



MYTH



RITUAL

IN EDUCATION  
LEADERSHIP



LITURGICAL DRAMA

*‘Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof’*

*How far are these international concepts?*

Professor Fenwick English,  
University of North Carolina, USA



Professor Angela Thody,  
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Doctoral Programmes

Emeritus Professor Angela Thody

MYTH, RITUAL, LITURGICAL DRAMA



**MYTH**



**RITUAL**



**LITURGICAL DRAMA**

***New area for  
exploration in our  
discipline***

***How far are these  
international concepts?***

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## WHY TRY THESE NEW LENSES FOR EDUCATION LEADERSHIP?

TO CREATE AWARENESS THAT

- SOME OF OUR IDEAS ARE MYTHS
- RITUAL AND LITURGY MAY BE IMPORTANT STABILISING FACTORS, RE-ESTABLISHING THAT EDUCATION IS 'SACRED', HENCE VALUED
- MYTHS AND RITUALS CAN BE CONSCIOUSLY CREATED – ANOTHER FUNCTION FOR LEADERS
- EDUCATION LEADERS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO PERFORM LITURGY MORE EFFECTIVELY TO ENHANCE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT
- EDUCATION LEADERSHIP HAS A HISTORY – AS DOES EDUCATION – AND GENERATIONS LINK THROUGH THIS TO GIVE CONTINUITY AND WORTH
- SCIENTIFIC RATIONALITY NO LONGER HAS A MONOPOLY



## Rituals/myth/liturgical drama cater to ‘romantic antiquarianism’

(Pettitt, T. ( 2005) ‘When the golden bough breaks: folk drama and the theatre historians’, *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 4 (2).  
Consulted at <http://guoa.ub.gu.se>, 8 April 2008. p. 2)

This enables ordinary human beings [to] authorize  
their world and give their social identity (place)  
legitimacy

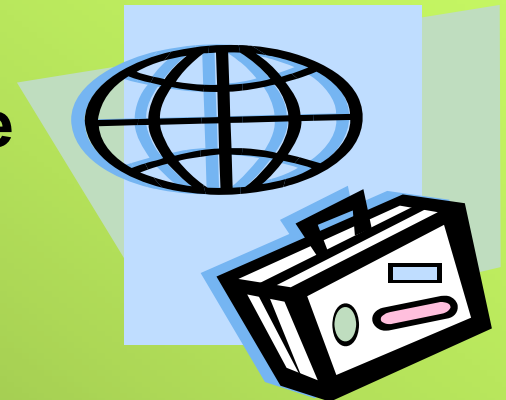
(McCutcheon, R. (2000) ‘Myth’ in Braun, W. and McCutcheon, R. (2000) *Guide to the study of religion*. London:  
Cassell. pp. 200-201)

## **WHY TRY TO PRODUCE A UNIVERSAL COSMOGONY?**

**Chance comparisons and curiosity started this off**

**Definitions came readily as generalisable**

**Current globalisation of ‘solutions’ in education contrasted with beliefs that myths/ritual/liturgical drama is very context bound (e.g. folk dance and music)**



**To help us understand these topics through providing more cases to analyse and to see if the theory holds good in all cases**

# BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: MYTHS

ADD AN EXAMPLE OF YOUR OWN

- **EXPLANATIONS OF THE INEXPLICABLE**

Why some leaders succeed when others in similar circumstances don't – charismatic leadership



- **ATTITUDES AND VALUES WHICH OFFER MEANING TO HUMAN EXISTENCE**

Green leadership will save us from climate change

**GENERALLY BELIEVED**

Distributed leadership  
is the best way

**REPRESENTATIONS OF REALITY THAT  
MAY NOT BE REAL**

**MYTH MAKING IS HUMAN NATURE**

League tables

**NOT BASED ON 'SCIENTIFIC' EVIDENCE**

**FICTION THAT MAY HAVE SOME BASIS IN FACT**

Peer review (or citation matrices) are the best way  
to judge research leadership





## BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: RITUALS

*often repeated, self-evident, symbolic actions, that are always interactive and corporeal, sometimes accompanied by texts and formulas, aimed at the transfer of values in the individual or the group,. And of which the form and content are always culture, context and time bound, so that the involvement in the reality that is presented in the ritual remains a dynamic given*

(Wepener 'Researching rituals: on the use of participatory action research in liturgical studies'. Unpublished paper, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, SA. [www.academic.sun.ac.za](http://www.academic.sun.ac.za). April 5th 2008, p.2))



**Examples (formal) : graduation and commencement ceremonies  
meeting agendas, appointment interviews  
(informal): workplace management rituals/  
customary plays  
as in 'I always deal with my emails at the  
beginning of each day'**



## BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: RITUALS

### OBJECTIVES OF FOLLOWING FORMAL RITUAL

**PLACATE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS  
(I.E SUPPORT THE STATUS QUO)**

**Morris dances to placate the climate gods to ensure  
a good harvest**

***Graduation ceremonies to placate the gods of public  
expectations and ensure that universities retain good PR***



### OBJECTIVES OF INVENTING INFORMAL RITUAL

**Stress relief**

**Establishing certainties**

**Enhancing communication**

**Undermining the status quo**

***Creating a doctoral newsletter***

***A school principal who drops into the staff room***





## BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: RITUALS

*SO SUGGEST ONE REPETITIOUS, APPARENTLY  
SYMBOLIC, INTERACTIVE RITUAL FROM YOUR  
OWN ORGANISATION.*

*CONSIDER BEHAVIOURS THAT ARE PARTICULARLY  
CONCERNED WITH TRANSMITTING VALUES EITHER  
CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY.*

*YOUR RITUAL MAY BE FORMAL OR INFORMAL,  
SUPPORTIVE OR SUBVERSIVE,  
INVARIANT (STABILITY THROUGH REPETITION  
OF THE SAME FORM)  
VARIANT (ADAPTED BY EACH GENERATION OR  
INDIVIDUAL)*



## BORROWED (TRANSMUTED) DEFINITIONS: LITURGICAL DRAMA

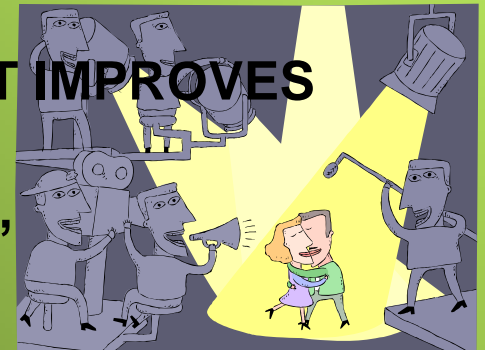


PERFORMANCE OF  
RITUAL, DERIVED FROM  
MYTH AS AN ART FORM

AIM IS FOR LEADERS TO  
DEMONSTRATE THAT  
LEARNING IS HALLOWED

***EXAMPLES:  
PRIZE-GIVINGS;  
THESIS VIVAS;  
DISCIPLINING STAFF  
AND STUDENTS.***

AS PERFORMANCE  
IT'S ACTING – AND THAT IMPROVES  
WITH PRACTICE AND  
REHEARSAL, COSTUME,  
STAGING...SO LET'S  
TRY GRADUATING.



**PERFORMANCE IS PART OF LEADERSHIP – THERE IS  
A NEED TO BE DRAMATIC, LARGER THAN LIFE, TO  
KEEP THE FAITH WITH WHAT EDUCATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP IS HELD TO BE IN THE PUBLIC (AND  
STUDENTS') MINDS.**

**So now it's time to start the music, it's time to light the  
lights...**

***Each group to select (and perform) one ritual and report a  
myth. We'll then consider the significance, value and  
performance and whether or not they are transferable to  
other cultures.***

**Note: please leave a copy of the myths and rituals you have  
already identified with Angela. Send her any more you come  
across as your return to work**

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