

CHAPTER 5



SACRIFICE, SOVEREIGNTY AND THE DYNAMICS OF STRUCTURE AND ANTI-STRUCTURE

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‘One is tempted to speculate about the relationship between the hippies and the Hydrogen bomb.’

—Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*

Victor Turner (1969: 148) highlights the spirit of the times when he identifies the threat of a new mass-death event as a powerful factor behind the effervescent ‘happenings’ of the hippies in the 1960s. By framing such excursions into ‘anti-structure’ in the hope of remaking the world in relation to the more routinized elaborations on *communitas* found in non-modern or what Turner calls tribal societies, Turner not only eschews the primitivism of the hippies but also identifies the similarities with modern forms of practice. As a genuinely comparative study, *The Ritual Process* thus stands with its contemporary publications *The Savage Mind* (Lévi-Strauss 1966; now republished as *Wild Thought*) and *Purity and Danger* (Douglas 1966) as landmark works that extend with both rigour and intent the project of anthropology. In the shadows of the mass-death events of the twentieth century, the new academic disciplines exploring alternative ideologies in hand with the critique of the roots of these disasters captured the minds of many, myself included.

A major point of *The Ritual Process* is, then, that there are many things to learn about and from non-modern societies and the non-modernism that persists in all societies, but going primitive was not one of them. For com-

munitas occurs not only in the interstices, but also on the margins – the sites of social exclusion for outsiders and inferiors. Histories cannot be rewritten by donning a feather, especially when that feather is actually a debutante's *cotillion*. Liminality and its *communitas* relate specifically to the threshold – a separation-in-transition. It may be a border that relaxes to become a point of entry – or, importantly, it may not. The condition may, therefore, be liminoidal in the sense of having the attributes of the liminal without any clear entelechy other than itself. Or possibly a broader function – a neocolonialism perhaps – about which the hippies were seemingly ingenuous or fed by the same duplicitous romanticism of previous generations recalling Winnetou and Old Shatterhand with psychotropic additives.¹

The hippies are, then, noted at several points in *The Ritual Process* but described as contemporary examples of spontaneous *communitas* or anti-structure outside the normative and ideological variants of that phenomenon. This feature of the social movements of the time is then compared with antecedents such as the Franciscans, whose founder was also enjoying renewed interest in the shadows of mass-death,² to raise the question of what kind of structures are around the corner and what kinds of ritual contribute to their dynamics. For the key to Turner's approach is the sense of the dynamics of structure and anti-structure, the relationship between being and becoming, as these form and reform in the ritual process. Here, moreover, resides the main difference between Turner and Lévi-Strauss and Douglas, who focus on cognitive systems and social morphology as relatively more static forms than what Turner's dynamic approach explores. In this way, Turner's structuralism never loses sight of a sense of process or history; an orientation to practice at once characteristic of the Manchester School and, in its attention to ritual, moving in new directions (Evens and Handelman 2006). But more than simply pursuing new directions of thought informed by changing social theories and historical circumstances, the anthropology of ritual developed by Turner taps into the dynamics of ritual itself. Central to these dynamics is the liminoidal, or better the virtual, as the condition of possibility that can open new directions (Kapferer 2004). Where the liminal marks the interstice, the virtual acknowledges its innovations and opens up an even more powerful dynamic for both the anthropology of ritual and for anthropology more broadly.

This chapter addresses these innovations by considering the role that ritual sacrifice plays in the dynamics of structure and anti-structure in a more recent 'happening' – the *début*/royal wedding of Harry Windsor and Meghan Markle in 2018. Through a consideration of that event, the chapter addresses both the relationship between liminality and sacrifice, and a further reflection on the era of *The Ritual Process* and what the effervescent 'happenings' of that era achieved. More specifically, the chapter takes up Bruce Kapferer's

observation regarding how, for Turner, ‘structure/anti-structure have a life/death resonance, an endless cycling of renewal and decline, and then rebirth full of new potential’ (Kapferer 2019: 1). This remark ties with a significant analytical point that Kapferer (1997: 185–220) makes in a lengthier discussion of sacrifice in the Sinhala Buddhist anti-sorcery rite known as the *Suni-yama*, where he describes sacrifice as ‘the total act which condenses or has immanent within it qua act the generative processes of human beings and their life worlds’ (ibid.: 187 original emphasis).³ He then suggests that sacrifice should be regarded as lying at the core of what anthropologists routinely describe as ritual, not because sacrifice is violent or somehow a deferred violence but because at its heart is the concern with the unmaking and remaking of the world. This suggestion resonates with a comment by Turner in *The Drums of Affliction* that Ndembu blood sacrifice symbolically constitutes ‘at once the end and the beginning of cycles of social development’, with the actual sacrifice seldom concluding a ritual performance rather than occurring somewhere within it (Turner 1968: 276). Turner continues: ‘The sacrifice, then, represents “the high spot” rather than the termination of a ritual. It is a “spot” where, in native belief, the visible and invisible components of the cosmic order interpenetrate and exchange qualities’ (ibid.).

Sacrifice and the liminal are thus intertwined, and it is telling in this regard that Turner includes a classic instance of a *rite de passage* – ritual circumcision – among his examples of sacrificial ‘high spots’, declaring circumcision ‘as a species of sacrifice’ (ibid.). This is not simply because of the blood but rather the ‘life/death resonance’ that rites of passage in general display with neophytes acquiring the character of victims who are, as it were, put to death and reborn. While not necessarily as extreme, brutal or indeed dangerous as a circumcision or some other forms of initiation, wedding ritual of the kind explored here nevertheless displays the same logic of life/death resonance, and, thanks to Turner, these points are well understood and frequently documented (Grimes 2002).

Sacrifice and Sovereignty

What follows, therefore, is not simply another study of a rite of passage but a consideration of the lifeworld in which a particular rite of passage occurred, and the kind of ‘happening’ or critical event that was enabled. In particular, by examining a royal wedding, the chapter will consider the relation between sovereignty and sacrifice by posing the questions as to why royalty, kingship or, more simply, sovereignty is so ritualistic, and why this ritualism, the theatre of statehood, so often involves status reversal, comedy and other forms of egalitarian transgression, including but not limited to the violence

of contest, hunting and sacrifice. These are of course well-trodden paths in the study of ritual, but like Roman roads, they all-too-often appear to track towards a clearing where scholars and theorists imagine primordial humanity to reside in the nakedness of its pristine desires, drives, and feelings of inadequacy or mimetic rivalry (Girard 2005). My hope is to avoid such an explanatory regression to pristine human nature, not because it is wrong necessarily but simply reductionist. Following Turner's dynamics approach, I would suggest that it is a style of reasoning internal to the logics of sacrificial liminality itself.

A vast literature attaches to the pristine human nature or the 'all-roads-lead-to-man' perspective, much of it preoccupied with the work of René Girard (1986, 1987, 2005, 2011) and to a lesser extent Walter Burkert (Burkert 1983; Burkert, Girard and Smith 1987; Bloch 1992). A broader survey and discussion of this literature is warranted, albeit elsewhere.⁴ For now, I will simply note how ritual transgression has long formed a distinct intellectual problem for scholars who isolate the transgressive, some would say Dionysian, features of ritual in terms of a primordial imaginary informing a speculative account of human nature. Desire and its concomitant lack are too readily identified as projections of this nature, which is all too often an economic individualism that simply reduces ritual to a so-called hierarchy of needs, ranging from male autopoiesis (Jay 1992) to power and status (Bell 2010; Bloch 1992), with varieties of functionalist utilitarianism in between. In this way, sacrifice becomes an inherently flawed undertaking and hence a modernist problem (Zachhuber 2013), becoming a discrete phenomenon with a distinctive history separate from the study of ritual, with much attention centring on its violence and, concomitantly, its relation to primal scenes of killing. It becomes, in other words, the 'hot spot' of ritual studies at the expense of what surrounds it.

In some ways, sacrifice has been the poorer for this special attention, where liminality is identified more neutrally as a ritual phase – a necessary interstice between existential states remarkable for its parallel articulations of symbols that breakdown, recombine (often bizarrely) and refresh ideas and orientations to the world (Turner 1967: 106). In my perspective, however, this is precisely the nature of sacrifice and, more importantly, the dynamics of structure and anti-structure in the ritual process. Closer attention to the liminality of sacrifice would, then, gesture less aggressively in those explanatory directions, and note other and arguably more important features such as the prevalence of substitutes and simulations as the communication of *sacra* in sacrificial and other rites of passage rather than as expressions of deferral and transference or repression of primordial desire. This is not to say that such features do not exist but rather to suggest that we should avoid such reductionist explanations, the roots of which are firmly embedded in

modern utilitarian ideology (Dumont 1977, 1986). Such ideology struggles with anything but the pragmatic value of ritual, and so strives to identify functions of varying degrees of latency where the underlying principle is the sense that at the heart of all ritual lies a pathological lack, a sense of human fallibility in the face of the world. Treated less pathologically, sacrifice and its inherent liminality can be viewed as having the power not only to reposition individuals in the world, but also – to borrow Lévi-Strauss's concept of the totemic operator – to 'detotalize' and 'retotalize' these worlds (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 146–47).

More than intertwined, sacrifice is then the liminal par excellence, and as such it forms one of the most fertile grounds of human creativity at the interface of life and death. Describing the features of the liminal phase, Turner noted the often-monstrous nature of its ritual symbolism as a form of communication that 'breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation' (Turner 1967: 106). By placing a man's head on a lion's body, for instance, one can speculate about humans, lions and their shared world, which now becomes a world of analogical or polythetic possibility in which the threads connecting and forming semantic domains depend as much on their differences as their similarities. Substitutes are then kinds of monstrosity in the sense of portending, albeit not necessarily something dire in the conventional sense of the monster as the sum of all fears, but instead something that is exotic and at the interface of being and becoming.⁵

The Old Chestnut of the Nuer Cucumber

Fearsome monsters as sacrificial victims do of course exist and, like the Tarasque water monster in the church feast of Tarascon (Dumont 1987), their sacrifice acquires moral dimensions associated with taming, capture and the conquest of evil. But other substitutes lack such association. The famous Nuer cucumber,⁶ for example, that is cut lengthwise in twain as a substitute for an ox, is hardly frightening. Nevertheless, it is a sacrificial offering that enables in its simplicity a speculation on the double-orientation of offerings both upwards to higher beings and outwards to the wild in the manner of the Biblical scapegoat – hence the nature of that lengthwise cut and its resonance with the proper orientation of the animal victim's fall (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 211). Moreover, the cucumber is, like the ox when sacrificed, called a cow '*yang*' (ibid.: 203). More than monstrous, the cucumber as a sacrificial substitute thus becomes a complex symbol, a portent or becoming. Its simple form not only belies but also enables its polysemic and speculative possibilities.⁷ It may be the poor alternative, less effective than the real thing, but so too is the ox, which is, I suggest, itself a substitute for

the real sacrificial prize – the cow – that was far too economically valuable to be sacrificed but was instead continually reinstated by its surrogates.⁸ The cucumber-as-*yang* may thus lack economic value and never itself be substituted by an ox or any other animal in the hierarchy of offerings, and nor can I imagine any great feast of cucumber being anticipated other than in the expectation of the animal sacrifice that would eventually replace it. But one should not be confused by a ‘poor cousin’ perspective that imagines the abstract totalities of complex symbols as necessarily valuable in material economic terms, when their value is precisely *symbolic* and, concomitantly, hierarchical in the Dumontian sense of an ‘order resulting from the consideration of value’ that is ‘an integral part of representation in holistic ideologies’ (Dumont 1986: 279–80). For such objects may just as easily be ‘priceless’ as they can be worthless, and it is in this way that they may become ‘total services’ – gifted objects and actions, the value of which is always greater than their economic worth (Mauss 1990: 12).⁹

Perhaps more famous than his discussion of the sacrificial cucumber is Evans-Pritchard’s characterization of Nuer society as stateless (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 1970). But sacrifice also throws doubt on this idea because it enables one to think of the cow as the Nuer sovereign being. Of course, it was the ox that stood atop the rankings of sacrificial creatures, just as it was men who commanded the social field, but in the hierarchy of value it was the cow that commanded the semantic domain, doing so in its twinned domestic and wild forms, and their associated biopolitical and necropolitical attributes. These attributes stem, according to Nuer cosmogonic myth (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 49), from the primal murder – the killing of the mother of the first cow and the first buffalo by men – and the feud that ensues where Buffalo attacks men whenever it finds them in the bush (the wild where it dwells), while Cow remains among men causing them to fight and kill each other through a mutual parasitism arising from Cow’s voluntary surrender to being the source of the perpetuation of human life. For it is cattle that create society, and this is evident, for example, in the role of bride wealth in creating paternity not only for men but also for women and the dead (Evans-Pritchard 1951: 109–11). Such bride wealth is intimately entangled, moreover, in compensation for homicide (blood wealth) often serving a double function. The ‘cattle complex’ is thus archetypal in the sense that, like Jungian archetypes, it dwells at the interface of life and death, the essence of the human/animal (structure/anti-structure) relation. It thus shares biopower and necropower – the full sense of sovereign being as the hierarchical life/death relation made possible by ritual.¹⁰

In my scheme, therefore, this is the heart of sovereignty and its relation to sacrifice – the king’s first body, as it were, that enables the second body to be filled by a human being, albeit not necessarily.¹¹ By their very stateless-

ness, the Nuer thus reveal the essential features of the state. The Nuer cow is comparable to the sacrificial, albeit human sovereign being of the eastern neighbours of the Nuer, the Shilluk (Evans-Pritchard 2011). Put differently, where the Shilluk have a human king whose life and death follow a sacrificial path, the Nuer have cattle – Cow – with whom they will ‘cease together’ (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 49). Instead of depicting the two groups dichotomously as stately and stateless, hierarchical and egalitarian, I prefer to characterize the Nuer society as being grounded in the practice of sacrifice, where that sacrifice has not been captured hierarchically (embodied) other than by all men, and so remains through its multiplicity of substitutes a society in which sovereignty is not absent but deeply embedded and widely dispersed. Put differently, I am suggesting that the egalitarianism of the Nuer is intimately connected to the power of their ritual and their mutual parasitism with their cattle.

Moreover, I would say that the embeddedness of sovereignty in Nuer society arising from its sacrifices also resides in its onto-cosmological concepts of kinship, which identify the Nuer self as an emergent property of what I will call ‘haemopoiesis’ or blood-making.¹² Such haemopoiesis is founded on the uniquely social character of blood (*riEm*) as one of the three ‘cardinal principles of life’ (Hutchinson 1996: 75), evident not only in male initiation but also in its female complement in childbirth (ibid.: 190) as well as in the ready distinction the Nuer make between the social and biological father made possible and mediated by ‘blood’ and, of course, cattle.

The social nature of blood is evident, moreover, in the Nuer concept of homicide as the capture or entrapment of the foe’s blood, and how acts of killing inform the nature of feud. This is revealed by the rite known as *bir* performed by a leopard-skin chief (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 152; 1956: 213), but I will use Hutchinson’s terminology ‘*bier*’ and ‘earth priest’ (Hutchinson 1996: 106). Upon killing a man, the murderer seeks the sanctuary of the earth priest’s homestead and fasts until the priest cuts the killer’s arm twice with a fishing spear, making two downward (expelling) incisions on the man’s shoulder, and also performs a sacrifice of a steer, ram or he-goat provided by the killer (recall again the double-movement of the sacrifice). In this way, both the sacrifice and the killer’s bleeding release the blood of the victim that was internalized in the body of the killer by the act of homicide. Only then can the compensation negotiations between the respective (feuding) kin of the murderer and his victim proceed.

Evans-Pritchard stressed how the leopard-skin chief had no juridical power in these events. Nuer society may not, therefore, have had kings in that legalistic sense, but this does not mean it did not contain sovereignty. That sovereignty was, instead, embedded in ritual. To use the language of Kantorowicz (1957), among the Nuer one of the king’s two bodies was in-

visible (everywhere and nowhere) and the other was the cow. The sacrificial surrogates were the ritual symbols that formed the simulacra of power that became the imaginary and seductive power of the State. Such a State is not reducible to the actual world of kings and states, because what *they* comprise are the limited forms of territorial and economic capture of what is always a cosmological process. Put differently, every king is a simulacrum of kingship, its second and actual body portending the macrocosm it represents. The marvel of Nuer statelessness is that by having no actual king the nature of the two bodies of kingship is brought into stark relief, and this was indeed the ‘peace in the feud’ (Gluckman 1955).¹³

I am arguing, then, that the Nuer cucumber breaks the cake of custom to enfranchise speculation on the relationship between sacrifice and sovereignty. Concomitantly, it informs the compulsion for ritual, the pomp and circumstance, that underlies all forms of statehood. Such pomp and circumstance, evident for example in the recent coronation of Britain’s King Charles III, is not, however, simply a display – a theatre – but rather a fraught cosmological process in the imaginary of power striving to represent itself to itself.

I want to explore these ideas through a less recent royal ritual that some may decry as merely a television spectacle that, like a hippie in headdress, is a mere approximation to the *realpolitik* and, as it were, ‘*real rituel*’ of genuine states and monarchs. I disagree, and while I am mindful that some may mock my disagreement by declaring that once one decides that a cucumber is a sovereign being one has little choice but to imagine the power of royal ritual, I can only fall back on my original observation about the intensity of royal ritual. I want, therefore, to examine some contemporary royal rituals to appreciate their sacrificial nature and the tremendous human fascination people have with such rituals and their leading players. Put simply, why do we fuss so much about the emperor’s new clothes, and how might that relate to someone substituting a cucumber for an ox, or a father-in-law for a father?

The Iconoclastic Nature of Crowning Oneself

Hubert and Mauss (1964) commence their essay on sacrifice by distinguishing the royal unction from sacrifice, declaring the former to be merely a status change for the neophyte where, in sacrifice, that change is more encompassing and can even include non-human entities like new dwellings. A *sacre* is thus a consecration rather than an immolation, albeit with a fine line separating the two, and a line underscored by the two bodies of sovereignty – the ‘house’ so to speak and the individual occupant at the time. As

examples of *sacre*, coronations are, therefore, good examples of the relation between sacrifice and sovereignty, because in the former the focus is the transformation of a new monarch into twin bodies.

While the instances of monarchs crowning themselves are considerably greater in number than the most notorious case when Napoléon Bonaparte became Emperor of France in 1804, self-*sacres* remain remarkable (Aurell 2020). But perhaps more important than a scandalous instance such as Frederick I in 1701 or Napoléon a century later is Jaume Aurell's conclusion that coronations have a long history of ritual innovations, one of which one might call the DIY variant. Napoléon's *sacre* remains a beautiful example. After careful planning, he arrived at the capital's main cathedral dressed already in the robes and crown of a Roman emperor, and thereby conjured 'up the spirits of the past' in a new formulation (Marx 1978: 9–10). The crown that had been prepared for the rite was redundant, as was the Pope who had travelled to Paris to perform the *sacre* but appears to have been privy to what would transpire when, in preference to leaving the official crown hollow, Napoléon used it to crown his wife Joséphine. Priest and king were thus combined in the republican body of the new emperor, who had transformed the coronation into another critical event reconfiguring the social dynamics of post-Revolutionary France. This was expressed not only in the relation between Church and State but also in the sense of the laity (*laïcité*) as a generalized egalitarian body of undifferentiated labour from which an unrestricted modern bourgeoisie could arise (ibid.: 10). Personal dress, moreover, played a critical role in these fashion politics, and in this way Napoléon was buying into what the historian Lynn Hunt has identified as a critical feature of the larger spectacle of revolution (Hunt 1998). Put differently, while Napoléon might have been the only person in a toga, all around him the citizens of the new republic were wearing new clothes.

Marx notes the emperor's Roman robes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* declaring how, like Luther before him, the new emperor draped himself in old clothes as the symbols of authentic authority. But where the predecessors had been iconoclasts smashing the feudal system, their successors set about the bourgeois capture of the momentarily free republican body still revelling in its iconoclastic spectacles of storming the Bastille, bearing witness to the decapitations of the aristocracy and, later, every 'enemy' of the Revolution in the Great Terror. The ritual theatre of power was, therefore, not limited to the actual coronation event but to a larger revolutionary spectacle: the 'hot spot' of the Terror where the visible and invisible interpenetrated, and, as Hegel (1977: 355–63) describes it, Spirit descended from heaven to earth and took on the form of an absolute freedom ascending 'the throne of the world' (ibid.: 357). These were indeed exceptional times; times in which the anti-structural power of sacrifice, its 'mere anarchy' (to borrow from Yeats)

was 'loosed upon the world', and 'a new rough beast' slouched 'towards Bethlehem to be born'.

The importance of iconoclasm in these political events has been identified by Dominique Colas (1997) in a powerful study of the history of the concept of civil society. Commencing with Luther and the Reformation, especially the extreme iconoclasm led by Zwingli and Müntzer, Colas traces the history of civil society and civil war into the time of the French Revolution and its aftermath, stressing the importance of the symbolic gestures in the theatre of politics in ways that relate closely to the argument being made here about the ritual process. For indeed, the actions of Napoléon in his self-coronation were not just symbolic gestures but acts of '*destruktion*'. By this I mean acts of identification of the traditional content of ancient ontology that are then systematically dismantled in order to identify the primordial experiences of being by which lifeworlds are apprehended. The term '*destruktion*' was coined by Heidegger (1962: 44) to describe his phenomenological method. Translated as 'deconstruction' partly through the work of Derrida, the hermeneutic developed by Heidegger as *destruktion* is not simply interpretation or *verstehen* but more radical in its sense of identifying primordial experience and striving to recreate it. For my purposes, the term elaborates on Turner's description of the interpenetration of the visible and invisible in the 'hot spot' of sacrifice and Hegel's description of Spirit descending in the secularization of the Great Terror. Iconoclastic violence is, in other words, intensely anti-structural. It does not simply destroy but highlights ancient ontologies through its acts of violence such as Alexander the Great's slashing of the Gordian knot.

The Wedding of Harry and Meghan

Perhaps oddly, I was reminded of Napoléon's carefully planned hubris when I watched on television the 2018 royal wedding in Britain of Henry Windsor (aka Prince Harry) to an African American television actor Meghan Markle. The wedding broadly followed the sacrificial logic of an initiation typical of the Western 'white wedding' with the usual symbolism of that rite, including, for the royal men, military costume and accoutrements. Weddings are thus public events with state (and church) sanction, multiple symbols of fertility (flowers, page-children, sometimes rice or confetti) and the three phases of a *rite de passage* including an integrating feast known as the 'breakfast'. The principal neophyte is the bride who wears the dominant symbol of the rite – a special white dress that is normally invested with magical properties and kept hidden from the groom until the rite begins, and the two families joined by the alliance become wife-giver and wife-receiver.¹⁴ Weddings

are also some of the most widely practised initiations in the contemporary world, and concomitantly some of the most innovative and personalized consumer events (Grimes 2002).

Many people in Australia, and I imagine elsewhere, especially women, declared in their passionate enthusiasm for the 2018 event that they ‘just wanted to see the dress’ (albeit with the woman inside it). A few, a very small number in my limited survey, noted the fact that Markle is a divorcee and therefore no stranger to marriage or presumably sexual intercourse. A mere generation earlier her white wedding dress would have been disparaged because the ‘meaning’ of the dress is meant to be virginity.¹⁵ However, like the mother–daughter bond symbolized for the Ndembu by the milk-tree (Turner 1967: 34), the ideological pole of meaning is subverted by ritual practice and emotional response. As the dominant symbol of marriage, the dress symbolizes the bride’s liminal neophyte status, not her sexual history. While rarely worn in subsequent marriages because of expense, white wedding dresses are not forbidden; and while this was not the bride’s first marriage it was her first time for becoming a (real) princess. Moreover, white wedding dresses have grown in popularity around the world. An industry attaches here with the lucky dress designer becoming famous and hopefully rich from their commission.

The wedding of Harry and Meghan then proceeded to become too remarkable and, for me at least, reminiscent of Napoléon’s coronation. In the spirit of intensifying identity politics, particularly as these feature black/white women at the creative threshold of unmaking/remaking race (Streeter 2012), the bride subverted the father’s role of sponsor who ‘gives the bride away’ to offer herself as the initiate – at least almost, for there remained a boundary within the ritual enclosure, the chapel at Windsor Castle, that separated the initiate from the ritual space and thereby gave a role to the groom’s father (the then future King Charles) to become a surrogate father to the bride as well as father to the groom. The twist followed a brouhaha before the wedding when Markle’s father, a white American, gave several paid interviews to the popular press about his daughter in which he stressed his importance in her career. In the event, Thomas Markle did not attend because he was recovering from heart surgery. The strong sense, though, was that he had been excluded and his daughter was responsible for this abdication. In addition to the secret of the dress, there was now the question of who would be giving the bride away. Would it be her mother who had behaved with impeccable aloofness towards the media throng? The answer was no. Meghan’s mother performed the traditional role and was simply in attendance while the daughter gave herself away. This was all about the individual collapsing the initiate and sponsor roles into a fluid state between the solitary bride and the royal family into which she was marrying. There

was, quite simply, an element of gender politics and the individualism that underpins that politics. It was a republican body in a white wedding dress that entered the chapel amid the anomaly of the wife-giving father now also being the wife-receiver.

At this point, the wedding became decidedly strange. It included an African American preacher, prominent African American television and sporting celebrities, and a British-based Anglo-Caribbean gospel choir that performed in the African American style. British celebrities and older aristocrats did their part by being visibly uncomfortable with what became a prolonged event of at times jarring innovations that presented to the world the British monarchy's new relationship to its racist and slavery-based past. The commoner woman thus did not simply become royal. She also converted the royals into African Americans by becoming a vector for the uncanny return to the past. The couple then drove away in an environmentally conscious electric version of one of the iconic and arguably most phallic English sports cars of the 1960s – an E-Type Jaguar with the wedding date forming its registration number; the whole symbol declaring in effect 'Something old, something new in Year Zero'. To cap it off, the car was left-hand drive, and so although Prince Harry drove the car, Meghan may have appeared to some to have been in the driver's seat. It was an act of symbolic capture that one can imagine gladdening the hearts of a few old iconoclasts while also generating for others a degree of discomfort.

Unsurprisingly, it did not take long for the British press and its public to unite with the nation's discombobulated aristocracy to depose the usurper who had presented to the nation a version of the master-slave relation reformulated by this black/white embodiment of the threshold of race rendering Britain's relationship to its past intensely uncomfortable. In 2019, the couple took legal action against a tabloid newspaper, and Harry publicly declared that the campaign against his wife paralleled his dead mother Diana's bitter and ultimately tragic experience. While the legal action has received widespread public support, it has also invited criticism that the British royal family does not demean itself by going to court in the manner of an ordinary citizen. The attempted conversion of the Royals vis-à-vis their kingdom's racist and enslaving history has thus failed spectacularly, and in 2020 the couple chose to abdicate and move to California from where they will be able to pursue a more conventional celebrity lifestyle and campaign more aggressively for the revisionist history gaining momentum through the iconoclastic Black Lives Matter protests of that year, when historical figures with close associations to slavery, racism and empire, such as the Royal Africa Company stalwart Edward Colston, who had his statue toppled, defaced and dumped in the Avon River in Bristol. Meghan's carefully choreographed wedding might have lacked the spontaneous violence of Colston's fall. Nev-

ertheless, it employed the same dynamics of anti-structure to imagine a re-birth full of new potential – failed perhaps, but not forgotten.

Like the coronations and weddings, innovations to British royal ritual are not new. In the 1920 interment of the Unknown Soldier – Britain’s version of what became a widespread celebration of a nation’s anonymous ‘Everyman’ victim of the First World War – King George V and close male kin walked *behind* the gun carriage bearing the Unknown Soldier to Westminster Abbey (Bastin 2012: 328). The people in their sacrifice to the nation were thereby honoured by the monarchic state in the classic pose of status reversal. In the face of the world events involving the revolutionary and civil war collapse of dynastic empires, including those of several of King George’s relatives, the heroic mortuary rites for the Unknown Soldier realigned the British monarchy in relation to its potentially outraged subjects who had just endured the ‘Great War’. The war had itself provoked intense memorialization with noteworthy variations in how different states engaged in this process and, where monarchies remained, how the monarchs participated in breaking the ‘cake of custom’ and enfranchising speculation. Where there were no longer monarchs, it was in the icons of state that the reversal occurred. In France, for example, the Unknown (French) Soldier was laid to rest at the same time as in London: the moment of the armistice which has remained sacred ever since. In Paris, the site chosen was in the ground at the base of the Arc de Triomphe: Napoléon’s Roman arch erected to commemorate the emperor’s victories and honour his fallen generals. With the everyman installed, however, this acknowledgement of rank ceased, along with any passage through the arch by any future military parades. The Unknown Soldier thus does not simply deterritorialize and reterritorialize the Arc de Triomphe but adds another layer to the state ritual that Napoléon himself had captured and secularized.

When Prince Harry’s mother Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997, other royal/commoner inversions took place in Britain. The men of the family – Diana’s brother, ex-husband Charles, his father Philip, and Diana’s two sons William and Harry – walked in the funeral procession behind the catafalque while the Queen (Elizabeth) stood in front of the palace gates with her sister Margaret and their mother to honour the ‘People’s Princess’, acknowledge the tremendous outpouring of grief, and dispel the growing resentment for the Windsor family over Diana’s death (when more accurately she was a victim of public obsession about her private life). Unlike the Unknown Soldier, the funeral for Diana was more heavily gendered and the palace domesticated not only with the reigning monarch being female but also in the way she chose to present herself in a deferential relation to the nation’s most popular royal celebrity. Indeed, she even agreed that the British flag – the Union Jack – could be flown at half-mast at Buckingham Palace as a sign

of mourning, and bowed her head when the catafalque drove past. For while the protocol is that the only flag that flies at Buckingham Palace is the Royal Standard, which only ever flies when the monarch is present and thus never flies at half-mast,¹⁶ the absence of any flag in the aftermath of Diana's death (the Queen was in Scotland) was widely and angrily interpreted as a snub to the ex-wife of the heir to the throne. Resented for their ostensible lack of emotion in the face of the enormous sea of cut flowers placed by members of a grieving nation – a demotic storming, so to speak, of Kensington Palace – the concessions made during the funeral converted Diana into a sacrificial victim duly honoured by the ritual sponsor – the Queen – who thereby restored the dignity of her office.

Princess Diana's story is, of course, well known and a powerful reminder how the nexus of sex and celebrity in the creation of virtual women has never been limited by the categories of race. After her divorce, which if anything garnered her further popularity as a victim of a seemingly duty-bound and appearance-keeping monarchy, she began to consort with rich and famous men who represented the new foreign wealth in post-imperial Britain. This rendered Diana liminoidal, not unlike her son's daughter (whom she would never know). When she died in a car crash fleeing pursuit by a ravenous paparazzi, her funeral, in its combination of public grief and anger as well as state-response, reincorporated the dead ex-princess as a sovereign being standing in relation to the main sovereign – the Queen – in a similar way to the Unknown Warrior's burial 'among kings because he had done good toward God and toward his house'.¹⁷ The Union Jack at half-mast in lieu of the Royal Standard was like the crown being placed on Joséphine's head. It was, in short, another act of iconoclasm through which the monarchy – the cake or, better, the Battenberg of custom – was reimagined.

Stephen Frears' fictional film of the aftermath of Diana's death, *The Queen* (2006), is part of this reimagining as a myth of state employing the ritual technique of cinema. In a compelling scene, we observe Queen Elizabeth alone in the grounds of Balmoral Castle having a moment of private grief over Diana's death, when she encounters a stag so close it appears almost tame. Her quiet admiration of the stag's majestic beauty is then interrupted by the distant gunfire of hunters and the barking of their dogs (and presumably her husband, whom she has earlier admonished to take his grieving grandsons for a walk *without* any guns). Kingship as the Master of the Hunt reasserts itself, prompting the Queen, in her private moment, to shoo the animal away and prevent any royal sacrifice – the capture of the life of the stag, the wild exteriority of sovereignty itself, that, again, like the Nuer cow, embodies the archetypal conjuncture of life and death. In this moment, we also realize the nature of the paparazzi: the hunting dogs of a populist state that adorns the pages of the gutter press with the trophy-simulacra (photographs) of captured heads.

By her action of shooing the stag away, Elizabeth creates her scapegoat, allowing the animal to rejoin the wild from which it came, taking with it the sins of state. She thus reasserts her sovereignty over the sacrifice with a new relation to it as woman/mother/grandmother or what the Nuer would call ‘yang’ (cow). While some interpret the stag to symbolize the Queen, others declare it to represent Diana. A third interpretation would call it the Queen’s father reappearing like Aslan to restore the overwhelming sense of duty that attaches to the monarchy. In my approach, all of these perspectives are true because the Queen and Diana and the Queen’s father are ‘sovereigns’, but in this way the stag – sovereignty – is not limited to any one of them. It is, instead, a complex symbol: highly polysemic and yet simple in form (Turner 1975: 163) – a vital body of the sovereign reborn following Diana’s now sacrificial death. As wild nature – crowned nature with a head that could grace an interior wall of the castle stuck on a wooden plaque to bear witness to its killing/capture – the stag embodies the wild nature of the ‘king’; the true king who can remove the sword from the stone (i.e. unleash power from its chthonic embrace). As such, the stag is also Britain itself in the way the Unknown Soldier became the nation reborn from the Great War. Symbol of a symbol, the stag is not reducible to one being or another but becomes instead an archetype, a being at the interface of life and death.

Recalling Turner’s point about the ‘high spot’, the nature of sacrifice is that it unleashes a dynamic of structure and anti-structure whereby transformations of sovereignty provoke axial moments by enabling enthusiastic realignments of consciousness associated with their worlds. They thus reflect the changing configurations of power not simply as representations of some ideal order, but as part of the instrumentality of that world. Such instrumentality often occurs where the cracks are widest and contradictions most apparent (Turner 1969: 43), such as when an estranged princess dies or a descendant of slaves becomes a princess. Critically, too, they do not always work in the ways their creators intend. Meghan Markle’s self-coronation when she married into the royal house of Windsor was a critical event in the history of race relations and the transmutations of slavery, but these are only some of the cracks. They sit within the circumstances of ongoing conflicts not only in the UK and the USA but also in the broader hegemonic space the dynamics of structure and anti-structure engage.

Conclusion

I began this chapter noting Turner’s observation about the hippies and the H-bomb, and the importance of the 1960s as the context when *The Ritual Process* was published. The connection is well recognized if perhaps inac-

curately and too glowingly described (e.g. Rio and Bertelsen 2018). For it was a period of new possibility wherein social and political institutions, themselves products of previous radical movements, were challenged and thereby exposed as the products of the dynamic of structure and anti-structure. In this way, the radical movements of the 1960s such as the May '68 movement in France failed and thereby preserved a great tradition that 'has been with us since the beginning of modern times' (Castoriadis 1997: 55) when people like Napoléon crowned himself and mobilized the spectres of the past. They have not gone away, but neither has the dynamic of structure and anti-structure that these attempted captures amplified.

For while anti-structure appeals to anti-capitalism – going primitive – capitalist modernity at the same time thrives on this anti-structure, its dialectic. Put simply, the connection between the hippies and the H-bomb is also the connection between the hippies and the military-industrial complex that fed and educated them, and let them loose on the world as members of the Peace Corps who built the great fiction of 'civil society' as the new Leviathan – a Leviathan formed in the baskets catching the heads during the Great Terror. It was, of course, a struggle because its target was for the old state to be replaced by a new society, a struggle against domination through a historic movement of liberation that 'only paved the way for hegemony, the reign of general exchange – against which there is no possible revolution, since everything is already liberated' (Baudrillard 2010: 67).

Therein lies the rub of it. The dynamics of anti-structure captured within the dialectics of capital have been the driving force of global hegemony and its celebrations of freedom. The naive utopias of the 1960s that created the farces of primitivism, the small wins of occupation, and a few decapitated tyrants, also extended the boundaries of capture into the newer spectacles of 'identity talk', including the contemporary farces of royal weddings, the assaults on a few statues and other acts of iconoclasm that form the basis of new populisms in which the populace disintegrates in readiness for the return of the king. I may perhaps be merely echoing the words of Pete Townsend – 'Meet the new boss, same as the old boss'¹⁸ – or another Napoléon (*Animal Farm's* pig) but I do so to share Townsend and Orwell's note of caution, which I also recognize as Turner's note of caution conveyed in his misgivings about the anti-structural aspirations of the hippies. But this is not saying abandon hope, but rather insist on a more authentic grasp of what our contemporary political agitations involving historical revisionism and iconoclastic name calling (and changing) is actually achieving.

For the dynamics of structure and anti-structure are also the dynamics of capture and the potential of ritual to make cucumbers of us all. And while there might be a tremendous *jouissance* in this becoming-vegetable, there re-

mains always the threat, the pickle so to speak, of an egalitarian nightmare: the totalitarianism that cuts us in two.

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NOTES

1. The characters of Hitler's favourite novelist, Karl May, whose fanciful novels of the American West were enormously popular, including with Albert Einstein (Galchen 2012).
2. In films like *The Flowers of Saint Francis* (Roberto Rossellini 1950) and *Brother Son, Sister Moon* (Franco Zeffirelli 1972) one can see the celebration of a Catholic ecology movement reacting to fascism and its relation to Church history.
3. See also Kapferer's discussion of sacrifice in relation to the film *2001, A Space Odyssey*, and the sequence where the sole-surviving human, Dave, re-enters the spaceship *Discovery* and deactivates the ship's computer HAL to transcend the death drive inherent to sacrifice, and thus become the last man (Kapferer 2014b: 76–80).
4. Kapferer (1997: 210–13) addresses some aspects of this literature, noting its functionalist themes. A broader survey is warranted. Inter alia, it would include recent work on the transmutations of sacrifice in ancient Rome (Stroumsa 2008, 2009; Agamben 2011, 2013) and India (Heesterman 1993; Collins 2014), as these works enable a reconsideration of Girard's discussion of the scapegoat and the figure of Christ (Girard 1986). For Girard's concern with the violence of sacrifice and mimetic rivalry is also grounded in the nature of symbolic obviation and the potential *end* of sacrifice as the enabling condition of new political theologies, which is evident, for example, in the Abrahamic religions from the Akedah onwards (Evens 2008). Ostensibly abandoning sacrifice, these new theologies internalize it in new forms of capture that enable axial moments and new modalities of sovereignty.
5. This point draws heavily on Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987: 232–309). Commenting on Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, Deleuze and Guattari identify a third space between his account of sacrificial analogy and totemic institution that is 'more secret, more subterranean: *the sorcerer and becomings*' (ibid.: 237); a dynamics approach with strong parallels to *The Ritual Process*.
6. See Evans-Pritchard (1956: 202–3); Lienhardt (1961: 257). See also Lévi-Strauss (1966: 224); Descola (2013: 231).
7. Turner (1975: 163) identifies the inverse relation between form and meaning in simple and complex symbols in his study of the *Chihamba* rite.
8. Evans-Pritchard (1956: 202) describes the ox as the pre-eminent immolation, but tellingly adds that fertile cows are only sacrificed at mortuary rites for eminent persons. Moreover, while Evans-Pritchard declares that the appellation '*yang*' should be considered along the same lines as the English synecdoche for any member of the bovine species (ibid.), the fact of its usage for a hierarchy of offerings, including cu-

cumbers and male and female goats in a culture and language so intensely focussed on cattle, suggests the labelling reveals a hierarchy in the whole–part Dumontian sense (Dumont 1980). Indeed, the cow–ox relation can be likened to the Indian priest–king relation that has been consistently misunderstood by Dumont’s critics due to what I would call their neglectful utilitarian approach to ritual and symbolism (Bastin 2016).

9. No doubt the ‘poor cousin’ substitute perspective resonates with common sense Nuer understandings grounded in the realities of the respective market prices of cucumbers, goats and cattle. Nevertheless, symbolic value always transcends the market because it remains its enabling condition (Bourdieu 1990: 118). Indeed, other clues from Sharon Hutchinson’s (1996) more recent account of Nuer cultural values highlight this. For example, the different types of money in a changing Nuer world affected by colonial occupation, cattle markets, labour migration and civil war reveal two principal forms distinguished by the relative degree of sociality and wage labour in their acquisition (Hutchinson 1996: 53). Simply put, the money of blood (*riEm*), that is the money born of human social interaction between the Nuer themselves as well as cattle, is greater in value in the cattle market than wages earned in Khartoum and elsewhere. Such wages are known as ‘shit money’ mainly because it is money often earned through menial cleaning jobs. More than that, this kind of money is also ‘shit money’ because it is symbolically dead. It lacks the pulse of human (and cattle) sociality in its formation. Money and its associated debt as its entanglement in the web of sociality is thus exposed in Nuer ideology in all of its life/ death potentiality.
10. The twinned elements of biopower and necropower combined in the figure of the sovereign draws upon the work of Achille Mbembe (2019). I stress, however, that in my usage these double movements of sovereignty are non-dualist and hierarchical rather than simply dialectical. This is not to say that dialectics are impossible but rather to limit those dialectics to states of exception, such as what Mbembe describes for the postcolony, but more broadly for the totalitarian death-spaces embedded in such states of exception, where, indeed, the dynamics of hierarchy are flattened and suppressed by the totalitarian disease.
11. The language of the two bodies of kingship is drawn from Ernst Kantorowicz (1957), albeit with the suggestion that their relation is hierarchical.
12. Jadran Mimica’s description of Yagwoia fatherhood as an ‘archetypal auto-symbolization of the existential flow’ (Mimica 2006: 79) is important for this discussion.
13. A critique of David Graeber’s discussion of divine kingship (Graeber 2017a, 2017b) will be developed elsewhere from this point. Suffice to say here that Graeber’s approach takes as its starting point the figure of the human divine king instead of the nature of divine kingship and royal ritual as variants on the nature of sovereignty.
14. The magic is the sense that it is considered bad luck if the groom sees the bride wearing the dress ahead of the rite.
15. Indeed, when Harry’s great grandfather’s brother Edward married the American divorcee Wallis Simpson in 1937 in a civil ceremony in France, the bride wore a pale blue dress with a matching hat.
16. Thus, were Queen Elizabeth to have died at Buckingham Palace when her son and heir Charles were elsewhere, the Royal Standard would have to have been lowered, and immediately raised wherever Charles happened to be.
17. From the inscription on the gravestone inside Westminster Abbey.
18. From the song ‘Won’t Get Fooled Again’, first recorded by The Who in 1973.

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