

Liminal Rites as Molecular Revolution

That there is a development from ritual and magic practices in so called 'primitive' societies to cultural practices in more 'developed' societies has been demonstrated clearly by Victor Turner. The process of separation > liminality > reaggregation found in rites of passage has developed in many cultures into such mundane practices as 'private' views for exhibitions and corporate AGMs. (Turner, 1990: 8-18) There is no doubt that these events mirror the liminal stage of ritual practice, but they are severely diluted. Truly liminal ritual states are heterogeneous spaces of loosely assembled 'partial objects' and particle signs that are connected together to make what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari might call a body without organs (BwO). A BwO is composed of three types of part: working parts in connective synthesis – This participant and that one and this ritual material and that one and... and... and...; a disjunctive synthesis with an immobile motor structuring the ritual by causing a halt, and either/or moment, a gap; and finally, the conjunctive synthesis of an adjacent part, the production of an excess through the performance of the ritual, the *communitas*, an altered consciousness that holds the whole thing together.

The BwO, especially in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is a name for 'constructive and experimental practices that involve living against that stratum that binds us and constitutes us as human'. (O'Sullivan, 2012: 278 n25) As far as dominant regimes of signification are concerned, if you are not organized as an organism, you are deprived. If you are not signified and signifier, you are deviant. If you are not a single, nailed-down subject, you're a tramp. The BwO opposes all organisation with disarticulation, experimentation and nomadism. Liminal rites are cyclical in nature but, as with cyclical process like Kolb's learning cycle or action-research, the cycles are designed to bring about a progressive change.

Encrusted societies with dominant signifying regimes and hierarchies tend to emphasise a single, common world-view, but more than one state of consciousness is valid for first hand observations. For example, Emile Durkheim describes how people engaged in liminal rites for days on end are left with the conviction that there are two simultaneous but mutually incomparable worlds coexisting: One being the profane everyday world, the other being the world of the sacred. (Durkheim, 1964: 218)

Preparation / Cleansing / Grounding / Creating a Sacred Space / Raising and Releasing the Power / Centering Meditation / Closing the Sacred Space. A stone appears, an animal, a circle. A persona appears, a shadow, a parasite. We must meet the Shadow and absorb it without fear. We go into the ground, our bodies are stripped away, so we can be reborn, but is it really "us" that returns?

"I must put three things together: habits or customs, animals, noises. At first glance, they are unrelated. Yet I am not putting them together haphazardly. I am forced to do so by my tongue: Latin, Greek, Roman. In this somewhat fuzzy spot, a parasite is an abusive guest, an unavoidable animal, a break in a message." Serres, Michel (1982) The Parasite. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press

In French, parasite also means static, white noise. Fuzz and repetition, lulling, hypnotising, opening us up to being possessed, to becoming drones. In a ritual we become host to a parasite of an indeterminate nature, the organism invading us dissolves boundaries and binaries. We open up to it, invite it in, without really knowing what it is, what it will take from us, what it will give. We are the eaten host, knowing our blind sacrifice is meaningless, and yet still turning from base metal to gold.

Periodically, clans or tribes celebrate rituals to transform sedentary life into a 'concentrated exaltation of collective energies' and the intensity fosters a sense of having reached a different mode of existence in which people feel, think, and behave differently than they usually would. (Richman, 1995: 63) Shamans enter into trance and journey to the underworld, the virtual source of life, in order to heal others and it is possible to maintain a 'normal' state of consciousness and 'shamanic' state of consciousness simultaneously. The shaman knows that they are sat in the patient's hut drumming, but they also know they are in the underworld talking with a spirit guide. Shamanic states of consciousness are linked to frequencies in the theta wave EEG range: 4 to 7 cycles per second. (Harner, 1992: 80-1) which can be induced by rhythmic drumming between 180 and 220 bpm.

How tempting to recall here the formula of fetishistic disavowal: 'I know very well, but still ...'. To the current exemplifications of this formula ('I know that Mother has not got a phallus, but still ... [I believe she has got one], know that Jews are people like us, but still ... [there is something in] we must undoubtedly add also the variant of money: 'I know that money is a material object like others, but still ... [it is as if it were made of a special substance over which time has no power]'. Žižek, Slavoj (2008/1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology* London: Verso

The liminal zone can be conceived of in terms of movement and stillness. The liminal is an expression of the curve between change and the absence of change. This is not simple the case of a doorway to an altered something, but the intensities "going" and "not going" both occupying this same zone. A tendency toward an expansion or difference is complimented by a tendency towards annihilation and stasis. While these should not be confused with dialectic poles, being as they are just some active functions within a liminal assemblage, the two present an interesting pivot from which to briefly investigate liminality in terms of power and resistance.

but still... the shining impermeability of PVC, but still... the royal lizard dances for us, but still... dripping with cum slime, but still... the black mirror iCrave, but still... the obelisk meat syringe fetus floats in space, but still... dissolving in her, but still... Queen Iron's pounding will protect us from the dirty Euro, but still... the archaic alien phallic mother goddess, but still... the gold of desire defeats death, but still... burning bones brings the sun back, but still...

We are no longer separate from this ritual, it has possessed us and we are a machine with it, we are sucker and sucked, an ouroboros of desire, a Rebis, a feedback loop that drones eternally. Ritual objects become fetishes, we can't remember what made them seem important, but by using them again and again, the original, never consciously seen, object of desire becomes identified with this, and the games we play with it.

"The quasi-object, when being passed, makes the collective, if it stops, it makes the individual." Serres, Michel (1982) *The Parasite*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press

The ecstatic trance state is synonymous with Spinoza's 'joy' as the passage from one form of knowledge to another; from understanding to intuition; from individual to collective. Joy is the energy that produces the collective society (O'Sullivan, 2012: 27) and the surplus that is produced in ritual is a 'larval subject' that is then reintegrated into a particular societal position or role. The other purpose of liminal rites is to provide a state of effervescent *communitas* that 're-sets' relations for the cult itself. *Communitas* is a nonstructured relationship between people in the ritual that marks a transition between different cultural positions. In *communitas*, the usual social rules are broken down to emphasise a sense of cross-clan equality. (Turner, 1975: 22) Social assemblages, such as art collectives, also include non-human, technical elements. (Guattari, 2006: 417) For example, the Ndembu people's divination rituals include items that can be used in a variety of settings, with a variety of meanings and uses. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 181) We could argue that all artistic production takes place in liminality: they separate themselves from the world and enter into an unstructured co-development with their chosen medium. The repetition of these media and conceptual refrains are the non-human elements of their own desiring-machines.

Some objects have no meaning unless they are used, such as a ball in a game, quasi-objects do not exist for an individual, those in the group exist because of, around, these objects, and yet, in themselves they are meaningless. When you are the holder of a quasi-object, you are the focus, the sacrifice. The only way to survive is to lose your self in this group, to play games, Rituals that become, endlessly. We pass Quasi-objects between us, but as they move something of them sticks, they are a slime that stays on us, that seeps into us, infecting us, a virus, a parasite, joining with us in a queasily intimate way. They pass through us, turning us inside out, bringing our organs to the surface, and persuading us that we have always been this way.

"A thousand incidents arise, which seem to be cut off from those which precede them. [...] Our attention fixes on them because they interest it more but each of them is borne by the fluid mass of our own psychical existence. Each is only the best illuminated point of a moving zone which comprises all that we feel or think or will [...] It is this entire zone which in reality makes up our state"

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*

The tendency toward an absence of movement found within the liminal zone is not one approaching an absolute zero as defined by God or Mathematics, but this tendency is always toward a local zero, with the space-time local being of varying scales. A harmonic negation of difference between bodies. However it is defined, this tendency would involve the retreat of the individual in favour of the group, or exterior identity as well as a general tendency toward oblivion.

"Under conditions of state terror, no individual works, for no individual is able to externalise an object which carries his signature; consciousness has lost its master for mediated self expression and it lets nothing break loose to become a free object standing over against it" Butler

Before moving to the other intensity, namely Change, I would like to first talk about the grind toward a local zero in terms of the liminal function of the political State.

Discussing Hegel, Judith Butler describes the obliteration of the self under conditions of state terror. While Hegel's writing in *Lordship and Bondage* was concerned with the state terror of the eighteenth century, it is not hard to draw this concept of stillness to contemporary era. We can think of the reality of Syria, or the West Bank, or, to more local time and space focus on a bystander caught up in anti-riot deployment in Brazil, or simply the encounter of a subject of the wrong denomination with two or more police officers in the right context. State terror destroys the individual subject, annihilates them and renames them as itself. State terror immediately recasts, reterritorialises and occupies like a presence, like a role forced on a performer.

It's not the object that holds the power, it's not the ritual, it's not what we do or say or eat or kill, but still... there's something that brings us back, an addictive siren song that promises what we want if we just do it again, until what we want isn't important any more, we're conditioned to crave the buzz of the ritual itself, not caring if some demon or control system is laughing at us pitilessly, perhaps that's what we wanted all along.

Bataille described the operations of the Sovereign, the divine head of state, prone to violence and love and instilling love and fear in its subjects, in a comparable manner to these mechanisms. An obscene leviathan which sucks up individuals, and with them their individuality casting them in support of itself or as a standing army of negation though terror.

"Their eyes roll back, they foam at the mouth, they touch lit torches to their naked torsos, showing that they are no longer human, but possessed with supernatural powers. However, these are not the powers of nature or the deities of tradition: they are specifically possessed by representatives of Western colonial power, becoming the governor general, the engineer, the doctor's wife, the major, the corporal of the guard." Kollektiv, Pii (2013) Art in the Age of its Dissolution: Beyond The Democratic Paradox . Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London. [Thesis] : Goldsmiths Research Online.

The Heterogeneous sovereign creates its subjects in its own image "The King is the object in which the homogeneous society has found its reason for being, maintaining this relationship demands that he conducts himself in such a way that the homogeneous society can exist for him". This act of performance calls its audience into being. The leader casts a spell not dissimilar to dog whistle politics. As alchemy and evocation such examples can demonstrate that state liminality is not a dichotomy of movement and stasis, transformation and perpetuation. While the state might freeze subjects into homogeneous formations, the tendency for difference is never entirely removed from even the most brutally enforced political assemblage. A tendency toward diversity can begin in such a manner as the BNP's attempt to ape mainstream political aesthetic performance, which arguably began their own dwindling decline toward the irrelevance where even the most domestic racist find themselves splitting from the formation. Equally revolt, like an inevitable mutant gene is to be expected in any frozen state, if only as minute deviation from routine.

In their rituals, the Hauka cult in Africa became possessed by the powers that oppressed them, but rather than being a submissive act, this is a form of resistance, unsettling and subversive to those in charge, they aren't being taken over, they are taking over, taking on the power, turning around the mirror.

Within Bataille's analysis, the homogeneous strand of society is want to collapse of its own accord, as if wearing out its mechanisms with the very process of turning labour into value. As Deleuze and Guattari tell us, all machines are breaking. Are irreparably broken already perhaps. So that homogeneous strand of society, that which is concerned with production, is still supported by the state, by the military and police forces, which it requires to repair this mechanism by crushing strikes or breaking barricades. The state serves the bloated homogeneous mass by policing the heterogeneous fringe, which threatens to interfere with the business of utility.

"parody becomes more than a tool of deconstruction or critique, the performance fiction generates relations and roles through a parody beyond irony, or that goes further than irony"
Burrows, David (Ed.) (2010)
Performance Fictions. Birmingham:
Article Press

This happens too in Super-Parodic Performance, such as Tele Geto TV in Haiti, imaginary media broadcasts made with mock equipment, a performance of something impossible to make it real. Instead of finding archetypal parts of yourself through dreaming, or the Holy Grail through telling myths, this journey isn't to some form of heterotopic 'other place', but instead 'others' this place, makes it unfamiliar, in order to perform an external Shadow Work, reintegrate what we fear or hate into ourselves, accepting the beneficial elements without becoming overtaken by the harmful ones.

Divination is a means of revealing the 'unseen' or unconscious: it reveals something about the individual or collective unconscious that indicates a struggle or conflict that needs to be treated, before it eats away at the society, using ritual methods or magic. The Situationist International practice of the *dérive* should be read as a form of divination, especially the early, more paranoiac, *dérives* conducted by Ivan Chtcheglov. They drifted from one urban ambience to another, exploring the invisible dividing lines of the city, revealing the unseen; mapping it. Another form of divination is William Burroughs' cut-up technique, which involves a cutting into the present so the future leaks in. The resulting texts are then interpreted as messages from the future but are, in fact, the unconscious leaking into conscious awareness. AAS uses both of these forms of divination, and others, to produce scores and other texts to interpret and perform.

AAS has also been using sigil magic and spells as performance scores since 2010 but as well as acting as scores, sigils are graphical devices that operate as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind. They encode writing (conscious) into an abstract symbol (unconscious), an inversion of the dream interpretation of psychoanalysis; reprogramming the unconscious. One recent psychological study showed that subliminal exposure to the IBM logo made people less creative compared to a control group, whereas exposure to the Apple logo made a third group more creative. This is a clear demonstration of the principle of sigil magic. (Duke University, 2008)

Our rituals come to us, we don't create them, chance encounters, random diagrams, walking, finding, a psychogeography of hidden forces that we tap into and subvert. We read the city like a spell, find scores in paths in the woods, cast hexes online. We occupy the spaces in between where we are supposed to be and what we're supposed to do. The actions could be anything, but they are this, and we commit to this, happily blindfolded, dancing off the edge.

"The history of symbolism shows that everything can assume symbolic significance: natural objects (like stones, plants, animals, people, mountains and valleys, sun and moon, wind, water, and fire), or man-made things (like houses, boats, or cars), or even abstract forms (like numbers, or the triangle, the square, and the circle). In fact, the whole cosmos is a potential symbol." Jaffe, Aniela (1978/1964) 'Symbolism in the Visual Arts' in Jung, Carl Man and His Symbols London: Picador

From this point we can move to consider how would such functions present in the redistributed global power lines of the corporate and immaterial world of the twenty-first century where the state now contracts the homogeneous field to perform the violence that it lobbied for in the first place. The Homogeneous structures assume more of the Sovereign's powers than simply the application of violence. At present, the ability to make a public in its own image is arguably more the domain of the corporate than it is of the first three estates. Cultural hegemony is how Capital instills its values, as perhaps explains the post-theological morality which still maintains that labour, suffering and subservience are virtuous qualities, despite the removal of heavenly reward. A performative manipulation of psychology, just as exploited by the rise of Fascist governments in Bataille's analysis. Bataille reads the rise of Mussolini as the calculated fulfillment of the unconscious proletariat's need for a Sovereign figure to love and fear, manipulated by a bourgeois class more deft and familiar with the workings of power. The modern corporate sovereign uses full cultural domination, full cognitive domination, to secure an unworldly reality as presented by power.

"But the ritual of witchcraft is the ritual of an oppressed people. The religion of a conquered nation has often become the magic of societies formed as a result of the conquest." Georges Bataille, Literature and Evil

While most human actions are shaped by 'secret causes' deriving from the unconscious, individual self-control keeps them in check. The effect of these 'secret causes' is most apparent and most dangerous in crowds, when the collective influence of the hypnotised masses takes hold (Richman, 1995: 60) as in the cases of riots, football crowds or fascist rallies. For Durkheim, the effervescence of collective ritual is 'evidence of their revolutionary potential' (Richman, 1995: 62) and in order to become a subject group, a subjugated group must become revolutionary at the unconscious level. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984) Therefore, we propose that liminality provides the space for this molecular revolution of the unconscious. A combination of ritual methods and sigil magic can therefore prime the unconscious and provide a defence against fascism.

This isn't magic, but still... , this isn't sex, but still... , this isn't revolutionary, but still... , this isn't a post apocalyptic cult, but still... , this isn't performance, but still... , this isn't going to save the world from destruction, but still...

The anglophile, straight, neurotypical, middle class, young healthy white male is the Corporate Sovereign's avatar in the total liminal zone which subsumes our reality, recasting all identity from his light and shadow. Within this liminal zone, the processes of universality and hegemony mean even revolt is a aspect of the absolute, that deviation is commissioned by power through performance for its own means.

Capital as a field of reality is a liminal becoming, forever spotted with intensities of movement, within bubbles of stillness, and so on indefinitely.