

PERFORMANCES AT FESTIVAL PERIODS IN THE YEAR AND THE “AS IF” CONCEPT

EMILY LYLE

While a researcher may be actively involved in fieldwork, the full understanding that both researcher and performer desire is bound to involve a theoretical dimension, which becomes especially vital when reference has to be made to the past. Performances at festival periods in the year are explored in terms of the relationship between an actual “as is” world and an “as if” world of the imagination.

Keywords: *as if, imaginary, festivals, calendar, play*

Ko se raziskovalec aktivno ukvarja s terenskim delom, je popolno razumevanje, ki si ga želita tako raziskovalec kot ustvarjalec, neločljivo prepleteno s teoretsko dimenzijo. Ta postane še posebej pomembna, ko se navežemo na preteklost. Izvedbe v prazničnih obdobjih skozi leto so raziskane v smislu razmerja med dejanskim svetom »kakor da« (as is) ter med svetom domišljije »kakor da« (as if).

Ključne besede: *kakor da (as if), imaginarno, prazniki, koledar, igra*

The researcher and the performer may both have enquiring minds and wonder about the “why” as well as the “how” of a seasonal performance but the researcher, ideally, has unlimited opportunities for enquiry and is called upon by the academic community to bring the fullest possible insights to the understanding both of current practice and of the practices of the past so far as they can be known today. Sensitivity of interpretation is required so as not to force any particular performance into a preconceived conceptual mould. The performer is responding on each occasion to the performance milieu. This varies on each occasion but one of the variables is the extent to which value is placed on conserving the practice of the past, and so we have performances that are radically new alongside performances that show very little change, although all must vary to some degree. We cannot step twice into the same river.

Whether in the present or the past, a seasonal performance by definition occurs at a particular time of year, which may be subject to wild fluctuations in the light of the exigencies of modern times. One instance of a total change is the annual ball game played in the town of Duns in Scotland (Hornby 2008: 132–137). Like other similar customary ball games throughout the area, this was played at the beginning of Lent and took place in February or March. When it was revived in the 1940s after more than half a century of disuse it was attached to the town’s annual week-long celebration in early July. By this time, an association with the town’s identity took priority over an association with the period before Easter in the Christian year.

The performers are “the same” as in the past, that is, they are still the men of the town divided into opposing halves. Any researcher is well advised to stay clear of this performance which is a rough-and-tumble game of handball played in the town square

and the surrounding streets during which the players mingle with spectators and passing traffic. My credentials as researcher were proved one year by a camera-shaped bruise on my chest after a scrum of players had moved rather faster than anticipated in my direction and knocked me down. One of the players took time out to make sure I was not hurt and I was kindly invited into a neighbouring house for a restorative cup of tea.

All that closeness did not bring me to the heart of the meaning that a contest between the halves of a community might once have had (Lyle 1990; 2008) although it was certainly a way of preventing my making uninformed statements about the present situation in a specific place. The field researcher is not necessarily a different person from what has been called an “armchair” researcher. Both an active and a theoretical engagement with a custom, or with a range of customs, is likely to be the ideal, although that ideal is not attainable when customs are no longer current. In this article, I am taking a theoretical approach and aim to explore the “as if” concept in relation to the performance of seasonal customs.¹

“As if” is half of a dichotomy of which the other half is “as is”. The “as is” world is the real, factual one while an “as if” world is an imagined, fictional one. The “as if” concept relates to many fields of study but we will find it a particularly useful tool for an understanding of the ritual year. Arnold van Gennep observed (1943: 106), for folklore in general, that the concept is valuable in showing the researcher that questions of the type “Why do you think that?” and “Why do you do that?” cannot expect to receive rationalistic answers relating to the real world if, as may often be the case, the responses are premised on an “as if” world.

At the root of the enquiry being opened up in this article is the matter of how to assess and define the truth value or validity of statements. This question has been of vital importance to anthropologists in the field and one often quoted instance relates to a study of the Nuer of East Africa where E. E. Evans-Pritchard put forward the claim that for the Nuer twins are birds. Dan Sperber points out that the Nuer do not believe that twins are birds in the real sense.

Evans-Pritchard reported that the Nuer hold “that a twin is a bird as though it were an obvious fact, for Nuer are not saying that a twin is like a bird but that he is a bird”. But, then, Evans-Pritchard warns that we should not take Nuer statements about twins “more literally than they make and understand them themselves. They are not saying that a twin has a beak, feathers, and so forth ...”.

Well, there is no such thing as a non-literal fact. Hence if we pay close attention to the whole of Evans-Pritchard’s report, we can no longer maintain that for the Nuer it is a fact that twins are birds. It is, rather, a commonplace representational belief of semi-propositional content. (Sperber 1982: 176, quoting Evans-Pritchard 1956: 131)

¹ I would like to thank Léon van Gulik for supplying me with a number of references to studies of this concept, which we had both touched on in our presentations at the SIEF Ritual Year Group conference held in Tallinn in June 2010; I would also like to thank Laurent Sébastien Fournier for drawing my attention to the comments of Arnold van Gennep mentioned in the next paragraph.

Sperber comes to the following general conclusion:

That beliefs reported by anthropologists are representational is rather obvious: they are “cultural” beliefs, i.e. representations acquired through social communication and accepted on the ground of social affiliation (Sperber 1982: 175).

This is helpful but “belief” can be a rather inexact term that is always calling for explanation (cf. Needham 1972) and we can steer clear of it by positing the “as if” framework.

A statement can be valid within the “as if” framework, without being factually true. As Sperber says, *Hamlet saw the ghost of his father* is stored in the context of *In Shakespeare’s play* (1982: 172). The statement is true within that imaginary framework. It is not intended to be a statement about the real world.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF “AS IF” AND ITS DESCENDANTS

The “as if” terminology was introduced by the German philosopher, Hans Vaihinger, in his book called *Die Philosophie des als ob* which was published in 1911 and was made available in English translation in 1924. After speaking of the formation of *artificial thought-constructs*, he goes on to say:

The “As if” world, which is formed in this manner, the world of the “unreal” is just as important as the world of the so-called real or actual (in the ordinary sense of the word); indeed it is far more important for ethics and aesthetics. This aesthetic and ethical world of “As if”, the world of the unreal, becomes finally for us a world of values which, particularly in the form of religion, must be sharply distinguished in our mind from the world of becoming. (Vaihinger 1924: xlvii)

The translator of this book, C. K. Ogden, points out that, although Vaihinger’s ideas were independently arrived at, some similar concepts on fiction had already been articulated in the early nineteenth century by the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham (Ogden 2000: xxxi–ii). However, the “as if” and “as is” terminology stems from Vaihinger, and it is this that has been found fruitful in a variety of disciplines throughout the century since his book was published.

William E. Smythe, while looking at a broad spectrum of uses of “as if” thinking studied in the field of psychology, finds a place for *mythological fictions* and comments on an aspect that is relevant to study of the ritual year, saying:

Myths are imaginative constructions . . . (They) are typically cast in narrative form, although this is not an essential feature, as mythological themes may also be expressed in rituals . . . (Smythe 2005: 295)

A recent study of religion called *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, that addresses itself to clarifying misunderstandings and translating concepts among the world’s religious traditions (Seligman et al. 2008), gives a central place to the

distinction between the “as is” and the “as if”. In religions of the book, notably Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the religious scope covers the “as is” world and attachment to the religion is marked by sincerity. When the religious world inhabited is an “as if” one, the attachment is a matter of participation in ritual.

While literate societies have moved in the direction of “as is” religions with an absolute claim to truth, the prior oral cultures had an “as if” view which allowed different societies to have their own religions without conceptual conflict. They were not “relatively true” but operated on a different plane from that of the “as is” religions. Although we are often concerned in historical expressions of the ritual year in Europe with input from the “as is” religion of Christianity, I am focusing in this discussion on the prehistoric “as if” structure on which hybrid forms that incorporated Christian concepts were based.

The aesthetic creations of literature and art are also “as if” worlds that have been the focus of attention and here I can instance the work of Kendall E. Walton (1990; 2008). We have already seen from Sperber’s example that the play of *Hamlet* is a self-contained fictional world and fictional writings are discussed by Walton in this way. Walton also treats the world of art and can again, of course, demonstrate that we are able to make statements about a painting, such as *The ship is in a stormy sea* (2008: 66–70) while remaining outside in the real world of the art gallery. However, Walton also suggests that the involved person reading or looking may be considered to enter into the imaginative space of the aesthetic creation (1990: 271–274). Works of literature vary in the degree to which they invite the direct involvement of the participant. Sometimes, for example, the reader may be told at the beginning by a narrator that the story about to be presented has been found in an old journal. This has a distancing effect and can make direct involvement less likely. We could speak of the observer who is really engaged as in a warm relationship and the more detached observer as in a cool relationship. Differences between the impacts of different researchers observing rituals on the performance of such rituals may well turn on a difference in the degree of empathy with the imaginative activity going on.

Children’s make-believe play demonstrates in a highly interesting way the formation and use of “as if” worlds that are particularly appropriate to an understanding of the ritual year since both have live performers contained within the play areas where “as if” worlds are created (Seligman et al. 2008: 70–73, 88–89). Johan Huizinga finds that one of the most distinctive characteristics of play is “its spatial separation from ordinary life” and notes:

A closed space is marked out for it, either materially or ideally, hedged off from the everyday surroundings. Inside this space the play proceeds, inside it the rules obtain. (Huizinga 1998 (1949): 19) ... Formally speaking, there is no distinction whatever between marking out a space for a sacred purpose and marking it out for purposes of sheer play. (1998: 20)

He is also aware of the temporal dimension saying that play “is an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space” (1949: 132).

In study of the ritual year, the temporal aspect calls for special attention.

PLAY AREAS IN THE YEAR

Children's games may take place within a designated "play space" and there is certainly a "play time" at the end of which they are forced, reluctantly, to come back to the real world. Spatiotemporally, we may speak of "play areas". Each ritual point in the year can be taken to be a "play time" of a day or longer, and eight main play points can be located in a model of the Indo-European year.

And here it may be helpful if I recap some points about the design of the ritual year. We have a wealth of material that comes from various parts of our Indo-European heritage and, in the way that there was a common language, it is postulated that there was a common calendar. Although a calendar is not quite as intricate as a language, it still has many components to handle. In a count of days, for example, the lunar period between the first visible crescent and the next visible crescent is not a simple one but varies between 29 and 30 days. The count of the year days is only approximately 365 and allowance has to be made for an extra day every four years. And then the period of the year is not divisible by the period of the month so forcing the use of a system with an intercalary month at approximately every two and a half years. In the face of the intricacy of the facts, people took control of the calendar and made it an artefact that drew on features of the natural world but was a fresh creation. And so we have natural features that can be observed and can act as signals to indicate the arrival of a play period and we have a cultural creation with marked points which can also act as signals. The ritual calendar could be produced by marking special points on an object but it could also be held in memory. In either case, it is a temporal sequence with a series of physical or mental markings.

It is worth bearing in mind that major festival times involving whole communities derive part of their specialness from their rarity. The annual round is convenient to us in having its celebrations at the quite long interval of twelve months. So, to take an extremely familiar example from the "as is" religion of Christianity, Christmas comes only once a year and it falls reliably on the 25th of December. But we can accommodate considerably more of a festive life than one point in the year. There is no absolute number of festive times but it would be an important issue in making comparisons between cultures to determine how many there are and when they fall. If there is a controlling religious body, the main festivals will be quite clear-cut, although there will be the option of having many minor ones which may exhibit more variation. Within the folk calendars of Europe, there is wide diversity and it is essential to consider such matters at the village level as well as at the level of the nation. Typically, the timing of folk festivals is not the subject of legislation and so there is scope for flexibility. If we reach beyond the contemporary, as I think any deeply based theoretical approach is bound to do if we intend to engage with every aspect of seasonal customs, we have to ask ourselves how many major festivals there were in the year in the pre-Christian era when the only religion was an "as if" one. It was an object of importance in an oral society to keep the ritual sequence running, and throughout the year there were set times

that can be regarded as “play areas” where adults took on ritual roles in the way that children adopt roles in games of imagination. There would, of course, have been diversity even in the pre-Christian period for there would have been no absolute controls but, by comparing the different cultural traditions carried within the different language groups, we should be able to arrive at an approximate sequence that will then allow us to see something more of the concepts that once drove the celebration of a series of ritual periods.

In Figure 1, I have indicated the hypothesised Indo-European calendar and shown eight possible play areas, of which some are more salient than others, so that there is scope for arguing that there were fewer than this set of eight in the basic Indo-European pattern. However, for the moment I include them all.

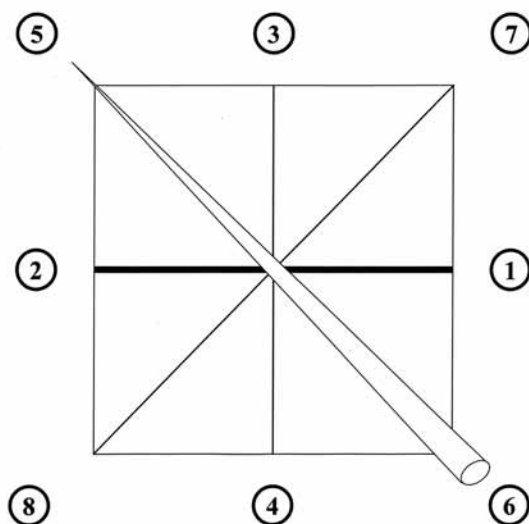


Figure 1. “As if” circumscribed areas are represented at eight key points of the posited Indo-European ritual year. The heavy horizontal line marks the division between winter (above) and summer (below) while the expanding diagonal line indicates the division between the waxing and waning halves of the year with the winter solstice at the top left.

1 marks the beginning of summer and **2** the beginning of winter. These points are well represented in the Icelandic calendar with its transition festivals in mid-April and mid-October (Árni Björnsson 1995: 7, 14–17, 59–62). The starting points in the halves of the year can also be clearly made out in Celtic and Slavic sources (Rees and Rees 1984: 84–92; Lyle 2009; Mencej 2005). We can see that there is a strong connection with the movement of animals from near or inside to far or outside at the beginning of summer and the reverse at the beginning of winter. In the real “as is” world the cattle leap joyously out of their winter confinement at the beginning of summer and this transition is made the subject of ritual activity, and there is a similar ritual marking of the transition to winter. And here it will be useful to turn to Walton’s idea of “props” in relation to the “as if” play world.

PROPS AND PLAY AREAS

The prop (or support) is an “as is” object that is imaginatively transformed in the “as if” play context. One of Walton’s instances (1990: 37) is a tree-stump which is transformed in the children’s imaginative play into a bear (Figure 2).

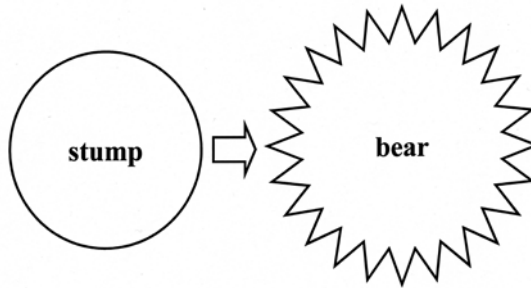


Figure 2. The “as is” stump is a prop that is transformed in imagination into an “as if” bear.

Similar instances are when some shaped mud is designated a pie that can be eaten, or a stick becomes a sword or some coloured water is agreed to be medicine – all within the confines of the children’s game. The children who imagine these things are themselves props and are also transformed; for example, the child who picks up the stick that has become a sword has become a soldier (Figure 3).

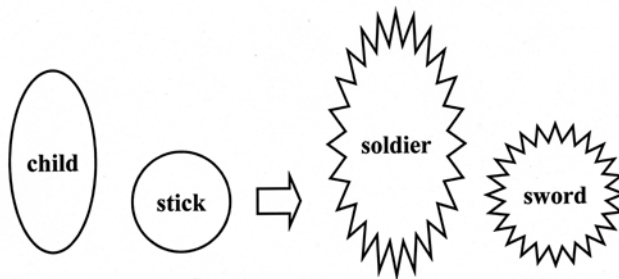


Figure 3. The “as is” child who does the imagining is a prop that is transformed in imagination into an “as if” soldier when the “as is” stick prop is transformed into an “as if” sword.

In the ritual context, we may consider the end-of-summer transition mentioned above, which can be marked by a custom like that recorded in Austria:

At dusk on St Martin’s Eve the boys set off making a wild din and yelling throughout the village, and banging on lids, ringing bells and yelling, they stop at every house and shout “The wolf is free!” The older youths force their way inside, wearing masks of skins or white sheets and cloths. They imitate wolves and attack the children. Those who “set the wolves free” and the “wolves” perform wild antics around the village. (Mencej 2005: 82, from Grabner 1968: 73)

There are boys who are wolves and there are boys who set them free. These characters are living props who imagine themselves into different identities that are either other humans or animals. The humans are performing the action of the Master of the Wolves, who is often identified as a saint. The concept of which this ritual action forms a part is a dual one, according to which the Master of the Wolves sets the wolves free or unmuzzles them at the end of summer but confines or muzzles them at the opening of summer so that they cannot do harm to the animals out at pasture. Mencej gives as one instance: “In Estonia, on St Michael’s Day St George removes the muzzles of the wolves which he had put on on his name day (i.e. on St George’s Day in spring)” (2005: 84). If this action of “opening the mouths of the wolves” is enacted, we have two animate props, performer 1 (the saint) and performer 2 (a representative wolf), and a cord of some kind which is an inanimate prop for a wolf muzzle.

In a custom that was found in Ireland at the beginning of spring on the eve of the 1st of February (point 3 in Figure 1) a doll-like effigy is carried from house to house and is welcomed as St Bridget, who has a clear connection with the goddess Brigit (Ó Catháin 1995: ix). Walton comments:

A doll directs players of the game not just to imagine a baby but to imagine the doll itself to be a baby. So it generates fictional truths about itself; it represents itself. (1990: 117).

The doll in this Irish custom is also a prop, but not in this case for a baby similar in size to the doll but for an adult woman. Kevin Danaher notes that this spring custom of carrying about a symbol of the saint was known over a large part of Ireland and he describes this particular object.

Most commonly this (symbol) was an effigy supposed to represent St Brighid herself, made with more or less care as local custom demanded. Sometimes this was a nicely dressed doll borrowed from a little girl; often such a doll was re-dressed or decorated for the occasion. More often the image was specially made; a sheaf of straw might be pushed into shape and suitably dressed or garments might be stuffed with straw or hay to approximate to a human figure. The foundation of the figure might be a broom or a churn-dash, or some sticks or pieces of lath fastened together, and the whole padded and dressed. The churn-dash was widely used, as it could be stood upright on the floor. The head and face might be made from a mask or a carved turnip or a piece of white cloth suitably painted or coloured. Sometimes care was taken to represent the saint’s figure with some reverence; other effigies were deliberately grotesque. (Danaher 1972: 24)

However it was shaped, it served equally well as a prop

At each ritual point of the year there is a play area which is marked out in time and potentially has its own delimited space as well. A Scottish house-visiting custom that occurs both at the beginning of winter (point 2) and about the time of the winter solstice (point

5) requires a special kind of space since it is itself a dramatic performance (Lyle, ed. 2010). The acting space is often a room in a house where the spectators are the members of the family being visited by the actors, but the entire ritual space for the “game” the actors are involved in is the whole area that they include in their travels from house to house. The “play time” is either tightly defined as a single day or as a broader period of up to a few weeks in length, but in either case the action begins after dark. The actors both use props and are props themselves in the sense that two boys are transformed into warriors and fight with sticks transformed into swords while a third boy is transformed into a wonder-working doctor who produces a cure with water transformed into a magic potion with the power to resurrect that one of the warriors who has been killed by his opponent. The dramatic illusion in itself seems to be the same as is found in a theatre, and to give rise to what could be called a secular rather than a ritual experience. The setting within the house-visiting custom, however, which involves a blessing and the receiving of gifts, lends the whole event a ritual resonance and the play can be felt to symbolise a death and revival appropriate to the time of year. But even when one of the boys is a prop for the great king, Alexander of Macedon, the boy is still a prop for a mortal and not a god. We have met St George who stands in for the Master of the Wolves and St Bridget who stands in for the goddess Brigit, so perhaps we can faintly see the outlines of pre-Christian supernatural combatants behind the heroes like Alexander of Macedon and Sir William Wallace whose roles are played by the boys.

THE WHOLE YEAR IN RELATION TO AN “AS IF” WORLD

So far, we have considered specific points in the year, and now we can turn to the year as a whole. Walton’s discussion of the stump prop (1990: 36–43, 209–213) may be helpful in making a connection with a time sequence. Movement in space takes a period of time and Walton points out that, once it has been mandated in the game that stumps are bears, the children playing come across unexpected “bears” as they run about and they react accordingly. Rather similarly, if people “move” through the year with the passage of time they come to that play point that has been designated as transformed and transfer into ritual mode. In a world that is understood to correspond totally to an “as if” world, there is no one who is not playing the game and transformation is complete.

When the “as is” world is correlated with an “as if” one, there are specific links between the two. Thomas G. Pavel in his book *Fictional Worlds* lists several one to one correspondences between real and imaginary items and activities, such as: globs of mud = pies; small black pebbles = raisins; children manipulating the mud and pebbles = cooks preparing the raisin pies. He speaks of the “as is” and “as if” worlds as primary and secondary:

Since the really real world enjoys a definite ontological priority over the world of make-believe, we may distinguish between primary and secondary

universes within dual structures, the former constituting the foundation upon which the latter is built. In our example, the world of the children playing in the mud functions as the primary universe, while the world of cooks and pies is assigned the place of secondary universe. As we saw, the two universes are linked by a relation of correspondence, which in our example yields an isomorphism, since to every element in the primary universe the relation “will be taken as” assigns one and only one element in the secondary universe. (Pavel 1986: 57)

In a dual structure like this, each relevant item in the “as is” world has a corresponding item in the “as if” world but, as Pavel points out (1986: 57), there may in addition be freely developed elements in the imaginatively created secondary world that have no corresponding element in the primary world.

The “as if” world contains “culturally postulated superhuman beings” (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 123–124), and it also has locations and times at which these beings enact their roles. We can say: “The fairies move between their summer and winter residences at Halloween and Beltane,” and the statement can be valid within this fictional framework. And, interestingly, it is possible to make invalid statements and to be “wrong” in terms of the fictional system. Much energy must have been expended in oral societies in the training of specialists who would know their way about in the “as if” world and would be able to make authoritative valid statements concerning it. People’s everyday “as is” world existed without support, but the imaginative “as if” world that they also inhabited needed the upkeep of well-informed ritual enactment if it was to remain in place.

I have been arguing that correlation is of the first importance when we attempt to explore the meanings of the ritual year. A point in time relates to the day, the month, the year, the human lifespan, as, e.g. midnight, dark moon, winter solstice, birth. These all rest on the correlation of sequences within the real “as is” world but an additional “as if” correlation would point beyond that to a postulated further sequence in an “as if” world.

REFERENCES

- Danaher, Kevin
1972 *The Year in Ireland: Irish Calendar Customs*. Dublin: Mercier Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E.
1956 *Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gennep, Arnold van
1943 *Manuel de folklore français contemporain*. Tome 1. Paris: Editions Auguste Picard.
- Grabner, Elfriede
1968 *Martinisegen und Martinigerte in Österreich*. Ein Beitrag zur Hirtenvolksskunde des Südostalpenraumes, Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten aus dem Burgenland, Heft 39 (Kulturwissenschaften, Heft 14). Eisenstadt: Burgenländischen Landesmuseum.

- Hornby, Hugh
2008 *Uppies and Downies: The extraordinary football games of Britain*. London: English Heritage.
- Huizinga, Johan
1998 (1949) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Lawson, E. Thomas and Robert N. McCauley
1990 *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyle, Emily
1990 Winning and Losing in Seasonal Contests. *Cosmos* 6, 161–171.
2008 The Luck Contest in the Ritual Year. *The Ritual Year 3: The Ritual Year and History*, 101–105.
2009 The Celtic Year and Gender. *Cosmos* 25 and *The Ritual Year 4: The Ritual Year and Gender* (joint issue), 181–189.
- Lyle, Emily, ed.
2010 *Galoshins Remembered: A Penny Was a Lot in These Days*. Edinburgh: European Ethnological Research Centre in association with National Museums of Scotland.
- Mencej, Mirjam
2005 The Slavic Summer/Winter Opposition in the Pastoral Year and the Christian and Pre-Christian Figures Identifiable as the Master of the Wolves. *Cosmos* 21, 79–111.
- Needham, Rodney
1972 *Belief, Language and Experience*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Ó Catháin, Séamas
1995 *The Festival of Brigit: Celtic Goddess and Holy Woman*. Blackrock: DBA Publications.
- Ogden, C. K.
2000 (1937) *Bentham's Theory of Fictions*. London: Routledge.
- Pavel, Thomas G.
1986 *Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press.
- Rees, Alwyn and Brinley Rees
1961 *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Seligman, Adam B., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett and Bennett Simon
2008 *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smythe, William E.
2005 On the Psychology of “As If”. *Theory Psychology* 15: 283–303.
- Sperber, Dan
1982 Apparently Irrational Beliefs. In: Hollis, Martin and Steven Lukes (eds), *Rationality and Relativism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 149–180.
- Vaihinger, Hans
1911 *Die Philosophie des als ob: System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistischen Positivismus*. Berlin: Reuther and Reichard.
1924 *The Philosophy of “As if”: A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.
- Walton, Kendall L.
1990 *Mimesis as Make-believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2008 *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UPRIZORITVE V PRAZNIČNIH OBDOBJIH LETA V POVEZAVI S KONCEPTOM "KAKOR DA"

*Raziskovalci imajo več priložnosti za raziskovanje teoretskih razsežnosti ritualnih dogodkov kot izvajalci/ustvarjalci, čeprav imajo morda oboji enako zanimanje. Avtorica želi umestiti ritualne izvedbe v specifični teoretski kontekst »kakor da«. »Kakor da« je polovica dihotomije, ki jo dopolnjuje »kot je«. Svet »kot je« je resničen, dejanski, medtem ko je svet »kakor da« zamišljen ali izmišljen. V jedru teoretskega premisleka je vprašanje, kako oceniti in definirati resnično vrednost ali veljavnost trditev. Terminologijo »kakor da« je prvi uporabil nemški filozof Hans Vaihinger v delu *Die Philosophie des als ob* (1911). Otroška igra pretvarjanja prikaže ustvarjanje in uporabo svetov »kakor da«. Njihove igre se dogajajo znotraj določenega »prostora« in nedvomno tudi »časa« igre. V okviru kronotopa lahko govorimo o »področjih igre«. Vsaka ritualna točka leta lahko postane »čas igre« za dan ali dlje: osem osnovnih točk iger, ki jih lahko zasledimo v modelu indoevropskega leta, je ilustriranih na sliki 1.*

Kendall L. Walton je raziskal uporabo rekvizitov, torej predmetov in ljudi, ki se v procesu »kakor da« transformirajo, drevesni štor se lahko v otroški domišljiji preobrazi v medveda, otrok s palico pa v vojaka z mečem. Na podoben način se v ritualnem dejanju, povezanim z zapiranjem in odpiranjem volčjih gobcev v začetku poletja in zime, lahko pojavita dva živa rekvizita, izvajalec 1 (za svetnika/gospodarja volkov) in izvajalec 2 (za volka), ter nekakšna vrvi, ki je neživi rekvizit za volkov nagobčnik. Punčkasti portret, ki ga v irskem ritualu z začetka pomladi (na predvečer 1. februarja) nosijo od hiše do hiše, predstavlja rekvizit za sveto Brigito, posredno pa za boginjo Brigit. V začetku zime in v času zimskega solsticija na Škotskem izvajajo igro Galoshins, ki ima kot rekvizite tri dečke, preoblečene v dva bojevnika in čudodelnega zdravnika, ter dve palici in vodo, ki se preobrazijo v dva meča in magično zdravilo. Ti rituali so povezani z določenimi točkami v letu, leto pa si lahko razlagamo kot »kakor da« svet, v katerem žive nadčloveška bitja. V tovrstni dualni strukturi ima predmet iz primarnega sveta »kot je« svoj ustreznik v sekundarnem svetu »kot da je«, hkrati pa se lahko v slednjem razvijejo tudi elementi, ki v primarnem svetu nimajo opore. Točka v času se poveže z dnevom, mesecem, letom, npr. polnočjo, mlajem, zimskim solsticijem, rojstvom. Vse to temelji na zaporedjih v resničnem svetu »kot je«, dodatna soodnosnost »kakor da« pa pokaže prek tega na pričakovano prihodnje zaporedje v svetu »kakor da«.

Dr. Emily Lyle, University of Edinburgh, Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 27 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD, Scotland, UK, e.lyle@ed.ac.uk