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**The Greyhound was my Guide:
Vern Harper's Inipi Ceremony and Victor Turner's New Anthropology.**

**by
Bruce H Dunn**

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology/Anthropology

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
October, 27, 1999**

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acceptance of this thesis**

**The Greyhound was my Guide:
Vern Harpers Inipi Ceremony and Victor Turner's New Anthropology**

submitted by Bruce H Dunn, B.A.

**In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts**

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Sociology/Anthropology

**Carleton University
October, 27, 1999**

**This work is dedicated to those at the Four Directions camp who altered my definition of
what it means to be brave.**

Abstract

The sweat lodge, or Lakota inipi ceremony is a central practice for native North American's who follow the red road. This thesis concerns the practices and teachings of Vern Harper, the "Urban Elder", a Plains Cree Medicine man who resides in Toronto's inner city. The author takes an experiential approach to his symbolic analysis based on Victor Turner's "New Anthropology" and framed his personal experiences in terms of Turner's ritual theory. He balances ethnographic background and description with contemporary influences and personal experience. Dunn utilizes Turner to inform those experiences which places him in a position in turn to inform Turner's theory.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

When I started my Masters Program I was not sure of my academic intentions, however I was sure of my interests. I enjoyed ritual studies and in my second year thought I would complete a document which was strictly theoretical. I was very wrong. I changed direction when a Cree friend of mine brought me to his 'wedding sweat' and introduced me to an Elder of his Nation, one who regularly practised the 'sweat lodge' as 'ceremony'. I participated that time and was astonished by the experience. I had absolutely no idea that 'ritual' could have been so intricate, full of meaning and intense while it maintained an air of simplicity and a straightforward approach.

Sometimes I feel I have stumbled through life but there come times in your life when you know you are supposed be somewhere for a particular reason. 'Vern Harper' knew this first and invited me to 'sweat' with him again. I recognised the value, accepted and began to research the 'sweat lodge'. My 'fieldwork' eventually adopted a character greater than this thesis. I lost sight of it, and many other things, for a long while. While I was participating directly in my life I wasn't fully participating in my life. I believe that to have been necessary for the understanding that I have achieved.

1.2 What it is not

Perhaps the easiest way to discuss what this work is about is to first discuss what it is not. I can not, and do not wish to, speak for anyone else, be they native, other male

practitioners, women, children or those older. It is not about my elder's 'legal' and 'medicine' responsibilities in Toronto or in the Federal Penitentiary. This work is not about the community surrounding the camp in which the 'sweat ceremonies' and 'fasting' took place. Finally it is not about anyone else's direct experience or relations with Vern Harper, but my own.

The 'sweat lodge ceremony' has been represented and has had meaning assigned to it in many ways. This paper is not about; pan indianism (Hultkrantz 1992); demonstrating antiquity and global distribution (Lapatin 1960); ethno history or cross cultural mythic analysis (Bruchac 1993); an all inclusive or extensive breakdown of 'teachings' nor a modelling in cosmology (Brown 1953 and Lamedeer 1972); its central role in a way of life on the land (Cardinal, Steinbauer 1994); a justification or validation of efficacy (Young, Ingram, Swartz 1989); addressing issues of 'cultural appropriation.' (Lindquist 1995); modelling it in terms of academic views on 'shamanism'(Paper 1990); or the development of a native healing model through 'western biomedical' interpretation based on the 'scientific paradigm' (Pompana and Grumbly 1994, Swartz 1994, Wilbush 1994)

1.3 Intentions

This document is an exploration of personal experience resulting from sustained practice of the 'sweat lodge ceremony'. Through Victor Turners methodological approach it is my intention to frame my own experience in terms of his theory with the hopes of providing further understanding of my host group. It is also my intention to inform his

own theory as a result of my findings.

1.4 Organization

This manuscript is organised as follows: Chapter one concerns methodology and execution; Chapter two is an introduction, review and outline of the central features of Victor Turners ritual theory; Chapter three is an ethnographic portrayal of Vern Harper and his medicine; Chapter four is an outline and structuring of my personal experiences with the 'sweat lodge ceremony'; and, Chapter five is a modelling of that experience, a creation of meaning and an assessment of the pertinent aspects of Turner's theory from an ecological perspective.

1.5 Turner's Methodology

Early in his research, through necessity, Turner developed his own methodology of investigation in symbolic studies and inferred the properties of symbol from three different levels or fields of meaning, the 'exegetical', the 'operational' and the 'positional'. The exegetical meaning of ritual was obtained from either, indigenous interpretation of knowledge, or derived through the analysis of myth. (Turner 1968:81, 1964a:20, 1965:50) It reveals the symbols 'manifest' sense of which the subject is fully conscious. (Turner 1968:80) The operational meaning of a symbol is derived from observational form and characteristics, for example how it is used and by whom. (Turner 1964a:20, 1968:82, 1962b:172, 1965:50) It reveals the symbol's 'latent' sense of which the subject is only marginally aware but could become fully aware. (Turner 1968:81) The positional or

'contextual' meaning is derived from a symbol's relationship with other symbols in the total ritual complex. (Turner 1965:51, 1968:45) This reveals the symbol's 'hidden' sense, which is related to other human beings, and of which the subject is completely unconscious. (Turner 1968:81, 1964a:20)

Toward the end of his career Turner was at the forefront of the discipline's interest in direct experience with ritual. His initial methodological approach developed in a logical progression. In striving for a more rounded depth of meaning he added the legitimacy of meaning which is derived from personal engagement with the 'other's' symbolic and ritual systems. Although rarely consolidated, his understandings are cohesive and grounded in phenomenological and experientially based fieldwork. This he outlined in both theory and practice and is the context for my overall methodological approach.

The basis of his stance was the realization that in the end 'non western' behaviours cannot be explained by 'western theory'. (Turner 1978:5) When anthropology in effect 'explains away' experience it amounts to nothing more than 'cognitive ethnocentrism'. (Turner 1982:65) At the same time anthropology has learned to not take 'anything for granted', 'especially the axiomatic values of our own particular cultural heritage.' (Turner 1978:5) Turner identified the need for a means to model or at least to understand experience, as close to how our 'informants' would, as possible. In order to achieve this he called for a 'New Anthropology.'

This 'new anthropology' is to be based on a 'processualism' which demands the investigator become involved with central socio-cultural processes, namely ritual. The anthropologists must have access to exoteric knowledge and participation so that symbolic

analysis from fieldwork would be then based on data 'generated in the heat of action in ritual'. Anything obtained from a stance of detachment would be very different and much less valid. (Turner 1985:172)

'New Anthropology' is observation in the midst of practice, not of the 'other' but an observation in which the anthropologist replaces the object as subject. (E. Turner 1992:Xl) The field worker becomes actor, observer and observed. To obtain knowledge of 'religious processes' we have to 'put ourselves inside', we have to fully and totally participate. In this participation, Turner goes on to say, there are 'no short cuts', one has to proceed from symbol to symbol 'if one is properly to follow the indigenous mode of thinking.' (Turner 1969:20) He later adds that in his view, in order to make this claim, 'there must be a conversion experience.' (Turner 1975:31) Further 'It is only when the symbolic path from the unknown to the known is completed that we can look back and comprehend its final form.' (Turner 1969:20) The approach has to be 'intuitive' and then developed in a logical series of concepts. (Turner 1975a:186)

Turner believes this process to be possible in a totality as he discusses the human 'flexibility' towards 'multiple environs and socio cultural roles'. He believes we can basically share our hosts' experience. (Turner 1976:7) Combined with this flexibility is Turner's belief that we can explore and know our own 'subjective depths' through 'scrutinizing the symbolic objectification expressed by others', as we can equally, through introspection. This self scrutiny gives us clues to the 'penetrations of objectification...from the experience of the other' and involves 'a hermeneutic of direct experience and reflexivity'. (Turner 1982:14)

New anthropology is towards an experiential or 'inside view' of the other culture. (Turner 1985:223) When we do so we achieve a reflexivity. We learn about ourselves as we attempt to grasp and portray another group. (Turner 1985:223) The more we learn of ourselves in the process the more we learn about others. As Edith Turner continues, these 'echoes, reflections, and transformations are surely the stuff of social process'. (E. Turner 1992:3) So to engage in 'reflexivity' in anthropology is essential as an actual participant is not just going through the motions. (E. Turner 1992:5)

Finally, Turner understood that experience is not completed until it is expressed intelligibly to others, a 'creative retrospection' in which meaning is assigned to the 'events'. (Turner 1982:18) The process of explanation and explication are one and the same. (Turner 1982:13) This is the basis for 'performative and reflexive' anthropology. In a kind of 'performance ethnography', Turner views a dialectic between performing and learning, and performing understanding. (Turner 1982:94) This is also the basis for communicating that experience in an academic form. To do so is to complete the understanding.

1.6 Approach

With a naive eagerness for punishment I dove into the participatory and lived experience of ritual. Throughout the process I kept a field, or phenomenological journal and logged teachings, my experiences, dreams, images, feelings, emotions, thoughts and mind wanderings. I chronicled trips which I matched with experiences in order to evoke themes. These themes, some of which I identified during practice, gradually became

recognizable.

Questioning fellow participants would have been detrimental. Not only would I have been avoided for this suspect behaviour but Vern Harper, our teacher, would have thought that to pry into peoples lives was intrusive, as do I. After a while it might also have been an issue of power relations as I attained experience. Turner's methodological approach, the dynamics of the 'camp' and respect for the boundaries of others was in the end most suitable. This concerned Vern and myself, we knew what I was doing, and as time passed so too did the more senior practitioners.

The dynamic between Vern and I was of a more 'traditional' style, a 'respectful inquiry' or 'traditional discourse' with an emphasis on careful listening to what is being said in both public and private forum. I would often have to settle for all that he was prepared to share or disclose. I could not pry out information. (Katz 1993:365) Again, it would have been recognised as not genuine and fake.

I believe this style to have been the most appropriate and fluid as it involved personal issues and relevant teachings. Confirmation and understanding of experience was a process of 'negotiative dialogue' which followed the sequence of experience, personal reflection, dialogue with Vern, and reformulation of my understanding. (Michrina and Richards 1996:15) In all, mine was a 'subjective approach', learning about symbol and culture through traditional means. Humanist anthropology where one meets and knows people, not 'informants' is necessary, comfortable and rewarding, and as Stoller points out, 'always takes longer'. (Stoller 1989:140)

1.7 The Stats

Over the span of twenty three months between May of 1997 and April 1999 I made fifty six independent overnight trips to the 'sweat lodge ceremony' at the Four Directions Camp. I have also made three extended trips: the first, for four days to work and receive teachings in the camp while 'sweating' each night; the second a seven day trip which involved a 'pilgrimage' to 'Dreamers Rock', an 'initiation site' on Manitoulin Island, which included six 'sweats' in the evenings; and another series of four over the same amount of days when I was in camp as a 'helper' while others were fasting. I have experienced a fast, no food nor water, for four days, twice, each with a 'sweat' 'going in' and 'coming out'. I have participated in six 'sweats' in lodges of the same 'medicine society' as Vern's, run by his 'nephews' and one in a lodge which was of a different 'nation' and teaching. Finally, I have acted as 'fire keeper' three times while not entering the lodge, and have made two trips to the camp to 'sweat' when they had been cancelled. The data for this work was generated from a total of seventy three sweats.

The 'sweats' I participated in were a part of ceremony or ceremony in themselves. They have occurred for the summer and winter solstice, the spring and fall equinox and for the new calender year. I have also 'sweat' for weddings, funerals, namings and adoptions. Yet the majority of them were a matter of 'routine practice'. The ceremony lasts from one to five hours, averaging about three hours. Its duration depends on a number of factors, the most constant being the intensity which is regulated by the level of heat maintained by the operator and the skill and experience of the participants.

1.8 Concept of Operations

In review of my notes, a pattern of my attendance emerged. I would 'sweat' in sequences. For example, my first sequence was six 'sweats' followed by a fast, over a nine week period. I did not return for three weeks and then participated for four consecutive weeks, followed by a another three week lull and then seven 'sweats' in a ten week period. The breaks between were very much about digesting the information, reflection and rest. I often learned as much, if not more, about myself during the lulls as I would in the immediacy of the lodge. In fact this time for reflection was crucial and valued as a 'mental health break' in some cases. Still the total period was about my participation; I was either participating, reflecting about participation or preparing for participation. Of course Vern would sometimes take leave for family time or for other obligations as an Elder and even 'spiritual' reasons, 're-balancing' or having 'to work through something' and although my trips to the camp held a personal high priority I would have to fulfil my own responsibilities to family and work. These 'priorities' also influenced the pattern of my attendance, often forcing rest. In the end, my basic rule was, if the weekend was available, a sweat was on and I if had the money for the trip, I was there.

1.9 The Skills of Experience

My initial concerns lay with personal behaviour, protocol and survival of the ceremony and my first experiences were a 'mishmash' of memory of images, feelings and voices. I would emerge from the lodge recalling only form and generalities but no detail. I progressively achieved a level of calm and a constant enough focus for development of

some sort of recollection of types of experiences that I was previously unfamiliar with. Sometimes these recollections of 'feelings', 'mind wanderings' or 'teachings' would arise over a period of days after the ceremony, even overlapping subsequent sweats and their respective associations. The development of this skill of awareness and recollection was a continual process and as focus sharpened 'inside', recollection required less effort and was more clear 'outside'. Further, this development of memory also extended into dream series and to experiences in the mundane world which were other than mundane.

Clarity was always an issue, I was either striving for it or astounded by it. The personal clarification of experience was another skill which required development. Inevitably I would have to convey information and initially I found that developing an explanation or description in conversation to be my most comfortable and successful means. I was fortunate enough to have interested, tolerant and experienced close friends with whom I would perform 'sanity checks'. I would develop a coherent story or mental image through the discussion or sharing of my experience. Once the experience had been in a sense solidified I would consult with Vern whose direct or indirect input would confirm or transform to a greater or lesser degree that which I had suspected.

Over time, the solidification of experience through conversation and required consultation became less frequent as I was becoming more comfortable with these types of experiences and with the parameters of the tradition. Personal interpretation is not only accepted but encouraged, it is part of 'listening to yourself'. Further, through the repetition of experience I would receive clarifications and confirmations inside the lodge. Still for major issues or occurrence conversation and consultation was a must.

1.10 Difficulties

The most intense difficulties I experienced related to the stress created from addressing evoked personal issues, the tension between the groundedness and the confusion and the exhaustion of travel and work during the height of my sustained practice. These difficulties however became primary data. Further difficulties in writing ensued from the amounts of data generated and the organizational process. Not only did I have to discern that which I was willing to discuss, but I had to recognize and evoke themes from interpenetrating and mutually reliant experiences. At times it was easy to avoid revisiting painful memories and emotions caught in my journal and I had to wait until I developed perspective, a certain level of emotional maturity and maturity within the tradition. Finally, although this process is partly a reification and construction of meaning, it was not easy to formulate these experiences into an academic framework and theoretical perspective while altering primary meaning as little as possible.

Chapter 2: Victor Turner

2:1 An Introduction

Victor Turner, (1920-1983), began his career in anthropology in the structural functional tradition of the 'Manchester school'. Over a productive three decades, often in partnership with his wife Edith, he contributed some twenty books and monographs, as well as forwards, commentaries and journal articles. Turner's legacy also included the development of a lasting methodology and conceptual apparatus. (Deflem 1991:21)

His initial fieldwork was with the Ndembu of north west Zambia, for a total of two and a half years starting in 1950. He achieved a level of ethnography and description of ritual, rich in detail, extremely well written and deeply analysed. (Kuper 1983:153, Grimes 1982:133) Turner was also a leader in symbolic analysis and ritual studies and his advances in ritual theory were original and interdisciplinary. In the end Turner's work ranged from ethnography, symbolic anthropology and religious studies to theatre and performance theory, everyday life and a new psychology. (Maclaren 1985:17)

Turner's writings can be classified into three periods. (Segal 1983:334, Bernard 1985:210) In the 1950's in works like *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*, he was concerned with only the social function of not just ritual and religion but culture altogether. He viewed ritual as a phase in social process for which he developed a 'dramatic' mode of analysis which stressed the 'processual' nature of social life. (Bernard 1985:210)

In the 1960's in works like *The Forest of Symbols*, *The Drums of Affliction* and

The Ritual Process, he became concerned with the intellectual or psychological function of ritual as well. His initial emphasis on 'process' had lead him to examine the 'processual' nature of rituals themselves. The liminal genres were depicted as highlights of human experience, critiques of culture and sources of creativity and influences for social change. (Manning 1985:40)

Since 1970, in such works as *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* and *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, he had remained concerned with both functions but had turned from 'primitive' to 'modern' society. (Segal 1990:334) In his 'comparative symbology' his main interest was the 'creative antistructure of mechanised modernity.' (Turner 1983a:124)

2.2 Literature Review

Turner's conceptualization of ritual directly influenced a broad number of disciplines whose proponents enthusiastically applied the outline of his work in new directions. This thrust occurred in 1984 and 1985 just after his death, perhaps as a result of increased awareness and tributes to his career. These areas include: literature and art history, (Hecht 1985), hermeneutics and semiotics (Turner and Turner 1985), new psychology (Turner and Turner 1985), performance theory (Schechner 1985), education (Maclaren 1985b), studies on popular culture (Manning 1988), music (Salamone 1988; Manning 1985), politics (Alexander 1991a), tourism and play (Cohen, 1985), and classical civilizations (Eisenstadt 1985). Specifically in religious studies to: the study of pilgrimage; (Pace 1989, Sax 1990), the history of religion (Shorter 1972, Heyd 1985), and theological

studies (Arbuckle 1986, Giihus 1984, Holmes 1977, Worgul 1979) Considered the father of symbolic anthropology, after this intense outpouring his work was and is referenced in both a supporting and dominant role, especially in his own discipline. For example in; sensorial anthropology (Andermann 1991), medical anthropology (Devisch 1985), and symbolic anthropology (De Matta 1979, Messerschmidt and Sharma 1981)

Turner's work has also been applied with limited understanding to such areas as, television (Lyons and Lyons 1985), friendship (Miller 1985) and monasticism as alternative structure. (Silber 1985) He has been misunderstood, usually a result of a focus on his earlier works. These inaccuracies are grounded in the perception that he views ritual as essentially conservative of the existing social order, such as an overemphasis on his presentation of ritual as cathartic or an act of sublimation. (Leslie 1970) (Segal 1983); a total reliance on the role of ritual in restoring social equilibrium as a form of systems maintenance (Sutton-Smith 1972); or as a result of an emphasis on ritual being politically integrative. (Morris 1987)

Criticisms of his work include: his overestimation of the power of the liminal to challenge, and the response of the social structure to neutralize it. (Deflem 1991); his model of structure and his distinction between structure and antistructure is too rigid. (Gluckman and Gluckman 1977); in his later works he has less ethnographic material and they have become more faith than fact. (Schechner 1985) Turner is further criticised for his requirement for formalisation within ritual. (Grimes 1985) We can also not congratulate Turner for being systematic, organized or even polished. His methodological and theoretical ideas are accurate but were totally scattered. Although they were based on

solid data he sometimes has considerable shifts in his point of view. These may have stifled provocative works on his theory. They do exist in Deflem (1991), Alexander (1991b) and Segal's (1983) review of his general approach to ritual. The most notable are Bynum (1984) and her work on liminality, structure and the position of women, Algamor (1985) with his work on 'short' and 'long' term liminality as they exist in a 'linear' temporal framework, and Orig (1993) with his uncovering of the extent to which Turner relied on the work of Freud.

2.3 His Ritual Theory

Definition

Turner's definition of ritual has remained constant throughout his work: '...stereotyped sequences of activities involving gestures, words and objects performed in a sequestered place and designed to influence pre-natural entities or focus on behalf of the actor's goals and interests.' (Turner, 1977:55) He subdivides ritual into an aggregation of symbols, segmented into 'phases' which in turn are divided into 'episodes' 'actions', or 'gestures', each containing an arrangement of 'symbols', 'activities' or 'objects', and each with an aim which is a means to the completion of the next. Ritual is a complex system with a symbolic structure, a value structure, a telic structure, and a role structure, and is itself a part of a wider system. (Turner 1968:4)

Turner contextualizes ritual as being a universality and the key to religion, while religion is the key to culture. It is a process of communication which both stores and transmits information of place, both geographical and societal, orienting humans within the

world, not explaining it or controlling it. It not simply instrumental but expressive, and that expression is an end in itself. (Segal 1985:330) The overall value of Turner is his recognition that ritual is not 'epiphenomenon' in that it is not symptomatic, nor mirrors or rests on fundamental social process. Rather it has 'ontological status' and is part of the process of social change. (Turner 1974:57, 1977a:31, 1985:251) In short his is a processual view of ritual in which ritual has a 'point', namely, to transform. (Turner and Turner 1980:163)

Rites of Passage

Turner's broader theory of ritual is based on the model uncovered by the French ethnologist, A. van Gennep, the structure of ritualized transitions he in 1909 referred to as 'Rites of Passage'. His focus was with small scale 'pre-industrial societies' whose 'change is bound up with cyclical and biological rhythms'. (Turner 1985b:206) Turner defined these rites in general as 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age.' (Turner 1964b:93) The term 'state' is an inclusive concept, not confined to culturally defined life changes but one which accompanies any change from one 'relatively fixed or stable condition' to another. 'State' may also be applied to ecological conditions, or the physical, mental or emotional condition in which a person or group may be found at a particular time. (Turner 1964b:93)

Life Crisis

Van Gennep separates these rites in two categories to which Turner adds a third.

The first, 'life crisis' rituals, pertain to rites which are based on cultural definitions of the human life cycle, the critical moments of transition in the social or biological development of individuals. (Turner 1957:292, 1967:7) Their focus lay with: pregnancy, naming, puberty initiations, marriage, initiations into adult associations and the achievement of subsequent grades, the elevation in political office and funerals. (Turner 1969:167) In all, as Turner points out, there is an element of status elevation in which the ritual object or novice is being conveyed irreversibly from a lower to a higher position in an institutionalized system of such positions. (Turner 1969:167) These rites, according to Turner, also handle disturbances in the social structure caused by the change in social status of the subject(s). (Turner 1957:292) They also create periods of adjustment during which other societal members transform their relationships accordingly. (Turner 1967:7-9) Life crisis rituals are common to all, automatic, (Turner 1967:7) and can be extremely elaborate. (Turner 1968:198) It is on this category and specifically initiation rites that Turner focused in order to fully understand the inherent concepts of ritual in general.

Seasonal

'Seasonal' or 'calendrical' rites are the second category uncovered by van Gennep. They commonly involve the whole community, and are performed at well 'delineated points' as the group passes through 'agricultural and astronomical cycles', or other 'junctures in the cultural reckonings of recurrent and cyclical time'. (Turner 1969:168, 1985b:206) These rituals are the most prolonged and are less liable to disturb the fundamental social order. (Turner 1985b:207) Seasonal rites incorporate a status reversal

or inversion of authority. Persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors. (Turner 1969:167)

Rituals of Affliction

Turner's addition is the third category, 'rituals of affliction'. These are employed to remedy 'illness, misfortune, disaster, or catastrophe', both 'individual and corporate'. (Turner 1985b:207) He believes these rituals to be context sensitive and relating directly or indirectly to social interrelations. (Turner 1985b:208) They are performed within a definite sequence of a total social process. First is the identification of illness and misfortune, followed by informal or formal discussion in the local community as to what is to be done. Thirdly a diviner is sought who employs a seance to determine a diagnosis of the nature, cause, and agency of affliction and the appropriate rite to be performed in response. The final stage is the actual performance of that rite. (Turner 1962: 282)

In this, his social drama approach to ritual, he correlates an individual's illness to the ills in the corporate body as afflictions are seen to be manifestations of social conflict, open or secret. (Turner 1985b:208). Healing involves the revealing of tensions and aggressions within group, and exposing them to ritual treatment. The 'doctor' alters the conflict in a socially positive direction whereby the energies of conflict are domesticated in the service of the traditional social order. In ritual 'emotion is roused and then stripped of its illicit and anti-social quality' losing none of its intensity. (Turner 1964e:392) Turner suggests that such affliction is positive because the ritual to remove it evokes and dispels

the conflict in the group. (Turner 1962:282)

There is also a relation between the particular affliction and the associated group or cult whose 'adepts' collaborate to heal. (Turner 1957:294) In the case of his fieldwork these were hunting cults, fertility cults and a variety of curative cults. (Turner 1967:11) Most adult members of a village are adepts in at least one cult, (Turner 1957:296) whose membership cuts across both descent and territorial groups. (Turner 1964e:362) This performs a political function as the system is a set of interconnections. (Turner 1957:296) Further, the rituals themselves stimulate and keep alive sentiments of tribal unity, which transcends the irreparable divisions and conflicts of interests. (Turner 1957:298, 1964e:362)

Successive Stages

Van Gennep also indicated successive stages of ritual, 'separation', 'liminality', and 'reaggregation', which Turner also developed. Separation or the 'pre-liminal' is symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group from mundane life. This separation is from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions, or both. (Turner 1964b:94, 1969:94)

Reaggregation or the 'post liminal' is symbolic behaviour which returns the formerly detached to new places in society inwardly transformed and outwardly changed. (Turner 1977: 48) It consummates the ritual subject(s) in a stable 'state' once more, (Turner 1964b: 94) where they are expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards pertaining to their new social positions. (Turner

1969:94) This movement from liminality is marked with a series of symbolic actions which endows them with the insignia and emblems of that new status. (Turner 1985b:208)

Another common feature of rites of return is the purification from polluting sacredness and the potency of liminality. (Turner 1985b:208)

Liminality

Liminality is ritual's central dynamic, giving ritual its capacity to transcend and transform everyday life. (Turner 1985:160) This stage exists the moment when 'social structure' momentarily 'loses its grip', (Turner 1985b:207) and is therefore essentially 'unstructured' or rather 'destructured' and 'prestructured'. (Turner 1964b:98) Turner describes it as a threshold experience, (Turner 1977:56) that can vary in duration and intensity, (Turner 1985b:208) with well defined periods experienced as a corridor or tunnel. (Turner 1977:52) Liminality is a 'space time' phenomenon, (Turner 1985b:208) of 'potentiality', (Turner 1978a:3) bringing neophytes in close connection with the 'unbounded', the 'infinite' or the 'limitless'. (Turner 1969:99)

It is a transitional phase, (Turner 1985b:207) in which its subjects are secluded from everyday life. (Turner 1969:94-96) In this 'social limbo' they are not expected to perform the social duties of occupants of a particular social status or identity. (Turner 1982:84) They are 'betwixt and between', (Turner 1964b:97) 'structurally invisible' as they are undefinable by social categories, thus they are seen only as entities. (Turner 1969:103) In this 'interstructural' period liminaries share the attributes of 'ambiguity and neutrality' which is reflected and expressed in their 'symbolic representation'. (Turner

1969:95) They are 'neither living nor dead and both living and dead', (Turner 1964b:97) are 'neither here nor there', (Turner 1969:95) 'no longer and not yet', (Turner 1969a:95) 'both this and that', 'both cultural and natural creatures' and, or 'human and animal'. (Turner 1969:102)

Once they have undergone the 'symbolic and metaphorical death' of separation, these 'initiates' or 'neophytes' are subjected to a 'levelling and a stripping', (Turner 1969:169) or a 'humiliation and equalization'. (Turner 1985b:206) In all life crisis rituals the theme of suffering is stressed as a means of entry into a superior ritual and social status. (Turner 1968:17) Removed is status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, or anything to demarcate them structurally from their fellows. They cannot be distinguished as separate, they are 'homogenized', (Turner 1969:95) and are subjected to the community.

Liminalities are referenced only by symbolic representations giving visible form to an inward and conceptual process. They are frequently modelled on 'negative human biological processes' (Turner 1964b:96) such as 'death' and 'decomposition'. (Turner 1985b:206). Or viewed as 'embryos' or 'newborn infants', 'androgenous' or 'bi sexual', (Turner 1969:95) and classed with 'spirits or ancestors'. (Turner 1985b:206) Further they are identified with the 'earth', 'often revert to nature', (Turner 1985b:206) and are represented via 'environmental processes' such as 'darkness', 'wilderness', and 'eclipse'. (Turner 1969:95)

Communitas

Communitas is liminality's existential thrust. Liminality breaks in through the interstices of structure and communitas breaks into experience through the interstices of liminality. (Turner 1969:128) It is elusive and hard to pin down in character and can only be understood or defined in relation to structure. (Turner 1969:127) Communitas is spontaneous and of the now where as structure is rooted in the past and extends into the future. (Turner 1969:108) It reveals a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. (Turner 1969:96)

It is a 'direct', 'immediate', and 'total' confrontation of determinate human identities in a 'full' and 'unmediated' communication. (Turner 1977: 52) A deep personal interaction, (Turner 1982:47) which is 'undifferentiated', 'equalitarian', 'nonrational', and 'existential'. (Turner 1975:20) It creates a strong sentiment of 'humankindness', (Turner 1974:274) a 'generic social bond', (Turner 1969:116) and a 'corporate identity between unique identities.' (Turner 1975:23) It is an "essential", without which there could be no society. (Turner 1974:83)

Communitas also promotes the unbounded spiritual self and opens people to ultimate meaning and significance. (Alexander 1991b:63) It is not only 'instinctual' but also involves 'consciousness and volition'. (Turner 1969:188) It can be attained through discipline learned in liminality. (Turner 1985b:211) It is an experience of focus which can be achieved through focus, as Turner points out, it 'is a product of men in their wholeness wholly attending'. (Turner 1969:128) By symbolic action it may be raised to 'metaphysical power.' (Turner 1975:20) It is an experience of 'unprecedented potency',

(Turner 1969:128) there is in it a feeling of endless power, (Turner 1982:47) which can be 'ecstatic'. (Turner 1969:188)

Turner distinguishes between three types of *communitas* in society. (Turner 1969a:131- 140) Firstly is the 'existential' or 'spontaneous', which is free from all structural demands and is fully unpredictable and immediate. It is often ritually guarded and liminally stimulated. (Turner 1969:137) *Communitas* is a phase not a permanent condition and can not be maintained for any length of time before it soon develops a structure. Free relationships between individuals are converted into norm governed relationships between social personae. (Turner 1969:132) This inevitability of decline into structure, (Turner 1969a:132) also produces a structure in which *communitas* may again rise. (Turner 1974a:282) This reality leads to the other two types, 'normative' *communitas* which is organised into a social system, (Turner 1969:136, 1982:49) and 'ideological' which refers to utopian models of societies based on existential *communitas*. (Turner 1969:132)

Gnosis

In the liminal condition gnosis is imparted to the 'neophytes'. This is 'shared', 'corporate', 'arcane' and 'esoteric' knowledge which relates to the 'cultural engendering' of 'personhood', and 'revitalization' of the social structure. (Turner 1952) Gnosis represents the 'mystical' knowledge about the 'nature of things' and how they came into being, and the 'primordial constituents' of the Universe. (Turner 1964b:107) It gives the 'initiate' an ultimate standard of reference'. (Turner 1964b:108)

Gnosis is not imparted merely for the sake of acquiring knowledge, the knowledge is to reshape the novice, (Turner 1964b:102) from one kind of human being into another. (Turner 1964b:108) The knowledge involves theogony, cosmogony, and mystical history of their societies or cults. (Turner 1964b:103) It also includes 'ethical and social obligations', law and kinship rules and technological skills. (Turner 1964b:103) The neophytes' submission increases malleability, (Turner 1964b:101) for this change of the inmost nature, this change in being. (Turner 1964b:102)

Sacra

'Sacra' are communicated through symbols, either exhibited in sacred articles, through demonstration such as dance, verbal instruction such as mythic history, or any combination. These symbols represent unity and continuity and are simple in form but are often given complex cultural interpretations. Often they are in a primordial mode of abstraction in which natural and cultural features are represented as disproportionately large or small and in unusual colours. The outstandingly exaggerated feature is made into a thought provoking object of reflection. (Turner 1964b:103-104) It is a process of 'deconstruction and recombination'. These items of distorted, abstraction and magnification, are not aimed to terrorize but to make neophytes vividly and rapidly aware of what may be called the factors of their culture. They do so by startling the neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have taken for granted. (Turner 1964b:105)

This is a reflexivity and a scrutinization of central values and axioms. (Turner

1969:167) Society becomes at once subject and direct object. (Turner 1969:VII) It is a deconstruction of the 'uninteresting' that reveals the freedom and the indeterminacy underlying all culturally constructed worlds. Furthermore it is a construction of the 'meaningfulness of ordinary life.' (Turner 1985:163) Not only is about the social, it is a disordering and reordering in which liminaries take themselves for their subject matter in a reflexive moral self critique. (Turner 1977b:136) Liminaries become the simple antithesis of their antecedent secular 'selves', (Turner 1985:162) and have a 'fearful view of themselves in the very nature of things'. (Turner :154)

Symbol

Turner understood symbols to be the smallest, autonomous, unit of ritual. (Turner 1964a:19) He viewed them as 'storage bins' packed with the maximum amount of information that are revealed and regarded as 'powerful and authoritative', even as 'ultimately valid' and 'axiomatic'. (Turner 1968:1) Symbols can be 'objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units'. (Turner 1964a:19) In fact Turner viewed all things in a ritual context as standing for something other than themselves. (Turner 1969:14) Turner further viewed symbols as 'transformative of human attitudes and behaviour', their 'powers' exposed through their 'skilled manipulation' to act upon and change the persons involved in ritual performance. This 'power' makes it not necessary for a symbol to be verbally explained to be comprehended, as its significance is often understood at 'preconscious', or even 'unconscious' levels. (Turner 1968:8)

He distinguishes between two types of these 'meaningful vehicles of ritual', 'dominant' and 'instrumental'. (Turner 1967:31-32) He pays little attention to instrumental symbols which are the means of attaining the specific goals of each ritual performance and are understood only in terms of the total system of symbols which make up the particular ritual. It is his distinction of dominant symbols which is of importance.

Dominant symbols appear in many different ritual contexts. Their meaning possesses a high degree of autonomy and consistency throughout the total symbolic system. They are 'power accumulators', (Turner 1968:85) which are regarded not merely as means to the fulfilment of the purposes of a given ritual, as instrumental symbols are, but more importantly refer to axiomatic values that are regarded as ends in themselves. (Turner 1964a:20)

He discerns three empirical properties of dominant symbols. (Turner 1967:28-29: 50-55) The first is 'condensation', 'polysemy', or 'multi vocality', in that one single dominant symbol represents many different things and actions. (Turner 1964a:27) The second property is the 'unification of disparate significata', an interconnection of the underlying meanings of the symbols through 'common analogous qualities', or by association in fact or thought. (Turner 1969:52) This creates a 'fan' or 'spectrum' of 'referents', 'denotata' and 'connotata'. (Turner 1962:284) which through their generality allows the connection of the most diverse ideas and phenomena. (Turner 1964a:27)

Thirdly is the 'polarization of meaning' or 'bi-polarity' in which dominant symbols possess two distinct and opposed poles which are a 'cluster of referents or significata'. (Turner 1969:52) At the 'ideological' or 'normative' pole the cluster of significata refers

to components of the moral and social orders; such as principles of social organization and social rules. The arrangement of norms and values of society, their ideals and moral imperatives. (Turner 1964a:28, 1968:18) It represents the unity and continuity of the group. (Turner 1964a:29) At the 'sensory' or 'orectic' pole the cluster of significata refers to natural or organic and physiological phenomena and processes that arouse desires, feelings, impulses. (Turner 1964a:28, 1968:18) The sensory, emotional significata are 'collective representations' appealing to the lowest common denominator of human feeling. They are also flagrantly physiological, representing items of universal experience. (Turner 1964a:28)

Operation of Bipolarity

Turner sees 'individual bio-psychic needs' and the 'needs of society' which are in many respects 'opposed and contrary', come to terms with one another in the dominant symbol. (Turner 1968:18) An 'exchange of qualities' may take place 'in the psyches' of the participants between oretic and normative poles under the 'stimulating circumstances of the ritual performance'. In essence the poles 'participate in one another's meaning' (Turner 1965b:6, 1975b:156) Powerful and primitive physiological drives and emotions associated with the organic referents (Turner 1968:18) are divested in the ritual process of their antisocial quality and attached to or borrowed by components of the normative and ethical order. These emotions connected with illicit impulses are purified by their association with morality and law. (Turner 1968:18) They energize the latter with a borrowed vitality, thus making the 'obligatory' desirable. Symbols are both the resultants

and the instigators of this process, and encapsulate its properties. (Turner 1969:52)

Dialectic Tension

Society involves a 'dialectic tension' between mutually indispensable opposites: (Turner 1969a:129) successive and alternating experiential phases of *communitas* and *structure*. (Turner 1969:203) Turner utilizes Merton's definition of social structure, '...the patterned arrangements of role sets, status sets, and status sequences consciously recognized and regularly operative in given society.' (Turner 1967:232) He views social structure as both positive and necessary for social life as a means of organizing society so it may meet material needs. (Turner 1977b:46-47, 1974:266, 1969:129) However, it is also problematic. Differentiations among hierarchical social status and roles, necessarily creates 'alienation', 'distance and inequality' and 'exploitation'. (Turner 1974:272) These are the foundation of strife and factionalism, and of struggles between incumbents of positions or rivals for those positions. (Turner 1969:179)

The primary motivation behind ritual is to create liminality, or 'antistructure' so that neophytes may break free of social structure in order to transcend its existential limitations and unmask the arbitrary distinctions so that they may interact as beings who share the same humanity. (Turner 1974:46-47, 1969:127) These 'beings' critique structure, question the rules of social structure and offer 'new models' and suggest 'new possibilities'. (Turner 1974:202, 1969:127) In this subversive challenging of established structures, (Turner 1985:162) they present a threat to themselves and to the entire group. They are regarded as dangerous and require their segregation from 'quotidian life'.

(Turner 1985:159, 1977a:39) Initiates return to structure revitalized by their experience and reconfigure it among communitarian lines. (Turner 1974:260, 1982b:52)

The dialectic is a process of restoring the basic human unity experienced in *communitas* into arbitrary social-structural distinctions, making social structure serve the 'commonwealth'. (Turner 1969:178, 1974:259, 1985:198) Social structure is not static, it is constantly being influenced and modified by *antistructure*. (Turner 1969:178) Social change occurs in the direction of communitarian relations to maintain collective life. Structure is placed in the service of *communitas*.

Once immersed in the profound humility found in the depths of liminality (Turner 1969:105) and equalized with structural inferiors (Turner 1974:259) the pride of the incumbent must be tempered. (Turner 1969:97) They can '...surely never again be quite so parochial, so particularistic, in (their) social loyalties.' (Turner 1974:259) Social fellows are responsible to one another in supplying humble needs. (Turner 1969:139) Structural form is divested of selfish attributes and purified by association with the values of *communitas*. (Turner 1969:184). 'Structure and the high offices provided by structure are thus seen as instrumentalities of the commonwealth, not as means of personal aggrandizement'. (Turner 1969:104) Leadership is to act in terms of 'communitas values even while playing structural roles'. (Turner 1969:177)

We have in society two major models. Society as structured and society as a collection of undifferentiated equal individuals. (Turner 1969:96) Turner believes in a 'human need' to participate in both. (Turner 1969:203) There is a requirement for a healthy balance or rather oscillation between the two. No society can function adequately

without this dialectic as it is directly related to the health of social and personal lives.

Hypertrophy or atrophy of either will result in social conflict or psychological problems.

(Turner 1977:59)

Chapter 3: Ethnography

3:1 Urban Elder

Vern Harper is Plains Cree and a 'traditional' urban 'Indian' who 'walks the red road'. He is recognised by the community of Native North Americans who live in Toronto and by a wider community of practitioners in native north america as a Cree elder, the 'Urban Elder'. (Voitivici 1997) He received most of his teachings at a time when 'native people were not supposed to talk about or practice their beliefs' and when 'traditionalist elders and spiritual leaders were all underground'. As an Elder, Vern views it as 'his time' to perform the duties he has trained to do for the last thirty years. As a medicine man he is to serve the community, his responsibility is to 'teach the faith and the history of life' and 'do the ceremonies' in order to 'keep them alive' and to 'keep his culture alive' as so many of his people have undergone 'defeathering'. Vern believes we all have a responsibility to find out what we are on the earth for and one can only do this through focus and prayer. 'It has taken me four decades to find this out. Some people have great tasks and others are given simple things to accomplish. And mine is very simple.' (Johnson and Budnik 1994:134)

Vern believes his 'mother's last breath', his 'intended life task' and protection from the 'spirit world' has kept him going. 'It helped me survive prisons, mental institutions, skid row, alcoholism, drug addiction, and the self guilt that was conditioned and forced upon me'. He often recounts the story of having finally made it 'through' and facing a life which was changing for the better. He told his 'Auntie' that he believed his life had been a

waste. She in turn told him ‘...life is like a garden, and for anything to be worthwhile and grow and bloom, it takes a lot of shit...and that’s what you went through...now it’s up to you.’ He knows his own addictions and personal healing were necessary for the counselling he does now. He refers to the ‘school’ he attended as ‘Crow Dog’s Universe’ where everything in life is connected. It is because of this schooling that he can have an ‘idea’ or ‘feeling’ about people’s street experiences as he has gone through similar ones. He says ‘they listen because they see that I am living a good life’, ‘doing good things’, and that ‘I walk my talk.’ (Johnson and Budnik 1994:132)

His past is reflective of many aspects of the aboriginal story. His sons call him the ‘Indian Forrest Gump’ because his personal experiences are so diverse. It is these life experiences that Vern draws from in his teachings and which allow Vern to be ‘chameleon like’. People are attracted to his ‘magnetic charisma’ and will approach him or interact with him from an angle they are comfortable with.

Vern Harper is a fifth generation grandson of ‘Big Child’, a hereditary war chief of the Cree people, as he is himself. He is a sixth generation grandson of ‘Big Bear’, ‘the last of the Indian holdouts’ who held council with Sitting Bull and Riel and fought the last battle between the Cree and the Canadian Government at Batoche in May 1885. As a warrior, leader and political dissident, Vern was in direct logistical support of the stand off at Wounded Knee and has held various positions in non governmental political organisations.

In 1974 Vern served the people as one of the elected representatives and organizers of the ‘The Native Peoples Caravan’, a ‘road move’ from Vancouver to

Ottawa for the thirtieth opening of parliament. It was an attempt to gain attention and support for native housing and land claim issues. During this time, natives in Canada began to see themselves not as a national minority but as an oppressed nation, and the caravan played an important role in this political awakening. It greatly added to an understanding of identity and self worth. Rallies and demonstrations were held along the way and on Parliament hill they were met by violence from the RCMP. (Harper 1979)

Vern has spent time on reserve. He has run a trap line and lived off the land on Mistiwasin in northern Saskatchewan. He has participated in the dominant society as 'Hurricane Harper' a pro-boxer, a soldier in the 82 Airborne in Korea, and as one of the first 'crazy smoke jumpers'. He is also familiar with the 'Institutions'. At the age of four when his mother died he was taken by Children's Aid and placed in foster homes where he was 'defeathered' and he spent five years in a maximum security federal penitentiary when falsely convicted of armed robbery. Vern has also been placed in a straight jacket and spent time in an asylum for the insane. (Johnson and Budnik 1994:130)

As an Elder in the city he performs prayer and pipe ceremonies, healing ceremonies, marriages and funerals. He gives teachings to both aboriginals and politicians. He works as an Elder with young offenders for Aboriginal legal services of Toronto. He is also the spiritual Elder and traditional teacher of The Native Indian Brotherhood of Workworth Federal Penitentiary, one of the few medicine men permitted into prisons to counsel and perform ceremony.

Vern is a humble man. He very much views himself as a 'skilled practitioner' who merely provides a place for people to get in touch with the 'Creator'. He often says to

those who do, to not put him on a pedestal as he is only human and the higher he is placed the longer he has to fall.

3.2 No Nonsense

Vern's medicine name is 'Asin' meaning stone or rock. His personal medicine is centered in the 'inipi' or 'sweat lodge' ceremony. As a Cree 'medicine man', he has a reputation of being disciplined. His camp, where the 'sweats' are held, is open to all who are willing to respect the ways being practiced there, providing it is on invitation or by verbal introduction and consent. For a practitioner to bring or refer someone is to be responsible and accountable to Vern for their behaviour. Things can definitely get strange and I have witnessed 'gate crashers', guests and hosts being asked to leave when behaviour was not acceptable.

The rules of the camp are enforced and are not viewed as restrictive but as necessary. Limited conversation prevents us from getting on each other's nerves and the standard of dress and cleanliness are a reflection of respect for the elders, the teachings, the 'spirit world', each other and ourselves. One contentious example is the spatial separation of genders prior to ceremony. This is accompanied by a division of labour and has been viewed as the exercising of male authority over women. However, this separation is preferred by those who are in camp healing from wounds in part created by their opposite gender and with the magnification of emotions it can be viewed as preventative. It also has 'spiritual' foundations.

Vern likes to use the soldierly idiom 'drill and practice' which sums up his

approach. He emphasises the need for repetition and continual practice whether it be during personal lows and highs or whether one feels they are simply going through the motions and not 'getting anywhere'. The 'doing is the learning and the blessing' in the end. Further, when in the habit and when times are really hard Vern says if you 'hang on to the pipe, it will hang on to you'. He believes in hard work and that 'talk is cheap...believing is acting and behaving.'

He places great weight with the practical and not in 'academic' discussions. I once approached him with a dream concerning sexual relations with a member of the 'spirit world'. He did not reply with an explanation, instead he showed me how to 'pack a pipe' for ceremony. After the 'calming' that ensued I had developed my own sound answer. I was 'coming out of my first fast' and in the 'lodge' when Vern told me to 'keep my nose out of the books', as it is 'the experience that I will learn from'. In respect I made a personal commitment to his 'medicine' and began serious practice.

In front of his lodge you will often find a black flag which indicates intense heat and has helped him gain the reputation, 'to burn with Vern'. His methods of operation can be illustrated in two examples. When in the lodge and Vern calls for the door to be opened up we are meant to sit still and be silent. At times this is extremely difficult as it is the height of intense heat and often one has been holding on just for the fresh air to rush in. Sometimes sounds of relief can be heard and Vern will have the 'fire keeper' close the door, so that we may do it again and follow the 'correct practice. The second example occurred when I made a big mistake, one that I still cannot believe I did. It was so hot and I was sitting next to the bucket of water and I put my hand in to splash water on my chest

with the hope of easing my heart burn. I clearly behaved in a manner unbecoming of my instruction so Vern and I stayed in for a fifth round where I received a teaching on 'listening' while I was suffering the 'dry heaves'.

It is not my intention to give an impression of anything greater than a structure and strictness which is part of his teaching and is required for the operation of such a camp. It is very democratic in the lodge. I have never been told who I am, what to do, or what to believe. Vern and the camp have an excellent reputation for being straight forward and serious. This all the more noticeable when participating in ceremonies hosted by others in a non 'home environment', or when hearing stories of what occurs elsewhere.

3.3 Teachings

Vern's 'teachings' are simple, primarily Cree and occur within the framework of the Lakota Sioux ceremonial tradition. They are influenced by the clown or 'Heyoka medicine society' of which he is a part and by teachings particular to 'Sun dance' and 'Warrior' societies. As a teacher, his style is to convey only manageable portions, he says that 'we cannot expect to learn everything at once and that we must hear the teachings at least four times before we achieve true understanding.' Further, one cannot get ahead of themselves or reach a point where they are unable to handle the medicine received, Vern often states that in the lodge 'the creator only gives you what you are ready for'.

Of central importance in Cree teachings is 'the listening'. For Vern it means more than anything else. 'We learn how to listen to the environment....and there can be no real respect unless we learn how to listen to each other, not to hear what we want to hear, but

to hear the truth'. 'We must also listen to ourselves, our bodies'. 'Our young people have forgotten how to listen so we need to get back to listening'.

The Cree teachings are also very strong in conveying that 'life is a ceremony'. Even waking in the morning is 'a ceremony, coming out of the dream world'. This ceremony of life is part of a journey to the spirit world so preparation during it, to Vern, 'means everything.' 'Make life a good journey and then you will be prepared so when your time comes your spirit journey is a good one'. 'If you are remorseful and bitter and angry, that's how your journey is going to be'. 'We see life as sacred and every day should be a good day with good thoughts and good feelings, because you never know when you are going to leave'. 'I've faced death many times, but I was a slow learner. I've finally learned to appreciate life, because it is sacred.' We are spiritual to Vern simply through the act of breathing. 'Spirituality is breath, and you take it from there'.

Life is also about purification of mind, body and spirit. 'It is our responsibility to be free mentally, physically and spiritually'. 'We must try to recapture our sense of wholeness, and our awareness of ourselves as spiritual beings so that we may move to a higher level of consciousness'. 'We must try to bring each of these aspects of ourselves to a level of fitness and get them in sync' but 'It is difficult as for example when we try to purify our spirit our intellect gets in the way and betrays'.

Gender and there relations holds a central place. The Cree believe that women are complete beings because of their direct connection with 'the fire of life', which is within them. 'A man is not complete and have to find that fire to complete themselves, they must seek the other half of himself in ceremony'. Vern has been running sweat lodges for close

to twenty five years and he claims that only two times 'the men were more together psychologically than the women'. 'Historically and traditionally, we have always followed the woman'. Men need women. We don't have the sensitivity, the feeling that women do. So the teaching is for a man to focus on being a good man and to have children and grandchildren in order to keep passing down this knowledge.

Further, Vern teaches the awareness that we are a part of the earth and must function as part of the whole. 'This awareness has been given to us by the creator'. For the Cree, all of nature is alive. The land 'is our life' and 'we depend on all natural things for our existence'. For this reason Vern teaches 'We must live at peace with the land, for the destruction of our environment is the destruction of ourselves'. 'Our actions must be based on this spiritual understanding'. 'Each generation has to be conscious of what they are doing' and consider 'how something is going to affect our children'. 'We are like farmers in a sense, growing our children and the environment'. Vern finally warns of the danger 'to go the other way and to not be in tune with ourselves and nature'.

We are now in the period called the 'Eighth Fire' in the Cree teachings. A period, Vern explains, 'in which changes taking place in this generation are part of a larger purification' that began in the 'Seventh Fire', 'when all the changes were taking place in society'. He recounts a Cree prophecy which occurred before the Europeans came and which claims 'a time would come when the rainbow people and the people of colour would appear and be like children'. 'The prophesy talked about how the people would be very innocent and child like, and that would be one of the signs for the great changes to come'. This time would be known as the 'Seventh Fire' and Vern after discussing this with

other elders believes it to be the 'hippie movement'.

The 'Eighth Fire' is not to be viewed as foretelling 'doom and gloom'. Rather Vern sees it as 'Mother earth rebalancing herself and us'. 'That's why it's important that we are physically and spiritually strong'. 'We need to get ourselves together because it will be about completion'. 'Mother earth will clean herself from all the poison'. 'The Cree have survived because we've been very flexible, we adapt, we know how to keep the values of our ancestors and take things from other cultures and make use of them'. 'It is important we are not distracted by drugs and alcohol'. 'We need to be sober minded for the hard times ahead of us. This is part of our purification'. (Johnson and Budnik 1994:130)

3.4 Practice

The 'teachings' and 'practice' converge in Vern's lodge, which is one of 'learning, healing and purification'. For Vern the lodge 'is everything', 'when you go into a sweat lodge, it is a religious act' and his religion 'is about the spirituality of the earth'. His medicine is to 'honour and sit on mother earth and to really understand.' 'I offer my pitiful prayer and to give thanks'. 'All my life I suffered, but I always did it selfishly. But when I use the lodge, I do it unselfishly. I crawl in there, and I think about my brothers and sisters. I think about the environment, and I suffer and pray in there. That's how we use the sweat lodge'. 'When we come out of that lodge we feel like babies and the whole purpose is we come out with love in our hearts and a good feeling and we put that feeling into our lives daily.' (Voitivici 1997) 'In the Sweat lodge there is nothing we can't learn,

and we must always continue to strive for understanding through prayer, meditation and hard work.'

3.5 His Camp

'The Four Directions Camp', is 'on the land' about an hour outside of Toronto. The location was donated by an established religious order about fifteen years ago. It is well insulated from the nearest town and highway and at the end of a dirt road past farmhouses and old ruins. Once down the hill you find it located on a stream in a cedar lowland surrounded by a mixture of farmland and bush. There are a number of well built shacks, which include: the common building where feasts are held, men's and women's change huts, a tarpaulin covered long house which is a wood shelter and the 'Bus Stop', Vern's shack where he prepares for sweats, loads the pipes and conducts private teachings.

The makeup of practioners constantly flows and is different to a greater or lesser degree from one sweat to another. There are of course a core group of regulars who have been practising frequently or at least consistently for a number of years. Then there is a more peripheral and alternating group of regulars who have been practising long enough to have a grasp but may be less consistent. Finally there is a fluid group who consist of people passing through and the interested or curious who may attend from one to a handful of times. In any case attendance can range from three or four to thirty four but averages around ten to fifteen.

These people are representative of a broad spectrum of character and background.

They include Aboriginals, Metis and Non-Status Aboriginals who live and work in Toronto or the surrounding area, locals who are 'grass roots type people', ex offenders who know Vern from his work in prisons, young offenders who he is working with in Toronto, members of the same medicine society, sun dancers and practitioners of western oriented sweat lodges, or guests, friends and relatives of practitioners. Further, the camp attracts on occasion medicine people from the surrounding area or those medicine people who find themselves visiting or passing through Toronto from all over North America. They can range from members of the Six Nations Long house tradition to Mayan Jaguar shamans. The medicine people not only reflect the Aboriginal community but other communities such as Buddhist and Jesuit. 'On occasion New Agers may slip through the cracks.'

3.6 The Lodge

In the camp there are two semi permanent sweat lodges which are torn down, burned and rebuilt once a year. One is a communal lodge in which the men, the community, and 'doctoring' sweats are held. The other is the women's lodge. Each lodge is shaped like an inverted bowl, about one metre high at its highest and about three metres wide. It is constructed in a sacred fashion or following the medicine way in which set protocols are observed. Cedar poles are cut and planted in cleansed holes paired at the cardinal points of the compass. Starting in the western doorway the opposite poles are bent, woven and tied to create arches. Once the initial four arches are created by the eight initial poles, the remaining eight poles are tied into another four arches which lay off

camber from the first so that each hole is an even spacing from the other. They are woven and tied in such a manner that at the crest where all arches meet the eight pointed Sioux star is created. Four levels of ribs are lashed around the circumference of the skeleton and a spine is added stretching from the eastern doorway to the western doorway, ending as the ribs do prior to the physical door of the lodge located in the west. The structure is then covered with blankets, tarps and sleeping bags so that when closed up it is completely sealed not allowing light in nor the steam and heat out.

Inside, in the center of a cedar-blanketed earth floor is a pit which holds the heated stones. A straight line is formed from the pit through the western doorway to a mound outside used as an altar which was constructed from the earth dug in the creation of that pit. The line can be continued along a runway to the fire where the grandfathers are heated. The fire is cupped in the most westerly side with a wall of stone.

There is much symbolic imagery which coincide with ceremony and important aspects of this ritual space. First the lodge is viewed as the 'womb of mother earth to which we return and from which we may be reborn.' The stones or 'grandfathers' are 'wise old men' whom when heated release 'the energy and wisdom of creation.' The water brought in is the 'life blood of our mother' and when poured on the 'grandfathers' is transformed. The healthful and rejuvenating steam or 'breath of our grandfathers', takes our prayers to 'the universal life force of creation we call great spirit or creator' and our 'bad stuff' to a safe place to be 'dealt with in the spirit world' where it will not harm anyone.

The canopy of the lodge is representative of the night sky and the sun and moon

are represented in the fire and the cupping wall. The four cardinal directions are marked and each form a quadrant of the circle outline of the lodge. The directions are viewed as portals to a different dimension or reality. Each has its own teachings and an associated colour, medicine, animal and spirit familiars. There are actually six directions as zenith, or sky and the nadir or earth are added, and on occasion a seventh direction, which is the self. Many of the teachings revolve around the particulars of, and orientation within, this space.

3.7 My Trip

After working a full day, at about ten p.m. I would begin to get together those items I required for the sweat; towels, shorts, sandals, change of clothes, shave kit and work gloves. I also packed a leather bag with the four medicines; sage, cedar, tobacco and sweat grass and odds and ends like diamond willow fungus, a crystallized sap from Maya, and a variety of blood purifiers such as 'rat root', 'labrador tea' and dried wild garlic. This would also include personal 'medicine', my 'medicine pouch', 'fetish' and tobacco ties. Other items included gifts required of me in my relations with an Elder or as a partner in trade with other practitioners. Tobacco for Vern's teachings and other relevant medicines and utility items which were also appropriate. Such gifts have consisted of; a winter jacket, work boots, mortar and pestle, headlamp, food, blankets during fasts and sometimes cash, not just for donations for camp requirements but for Vern and his family. I would also carry items required for the camp which I occasionally came across such as axe heads and handles, files, wedges, metal buckets, tarps, binder twine, candles and fuel

cans.

Often under heavy burden I would walk, through down town, to the bus station to catch the midnight express for Toronto. 'Sweats' were usually held on Sundays for the convenience of those employed or those with family obligations, so the 'bus trip from hell' or 'diesel therapy' would occur early Sunday morning. On a good trip I would get in a night's sleep and wake up in Toronto five hours later, on a bad trip I wouldn't sleep well because I was just too wound up or agitated or the bus was crowded with holiday travellers and I would have to share a seat. In any case either 'is part of it'. In Toronto I would make my connection at seven a.m., having caught a bit more sleep in the station. Another quick nap, a hike out of town and I would enter the camp by about nine a.m.. Sweats can occur any time, as late as midnight and as early as ten. In the summer they are at about four p.m. and in the winter months the time aimed for is noon. I would 'sweat', 'feast', catch a lift back into Toronto and meet the seven thirty or nine p.m bus if I was lucky. I would usually be on the return midnight, definitely catch some sleep and make it to my apartment to shower so I could be at work Monday morning.

For the next few days I would reflect and take notes, 'cruise', 'recover' or 'come down' or just stay 'spun'. I would then begin preparations in order to be ready for the following Sunday. This sequence and frequency occurred in the height of my fieldwork when my participation was at its most intense. In the beginning the trip was longer as I would sometimes sleep at the camp or at friends' in Toronto and lately my 'brother' (in practice), and I would drive down.

3.8 Preparations

Usually the first one in camp, and with much work to do, I would begin preparation. After opening the buildings and starting up the stoves if required, the next step for me was to clean up after the last sweat. This consisted of emptying the spent grandfather from the lodge and airing it out, cleaning the stone chips and unburnt coals and ash from the fire, and sweeping up the fire area, runway, altar and entrance to the lodges. To prepare the fire there was always wood to split and if I was instructed to do so would select the grandfathers, construct and start the fire. Usually somewhere in this process people began to show up and help out. Once this part of the process was accomplished there was a lull in preparation as the grandfathers must be 'in' for about three of four hours. We would tend to the fire, drink coffee, smoke 'butts' and 'catch up' with friends.

When Vern arrived our circle would receive detailed 'public' and 'personal' teachings. It is at this time that I would discuss with him experiences and receive his feedback. Preparation of a different type would continue and at a slower pace. Tobacco 'ties and flags' would be tied and placed in the lodge, buckets of water would be placed around the fire, 'smudges' would be readied and performed, the 'prayer pipe would be packed' and the 'altar' would be set up.

3.9 The Ceremony

When everything was 'good to go' and 'the grandfathers were ready' everyone would get changed, 'smudge' and enter the fire area. After making an offering to the fire,

Vern gave the 'low down' on how to enter the lodge, reaffirm why we are here and how to generally behave inside. In a community sweat he entered the lodge first at which point the first 'grandfather' was placed inside. He would invite the women in and then call the men in one at a time. He would choose an order respective to the location in which he wants you. This placement is relative to personal experience, the level of experience of the others or where one should be at that time.

As a member of the 'Heyoka' society Vern enters the lodge crawling backwards. The remainder of us enter crawling in on our hands and knees. We lay our tobacco, anything we wish to be purified, or medicine on the altar. We touch the prayer pipe, the buffalo skull, the earth and then our chests. At the doorway we pause, kiss the earth and say 'all my relations', an all encompassing, simple and crucial prayer. We then move to, sit and settle where we are motioned to.

Once in the lodge it is all about 'prayer'. One is to try and focus and be in prayer for the remaining time. The prayer pipe is passed in to touch the entering grandfathers. The fire keeper brings in the remaining six of the first seven, one at a time, and passes them to whoever is close to the door who in turn takes the pitchfork and places them gently into the pit. The first one is already in the center of the pit and the next four are placed on the cardinal directions starting with the west and followed by the north, east and south. The next two represent the earth and sky and are placed between the western and northerly grandfathers and the eastern and southerly grandfathers, respectively. Each are sprinkled with' or 'blessed' with 'medicines'. The remaining nine are brought in and placed clockwise starting in the west around the seven which are already laid. They too

are welcomed by the pipe and ‘blessed’. We smudge with the smoke it creates. The pipe is passed out, the water is passed in, the door flap is closed and the grandfathers are again greeted and dusted off with a splash of water. In that first blast of heat and steam we are asked to ‘bless ourselves’ and we smack parts of our body we wish to attract the healing and rejuvenating heat to.

The ceremony is divided into four rounds, each round corresponding to a cardinal direction and its relevant teachings, songs and prayers. Between each round the door is opened and we may relax even though we are still in prayer. In these interim periods teachings also occur and logistics performed such as bringing in more grandfathers, water, specific medicines or foods, and although anyone may leave at any time if they indicate, it is here that it is most appropriate to ask.

The first round corresponds to the west. It is a cleansing or purification round and corresponds with ‘piercing’ songs or ‘the four directions song’. One is meant to pray for ‘the health of the people’. The second round corresponds to the northerly direction and healing. One is meant to pray for ‘the community.’ The song is often a bear song. The third round corresponds to the east, the direction of women and new beginnings. One is meant to pray for ‘family’. The corresponding song is ‘strong women song’. It is also the round where we pray out loud and we focus on others’ prayers. Between the third and the fourth round, the prayer pipe is brought in and smoked, an act central to the whole ceremony. The fourth round corresponds to the south and is the direction of spontaneity and emotions. Here one is meant to pray for those one forgot and oneself. The song which often corresponds with this last round is the ‘warrior song’.

Once the last round is over and there are not to be any additional rounds we would all exit clockwise again pausing at the door kissing the ground and saying 'all my relations'. I stand if I can and stagger to the fire. It is important to not look back at the lodge as one is leaving behind that with which one has dealt with. Often I would walk into an open field to stretch and breathe, pass out on the grass, rinse off in the stream regardless of season or walk in the snow. Other times I could have immense energies and go directly to the men's change hut and get ready so I may continue with work, burning the ties, putting the objects on the altar away, getting the generator going, or offering the food for the feast to the fire.

Chapter 4: Experience

4.1 Introduction

Vern openly acknowledges the range of experience one may have in the lodge.

I first recognized a depth and penetration when I was becoming familiar with his teachings. I often could not focus and would not be aware of what he was saying as I had become overwhelmed with discomfort. Still, during the subsequent few days, the subjects and particulars of his discourses would emerge into awareness both forcefully and vividly. This would occur either independently or when triggered by some catalyst.

4.2 Identification, Magnification and Perspective

Personal experience resonates heavily with his teachings. When in the lodge, as Vern speaks of a subject one's personal experiences relative to that subject, are evoked and brought into awareness. For example, in giving a teaching on suicide, if one had attempted or had considered attempting it, all emotions and incidents, surrounding that attempt or thought of attempt, would be evoked. If one had known someone who had committed suicide, all emotions and feelings would surface regarding that event whether they were conscious or not. Even if one did not have any immediate experience with this example, it would evoke thoughts, and a more developed understanding.

This is a personalization of the discourse. One may even feel that Vern is addressing them specifically in a lodge in which there are many others thinking the same

thing. This personal identification with the teaching through evoked experience forces a recognition of those memories and associated emotions. Also forced is a controlled reflection which leads to an alteration of personal understanding. This direction occurs within the confines of a 'safe' environment which eventually assumes a place specific to dealing with that which has been evoked. Through the repetition of teachings one eventually works down a list of related experience until a sufficient degree of resolution has occurred.

With the experience of practice one develops, while in the lodge, what is recognized as a 'heightened perception'. This is a clarity, an alertness and an intense focus which allows for a stylized 'viewing' of personal experience. The personal identifications of thoughts, memories and associated emotions evoked may be viewed in an 'entirety'. The 'heightened perception' intensifies or magnifies the resonances of the teachings given or indeed those which seemingly occur independently. This is a necessary part of the process of reflexivity and can be considered a forced perspective. Once having undergone magnification, 'issues' subsequently do not seem to maintain the same degree of importance or at least seem manageable, eventually they seem resolved. This perspective takes on further meaning when one experiences its expression through the antiquity of the 'grandfathers', or develops the ability to alternate between the perspectives of the 'eagle' and of the 'mouse'.

This model not only occurs within the immediate context of ceremony but it also occurs in a kind of 'trend', over a period of time, with situations of central importance. One example I am willing to share and one which personally caught me off guard concerns

a constant of many of Vern's teachings and one which maintains a centrality of its own. He frequently speaks of his personal experiences with addictions and his current sobriety. He includes concerns of 'belief and practice' as well as 'social' and 'spiritual' relations but it primarily involves his life on the 'red road'.

Indeed many of the practitioners either in the past or in the present have had personal difficulties with addictions. In my own life there have been sessions when I have overdone it which lead me to the understanding that I had periodic problems with abuse. I never believed it was a continuum of a sustained habit nor that I had a need that I could identify with my addictions to more socially accepted drugs. Now, in retrospect, I believe I did have a persistent 'psychological' dependency which took on many forms and if it was not a physical addiction it was most certainly close. During the height of my practice it resurfaced and became one. I experienced a session of heavy use.

When I first identified this particular trend I viewed it as a personal and patterned response, in order to cope with the evocation and revisitation of painful memories and emotions. I then thought as a result of further experience that there was another factor at play. This involved my experiencing of 'deep connections' with others during ceremony.

These connections manifested in a variety of fashions. One 'style' occurred during the 'prayer round', when practitioners have the opportunity to pray out loud and in turn. I have had what I described as complete, connective and empathetic identifications with those praying. I have followed their words with intense focus, both learning lessons and participating in the emotions conveyed. Most memorable was the feeling of joy and relief when someone unfamiliar to me spoke of her cancer remission. A second 'type' of

connection occurred while participating as support in a healing round. I was to pray for a 'patient' whose problems resulted in spousal abuse. As support I was to 'ask to take what I can handle and throw it into the pit'. I did and at one point experienced an intense anger which was clearly different and distinguishable from my own. I began to swear harshly for which I later apologised, Vern identified the swearing as not my own. It is in light of these experiences which I wondered if I had taken on someone else's problem, either sympathetically or unconsciously.

I finally came to a third understanding, one which lead to the development of this model. As a result of Vern's teachings, through the process of identification every negative and socially inept experience I have had while using drugs and alcohol were evoked, reflected upon and to a certain extent relived. Further, these experiences and emotions leading to, and resulting from, past sessions were magnified. This magnification revolved around an intensely negative personal image. It seemed to re-emerge into my life and I lived a magnified visit of past experiences which were not resolved. It was in the end a practised or lived reflexivity which developed the perspective necessary to resolve them, at least for now.

At the time I knew this behaviour to be contrary to the practice in which I was involved. I believed it was a sign of disrespect and felt an intense guilt. Yet somehow it was a 'part of it all'. I believe this experience to be a combination of the three outlined views. I experienced the lived experience of my fellow practitioners and teacher through a connection. I also, through the identification and magnification of my own personal experiences with Vern's teachings, came to a recognition of a coping mechanism and the

difficulty with substance abuse which I had developed and which had prevailed to that point in time in my life. In other words, I either by association believed I was an abuser, or recognised that I in fact was an abuser. In any case, both, served to prevent or resolve a problem which allowed me to address the issues at its roots and gave me a basis for identification with my fellow practitioners.

4.3 A Pattern To Ceremony

In February of 1999 I became extremely ill. I experienced the stress and agitability involved with any flu-like symptoms, then I was floored, bed ridden for about seventy two hours. I had entered a 'delusional state' and had powerful dreams and mind wanderings, both negative -a death figure hovering over my chest, and positive -singing happily in the lodge. The illness subsided and I felt purged. It later occurred to me that I seemed to have gone with the illness rather than fight it and I believe in the end I was better off. I discussed it with Vern and he of course confirmed that 'strong medicine can come when you are sick' and 'illness was like being in ceremony'. Through this experience I realized I followed a sequence of 'emotional states' which formed stages in a process of ceremony.

In preparation for my second fast in July of 1998 I experienced being scrambled, stressed and anxious. I was tying my tobacco ties and flags, collecting my required medicines and objects particular to the fast and was starting to become frustrated. I was also preparing a bear skull for 'give away' which required boiling so the remaining flesh, muscle, brains, sinew, eyes, tongue, lips and palate could be removed. After having it stew on my stove for two days, I began to carve, scrape, poke and dig, all the while sweating

profusely and crying. I eventually became physically ill and entered a panic. During the fast I was 'visited' by that bear. I also revisited the building of stress and anxiousness which culminated in a claustrophobic scramble out of my fasting lodge. In the end I became aware and could identify their arising and calm their effects with a focus on my own breath. I had identified that preparation for ceremony, which involves a greater or lesser degree of anxiousness, is an integral part of the ceremony itself.

The next associated emotion in a ceremonial process came to the front during my first 'fast' the previous summer. I had entered camp early that morning after a particularly uncomfortable bus ride, and my 'brother' and I began to build our own faster's lodge which is essentially a personalized sweat lodge. One must cut cedar poles and haul them out of the bush, construct the frame, cover it and lay out medicines, a difficult task in the July heat while facing four days of isolation without food or water. It seemed people were continually arriving unprepared. To tie the seven hundred and seven tobacco ties required is an essential part of the preparations and is meant to be done in prayer prior to arrival so that one can focus on building one's own lodge, another essential part of preparation. In the end the two of us were required to build five extra lodges. When in the bush I developed an extreme anger reminiscent of a frustrated anger experienced in my youth and childhood, a completely disempowering experience. Of course during my fast I revisited this anger and found myself pounding my fists on the ground in a tantrum. In the sweat 'coming out of the spirit world', I became the most angry until it totally dissipated.

The anxiety and anger are followed by a calming prior to that which may be considered, an actual ceremonial boundary. In August of 1998, Vern's family, my

'brother' and I made a 'sacred trip' to 'a power spot' for a pipe ceremony. After assorted fender benders and arguments, we climbed up to the ancient initiation site. Most noticeable was the hush and quietening. No one spoke as we prepared the medicines and it seemed the air became still and one could hear the silence. A number of birds of prey were 'attracted' and circled. The pipe ceremony only magnified this experience which was later identified, by Vern, as an experience like a 'tuning' or 'alignment'.

The next aspect of this process to ceremony is a process in itself. It was the most difficult to identify and to discern with any clarity. It occurred in the heart of ceremony, just past the mid-way point. In the lodge, either toward the end of the third or beginning of the fourth round, or in the third day of a four day fast. It has felt like a flipping point or an inversion. There seems to be a difficult and heavy, downward slide followed by a much lighter, upward shift, a switch from negative to positive, from weakness to strength or from depth to height.

I would include the anxiety and anger as the lead in the gradual negative slide. Although it seems to pause or level for a moment prior to ceremony, it continues and the negativity becomes magnified. In this period I have become the most frightened, having the most angry, disgusting and anti social thoughts and images I have ever had. These were directed toward people who were participating in ceremony and to those who were generally involved in my life. Quite often they were directed at myself and assigned to my own behaviours, manifesting in feelings of self loathing and self pity.

Once the forward edge of the negativity had been reached there seemed to be teetering or a still in which it seems a mind wandering or thought could not occur. The

ensuing positive process is certainly more upbeat. After the shift I have had my most inspiring, compassionate feelings and thoughts, my most positive and hopeful outlooks and brightness of spirit. Again these too were directed towards the people immediately in the lodge and to those otherwise involved in my life. They also applied to myself and manifested in a level of self respect that I had never before experienced.

The final experience in the process is best described as a cleanliness of mind and body which is at once a release and calmness. It is also a feeling of intense personal strength of revitalization or invigoration, and a mind set of personal clarity and contentment. One Monday morning upon my return, I felt I was moving with a much slower tempo than my surroundings. At the same time that I recognised where I was, nothing was familiar and in a strange way seemed two dimensional. I did not feel confused, rather I felt grounded and clear. I recalled the incident to Vern who spoke of what it means to be a 'red roader' saying that that's how things in the city look all the time, unreal. Perhaps all the time for Vern and others but I found this feeling to dissipate as I became wound up in everyday life. It would subside as personal issues took hold, sometimes with awareness, but mostly not, and remained until they played themselves out. I recently described to him the tension that I have experienced during my overall practice between feeling the most grounded I ever have and at the same time the most screwed up. Vern identified what he called 'the paradox of healing.'

4.4 Deconstruction

The different aspects of the process became pronounced at the different times I

have just recounted but none the less occur with each individual trip to 'sweat'.

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork this process also occurred in a broad context. I was living the life of a 'marginal', working solely to support myself and finance my travels to ceremony and when I was doing neither, life seemed to be either about reacting to, or recovering from, these experiences. The stages of anxiousness, anger, the pause, the negative and positive experiences in the center and the subsequent cleanliness, has occurred in a greater process of the last two years of my life.

Anxiousness and stress were most pervasive during a period when a number of magnified personal and family issues were being addressed and re-evaluated. Relationship and family interactions, character realizations and the revisitation of past experiences created a framework which enhanced the emotions running both 'high' and 'low'. Further, 'tensions' were arising. Some of these personal issues and 'tensions' are difficult to separate, as they all manifested interdependently and were constantly present to a greater or lesser degree. A large part of the anxiousness indeed resulted from both the need for and the actual discernment of individual themes and associated emotions within this period.

The primary tension occurred between 'male and female'. Many teachings and imageries surrounding the lodge concern these 'complementary aspects to the same whole'. This 'tension' or the recognition and evocation of the 'other' manifested personally in a number of fashions. Most prominent were a heightened sexual drive or the need for the expression of a physical union with the feminine. Others occurred in two of my most powerful dreams. In one, I was a woman sitting in the woods. I looked down at

my vagina and started pulling out a negative and dark energy which then began to flow on its own accord. The second seemed complementary, and was a dream which included intimate relations with a member of the same sex and of a darker 'race'. Both examples seemed to be within the ordinary boundaries of Vern's experience. His interpretation was a 'balancing' of my own male and female qualities and the experience of 'my growing up as a male', which I understood to be gender socialization.

I was also increasingly experiencing what I describe as 'out of the ordinary', occurrences which I noted in my journal as having left me 'spun'. I believed in having experienced the following: receiving helpful information in dreams and visions which was privileged and verifiable; shivering in the intense heat of the lodge and seeing lights in the dark; instances I can only conclude were 'numinous'; having strobe like visual flashes of distant occurrences; the feeling I was pulled from my father's lodge into the sweat lodge during a 'support sweat', or being in the clouds and the night sky; and finally, the belief in which I was holding conversations with manifestations of the 'spirit world'. All were totally new to me but, well within the parameters of experience for my teacher and some fellow practitioners.

The revisitation of experiences, magnified emotions and the re-evaluation of social and family interactions, the manifestation of 'tensions' and the testing of my explanatory boundaries led to a loss of personal control. This phase of anxiousness flowed quite easily into the next phase of the process. Anger and alcohol consumption are excellent partners. Finally I experienced the pause in a resignation to what I thought was emotional burnout. I felt spent, listless and even bored, which I thought was strange considering my travels.

It was a period of overall unhealthy behaviour. I did not like myself nor the predominantly negative mind set. It was most certainly a downward slide in which I experienced a situational crash. I do have to point out that these general trends did move with times of strength and personal achievement. I might have been a wreck but in retrospect it doesn't seem to have been that bad. A positive review due to the overall positive and healthy process.

The 'flip' from the pervasive negativity and weakness to the strength of positivity happened in the lodge during what I thought was an average 'sweat.' The intense and powerful experience could not be fully identified until it occurred for a second time. It was simple yet personally difficult point to get to. I was in Vern's nephew's lodge in one of my toughest 'sweats' to that point. It was extremely hot and I was gasping, groaning and hyperventilating in the mud, I could not even ask to be let out. There was no luxury of unfocused mind wanderings or unrefined prayer. I thought I was to die and I recognized it as a great place to do so and I let go. In an instant my breathing became more regular, the intense fear dissipated and although it was still tough the submission and trust altered the experience.

4.5 Reconstruction and Instruction

During my instruction I understood there to be three types of associated knowledge. The first two, a 'technical' knowledge and a 'spiritual' knowledge, are mutual and lie on the surface. The third is an 'experiential' knowledge which provides the depth.

The 'technical' and 'spiritual' knowledge of a certain subject increases in detail as

the focus oscillates between the two. When taught about the technical details of the fire, I learned methods of construction and its mechanics. For example how to identify and utilize different types of wood, how to take advantage of the wind, how to identify rock types and the length of time they take to heat, and even safety issues such as what sulphur flames look like or how to suppress explosions. The spiritual knowledge included: the medicines used and how they were employed when selecting materials, the proper method of making an offering to begin the fire's construction and how to orient the grandfathers. Spiritual knowledge also included the teachings of the materials and the fire itself.

'Experiential' knowledge develops over the time spent working the fire. Here, the 'doing is the learning'. 'Feelings' can be isolated and confirmed in respect to specific incidents. This type of knowledge gain allows you to recognize or 'know' how 'powerful' a fire is when instructions are followed and the difference when they are not. It is the development of 'intuition' and 'knowing' which 'grandfathers' are to be selected and how they are to be specifically arranged. It is 'knowing' when they are ready and in which order they are to enter the lodge.

This experiential knowledge also develops with other than practical subjects. I believe my first isolation of experiential knowledge was 'feeling' the difference in 'energy' levels from one sweat to the next. I later began to identify subtle levels of 'feeling' in an experiential knowledge regarding my exposure to what would be understood as 'feminine energy'. When after participating in a number of consecutive community sweats, I felt the presence of the feminine energy when it had been removed, when the men began to sweat alone again. I began to discern different variants of this 'feeling'. For instance at a distance

when the women were sweating at the same time in the lodge next to us, which was once again noticed through their absence. Other variants of 'feminine energy' have been isolated in defining experiences, such as an intensity when 'sweating' in the womens lodge, or through experiencing the 'energies' effects when one of the women began her period during ceremony.

With the attainment of 'experiential knowledge' coincided a tension between 'rational' and 'intuitive' understandings. It was a process of experience and self-doubt which lead to the identification of belief. During a healing round when a specific 'doctoring' was being performed on a patient, the metal bucket, containing the water for the 'grandfathers', began to bash about. I felt it hurling past and was startled by the racket created as it repeatedly smashed on the stones. Although on the whole I could say I believed in the ceremony, I also believed that someone had smashed the bucket around.

This of course was contrary to Vern's understanding which was one based on a belief in the 'spirit world'. I inspected the bucket's construction and had to decide the handle could not withstand the force required to split it along it's seam when it hit the grandfathers. I also had to decide the trajectory of the swing or pound required was greater than the height of the lodge would have allowed and that if someone was leaning over the 'grandfathers' they would have been burned. I was suspect and although I did not pursue it any further I also did not accept it as truth.

Months later I participated in a 'Heyoka' sweat in which the structure of the ceremony is performed in reverse order. I happened to be positioned in the eastern doorway, beside Vern, with the bucket in front of me. I was on the ground and sat up

straight with a shot of energy. I heard Vern take a quick deep inhale, as he does when he is 'consumed' by a 'spirit' manifestation. The next thing I was aware of was he was facing the opposite direction. He and the bucket were spun around and with his back toward the pit he was throwing the water over his shoulder onto the grandfathers. A couple of days later I recounted that experience to a friend who began to explain away the action, understanding Vern to have spun in place under his own physical power. I realized that I in no way attempted to rationalize and took it to be truth.

During the process of believing there were several noticeable points: when I became more comfortable with what I was doing and my experiences were no longer 'airy fairy'; when I stopped looking for meaning in everything; when an initial period of intense belief became more subtle and solid; when I developed an understanding that I was being trained in the disciplined practice of a tradition; when experiences themselves became more fluid and explanation was no longer felt to be required; when I had developed enough knowledge and experience to interpret my own experiences within the parameters of the tradition; and finally, when I became recognized as a cultural carrier and was required to convey information.

This shift in the manner in which I viewed my experiences coincided with a shift in personal identification and the identity I developed. This was first realized when I was introduced outside the camp to elders and practitioners of another tradition as one of Vern Harpers 'helpers' and was suddenly interacting with others under new circumstances. It was reinforced when introduced in someone else's lodge as a member of Vern's camp. These identity alterations had to do with association but did solidified a process already

underway. For the better part of a year I worked the wood pile and maintained the camp's tools. I was gradually entrusted with tasks that required knowledge and experience. Specifically I was asked to help with 'doctoring rounds' or asked by the women to be their 'fire keeper' and I was teased as being 'not the first anthropologist who has been converted.' Again, outside camp I was recognised for 'following these ways' and called upon to build lodges with a western doorway. Finally I was recognized for my abilities in a particular 'medicine' and invited to participate in a corresponding ceremony.

4.6 Identification with Bear

A personal association with bear became a constant and dominant theme which developed simultaneously with the other experiences. My first noticeable experiences in the lodge with bear were not necessarily individual nor specific. I simply began to identify the effects of the application of 'bear grease' in both the relief of discomfort and the increase in perception and focus. Described as a powerful medicine it was provided to me by Vern, in the lodge, accompanied with directives for use.

After three months of practice, while in the lodge at about two a.m., during the third round I had a 'visual' experience in which I believe bear emerged from the 'grandfathers' and wrapped her arms around me. I keeled over and I 'saw' what I would describe as three dream like 'scenes' or a basic level of 'vision'. I knew I was in the lodge but all occurred as if it were daylight, I had no difficulty associating with them and I understood this experience to be initiated by bear.

Subsequently I have frequently 'felt' a strong presence' or have 'seen' bear in the

lodge, usually when sitting in her quadrant, in bear-specific sweats, when 'bear songs' are being sung or in healing rounds. This 'presence' has also occurred when I have on my own accord recognized her in prayer or when I was invited to sweat with some of the women in their lodge. During an extended stay in camp, Vern, his wife and I performed a 'bear sweat' in which 'bear medicine' and 'specific teachings' were imparted. I found it personally intense and I became physically ill. Vern conferred that I was affected by 'her doctoring during her visit'. In another event, during my second fast I was 'visited' by the 'bear spirit' through a visual manifestation. This manifestation had ferocious intentions and invoked a fear which revealed itself as a 'personal motivator'. In accordance with my teachings I again understood this as receiving a gift of her medicine.

My dream action in this area was constant and vivid, which according to Vern was a 'good medicine.' Dream experiences of bear can be divided into three themes: when I am a human interacting with bears, when I am a bear interacting with bears and when I am a bear interacting with humans. As a human interacting with bears: I have been in human space, near buildings when bears are present and afraid, I seek safety in or on the structure; I have been with bears in the bush and upon seeing the city I would feel compelled to leave; bears have also been helpful, assisting me when I have had a hard time traversing a geographical feature or in delivering me to the camp; they have torn and chewed at my legs, exposing flesh; and, I have dreamt that I was given a suit of fur, which I don. In dreams as a bear interacting with bears I am either being shown how to behave by other bears or am a companion. Finally as a bear interacting with humans I had dreamt that I was walking along a trail in early fall. When I heard 'people' approaching, I climbed

a tree and allowed them to pass underneath without seeing me. As I looked down to watch them I realized I was a bear. Similar in theme, after having unknowingly eaten bear meat I had an extremely realistic dream in which I experienced intense fear while having to wrestle with a 'hag' woman. I recounted this to Vern and he inquired as to what I would expect from eating bear. It was like cannibalism and that I personally should not eat her. The 'Cree shouldn't eat bear because of the medicine we practice and you sweat with us lots so there is another reason to not eat bear.'

I also began to develop, a 'fetish', items of personal medicine used in accompaniment with fasting or bear specific sweats. These items include: a traditionally prepared hide; a hood to be worn in ceremony; and meat, which I trade. I have received other items such as: claws; teeth; pieces of fur; an effigy pipe; a tattoo; drum; smudge bowl; buttons; effigy carvings; lighters; and pictures. I have rescued skulls from hunters and taxidermists which I have cleaned and given away and I have learned to make other medicines such as 'bear grease' and a pulverized dried meat with cedar and blueberries. I must point out that the process of construction of these items is a personal ceremony in itself. A period of focus and association.

Other significant personal 'medicine' included a 'sweat' ceremony 'for my colours' which were witnessed by Vern and assigned to me. These are: deep red which are associated with the northern direction, the blood of the people and the colour of warriors.; followed by the dominant colour, forest green which is the colour of the earth and reflects a grounding in her.; and, black the colour of the west, the orientation of the 'sun dance lodge'. All three colours are associated with bear and are all located in the north western

quadrant of the lodge, my most effective position. Finally my personal association had been recognized through an invitation to an Ojibwa sweat ceremony in the spring to honour the awakening of bear.

In Cree teachings, bear and humans are closely associated, each considered a half of the other. When a bear is skinned its body looks like a human body and a human looks like a bear when attempting to walk on all fours. Bear, is considered the ‘medicine of the north’, is ‘spiritually strong’, and ‘helps us to heal’. She is referred to as female, and is revered for her mothering instinct and abilities. Her familiarity with root medicines associates her with healing and hibernation and is heavily associated with the mystical and ceremony, with rejuvenation and rebirth. Bear is associated with the earth herself.

In Vern’s teachings bear is associated with medicine, healing, ceremony, spiritual power rebirth, femininity, mothering and the earth, all considered characteristics of the lodge.

Cree medicine is bear medicine.

Chapter 5: Modelling and Meaning

5:1 Introduction

In this my final chapter I wish to model my experiences in terms of some of Victor Turners pertinent ideas, namely integration and the process of belief. In order to do so I must fill in some background information and certain areas of his work. It is also my intention to view Turner's career and methodology for a new anthropology in an attempt to expand his direction.

5:2 Identity

Underlying Vern's teachings and practices is a firm element of integration which is also viewed as a liberation. He refers to natives who have not learned, or do not practice 'traditional ways', as 'de-feathered', a term associated with a loss of culture, identity and spirituality. For Vern, participation in ceremony is an essential part of a process to become an 'Indian' once again. He believes that only when one has overcome the 'learned behaviour' of the cities, which does not correspond with the 'teachings', has one achieved a 'personal freedom', 'and we were all meant to be free'.

In 'becoming Indian' in a contemporary urban setting, Vern speaks of following the 'red road'. A necessity, he feels, for natives to face the difficulties in the city. The 'red road' is a 'challenge of correct living', in a 'straight and narrow way'. It is living an 'honest life' based on the 'ways of the pipe' which is central to the 'seven rites' of the

Sioux. (Lame Deer 1972) This path is grounded in the 'great vision', of the Sioux prophet Black Elk, in the late 1800's. He 'witnessed' his people following the 'red road' accompanied by the 'grandfathers' of the 'six directions' in order to survive the White's presence. (Nierhardt 1972:53) If one is not a 'red roader' then one lives on the 'black road', distracted and ruled by the senses, living one's life for oneself in error and destruction rather than for 'the people.' (Brown 1953:7)

The 'red road' has become the philosophy of life in the Lakota teachings, (Kehoe 1989) and is often referred to as the 'sweat grass trail' in Cree teachings. According to Katz, 'traditional' philosophies of living of this kind have in more contemporary settings incorporated concepts such as healing, transformation and education, which are key in addressing the need for reintegration. (Katz 1993:331) In terms of the 'red road' one would heal from the personal and social ills afflicted from following the 'black road'. The emphasis on healing in ceremony would be accompanied by teachings exemplifying of the former and contrary to the later.

Being 'drug and alcohol free' is not only personally important to Vern but as an undeniably destructive force in aboriginal reality, it has become a primary focus of healing and teaching as a 'contrary' to this 'way of traditional living'. Vern, some of his 'nephews', their 'students' and their teachers before them have 'suffered selfishly, negatively affecting everything'. However, they have overcome their personal addictions and now suffer 'unselfishly, in prayer in the lodge'. They have become 'red roaders'.

5:3 Creativity of the Masters

The incorporation of this teaching can be modelled through Victor Turner who understands ritual symbols to be 'dynamic entities' which alter form over time, (Turner 1982:22) not in an arbitrary process but as a 'product of social dynamics', (Turner 1975b:155) and as a product of 'historical' influences. (Turner 1962b: 168) This flexibility results from a component of spontaneity allowing ritual to be responsive to current circumstance, (Turner 1978:5) and a 'multiplicity of elements' which provides an immense capacity for ritual to 'portray, interpret, and master novelty'. This same flexibility makes it adaptable to change. (Turner 1977:52)

These changes in the symbolic structure occur through individuals who are skilled at the particular cultural practice. In Turner's model, individuals within this tradition will continue to alter ritual symbols to meet with more 'contemporary' needs. The 'form and the content' of ritual, in Turner's understanding, is a combination of the memory of previous performances and teachings and the flair of those immediately engaged in it. (Turner 1976:67) This has to occur within specific boundaries as some symbols have the latent capacity to elicit creative and innovative responses. (Turner 1982:110) Less skilled practitioners are not experienced enough to do so and are intentionally restricted by the structure within liminality. (Turner 1964b:99) Turner did emphasise that masters of a particular tradition are 'encouraged to innovate and improvise within the limits of that tradition', (Turner 1985b:210) so they may become the source of new meaning in ritual symbols or of new symbols themselves.

This flexibility of practice ensures the incorporation of the 'collective experience of individuals' which is in turn 'made available and accessible to the sympathetic penetration

of other minds'. (Turner 1982:14) In 'ceremony' we 're-experience a communication saturated with the experiences of predecessors of that tradition.' (Turner 1985:207) During my participation in the sweat lodge ceremony, run by Vern Harper, one of the collective experiences encoded which I 're-experienced' was that of a lineage's experiences with substance abuse and recovery.

5:4 Healing

By Katz' (1993) and Turner's (1957) definitions, I could and should consider 'sweat ceremonies' in the context of the 'red road' in terms of Turner's ritual category, 'rites of affliction'. Contradictions to living life on the 'red road' would not be considered 'conformity' and 'continuity' and would thus be 'dangerous' which according to Turner must be addressed in terms of ill health. (Turner 1965:50) With regard to Turner's category of rite and its context in his model of 'social drama', the only effective similarity of my experience concerned his sequential stage of divination.

Turner points out, that to name anything hidden is 'halfway to health', so when 'afflictions' are grasped by the mind and made capable of being thought about, they can be dealt with and mastered. (Turner 1969:26) In Turner's model, afflictions are 'revealed' through the 'institutionalized procedure' of divination, (Turner 1961:214) which occurred in his study under the authority of a 'professional healer'. (Turner 1968:196) According to him, this healer created a 'psychological ascendancy' over the participants to 'soften them up,' so that they 'became less guarded'. (Turner 1961:240) Through the 'skilled manipulation' (Turner 1968:196) and 'intuitive interpretation' of symbols, (Turner

1961:238, 1968:45) the 'diviner' made 'known and visible...the unknown and invisible agent of affliction'. (Turner 1968:29, 1975:15)

Turner's focus was on situations of immediate and public social disturbance and the restoration of relationships in the context of social organisation. Here the role of divination was primarily of social analysis. In his model, intentions, afflictions and symptoms are specific to particular historical episodes. Through the divinatory process of Verns teachings and the sequence of 'identification, magnification and perspective', a potential variety of behaviours contrary to the 'red road' may be brought into personal awareness. Although they do have social implications these 'ills' are viewed and addressed on more of an individual scale yet in a collective experience. It is for this reason that this divinatory process is much less specific and even left open ended. Still in this fashion it does 'reveal that which is hidden'.

5:5 Integration

A pivotal aspect of Turner's category of 'rituals of affliction' was the patient's 'initiation' into the respective 'curative cult'. This transformative and irreversible movement from a 'state' of illness to a 'state' of health, (Turner 1975:36) and incorporation into a 'cult' or 'society', (Turner 1961:246) is a characteristic more consistent with 'life crisis rituals'. Perhaps Turner's own category was created in order to illuminate and analyse the social aspects of culture and ritual with which he was concerned at the time. This process could be more accurately viewed in terms of his own understandings of 'initiation' and van Gennep's 'life crisis' rituals. One becomes changed

by ritual symbol in a process of 'social conditioning' as one adopts a role as a repository of the particular society's or cult's knowledge. (Turner 1957:294)

In this process, ritual symbols, which are felt to possess an efficacy based on their 'charge' or 'power' are aimed at producing effects on the 'psychological states' and behaviour of those exposed to them. (Turner 1982:22) This transforms the participant in a desired direction. (Turner 1965:54) To shape personality 'at the forge of ritual', (Turner 1960:143) the neophyte is 'often ground down through hardship', 'ordeals' or 'endurances' to a 'generalized materia' or blank slate to be positively refashioned and transformed.' (Turner 1985b:210)

This process is a directed alteration of the definition of self through deconstruction and reconstruction. A process Turner understood to be 'painful and unconsciously resisted'. This 'resistance' is however overcome in the 'form' of the ritual. (Turner 1968: 237) His implication is one in which a participant has no alternative or choice but to be transformed. One reaches a breaking point in a forced change by design of symbol and system. In our developed context, the 'sweat lodge ceremony' as a 'life crisis ritual' seems to create crisis from which one may emerge, or create an 'illness' for which this ritual system provides the cure. The participant is guided to an unhealthy 'state', guided through it and then guided to a healthy 'state', a re-direction towards the 'red road'.

5:6 Cognitive Maps

Turner frequently uses as analogy the Ndembu terminology for ritual symbols which means 'to blaze a trail', referring to the way marks made by hunters so they do not

lose their direction. Symbols are viewed as a means of navigation both to and from known and unknown territory. (Turner 1969:15) His recognition corresponds with Lindquist's model of 'cognitive mapping'. She understands that one's 'cognitive map' has been constructed as a result of previous experiences and is thus most suited to interpret the experiences one is likely to encounter. These maps for the most part 'adapt' to incorporate and organize experience as it occurs. (Lindquist 1995:10) They are developed from experience both in the mundane world and in ritual liminality.

The 'anthropologist' in the process of understanding claims the 'other's' cognitive map. This acquisition is to make their own experience and knowledge compatible. Their own map adapts to absorb new experiences, but if those experiences are so out of the 'ordinary' they cannot be encoded by the old, one must gradually take on the 'models or frames of reference' from the host group so that the new experience may be incorporated and newer experiences may be organised. (Lindquist 1995:8-10) As parts of the host society's map becomes integrated one would eventually achieve a critical mass in that the new map would dominate the previous one as more and more like experiences of the host accumulate. It is a true sharing of and modelling of experience resulting in a process of belief.

In effect Black Elk left behind his created map for others to follow in order to live a focused life within the context of radical change. Those that followed in the tradition added to the map where required. As one who is being integrated follows this symbolic trail one's own cognitive map is changing in order to incorporate the experiences which occur. These experiences have been initially charted by both original and subsequent

cartographers to which the new explorers are led. In my case they were of a diverse and poly-phasic nature and include such incidents as visions and powerful dreams, the development of associations with a particular medicine, as well as the harsh realities of the city such as substance abuse and recovery.

These maps are intended to show the participant how the originators arrived at a specific 'state' and how the originators returned. In the example of substance abuse, if it is not the participant's own personal experience through adopting the 'Other's' cognitive map to a certain extent it becomes so. In the process of being shown, a participant is brought to that 'state' and in continued participation they will also be returned. If it is the participant's personal experience then being led along the map accelerates that experience. It shows the participant, via the experience of others, one's past, present and potential future. Experience becomes the message and the knowledge.

This model of transformation and the process of belief is dependant on social interactions and the framework of a tradition. Yet, crucial to this transformation is its grounding in the private phenomenological experience which was previously unfamiliar to the participant. These events, by their very nature, are not immediately consciously articulate and are 'ineffable' subjective experiences. 'Knowing' becomes valid as one must rely on feelings and intuitions generated by the senses. (Lindquist 1993, Luhmann 1989)

This 'knowing' from experience generates ideas which provide the events with content. One's actions can be guided by intuitive feelings. The accumulated experiences of previous practitioners wished to be conveyed can not be explained as words can not encase or convey them. The closest one can come to explanation is of form or structure,

which ensures the experience is transmitted as experience to those who are meant to receive it. In order to be fully communicated, the knowledge of experience must be conveyed through the experience itself. This is a guided assurance of experiencing the experiences of the experienced.

Turner's understanding of 'gnosis' is one of a corporate knowledge which is imparted not for the sake of acquiring knowledge but to reshape the receiver. (Turner 1964b) It is not intellectual knowledge but the knowledge generated from the process of transformation. Gnosis is the 'knowing' of the experience of transformation which ensures the transformation of the receiver. The 'technical and spiritual' knowledge which is represented in Turners understandings of the 'sacra', (Turner 1964b) are required to frame the initial experience wished to be conveyed. In my teachings, the 'sacra' was an attempt to verbalise that which cannot be verbalised, the description of the experience which is imparted in the process of instruction and the building of belief. Eventually, the intuitive knowledge generated by subjective experience finds in the 'sacra' the framework for understanding. Experiential knowledge, the true center of focus, provides the conveyance of experience with depth.

The 'secrets and the mysteries of a society or cult' is the 'knowing' of the experience. 'Gnosis' is the form and 'sacra' are the details which define that experience. In my practice in the sweat lodge it was through this form and content, that it was ensured that I would experience and understand the experiences of my hosts to the extent that I was able. My personal experiences in substance abuse was at least one commonality which could generate experiential knowledge to provide depth to the framework. Through a

foundation of understanding which could lead to altered actions and interpretations similar to those of my hosts, I was given an idea of what they have gone through.

5: 7 Interpretive Drift

In Luhurmann's like model of adopting the host's 'cognitive map' she recognizes two types of belief transitions. (Luhurmann 1989:307-325) A sudden transition which 'shatters the previous intellectual world', and her focus which is a gradual transition with 'no dramatic event'. The latter, 'interpretive drift', is a subtle shift in belief which is often 'unacknowledged' while in process. Luhurmann makes the distinction between the intent to practice and the intent to believe and views this shift as 'accidental'.

The symbolic system in which I experienced practice was of a design for re-integration or incorporation into the ways of the 'red road'. Anyone who participates will undertake a process of transformation whether they have been 'de-feathered' or are from another background. The belief transition I experienced was of an intense and rapid style involving a drastic and difficult alteration in a short period of time. This style of process has to do with the nature of symbol, the effectiveness of a particular tradition, its masters, the extent and duration of practice and the receptiveness of the participant.

The experience of experience is the key to an economy of ritual symbol so my individual experiences over the extended practice were the message. I had no alternative but to understand them on Vern's terms based on his own 'experiential knowledge' and the knowing of his discipline. Both they and their interpretation were communicated. In effect those who directed me were giving me their experiences and the means by which to

interpret them.

This acknowledged shift left a trail of clearly punctuated identifiable experiences, a suitable example for the intent of Turner's processual anthropology. To point to the noticeable punctuations and themes of one's lived transformative experience. This is the reflexive focus of the anthropologist as these events, are the events which are important to those conveying the information. Personal experience illuminates the host's reality and is approaching the level of understanding Turner believes that can be achieved. (Prattis 1978)

The majority of my identifiable experiences concerned the teachings on social issues and were punctuations which occurred forcefully, in an open fashion and in a social context. As a result of their intensity and frequency these social experiences could have subordinated the perception of other experiences. One teaching which was less prominent but which was seriously emphasised by Vern concerned ecological themes, our roles and responsibilities in an environmental context. My experiences in this area were both more clear and less noticeable, occurring as a constant and in the background to the more immediate social concerns. These teachings were experienced through my association with bear.

I believe experiences resulting from ecological teachings to be less immediate and more latent, resembling Turner's understanding of the ritual dorminancy of past experience. Unless social immediacy is replaced with a situational environmental immediacy it takes a much longer period of time for a similar process, as I have outlined with social experiences, to unfold. My sustained practice generated enough perspective for

the more socially oriented teachings, however an adequate perspective can not be achieved in such a short period for environmental teachings, only confirmation or a clue to its validity. Therefore it is to the extended experience of Victor Turner I will turn in order to develop that perspective.

5:8 Turner's Fourth Theme

Turner's personal history has always influenced his work. (Bernard 1985:208) For example, his social experience in the second World War, (McLaren 1985:17) or his interests in theatre, literature and sports. (E.Turner 1985:5) So too then, would his intuitive and grounded character traits as well as his connection with nature. (Turner 1982:8, E.Turner and F.Turner 1985:12) Turner recognised the effects nature had on his personality, prior to entering anthropology, while living in the English countryside, (Turner 1982:8) and his long-time identification with the nature poet, Walt Whitman. (E.Turner and F.Turner 1985:15) Further, Edith describes him as 'earthy', in both an English country sense, (E.Turner 1985:5) and for his enjoyment of 'tribal life' in the bush. (E.Turner 1985:2) These character traits and experiences with the natural world should have provided at least a theme of ecological interest which may gradually have arisen and developed into a major 'period' of his work. This process would be ensured through experience grounded in ritual and may either be with or without his own awareness.

5:9 Social Process

Turner's initial work was heavily grounded in the functionalist paradigm of the

academic institution in which he was being trained. (E. Turner 1985:4) This nurtured his interests in the main principles governing Ndembu social structure, (Turner 1957:61-81, 258-287) which were also interests of the research institute for which he worked. (Deflem 1991:3) His earliest incorporation of the 'ecological' occurred in this context where the natural world was a sub feature of economics and a picture of the local landscape in ethnographic description. (Turner 1957:14-25) Through his model, 'social drama', (Turner 1957:89) Turner viewed it in terms of 'natural disaster', (Turner 1957:140) which originated in the social realm and caused conflict for which ritual was employed as a 'redressive mechanism', (Turner 1957:91-94) and as 'ecological' factors in the restriction of village size or as a cause for village mobility. (Turner 1957:42-46) This focus on social process and its advancement in situations in which ecological considerations arise, is situationally understandable. He did recognise the greater environmental context and perspective his 'informants' regularly made, but could never emphasize nor model it. (Turner 1957:180, 69, 1964c:115) The ecological in all cases is incorporated in the socially and politically functional. (Turner 1957:176)

5:10 Field Experience

Turner rarely referenced his own initial experiences with ritual: '...many sleepless nights I had, watching and recording ritual in action, even dancing ritual as best I could.' (Turner 1978:18); or, in his admittance to have taken part in 'Chihamba'. (Turner 1976:69) At that time his direct participation couldn't be openly talked about, (E. Turner 1992:1) and it was not until much later that Edith revealed the full extent of their

participation as novices and of their own 'initiations'. (E.Turner 1985:3)

Turner was afflicted by Kavula, a territorial or tribal spirit, who during the ritual, surfaced from the earth in the forest and allowed himself to be sacrificed by the initiand. Transformed, the spirit in turn sacrifices the candidate for admission into his cult. (Turner 1977b:108, 1976:68) 'Kavula' is the 'divine unknowable' and is both a sky and an earth god, connected with lightening, thunder and with rain and the rainy season. Kavula is a sign of transformation as are his cultic initiands. (Turner 1976:76) So marked, Turner became a lifetime 'pious adherent'. (E.Turner and F.Turner 1985:13)

5:11 Ritual Process

Although processual, Turners idea of the 'social drama', was still a functionalist device. Still, ritual itself became processual and humanly meaningful when he combined this idea with van Gennep's structural commonalities of ritual. Van Gennep had successfully demonstrated the fundamental importance of, and the link between, the social, spatial and celestial spheres. (van Gennep 1969:63,49,15) He understood human life to be governed by 'cosmic rhythms' the same periodicity which governs the universe. Life then 'resembles nature' and the transitions of nature, from which neither the individual nor society stands independent.' (van Gennep 1969:180) Van Gennep clearly contextualises the importance of 'rites of passage' within the context of 'celestial changes'. (vanGennep 1969:3) Turner was still trapped in social understandings and experiences, he did not seriously consider van Gennep's framework and paid particular attention to the liminal phase of the structure so he could continue to view ritual in terms of social structure.

5:12 Seasonal Ritual

Turner's fieldwork was also during a time of rapid socially generated change providing him with both fruitful and supportive material. Socially oriented, or the social aspects of ritual were most probably emphasised given the situation and were being watched for. Turner more than just ignored this possibility; he even explained away seasonal ritual. Claiming, the 'Ndembu' had 'no major seasonal rites', or 'regular seasonal performances' celebrating 'crucial changes in the ecological cycle'. (Turner 1957:298, 1968:278) Turner claims that a society whose structure does not closely follow a fixed ecological pattern finds its 'emphasis on man himself'. In that 'biological processes' not found in the 'environs' are instead found in the 'developmental cycles' of 'social groups' and in the 'life cycles of individuals'. He again emphasises the social and even locates nature in it. (Turner 1968:278)

Conversely, Turner places importance on a 'rainy season and its association with life and earth'. (Turner 1968:278) Turner even references Ndembu mythology of the 'original owner of the land', and the daily prayers and mendications for the symbolic unity of the land, its fertility and the continued health and strength of its animals and vegetable resources and of the people. (Turner 1957:320) Further, he was meticulous in describing the importance of the ecological elements of his own cult in which he participated. However, Turner seriously addressed seasonal ritual only in terms of collective liminality or of social structure, whereby 'status reversal' of the leadership occurs. (Turner 1977:56)

5:13 Field Theory

Turner adopted Lewin's 'field' theory as a methodological approach to provide a context for ritual allowing for a more comprehensive interpretation. (Turner 1968:91, 1964c:116, 1964a:6) He distinguished between two main 'fields'. First, the 'social' field, which he associated with 'social drama', (Turner 1974:17) and as a means to focus on the political and social factors in the performance of ritual. (Turner 1967:170) This field was, as he felt anthropology should be, closely linked with history and its diachronic methods. (Turner 1971:363) And second, the 'cultural' field, which he associated with life crisis rituals, and which encompasses the ritual within the total ritual and religious belief system. (Turner 1968a:14-15) This he feels is independent of the 'concrete historical situation' (Turner 1968a:87-88) He studied the relationship between his hosts' religious belief and ritual and could not uncover another concept of time nor an ecological component. (Turner 1968:14-15) Turner is almost able to contextualize the first two in a vague reference to an 'Ecological' field and an acknowledgment that it is a consideration in the 'flow of events'. (Turner 1967:262) This notional field would have at least provided an association for the remaining Seasonal style of ritual in the model he chose to use. I believe Turner was held back by his view of time, he associated cyclical models with abstract structures produced by synchronic methods (Turner 1971:349-353) and was deeply resistant to them.

5:14 Reflexive Experience

Edith confirms that neither she nor Turner ever saw any 'spirits' during his

fieldwork in the 1950's, (E. Turner 1992:7) yet she emphasises the extent of the 'liminality he experienced' in the 'circumcision camps'. (E. Turner 1992:15) 'A liminality', Turner said, 'which provides a lifetime of thought for the thoughtful'. (Turner 1985a:132) Long after his participation she noticed a period of 'change on many levels', (E. Turner 1985a:7) and he mentions, in context, 'the personal crisis' that it caused. (Turner 1976:76) Turner recognized that he had been affected by the 'symbolic powers' 'invoked in field investigation' and in this experience he experienced their 'ontological value'. (Turner 1975:31)

5:15 Observational Methodology

There is no question that both Turner's interests and bias, in theory and his awareness of his own personal experiences, had been socially oriented. He didn't follow his own methodology of observation with regard to environmentally oriented symbols, as he paid no serious attention to a greater ecological emphasis from either his informants actions, explanations nor mythology. Further, he didn't seem to pay serious attention to the theories he borrowed from others or the ecological context of his own personal ritual experience.

Turner's transformation and personal crisis motivated the majority of his second thematic period, which was characterised by an interest in psychological interpretations of ritual. This personally reflexive time was one in which he produced his most definitive and influential work. Any understanding of nature was either expressed internally or grounded in internal expression.

To this point, Turner never seemed interested in creating a model of human and environmental relations based on his ritual theory. One could be extracted and pieced together from statements spread throughout his work, but there are two ecological groundings from which one may draw, each resulting from a different methodology. A model extracted and created, based on his employment of an observational methodology would be effected by his overemphasis on the social as well as functionalist influences.

This model would be based on the point of interaction and unification between the social and natural poles within the dominant symbol. (Turner 1964a:44) On the one hand he views this unification as an equality which demonstrate their interdependence and mutual influence, both society and nature are flexible and processual. (Turner 1969:50, 1965b:88, 1964a:35) Yet he wishes, in anthropology, to treat the natural pole of meaning as a constant and the social aspects as variables. A static environment and a dynamic social structure in the heart of ritual stifles any processuality or mutual influence. Turner both describes and uses this exchange as one in which culture 'domesticates and manipulates' the 'wild and wayward' forces of nature. (Turner 1968:30) This unification is only in the name of social ends.

5:16 Freud

Orig points out the extent to which Turner relied on Freud during this thematic period. His understanding of polarization within dominant symbols evidently was derived from Freud's theory of dream analysis or representation. In fact Orig substantiates Turner's borrowing of not only a few psychological concepts from Freud but an entire

theory of symbols. (Orig 1993:285)

This theory of symbol was of course closely tied to his observational methodology. He directed the greatest part of his descriptive and interpretive energies to the first two aspects, symbol's manifest sense and its latent sense. (Turner 1968:81)

During this time he was ambivalent about the third, symbol's hidden sense. He viewed this hidden sense as ontological, concerned with the nature of reality and human existence.

(Turner 1962:80) He also held the view that 'social and psychological categories', were incapable of framing this sense of the 'religious symbol'. (Turner 1961:21-22) (Orig 1993:289)

The manifest and latent sense of symbol are easily witnessed and experienced in the social sphere and can thus be modelled accordingly. The hidden sense of symbol is less evident and in this model is understood to be a connection with the natural world. Turner was not so interested but ended up developing the methodology capable of investigating it. The hidden sense of ritual becomes important in his final methodology for his New Anthropology. Participation in ritual will provide in the participant the visible form for that which seems to be hidden.

Turner eventually rejects Freud as a result of his investigation into the operation of the human brain. In Turner's understanding of the operation of the left and right hemispheres in conjunction with the 'triune' structure, he claimed that Freud did not use the model in its totality, rather he represents 'left hemisphere hegemony thus denying the creative aspects of right'. (Turner 1985:282) Rejection of Freud is not necessarily a rejection of his theory of symbol, however Turner did not have the opportunity to revisit it

and reform his position. What it does though is represent an expression in his interest of the whole or wholeness.

5:17 His Experience

The Turners were always viewed by their host's ritual specialists as fellow practitioners of 'medicine' as they performed first aid, distributed 'European medicine' and regularly attended performance. (Turner 1969:9) Turner eventually became an 'adept' in circumcision ritual, (E.Turner 1987) and matured in his personal understanding to instruct 'Ndembu dance'. (Turner 1982:95,100) Edith recounts a practical application of his knowledge of the skills of healing and ceremony, (E.Turner 1992:179) and when she returned, some forty years later, she was recognised as culture carrier, became immediately involved in recreating ritual and was viewed as a 'doctor' of the cult. She also assumed the developed abilities of a practitioner, experiencing the drum and seeing the 'spirit manifestation' of illness. (E.Turner 1987:96, 1992:1,153)

Prior to intense personal phenomenological experiences Turner's only explanation for ritual was a social psychological one. (E.Turner 1992 7) It was after his 'deep moments of religion', (E.Turner 1985:8) and 'his own visionary experiences', (E.Turner 1992:28) that he was forced to drop his 'explanatory materialism'. (E.Turner 1987:99) Ritual was no longer a disguise of deeper social and psychological processes. (Turner 1975 31) Turner became convinced that religion was truly at the center of the human condition. (Turner 1975:31)

These intense experiences correlated with his shift to his comparative symbology, a

focus on liminal genres in 'industrial' culture, his third thematic period. Schechner viewed his further investigations to be motivated by faith, looking for *communitas* everywhere in an attempt to convince others to seek it out. (Schechner 1985:191) It is in this frame that his exploration for a physiological basis for *communitas* and religion is generally contextualized. (Deflem 1991:18) However, in the context of Turner's own processual methodology, these experiences are data. Turner had exited his own period of reflexivity and deconstruction and entered his initial interest with the substance of experience. His final experiences were so pervasive that he had no choice but to return to an ecological theme. In effect his latest works could be viewed in this context as Turners fourth thematic period.

5:18 Experiential Methodology

The second ecological grounding for a model created from his ritual theory is based on experience and participation. The ineffable experience, *communitas*, in itself could not be modelled so Turner either related it in terms of his interests which could be modelled such as social structure or in terms of metaphor. His understanding of *communitas* was first and for most in social terms. However, his understanding of the boundaries of this experience continually expanded, in this case, from 'fellow liminaries' to 'tribal or national' and to 'all of humanity'. (Turner 1969:116, 1982:51)

The metaphors Turner developed coincided with his interests at the time. Turner discussed *communitas* in terms of a mystical metaphor, (Turner 1969:105,137, 1975:23) and in psychological metaphor. (Turner 1969:163, 1982:48) Yet Turner seemed unaware

that it was the ecological metaphor which has been the constant. Even early in his work he couldn't help but view the experience in terms of the natural world, as a '...deep intuition of a real and spiritual unity in all things.' (Turner 1968:21) Or as a mystical relationship the liminal personae has with 'the whole of the earth it dwells upon'. (Turner 1969:120) Still for Turner *communitas* is nature in dialogue with social structure. (Turner 1969:140)

In his most recent works he again emphasised an 'actual experience with the world' namely the unity which occurs in nature. (Turner 1981:21-22, 1982:51) He expressed it as a 'sense of harmony with the universe...and the whole planet is felt to be *communitas*' (Turner 1985:298) Turner also understood it to rest on a 'natural' law which is an 'implicit law of wholeness arising out of relations between totalities'. (Turner 1985:190) *Communitas* became an experience of 'direct participation' with an underlying and uniting substrata of the cosmos from which all rises and returns. (Turner 1982:48)

Turners closest attempt to the construction of a model of human and environmental relations based on his ritual theory was his discussion near the end of his career, and published after his death in, *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience*. As was his style it was a work in progress and this was his initial attempt. It was based on the experience of *communitas* in the context of dialectic tension that Turner discussed his ideas of adaptation. (Turner 1985:161) This model originated in his understandings of the bipolarity operational in dominant symbols and although processual was still rooted in functionalist emphasis' and ideas of social structure. (Turner 1985:154)

Turner's interest in neurobiology was his most pervasive interest yet final expression of ecological concerns. It was primarily a search for the evolutionary and biological origins of ritual. Turner returned to psychological explanations but this time from a different approach. His interest was in a biological basis for archetypes which play an important role in Jung's process of individuation, the movement towards, and the experience of wholeness which Turner equated with *communitas*. Through Jung and the supporting discoveries of neuroscience he uncovered what would be the psychogenetic, even the neurogenetic basis for *communitas*. (Turner 1985:282-286) His was an interest in the grounding of a subjective and intuitive experience in 'hard science' and in the end making a solid link between *communitas* and the natural world. (Turner 1985:282) Again *communitas* is a direct experience with one's natural surroundings.

Turner expressed a secondary interest in the social and attempted to incorporate it by finding a 'social' archetype so that it too may be grounded in nature. This act in itself is signatory of Turner's own interpretive drift, marking his shift in emphasis from a social to an ecological focus. This perceptual alteration and the relocation of his social interest into an environmental perspective was not easy for Turner; he admitted to a certain amount of difficulty experienced in this work. He had to 'question anthropological axioms of his generation', 'the belief that all human behaviour resulted from social influences'. (Turner 1983b:221) Turner concludes his work *Body, Brain and Culture*, with a metaphor of *communitas* once again expressed in ecological terms. Wholeness for Turner becomes expressed in human microcosms and is of the Gaian macrocosm to which we are related in its historical totality and conscious awareness. (Turner 1983b:240)

5:20 New Anthropology

Turner's own personal phenomenological experiences were catalyst for his final shift to ecological concerns. His transformation and intuitive knowing of one's ecological position was expressed in his understanding of *communitas*, an understanding substantiated in its assurance of his change in perception. As a result of his experience in ritual Turner's own transformation which was also expressed in his work became the methodological basis for his New Anthropology, a processual anthropology based on participation and experience in ritual symbols. If his methodology for New anthropology centers on the anthropologists full participation in the 'other's' ritual symbols, then it would have been understood by Turner that *communitas*, an experience of unity with the ecological, is possible or likely and intended to be progressively achieved. The transformative experiences of ecological unity is New Anthropology's methodological axiom, one of the fundamental experiential influences for the anthropologist to understand themselves, their hosts, and humanity.

Turner's interests and my own experiential punctuations were primarily located in social life, indeed my own initial experiences of connection were in a social context and with fellow practitioners. Experientially their social importance can seem all prevailing which is further emphasised by the importance placed on social relations by my hosts. But there was for both Victor Turner and myself something which carried more weight and which occurred in the background. These were experiences at an ecological level which were so pervasive that they altered our perspective of the social further. The environment became primary and social became secondary. This perspective of contextualization

corresponds not only to our own experiences in the 'heat' of ritual, which were guided by our hosts based on their own experiences, and their resulting reverberations, but also with our informant's explanations and teachings. Not only does the resulting perspective correlate with our 'hosts' emphasis but in the end so too does the methodology.

Through this methodology I have had my own powerful ecological connective experiences while in the lodge, with the 'energy of creation from the grandfathers' and while sitting in 'mother earth's womb'. I have had numinous experiences just after emerging from the lodge and have felt 'the gravitational like pulling of the full moon on my chest' and 'deeply felt the sound of running water while in the stream'. These experiences found greater expression in my experiences with bear. Experiences I was intended to experience; experiences which were reflective of the experiences of my hosts.

The New Anthropology, the processual anthropology of experience in the end is an ecological anthropology with an ecological methodology. Through this methodology there can be absolutely no framing of social experience or viewing of one's host's or humanity other than from an environmental context. My social experiences with the teachings of substance abuse must be viewed in terms of an ecology of health for which ritual is paramount as these experiences were evoked and placed in perspective within an ecological context. Living the 'red road' while living in the city may be said to be living in an ecological context in a seemingly unecological setting.

In the end Victor Turner's New anthropology is a call for anthropologists to participate in ritual no matter what one's specific interest. If this is not possible then one must at least adopt an effective practice so that their own priorities and perceptions will

alter. His processual anthropology is a call for a new perspective which would involve the rewriting of anthropology. A call from one of our own masters.

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