



The Craft of Ritual Studies

Ronald L. Grimes

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RONALD L. GRIMES

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*Dedicated to Karen McCarthy Brown
in honor of her many crossings
and
in memory of*

*Roy Rappaport (1926–1997), Catherine Bell (1953–2008), and Frits Staal (1930–2012),
debating partners become ancestors*

Craft:

- an art, trade, or occupation requiring special skill, especially manual skill
- to make or manufacture with skill and careful attention to detail
- skill or ability used for bad purposes; cunning; deceit; guile

—Dictionary.com

It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it.

—Jacob Bronowski

- The list is the mark of a highly advanced, cultivated society because a list allows us to question the essential definitions. The essential definition is primitive compared with the list.
- We like lists because we don't want to die.

—Umberto Eco

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VIDEOS AND APPENDIXES

The Santa Fe Fiesta, a video album online at <https://vimeo.com/album/1557600>, is integral to chapter 4.

Illustrative and supplementary videos are contained in two additional online albums: *Ritual Creativity, Improvisation and the Arts*, <https://vimeo.com/album/1524902>; *Highgate*, <https://vimeo.com/ronaldlgrimes/albums>.

References to specific sections of a video are coded by title or number, then minute and second separated by a colon. For example, 1:30–3:20 refers to a video beginning at one minute and thirty seconds and continuing through three minutes and twenty seconds.

Appendixes for this book are online at oxrit.twohornedbull.ca/volumes/craft-of-ritual-studies/ and on the author's site at <http://ronaldlgrimes.twohornedbull.ca/craft>.

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The Craft of Ritual Studies

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Introduction

However the brain works, mine depends heavily on eye-hand coordination. “The hand is the cutting edge of the mind.”¹ I enjoy making things with my hands and giving them away. Persistently reflexive, I also take delight in thinking about making. I collect found objects with which to make things. To keep up with the accumulative mess, I make lists. To get oriented I tell stories. I slide readily from things manual and visual to things verbal and conceptual. I reason from particular to general, narrate from present to past, and doggedly cycle between the down-and-dirty details of ethnographic research and the abstractions of philosophical reflection. This combination has led inexorably to conducting field research with a camera in my hands and to a book designed accordingly: first a method, then a case, and finally a theory. Part I provides methodological orientation for studying ritual by laying out the basics of participant observation, interviewing, and videography. Part II, an online case study of the Santa Fe Fiesta coupled with analysis of the videos that constitute the case, is followed by a history of the fiesta’s predecessors. Part III theorizes ritual by considering its definitions, cultural locations, elements, and dynamics. The three parts—method, case, and theory—play off each other. Their relationship is circular and interactive rather than linear or hierarchical.

I imagine this volume as a book for the hand even though it is not a step-by-step, how-to book. Whether it is actually a handbook, imagining how the finished product would fit into the palm sometimes kept me writing. The result is a written volume accompanied by online videos, a hybrid without a proper—or at least a nice—name. In New Mexico such creatures, even when they are humans, are dubbed “coyotes.” In English royal history such offspring, especially if they aspired to high office, were given less kind names. Even though my intention is to orient readers, the initial effect of these reflexive ruminations on the study of ritual may be disorientation. Aimed at enhancing the dexterity of ritual studies researchers, the book may nevertheless induce disorientation, awkwardness, and self-consciousness, but students of ritual shouldn’t worry too much about these feelings, since they usually evaporate quickly.

Although the book and its accompanying online videos are designed with classrooms in mind, their argument resembles an extended position paper more

than an introductory textbook. Whereas textbooks provide balanced surveys of a field, summarizing key ideas and introducing major thinkers, I am articulating a position by connecting the dots of my own research on ritual. To make the through-line of the argument more visible, thus more vulnerable, colleagues appear mainly in endnotes. Like the little girl instructed to be sure of her meaning before she spoke, I approached the writing task asking, “How can I know what I think till I see what I say?”²

My research on ritual began with fieldwork in 1973 on the Santa Fe Fiesta and ended in 2012 as it began, with the Santa Fe Fiesta. I almost called this *Endings in Ritual Studies*. The title would have seemed to complete *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, bringing to a conclusion what that book initiated. But in the final analysis, there is no final analysis. I found that I could not write something that I or anyone else would take as “the last word.” So *The Craft of Ritual Studies* is an ending only in the sense that it is the most complete statement of what I have to say about the study of ritual. If for others it is a fruitful beginning, I will rest content.

Some who study ritual consider their labor a science; others regard it as an art. However, I’ve come to consider ritual studies a craft. Craft is art’s practical-minded, hands-on, manual-laborer cousin. When I was a high school student, a teacher rebuked me for taking woodworking and typing, both courses then labeled “manual arts.” I was puzzled at being instructed that such subjects were mere crafts, neither true arts nor very academic and thus not for students like me. Only girls took typing, and only dunderheads took shop or auto mechanics. What kind of student was I? The sort, my teacher retorted, who should take Latin (forget Spanish), because I was going on to university. Obediently, I took that dead language, but defiantly, I also took shop and typing, which have served me more faithfully than Latin. The supposedly higher “language arts” would have served me more effectively if I had chosen to learn Spanish. Latin might have served me well if I had eventually studied medieval European liturgies instead of contemporary rituals.

As a manual art, or craft, ritual studies may lack the clout of science, the venerability of Latin, and the elevation of fine art, but it should not lack utility. If you can’t put your hand to this book and use it, something has gone awry. Unlike art, which, they say, cannot be taught because it is the issue of genius rather than the outcome of manuals, the craft of ritual studies should be as utilitarian and easy on the environment as a good Dutch bike. Ritual studies should be as beautifully proportioned as an Arts and Crafts-style Morris chair and as tasty as artisanal bread or your local craft beer.

If you think of the study of ritual as a science, you will aspire to be systematic and search for rules, if not laws. If you think of ritual studies research as an art, you will think of systems as prisons; you will suppose that there are few, if any, laws; and you will consider rules as social conventions, there for you break or transcend. If you are really, really smart, you will suspect that it’s all too easy—and likely damaging—to overdraw the differences between science and art. So I take a middle path.

To treat ritual studies as a manual art, an activity of the hands, arises from a conviction that theorizing, like ritualizing, is inescapably embodied. The trouble is that we human beings are not necessarily articulate about that which we embody. Ask someone walking in a procession or exiting the throes of trance, "Why ritual?" and your question will barely elicit a glancing shrug, "Why not?" Persist questioning and you may hear, "Because we always have done so" or "Because our ancestors did so" or "Because doing so is a good thing." Such answers are about as satisfying to a student of ritual as the answers that great dancers or star athletes give immediately after stellar performances.

The relevance of ritual is far from evident to students. Even though an academic ethos is supposed to be more reflective than a ritualistic one, a professor asking a room full of students, "Why study ritual (or anything else for that matter)?" often hears responses that are not all that different from those tendered by ritualists, ballerinas, and hockey players: "Because it's what you do in university" or "Because my parents want me to." In both academic and ceremonial circumstances, such replies have something vaguely honest but strangely comical about them.

Students nearing the end of a course on ritual sometimes turn the tables, asking me the question I asked them at the beginning of the course: "So, Dr. Grimes, why do you study ritual?" The question is genuine, because by now they have figured out that I don't study it because I was cradled in it or am enamored with it. I chant them a bit of Latin: "*Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto.*" Terence, a Roman comedy writer and the son of a slave mother, offered this wry retort to a difficult question: "I am a human being, so nothing human is foreign to me." To avoid presumption I edit Terence as I appropriate him. I change "is" to "ought to be." I study ritual because nothing human ought to be foreign to me. Some human activities, ritual among them, seem persistently odd. I believe we should study most intensely those things that seem most foreign to our own experience. The more "other" something human feels, the less human we become if we do not query it. So my somewhat longer, non-Latinate answer to the probing student question is something like: "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?"

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 at China. We are told

that it transformed young Germans into Nazi soldiers. So we had better study ritual; our humanity depends on it.

Ritual studies encompasses ritual in all its forms—religious and nonreligious, collective and individual, transformative and confirmative, textually prescribed and improvised, traditional and invented, long-lived and short-lived, emerging and declining, change-inducing and change-resisting. Interdisciplinary in approach and cross-cultural in scope, ritual studies is carried out in the field as well as in libraries; it is ethnographic as well as textual. Because ritual studies emerged under the colonial tutelage of anthropology, many of us who study ritual assume that the paradigm for research consists of outsiders who arrive from elsewhere poised to study other people's rituals. Robertson Smith is said to have given modern anthropology its first comprehensive theory of ritual. If you underline "modern," "anthropology," "comprehensive," and "theory," perhaps this myth of the origins of ritual theory has some truth to it. But Smith was hardly the first to think critically and comprehensively about ritual. Ritual is studied by people within their own cultures as well as across cultures. Practitioners, not just scholarly outsiders, have long theorized about ritual. You can find ritual theory in sacred texts such as India's *Satapatha Brahmana* or in religious treatises such as Kukai's treatments of Japanese Shingon Buddhist ritual. So we should not ignore two facts: Practitioners sometimes theorize, and theorists sometimes practice. People cross and recross the sacred but imaginary line that separates ritual practitioners (whom I also call ritualists and ritual actors) from ritual studies scholars (whom I also call students of ritual). As useful as the insider/outsider distinction can be, when the labels are reified and then stacked into a hierarchical arrangement (theorists above practitioners, for example), each tempted to write the other off, we lapse into stereotyping. In these circumstances each becomes polemical and indignant toward the other. From the inside, the dogma is that outsiders can't possibly understand. From the outside, the prejudice is that insiders don't really understand what they are doing. Each is half a truth. Each posture, that of insider and that of outsider, has its virtues and vices, and neither has a monopoly on the truth.

Ritual studies as an interdisciplinary academic enterprise is in its adolescence, having begun flying under this particular label in 1970s, but the study of ritual is older than ritual studies. As I imagine it—for that is all we can do—the origins of the study of ritual are ancient and multiple. Perhaps studying ritual arose when a rite went astray: What just happened? Why didn't that work? Or when one devoted ritualist encountered another ritualist equally devoted to another ritual tradition: Why are you doing that? How did you do that? How does that work? Where can I get one of those?

People, I suppose, began to theorize about ritual when it went wrong or when practitioners found themselves in situations evoking comparison, competition, or judgment. My guess is that doing preceded theorizing about doing, but who knows? Neither I nor anyone else. Whatever the case, ritual studies scholars did not invent

ritual, the study of ritual, or ritual theory, even if they invented current concepts of ritual and knit together the interdisciplinary academic field of ritual studies. Ritual studies scholars are latecomers upon the ritual scene.

For years I have wrestled with simple-sounding but difficult questions: What is ritual? What do rituals do? How do ordinary practitioners cultivate, enact, and assess ceremonies? Ever since I began working on ritual, both the idea and the thing itself have been troubling. More recently, it was disconcerting to stumble over yet another set of questions with a familiar but different ring: What is theory? What do theories do? How do ordinary scholars create and assess theories? I had assumed I knew what theories were, but, like most things put under microscopes, they ramify, becoming ever more complex. This is a book, then, written out of the repeated rediscovery that both ritual and theory are thorny as concepts and daunting as practices.

Most academics who study ritual are not ritual studies scholars. They are historians of religion, anthropologists of religion, area specialists, theologians, sociologists, psychologists, literary critics, performance studies scholars, or others whose expertise is elsewhere. So there is a broad and a narrow use of the term “ritual studies.” On the one hand, it means simply “the study of ritual” regardless of discipline and regardless of the status, professional or amateur, of those who carry it out. On the other hand, it refers to the study of ritual by scholars who devote most of their research time and energy to doing it. In the former sense many engage in it; in the latter, few.

Most of us who study ritual also teach about it. In a recurring fantasy, one uncomfortably close to reality, I am in a small, overheated, oxygen-deprived classroom late in the evening. I am trying to keep a seminar on ritual theory awake, but the students, their caffeine now running thin in their veins, are tempted to snooze. They are eager to escape the interminable abstractions for a beer or some other bodily reprieve. I must not only keep them awake but also imbue them with theoretical sophistication and methodological finesse, for in the spring, when the snow thaws, they risk being eaten alive in the field, surrounded by ritualizing bodies who will circumambulate their socks off or drive them with dancing into the hardwood floor, where the spirits will have a feast day on their untutored souls. Taking desperate measures, I jump up on the desk, book in hand, and begin to stomp out a rhythm. The connection between theorizing and dancing having escaped them, the students yawn, jolting me back to reality.

The obvious cure—any good prof will tell you—is to get the students to do the work. Stop lecturing at them; this is a seminar, so let them talk, do the work, play the stuff out. Whatever else it is, research is a problem not only of the brain and the academy but also of pedagogy and writing, so both activities will be close at hand as we ruminate on theory and method in the study of ritual. Students, especially graduate students, must display theory and method or be found wanting. Bereft of theory and method, they risk shriveling into mere undergraduates. So in the upper

crust of student culture, the ever-competitive quest is on for current theory and useful methods. When, by dint of passage, graduate students have been transformed into professors and writers, they sometimes disremember the albatross of theories and methods and begin heavy-handedly imposing these burdens on underlings. Having been put to sleep by dealing in definitions and waxing on about theorizing, newborn professors do likewise to their students. Sleep, of course, is not bad, but sleeping in class is. It's fine for theory to daunt, but it ought not to bore. But how are we to make theory and method not only practical but also engaging? That is the teacherly question. It is also the writerly question. One answer to it is "Get real." As teachers of ritual studies, we keep ourselves and our students awake by connecting theories to theorists and to their actual circumstances. We induce wakefulness by refusing to disembed theories and methods from lived lives. The other answer is "Get imaginative; be playful." By admitting that there is a certain foolishness or playfulness, a kind of musicality or poetry, to theorizing, we are not defiling these fine and high arts, only admitting that theorizing too is an imaginative practice.

PART I

METHOD

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Performing Research and Teaching

Method, case, and theory are parts of a dynamic whole. Interacting, they constitute research. When we examine a case with an eye to the practices that produced it, we have begun to extract its method. When we employ a method, a theory is implied. When we put a theory to work on a case, a method is required. A method determines how rituals are or ought to be studied. Whereas a case tracks a specific ritual as practiced, a theory speaks of ritual in general—its forms, elements, and dynamics.

Employing a method, like marshaling a theory, is neither hard science nor fine art. It is a craft. How, when, and in what proportions you invoke the guidance of theory, marshal the directives of method, or resort to storytelling are infinitely variable. How woodenly or musically you play these scholarly instruments is partly a matter of personal style and partly a matter of professional expectation and convention. How much homage you pay to previous theorists and the literature, as well as how aggressively you take them to task, varies widely. Even if your theories, methods, and data are rigorously scientific, their deployment is craftlike.

Methodology (“talk about method”) takes at least two rhetorical forms. *Methodological advice* assumes an imperative mode, while *methodological narrative* happens in declarative mode. In the first, an experienced researcher advises an inexperienced one, “Check your batteries periodically throughout the course of an interview.” The senior researcher, basing counsel on experience, makes suggestions or lays down a rule. In the second, the elder tells stories: “Once, when I was interviewing a most articulate participant, I became so fascinated that I forgot to check the batteries. When I returned home, I realized I didn’t have the interview, only my memory of it. And, wouldn’t you know it, a week later, the participant was dead.”

The distinction between prescribing and narrating is less clean than it might appear. Storytelling can readily be heard as covert advice: “I made a mess, so don’t you do it this way.” Like dictionary definitions that start out as descriptions of usage, fieldwork narratives can, over time, become prescriptions. “How I conducted fieldwork” stories can be delivered or heard as cautionary tales implying, “This is how you should behave in the field.” Whereas methodological narrative is often in the

service of how *not* to do things, methodological prescription is largely about how *to* do things. In any case, the goal of methodological reflection, of whatever ilk, is orientation in the field. Whereas theory is about gaining perspective, and cases are about grounding, method is about becoming oriented. Without the orienting activity of method, data swamp us and theories abstract us.

Methodology is the meta-activity of reflecting on methods. Methodology is what we are doing in this paragraph. *Method* is the “how” of research, the bedrock of practical knowledge that enables us to do things well in the field. How-to knowledge is not only necessary out there, where things can get confusing or even dangerous, but is also essential here at home. It includes the full range of activities that researchers carry out: applying for grants, clearing ethics review boards, operating recording devices, conducting interviews, reading texts, analyzing data, writing books, editing video, and making multimedia presentations. Method includes not only the set of procedures operationalized in the field but also those for preparing to enter it and for presenting research after leaving it.

Methodology encompasses at least two distinct but related kinds of knowledge. The first is practical, on-the-ground know-how: how to gain access to a ritual, interview a participant, or take field notes. The second is so-called higher-order knowledge: thinking critically, comparing rituals across cultures, or interpreting postures and gestures. This second kind of methodological knowledge shades off into theoretical knowledge.

The method I advocate here argues for the value and necessity of carrying out ethnographic, historical, literary, and videographic tasks when studying live ritual events in the field.³ The method focuses on contemporary events and those who participate in them, and it assumes going afar into a field, if not geographically, then culturally. Even if I am only going a few blocks across town, I imagine arriving as a stranger or outsider. The usual way of describing fieldwork is to say that it consists of participant observation and interview. To these I add audiovisual documentation; it is no longer an expensive option but rather an affordable necessity. The audiovisual aim that I’m trying to foster is not only note-taking and data gathering with a camera but using recorded material for analysis and crafting presentations for audiences.

The preponderance of scholarly writing about ritual is based on ancient and historical texts. The rituals to which they refer are inaccessible to field researchers carrying cameras. The method I advance here fits this kind of data only indirectly or imaginatively. Those wanting to study historical, virtual, or fictive rituals will have to make modifications to the method; so will those wanting to study their own rituals as insiders.

I am not suggesting that the proposed method is the best or only way to do research on ritual. I do, however, believe that this way provides the fullest possibility for critical access to ritual data. One can learn more about a ritual by being there than by reading about it, and one can more completely document a rite with a

camera than without one. Whether one *actually* learns more depends on the abilities of the researcher and the circumstances of the research.

Research on ritual and teaching about it embed scholars in a complex process of social interactions that unfolds across time and usually in multiple places. We can imagine it as a trajectory, narrative, performance, or even as a ritualized process. This trajectory, which traces the path that connects a researcher with both a researched community and a scholarly community, aims at various targets: securing a grant, offering a course, or publishing a book. Research is a process for challenging common sense and conventional wisdom, thereby expanding the boundaries of knowledge, but such expansion also encounters resistance. Like an arrow released from a bow, research projects encounter drag. Even though we might wish the path from beginning to end were a straight line, it necessarily traces a curve. To compensate for gravity and inertia, we aim higher than the target. Our proposals promise unique and valuable results. Compared with others, our proposals and manuscripts are most worthy of funding or publishing. Like blurbs on the backs of books, proposals advertise.

Since research formalities not only facilitate but also inhibit innovative impulses, they constitute traditions every bit as much as ritual systems do. Research bureaucracies not only facilitate, they also obstruct the expansion of knowledge. Like every cultural subsystem, academic researching, teaching, and writing enshrine guarded conventions and house vested interests. So the research process not only challenges assumptions, it also suppresses and distorts knowledge.

Research is reported not only in publications and formal reports but also in tales from the field told to students or colleagues. If you describe a research interaction by schematizing it into a beginning, middle, and end, it is a narrative. If you present it before an audience, it becomes a performance, and an evaluation of it, a performance review.

Application forms often prescribe the shape of expected narratives. Check boxes, tables, timelines, and budgets may not look like stories, which more typically take the form of sentences and paragraphs, but usually there is an implicit narrative and sometimes, a required performance. If you do not honor the conventions, you will not get the grant or be published.

A research project, no less than a play, follows an arc:

You are educated about ritual by reading accounts and theories. These may or may not echo anything you have actually experienced in a ritual tradition from your own domestic, civil, or religious formation.⁴ If you are exceptionally lucky, you are taught methods and get to practice using them before you are launched into the field, where you will confront a ritual.

You conceptualize the project, especially ritual's role in it. Since you have not actually done the research yet, you are both remembering and imagining. Remembering what you have read from other scholars who

have studied ritual, you both defend and advertise what you hope to do in the future. Cautiously, you imagine (without calling it imaginative) what you propose, knowing that evaluators will be looking over your shoulder.

Using forms and instructions administered bureaucratically, and adhering to canons of length, style, and timing, you apply for a research grant. The application is vetted, peer-reviewed, ranked, and then selected or rejected for funding.

Assuming you get a grant to do fieldwork, you negotiate your way into the field, using methods to gather data to which you will apply a theory learned from teachers and books. The theory and method are supposed to determine the kinds of data you collect and the questions you ask of them.

You observe, participate, interact, and interview, transposing each kind of activity into data encoded in multiple media such as notes, tapes, videos, photos, material objects, memories. Perhaps you share some of these with the people whose rituals you study. Maybe they give you feedback. Maybe you even collaborate with them.

You return home and in your study or library begin the work of writing. The first thing you do is translate multimedia data into the genres valued in your academic discipline. For instance, you write descriptions of ritual events, and you write up conversations that you have been taught to call interviews.

Then, you apply a theory to data. If that theory is scientific, you are obliged to test it by identifying variables, quantifying covariances, tendering explanations, and making predictions. If the theory is not scientific, you nevertheless must somehow generalize or compare, mobilizing scholarly concepts to frame your dialogue with the data. Since you are not free merely to report, you stretch the purview of your descriptions and dialogues by writing interpretations, lacing your writing with quotations from reputable scholars.

You aim to make a contribution to knowledge by obtaining new data, proposing a new interpretation of existing data, or, if you are a senior scholar, by making theoretical advances. These question, critique, or refine someone else's theory. Major advances, you have heard, arise from proposing a new theory.

Having analyzed your data, you craft articles, perhaps a book. Drafts of publications are vetted by confidential, anonymous peer review, and then revised before being made public. Maybe you send a draft to the people among whom you worked in the field.

Drawing on your research, you make verbal and multimedia presentations at conferences. You invite responses, both positive and negative, to these presentations. You teach courses, lecturing on the subject matter.

Your publications and presentations are read, reviewed, and critiqued. In some cases you respond to these reviews, taking their implications into account in future research projects.

Outside the academy you are construed as an expert, so perhaps you grant media interviews.

Then the cycle starts over again. Typically, you go elsewhere because the academic market requires something new of you. But since you are cultivating expertise, you are torn. Perhaps you will return to the same place, producing a follow-up or longitudinal study.

If we connect its beginning and ending, this process becomes a cyclical narrative. It begins, ends, and then starts over again. When it starts over, we scholars claim to be building on our previous research records. Grant proposal forms frequently ask assessors about track records, assuming that, having run the race once, applicants are more likely to complete subsequent rounds.

Great plays can be generated out of stock plots, so it is no insult to notice the stock, narrative, or performative qualities of research and teaching trajectories. You smile, maybe even laugh, at such a tale. It doesn't fit everyone, perhaps no one. The process is not uniform—it has cultural, regional, and historical variations. Not only does this little tale labor the obvious; it also pokes a bit of fun and skirts thorny questions: Are these chronologically ordered stages, or simultaneously present layers? What constitutes valid critique? To what extent should writing about ritual take into account the research and teaching cycle in which it is embedded?

Even if you don't wish to call this set of formalized expectations a narrative or performance, there is little question that most scholars mount repetitive, seasonal, highly stylized performances in which the academic community exercises its collective wisdom through forms designed to instill its virtues and to deter what it deems intellectual vices. The process requires that one's own little (autobiographical) story be submerged into or shaped to fit the big (mythic) academic story. One's pay and promotions, which is to say, much of what scholars treat as sacred, depend on these evaluations. Maybe you don't want to call this process a ritual, but it is stylized, formalized, and prescribed.

The reason for hinting that research might be ritualized is not to demean it. Rather, it is to say that the usual ways of discussing theory and method are too idealized and too narrow. We need a broader, more inclusive sense of both, since theories and methods include not only arguments, definitions, and demonstrations but also storytelling and performing. The notion of a research narrative or performance complicates our understanding of theory and method. Now we must ask: Method for doing what task? At which point along the research-and-teaching trajectory? If we take seriously the idea that research, like ritual, requires performance, we will attend to the bodies, voices, and roles that shape interactions with people whom we study. We will learn to examine the scripts and conventional genres that underwrite

our thinking. We will study the social theatrics and politics that swirl around research activities. We will document the sensory, material culture that concretizes and fetishizes research. And we will attend to the conceptual and spatial frames that set off research as special. In short, we will treat ritual processes and research processes as relatives, not as opposites.

John Bourke as a Student of Ritual

Perhaps a sample research narrative can make the point more convincingly than a generic scenario. For scholars like me whose subjects are contemporary, it can sometimes be enlightening to take a historical excursion. Doing so can contribute considerable perspective on current theoretical and methodological issues. Also, students of ritual are often overwhelmed not only by the complexity of rituals and the complications of field research but also the oughts of method, so it can be enlightening to know how fraught with dead ends and missteps actual field research is.

John Bourke's compulsive journal-keeping and candid accounts allow readers to peer into his methods and theories for studying ritual.⁵ His journey to the Hopi Snake Dance in the nineteenth century passes through Santa Fe, New Mexico, the scene of our case study, and then culminates two hundred miles west of the city. Because his writing is so transparent, one can see what the study of ritual looked like during the so-called Second Conquest, the one carried out by descendants of English rather than Spanish invader-explorers.

The year is 1881. The modern Santa Fe Fiesta will emerge in less than a decade. Lt. John Gregory Bourke, United States Cavalry officer and military ethnologist, is riding west from Santa Fe. Accompanied by others, he is wheeling along in a horse-drawn field ambulance. They are traveling toward the Hopi mesas of northeastern Arizona. Bourke has been given a year's leave to conduct an ethnographic scouting mission on the rituals of several tribes. Besides being a soldier, he is an anthropologist who is about to witness the Snake Dance and write the first and most widely read account of it.

Bourke, a graduate of West Point Military Academy, is only thirty-five years old. Even so, he is already a seasoned soldier, having fought in and survived the Civil War at age sixteen, then weathered two of the fiercest Indian wars, those with the Apaches and the Lakotas. Bourke is regarded by Indians and soldiers alike as dogged, courageous, fair, and literary-minded. Bourke's Apache friends call him "Captain Cactus" or "Paper Medicine Man." When Apaches want favors, Bourke, ever the scholar, trades favors for religious knowledge. He writes, "I did not care much what topic he [an Apache] selected; it might be myths, clan laws, war customs, medicine—anything he pleased, but it had to be something, and it had to be accurate."⁶

No site in North America has been continuously inhabited for a longer time than the three high desert mesas inhabited by the Hopis. They are sustained by a ritual

tradition that is one of the most enduring in the Americas. Compared with many other First Nations rituals, which were either obliterated or subsumed into Christianity, those of the Hopi were, comparatively speaking, intact.

Then, as now, the Snake Dance is partly sequestered in underground ceremonial chambers called *kivas*. However, Hopis say they sing and dance not for themselves alone but also for the planet. Despite this planetary aim, ritual knowledge is not public. Even many Hopis do not have access to all of it. To give away *kiva* and Snake Clan secrets would be to court disaster, even death. Then, as now, Hopis say their lives depend on the performance of the Snake Dance. Without rain, which their deadly ancestors, the serpents, bring, the Hopis would die. They dance in order to be Hopi, in order to be human.

Another ethnographer, Frank Cushing, of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, has urged the Hopis to admit John Bourke to the Snake Dance, which occurs every second year in late August.⁷ Bourke's visit has no official government status, and the *kivas* are not open to most Hopis, much less to American soldiers. Because Bourke anticipates resistance, he and his men stage an improvised ceremonial entry, the tawdry Anglo equivalent of Hispanic rites of reduction. The gringos ritualize in order to gain access to ritual. Bourke's men pay him exaggerated homage as if he were a revered personage on a mission of great consequence. Consequently, when Bourke arrives at Walpi on First Mesa, the Hopis respond with a ceremonial display of courtesy.

Bourke is pushy. When the Hopis protest his intrusion into the *kivas*, he feigns ignorance, pretending not to understand. Hoping to distract them, he aggressively shakes their hands, pump-handling them like a whistle-stop politician. He pushes past those who would obstruct him, climbs down the ladder, and enters the underground ritual chamber. Inside the *kiva* now, Bourke himself tells his adventure-hungry readers what he encounters:

The stench had now become positively loathsome; the pungent effluvia emanating from the reptiles, and now probably more completely diffused throughout the *Estufa* [*kiva*] by handling and carrying them about, were added to somewhat by the rotten smell of the paint, compounded, as we remember, of fermented corn in the milk, mixed with saliva! I felt sick to death, and great drops of perspiration were rolling down forehead and cheeks, but I had come to stay, and was resolved that nothing should drive me away.⁸

These words come from a man who sweated only half as much in the face of Geronimo and his greatly feared Apache warriors. Bourke's description is not only a confession of fear but a report on a ritually induced awakening of his senses. This olfactory awakening jolts him momentarily out of his visualist bias. The underground portion of the ritual, executed in close, dark quarters, requires the handling and herding of

rattlesnakes with eagle feathers. The sheer tactile and olfactory power of the scene terrifies Bourke. But, with military discipline, the lieutenant does not abandon his post, although, according to his story, his compatriots evacuate theirs.⁹

Later, above ground, Bourke describes another scene, which, again, we will see through his eyes:

Fill every nook and cranny of this mass of buildings with a congregation of Moqui [Hopi] women, maids and matrons, dressed in their graceful garb of dark-blue cloth with lemon stitching; tie up the young girls' hair in big Chinese puffs at the sides; throw in a liberal allowance of children, naked and half-naked; give colour and tone by using blankets of scarlet and blue and black, girdles of red and green, and necklaces of silver and coral, abalone, and chalchihuitl [turquoise].

For variety's sake add a half-dozen tall, lithe, square-shouldered Navajos, and as many keen, dyspeptic-looking Americans, one of these a lady; localise the scene by the introduction of ladders, earthenware chimneys, piles of cedar-fuel and sheep manure, scores of mangy pups, and other scores of old squaws carrying on their backs little babies or great ollas [clay pots] of water, and with a hazy atmosphere and a partially-clouded sky as accessories, you have a faithful picture of the square in the Pueblo of Hualpi, Arizona, as it appeared on this eventful 12th day of August 1881.¹⁰

Although Bourke's narrative is poly-sensuous, his visualist preferences dominate; the description is a picture postcard. Constituting only a brief portion of the book, his description of the ritual is propped up by two bookends. At the front is a travel narrative; at the back is a theory.

Snake-Dance of the Moquis is a classic of early American ethnography, a rare work of observation, even though John Bourke and Peter Moran, whose job it is to sketch the rituals, cannot keep up with the pace of the ritual actions. The Snake Dance liturgy, he says, lasts for sixteen days, not for an hour or two on Sunday morning, so by the end the scholars are exhausted. Bourke has no idea what the costumes, objects, and spaces mean, nor does he know what will happen next. Bourke is keenly aware that the complexity of the event far exceeds his ability to observe and document; it also exceeds his linguistic abilities. Consequently, his arrogance in breaching the secrecy of the kiva is softened by humility regarding his ethnographic account of the ritual.

Bourke carries away what tourists and photographers such as Edward Curtis will soon be carrying away: pictures. Whereas his pictures are mainly verbal, those of tourists will be primarily visual and photographic. Bourke also carries away tactile and olfactory memories. In the end, he will publish the visual materials rendered as verbal data, but the tactile and olfactory memories, I believe, covertly determine the tenor of the theory, eventually undermining it.

Bourke is unable to make friends with the Hopis in the way he had with Lakotas and Apaches, even though he had fought against the Lakotas and Apaches and had only observed and intruded upon the Hopis. To his credit, he records a discussion with Nanahe, an exceptionally frank Hopi who tells him the truth to his face:¹¹

I saw you in the Estufa [kiva] at the dance; you had no business there; when you first came down we wished to put you out. No other man, American or Mexican, has ever seen that dance, as you have. We saw you writing down everything as you sat in the Estufa [kiva], and we knew that you had all that man could learn from his eyes. We did not like to have you down there . . . , but we knew that you had come there under orders . . . , so we concluded to let you stay . . . One of our strictest rules is never to shake hands with a stranger while this business is going on, but you shook hands with nearly all of us, and you shook them very hard . . . You being a foreigner, and ignorant of our language, can do us no harm . . . A secret order is for the benefit of the whole world, that it may call the whole world its children, and that the whole world may call it father, and not for the exclusive benefit of the few men who belong to it . . . If they [the secrets] became known to the whole world, they would cease to be secrets, and the order would be destroyed, and its benefit to the world would pass away.¹²

In this stinging critique of Burke's visualist ethnocentrism, Nanahe both compliments and criticizes him in a succinct sentence: "We knew that you had all that man could learn from his eyes."

Bourke's intrusiveness challenged and his capacity to understand the Hopi Snake Dance confounded, he leaves the Hopi mesas, going to visit nearby Mormons, who have been busy trying to convert Hopis into Christians. Although he turns something of an ethnographic gaze upon the Mormons, he is so relieved at being away from the kivas and rattlesnakes that he does not follow through. Although a little strange, the Mormons are insufficiently other to hold his attention for long.

After leaving Walpi, Burke does lots of reading, on the basis of which he compares what he has witnessed there with what he can learn from books about rituals in Greece, Guinea, Scandinavia, and Polynesia. His conclusions are partly determined by Hopi data and partly by reading comparatively. His comparisons are not always even-handed. Some of them are driven by the desire to show how the American way is superior to the Hopi way. Occasionally he inverts the hierarchy, suggesting the superiority of Hopi ways. Out of the comparison, he constructs a theoretical category, "ophiolatry." The Snake Dance is classified as the idolatrous worship of serpents. This classificatory act is his most fundamental theoretical move.

By 1891, only seven years after the publication of *Snake-Dance*, Burke's theory of Hopi ophiolatry crashes under the critique of Jesse Fewkes, another ethnographer, who conducts a more prolonged study examining variants of the Snake Dance at

three other Hopi villages. Armed more by data and details than drama and literary flourishes, Fewkes concludes that the ceremonies are not about idolizing snakes but about ancestor veneration and rain-making.¹³ Fewkes's view continues more or less intact today.

Even though Bourke's theory is displaced by Fewkes's, Bourke's book nets considerable cultural and academic capital. Eventually, he is elected president of the American Folklore Association. For Bourke, who dared to step down into a snake-filled kiva, this stepping back to write, lecture, and theorize was also a stepping up. His ethnographic foray and publication presage a tourist flood. A few years after the publication of *Snake-Dance*, other anthropologists arrive at the mesas. In the wake of scientific and popular publications by these social scientists, a sea of gawking tourists swamps the Hopis. The Santa Fe Railroad issues a tourist's guide for the Snake Dance and begins using Snake Dance images on posters to attract ticket-buying tourists. The Hopi Snake Dance becomes one of the most photographed, painted, and written-about indigenous rituals in the Americas.¹⁴ Consequently, as late as 1984, Emory Sekaquaptewa, a Hopi and an anthropologist, has to complain about white people who simulate Hopi performances and who believe that non-native people have a right to Hopi rituals as if they were in the public domain.¹⁵

In 1895, the year before his death, Bourke is patronized by Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Along with defeated Indians, some of whom Bourke had fought and written about, he and other aging soldiers are put on display. Only in his late forties, he is already being cast in the role of an old war horse. Ironically, when he dies at forty-nine, this lifelong student of indigenous ritual is buried without ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery.¹⁶

Bourke's scientific method is suffused with personal style. Like Frank Cushing, an ethnographer working among the nearby Zunis, Bourke observes rituals first-hand, but, unlike Cushing, Bourke does not participate in Hopi rituals or live among the people. Like Cushing, he is intrusive, but unlike Cushing, Bourke stays only for a short time, does not learn the language, and does not dress up like a Hopi. Both men took copious notes and both sketched or brought sketch artists. Although both were courageous and showed more respect for native people than many of their compatriots, both theatricalized dishonestly and invaded sacred precincts without proper invitation.¹⁷ By today's standards, their fieldwork ethics were imperialistic and disrespectful.

Writing strategies are a key feature of methods developed in the humanities and social sciences. In observing and writing, Bourke mobilizes his reader's senses with metaphor. Watching Peter Moran, his sketch artist, Bourke writes, "As long as he [Moran] could manage to endure the noisome hole, his pencil flew over the paper, obtaining material which will one day be serviceable in placing upon canvas the scenes of this wonderful drama."¹⁸

Quite deliberately, Bourke wraps the ritual in dramatistic and artistic metaphors. He sees the Snake Dance *as if* it were drama and art. Insofar as he is able to capture

ritual's sensuousness, he is a better writer than many scholars who write about ritual today. We would do well to imitate the sensuality of his writing but probably not its sensorium organization,¹⁹ because it renders *multisensory* activity into *monosensory*, visualist scenes warped by his revulsion at the overwhelming tactile and olfactory dimensions of the Hopi ritual.

Bourke's book on the ritual was preliminary, the outcome of a scouting mission. He does not claim otherwise. The document is neither a fully developed ethnography nor a full-blown theory. His book is a mixed-genre patchwork rather than a systematically applied theory governed by a scientific method. Bourke's conclusions were determined less by his theory than by his worldview—the taken-for-granted values and the sensory prejudices of Victorian America. A scholar's implied theory may differ radically from his or her declared theory.

A summary of the dramatic arc of Bourke's research narrative runs something like this: Our protagonist hears a story about strange ritual behavior and goes to investigate it. In the process, he triumphs over adversity and returns to publish and theorize. He brings home the boon of knowledge, which artists, politicians, and educators can put to culture-enhancing use. Building upon an ever-widening comparative perspective, he theorizes and storytells his encounter with the Hopi Snake Dance. On the basis of both the story and theory, others arrive at the scene. Soon it is media-constructed, photographed by Edward Curtis and hundreds of other camera-carriers.²⁰ As a result, today the Snake Dance ritual is completely sequestered. No longer available as an object of study, it is instead the object of fantasy-driven art and speculation-driven scholarship. The arc exceeds Bourke's own lifespan, and it has consequences that do not match his intentions.

Students of ritual in our time as well as Bourke's continually traverse the distance from circumference to center and back. So the researcher's stance is dynamic, not static, and often it moves across the circle of ritual performance; observation becomes participation. Kinesthetically conceived, ritual is the act of stepping in to *be*, whereas theory is the act of stepping back to *know*. Fieldwork typically requires both gestures but only the second attitude. This shuttling in and back is both bodily and conceptual, generating perspective by the constant shifting of angles of observation and vectors of participation.

Method is how one negotiates the distance between center and periphery. Method requires bodily, therefore sensory, action. Since Bourke stepped down and into Hopi liturgy in order to know, rather than to be, from a Hopi point of view, he did not "get it." His and others' "not getting it" eventually motivated Hopis to re-sequester the ritual, but not getting it was also the irritant that drove Bourke to theorize about the ritual.

From a Hopi perspective, the Snake Dance was, and is, a sacred rite, a liturgy. From Burke's viewpoint, it was a visual-verbal illustration of a theoretical category, ophiolatry. From the point of view of the tourists who soon followed, it was a spectacle. From my point of view, Burke's account of his encounter with the Hopi Snake

Dance is an illustration of a research narrative, a dynamic loop that knots together a religious ritual with the sensory data of field research, the methods of ethnography, and the tenets of a budding theory.

It would be unfair to stress Bourke's theoretical conclusions, since he, like his anthropologist colleagues, Jesse Fewkes and Frank Cushing, was known more for his descriptions and hands-on methods than for his theories. In late nineteenth-century American anthropology, reputations were made mainly on the basis of ethnographic descriptions embedded in journey narratives. Even though Bourke was obliged by scholarly convention to push his data in the direction of theory, theorizing was not what built nineteenth-century academic reputations.

It is easy to debunk John Bourke's theory of religion. Because he was an American soldier who lived in the colonial nineteenth century, we nonsoldiering academics cannot help noticing how culture-bound he was. When, for example, he confesses his antipathy toward snakes, referring to them as "mankind's first enemy," rather than as promising but dangerous relatives, we can feel him shiver.²¹ We shiver at his shiver, because casting snakes as enemies rather than as ancestors twists his theorizing into a Christian judgment on serpents. Whereas Bourke's seeing the rituals *as* drama and *as* art may be constructive despite its playing out a visualist bias, his olfactory response to snakes, because it eventuates in their becoming symbols of evil, reads like obstructive theorizing.

Today, journeys and narratives about these journeys continue to shape ethnographic research on ritual. But the tendency in twenty-first-century scholarship is to shrink, omit, or publish separately autobiographical travel narratives, leaving ritual descriptions to serve as grist in the mill of theory. Whereas nineteenth-century descriptions of rituals were largely narrative-driven, twenty-first-century ones are expected to be more theory-driven. The *intention* in making such a shift is to render research publicly accountable and scientifically respectable, but the *effect* is also to disembodify research, severing it not only from the researcher but also from the research narrative (which one typically hears over a beer) and the research performance (which one hears on ceremonially framed academic occasions). The outcome of much current theorizing about both religion and ritual is often to desensualize and hypervisualize them. As Nanahe observed, we have learned what can be learned using only our eyes, but our feet, noses, and tongues are probably as ignorant as they were in Burke's day. Because our theories and methods require of us performances that are inept if not imperial, because our theories and methods do not require of us kinesthetic, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory attentiveness, we have much information about, but little sense for, the Snake Dance and other such rituals.

By comparing and contrasting Hopi ritual practices and early American ethnographic practices, my intention is not to set up a binary opposition. On the contrary, it is to distinguish and relate researching and ritualizing by examining the arc that leads from the former to the latter. So let me say it plainly: Academic research is not only analytical, it is also narrative and performative. By transposing ritual into data,

scholars exercise ceremonial power by stepping back, then up into positions of academic authority. The rituals of researching, teaching, and publishing constitute the academic ceremony that goes on after the indigenous liturgy ends.

Who knows?—maybe research is as essential to First World academic life as the Snake Dance is to Third World Hopi life. With the Snake Dance, Hopis make it rain. With our theory-and-method dances we scholars makes things generalizable, maybe predictable, and, on rare occasion, even profitable. Hopis paint their faces, while academics put on dark robes and funny hats. Hopis enter kivas. The educated elite enter ceremonial chambers for dissertation defenses and graduations. Each group dances its own kind of dance. Each way of masking exercises its own kind of authority. But make no mistake about it, research, however public and scientific its mask, is incubated underground, where smelly things writhe in the dark. Research does not happen only in the light of day in public spaces.

We students of ritual, like snake-handling Hopis, engage in a dangerously elevated activity, so it is only proper that we who write about ritual receive instruction (and maybe a few whiplashes) from practitioners. We should learn not only *about* the Hopi but, insofar as we can, *from* the Hopi. What Hopis do with their own worst fears and greatest hopes is to sequester or mask them, rendering them sacred. They set loose ritual clowns, who both police and mock liturgical activity. Then, they unmask. The play of power is eventually downplayed.

The Koyemsi, or mudhead clowns, are sometimes depicted as dolls riding Palölökong, the feathered water serpent who slithers up out of a jar, becoming erect in the process. He rises up precipitously toward the sky.²² Such serpent-ancestors are as essential as rain, but they are also as dangerous as the devil. The Hopi scenario requires that sacred clowns, like scholars, ride high. However, it also requires that they be thrown off into the dirt. So be assured: Like others who aspire to think theoretically and write methodologically, our landing spot is predetermined.

Hopis, I imagine, would consider the act of studying ritual to be like trying to contain rattlesnakes. By whisking them ever so lightly with eagle feathers, Hopis herd the snakes, capturing them temporarily in clay pots. Later, dancers release the snakes in kivas and on the plaza. Finally, they recapture the snakes and, having blessed them with cornmeal, let them go. In two years, the whole process starts over again. I am guessing Hopis would tolerate our researching indigenous people's rituals if, in the end, we promise to break our theory pots and let the data go so they will be plentiful when the whole round starts over again.

Since I am playing out the notion that ritualizing is the act of stepping in to be, whereas researching is the act of stepping back to know, the two activities are different but dialectically related. Pushed, the one kinesthetic activity can pass over into the other. Ritualizing can pass over into research, and research into ritualizing. The researcher's reflex of stepping back from kivas and sanctuaries is a kinesthetic response to dissonance and disorientation. Methods are tools of intervention aimed not only at ensuring objectivity and fairness but also insulating researchers from

danger and disorientation. However much research is governed by data gathered into notes, it is also driven by a desire to escape alive and tell the story, erect a theory, or otherwise generate academic capital. Management-by-method is an attempt to control an object of perception experienced as unmanageable by stepping back and then taking up a tool that renders the ritually dangerous event into a visual or verbal scene more predictable and less threatening.

The labor of research, like that of ritual-making, arises from and generates its own conceptual space.²³ Method-operationalized theory is an act performed, transpiring in a setting or on a set. However much the magic of words makes it appear that theories dwell either nowhere or everywhere, they, in fact, arise and decline somewhere. Staged, theorizing is place-specific. We are used to locating rituals in space but not theories.²⁴ It may be true that theorizing enables perspective, but the theorizing eye is not really panoptic; it is neither universal nor divine. As Apaches say, "Wisdom sits in places."²⁵ In other words, it would be wise to follow methods and formulate theories as if the place where we do so matters.²⁶

Like ritualizing, thinking theoretically and acting methodically are bodily acts. Although performing them requires stepping back or returning home, these places are nevertheless places; they are not everywhere or nowhere. However godlike this disappearing act may appear from the perspective of local people in the fields where we study, we who come and go to do research are merely human. They know that, but we sometimes forget. The best way to humanize research is to contextualize it. In this respect a theory is no different from a ritual. Theories and methods, like rituals, should be understood in their several contexts: social, historical, cultural, or ecological. Because scholars are embedded in landscapes, eras, and communities, we better understand methods and theories when we comprehend their relation to the lives and times of those who create and consume them. When we do so, theories and methods no longer seem superior to rituals; the two are just different kinds of enactment.²⁷

From *Symbol and Conquest* to *The Craft of Ritual Studies*

Having laid out a generic research scenario followed by that of a nineteenth-century fieldworking scholar-soldier, I feel obliged to reflect critically on my own research and teaching performances. Its narrative arc begins in the classroom, leads to the field, eventuates in writing, loops into filmmaking, and culminates in this book with its accompanying videos. Unlike Bourke, I repeatedly returned to one ritual scene across a forty-year period. Like Bourke, I stumbled into things, having as much trouble at the end as I did at the beginning. Like Bourke's story, mine is not a model *for* anything, although I can imagine its being used as a cautionary tale in the classroom.

Having tried to teach a course on myth and ritual in which the ritual section floundered, I realized that neither my religious formation nor my degrees had

prepared me to understand ritual. So I began reading. Read and reread, written works, like rituals, can shape us. Victor Turner is widely known for masterful ethnographic writing and for making major contributions to ritual theory.²⁸ Reading his works in 1972 initiated for me a shift away from philosophy of religion toward the anthropology of ritual. Because of my formation as a student of sacred Christian texts and big Western ideas, it was revolutionary to discover that one could make a profession of traveling, talking with practitioners, writing narratives or descriptions, and reflecting on the process.

Shortly after inviting me to the University of Chicago as a Fellow of the Faculty, Turner suggested that I would never understand ritual by auditing his courses or reading in the library. Even though I was already a young faculty member with a PhD, he insisted that I should engage in field research rather than sit in his seminars. When I asked how I might learn to do such a thing, he quoted my mother without knowing it: "By doing it. You learn to do by doing." He added, "That's how I learned."

So, thirty years old, three years out of graduate school, and barely at the beginning of an academic career, I moved to Santa Fe not knowing exactly what I would study there.²⁹ Quizzed in formal circumstances, I would explain, "I'm going to do participant observation and conduct interviews." However much I was rehearsing newly learned lines, that sentence was tasty as it rolled off the tip of the tongue. Asked twice, I would occasionally quip, "I don't really know what I am doing, but I hope to find out." Asked again, I might edge up on a long story by replying, "I'm returning home—but the home I never knew I had. I grew up in New Mexico but not in Santa Fe. I discovered Santa Fe in much the same way as Europeans 'discovered' the Americas. The fact that the place felt like a discovery said more about me than it did about the place."

The academic year 1973–1974 was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The proposal said nothing about Santa Fe, not because I lied but because the course of my research changed drastically a few weeks after receiving this grant for a postdoctoral year. In the proposal I had said I wanted to write an introduction to ritual. I framed the problem as a writerly issue, not as a problem of either theory or field research methodology. Quickly, I discovered that I could not write the book. I was not ready. Turner had pointed out the obvious: I had never done fieldwork. Since he was so obviously right, I swerved dangerously on the career expressway, writing the NEH to inform them of the desired lane-change. Graciously, they granted me permission to change focus. I doubt that either the NEH or any other large granting agency would be so accommodating these days. In any case, I have been trying to write that introduction to ritual ever since I failed to do so in 1973. This book is in some peculiar way the grandchild of that never-written book.

Driven, then authorized, to make the change, I moved to Santa Fe to learn how to do field research. For better and worse, the field was not only the place but also the teacher. My intention was not to write, but that view changed. What was the