CLASSROOM SYMBOLS AND THE RITUAL DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOLING

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Au niveau du concept, il existe encore beaucoup de confusion sur le sens du mot "rites." En conséquence, dans le domaine de la recherche en science sociale, le statut de ce terme continue d'être ambigu. C'est particulièrement vrai des études portant sur l'analyse des modes d'existence des institutions modernes et des formes de culture contemporaines. L'article procède à l'analyse critique et à un nouvel examen du terme "rites," en vue d'élaborer un modèle conceptuel s'appliquant à la recherche dans le domaine de l'instruction scolaire. Sur la base de progrès récents dans les études concernant les "rites," une définition "prudente" du terme "rites" fait l'objet d'une expérience dans une école intermédiaire catholique de Toronto, au Canada. On y a identifié les modes dominants d'interaction, liés par voie d'analyse à une typologie des comportements ritualisés. On a mis tout spécialement l'accent sur l'utilisation pédagogique des symboles.

A great deal of conceptual confusion still surrounds the meaning of ritual. Consequently, the word "ritual" continues to have an ambiguous status in social science research. This is especially true of studies which attempt to analyze modern institutional life and contemporary cultural formations. This paper critically reexamines and reconsiders the term ritual in order to develop a conceptual model for the investigation of school instruction. Drawing upon recent advances in ritual studies, a "soft" definition of ritual is operationalized during fieldwork in a Catholic middle school in downtown Toronto, Canada. A number of dominant states of interaction are identified which are analytically linked to a typology of ritual forms. Special emphasis is placed on the pedagogical manipulation of symbols.

INTRODUCTION

Ritual and Schooling

> What is an educational system after all, if not the ritualization of the word (Foucault 1972 *in* Giroux 1983:207).

This paper argues the primacy of understanding schooling from the perspectives of culture and ritual performance. Its major themes grew out of an empirical application of the concept of ritual to school settings, especially events and conditions which provide the context for classroom instruction (see Note 1).

The idea of combining the concepts of teaching and ritual in a unified framework grew out of fieldwork in St. Ryan Catholic School (a pseudonym) in downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada. St. Ryan had been described as the "toughest" Catholic junior high school in the city, and had a population of primarily Portuguese students. Fieldwork was confined to a total of three Grade Seven and Grade Eight classrooms.

My efforts to give grounding to this investigation of ritual in a contemporary school setting are based on the following beiefs: (1) that schools serve as rich repositories of ritual systems; (2) that rituals play a crucial role in a student's whole existence; and (3) that the variegated dimensions of the ritual process are intrinsic to the transactions of institutional life, and to the warp and woof of school culture. For educators to be able to speak intelligibly and with insight about human behavior in the school milieu, the concept of ritual must be examined in all of its complexity and multiplicity. Moreover, this concept must be reconsidered and reexamined from a different theoretical starting point, or one that links gestural display and symbolic meaning to reality *construction* rather than simply to reality *reflection*. The concept of *ritual* will be enlarged beyond what may be considered prototypical classroom rites (e.g., morning prayer, opening exercises, or school assemblies) in order to locate the dynamics of the ritual process both in the performative characteristics of daily lessons, and in various resistances to instruction.

An examination of schooling as a ritual performance provides a strong basis for understanding the *modus operandi* of the pedagogical encounter. Relevant to this investigation is the understanding that rituals symbolically transmit societal and cultural ideologies, and that it is possible to know how ideologies do their "work" by examining the key symbols and root paradigms of the ritual system.

The Treatment of Ritual in the Social Sciences

The concept of ritual does not fit easily into the intellectual climate of present-day social science. There is a noticeable lack of analyses which link ritual to explanatory models in social science. Particularly in industrial settings, the analysis of ritual has been damagingly narrow and continues to labor under various theoretical handicaps. "Ritual," laments Mary Douglas,

"has become a bad word signifying empty conformity. We are witnessing a revolt against formalism, even against form" (1973:19).

Anthropologists who are hostile to the ambiguity of the term "ritual," who willfully ignore the concept in their own research, and who are apt to dismiss ritual as "useless" because it fails to provide an adequate description of social activity in modern, secular society, have banished the analysis of ritual from serious scientific consideration. These scholars tolerate investigations of ritual as long as they are limited to anthropological studies of societies which are more compact and unified than our own. Such scholars would describe modern rituals as symbolic wrap-arounds that live in the cloakroom of culture (meaning a place where anthropologists rummage through society's outer garments). The idea that rituals form the foundations of modern society is regarded as a naïve attempt to mix religion and science. Mainstream social scientists are prone to classify ritualists as people who perform external gestures without any commitment to the values and ideas which are being expressed. Ritual is regarded as superficial, and the primacy of ritual in contemporary society is underestimated. If unchecked, this perspective could destroy the concept of ritual.

According to some critics of the study of ritual, there is no useful purpose in studying this behavior. I believe it was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who once wrote: "If you board the wrong train, it is no use running along the corridor in the opposite direction." Are researchers who use the term "ritual" as a conceptual category in their research really "boarding the wrong train"? Jack Goody has suggested that, to a certain extent, they are. Recently, he has issued a stern warning against using the concept of ritual in research (1977:25-35). A number of Goody's warnings and some of his sanctions against the use of ritual as a theoretical tool are reasonable. More importantly, none are insurmountable. Goody's attack on how ritual is defined is more autopsy than exegesis, and has by no means exhausted the debate on the utility or richness of the concept. To date, there has been no definitive refutation of ritual as a worthwhile conceptual tool.

What a Ritual Is

The concept of ritual is not simply an arcane or religious idea. Instead, ritual extends far beyond the human religious heritage. Nor is this concept necessarily linked to "mysterious" experiences. Contemporary ritologists (see Note 2) have dissolved the mystical halo surrounding ritual and have stated that rituals constitute everyday human life, including secular activities.

Rituals are not abstract norms and ordinances to be enacted apart from the individual roles and relationships of daily life. Rather, they are inherently political and cannot be understood in

isolation from biographical and historical traditions of mediation (e.g., gender, home environment, peer group subculture, and clan). Within the framework of private and institutional life, rituals become part of the socially conditioned, historically acquired, and biologically constituted rhythms and metaphors of human existence. Although rituals tend to sprout anywhere that humans gather in groups, they become most intricate and textured in the area of religion, where humans adorn their experience with the rich symbols of transcendence and cultivate rituals as dramas of the divine.

Rituals often serve normative functions, and are governed by categorical imperatives or "oughts" that are rooted in the psychic structures of social action via the process of continuous socialization. Cultural forms which constitute our industrial life are tacitly shaped in terms of, and are therefore dominated by, both the parabolic and the discursive contexts which are provided by ritual symbols and metaphors. Yet, regardless of how much the human mind focuses on the ritualizing process, we are seldom consciously aware of the extent to which rituals structure our perception and behavior.

Ritual and Symbolic Meaning

Grimes (1982a) has stated that rituals are forms of symbolic action which are primarily composed of gestures (i.e., the enactment of evocative rhythms which make up dynamic symbolic acts) and postures (i.e., a symbolic stilling of action). Ritual gesture is formative, is related to everyday action, and may oscillate between randomness and formality. The apparent simplicity of this concept of ritual is deceiving. For example, critics of ritual may claim that the assertion that ritual is a symbolic act is a tautology. Other critics might say: "If ritual is a form of symbolic behavior, and if all behavior is symbolic, then is all behavior ritual behavior?" This concept of ritual provides a rationale for almost any explanation of social and cultural process. It is also a way of refining the concept to the vanishing point. Furthermore, I may be accused of using circular logic to provide an explanation of ritual which lacks theoretical rigor but has evocative rhetorical appeal. The answer to this is that not all symbolic behavior is ritualized behavior. To be considered ritualistic, symbols *must evoke gestures* (Grimes 1982a:61). Furthermore, not all ritual meaning is symbolic. Within a ritual, the relation between a signal and its referent may also be indexical or self-referential (Rappaport 1979:175-183). Finally, in addition to inscribing and displaying symbolic meanings or states of affairs, rituals also *instrumentally bring states of affairs into being*. The argument that a ritual merely reflects meaning in an *ex post facto* manner trips philosophically over the same stumbling block that has impeded many students of ritual over the years. Moreover, this viewpoint separates the medium of ritual

from its message. Rituals do not merely reflect; they also *articulate* (Delattre 1978:38; see Note 3). Ignoring this aspect of ritual undermines an understanding of contemporary cultural forms.

Ritual gestures are always concerned with the genesis of action. As such, they "constitute a class of mediating actions which transform the style and values of everyday action, thereby becoming the very ground of action itself" (Grimes 1982a:61). In fact, rituals may be seen as gestural embodiments of the inner cognitive or affective states of performers. Grimes claims that since gestures are metaphors of the body, they display the identifications of performers. A "virtual" gesture may generate corresponding patterns of thought and feeling and reinforce particular values. It can also be argued that, at least in part, rituals are the gestural embodiments of the dominant metaphors of social structure.

The idea that ritual is simply a routine or habit is a distortion which has accompanied the development of high technology. In actual fact, a routine or habit may be a genuine form of ritualized behavior. Routines are more than ritual surrogates, and habits are more than the psychoanalytic stepchildren of routines. But while routines and habitual actions are categories of ritual, they must be considered as lesser forms of ritualization. "Habituation," says Grimes, "is the bane of ritualization . . . imposed in the form of ought-filled, unmindful heteronomy, and then the secret of this imposition is glossed over" (1982a:38). Some scholars treat routines and habits as subrealms of ritual. For example, Barbara Myerhoff distinguishes rituals from habits and customs by their use of symbols, and states that rituals are significant beyond the information which they transmit. While ritual symbols accompany routine or instrumental proceedings, they also point beyond themselves and give routines and customs a larger meaning (1977:199-200).

What a Ritual is Not

Though humans long for permanence, our social life and ritual systems are always mutable. A ritual may be seen as a series of encoded movements that must oscillate between excessive randomness (high entropy), and rigid structure (high redundancy). High entropy means that an energy system may be arranged in a variety of ways (cf. Campbell 1982). This echoes Turner's concept of anti-structure. On the other hand, the rigid structure of redundancy means that there are few ways of arranging a system. Sally Falk Moore (1975) refers to redundancy as the process of regularization. By amplifying the uniformity and symmetry of social process, ritual gestures with high redundancy draw together and link various symbolic events in a meaningful pattern. Ritual actions with high entropy draw attention to the tenuousness and

arbitrariness of social life (e.g., the carnival or rites of inversion).

Non-ritual action may be seen as a form of "gestural noise" where entropy is so high that all possible meanings for the gesture are equally probable. Gestural noise results from random movements which lack predictability, codes, syntax, or patterns of meanings. Gestural noise is similar to Brenneman, et al.'s "first-form of bodily awareness, a form in which body consciousness is so close to itself that, like the serpent eating its own tail, it consumes itself" (1982:112). Such movements are "self-possessed," "premeaningful," and "presymbolic." They are also "sporadic, compulsive, and lack the rhythm that is the basis for a symbolic, and later, a meaningful gesture" (ibid.:112).

On the other hand, ritual gestures are more self-reflexive and "possess within themselves a tendency to place greater stress upon the 'pointing beyond' function of the symbol. That which is pointed to soon becomes the 'meaning' of the gesture, and gains greater importance than the gesture itself" (ibid.:113).

Nascent rituals have greater randomness or variance than formal liturgies and carry more information. That is, they allow participants to resolve a great deal of uncertainty. Nascent rituals are composed of gestures which are often encoded by the performers themselves. These codes are improvised as the ritual transpires. Thus, nascent rituals are more idiosyncratic and less static than formal liturgies. Participants in the more precise formal liturgy conform to a series of acts which they themselves do not encode (Rappaport 1978). Communications theorists state that information is the reduction of uncertainty between two equally likely alternatives. Thus, actions at both poles on the continuum of gesture (total entropy or gestural noise and total redundancy or invariance) convey no information. Unlike gestural noise, a formal liturgy may still be seen as ritual because (following Rappaport) although it contains little or no information, this lack of information is due to invariance and conveys a sense of certainty, unquestionableness, and sanctity.

A Working Definition of Ritual

Ritual is a diffuse and often impalpable concept which has long been haunted by problems of definition. Strong taboos interfere with seeing ritual as a coherent process. Most contemporary descriptions of ritual are inadequate and need to be replaced by ideas which locate ritual in a developing epistemology of gesture, symbol, and metaphor. Since ritual is the principal protagonist in cultural dramas, we must try to provide it with some epistemological anchor points or determinants of character and meaning. The term "ritual" must also be divested of its derisory connotations.

Victor Turner advocated a reevaluation of the definition of ritual and was adamant that the "flat view" of ritual be discarded (1980:162). By "flat view," he meant the perspective of functionalist anthropologists who refer to rituals as mere reflections of social structure. Instead, Turner attributed a paradigmatic function to ritual and claimed that as a "model for," ritual "can anticipate, even generate, change"; while as a "model of," ritual "may inscribe order in the minds, hearts, and wills of participants" (1980:163).

Grimes attempts to correct the limited or "flat" perspectives on ritual by stating that there are both *hard* and *soft* ways of defining ritual. He distinguishes between the two types of definitions as follows:

> A "hard" definition is an abstractly stated consensus established by a tradition of usage and calling attention to what is in bounds. A "soft" one typically congeals around nascent phenomena and calls attention to the bounding process itself or to the spaces *between* boundaries. It operates like a naming rite and develops largely in the basis of images. A hard definition of ritual is a "model of" (Geertz 1966:7) properties of known rituals. A soft one is a "model for" attending to what is yet relatively unknown about them. Hard definitions attempt to establish a clear figure. Soft ones aim at surveying and connecting adjacent fields. (1982a:55)

A hard definition raises the question that ritual is only (or mainly) a bounded, circumscribed, and somewhat frozen act (see Note 4). On the other hand, "hard" definitions define ritual in terms of its middle phases and neglect the incubatory, emergent, and decaying phases. In contrast to hard definitions, which may become trapped in an Aristotelian view of causality, soft definitions enable a researcher to "catch" the processual dimensions of ritual as they occur in field sites.

I shall now offer a minimal definition of ritual in the "weak" or "soft" sense (see Note 5). This definition is concerned with process and not with pre-specified behavior or extrinsic outcomes. It is designed to capture ritual in its nascent state and is framed at a generalized level in order to allow meaning to accumulate within a specified context:

> Ritualization is a process which involves the incarnation of symbols, symbol clusters, metaphors, and root paradigms through formative bodily gesture. As forms of enacted meaning, rituals enable social actors to frame, negotiate, and articulate their phenomenological existence as social, cultural, and moral beings.

The Fieldwork

In the latter part of 1982, I spent three months at "St. Ryan" Catholic School in Toronto, Ontario, Canada as a participant observer (the name of this school has been changed to protect its privacy). During this period, I used a mixture of ethnographic field techniques which included, but were not limited to, grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

THE RITUAL SYSTEM

St. Ryan's cultural field was an intricate ritual system of various symbols, ethos, world views, root paradigms, and forms of resistance. A key feature of this cultural field was the way the teaching staff organized and carried out instruction. Classroom instruction was analyzed as a ritual system, and the following typology was constructed:

Rituals of Instruction

1. The Micro Ritual

The *micro ritual* consisted of individual lessons that took place on a day-to-day basis in the classroom.

2. The Macro Ritual

The *macro ritual* consisted of individual classroom lessons as they appeared collectively over a single school day (including the periods between lessons and immediately before and after the lessons).

Micro and macro rituals can be seen as variations on rites of passage (cf. Van Gennep 1960). Although the rite of passage model may be loosely applied to both micro and macro rituals, it is most relevant to the overall passage of students through the school system. For example, students at St. Ryan may pass from the status of Grade Seven students in September to that of Grade Eight students in June if they pass the year. Academic failure is a risk which all student initiands face, both on a random daily basis (e.g., through homework assignments, "spot" questions, and "surprise" tests), and during more formal times throughout the school year (e.g., pre-specified term tests and final exams).

3. Rituals of Revitalization

Rituals of revitalization may be described as processual events which give participants renewed commitment, motivations, and values (cf. Wallace 1966). At St. Ryan, staff meetings were often revitalization rites where authority figures, such as the principal or vice principal, attempted to boost staff morale and strengthen commitment to the values of Catholic education. Classroom rituals of revitalization usually took the form of emotional discussions between teachers and students about the importance of mastering course work and school objectives. For some students, school-wide masses and confessions served as rituals of revitalization which formally linked the values of school and church.

4. Rituals of Intensification

Rituals of intensification are a subtype of revitalization rituals which emotionally recharge students or teachers. They unify the group without necessarily reinforcing the values or goals of ritual participants (cf. Wallace 1966). Rituals of revitalization and intensification may take the form of either micro and/or macro rituals.

5. Rituals of Resistance

Rituals of resistance are a series of subtle and dramatic cultural forms with many of the characteristics of "symbolic inversion." Invariably, these rituals resist the dominant authoritative tenets and codes of conduct which have been established by the teacher. Rituals of resistance may be seen as a type of ceremonial "destructuring" (cf. Grimes 1982b). In other words, they turn our view towards the dark side of culture and they are "agnostic," meaning that they are rituals of conflict. Within these rituals are the seeds of Turner's third phase of the social drama: redressive ritual and symbolic action. Space here does not permit a description of the full range of Turner's theory of social drama. Suffice it to say that rituals of resistance transform students into combatants and antagonists, while mobilizing hidden grudges and tensions for the purpose of rupturing school rules and subverting the grammars of mainstream classroom discourse. Resistance, as I am theorizing it, refers to the power to contest meaning through the corporeal nature of symbols and gestures. There is a liberating pleasure resulting from the "surface" of ritual, as well as within its condensed, symbolic layering. Resistance operates within the realm of meaning and subjectivity as much as in the more overt realms of social and political behavior. Resistance is played out as part of a cultural politics of the body and a geography of desire; as such, it deals in the currency of signs, symbols, and gestures. Among other things,

it is an unfixing of signifiers among relatively stable constellations of discourses, as well as an attempt at exploiting the polysemy of the symbol in order to pry open a space for articulating one's own lived meaning. It thereby creates a subject position that operates from strength rather than weakness, and is better able to resist a culture of lived subordination.

Often, rituals of resistance attempt to "purify" the contaminated and fragmented world of institutionalized social structure. These rituals take two distinct forms: (1) active-resistance rituals; and (2) passive-resistance rituals. Active-resistance rituals are intentional attempts by students to sabotage teacher instruction and the rules and norms established by school authorities. Passive-resistance rituals sabotage the normative codes of the dominant school order and are less demonstrative than active resistance rituals. Although rituals of resistance are part of the overall instructional system (e.g., serve as a form of ritualized feedback), the term "rites of instruction" generally refers to macro and micro rituals.

INTERACTIVE STATES

Unlike many other educational settings, the classroom rituals at St. Ryan did not accommodate either derisively unspontaneous or unapologetically improvisational teaching patterns. At St. Ryan, the tendency to maintain traditional protocol sanctioned a positivistic approach to schooling. Teachers worked predominantly within an ultraconservative, "old school" pedagogical format, and the majority of instructional forms could be linked to a "museum mentality." Although classrooms were structured in the "open area" format usually regarded as ideal for progressive teachers, there was a noticeable lack of newer, more innovative teaching.

At St. Ryan, rites of instruction included two interactive states: (1) the streetcorner state; and (2) the student state.

The word "state" is not used here to suggest a trance or state of consciousness in the clinical or psychological sense of the term. Rather, it suggests styles of interacting with both the environment and other people which might be labelled behavioral clusters or complexes. States of interaction are not simply groups of abstract events. Instead, they are organized assemblages of behaviors which give rise to a central or dominant system of *lived* practices.

The Streetcorner State

Before the beginning of school at nine o'clock in the morning, students at St. Ryan enter into particular roles and statuses and engage in distinctive behaviors which might be called the "streetcorner state." Heralded by the physical setting in which they find themselves, the streetcorner state consists of behavior which students exhibit on the street (e.g., "hanging around" the local neighborhood). Yet this behavior is not confined to the street and extends into adjacent areas such as the school playground, the nearby park, vacant lots, video arcades, the plaza, and abandoned buildings. By contrast, the student state includes most student behavior inside the school building (listening to a lesson, taking notes, writing an exam, etc.).

The streetcorner state consists of a cluster of attributes which constitute a particular *manner* of relating to settings, events, and people. Actions in the streetcorner state seldom conform to predictable scenarios. While engrossed in this state, students collectively "own their time." They also play out roles and statuses which reflect the dynamics of peer relationships and identities, regardless of whether these are forged in the street or on the playground. The schoolyard or street becomes a stage where individuals act out dramas of apotheosis, revenge, resistance, or revitalization. While in this state, students often unleash pent-up frustrations. Thus, the streetcorner state is cathartic, and its ritual forms are often under-distanced (cf. Scheff 1977).

In the streetcorner state, students are indulgently physical and freely exuberant. Activity in the streetcorner state may closely resemble a primary experience where bodies often twist, turn, and shake in an oasis of free abandon, as though locked in a state of non-differentiation. There is often a great deal of physical contact. Behavior in this state has *ad hoc* and episodic characteristics, and often seems to be unbound and ungoverned. Yet it is a mistake to think that lack of formality makes such behavior innocuous as a ritual mode. Instead, the streetcorner state most closely approaches ritualization associated with biorhythms and psychosomatic patterning, including such tacit ritual elements as personal habits and interaction rituals (cf. Grimes 1982a).

In the streetcorner state, bodily movements may carry overtures of merriment and diversion, and generally lack the demarcations of precise gesture (cf. Brenneman, et al. 1982). Here, the boundaries between spaces, roles, and objects are more plastic, adaptive, and malleable than in the student state. Students in the streetcorner state also seem to be more unpredictable and to make more noise than in the student state.

In the streetcorner state, students frequently exhibit exaggerated kinesthetic activity with irregular sequences of action and pronounced changes of posture. There are also more instances of irregular speech and body rhythms (e.g., spontaneous expressions of emotions). Often, sensuality is stimulated and relationships between individuals approach intimacy.

In the streetcorner state, time is relatively unstructured or polychromatic (cf. Hall 1973). In other words, since various activities take place simultaneously, they may overlap. Individuals are often able to "create" their own schedules.

The behavioral correlates of the streetcorner state emphasize personal functions, some of which, although usually controlled in the student state, are more permitted in the streetcorner state (for example, bodily emissions, idiosyncrasies, and eccentricities). Students are frequently motivated by such symbols as the bully, the clown, the weakling, and the slut. These symbols often appear to be iconic (cf. Courtney 1982).

Cultures (and subcultures) have distinct "moods." The mood of the streetcorner state is the "subjunctive" described by Turner, meaning a mood that embraces fantasy, experiment, hypothesis, and conjecture. In this mood of "maybe," metaphors flourish and in turn promote novel cultural forms (cf. Paine 1981:187-200). Because students do things at their own pace, there is apt to be more "flow" in matching skills and abilities (see Csikszentmihalyi 1975a, 1975b). Although students in the streetcorner state spend time experimenting with different roles and playing "as if" they were others, they are most decidedly themselves.

In the streetcorner state, students who are under intense emotional stress due to personal or family problems are better able to confront their emotions, and they also have greater opportunities to share their emotions with close friends and peers. The prevailing ethos is consumerism. For instance, students at St. Ryan frequently talked about buying cars, color television sets, motorcycles, leather garments, and "ghetto-blasters" (radio-tape recorders).

In the streetcorner state, individuals bathe in the ambience of working-class and ethnic cultural forms, yet remain unencumbered by the values and obligations of the student state. For instance, Portuguese is occasionally spoken, and students listen to rock music and engage in other recreational activity. Spontaneous communitas is frequently present, and this state could be said to possess a liminal or liminoid dimension. The ethos of the streetcorner state is ludic, or of the nature of play.

The Student State: The Structure of Conformity

After entering the school building, students at St. Ryan realign and readjust their behavior, and in the process, shift from the natural flow of the streetcorner state to the more formal and rigidly segregated "student state." Here they yield to the powerful enforcement procedures of teachers, including controls which allow teachers to dominate students without brute force. Students move "offstage" from where they are more naturally themselves to the foreground of the classroom, where they must undertake student roles which conform to the teacher's master script. They thus move from the "raw" state of streetcorner life to the more "cooked" or socialized state of the school existence. In reality, in both the streetcorner and student states, students are already "cooked," meaning that their roles are backed by social experience where they sustain a set of social standards expected of them by both their peers and the authorities. While it is safe to say that the streetcorner state is much more "raw" when compared to the student state, this does not mean that individuals exist as *tabulae rasae*. Rather, they enter a more "visceral," informal, and natural state of interaction.

The student state includes the adoption of manners, dispositions, attitudes, and work habits expected of "being a student." Teachers regard emotional displays as "antisocial," and the major theme is that students must "work hard!" Control mechanisms of teachers constitute the boundaries between the streetcorner and student states. These boundaries are permeable only during prescribed times, such as between classes or during recess. As a rule, students are compelled to enter the student state through a highly ritualized and institutionalized reward-and-punishment system which curbs the open emotionality and activity of the streetcorner state.

In the student state, youngsters are generally quiet, well-mannered, predictable, and obedient. Their gestures are pronounced and systematic. The mood of this state is "indicative," meaning that it prevails in the world of actual fact as described by Turner (1969). Metonymy is prevalent, and helps to produce predictable and restrictive cultural forms (cf. Paine 1982). Symbolization occurs mainly through the use of signs and religious symbols (cf. the terminology used by Courtney 1982). Time is segmented and monochromatic (cf. Hall 1973), and movements are often rigidified into gestures (cf. Brenneman, et al. 1982). There is little physical movement unless cued by teachers. A distinct separation exists between mind and body, and the work ethic is stressed. In the student state, ritual forms are usually invariant and conventionalized. Communitas is rare, as are the elements of liminal or liminoid ritual genres.

FORMS OF STUDENT INTERACTION

Street State	Student State
Tribal	Institutional
Emotional, nonrational	Cognitive, rational
Random, imprecise gestures	Nonrandom, precise gestures
Ludic	Serious
Forms of symbolization (icons, symbols)	Forms of symbolization (signs)
Play (ritual frame)	Work (ritual frame)
Spontaneous action	Teleological
Tapping own inner resources (right-lobe emphasis)	Imitation of teachers (left-lobe emphasis)
Away from formality	Formal, technical
Sensuous	Mechanical
Multi-signifiers (hyperintensity)	Multi-signified (low intensity)
Cathartic	Frustrating, tension-inducing
Whimsy, frivolity	Task-oriented
Status determined by peers	Status determined by institution
Liminal/liminoid	Hierarchical
Communitas (repartee)	Anomie, anxiety
Subjunctive mood	Indicative mood
Flow	Flow-resistant
Ritual forms (elastic, flexible, haphazard, improvisational)	Ritual forms (conventionalized, stereotyped, formal)
Motion	Gesture

Street State	Student State (cont'd)
Polychromatic Time	Monochromatic Time
Informal space	Fixed-feature space
Pediarchic	Pedagogic
Analogue	Digital

Students spend approximately seventy-six minutes of each school day in the streetcorner state, including time spent between classes, during lunch, and during recess. By contrast, they spend 298 minutes of each school day in the student state.

RITUALS OF INSTRUCTION

The Macro Ritual

The macro ritual consists of instruction over one day. It consists of a bastardized version of Van Gennep's rites of passage—a similar mutation or refined variation of the classical ritual process. The performative sequence of separation (preliminal), threshold rites (liminal), and rite of reaggregation (postliminal) is structurally and qualitatively altered. As in Van Gennep's three-part scheme, transformation from one state to another involves "separation" and a change of status and behavior for students. But the change from streetcorner state to student state is a change from a more natural state with characteristics of spontaneous communitas to an institutionalized state with uncomfortable, painful, and oppressive characteristics which are often associated with initiation rites.

In passing from the streetcorner state to the student state, students move across a threshold into a quantitatively different cultural realm. This movement is accompanied by a parallel passage in space from street and schoolyard to school building, together with a parallel passage from polychromatic to monochromatic time.

In the final phase of incorporation, the rite-of-passage model breaks down where initiates are supposed to return to a relatively stable and well-defined position in the social structure. Incorporation or re-aggregation from the streetcorner state to the student state, or vice versa, is never complete and seldom occurs in such a way that pre-ritual ties are completely severed. Some, but not all students may be temporarily incorporated into

the student state. Furthermore, the tendency toward incorporation occurs in two directions at once. There are two simultaneous "pulls" on the students: (1) a force pulling the students into the streetcorner state; and (2) a force pulling the students into the student state. Those students whose identities and statuses are reinforced by the streetcorner state will struggle to extend this state in class.

The streetcorner state is more seductive and symbolically tantalizing than the student state. Symbolic roles which are acted out in the streetcorner state include the bully (villain), the hero (a student who defeats the villains), the champion (a sports hero, break-dancer, etc.), the Madonna (often an attractive female teacher), the slut (a girl who is known for having sex with boys), the coward, and the rebel. On the other hand, informally-sanctioned symbols of the student state, including the "browner" (a student who plays up to authority figures), the teacher's pet, and the good Catholic worker become ashes in the fire that forges the visceral and often volatile ritual symbols in the crucible of the streetcorner state.

Passage from the streetcorner state to the student state frequently involves a distinct contradiction. As students undergo ritual instruction that tries to bring them into symbolic agreement with the restrictions of the student state (the rubrics of "being a student"), they may become re-confirmed in the streetcorner state by either resisting instructional rituals, or by making the most of the streetcorner state between class periods or during lunch—if, in fact, they ever really leave the streetcorner state. When a ritual lacks liminality as its most distinctive ingredient, students may try to fake passage by pretending that they are in the student state or the streetcorner state. Nevertheless, a counterfeit rite of passage is a contradiction in terms. Because many students find it more comfortable—and often more exhilarating—to be pulled along by the liminal ingredients of the streetcorner state, it is easier to pass from the student state to the streetcorner state. In contrast, it is difficult to fake passage from the streetcorner state to the student state unless students have mastered the codes, indexical clues, symbolic cues, and kinesthetic routines of the student state.

THE MANIPULATION OF SYMBOLS

One of the most powerful ways of symbolizing and sustaining order in the classroom was through religious icons and symbols—a profuse hemorrhage of signifiers, thick with meaning. Religious symbols are powerful precisely because their ambiguity leaves them open to many interpretations (cf. Cohen 1979:103; Eco 1982: 28-29). But rather than being the random choices of individuals, symbolic meanings are deeply cultural.

Throughout St. Ryan and its classrooms, religious symbols served as visual reminders of powers or external forces that were thought to be part of some heavenly community beyond the ordinary dimensions of space and time. Religious symbols make the transcendent qualities of God concrete. If they are not burdened by oversanctification, they make students see reality through a variety of interpretations.

Religious symbols purvey continuous messages. Through the structural characteristics of multivalency, multivocality, and polysemity, these symbols point to a reality beyond what they signify, thus enabling students to participate in that reality (cf. Tillich 1956:41-54). Depending on their location and the context in which they appear, religious symbols function in a variety of ways. For example, they may support the prevailing ethos of "becoming a worker" or "becoming a Catholic" (see Note 6). They can also cause these dominant ethos to become problematic by throwing them into states of contradiction or conflict. In the latter case, there may be ambiguity about how classroom culture will be defined—a situation with both functional and dysfunctional implications for preserving religious symbols within the framework of the dominant parent/teacher culture.

Religious insignia at St. Ryan included a large photograph of the Pope in the main hall, a painting of the religious founder of the school in the main lobby, a plastic statue of the Virgin Mary in the library, crucifixes in every classroom and office, logos of the Separate School Board on stationery and official documents, and school crests and uniforms worn by high school students who shared the building with students from St. Ryan. In one classroom, a hand-written Act of Contrition and the words of the Canadian national anthem, "O Canada," were mounted on the wall beside a crucifix.

Students at St. Ryan could easily identify the school's religious symbols. Written responses showed varying ambivalence regarding the significance of these symbols: some students seemed overwhelmed by the power of the symbols, while others said they were not influenced at all. A majority of the students testified that the symbols merely served to remind them that "they were Catholics." Nevertheless, a significant number of students said they felt Christ was present "in" the religious icons, and that he was "watching to see how we behave."

> The crucifix is there to keep us all holy and to keep the school holy.

> They [the religious symbols] mean that God is here with us.

> What they mean to me is what God's done for us, and

every time I look at the cross, I always feel that Jesus is staring at me, telling me to behave.

Although perhaps disconcerting, it is significant to cite the remarks of a staff member who claimed that the "bloodied and emaciated" figure of Senhor Santo Cristo represented "the general outlook of the Portuguese on the world." A description of the Azorean crucifix provided by this teacher recalled images of the tortured Savior which are often found on fifteenth-century crucifixes.

Staff Member: Life is hard . . . it's drudgery for them. They distrust institutions just like they distrusted the government of Portugal. They won't believe you if you tell them learning can be fun. They only understand things that are tough, hard, and practical. Just look at their crucifix . . . The first thing that I noticed was that strange attachment they had to this emaciated figure of Jesus Christ, whom they called Senhor Santo Cristo (see Note 7). It was a blood-spattered, disfigured Christ, and he symbolized much of their lives. And they basically see life as tough, harsh, and unrewarding . . . The other side of life is going to church and seeing these beautiful, paradisiacal images of an afterlife—the Virgin Mary with candles—and it's kind of dreamy . . . But all this comes as a reward for toughing it out in this life.

Rules for the "correct" interpretation of religious symbols were provided by teachers, administrators, and priests who occasionally visited the classroom to speak to students. Codes and terms for interpreting the symbolic order of the school were constructed by teachers. In other words, teachers "nudged" the connections between symbols and referents which had to be made if one were to be a good student and a good Catholic. The natural ambiguity of the symbols (e.g., Christ as a humble savior, a rebel, or an ethereal spirit) meant that teachers could unconsciously manipulate these symbols according to their own interests.

On one occasion, a staff member chastised a number of boys who had laughed and jeered at a visiting administrator from a nearby high school:

Staff Member: Some of you were just awful. But there were a few of you who behaved—God bless those who listened!

Although misbehavior was regarded as sacrilegious, students who behaved "like good Catholics" earned a blessing from the teacher. When teachers blessed good behavior, they used the sacred status of the Church to reinforce their remarks and to align the domain of the sacred with the policing function of teachers.

Although teachers never proclaimed themselves to be a type of educational militia, blessings were symbolic clubs which forced students into line and dragooned them into an agreed-upon sense of propriety and respect for classroom law and order. Like symbols, blessings were convertible to many uses.

When symbols were given specific meanings (e.g., God loves good listeners; Jesus likes neat work; Mary appreciates politeness), the remarks of teachers often became pestles which pulverized the power of these symbols into a sterile powder.

The syncretic nature of classroom symbols was neatly demonstrated at one point when an image of the Pac Man video game monster appeared on a wall adjacent to a crucifix. Given this juxtaposition of the absurd against a vision of holiness, what were students to think? Though I was reminded of a portrait by Salvador Dali of a beautiful blonde baby clenching a sewer rat between his teeth, classroom life may or may not be surrealistic drama.

Bound up with sacred symbols at St. Ryan was an inescapable "ought" or prescription. These symbols often carried ethical meanings which were partly the result of their opacity and multivalency. The characteristic of multivalency permitted religious symbols to be instruments of both social control and liberation. For example, Christ could be seen as a conservative who supported existing power structures, or as an activist who wanted the government overthrown. By operationalizing sacred symbols, instructional rituals could include both authoritarian and utopian dimensions.

In general, classroom rituals translated a broad range of Catholic symbols into graphic and readily-comprehensive messages with a compelling view of reality.

If symbols have great connotative powers by being fissile, ambiguous, multivalent, incongruous, and polysemous, one may legitimately ask: if reality is "up for grabs" in the sense that everyone interprets it differently through symbols (echoing Vico's *verum ipsum factum*), how do symbols systematically motivate groups of individuals? Victor Turner answers this question, at least in part, by saying that through the functions of their orectic and ideational poles, the mixed feelings of dominant religious symbols are "averaged out into a single ambiguous quantum of generalized affect" which is "deflected to . . . more abstract values and norms. . . ." (1978:575).

At St. Ryan, religious symbols and instruction focused mainly on self-denial, endurance, and one's own individual faults and inadequacies. Simple rituals of entry and departure from the school included paying respect to the Supreme Deity through the morning offering, and giving thanks for both material sustenance (grace before meals) and spiritual sustenance (the Act of Contri-

tion). Through these simple rituals, students participated in events which further established respect for teachers, contributed to the sanctification of instruction, and reinforced cooperation in the varied academic activities of the "sacred" workplace of the school.

Jesus was always symbolically present in classrooms at St. Ryan, where he constantly peered down at students from crucifixes mounted on the walls. His teachings were continually discussed in religion class, and his name was invoked when teachers blessed students for striving hard, for postponing gratification, and for academic stoicism during the discomfort of tests and assignments.

In response to a questionnaire, a large number of students felt that Jesus would not approve of their conduct at St. Ryan. Thus, students often exhibited intolerable feelings of guilt which made them submit more readily to control, and if necessary, to the forces of punishment meted out by teachers and priests as the educational representatives of Christ.

> I feel Jesus would sometimes like our performances but at other times not like them.
>
> I think Jesus would feel sorry for me.
>
> I think Jesus feels that I am rude and I like to fool around a lot.
>
> I feel that Jesus would be mad at me.
>
> He would not like it [the way the students behave] because of all the answering back, all the foul language, and all the fighting. Also because he sees no love between the students.
>
> I feel that Jesus would think we are terrible.
>
> I think Jesus would feel unhappy. I feel that at home, I am a very different person than when I'm at school.
>
> Well, I think if He was my father, He would slap my face, because that's what my father would do if he ever saw how I act in school (which isn't so bad). But at lunch I talk to guys and my father doesn't like that, and I sometimes act weird around my friends, and I don't think Jesus would be too pleased.

Daily prayers and religious activities were metaphors linking Catholic ideologies to the real "material" of instructional rituals and follow-up activities. Prayers and religious activities "spiritualized" the plodding of the school day and sanctified the order of classrooms. In the sense of "what goes with

what," prayers functioned to give students meaning within the Catholic world view. Prayers also established the religious/secular context for instructional rituals that followed them in the sense of "what follows what." Clearly, prayers and religion classes defined a distinct cosmology which students were powerless to reject.

The strength of ritual's ideological force is that it often erases its own traces from that on which it has an impact. This process enables us to understand how socialization works invisibly through the bodies and subjectivities of students. As enacted metaphors, rituals embody what they mean (cf. Grimes 1984). At St. Ryan, students enacted metaphors and embodied rhythms that were both embedded in the cultural capital of teachers (see Note 8) and transmitted through rites of instruction.

Throughout the process of schooling, culture is continually made and remade without revealing the source of its legitimizing power. It remains a smile without a face; a kiss without lips.

An understanding of the dynamics of the ritual dimensions of schooling uncovers possibilities for understanding how socialization "works" through dominant structural arrangements and human agency. Socialization is not a form of unidirectional domination. Neither is it merely a system of cultural or ideological constraints imposed from above. Instead, socialization is constructed from the many outcomes of negotiations between symbolic meanings, some of which may be antagonistic. These meanings are continually mediated by socioeconomic conditions, relationships of power and privilege, and the diverse ways students engage the world.

CONCLUSION

While the ritual demeanor of schooling at St. Ryan was more muted than, for example, the dramatic ritual symbols of the Catholic mass, the school had a complex medley of ritual forms. Instructional rites carried or "nested" the dominant epistemes, root paradigms, and symbols which created and sustained student world views. Instructional symbols and paradigms oscillated between two general states: (1) the physical "streetcorner state"; and (2) the cognitive "student state." Much of each student's day was spent negotiating between the experiential contradictions of these two states. In the streetcorner state, students related to each other emotionally and viscerally. In the student state, teachers encouraged students to develop relationships which emphasized "rationality."

Instructional rites at St. Ryan gave students coded messages which promoted behavioral norms and fashioned dominant cognitive frameworks. In short, these instructional rites provided blue-

prints for "thinking" and "doing." Students were thus taught to think of the world in certain ways and were motivated to act upon their world according to prescribed examples and ritual symbols.

An important question throughout this discussion of ritual and schooling has been: Do classroom rituals implacably control the destinies of both teachers and students? Although a definitive answer to this question is not yet possible, we must recognize that students are less harmed by classroom rituals than by being persuaded that these rituals are natural and inviolable.

NOTES

1. For an extensively revised and expanded version of this discussion, which was accepted for publication in *Anthropologica* in 1984, see Peter L. McLaren, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance: Towards a Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Gestures*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (scheduled for publication in 1986).

2. Ronald L. Grimes has coined the term "ritology" to mean the study of ritual. His work could have a profound influence on the way ritual is seen in the social sciences. For a further discussion of ritology, see Ronald L. Grimes, 1982a, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America. See also "Victor Turner's Social Drama and T. S. Eliot's Ritual Drama" by Ronald L. Grimes in this volume of *Anthropologica*.

3. The work of Roland Delattre (1978, 1979) has influenced my understanding of ritual. Delattre argues that ritual rhythms (or motions through which individuals commonly engage the world) are paradigmatic of how humans construct reality and develop their moral attributes. Thus, Delattre stresses the humanity-shaping and reality-constituting powers of ritual. His thesis articulates a sense of reality for individuals as they are engaged by ritual rhythms (a process that he claims is as influential as exposure to the ethos, mythology, ideology, or world view of a prevailing culture). Delattre states that ritual *articulates* rather than expresses our humanity. Since a ritual is more than a simplified symbolic expression of something which already exists, it creates something which would not otherwise exist. In essence, this means that a ritual cannot be said to express something precisely because there is no "thing" that can be expressed outside of the ritual itself. If we say that a particular ritual expresses something, *we fall into the trap of trying to separate the content of a ritual from its form.* Delattre follows Hofstadter's (1965) idea of articulation as creating forms and joints and building up an organized product with interconnected members, whereas before there was only the

potential for this. A living impulse works itself out through the process of articulation (Delattre 1979:38).

4. A strict definition of ritual appears in another publication (see Note 1).

5. Grimes's soft definition of ritual, which he terms "ritualization," reads: "Ritualizing transpires as animated persons during crucial times in founded places" (1982a:55).

6. For a discussion of the two prevailing root paradigms of instruction, see McLaren as cited in Note 1.

7. "Senhor Santo Cristo" is a Portuguese term for Christ.

8. Cultural capital refers to educational events and artifacts, such as different sets of linguistic and cultural competencies, that individuals inherit within the class-oriented boundaries of their families. Cultural capital also refers to sets of meaning, qualities of style, modes of thinking, and types of dispositions that are given a certain status as a result of whatever the dominant class or classes regards as most valuable (Giroux 1983:88).

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