



## Ritual: Perspectives And Dimensions

*Catherine Bell*

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## **Ritual: Perspectives And Dimensions** Catherine Bell

From handshakes and toasts to chant and genuflection, ritual pervades our social interactions and religious practices. Still, few of us could identify all of our daily and festal ritual behaviors, much less explain them to an outsider. Similarly, because of the variety of activities that qualify as ritual and their many contradictory yet, in many ways, equally legitimate interpretations, ritual seems to elude any systematic historical and comparative scrutiny. In this book, Catherine Bell offers a practical introduction to ritual practice and its study; she surveys the most influential theories of religion and ritual, the major categories of ritual activity, and the key debates that have shaped our understanding of ritualism. Bell refuses to nail down ritual with any one definition or understanding. Instead, her purpose is to reveal how definitions emerge and evolve and to help us become more familiar with the interplay of tradition, exigency, and self-expression that goes into constructing this complex social medium.

## **Ritual: Perspectives And Dimensions Details**

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## From Reader Review Ritual: Perspectives And Dimensions for online ebook

### Caleb says

#### Pros:

The priestess at Delphi's pronouncement to "Know thyself" confronted her listeners with a paradox. Most cannot know themselves nor take into account their faulty reasoning without a more experienced teacher. Catherine Bell in *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* is such a teacher. Her book provides an extensive critique for those who would presume to make ritual an object of study and enables observers of ritual activities to recognize the false assumptions and artificial constructions they formulate to depict the nature of ritual.

#### Cons:

Lacked constructive methodology to replace methodologies criticized. Tended to view all religious expression in terms of struggle for power among relationships in the liturgical community. (The depiction of "political ritual" was viewed in terms of tyrannical regimes only, yet this is a small snapshot of manifestations of political ritual.) Was reluctant to appraise the human condition and its aggressive/violent tendencies in certain ritual practices (human sacrifice, circumcision rituals, etc.)

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### Saku Mantere says

A wonderful review of ritual in religious practice and beyond. The ritual lens enables Bell to sketch an outline of many central thinkers in social theory and the book thus also serves as an intro to thinking about humanity more generally.

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### Alex says

Good overview, good account of what's at stake. 1997 was a good year for Religious Studies to catch its tail: Bell, in circumscribing the field, provides readers the opportunity to ask what it means \*for scholars\* to demarcate a field called "ritual." The first three chapters on the intellectual history of the topic (1: Tylor to Eliade; 2: Durkheim through to structuralism; 3: structuralism, semantics, semiotics, performance) goes by quickly and densely. The next two treat kinds of rituals and gen'l characteristics of ritual respectively. The final three treat of ritual density (what does it mean to speak of certain cultures, times, peoples, worldviews, religions as more or less 'ritualistic?'), ritual change, and ritual reification (how does Theory of Ritual feed back into the larger culture?).

Perhaps frustratingly non-partisan. There are several moments in the book where I feel the author might have been as bored as I was. Still...

**Rachel says**

This book is a little overwhelming for an "introduction," but it's good, very good.

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**Maya says**

Please read my whole review at : [Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions](#)

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**Andrea says**

Great text book but way above my mental pay grade, very dense and packed with information. Felt dumber than when I started it quite honestly as Bell is just such a brilliant academic and knows her shit.

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**Maya says**

I'm not even sure why this one isn't on my bookshelves here! I read it a while back then read it again recently...

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