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## **"7 Passages Between Life and Death: Rituals Doing Gender"**

Lecture with Pictures and Video-Documentaries, held August 25<sup>th</sup> 2000 at "ifu – international women´s university", ifu´s open space, section "rituals of remembering – rituals of respect"  
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### **Abstract:**

**"Rites of Passage" accompany changes of status as well as all crises in human life: pregnancy and birth, puberty and sexlife, marriage and divorce, dying and death, and also – with rites of initiation - all stages in education and profession.**

**Are "modern" cultures "ritually poor" in contrast to the "ritually rich" in "traditional" cultures?**

**How are - in "western" and "traditional" societies - Rites of Passage "making gender", creating and confirming womenhood and masculinity?**

### **"Here you kneel, there you bow..."**

"Three Guineas" by Virginia Woolf appeared in 1938. She is deeply concerned about signs, which could lead to war and asks: "What fosters a latent disposition towards war? How can >educated women< prevent a war?" To find that out, Woolf looks at her surrounding world of "educated men" from an almost ethnological distance.

"Although we see the same world as you, we see it through different eyes" <sup>1</sup> she says by way of introduction. What does she see? As an example she observes a ritual in one of the traditionally elite English colleges - the procession of its members:

"How many, how splendid, how extremely ornate they are - the clothes worn by the educated man in his public capacity! Now you dress in violet; a jeweled crucifix swings on your breast; now your shoulders are covered with lace; ... now your hats are boat shaped or cocked; ... now they are made of brass and scuttle-shaped; now

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<sup>1</sup> Woolf, Virginia: Three Guineas, Munich 1978, p. 21

plumes of red, now of blue hair surmount them... but every button, rosette and stripe seems to have some symbolic meaning. Some have the right to wear plain buttons only; others rosettes; some may wear a single stripe; others three, four or five ... Even stranger, however, than the symbolic splendor of your clothes are the ceremonies that take place when you wear them. Here you kneel; there you bow; here you advance in procession behind a man carrying a silver staff...here you appear to do homage to a piece of painted wood ... And whatever these ceremonies may mean, you perform them always together, always in step, always in the uniform befitting the man and the occasion..."

Many characteristics of rituals are contained in this description: amongst them the symbols, the distinctive clothing, the cleverly thought-out ceremonies; the 'spatial transition' in which time and space are transcended in processions and made sacred; the synchronous-collective, actions confirming and establishing society.

*(Illustration: academic procession Oxford, procession Deutschordensritter/ Bavaria)*

Virginia Woolf describes a particular category rituals with ironic precision: power and status rituals. She believes that in them, conformism and competition are scenically and symbolically represented, literally celebrated and that this fosters "a latent disposition towards war".

Her "anti-ritualism" is however above all aimed at another function of these rituals and symbols: the public confirmation of masculine identity, venerability and dominance. Woolf mocks:

"A woman who advertised her motherhood by a tuft of horsehair on the left shoulder would scarcely, you will agree, be a venerable object" <sup>2</sup>

### **"Holy things are social things"**

>Modern western people< in the last hundred years understood rituals to be either "rites of foreign people", or, with regards to their own civilization, traditional religious practices. In layman's terms, the concept was mostly used - as by Virginia Woolf - with disparaging neutralism, with 'repetition bereft of content', with loud ostentation or when one wanted to characterize conformism.

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<sup>2</sup> Woolf, Virginia 1978, p. 22-24

A non-normative definition is provided by the "New Dictionary of Ethnology": "Ritual, the ensemble of unconventional actions, which are carried out on a traditionally established path on a specific occasion" In the same article, reference is also made to difficulties with regards to definition: "However, there are so many attempts at definition that there...can be no agreement regarding the understanding of this phenomenon." <sup>3</sup>

The aim here however, is not to further the debate as to definition <sup>4</sup>, but to investigate the meaning of rituals in human life. In a psychosocial and social-pedagogic context, we are above all interested in the social function of rituals: what constitutes them and how do they work?

Rituals do not occur only in religious or magical cults. Can one recognize the 'secular' conditions of a society by way of its rituals? Yes, said the ethnologist Marcel Mauss, because: "**Holy things are social things**". After all, religious teachings and rites claim to regulate and organize worldly life as well. And vice versa: people "sanctify" social, worldly issues to emphasize them and bestow them with more dignity and consecration. <sup>5</sup> If we look around us, as did Virginia Woolf, at social life, culture, business, science, and politics we see: rituals are definitely not only representative of faraway "magic cultures". Rituals still exist and are also still here with us " ... always an especially succinct expression of identity concepts in the cultural life of a society". <sup>6</sup>

In the following sections the meaning of rituals in human life is investigated in a culturally comparative context: which functions do they fulfill here and now, in modern western society, in comparison to – contemporary! -'traditional' societies? Some researchers believe that modern western society is 'under-ritualized'. Does a lack of rituals, as maintained by Stanislav Grof for example, add to the "psychopa-

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<sup>3</sup> Both quotations from New Dictionary of Ethnology, published by Hirschberg, Walter, Berlin 1988, p.406, keyword "ritual".

<sup>4</sup> In the 19th century the debate centered around the fundamentals of myth or ritual; and in the 20th century on, amongst other around explanatory models (fear inducing versus fear reduction) and on social functions in general.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted after: Centlivres, Pierre: Marcel Mauss in: Marschall, Wolfgang: Classics of cultural anthropology, Munich 1990, p. 180. For Marcel Mauss, the ritual was a key concept for "social facts in their entirety"

<sup>6</sup> Greverus, Ina-Maria: Kultur und Alltagswelt. An introduction to questions regarding cultural anthropology, Munich 1978, p. 264. With regards to rituals, refer especially to chapter V, 17: The meaning of rituals for identity confirmation, p. 257 pp.

thology of society", to an increased disposition towards violence and disintegration?

And conversely: "Can and should new rituals be established to counteract this? 'What has already taken place in this regard? Can one speak of a 'Renaissance of Rituals'?"

## **VARIOUS DEFINITIONS, THREE FUNCTIONS**

A compilation by the Frankfurt cultural anthropologist Ina-Maria Greverus <sup>7</sup> shows how various researchers analyze rituals from different functionalist points of view:

- as an orientation scheme which reduces fear and stabilizes inter-human relationships (Mary Douglas 1970)
- as a means of experiencing integration and belonging (Victor Turner 1957)
- as a symbolic representation and thus the attempt to cope with a concrete life situation and real social and existential conflicts (Nancy D. Munn 1973)
- as a periodically renewed confirmation of joint religious, aesthetic and moral values and behavioral norms (Gerhard M. Martin 1987)
- as demarcation and participation in the >transitions< (Passages) in individual and group life (Arnold Van Gennep 1909).

Victor and Edith Turner <sup>8</sup> found a very useful formula for the social function. They start from the assumption that rituals serve as a means of coping with conflicts and

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<sup>7</sup> Greverus 1978, p. 258

A concise representation of research on rituals - its history, its theoreticians in the fields of ethnology, religious studies, psychology and cultural anthropology – can be found in Holz, Karin/Zahn, Carmen: *Rituale und Psychotherapie*, Berlin 1995, p. 14 pp.

There is a more widely illustrated (Geo illustrated book) fundamental work: why people celebrate as periodically renewed confirmation of communal religious, aesthetic, moral values

<sup>8</sup> Turner, Victor: *The Ritual, Structure and Anti-Structure*, Frankfurt/Main, New York 1989 (original edition 1969). Turner and his wife Edith belong to the structure-functionalistic tradition of British social anthropology of the 50's and 70's. I always mention both here - because without Edith Turner, the research on the matrilineal Ndembu, which was essential to the book, would not have been possible. Victor Turner researched the world of the men; Edith Turner researched the world of the women. The book repeatedly refers to how the couple exchanged and discussed the results

crises, or somewhat more elaborately phrased: "Rituals serve as a means for handling events, which results in difficulties for the classification patterns of our society."<sup>9</sup> For this, the Turners coined the term "**social dramas**".

When I bring the functionalistic definitions down to a common denominator, rituals fulfill three central social functions:

1. **Rituals confirm identity**
2. **Rituals help to overcome conflicts in human lives**
3. **Rituals have a group binding and confirming character.**

And I add a fourth function:

4. **Rituals are Doing Gender.**

### **Three Ritual Categories: Healing Rituals, Status Rituals, Passage Rituals.**

Social dramas occur on different levels. Because they form part of practically all aspects and conflicts of life - and this creates part of the problem with regards to analysis and definition -rituals will be divided into three categories here, even though such a clear demarcation is not really possible:

#### **1. Healing Rituals, 2. Status Rituals, 3. Passage Rituals.**

**1. Healing rituals** help to overcome conflicts related to illness, establish identity in the role allocation between patients, -healers and those associated, and promote the process of healing.<sup>10</sup>

One could also count cathartic (cleansing) rituals and outlet rituals amongst the healing rituals, which mitigate conflicts between individuals and society or societal groups - even if often only for a limited time.

All "reversed world" rituals such as the day during the carnival period when women assume control, or the diverse forms of ritualistic fights in the world are also counted amongst these. The **fighting ceremonies** of the Aymara, the **potato battles** of the Trobrianders, the **Pallio-Horse-Race** in Siena/Italy.

*(Illustrations)*

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<sup>9</sup> Eugene Rochberg-Halton in an epilogue to Turner, 1989, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> For healing rituals refer as well to: Pfleiderer, Beatrix; Greifeld, Katarina; Bichmann, Wolfgang: Ritual and healing. An introduction to ethno-medicine, Berlin 1995.

Where society was strictly hierarchically organized, such as in these parts in the Middle Ages, festive "reversed world" parties were held, with role exchanges between superiors and subordinates -in remembrance of the Golden Age and of the original status of equality. The "fools party" started in this way: "The clerics appeared in the church ... not only in -animal masks, but also dressed as women, procurers and traveling entertainers. Instead of burning incense, they would burn blood sausage or old boot leather. Instead of singing hymns they would sing dirty songs. Instead of eating consecrated wafer at the altar, they would eat fatty sausages. They also amused themselves by playing dice during the church celebration and performed highly unusual round dances to the delight of the audience. Even worse were the processions, which followed the church celebration. Young people presented themselves in their birthday suits and tried to amuse the rabble with rude talk and gestures!"<sup>11</sup>

Even these relatively harmless outlet rituals would hardly be imaginable for us today, they would probably be considered blasphemous.

Some – more or less - preventive healing rituals lead over time, in a controlled and symbolic way to insanity, they artificially induce experiences of ecstasy, to counteract the genuine madness and real destructiveness of the excesses. Hans-Peter Duerr writes:

"At certain times the South African Ternbu and Fingu hear voices from the wilderness, which call out to them. These are the voices of the mermaids who live in the depths of the rivers. Those who are called and either don't go, or repress the call, for the most part go insane and once again become patients in mental hospitals. He who follows the voices however, and spends some time with the mermaids, comes back a wiser and better person. Only he who can comprehend the irrational can be rational, because a clear understanding of irrationality is part of reason. Only he who looks the Latvian forest spirit Vaidatajs in the eye becomes free of it."<sup>12</sup>

## 2. There is a potentially negative connotation linked to **Status Rituals**.

### **(Illustration)**

Of course they also confirm identity and fulfill a group binding and confirming function. But how do they solve (status) conflicts? Do they resolve status disputes by means of clearly demarcated rules? Or do they perpetuate them and make them into pillars of a suppressive system?

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted after Martin, Gerhard M.: Fest und Alltag – Bausteine zu einer Theorie des Festes, Stuttgart 1973, p. 20

<sup>12</sup> Duerr, Hans Peter: Der Wissenschaftler und das Irrationale. Frankfurt/M. 1981, volume 1 cover, back

Quoted from: building blocks for a theory regarding celebrations. Here the critics come in. Virginia Woolf describes the scene in the English college as a status ritual, which serves the presentation and maintenance of hierarchies in a male organization. Woolf considers the procession a "ridiculous affair", which leads straight to war. This is because subjects and those in control form part of hierarchies and a system of order and obedience. Thus "sado- rituals" <sup>13</sup>, which are found not only in a military context, but which could also for example be part of rites of passage also form part of this group.

**(Illustration)**

**3. The term "rites of passage" or "rites of transition"** was coined ninety years ago by Arnold Van Gennep - he considered it the embodiment of rituals in general.<sup>14</sup> Rites of passage form part of transitions, change of status and crises in human life "from the cradle to the grave", the **seven stages between life and death:**

1. pregnancy,
2. birth,
3. youth (puberty, adolescence),
4. choice of partners and sexlife,
5. engagement, marriage, and divorce,
6. dying and death, as well as
7. all stages in educational and professional life.

Rites of passage are supposed to lead all of these "social dramas" to a happy end, for both the individual and the community.

### **AN EXAMPLE OF RITES OF PASSAGE: A CULTURAL COMPARISON OF YOUTH- INITIATION**

Let us take a current example - the discussion on increasingly rising youth violence and generation conflicts - and take a closer look at rites of passage, especially youth initiation rites.<sup>15</sup> The adolescent phase is one of extreme conflict - both for those

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<sup>13</sup> For the term "Sado-Rituals", refer to the book of theologian Mary Daly: GynÖkologie, Munich 1991

<sup>14</sup> Van Gennep, Arnold: Übergangsriten, Frankfurt/M., New York 1986 (first edition 1909).

<sup>15</sup> Initiation rites for youths are not automatically "Rites of Puberty". They can take place in several steps, start back in early childhood and take place over a period of up to 20 years. Other terms for these rites are: rites of maturity or rites of adolescence. Puberty rites for girls on the occasion of their first menstruation are called nubility rites.

growing up and the community. The questions presented in the beginning will be investigated using this example:

- How do initiation rites help youths find their identity in society, and from society's point of view - integrate them?
- How do "traditional" and "modern" societies differ in this regard? Can identity concepts be compared, are there "**anthropological constants**" to be discovered? Can conflict and coping strategies be compared?
- Initiation rites turn girls into women and boys into men. How do rites of passage symbolically express and confirm **female and male identity**? How different are these gender identities depending on the form of society ("traditional: or "modern", patrilineal or matrilineal)?
- Are modern western societies "under-ritualized", or "symbolically empty" with regards to youth rites? <sup>16</sup>
- Are women and girls especially under-ritualized, are they the world's "ritually poor"?

## YOUTH INITIATION RITES IN "TRADITIONAL" SOCIETIES

First of all, the signposts of youth initiation in traditional societies, summarized by Friebertshäuser and Klosinski. <sup>17</sup>

These initiations function on the principle of "dying and coming into being": for the most part they contain a ritual death, the rebirth and resurrection follow, with a new name and admission into the adult world. As with passage rites in general, this "social drama" of the youth initiation rites is produced in three acts - a dramaturgy, which is in part responsible for its effectiveness. <sup>18</sup> For this Van Gennep developed the theory of the three-phase-structure in 1909:

1. phase: separation, 2. phase: transition, threshold state, 3. phase: integration, affiliation, incorporation.

The three acts occur in the following way:

In the first phase, the youths - mostly in groups - are separated from their society or town and have to go into seclusion.

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<sup>16</sup> The term "symbolic emptiness" is used by P. Hugger in: Klosinski, Günther: Pubertätsriten, Äquivalente und Defizite in unserer Gesellschaft. Bern, Stuttgart, Toronto 1991, p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Klosinski 1991, p. 12 pp. Friebertshäuser, Barbara: Übergangsphase Studienbeginn. A field study about rites of initiation rites of a student culture. Weinheim 1992. It is not a coincidence that youth researchers and youth psychologists are interested in these traditional rites of initiation, so for example the ethno-pedagogue Klaus E. Müller and Günther Klosinski, therapist .

<sup>18</sup> The three stages respectively acts here follow Friebertshäuser, Barbara, 1992, p. 21 pp.



**Here the second phase begins.** The person being initiated is again treated on three levels:

- On the cognitive level - by means of instruction. The link to ancestry and tradition is established, and "information regarding morals and customs to safeguard identity" is passed on.<sup>19</sup>
- On the physical level - by way of eating taboos, ablutions, paintings, cutting of the hair, or "mutilating operations", which engrave an indelible, life-long membership into the body. (Abb. Tattoos). Van Gennep writes: "This includes the removal of the foreskin, the removal of a tooth (in Australia etc), the removal of the last digit of the small finger (in South Africa), the cutting off of the ear lobe, the piercing of the earlobe, the septum, the hymen, or a certain hair cut, which serves as emphasis: the mutilated individual is differentiated from the uniform crowd by means of a separation ritual (that is the basis of the idea behind the removal, piercing etc.) and at the same time affiliated with a specific group. Because the operation leaves indelible traces, the integration is final."<sup>20</sup>
- On the psychological level - by way of tests, physical and psychic attacks, through tests of courage. Fear is artificially created because the youths are supposed to be able to achieve and show control over their emotions (illustration: initiation of a Massai warrior).  
A large variety of interesting examples with regards to aspects of "boyhood" and tests of courage with illustrated texts was compiled by the Swiss ethnologist P. Hugger.<sup>21</sup>

The instruction is for the most part given by older people in a type of system of sponsorship. In general there is a strict hierarchy in the older generation. In the threshold phase on the other hand, the youths are given free rein and they receive unusual freedoms - for example with regards to systematic stealing and assaults. "In Liberia, during the time that the young Vai are being introduced to the legal and political traditions of their people, >stealing by the novices is not regarded as an offence. Under the leadership of their teachers, they carry out nightly raids, on

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<sup>19</sup> Klosinski 1991, p. 12

<sup>20</sup> Van Gennep 1986, p. 76

<sup>21</sup> P. Hugger, "Pubertätsriten – einst und jetzt – aus der Sicht des Volkskundlers. In: Klosinski, Günther, 1991, p. 25-39

neighboring villages, stealing everything which could be of use (rice, bananas, chickens and other food) and bringing it back to the holy wood, although they have specialty cultivated areas which provide them with the food they need. Similarly, on the Bismarck archipelago, the members of the secret societies Duk-Duk and Ingiet plunder and steal as much as they like from the houses and cultivated areas during the initiation ceremonies. The only requirement is that they leave the possessions of the other members of the secret society untouched."<sup>22</sup>

In other areas, "youth houses" for both sexes are built. "In Gond groups in central India where the institution was highly developed, they actually created a sort of autonomous youth republic", an organization with its own social rules, own form of organization, own moral, folklore etc as a counter society to the adult world."<sup>23</sup>

**In the third act of the social drama**, the initiated person finally returns to the society and is accepted into the adult world. This is often in the context of festive processions and lavish celebrations.

The unusual freedoms allowed in the "second act", the threshold phase, are represented by an especially pertinent (social) pedagogical model. Sixty years after VanGennep, the already mentioned "anthropologist couple Victor and Edith, Turner are working on the significance of the threshold phase, the "liminal phase": as a phase of ambiguity in which social relationships could be put under the label of "communitas" or described as having a lack of status. According to Turner, in the broadest sense, one could see the entire youth phase as a threshold phase - youth counter cultures, youth revolts and youth protest rites concretely express this "liminal" state of mind. Dangers of anarchy and fundamental questioning of the adult system are inherent in this borderline situation, in the no-man's-land between past and future identity.

Lack of status and anarchy in the initiation rites are consciously limited to the threshold phase, which is the only phase where they can be experienced and acted out. Thus originates the controlled, channeled "running riot" which is acted out and has a reproductive function for the whole society. The status-less phase finally leads to the resumption, acknowledgement and overtaking of the traditions and duties of the ruling system of values.

### **Aspects Specific to Gender**

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<sup>22</sup> Van Gennep 1986, p. 113

<sup>23</sup> Sozialisation und Erziehung in traditionellen Gesellschaften, eine Einführung. Berlin 1992, p. 65.

At this point I would like to mention that up to now the people concerned in the initiation rites are to all intents and purposes exclusively male. Thus the following two venues of thought revolve around male protagonists and -problems and the gender specific social function of the initiation rites: the "adolescent crises", that is the threat presented by the male youths, the problems with regards to "separation from females", and coming to terms with their male identity.

### **"Adolescent crisis" and the danger of the (male) youth**

The ethno-pedagogue Klaus E. Müller observes, that during adolescence a specific process occurs in which "one's being undergoes a change", which differentiates it from other passages.

(Male) youths ... "find themselves on the path towards the optimal development of their physical strength and maturity. Their capacity for achievement and articulation grows. Soon they will have influence, perhaps power and will enter into direct competition with the older generation, who not only are aware of this threat to their own position, but must also fear that the youths, albeit due to their insecure status with regards to the adults, could force a change which would threaten traditional order. Of course the problem is not the same in all societies. It is only relevant in residential life in larger local communities. Historical evidence for this is found in almost all literate cultures. It has always been recognized that the years from puberty up until actual integration into the adult world is an extremely critical phase - for both the adolescent and society." <sup>24</sup>

I will use only four quotes from this flood of historical evidence regarding the relationship tension between the male generations, which dates back thousands of years. The Roman Statesman Cicero wrote: "When everything in a state is free, then every house lacks a ruling figure. The father fears the son, the son disregards the father, and there is no differentiation, whether one is a citizen or a foreigner; the teacher fears the pupil and praises it, young people lay claim to the positions of older males ... it comes to a point where even the slaves behave as if they were free, women have equal rights to men, ... and finally donkeys are so freely running around that one has to cede to them on the streets." <sup>25</sup>

The holy Augustine (354 - 430), in his "Confessions", thought back with loathing on the "repulsive, extreme unruliness of the students" in his home city Carthago:

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<sup>24</sup> Müller 1992, p. 62

<sup>25</sup> Quoted after Rentmeister, Cillie: Frauenwelten – Männerwelten. Opladen 1985, p. 21

"They storm in unashamedly, and like a horde of savages create chaos where there was once order" <sup>26</sup>

Philip Melanchthon complained in the 16th century: "The unrestricted mischief of the youth is a sign that the end of the world is close at hand." <sup>27</sup>

In the 20th century Stefan Zweig reported on the "wild" years after the First World War in Germany and Austria: "The youth listened neither to parents nor teachers, they 'turned their back on every tradition ... a whole new world, an entirely new order was to be brought about in every area of life.' They revolted 'against every valid form ... out of sheer wish for revolt.' Even 'homosexuality and lesbianism arose not from an inner drive, but as a protest against the established, the legal, the normal forms of love.'" <sup>28</sup>

By the way, reference to "wild young women" is made for the first time in this description.

### **Separation of "female" and male identity: initiation rites as androgynous rites.**

The vast majority of initiation rites revolve around male adolescents. In the 'separation', the separation of male youths from their childhood - and especially from the mother and "women" in general is intended. <sup>29</sup> In principle, researchers are unanimous with regards to these gender-specific and gender-political implications of initiation rites.

Klaus E. Müller defines the meaning of initiation rites for youths as: Protection during the >adolescent crisis< by means of discipline and integration of the youths into the adult society; in patrilineal societies in particular young boys identify with the politically dominant male community and there is a general strengthening of solidarity and group awareness, with the help of the initiations. <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Augustinus, Confessiones V 8, quoted after Müller, Klaus E., 1992, p. 62

<sup>27</sup> Quoted after Klosinski 1991, p. 11

<sup>28</sup> Müller, 1992, p. 62/63

<sup>29</sup> For example the sub-incision by the "Mika", - the artificial slitting of the urethra as a means of producing "menstrual bleeding", by means of which they rid themselves of the impure blood from the mother (native Australians); in some rites the men follow quite a different procedure -they wish to become women, in that they imitate them, as with the Couvade, the man-child bed (Ecuador" On being a man on the path in androgynous society

<sup>30</sup> Müller, 1992, p. 79

What role does sexuality play in this? Sam Keen, Ray Raphael and Elisabeth Badinter have explored the significance of heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality in this process.<sup>31</sup> Badinter quotes the trans-identity researcher Daniel Stoller on "The problems of the male identity"

According to Stoller, the boy's heterosexuality is what comes into being "...through an intensive, painful process. Due to Money's research, it is generally known that it is a hard struggle for a young boy to break free of the original symbiosis, which united him with his mother. >He must break the identification with his mother in order to overcome the female part, which he took on from her.<... Because men do not feel secure enough in their own sexuality, they fear that homosexual drives could arise when they carry out what are traditionally women's tasks. ... Because they are not secure enough in their masculine identity, homosexuality is perceived as a severe threat to their identity:> The prospect of a union with the motherly femininity scares and binds them at the same time."<sup>32</sup>

### **Homosexuality in male initiations**

How a boy becomes a man through sexually androgynous rites, is certainly an underlying factor of major cultural differences, and one cannot generalize with a Christian-teaching attitude.

This is made clear with regards to elements of homosexuality and pederasty in the male maturity rites. Homosexuality and pederasty were and are in no way always, as presented by Stoller, experienced as an "extreme threat". On the contrary - they are often virtually ritually institutionalized. This is true of many "traditional" societies - but also of Europe. (Illustration: antique vase painting / statue of Harmodios and Aristogeiton).

The ancient male Greeks for example regarded pederasty as a valuable aid to education for boys.<sup>33</sup> "The only true love is homosexual love ... Homosexual love is based on a human moral attitude to one another, which leads to life-long- Philia (friendship) after the initial phase of pederasty."<sup>34</sup> Ideally, every young Greek male,

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<sup>31</sup> Keen, Sam: Feuer im Bauch. Über das Mann-Sein, Hamburg 1992. Raphael Ray: Vom Mannwerden. Übergangsrituale im westlichen Kulturkreis, 1993. Badinter, Elisabeth: Ich bin Du. Auf dem Weg in die androgyne Gesellschaft. Munich 1994 (original edition 1986).

<sup>32</sup> Badinter, 1994, chapter: Die Schwierigkeiten der männlichen Identität, p. 215, p. 218/219.

<sup>33</sup> See Reinsberg, Carola: Ehe, Hetärenum und Knabenliebe im antiken Griechenland. Munich 1989.

<sup>34</sup> Reinsberg 1989, p. 163

that is a citizen of Athens, went through 12 to 18 years of relationships with older men or with older male youths. These relationships would be ended upon the first beard growth of the young beloved. They then exchanged roles: those who were now adult would in turn establish relationships with young boys. One can thus refer to the men of ancient Greece - the free citizens - as essentially bisexual.

The reasons - or rationalizations? - for this speak of the superiority of homosexual love with regards to heterosexual love (Ancient Greeks), to the necessary raising of the mate contribution to youths by means of the transfer of sperm: "The essence of ritualized homosexuality is the insemination of the boy."<sup>35</sup> It is about the complete incorporation into male society, hook, line and sinker. "This is represented in the picture by Phaidros on the optimization of political and military achievement by means of pederast ethos. He painted the utopia of a city and an army consisting only of pederast lovers. The city was managed with utmost prudence and intelligence, the army would not have found its equal in bravery and magnanimity".<sup>36</sup>

The institutionalization and ritualization of homosexuality does not represent a demographical danger, since the reproduction of the population was guaranteed through the parallel heterosexual connections of the men (by marriage). So one could consider these systems, the reproductive and non-reproductive sexuality, including pederasty and prostitution, as ingenious inventions, with which men have obtained satisfaction of their needs in an extremely broad spectrum of illegitimate sexual acts, and that concurrently stabilized the relation of leadership at the same time.

Depending on the expression of the patriarchy there is a proportionate amount of, contempt towards women in +their attitudes, which is actively encouraged in some male rituals.

### **What becomes of young girls? How do they become women?**

It is typical that much less research and writing is done about initiations for young girls than on male maturity rites. This also reflects the reality: there are significantly less initiation rites for girls than for boys, at least in patrilineal societies. These are individual initiations rather than spectacular or secretive collective rites.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bohle, Barbara: Ritualisierte Homosexualität – Krieg – Mysogynie. Beziehungen im und um den Männerbund. Examples from New Guinea. In: Von Welck, Karin; Völger, Giesela (publisher): Männerbände – Männerbünde. Zur Rolle des Mannes im Kulturvergleich. Cologne 1990, p. 285

<sup>36</sup> Reinsberg 1989, p. 172

<sup>37</sup> Müller 1992, p. 67

How can this be explained? In patrilineal societies, girls are often considered less important or actually a burden. Girls go through the unmistakable "biological transition" of the first menstruation, the menarche; with this they become a marriageable exchange object and through marriage - or often first through motherhood - become a "real woman". Girl initiations are often linked to the menarche. The seclusion of girls in Indian nations in "menstruation huts" is well known.<sup>38</sup>

*(Illustration)*

When there are rituals in patriarchal societies, these are often sado-rituals, through which girls become women suitable for marriage and society. Extreme cruelties are unfortunately the norm for a daily number of 6000 girls in Black Africa. (Illustration: geographical distribution) They become victims of sexual mutilation, meaning the various forms of clitoris removal and mutilation of the outer genitals.<sup>39</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates the present number of women in Africa wounded in this way at 130 million. In Germany it is up to 20 000 women and girls. (Illustration: Initiation-"squatter" for clitoradectomy)

Sexual mutilations are often secret rites. They are carried out under the pretext of a "pleasant experience" in order to maintain the secrecy of the hellish, life-long pain during urination and menstruation, sexual intercourse and births. The justification for this is tradition, religious rules, and ideas of cleanliness and beauty, the fostering of loyalty, the need to curb the otherwise uncontrollable sexual energy of the women, and much more.

In a number of African and Arabian countries, the sexual mutilation of girls is forbidden. Without the execution of these sado-rituals, women in many population groups would not be able to live, however. They would become like the living dead because without a husband and family and no income, they would be disowned.

These sado-initiation rites have meanwhile been outlawed by the United Nations and constitute a violation of human rights, especially the "reproductive rights" of women. Men and women in the affected countries, as well as initiatives and non-governmental organizations inside and outside Africa are engaging in the educational, medical, legal and social offers of help. The Somali super model Warris

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<sup>38</sup> About Indian menstruation rites see: Carolyn Niethammer. *Töchter der Erde, Legenden und Wirklichkeit der Indianerinnen*. Göttingen 1994. For an example regarding the initiation of African girls see Barbara LeVine. *Die Initiationen der Mädchen in Nyansongo (Kenia)*. In: Popp, Volker: *Initiation. Zeremonien der Statusänderung und des Rollenwechsels*. Frankfurt/Main 1969, p. 60-70.

<sup>39</sup> Literature: Lightfoot-Klein, Hanny: *Das grausame Ritual. Verstümmelung afrikanischer Frauen*. Frankfurt/Main 1992. Walker, Alice; Parmar, Pratibha: *Narben oder Die Beschneidung der weiblichen Sexualität*. Reinbeck 1996.

Dirie, as a special envoy for the UNFPA is promoting the abolishment of these rituals.<sup>40</sup>

In Germany, in recognition of this threat of mutilation as a ground for asylum, a general party parliamentary group brought about a resolution proposal in the West German Parliament.

Lloyd Gardner showed a less crass example of ritual violence in his documentary film "The delecting women of Ogoloma".<sup>41</sup> In this village in South Nigeria, girls are locked in huts for five weeks for initiation rituals. They are required to eat in order to develop attractive, womanly curves. The upper and lower thigh is covered with heavy metal rings; the girls are fed and served - which they enjoy in view of their normal duty-laden lives. They practice dances and receive brief, guidance from older women on the breast-feeding of children, on how one keeps ones husband in a good mood etc. The fattening and separation phases in the huts end with a public chastity test with breast exposure, pregnancy test, and certificate of virginity, issued by the chief, inclusive of letter, seal, stamp and stamp fee. (*Illustration*) In the documentary one sees how this is seen as great fun by the young male spectators, who watch the "traditional" spectacle in jeans and T-shirt and embarrass the girls with "tests of courage" by touching and pestering them.

However, objections to these rituals by society and internal cultural conflicts between modern and traditional Africa are becoming apparent. In the case of a young woman, a music student in one of the country's university cities, she came back to Ogoloma especially for the initiation ritual, to participate as a show of respect to her parents. Limits were set beforehand however; she would let her hair be cut, let rings be put on, let herself be fattened - but would under no circumstances take part in the public breast exposure. At the end of the five weeks however, her father demanded this of her after all, contrary to the agreement. She withdrew her participation after violent arguments and went back to the city, thus inflicting severe damage to the image and status of her parents.

By way of this example of initiation rites for girls, I would like to illustrate the theory that in patrilineal societies with modernization conflicts, there is a tendency to regard **girls and women as the guardians of tradition and ethnic identity**. For them, this means - even if only allegedly – the old which becomes like a straitjacket to them; without conforming however, most of them could not survive, even if they were to support themselves. It is their brothers, fathers and sons however, which

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<sup>40</sup> Updated information on this topic is available on the homepage of the UNFPA on the internet: <http://www.unfpa.org>

<sup>41</sup> Book: Lloyd Gardner, director: Ngozi Onwarah, camera: Alwin Kuchler, Simone Horrocks. German synchronization Bodo Fabian. BBC production, broadcasted on NDR in 1994.



take it upon themselves to define tradition, religion and rituals, as well as the role of women and girls.

I would now like to present another aspect of this, which I will detail in another more comprehensive publication. It depicts girls in more pleasant ritual situations: in matrilineal societies in particular - of which there are many in the world, some of which I have visited <sup>42</sup> - there are initiation rites for girls which contain the usual functions of integration and adaptation to the rules of society - but not in order to prepare the girls for a life of suppression, but rather to prepare them to take over social, national political, economical and often religious responsibilities and rights.

### **YOUTH INITIATION IN MODERN WESTERN SOCIETY**

A comparative look at youth initiations and their functions here and today, whether a lack of initiation rites prevails in modern western society and leads to problems in society.

(Organize the following list perhaps as like a photo albumin with many small photos in a frame):

Let us take for example a young girl in Germany in the year 1998 - she can go through a large variety of status passages from earliest childhood: starting in kindergarten starting school - transition to secondary school - first communion, confirmation - first menstruation - first sexual relationship -acceptance into a youth clique, peer group, belonging to a youth scene - joining a sports association, -first drug consumption (cigarette, alcohol, etc) - beginning her studies - entrance exam -to an elite college - a voluntary year as assistant in hospitals, social services etc - driver's license test and first car - dancing lessons -engagement - first experience of unemployment after completion of studies - diploma exam - starting a career. (*Illustration* .....

For her brother, male organizational initiations could be added to that: admission to a dueling fraternity - conscription into the West German Armed Forces with official, swearing in ceremony.

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<sup>42</sup> Further elaborations in Rentmeister, Căcilia: "Rituale als soziale Dramen – preparation for social work studies/ social pedagogy" (Book in progress)

In socio-scientific research, this extraordinarily long-lasting phase of separation from child to adult, which can drag on for ten to 25 years is referred to as a "moratorium".

How are the **"particular aspects of modern status passages"** represented in a secular society? <sup>43</sup>

The number of status passages has multiplied. They can be passed alone or in the accompaniment of an adult; one can find oneself in a passage of status without noticing it. The transitions in the course of the secularization can be either secular or religious. Signs of these can be recognizable in the social environment or not. Some passages are documented with the issuing of certificates after having passed an exam - the change of status must often be officially legitimized. The rituals occur in different worlds: family, state educational institutions, private business structures, ideological groups, self-chosen youth groups, leisure time, and scenes.

In some initiation rites an elite is consciously produced - this means that there is a separation, not only from those who have not yet undergone the ritual, but also from those who will never undergo it.

***Digression:*** *An example of such "negative rites" are the "Bizutage" at French elite colleges.* <sup>44</sup>

*In these initiations, those in higher semesters serve as "ritual leaders" and direct the people being initiated - women and men -, through a series of acceptance tests and these are generally sexually sadistic and fecal acts. "Groaning and choking, the half naked youth tried to wrest himself from his tormentor. But strong hands held him down, opened his mouth wide and poured a ladle of the dreaded 'soup' down his gullet - a concoction of red wine and urine, oil and vomit..." - and that is just one of the most harmless "tests".* <sup>45</sup> (Illustration)

*Everything is done with the end goal of bringing forth unusual, "distinguished" people. Which psychosocial strengths are being used here\*? Psychological studies show, " ... that all people adhere more strongly to an institution, the stricter and more painful the initiation rites imposed."* <sup>46</sup> *There is also a well-known principle at play here: (first) subjugate yourself in order to (later) rule. In France, there is concern about the spreading of these rituals to "normal" colleges and high schools,*

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<sup>43</sup> With reference to Friebertshäuser 1992, p. 28 pp. which in turn refers to Glaser and Strauss 1971.

<sup>44</sup> The term negative rites was developed by Durkheim and was detailed by Bourdieu amongst others; they have a reproductive function for society, in a negative sense as well. See Bourdieu 1990. Friebertshäuser 1992, p. 32-34

<sup>45</sup> Der Spiegel, October 4, 1993.

<sup>46</sup> Bourdieu, quoted after Friebertshäuser 1992, p. 34

*and about the increasing sexualized terror - victims and perpetrators are however united in their maintenance of secrecy.*

Another characteristic of youth initiations in modern society furthermore is the absence of communal societal bonds. As a sign of pluralization and individualization, the initiation rites do not unite all youths, there is no defining ritual, such as for example with the youths of the GDR; it is mostly left to the youths to create various competing associations. This means that there is dissent amongst the initiations and circumstances accent this, to the point where the youths virtually create their own tribes. For example in belonging to competing youth organizations, student club, football clubs, ethnic groups, cultural scenes etc. The competing official rituals, which are often rejected, are combated in the following ways: protests against conscription, dueling fraternity parades etc. Ethnic or 'tribally' structured groups need to consistently validate themselves internally and externally by means of ritualized fights. An example of this are the regular battles between the punks and the police in Berlin, which break out punctually on the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup> of May each year. Very few of those taking part are aware that they are actually acting out an initiation ritual and that they are participants in a *never-ending* game.

### **Auto-initiation as an indication of "reversed world"?**

In the modern western world, one can clearly see many elements, which relate to traditional initiations, for example using the "body as a transition object".<sup>47</sup> However, while physical signs designate affiliation to the adult world in traditional societies, many youths of today are striving to demonstrate a distancing from the adult world by way of physical signs on their bodies. Adults themselves are merely an instance of enculturation among others and thus have a corresponding need for youthfulness.

Modern initiation rites - in comparison to traditional - are mostly concerned with the diminishment of the importance of the adult world. Many adults cannot or do not want to transmit traditions in a credible way. This has however, not led to a disappearance of initiation rites: many youths design their experiences and symbols of passage themselves - even when they would not classify their behavior and motives as initiations. Lenzen coined the phrase **auto-initiation, the self-initiation** in 1985.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Here Klosinski adapted a term by Winnicot. See Klosinski 1991, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> The term "auto-initiation" was coined by Lenzen in 1985, after Friebertshäuser 1992, p. 20.

This means that the time, type and form of the rites are chosen oneself. The media industry and advisory literature such as "Bravo", as well as the Internet function as "godparents" and "advisors". They provide information and models - for example, with regards to education, prevention and first love relationship.

### **Girls and young women**

The question here is also one of gender-specific differences. Are there initiation rites in co-educative modern society, which only girls go through? (It is well known that the first menstruation occurs with a significant "Absence of ritual" - and young girls in these parts do not want to celebrate purely biological and potentially mother-orientated passages.)

One theory could be: that girls and young women in modern, western, patriarchal societies are subject to rituals, even if in quite another form and context than in traditional societies. Frequently occurring instances of sexual abuse and sexualized violence can be classified as sado-rituals, as a justification of male needs. 70% of German prostitutes have experienced abuse, 80% of drug-addicted women.<sup>49</sup> These sad rituals lead to a sense of non-identity, which in turn leads to girls and later women, no longer being capable of setting boundaries. Furthermore, practically all girls are exposed to an omnipresent politic with regards to their bodies, a dictatorship of beauty ideals bereft of reality- which leads to a continual non-fulfillment of the norm to which they react with self-doubt, psychological problems, insane diets and beauty operations - key word: silicone breasts which lead to severe health damages and illnesses such as bulimia, all of which result in severe health problems.<sup>50</sup>

Girls often become targets, spectators and "participants" of initiatory borderline experiences of the opposite sex. They simply "go along for the ride" when young men, after having been to a discotheque, show off with reckless driving which often ends deadly in order to try out their limits and those of their car.

Rites of violence - male youth violence – are for most young girls- in spite of the occasional appearance of violence among girls-not been a means of testing their identity in the adult world<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Figures derived from: " Familie: Keimzelle der Gewalt", Frankfurter Rundschau,.....

<sup>50</sup> However, men are increasingly subjected to this doctrine.

<sup>51</sup> Here figures about male violent offences. And remark: Girls would probably refuse rituals triggered by "biological" events like the menarche as being atavistic.

## Under-ritualization or "Renaissance of Rituals"?

Since the "critical" 70's, the German social sciences have been viewing modern western rites of initiation with skepticism. This enhances the image of a traditional society, but our "own" western culture is perceived as being rather gloomy.

- Traditional initiations were accordingly categorized by way of: breaking-away conditions, artificially produced borderline experiences, controlled anarchy –afterwards "re-socialization" and integration with a secure position and role.
- Modern western societies are characterized above all through that which is lacking: Breaking-away conditions are not created - there is auto-initiation-youth revolts-danger of disintegration with no final integration and secured role.

One must keep in mind that these descriptions once again only apply to male initiations.

Some evaluations in presentation:

The therapist Klosinski finds it doubtful that the entertainment industry is principally responsible for the creation of initiation rites. It offers sources of protestation and "fabricated oppositional poses".<sup>52</sup> The integration would also come too late, the duration of the moratorium would be too long. According to Lenzen, the founder of the concept of self-initiation, it is doomed to failure, because significant elements of collective validation and recognition of the new, status are lacking and thus a cycle of repetition would be created.<sup>53</sup>

Ina-Maria Greverus believes that individuals suffer from a lack of interaction and communication, and that they are torn between striving to "appear normal" on the one hand and to "be individuals" on the other. Greverus remarks pessimistically: "When identity-confirming rituals are to be found at all in such a society, they turn individuals into objects and do not allow them to carry out the allotted identity tasks subjectively".<sup>54</sup>

At the end of the series of frustrating self-initiations, Klosinski sees how, therapists, social pedagogues and social workers have to then assume the heavy social respon-

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<sup>52</sup> Klosinski 1991, p14, p. 18

<sup>53</sup> Friebertshäuser 1992, p. 38, 39

<sup>54</sup> The term "appearance of normality" was coined by Goffman in 1975, the term "appearance of individuality" by Habermas 1967. Quote by Greverus 1978, p. 258

sibility of softening the impact of the unsuccessful integration by means of "emergency initiations" and replacing the absent, mentors and godparents.<sup>55</sup>

I would like to make three counter-claims to these skeptical opinions and then once again limit myself to using initiation rites as an example:

1. The extent of the crisis is possibly overestimated. Many people still feel linked to large churches. Others join religious sects or cults, or one of, the cultural scenes; others work in associations, organizations, the community in political parties and new social movements. Others have given up the search for the most "fundamental, deep, principal meaning" and develop and cultivate themselves by way of a certain lifestyle, finding satisfaction and belonging in this way. There are many combinations and a multitude of affiliation variants between these. All of the groups mentioned offer one their own initiation and affiliation.

2. It is extremely difficult to ascertain the degree of disintegration in general. It varies to a very high degree between single groups in pluralized society: social groups, city and country, east and west, masculine and feminine. On the one hand we have seen that over-rebellious (male) youths have been factors of contention for thousands of years and that this does not necessarily indicate a decline; on the other hand the adolescent crisis situation is increasing, because in reality increasingly more youths find no place - not only "place of work" - in society to confirm their identity. Also, certain violence and sado-rituals cannot be categorized using the key word "disintegration".

It is well known that hooligans are often well-adjusted workers during the week, who come together in excesses of violence on the weekends at football games - and mostly only participate in these violent rituals until they get married.

3. Can one speak of an under-ritualization of the German society? Aside from mass initiations to do with the state - a collective initiation - I believe that this concept does not apply. One can counteract that since the 70's - parallel to the negative judgment by the social sciences critics, there has been a move towards positive connotations, or even unconscious or conscious renaissance of rituals; for example in connection with the "new social movement" and the multi-cultural big city scene in Germany: there is a renewal of old rites - they are being revitalized, as well as entirely new rites are created.

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<sup>55</sup> Klosinski 1991, p. 17, 18

Amongst the dreaded "rebellious youth", those who were politically engaged, those who were studying and prospective academicians were quite open about their establishment of rituals. For example, the student movement of 1968, the women's movement of the 70's and 80's, the citizen's rights, peace and environmental movements. They vehemently rejected the rituals of, the parent generation - in order to create and live out their own - internally as well as externally by means of demonstrations and protests. This is why **festivals** took on a growing importance.<sup>56</sup>

### **Festivals, parties, parades -- from confrontation to communication**

Let us take for example +the women's movement - which, in its beginning years, was a movement of young, educated, radical women, mostly students - who, from the beginning of the 70's, demonstrated their new self-confidence, the new female identity vehemently in the outside world, on the streets, in Go Ins, Sit Ins, Sleep Ins etc. It did not simply remain at demonstration and purely verbal oaths of union under the well-known motto "united, women are strong!" For example the confirmation, the safeguarding of society, formed a part of every major ritual, of which many participants were not fully aware: such as in the "women's festival" (illustration: poster for the women's festival, Berlin 19751). This fulfilled the function of identity confirmation, created a similar dramaturgy throughout Europe and sometimes even became a communal work of art. Some of the basic building blocks of the ritual were:

women dancing to women (rock) bands, where everyone could play along at certain times, self-prepared meals, showing of films, information and advertising of current events, self-defense demonstrations and new projects such as women's safe houses, women book shops, women bars, work, abortion and contraception, lesbians and the forming of relationships. Part of the rituals, a sort of running gag, were disputes, sometimes physical, with men that they encountered or who had sneaked in, mainly custodians and reporters.

There were large women's festivals until the late 80's in numerous locations in Germany and Europe. One to two thousand participants gathered in even the smaller cities.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> For rituals and celebrations in general, see Sommer, Volker: Feste – Mythen – Rituale. Warum die Völker feiern. Hamburg 1992 with many illustrations.

<sup>57</sup> Conscious attempts to create rituals were made in the women's art scene, at one-off events such as "The Festival of the 1000 women" in the Frankfurt Opera in 1987 -, or also in esoteric-orientated groups, for "those who wished to re-experience the women's rituals of the past, "matriarchal rituals", in order to strengthen historically founded identity and collective belonging. Refer to Cecilia Rentmeister, Frauenwelten: fern, vergangen, fremd? The matriarchal debates in the new women's movement in: Greverus, Ina-Maria and others (publishers): Kulturkontakt, Kulturkonflikt, volume 2,

The festivals occurred at the end of international congresses, summer universities, Walpurgis nights and campaigns - and brought in money for campaigns, projects, or for the heating costs of the women's centers. They were a transitional ritual, insofar as many women, for the first time, overcame their fear of becoming "emancipated", stepped over the threshold to the new world of women: women's groups, "women's fights", as they were then called, and women's love.

In the 90's the festival and party culture became even more widespread. The punks and police are still fighting each other in Berlin on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Due to the publicity and media however, a much larger group of youths is affected. Their self-initiation inventions are parties and parades.

The parades fulfill all the criteria of a ritual identity confirming, group binding, time and space surpassed; they work on the high points during the course of the year, because the festival float and the costumes are often worked on for months, and the shows extensively rehearsed. In the Berlin calendar of rituals regarding youth identity confirmation, there are three parades with millions of participants in the summer alone:

in May the "Carnival of Cultures", a multicultural parade through Kreuzberg, where hundreds of different cultures and scenes, or urban "tribes" are presented; the event is four years young and brings in between 400 000 participants and spectators.

In June, one million people - 200 000 local lesbians and gays, together with 800 000 spectators celebrate "Christopher Street Day" (CSD). While the first CSDs twenty years ago were outside events, which evoked scornful comments and attacks from the side of the street rather than astonished smiles, they are now international tourist attractions. (Illustration....)

In July the "Love Parade" moves through the city. It started ten years ago and attracts about one million participants and spectators yearly. Added to this are the spectators who watch the lengthy live broadcasts on television.

The most important difference to the rituals of the 70's and early 80's is: many of the people being initiated are seeking positive, integrative identity confirmation from the outside, through the public and the media. Thus it ranges from dueling demonstrations to pleasure-oriented self-portrayals, festive parades - which means it ranges from confrontation to communication.

### **Techno and Love Parade: the Controversy**

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series: "Notizen" des Institutes für Kulturanthropologie und europäische Ethnologie, Frankfurt/Main 1988.



The controversy surrounding modern initiation rituals can be understood in the context of the history of the development of techno and rave parties and the love parade.

It started off as a typical self-initiation - with techno-parties, raves, nightly "underground" events in "secret" locations, in barns in the country, in unused subway tunnels, which were advertised by propaganda or by word of mouth.<sup>58</sup> Whether in tunnels or in clubs - every rave weekend became a miniature passage ritual: breaking away from the normal world of the week, the nights with "DJ-shamans", in the ecstatic threshold state of dance; the extremely loud and fast music, flickering strobe lights and stimulating drugs such as ecstasy; at the end of the threshold phase, the chill-out and reintegration into the everyday world. This life with its week-long liminal contexts can stretch over years, until the ravers leave the scene and turn to another lifestyle - or until techno loses its momentum and is taken over by a new "wave" upon which the signals of passage model themselves.

Interestingly enough, a fundamental conflict regarding youth initiation rituals is breaking out again regarding the Berlin Love Parade, but the other way around: that is, the old dissent between ritualism and anti-ritualism. To its rather "left-alternative" critics it is not rebellious and political enough. In their eyes there is no actual resolution of conflicts; it is simply an outlet ritual followed by an adjustment to the reigning order of society: from a true raver to joining the status quo once again: escapism on weekends, the "drug E" and ecstasy, on Monday once again punctually at work. (*Illustration*)

Critical observers - inside and outside the scene - accuse the event and those participating of consumerism and commercialism. In reality there is - at least - a four-fold increase in the number co-workers, listed here in descending order: The organizers, who also sell areas advertising space and sought-after camera angles for television, the DJ female shamans, the moving trucks, the participants. The media, above all television and radio, do not create "opposing positions" by way of their live broadcast, but rather serve to strengthen the integrative and affirmative effect of the ritual.

Other critics - participants in the first parades for example - see the unmistakable increase in the size of the crowd, the Changed drug consumption from "E" to beer, and ironically refer to it as the "proll-parade".

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<sup>58</sup> Literature: Böpple, Friedhelm; Knüfer, Ralf: Generation XTC, Techno und Extase, Berlin 1996, among others see chapter "Der DJ-Schamane", page 83 pp. Farin, Klaus: Jugendkulturen zwischen Kommerz und Politik, Erfurt (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung) 1997; Saunders, Nicolas/Walder, Patrick: Ecstasy, Zurich 1994.

Other critics have formed a counter-parade, the "Fuck Parade", which claims to preserve the original tradition of hardcore techno. One or two thousand "genuine ravers" cynically declare; "the music - from hyped-up death metal to punk techno - was so mercilessly loud that the alarms in parked cars came on in fright".<sup>59</sup>

The older generation on the other hand, politicians for example, look with benevolence upon the running wild of the young in the sign of the sunflower, play down the drug consumption, regard the traces of urine and 47 tons of aluminum cans left behind as venial offences; they see the event as a political demonstration, which saves the organizers costs on security and disposal. What is pleasing to the "adults", aside from the tourism promoting "non-conformist conformism" and the socially healing effect of slogan "Love, Peace and Unity"?

From a **gender-political point of view**, the technical rituals are "revolutionary". The unaware television viewer is confronted with two questions:

1. Unbelievably fast, loud, technically generated music is played - why does the public consist almost half of young women, whom one would actually suspect of having another taste in music?
2. How can half-naked young women in bras parade around with half-naked young men - ecstatically dancing, often under the influence of drugs, all night long, without it leading to sexual attacks?

Some chapters in the book by Friedhelm Bopple and Ralf Kniefner provide various answers to this. A few excerpts:

In England, Sheila Henderson carried out a study for a drug counseling station between 1991 and 1993 "... about the sexuality and drug consumption of young women on the rave scene. Henderson foregoes the usual demonization of drugs and establishes that this consumption not only has negative sides, but can create fun and enjoyment...

Girls ... feel free to leave the house and go to clubs without male accompaniment. They go accompanied by friends, or alone. They are less attached to a fixed partner than in other youth scenes ... the young women see this as freeing ... the women questioned in the study stress that 'sexual pressure and demands by men are not at play'. From the interviews, it emerges that the 'sexual security at raves' is attractive to girls. Quite in contrast to the usual discotheques, in which an alcohol-influenced

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<sup>59</sup> Ole Schulz in "taz" newspaper of July 13 1998, p. 23

atmosphere reigns and the women are seen as a 'cattle market'. The fun and enjoyment of dancing pushes sex into the background for the duration of the party." <sup>60</sup>

At the party, all sexual orientations are represented, the boundaries seem to have been eliminated, the rave is cross-gendered".

"In the XTC generation it is about enjoying contrasts: to accept transsexuals, homosexuals, blacks, lesbians and >perverts< and to integrate them into one's own emotions." <sup>61</sup>

Men express themselves in this way:

"I find touching totally >cool< on pills - I do not want this to be destroyed by my prick". <sup>62</sup>

What has happened here? It appears to have a connection to the type of drug, - with ecstasy, short "E". The music critic Simon Reynolds explains: " First of all, there is ecstasy-honeymoon, which produces something like an androgynous sexual indifference. Heterosexual men hug each other, the entire cultural space of the clubs change ... ecstasy leads to a break down of masculine defenses and to a sort of familiarization of the men. Often to the point of something resembling an infantile sexuality. Thus the wide pants, comforters, or children's songs or samples which combine sweets and pills." <sup>63</sup>

But in the techno scenes as well, nothing stays as it is. Reynolds refers to "drug cycles" and describes the change in this way: "As the amphetamine becomes stronger, this changes. The masculine body becomes a warrior's body, calling upon scenes from action films ... during the course of the last years everything has changed again. With \*the arrival of speed Garage the entire club scene has once again become highly sexualized, which is not least of all due to the fact that the main drug today is cocaine. If ecstasy transforms you into an androgynous angel, cocaine has the opposite effect. It turns you into a machine, constantly wanting more, and stimulates every possible appetite." <sup>64</sup>

The following highly positive quotes from Böpple/Knüfer in 1996 reflect only part of the reality in 1998. They are quoted here however, because the authors consistently make the link between the social drama of the techno rituals and the major society dramas. They do not criticize the ravers as "loving themselves" and "narcissistic", they see the parties and parades as physical boundary-establishing rituals with a political dimension: "Techno is also a way of experiencing one's body. The dance serves as an aid in sensuously experiencing one's body. With techno this ex-

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<sup>60</sup> Böpple/Knüfer 1996, p. 182-183, p. 194.

<sup>61</sup> Böpple/Knüfer 1996, p. 194

<sup>62</sup> Böpple/Knüfer 1996, p. 187

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Simon Reynolds by Tobias Rapp, taz newspaper 4.9.98, p. 15

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Simon Reynolds by Tobias Rapp, taz newspaper 4.9.98, p. 15

perience is combined with a festive ritual. The person heads into the crowd of partiers. The attraction of techno is based on the premise, not of sharing the experiences, but rather experiencing and going through them together. This is a type of connection, which it is almost not possible to experience in the everyday world anymore. The barriers of individualism in society are set too high.

The ecstatic dancers, enjoying himself by himself undergoes an elementary experience, which remains. There is no yearning for subjugation through displays of power and suppression of the weaker. Their experiences in "technoland" are of an intensity, which extend beyond the weekend. This has consequences for society: those who are at peace with themselves, and in their bodies do not need ideologies and their prophets, which only promise them something which they have already found in techno - independence and self-confidence." <sup>65</sup> And from everything that we know, hear and read, this is the case for the dancers.

Even when the Love Parade no longer resounds and dances through Berlin, when the techno scene stagnates: it has created a gender-politically revolutionary self-initiation ritual with its party life for the 90's.

## **Conclusion**

The above examples show: in western culture it is not only the terms under-ritualization and "symbolic emptiness" which apply In general. Old rituals perhaps lose their relevance or general validity, but many new rituals are created as well. Whether in conflict with society or in consensus: the confirmation of identity, the solving of conflicts and group bonding are occurring in the form of rituals. There is no "ideal world of rituals", because there is no ideal world - not even in so-called "traditional" societies. The world is changing everywhere. Even very, old rituals cannot be guaranteed to last eternally Rituals, for their part, represent potential for conflict, in so-called "traditional" societies as well as so-called "modern" western, pluralized societies.

Rituals apparently form part of anthropology. The entire range of human behaviors and ethics is shown by means of healing, sado and passage rituals. Thus rituals will always be subject to critical questioning with regards to being "consciousness-building" versus "conformist", stereotyped or power-oriented intention.

To the observer, ritual "social dramas" are a mirror, which as Greverus said: "...always an especially succinct expression of identity concepts in the cultural life

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<sup>65</sup> Böpple/Knüfer 1996, p. 198 and 193

of a society" - and thus provide a valuable source of insight with regards to the individual and society. For the participants in socially constructive communicative and not power-motivated rituals, the cognitive side plays an insignificant role. No critical questions are asked here, but answers are displayed scenically. For them, rituals are above all a collective experience, a source of strength and enjoyment.

End