oppression, both personal and collective ... what are the symptoms of a ‘sick’ ritual?” Maxwell introduces readers to the sphere of Turner’s greatest influence: performance studies. With the assistance of Jon McKenzie, he notes how the crucial Turner/Schechner dialogue would see the discipline’s object and method become synonymous with liberatory efficacy. While embracing Turner’s “attempt to push towards a phenomenology of cultural performance,” Maxwell argues that the “liberation theology of salvation” inherent to liminality overlooks the possibility that performance can “effect radically dystopian change,” cautioning about what is “altogether darker and dangerous at the heart of *communitas*.” While the fascistic Nuremburg rallies offer obvious counterpoint to the grace and wholesomeness implicit to Turner’s “*communitas*,” it is demonstrated that pervasive experiences outside the “liminal-norm” can be found closer to home. Offering recollections of two diverse Sydney performance experiences committed to memory, Maxwell’s accounts serve to indicate the oppressive and dangerous implications of liminal sociality, showing that performers may deviate or recoil from an otherwise alluring “undifferentiated, homogenous whole in which individuals confront one another integrally” (Turner 1969: 177).

The theme of performative efficacy lies at the heart of Chapter Three, “Performing ‘Sorry Business’: Reconciliation and Redressive Action,” by Michael Cohen, Paul Dwyer, and Laura Ginters. If liminality constitutes an unsettled, unsettling, and ambiguous movement between fixed points, and if this is as applicable to the historical trajectories of societies as it is to the biography of individuals, then we can observe the contemporary “reconciliatory” climate within settler nations like Australia approximating such temporal unsettlement. Demonstrating influences from Turner and Baz Kershaw, the authors consider conditions under which the “potential socio-political efficacy” of performance may be actualized. The circumstance with which they are taken is “Australia’s longest running social drama”: the history of the continent’s colonization, particularly recent performances on this stage. While settlement (involving dispossession and displacement of indigenous inhabitants) has set in train a social drama of epic proportions, events in the 1990s triggered an unprecedented popularizing of the “crisis”

and legitimate efforts at settler “redress.” While such efforts were hindered by the Howard Government, popular performances arose within a climate of indigenous/nonindigenous “reconciliation.” The authors critically discuss the “People’s Walk for Reconciliation” across Sydney Harbour Bridge, contemporary indigenous theater (the productions *Stolen* and *Aliwa*), and the Olympic Games’ opening ceremony as diverse cultural dramas where indigenous and nonindigenous Australians have made efforts at “negotiating together a response to what is shared in their history.”

One of the significant aspects of the Olympics opening ceremony—the planet’s most popular spectacle—is the mediatization of the performance (as an indelible part of the performance). The impact of television and other media on contemporary social life, particularly the performative implications of this media and the imputation that media *is* ritual, has stimulated research enlisting Turner’s ideas (with varying degrees of sophistication). As Mihai Coman points out in Chapter Four, “Liminality in Media Studies: From Everyday Life to Media Events,” increasingly popular positions, held within the discipline of media studies, that practices of media production and consumption constitute liminal ritual are generally unconvincing since they tend to appropriate Turnerisms without the theory and with little or no supportive ethnographic grounding. In his own work, Coman finds a Turnerian framework appropriate since “the mass media creates a *liminal*, subjunctive framework, a framework for symbolically experiencing possible ways of articulating social life.” For instance, during the period of instability in Romania (1990-1992), the mass media were both triggers and tools for creating and maintaining liminal social conditions. Applying the Turnerian analysis to contemporary social worlds made complex by media and the mediatization of culture, in Chapter Five, “Social Drama in a Mediatized World,” Simon Cottle offers a response to problems identified by Coman. As ever newer media become deeply implicated in the sociocultural drama of the present, we could replace “each society’s” with “each era’s” in Turner’s comment that “each society’s social drama could be expected to have its own style” (1985a: 74). As Cottle argues, since contemporary public rituals are “enacted on the media stage ... performed within differentiated and globalizing media ecologies,” mediatized social dramas ensue. Turner’s attention to extended performances unfolding in response to crises in public life makes his approach more appropriate, according to Cottle, than studies of “media events” and “media spectacles” in comprehending exceptional media phenomena like what transpired in the wake of the racist murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence (in the UK). Cottle adds an “ebbing/revivification” phase to the “social drama” sequence since, as evinced by the prefix “post,” some social dramas “become embedded as historical ref-

erence point, political benchmark, and cultural residue” long after “schism/reintegration.”

Part Two, “Popular Culture and Rites of Passage,” attends to studies of contemporary transition rites. Unfortunately, Turner never really did get to “make more precise these crude, almost medieval maps I have been unrolling of the obscure liminal and liminoid regions which lie around our comfortable village of the sociologically known, proven, tried, and tested” (1982b: 55). Offering insights on passage experience within the contemporary, popular media studies can illuminate inconsistencies in Turner’s speculative and “crude” liminal/liminoid distinction (in which television is cast as liminoidal). Take, for example, the popular “reality TV” series *Survivor*. A game involving selected contestants who elect to give up their normal lives (family, friends, home, job, etc.) for up to forty days of isolation, personal deprivation, and collective ordeals in “primitive conditions,” and with viewers choosing to invest their commitment, the program is technically liminoidal. However, since it is a powerful pedagogical vehicle for transmitting the rules and appropriate conduct of market capitalism (ruthless individualism, corporatism, and acquisitive materialism) to both players and home viewers, the series approximates definitive aspects of the liminal experience.

While film and television studies could offer useful insights in this area, an interrogation of Turner’s liminal/liminoid (and the supporting “ergic-ludic/anergic-ludic” dichotomy) is taken up here by Sharon Rowe. Disputing Turner (and diverging from Lewis, this volume), in Chapter Six, “Modern Sports: Liminal Ritual or Liminoid Leisure?” Rowe argues that modern sports events are decidedly liminal phenomena. In Turner’s scheme, as secular leisure phenomena characterized by optative practice, sports are incapable of “supporting a context sufficient to sustain the shared beliefs and visions” linking participants/spectators to a transcendent reality. But identifying the various “collective” dimensions of sport, and its equivalence to the “eufunctional” aspect of liminal phenomena, Rowe argues that sports events possess a “doubled double-edged capacity to present ourselves to ourselves in our sheer potentiality while at the same time conserving cherished images of what we are.” Exemplifying the dynamic Turner characterized by the term “ergic-ludic” (work-play), sport’s paradoxical context of choice and duty is shared with other realms of contemporary cultural performance.

In Chapter Seven, “Trance Tribes and Dance Vibes,” my investigation of a subgenre of electronic dance music culture, trance (or psytrance), is informed by Turnerian insights despite noted discrepancies in the liminal/liminoid formulations. One of Turner’s principal insights, developed during the radical cultural upheaval of the 1960s, was that liminality/communitas potentiates a *freedom from* (routine/convention/structure) and a *freedom to*

(experience and explore otherness/alternatives). Not only have there evolved performance genres dedicated to facilitating such freedoms, but counter-cultures are inventing dance “rituals” (“trance parties”) in order to (re)live a “tribal” experience (“the vibe”). While participation is voluntary, participants commit to the party “vibe” and defer to various cultural authorities. And while trance dance parties reclaim the sacred via a dedication to changelessness, they are, all the same, transitional worlds generative of alternative cultural forms.

If “experience” is the realm to which Turner gravitated, then it is reasonable to assume that his anthropology would be appealing for studies of contemporary youth, for whom *experience* constitutes an ultimate concern. In Chapter Eight, Amie Matthews investigates an increasingly popular leisure pursuit through which young people seek and obtain experience. In “Backpacking as a Contemporary Rite of Passage: Victor Turner and Youth Travel Practices,” Matthews indicates that backpacking is one response to growing desires for the experience of freedom (personal liberty) and authenticity (“realness”) necessitated by the “ambivalence, uncertainty, and sense of loss felt under modernity.” Extended overseas travel is regarded as a “secular rite of passage” for young people, a liminoidal process involving the rapid acquisition of experiential knowledge within extraordinary and sometimes risk-laden circumstances potentiating “a sense of solidarity and community between a diverse group of individuals,” and assisting “the development of reflexive and potentially cosmopolitan youth identities.” The experiences of “breaking out,” “living large,” and “being more” identified within backpacking resonate with the commitment to “going hard” and being “out there” that I identified among trance habitués, and since involvement in the latter may also involve travel (backpacking) and risk taking, the connection is not coincidental.

In an example of passage ritual within an educational (as opposed to leisure) context, in Chapter Nine, “Walking to Hill End with Victor Turner: A Theater-Making Immersion Event,” Gerard Boland introduces what he calls a “weekend immersion event” experienced by all three years of undergraduate cohorts in a unique theater/media studies course run by Boland at Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia. Operating for over fifteen years and now becoming known as the “Hill End Project,” the event is both invented ritual and normative *communitas* within a higher learning context. Boland employs Turner’s ideas to interpret the process by which young theater students are transformed (ideally) into courageous, creative, and cooperative practitioners, through a series of “neoliminal” performances, or “physical, psychic, and social threshold crossings,” involving site-specific and improvised theater near Bathurst’s Turon River and in the context of

a historic gold mining town, Hill End. While Boland's "Walkers," like Matthews's backpackers, are removed from the routine and transferred to an alternative experiential interzone, their passage is a unique component of a higher educational requirement suggesting that, by comparison to backpacking and other optative adventures of contemporary life, this invented ritual possesses strong liminal characteristics. This unique pedagogical ritual, where student neophytes traverse unpredictable and challenging terrain, represents a theatricalized threshold with significant social and cultural implications.

Discussion of travel and passage in the contemporary carries to Part Three, "Contemporary Pilgrimage and Communitas" where contributions comment upon the intersections of communitas, pilgrimage, and passage. A significant destination for alternative experience transpires annually in Nevada's Black Rock Desert at the countercultural festival known as Burning Man. In Chapter Ten, "Of Ordeals and Operas: Reflexive Ritualizing at the Burning Man Festival," Lee Gilmore demonstrates the applicability of the Turnerian perspective to Burning Man in a way that also problematizes the paradigm. Burning Man possesses traits characteristic of a rite of passage (and/or pilgrimage), including the "release from mundane structures," the movement of "Burners" from "center to periphery," participant ordeals, a "homogenization of status," reflection on the meaning of basic religious and cultural values, and reaggregation in "decompression" events. Yet, as Gilmore observes, since Burning Man's temporary desert city imports and replicates civic infrastructure and urban comforts, separation from the mundane may be cursory. Furthermore, since participants frame and construct their experience of the event in multitudinous ways, and class and status differences are reproduced in situ, communitas is jeopardized and undermined by the event's "deeply heterogeneous" (or "heterotopic") character. While Gilmore is cautious, the resonance between Turnerian theory and the event is striking. She recognizes that Turnerisms often "speak" so viscerally to participants precisely because the formulations were in part shaped and buoyed by the counterculture from which Burning Man and its participants draw heritage. As a site for the "recursive absorption of ritual theory" in contemporary efforts to create innovative rites "ideologically positioned outside of more traditional religious contexts," Burning Man illustrates the cultural filtration of Turnerian thought, with on-site performances demonstrating how popular theory has authorized "contemporary ideas about *what ritual is* and *how it should transpire*."

While Burning Man offers a liminal break from the marketplace, it could be argued that the marketplace is the "realm of pure possibility" since individualism has altered what we understand and experience as religious

practice and the sacred has become uncoupled from institutional religion. In a world where consumption has a critical role in the re-production of (the now sacred) Self, the temples to what Russell Belk refers to as “consumption sacredness” are shopping malls. In Chapter Eleven, “Shopping for a Self: Pilgrimage, Identity Formation, and Retail Therapy,” Justine Digance and Carole M Cusack argue that the quest for Self drives “shopping pilgrims” toward these sacred centers of the West. “Consumption pilgrimage” is investigated in the context of a secondary school girl’s Formal Fashion Spectacular at Sydney’s Queen Victoria Building (reinvented as a shopping plaza), which the authors argue is a site of fragmentary *communitas* and potential transformation. This is a liminal world where dominant symbols (what the authors call “tribal identifiers”) appear to be corporate logos, and “consumers regard shopping as a quest for contemporary answers to perennial problems.”

Leaping (wildly) from “shopping pilgrims” seeking the sacred Self in malls to protest pilgrims seeking sacrality in Gandhian Satyagraha, the following chapter demonstrates the broad application of the Turnerian pilgrimage model. If political techniques are diffused, translated, and reinvented across national boundaries, how are these processes organized and performed? According to Sean Scalmer, translation is often the work of pilgrims, and reinvention “relies upon the unity gained through public rituals.” In Chapter Twelve, “Turner Meets Gandhi: Pilgrimage, Ritual, and the Diffusion of Nonviolent Direct Action,” Scalmer draws on the Turners’ approach to pilgrimage and *communitas* to enable comprehension of the diffusion of Gandhian Satyagraha (or nonviolent direct action) from India to Britain in the mid-twentieth century, and its reinvention in the Easter Alderston nuclear reactor marches from 1958, which themselves had a formative impact on social movement activism in the 1960s and after.

Spontaneous *communitas* has been found to arise at diverse sites. Margi Nowak found it manifested in an “online community” that enabled parents of children with ‘invisible’ behavior-affecting disabilities to share their “narratives of vulnerability” and become courageous critics of the state. As Nowak argues in Chapter Thirteen, “Dramas, Fields, and ‘Appropriate Education,’” confronted with the difficult and painful task of ensuring their special-needs children an “appropriate” education within the bureaucratic US school system, one feature of such a community is that it provides parents whose disabled children are entering the education system access to “parent advocates” experienced in the discourse of the educational, medical, and legal systems. As Nowak comments, once “scared neophytes” become experienced advocates through the assistance of the virtual communities, they may become ardent critics of the education system, and thus perform

important roles in escalating conflicts with their respective school districts, conflicts that take the form of a social drama.

Part Four addresses the critical role of Edith Turner in the Turnerian project. The contributions need some introduction. Victor Turner married Edith Davis in 1943, precipitating an extraordinary relationship. While Turner had many colleagues, none were more intimate and central than Edith, who admits to being a “principal collaborator in every field that Vic explored” (1985b: 1). Edith’s own anthropological research career spans diverse fields, from the Ndembu of Zambia to Catholic Pilgrimage in Mexico and the Iñupiat of North Slope Alaska. With her publication rate and lecture appearances growing prolifically following Victor’s death she would publish her own monographs, beginning with *The Spirit and the Drum* (which had been written 33 years before its publication in 1987), becoming a significant figure in the anthropology of consciousness and editor of the journal *Anthropology and Humanism*.

But it is the inter-Turnerian dialogue that is of interest here, a dialogue that appears to complicate what is held to be Turnerian. The Turners co-authored their first scholarly article in 1953 (Turner and Turner 1955), a feat not repeated until the late 1970s (Turner and Turner 1978). While their names rarely shared the authorial byline—a result of several factors, not the least of which was Edith’s nonprofessional status (the “anthropologist’s wife”) (see Engelke 2001: 124–133)—Edith was nevertheless the coauthor of everything Victor wrote (see Engelke 2004). Given this extraordinary circumstance, the intellectual boundary between the Turners was fuzzy and complex. As Victor completed his PhD dissertation (and in preparing other publications), Edith notes how she responded with enthusiasm to being “conscripted to draw up the tables, to correct them endlessly, to put together satisfyingly complex genealogies” (1985b: 5). The exchange of notes and ideas was also critical. For instance, “Social Dramas in a Brazilian Umbanda” (Turner 1987b) clearly illustrates how Victor relied upon his wife’s keen and sensitive eye (as revealed in her detailed field notes, which he drew upon extensively). And, herself infected by his enthusiasm with the implications of brain research for ritual (and thus of scientific–neurobiological and biogenetic–research for understanding religion), Edith would speak and write on the subject with comparative zest following his death (see E. Turner 1986b). Moreover, the Turners shared a life that was extraordinary in range and intensity. Their experience of ritual during the initial fieldwork in Africa inspired the move toward Roman Catholicism, a decision that, Victor explained, enabled (via pilgrimage) assimilation “inside the heart of the human matter.... Deciphering ritual forms and discovering what generates symbolic actions may be more germane to our cultural growth than we have supposed. But we have

to put ourselves in some way inside religious processes to obtain knowledge of them" (1975: 32). Recognition of this intimate exchange and commonality of experience compels a reimagining of what is generally regarded as the Turnerian approach.

Originally called "Kajima" after the Ndembu village of the Turners' second field period (1954–55), and employing an intimate first-person narrative developed outside the stylistic demands of anthropology, *The Spirit and the Drum* was intended to be a humanistic "companion piece" alongside the more scientific *Schism and Continuity* (Engelke 2001: 128). Having returned, some thirty years later, to the Ndembu village in which fieldwork was initially undertaken, and participating in the *ihamba* healing rituals, Edith would produce an ethnography, *Experiencing Ritual* (1992), diverging markedly from Victor's sometimes positivist account of the same ritual (see V. Turner 1967d). Her account of witnessing the *ihamba* spirit removed from the patient Meru marked the emergence of an experiential anthropology challenging the discipline to open its boundaries to experience that, by the standards of most ethnographers, is beyond the "ordinary" (see Young and Goulet 1994). Challenging anthropology's secularist fundamentalism (E. Turner 1994: 91), Edith's radical methodology pushed beyond disciplinary taboos (1992c) and cleared the way for a humanistic anthropology of consciousness. Developing linguistic competence, plunging beneath the surface of symbols, her ethnography would demonstrate a commitment to conveying cultural worlds and performances faithful to the sensibilities of those who dwell in those worlds (see E. Turner 1996, 2005, 2006).

Matthew Engelke's "Interview with Edith Turner" (Chapter Fourteen) offers a fascinating prologue to this section. The chapter reproduces an interaction¹⁶ that touches on significant aspects of Edith's life and demonstrates "how the dynamics of gender and marriage affect the production of anthropological work." The interview not only reveals Edith's role in the field, editing Victor's work and complicity in Victor's intellectual development (especially the idea of "communitas"); it also provides insight on her immersion in the "human story" of the Ndembu (and others she has lived among as an ethnographer). While her approach diverges from Victor's, she regards her work as an "extension" of his experiential, intuitive, and generative approach (such as was conveyed in *Chihamba the White Spirit* [1962]). As she elsewhere explains (1985b: 4), opposed to formalism and structure, whether British or French, Victor "enjoyed what was earthy, what was fecund, growing, seminal." Inscribed in the core themes of liminality and communitas, the trait illustrates what one of Victor's foremost students, Barbara Babcock, suggests is the "gynesis"—the "putting of Woman into discourse"—in his work. Most accounts of Turner list influences including Durkheim, Gluckman,

van Gennep, Dilthey, Csikszentmihalyi, even Rilke, Blake, Shakespeare. But in Chapter Fifteen, “Woman/Women in ‘the Discourse of Man’,” not only is Woman figuratively significant in Turner’s anthropology of the generative, indeterminate, and either/or, but as Babcock suggests, the voices and ideas of actual women were critical in his intellectual development. While these include his mother and Babcock herself, of course principal amongst these influences was Edith, who, not only the “indicative mother” of his children and much of his work (being heavily involved in field and library research, writing, and editing), was also his work’s “subjunctive mother.”

Responding to an apparent “oscillation between methodological atheism and respect of religious experience” in the Turners’ work, in Chapter Sixteen, “Faith and (Social) Science: Contrasting Victor and Edith Turner’s Analysis of Spiritual Realities,” Douglas Ezzy attends to epistemological issues at the heart of the anthropological enterprise. While Victor’s earlier anthropology was shaped by a perspective that would “implicitly denigrate” Ndembu religion as “mistaken and ethically inferior,” he resisted the atheistic implications endemic to structural functionalism, striving to record, via social drama, ritual’s “ontological status.” Yet, as Ezzy points out, such status seems to have only applied to “certain types of religious experience” consistent with Victor’s Christian faith. Thus, while the revelatory *Chihamba* ritual appears to resemble *communitas* (a concept owing something to the experience of Christian mystics like Eckhart), “secular anthropological discourse” is the privileged model in the case of Ndembu divination rituals. Yet, thrown into the field and undisciplined in anthropological methodology, Edith Turner appears to have been placed in a unique position to write unfettered by the “endemic methodological atheism” with which her spouse struggled. While, according to Ezzy, her approach to ritual has not been uninfluenced by her Catholic faith, Edith developed an experiential methodology that would reveal the significant role of altered states of consciousness in religious experience. Offering the kind of “respectful interpretative frame” required to supersede anthropology’s “methodological atheism,” Edith (and in other ways, Victor) are seen to have made important contributions to the interpretation of religious experience.

In the final contribution, Chapter Seventeen, “Challenging the Boundaries of Experience, Performance, and Consciousness,” Jill Dubisch relates just how Edith Turner’s approach made its significant contribution to Turnerian theory, anthropological method, and the study of cultural performance. While Dubisch recognizes that Edith’s reflexive, engaging, and revelatory narrative style constitutes a radical departure from standard anthropology, more radical, she argues, is the way such style is deployed to “illuminate and expand” our understanding of Turnerian theory. Edith’s work demon-

strates how the field experience embodies theory, and, as Dubisch conveys, since she takes extraordinary ritual experience (that of others and her own) seriously, such an approach enhances our understanding of “communitas, ritual, symbol, social process.” Enlarging the boundaries of what constitutes anthropological analysis, the approach assists Dubisch in taking her own experiences seriously (e.g., visions experienced during her research on healing modalities, and in particular during her associated Reiki training). It is concluded that by developing “an anthropology *through* experience” and an “anthropology through ritual,” Edith has moved in directions Victor only hinted at, meanwhile furthering the Turnerian project in ways he would have surely approved.

While the Turnerian framework has left an extraordinary legacy, perhaps the most intriguing quality is what Schechner identified as its “unfinishedness.” His sometimes “crude, almost medieval maps” are, for some, a probable cause for infuriation, yet the incompleteness of Victor Turner’s work and career has inspired many to continue blazing the trail—including, of course, Edith Turner herself. Invariably, attention to the shortcomings and inconsistencies in Victor Turner’s approach are swiftly qualified with a recognition that our comprehension of culture, performance, and religion would be considerably deficient in his absence. In response to the challenge of understanding contemporary cultural performance, and in recognition of the persistent relevance of its heuristics, the chapters in this collection demonstrate the broad and evolving appeal of the Turnerian project.

NOTES

1. Turner submitted his PhD dissertation (published as *Schism and Continuity*, 1957) and would work as a Senior Fellow and Senior Lecturer at Manchester.
2. Turner’s enormous cross-disciplinary sphere of influence is illustrated by the appearance of various volumes indebted to his work (e.g., literary studies—Ashley 1990; pilgrimage—Morinis 1992; psychoanalysis—Schwartz-Salent and Stein 1991; neurophenomenology—Laughlin, McManus, and d’Aquil 1990), and special journal editions published posthumously, including Seneviratne (1983) and Bouissac (1985). For specific examples of Turner’s cross-disciplinary influence, see Olaveson (2001: 92). He also had an impact on American Studies, indeed becoming a Visiting Professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota in 1980. Roland Delattre (personal communication) recalls that the auditorium at the 1977 ASA convention in Boston was “packed to spilling over” in anticipation of Turner’s response to Delattre’s address.
3. See Frank Manning (1990) for a comprehensive, yet incomplete, list of Turner’s publications, and Henry Barnard (1985) for a useful annotated bibliography.

of Turner's published work to 1975. For a reasonably comprehensive review of his work, see Matieu Deflem (1991). Barbara Babcock and John MacAloon's commemorative essay (1987), Edith Turner's prologue to *On the Edge of the Bush* (1985b), Benjamin Ray's entry on Victor Turner in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1993: 94–96), and Matthew Engelke's extended analysis (2004), provide good primers.

4. Symptomatic of Turner's enlisting of the natural sciences to assist the understanding of ritual, "corresponding to open-endedness in biological evolution" (1974: 15), cultural drama is perceived to be evolutionally advantageous. Accordingly, liminality provides culture with an adaptive response to changing historical circumstance, to the trenchant contradictions and conflicts of daily existence.
5. Turner suggested that *communitas* is closely associated with the lowering of status. He extended this concept metaphorically to cover such themes as: the relationship between those undergoing ritual transition; "religions of humility" (e.g., Franciscan, Vaisnavism); institutionalized poverty (such as that taught by Buddha or Gandhi) and other monastic and mendicant states (these states are described as "permanent liminality" and are an attempt to bring about sustained "normative *communitas*"); the middle-class countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s; the status of autochthonous people; "submerged" kinship links; and Christian pilgrimage (1969; 1973; 1974; Turner and Turner 1978).
6. As a timeless condition or "a place that is not a place," the pan-human modality of *communitas* is perceived to be manifest, for example, in Zen Buddhism's "prajna" ("intuition") and Confucianism's "jen" ("love, goodness, benevolence, humaneness and man-to-man-ness") (Turner 1974:46, 283).
7. French anthropologist Roger Bastide's theory of the "*instituent*" "immanence of sociality" operating in response to the "instituted" (with institutional religion in turn forming out of normative instituent) demonstrates a curious parallel with Turner's theory. According to François Gauthier (2004: 67), in Bastide's scheme "when instituted forms no longer provide for the vividness of the instituent experience we witness the appearance of *savage* quests for the *vivid fervour of the instituent* that shun any regard for domestication." There are further parallels with the universal sociality of Michel Maffesoli's "orgiasm" (1993), which could be identified as corporealized *communitas* (see St John 2001a).
8. See also the "Encounter with Freud" (1978) and essays gathered in E. Turner (1992a), including "African Ritual and Western Literature" (chapter 4) which compares the *Chihamba* initiation ritual and Dante's *Purgatoria*, and the "Kanokura Festival at Shingu" (chapter 6).
9. Influenced by Grotowski and in conjunction with Schechner, the Turners became involved in staging experimental Theater/ritual "ethnodrama" with their students.
10. Of course, Turner does not hold a monopoly on perspectives on ritual, and the role of media in complicating and extending what we regard as ritual (includ-

- ing liminality) has been undergoing serious analyses (see Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998; Couldry 2003).
11. Forging a holistic anthropology and freakishly astride disciplines, Turner adopted psychological and biological perspectives on ritual with the aim of abolishing “the sharp distinction between the classic study of culture and sociobiology” (1985g: 297). The “geology” of the brain and nervous system suggested the symbiotic coadaptation of biogenetic and sociocultural processes, or a “dual control” of genotypes and culturetypes (1985e). “The New Neurosociology” (the title of an essay presented in 1982 at Smith College), to which Turner was latterly committed, held sympathy with Maclean’s “triune brain” theory, Jung’s archetypes, the collective unconscious and individuation (see 1985f.), and the potential complementarity of the brain’s hemispheres, the fundamental union of which was an expression, according to Schechner, of Turner’s “utopian wish” (1987b: 14).
 12. Which, as Doug Ezzy explains (this volume), is itself a “religious/philosophical” faith masquerading, through methodology, as unbiased objectivity.
 13. Also, while spontaneous *communitas* has been found to compare favorably with Durkheim’s “collective effervescence” (Olaveson 2001), since Turner made only an incomplete riposte to the anomalies in Durkheim’s theory of religion (where ritual appeared to be both social and asocial), it remains uncertain as to how his theory advances upon the latter. While acknowledging that a phenomenological perspective would shed light on the transpersonal (and thus astructural) character of *communitas*, this development was cut short by Turner’s death.
 14. The utility of such conceptual architecture should not be underestimated in an era when “natural” and “non-natural” disasters (e.g., the Asian tsunami of December 2004 and especially 9/11) have triggered and continue to require extraordinary local/global responses.
 15. For *Limen*, see <http://limen.mi2.hr/>. The journal’s brief period of activity (there were two editions) might be considered to be consistent with a liminal logic. For *Liminalities*, see <http://www.liminalities.net>.
 16. Originally Engelke (2000), though part of a larger project (see Engelke 2001 and 2004).

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