

Sometimes Even a Single Feather's Enough to Fly: A Hermeneutic Journey through Rites of  
Passage in Outdoor Education

by

Miles Minichiello

Bachelor of Arts and Science, Quest University Canada, 2014

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**Supervisory Committee**

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**Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

Rite of passage is a term that is used widely and uncritically in the field of outdoor education. This hermeneutic research project explores how a third-generation Canadian outdoor educator explores how rites of passage are understood in outdoor education. On this hermeneutic journey I set out to provide a more complex understanding of rites of passage in outdoor education. In exploring the literature of rites of passage in outdoor education, I noticed that there is a lack of discussion on non-Indigenous practitioners' cultural heritage and how to address the desire many practitioners have for ritual. I used Stephen Jenkinson's texts as a foundation for the hermeneutic conversations that I had with rites of passage in outdoor education. The research journey shifted from focusing on rites of passage to how outdoor educators could build a ritual skillset. I propose five propositions of ritual that may help practitioners develop their own ritual sensibility.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Humans seem to be driven to make meaning in their lives. In many different cultures, scholars recognize the importance of ritual in helping people transition from childhood and adolescence through to adulthood. These rituals, commonly called rites of passage (ROP), help imbue human experience with meaning and purpose (Plotkin, 2008, Prechtel, 2004). Blumenkrantz (2015) writes that, “[ROPs] are intentionally designed to transmit community and cultural values while strengthening the bonds of community” (p. 6). He continues to suggest the values and ethics learned through ROPs, enable youth to understand and make meaning of their lives. To Blumenkrantz, this is the core of a ROP, and he further suggests that ROPs must also be mutually beneficial for the youth and their communities. In this way, ROPs can create stronger relationships between youth, their communities and the natural world, bringing a greater sense of purpose and meaning to their lives, while combating the challenging issues of our times (Blumenkrantz, 2015; Grimes, 2000)

Outdoor education (OE) has a history of trying to connect youth with their communities and provide transformative learning experiences (Gass, 1993; Norris, 2011). OE itself is a broad term that includes a variety of practices and terminology in the field, including *adventure programming*, *outdoor adventure education*, *experiential education*, *ecotherapy*, *outdoor behaviour healthcare*, *wilderness education*, *primitive skills*, *adventure therapy*, and, *wilderness therapy*. A commonality in the field is using natural or novel environments to facilitate growth through challenge (Norris, 2009). In this thesis OE refers to programs that go on multi-day or weeks-long self-propelled expeditions into places where there are little to no modern amenities and are less effected by human occupation.

The origins of Western OE can be traced to 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe and America. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) movement, started in 1844 by George Williams, founded its first outdoor residential camp in North America in 1885 (YMCA, 2018). Norris (2009) outlines five factors, foundational to the development of OE in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First, unions were calling for shorter work days, which increased available leisure time. This, coupled with improved technological efficiency, allowed improved accessibility to outdoor recreational opportunities and the creation of clubs and associations (e.g., alpine, bicycle touring, and canoeing clubs). Second, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the concept of youth emerge as a distinct social category. During this time, there was a growing gap between when one was no longer dependent on their parents (childhood) and when one entered the workforce. Third, Norris draws from the Romantic Movement's critique of Enlightenment Philosophy, citing the idea of being able to recover a sense of wholeness in nature. Fourth, progressive education emphasized learning through experience, independent and critical thought, placing the student as central to the learning process, and being democratic in practice. Finally, the conservation movement and clubs such as the Sierra Club contributed to the creation of national parks in the United States of America (USA) and Canada. Norris (2009) concludes by writing that the YMCA, like other long-standing OE programs that originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "grew out of a social movement, originally rooted in liberal Protestant theology, that sought to redress what it saw as the harmful and disruptive social consequences of modernity and industrialization" (p. 27).

The foundations of OE are also highly gendered. Cook (1999) discusses the anxiety around male youth delinquency in the UK during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. OE was seen as a way to build character in young men, and "rescue ... boys who loafed on the street corners and drifted towards bad citizenship" (Cook, 1999, p. 160). Humberstone and Pedersen (2001) write

that “women’s involvement [in the Scouting movement] was an afterthought” (p. 28). While, Cook (1999) writes that “girls were to act as ‘guides’ in the background while their Boy Scout brothers led pioneering expeditions into adventure” (p. 159). The early Outward Bound courses were also intended for young men (Rogers & Perry, 1967) and in Canada did not involve women until the 1970’s.

Ernest Thompson Seton is another prominent figure in the history of OE and one of the first to use OE as a therapeutic approach. In 1902 he established a camp to reform several young men who had vandalized his property (Woodcraft League Histories, 2006). Since Seton’s first camp there have been many other programs and camps that have attempted to use the natural world to promote change. Factors common across these programs include: the limited number of participants (4-12), self-propelled travel in unpopulated areas for multiple days or weeks, instructors who guide the participants through various challenges, and curriculum speaking to some form of personal growth. Programs may also employ trained counsellors. My research focuses on programs that include the above factors (which I will refer to as OE). Many OE scholars believe OE to be a modern day ROP (Andrews, 1993; Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1993; Russell, 2001). The ROP model in OE is based on the work of van Gennep (1906/1960), Eliade (1958), Turner (1966), and Campbell (1948/2008). These theorists describe a three-part ROP model: where an initiate is removed from their community (*separation stage*), then undergoes a transformative ordeal (*liminal stage*), and is incorporated back into their community with new roles and social status (*reincorporation stage*). Many scholars and practitioners see this model embedded in the traditional OE program, as the model seems to constitute the basic framework of the program. For example, the participants leaving their homes to start the program can be seen as being in the *separation stage*, the program itself is seen as the *liminal stage*, and the program ending and

participants returning home is seen as the *reincorporation stage*. OE practitioners have long been attracted to ritual and the ROP model (Norris, 2011). However, many scholars and practitioners use the terms “ritual” and “ROP” in a simplistic and generalized manner (e.g. see Bettmann, Gillis, Speelman, Parry, & Case, 2016; Tucker, Norton, DeMille, & Hobson, 2016), which has caused ritual studies and ethnography scholars to be critical of this model (Grimes, 2000; Stephenson, 2003).

Stephenson (2003) and Grimes (2000) call for people using ritual to ritualize mindfully and creatively. Importantly, they urge practitioners creating rituals to be aware of the models they are drawing from, and the context in which these models were created. Grimes (2000) encourages the use of models and theories as a way of understanding ritual, but states that it is essential for the practitioner to be aware of the context in which they were created and whose experience they favour. For example, the ROP model was constructed from ethnographic data of male coming of age ceremonies and then applied as a universal pattern for all ROP (Grimes, 2000). In his study of current ethnographic data, Grimes (2000) claims only approximately one-half of the world’s societies mark the passage into adulthood with formal rituals. Despite the specific contexts of these theories, they are widely used by OE practitioners. The literature does not suggest that critical analysis of these theories has been completed and they are often discussed at a superficial level. While ritual studies (Grimes, 2000; Stephenson, 2005) and OE scholars (Bell, 2003; Norris, 2011) have identified concerns within the ROP model in OE, they acknowledge that the model is a valuable way of understanding and creating rituals for people’s transition into adulthood.

There are many similar terms used for ROP, such as rite, ritual, ceremony, initiation, and ritualization. Ritual study scholars have discussed the difficulties in defining these terms (Grimes, 2014; Blumenkrantz, 2015; Post, 2015; Stephenson, 2015). Stephenson (2015) calls ritual a

“slippery fish” to identify (p. 7). He does suggest that rituals have common aspects: they are patterned, stylized, repetitive, communicative, and non-linguistic ways of sending messages. Stephenson continues, “Ritual has so many different dimensions – biological, political, psychological, ecological, economic, and religious – that a comprehensive, integrative explanation of its workings is likely forever beyond our grasp” (p. 61). Turner (1969) explains the difference between ritual and ceremony as a ritual transforms a person or culture, while a ceremony solidifies the status quo. Davis (2003) is critical of the transformative power that is often ascribed to ritual. He writes that ritual, especially ROP, generally marks, rather than makes, a transition. Plotkin (2008) echoes this statement. Bell (2010) argues that there is no universal or intrinsic category of ritual and believes that categorizing and classifying are instruments of colonial thinking. Turner’s definitions of ritual and ceremony are an example of this. Turner creates a dichotomy between different ritual practices, which may not hold true. Bell (2010) warns researchers to not focus on the function or symbols of ritual, but rather “[f]ocus on ‘ritualization’ as a strategic way of acting and then turn to explore how and why this way of acting differentiates itself from other practices.” (p. 7-8). Bell (2010) goes on to define ritualization as “a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’” (p. 74).

For the purpose of this thesis, ritual will mean a formal process that is made special and is repeated by a group, community, or tradition. Ritualization will mean an everyday act that has become special and is repeated by a person. For example, the rock climber who always put their right shoe on first believing it is important and will make them climb better. For this thesis, the terms ROP and initiation will refer to the transition from child, adolescent, or young persona into an adult as this is the ROP that OE is mostly concerned with. ROP will mean a ritual, series of

events, or internal process where one is enculturated into their role and purpose in their community, culture, or society. Initiation will mean a ritual or series of events that creates a shift from a self-centric world view to one that is transpersonal (Tacey, 2011). Plotkin (2008) calls this transition “becoming fully human”, which involves learning the unique gifts that one has to offer the world, and seeing oneself as intrinsically connected to the more-than-human-world

### **Situating Myself**

I am a third-generation British Columbian, whose family comes from the British Isles, Italy, and France. My family has lived in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia for over one hundred years, while I myself was born and raised in Creston, BC. As an able-bodied white heterosexual male, I am situated in a place of privilege. I began working in the adventure tourism and wilderness therapy industry when I was 19, as a white-water rafting guide at a commercial rafting operation, as well as a wilderness guide at a youth at risk camp. These first jobs represented a conclusion to a period in my life. A period that consisted of a clinical depression diagnosis, letting go of former identities, crashing a car which seriously injured a friend, and moving away from my home town. Throughout this transitional period, I was called to the outdoors to learn more of who I was and what I was capable of. I dreamed that I might one day be able to guide people on wilderness trips. It felt like something greater than me guided that calling, and it was during these initial outdoor industry work experiences that I was exposed to two things which have shaped my career. The first was the use of ritual and the ROP model in my work via my introduction to the writer Martin Prechtel. The second experience related to masculinity and how cultures teach boys to become men. I had never consciously thought of ritual or ROP before. I became very interested in ROP upon being introduced to Prechtel’s work and different ritualised aspects of programs where I worked. More discussion on my experiences

and how these two aspects have shaped my education and career in OE is done throughout this thesis.

Although my field experiences were powerful and moving, they were also draining and found me leaving work in the outdoor industry to go to university. My undergraduate education provided an opportunity for flexible and creative studies. After much thought and searching I decided to focus my undergraduate program around masculinity and how boys become men in modern Western culture. My honours thesis focused on my own personal experiences, while examining the modern men's movement and various other modern and anthropological writings on ROP. In my undergraduate research, I found that myths, that natural world and ritual were all connected and played an important role in my own maturation process.

As part of my undergraduate program, I travelled into the forest and fasted for four days. A four-day wilderness fast resembling certain Indigenous people's coming of age ceremonies has been called a pan-cultural rite of passage (Foster & Little, 1989; Plotkin, 2008; Shaw, 2011). There are many organizations throughout North America that offer these programs; however, it should be noted that the pan-cultural claim of these programs is problematic (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). I did not intend my fast to be a ROP, but rather an opportunity to gain understanding of my previous life experiences, and to search for deeper knowledge of myself. My grandfather passed away shortly after my fast, adding another layer to this experience. My undergraduate degree was experiential in nature. I traveled to the UK to partake in the rituals of a community trying to reconnect with the non-human world and create a more complex understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman. This community was greatly influenced by the work of Prechtel, and the experiences changed the course of my life. At times it felt like I was living mythically and part of a much larger story. Prechtel's concept of mutual indebtedness,

which is discussed in Chapter 4, and his teachings on initiation greatly informed my undergraduate research, and served as helpful tools for understanding myself.

After university, I worked for an alternative outdoor high school program, with the aim to turn the program into an initiatory experience for the students. I soon realised that this was futile, for many reasons. I was the only person involved with the program who saw the program in this light. The program was just starting and was not connected with any of the other important parts of students' social lives, such as friends, family or religious and community organisations. I did not have the skills, confidence or knowledge to single handily create a ROP for youth from a number of different backgrounds. The task I set out for myself may have been impossible. In fact, it may reveal my own naivety in thinking such a thing is possible. It was from this realisation, that I did not have the foundation of knowledge to start a ROP program that I began to pursue graduate studies as an option for building my skill and knowledge base.

Which brings me to the two motivating factors guiding this thesis. My desire to develop a more nuanced, what Norris (2009) calls, ritual sensibility, while adding a layer of complexity to OE understanding of ROP. Much of the discussion that I have had, or read, of ROP in OE involves the *hunger* of Western practitioners to have ROP that are based on tradition, ancestry, and place. This often results in appropriating Indigenous cultural practices. I too have felt this *hunger* for cultural practices that feel real. Borrowing, stealing, or pretending from other cultures is unethical, a further process of colonization and I believe will not work. In this thesis I attempt to further my learning of ritual in a way that is culturally sensitive and based on my own heritage.

## **Introducing the Study**

I have worked in some form of OE for close to a decade. It is within this field that I am situating my research. Conceptualising OE programs as ROP is a common practice in this field (Norris, 2011). The OE and wilderness therapy (WT) literature sees the use of ritual and ROP as an important part of programs (Bettman et al., 2016; Cohen & Zeitz, 2016; Tucker et al., 2016). For example, Harper, Gabrielsen, & Carpenter (2017) discuss the transition from urban to wild places as a type of threshold experience. However, there have been calls by scholars to better understand the use of ritual and the ROP model in OE (Bell, 2003; Norris, 2011). This includes challenging the simplistic and generalized use of ritual and the ROP model (Norris, 2011). For example, many leading OE scholars describe programs as being a ROP, but provide little to no explanation on how this is done, what cultural context makes it a ROP, or even what the term ROP means. Further, OE in North America has a history of cultural appropriation and is based on the principles of colonization (Harper et al., 2017; Mullins, Lowan-Trudeau & Fox, 2016). This has presented further complications and issues of using the ROP model in OE, as experiences are often couched in language from Indigenous cultures, or certain experiences are said to have originated from Indigenous cultures, where practitioners and participants have no right to appropriate the experience (Norris, 2011). This thesis aims to add to the level of understanding and practice of ROP in OE.

Norris (2011) and Bell (2003) have called for a more nuanced understanding of the ROP model in OE. Norris (2011) writes that conceptualising OE trips as a type of ROP is deeply engrained within the culture of OE. Practitioners also have a strong affinity for ROP (Norris, 2011). This suggests that there is a yearning within practitioners and programs for some sort of ritualised or initiatory experience. Cultural appropriation is an important consideration for all

programs using ritualised behaviour, especially in the field of OE which has a long history of appropriating different Indigenous traditions (Mullins et al., 2016; Norris, 2011). To further complicate this matter, North American OE programs are run on land that has a long history of settler colonialism and land claims by Indigenous people (Friedel, 2011; Manuel, 2017). In my experience, a large number of participants and program staff are non-Indigenous, meaning that these people cannot reproduce or use Indigenous rituals.

This thesis is guided by the beliefs that non-Indigenous people must act from their own cultural heritage, that non-Indigenous people do not have the cultural teachings to understand or use Indigenous rituals, and that non-Indigenous practitioners must engage with the complicated realities of being a non-Indigenous person in North America. This includes learning the history of colonization, land claims and treaties, the removal of Indigenous people from their homeland, and the cultural genocide and systemic oppression that has been inflicted on Indigenous people.

## **Research Plan**

Previous personal research and the completion of a literature review on ritual and ROP, indicated that the majority of the literature was written by Western authors (e.g. Campbell, 2008; Eliade, 1958; Grof, 1996; Henderson, 1967; Leighton, 2014; Mahdi, 1994; Foster and Little, 1989; Plotkin, 2004, 2008; Shaw, 2011; van Gennep 1909/1960). Mainly, these authors used or adapted the three-stage model and discussed ROP in a universal or generalized way. I started reading the work of Stephen Jenkinson and found his work to question Western ontology, examine the cultural heritage of settlers in North America. Jenkinson's work is also focused on ritual and initiation. He seemed a good candidate to investigate potential new and different knowledge to ROP in OE.

Stephen Jenkinson is a former palliative care program director at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, and an Assistant Professor at a Canadian medical school. He holds a Master of Theology from Harvard University, and a Master of Social Work from the University of Toronto. He is a Canadian settler, and challenges and provides new insight to the ROP literature in addition to holding a wide body of writings, interviews, films, and speaking engagements. Importantly, Jenkinson's work questions western ontology, examines the cultural heritage of settlers in North America, and focuses on ritual and initiation. I found much personal resonance with his work and selected Jenkinson to inform my exploration of ROP. Jenkinson's work and teaching places importance on one's connection to home/place, ancestry and cultural heritage. He has started his own school, The Orphan Wisdom School, where he teaches on culture, ancestry and language.

Jenkinson was chosen for this study as he shares a similar background to me: Anglo-Canadian, middle-class, university educated. In my experience in OE these characteristics are shared by many who are interested in ROP. Jenkinson was chosen as he does not try to borrow or adapt other cultures teachings or traditions, but attempts to teach from the culture he is part of. As stated early, I do not think it is possible for non-Indigenous people to borrow or adapt Indigenous cultural practices. Jenkinson seemed to offer something different to non-Indigenous people. The opportunity to learn from one's own culture, instead of taking from a different culture.

A hermeneutic examination of Jenkinson's work was done to expand OE understanding of ROP following the research question: *How can Stephen Jenkinson's work help to expand OE understanding of ROP?* This research question was broken into two smaller research questions.

RQ1: *How does Jenkinson's understanding of ROP differ from OE understanding of ROP?*

RQ2: *What can OE practitioners learn from Jenkinson's understanding of ROP to develop their own understanding?*

### **Organisation of the Thesis**

The organisation of chapters 3-5 are based on Campbell's (1948/2008) *Hero's Journey*. This conceptualisation was developed through the research journey. It helped me to conceptualise the research journey, while showing how deeply entangled I and OE are with the ROP model. In my experience in OE, many people have a *hunger* for ritual. It is important for me as a hermeneutic researcher to expose these biases. Organising this thesis around the Hero's Journey also serves as a tongue-in-cheek way to poke fun at myself and the model. In the sense that I am, on one hand critical of the model, and on the other finding it helpful to conceptualise my thesis.

*Chapter 2: Methodology.* In this chapter I present a theoretical overview of my research methodology, hermeneutics. I explain how, while following a hermeneutic approach, my research focus changed over time, until I arrived at Jenkinson's work. Also presented are my three research questions, and methods used in this thesis.

*Chapter 3: The Crossing of the First Threshold.* This chapter is the *separation* phase of the ROP model. In this chapter I present the results of a literature review done on ritual studies, the ROP model and how OE understands ROP. This stage of the ROP is focused on the knowledge and experiences that one already has. One is then separated from them and moves into a liminal space.

*Chapter 4: The Road of Trials.* This chapter represents the *liminal* or *initiation* phase of the ROP model. In this chapter I am following the research question: *How does Jenkinson understand ROP?* I discuss Jenkinson's understanding of ROP with that of OE and ritual studies. I present my interpretations of Jenkinson's ontology, his concept of Orphan Wisdom, and his understanding of ROP and initiation. These findings are discussed around the hermeneutic conversation I had with these findings.

*Chapter 5: The Crossing of the Return Threshold.* This chapter represents the return phase of the ROP model. Following the research question, *What can OE practitioners learn from Jenkinson's understanding of ROP to develop their own understanding?* I share personal reflections and interpretations of Jenkinson's work and of OE understanding of ROP. I present five areas of ritual and ROP that practitioners can use to further their own ritual sensibility.

## Chapter 2 – Methodology

In this chapter I describe the theoretical and historical foundations of hermeneutic research, methods used in this thesis, and my research question. During my research, I read, listened, and watched works by Stephen Jenkinson numerous times. This process involved making notes and reflecting on my interpretations of the texts. This process was repeated multiple times to gain a more nuanced understanding. My interpretation of the texts was based on a hermeneutic approach.

### **Hermeneutics**

Smith (1998) writes that “Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it” (p. 42). Other hermeneutic researchers write that “truth” in hermeneutic research is a matter of interpretation (Jardine, 2006) and that it is historically situated and can generate understanding (Gadamer, 2004). These statements align with my goals in researching rites of passage (ROP) in outdoor education (OE). Further, I want my research to be grounded in the historical and cultural place I am occupying and believe this is essential not just for my thesis, but for OE research and practice as well.

Hermeneutics is focused on interpretation (Moules, McCaffery, Field, & Laing, 2015). In this research methodology, the researcher engages into conversations with texts (Gadamer, 2004). The interpretations that arise from these conversations are the truth claims of the research (Moules et al., 2015). As such, claims from hermeneutic research are always based on the researcher’s subjectivity (Smythe et al., 2008) and are never final or complete (Gadamer, 2004).

## **Hermeneutics through history**

Although contemporary hermeneutics and hermeneutic phenomenology started in the 18th and 19th century, the origins of hermeneutics can be traced to Ancient Greece. Etymologically, hermeneutics is derived from three different Greek words, *hermeneuein*, to say or interpret; *hermeneia*, the explication of thought; and *hermeneus* who is Hermes, the Greek trickster and message-carrying god (Moules et al., 2015; Mantzavinos, 2016). It was Hermes job to deliver messages from the gods, which were beyond human understanding, into something that humans could understand (Burkert, 1985; Caputo, 1987). As a trickster, Hermes translations often were ambiguous. Therefore, hermeneutics is about interpretation, saying what one interprets, but also that one's interpretations may be ambiguous or different from the original message. Conversely, one's interpretations, as well as the text, are open to alternative readings. There is no absolute certainty in hermeneutics. Interpretations are based on subjectivity, context and change as the interpreter changes.

Hermeneutics was an important method for discovering meaning for the Ancient Greeks (Mantzavinos, 2016; Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). Interpreting laws, contracts, myths, and dreams to understand the hidden or underlying meanings represent the beginning of hermeneutic study in Ancient Greece (Mantzavinos, 2016). Philo of Alexandria discussed how the literal meaning of a text may conceal a deeper non-literal meaning, and that the deeper meaning can only be uncovered by systematic interpretive work (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). Augustine's writing on hermeneutics claims that there is a connection between the language one uses and how it creates understanding, and that interpreting a text involves a broader existential level of self-understanding (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). This statement is described as the universal claim of hermeneutics. The connections between the subjectivity of the researcher and their own personal

understanding have been important aspects of hermeneutic study since its origins in Ancient Greece.

Hermeneutics was an important field of study during the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Mantzavinos, 2016; Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). Hermeneutic scholars at this time were mainly concerned with discerning if scripture and philosophical writings were authentic (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). However, Giambattista Vico writing in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century challenged the Cartesian thinking of his time. For Vico, thinking is rooted in the cultural context in which it emerges. He wrote that to understand one's self, one must understand the progression of the intellectual tradition that one is part of (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). The hermeneutic tradition of the Middle Ages and Renaissance provided the foundation for contemporary hermeneutics which originated in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Contemporary hermeneutics originated in the philosophical traditions of phenomenology of continental Europe (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). The origin of contemporary hermeneutics is often attributed to Schleiermacher, who used the interpretive method of hermeneutics to interpret all linguistic meaning where before it had only been used for interpreting texts (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). However, Johann Conrad Dannhauer did this in 1630, over a century before Schleiermacher (Mantzavinos, 2016). Other important aspects of Schleiermacher contribution to hermeneutics is the belief that one must examine one's own prejudices before one can examine others. He believed that understanding is never complete, and language does not allow for us to ever know something completely (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). With the rise of phenomenology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Husserl and his students Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger laid the foundation of contemporary hermeneutics by bringing the researcher's experience and perspective into the method (Norris, 2009). Heidegger made an important contribution to

hermeneutics by shifting the focus from one's experience to how one understands the world; this is often referred to the ontological turn in hermeneutics (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, built on Heidegger's idea of the importance of relationships and language.

Gadamer is the major figure of hermeneutics in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century (Moules et al., 2015). Gadamer (1996) writes

The concern with things which are not understood, the attempt to grasp the unpredictable character of the spiritual and mental life of human beings, is the task of the art of understanding which we call hermeneutics (p. 165).

Gadamer is suggesting that hermeneutics is focused on that which is not well understood, and those capricious aspects of mental and spiritual life find congruence with the study of ritual in OE.

In his major work *Truth and Method* (1960/2004), Gadamer makes the claim that hermeneutics is universal, and that all understanding is based on people's interpretations. He goes on to explain, all understanding happens in language, therefore all understanding is interpreted through language (Gadamer, 1960/2004). As language is always changing, it seems to suggest that understandings will change as well. Related to language is Gadamer's understanding of conversations. Gadamer (1960/2004) sees language existing only in conversation. Abram (1996) building on the work of Merleau-Ponty, writes of how conversations are not just through spoken language, but that one participates in conversations through movement. Abram extends this concept to include one being in conversation with the place one is in, as well as the non-human world. Important to Gadamer (1960/2004) is that in "every true conversation ... each person opens himself [or herself] up to the other [and] truly accepts his point of view as valid" (p. 387). He goes on to write that conversation is "a life process in which

a community of life is lived out” (p. 443). This brings up another important point of Gadamer’s understanding of hermeneutics. Individuals having conversations are not neutral rational beings, rather they are influenced by their history, culture, and personal experiences (Gadamer, 1960/2004). A central aspect of Gadamer’s philosophy is the *fusion of horizons*. A horizon refers to a body of knowledge (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). The fusion of horizons occurs when one fuses the knowledge that they have with another body of knowledge they are learning (Gadamer, 1960/2004). One’s horizon of the present is influenced by the various different beliefs, ideas, values, and experiences that one has had, and as such is always going to be influenced by the horizon of one’s past. Gadamer (1960/2004) discusses the entanglement of this concept,

In fact, the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past (p. 305).

For Gadamer, the fusion of horizons is not done by mastering a theory or method, and cannot be theoretically deduced or even fully articulated, but rather is done by engaging with texts in a productive way and relying on one’s own tact and sensibility to be guided to some kind of new understanding.

Originally hermeneutic methods were applied to written texts (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). However, some hermeneutic researchers have strayed away from what might have been originally considered a text. For example, ecopsychological researchers (Abram, 1996; Norris, 2009; Fisher, 2002/2013) have used a hermeneutic method on landscape, wilderness, language, and experience. For Abram, language includes the interactions between different species and landscapes. Norris was originally put off with the emphasis on text until he replaced text with

words like landscape, experience and wilderness, which to him seemed a natural extension of hermeneutics. Bringhurst (2011) writes that the original writing was the impressions that are left on the environment, whether that is foot or paw prints, smells, or broken branches. This broader conceptualization suggests that many different types of texts can be found in the world.

### **Hermeneutics in Ecopsychology and Outdoor Education**

Hermeneutics have been taken up by ecopsychological scholars such as Abram (1996), Norris (2009), and Fisher (2002/2013). Abram (1996) builds upon the work of Merleau-Ponty and incorporates the more-than-human world's influence into a researcher's experience. Norris' (2009) PhD research with leading outdoor educators providing transformative personal experiences was guided by a Gadamerian interpretive framework. Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics focuses on the belief that hermeneutic researchers aim to combine the understanding of different *horizons* to create new meaning. Fisher's (2002/2013) work applies Caputo's *Radical Hermeneutics* (1986) to include the natural world. These three scholars all try to give voice to something that is unknown or repressed, which is an important part of hermeneutic research (Smythe et al., 2008): Abram, for humans as being a part of, and not outside of the natural world; Fisher, for the natural world's role in shaping human psyche and societies; and Norris, for how OE can help change systems.

Three prominent aspects of hermeneutic inquiry are relevant to ecopsychological research: overcoming alienation, risking being changed, and being creative (Fisher, 2002/2013). For Fisher, "a hermeneutical inquiry is one that studies something strange, unfamiliar, or alien that must be made comprehensible, familiar, or near through a process of interpretation" (p. 37). A major strength of hermeneutic research for Fisher is the ability to give voice to that which has no voice in the dominant discourse. However, he critiques other hermeneutic scholars for not

giving voice to the role of the natural world. Fisher writes that “If we wish to uncover new realities we must therefore be willing to become new people” (p. 39). The willingness to be changed by learning something new seems to suggest that what is learned is life changing and not just something one writes a paper about. Part of my motivation for pursuing this research is, in a sense, to become a new person. Hermeneutic research is “always located in that zone between the familiar and the not-yet-clear” and requires one to be creative and “let their intuition ... guide their engagement” (Fisher, 2002/2013, p. 40). It seems that hermeneutic research is undertaken in a liminal space which has a connection with ritual studies and OE which often have a focus on thresholds (Harper et al., 2017) and liminal spaces.

### **Hermeneutic Process**

There is debate as to how one does hermeneutic research. Theorists like Gadamer have written that there are no hard and fast rules to hermeneutic research, but that the process needs to rely on the sensitivity and background of the researcher, and that the researcher’s ability to listen is key (Ramberg & Gjesdul, 2014). Other researchers have developed stages to the hermeneutical research process, such as Geanello (2000) and Anderson (2004). Smyth et al. (2008) classify hermeneutic research as a journey of thinking versus a specific process where findings can be pinned down. Moules et al. (2015) claim that hermeneutic research is more of a practice than a method. As a practice it is not neutral, but guided by personal decisions of the researcher, and is a collective enterprise, involving how one engages themselves, with others, and the world (Moules et al., 2015). This engagement with the world is an essential part of hermeneutic research (Moules et al., 2015). I will now present three different methods/guidelines and how I used them in this research.

Geanello (2000) developed a three-part method for hermeneutic research. In the first step, *explanation*, the researcher selects main details from the text to begin to grasp what is being said. In the second step, *surface interpretation*, the researcher begins to develop a naïve understanding of what is being discussed. The researcher also selects significant parts of the text to analyse more closely. This allows the researcher to develop a more profound understanding of the text. In the third stage, *depth interpretation*, the researcher contextualises the new understanding they have gained from the second step to the preunderstanding they had before the research.

Geanello's method was helpful for me to conceptualise the hermeneutic research journey. By having three distinct stages, I was able to view the research process as a story or journey. I found it helpful to view Geanello's method as a climbing down a staircase. In this first step I was selecting which aspects of text I would participate in conversation with. In the second, I was beginning to 'dig into them', and develop an understanding of the text. In the third step, I was continuing this journey to the roots of the text. In using Geanello's method, I was also struck by the similarities with the ROP model, and how stories and journeys are often broken into three parts in Western thought. This insight helped to further complexify my research journey.

Smythe et al. (2008) resist providing a specific method for hermeneutic researchers, believing that hermeneutic research is a journey of deepening one's understanding verses trying to pin down specific results. They liken hermeneutic research to a bike wheel, if the nuts are too tight the wheel will not be able to move at all, and if they are not tight enough the wheel will become separated from the frame. With this analogy Smythe et al. (2008) provide 11 "hand holds" (p. 1393) for hermeneutic researchers to use, recognising that some guidance is needed for hermeneutic research.

1. *Beginnings*, Smythe et al. resist creating a firm or definitive research question. What matters is to think deeply about the phenomenon or area of study.
2. *Captured by thought*, in this stage researchers should not try to solve or work out what they are researching. One should not be trying to find understanding in this stage but to follow interests or ah-ha moments.
3. *Enjoying*, in this stage researchers are encouraged to let go and trust their thinking and that new understandings will come and lead you.
4. *Working*, in this stage researchers engage with the text listening for ideas to jump out, examining their own writing, to thinking, read, and think again, and to let their thinking go in whatever direction feels right.
5. *Listening and responding*, in this stage researchers should not have a pre-determined plan for how they will analysis the work, but be open to what emerges from the text
6. *Unutterable circle of writing*, when researchers begin writing their findings they are encouraged to have conversations with others interested in the topic, as these others may help the researcher see the topic in a new light. Researchers are also encouraged to trust what emerges in the writing process.
7. *Openness*, the researchers are encouraged to be open to what emerges throughout the research process.
8. *Always an impression*, the researchers are reminded that what they find is an impression, and what they find are offerings to engage others in their own thinking experience.
9. *Discerning trust*, the researchers should recognise that what they find reveals something about their own experience, if there is resonance between these ideas and others it suggests that there is some trustworthiness to the finding.

10. *Graced Moments*, refers to the times when researchers may come to an insight or part of the text that seems to have a shared sense of belonging, meaning that it is “felt and understood as being true” (p. 1396) not just to the researcher but to a wider community.

11. *Being self*, researchers are encouraged to be who they are and to let their thinking come. Smythe et al. urge researchers to trust that ideas will come, lose themselves in the interplay of the aspects of research, listen to their moods, and respond to resonance of insights.

Smythe et al.’s (2008) method helped me to not ‘get stuck’ in being too methodical. By using this method, I was able to move away from rigid methodological structures, and allow the research journey to guide me. This created space for different types of understandings to arise that were not purely rational. In using Smythe et al.’s method, I felt that I was given permission to explore different ways of knowing and thinking about my research area.

In their textbook *Conducting Hermeneutic Research: From Philosophy to Practice* Moules et al. (2015) present five guidelines for researchers. The authors write, “guidelines are there to simply orient the researcher, to help them make responsible, reliable, and defensible decisions” (p. 61). By guideline they mean “that which serves to steady the motion of a thing or journey” (p. 61).

1. *The way of hermeneutic practice is determined by the phenomenon, not the method.* A researcher is meant to examine and let the phenomenon and what arises from those examinations guide their research. Further, one must learn “what this one case requires to deepen understanding of both the instance and its context” (p. 63). Therefore, one is required to learn about the phenomenon and what context it arose in.

2. *Hermeneutic practice requires a disciplined (phenomenological) focus on the particular.*

When a researcher is drawn to a phenomenon they must examine what it is about the phenomenon, the context, and themselves that created that attraction. Hermeneutic research is always tied to “something that has befallen one” and a particular context (p. 63).

3. *Hermeneutic practice requires that we be vigilant and open in our encounters with the lifeworld.* Therefore, a researcher must be willing to put what they know at risk. By doing so one’s understanding can be broken open so a new understanding can form. This requires an openness to the world and what is happening in the research.
4. *Reading in the hermeneutic tradition involves a practice of learning to read self and world differently.* Researchers are reminded that they are not looking for literal meanings, or the author’s intent behind the meaning of the text. Rather, hermeneutic research is focused on what arises in the researcher. This requires a certain level of tolerance for uncertainty, as one may be confused for some time.
5. *The nature of hermeneutic practice is dialogical.* One is always in dialogue with the world. Moules et al. (2015) write “the world speaks to us, and most importantly, we listen to its address.” (p. 67)

Moules et al. (2015) add two other important aspects of hermeneutic research; tact and address of the topic. Tact in this sense means having a sensitivity towards the phenomenon, context, and knowledge that arises from the research. Moules et al. (2015) discuss the importance of what knowledge and resources to draw on, which questions to ask, and when to stay silent. There is congruence with Smyth et al.’s (2008) analogy to hermeneutic research being similar to a bike. One must have the right combination of bolts being tight enough, but not

too tight. Address of the topic refers to one's own subjectivity. Hermeneutic researchers often have a personal experience with their research area (Moules, et al., 2015). Moules et al. (2015) remind researchers that their interest in the topic is not the start of the phenomenon nor will the phenomenon end with the research project.

Moules et al.'s method required me to examine my own drives and interests in the subject. Through using Moules et al.'s method I examined my own experience of ROP and what I had learned from them. I was also reminded that dialogues that I was having with the subject must be extended out to include all aspects of my life, and that there could not be a divide between this research and the rest of my life and experiences.

### **Validity and Rigour in Hermeneutic Research**

Validity and rigour in hermeneutic research differ from that in natural sciences. Moules et al. (2015) describe rigour in hermeneutic research as,

careful attention to the treatment of topics such that the work engenders trustworthiness and believability. Rigour in this context does not show itself in a strict adherence to an inflexible method, or in absolute and precise findings that can be replicated to authenticate them, but rather in attention to a cohesive, comprehensive, cogent, and expansive contribution to understanding of the topic (p. 172).

Interpretations in hermeneutic research cannot be duplicated (Moules et al., 2015; Smythe et al., 2008), but their validity is established by textual and situational evidence (Geanello, 2000). Further, interpretations from hermeneutic research cannot, and do not, hold universal truths or final interpretations (Moules et al., 2015; Smythe et al., 2008). Valid hermeneutic work should raise questions for readers and researchers (Moules et al., 2015; Smith, 1991). The research needs to be convincing enough to start a discourse with readers (Moules et

al., 2015). Hermeneutic research is not trying to solve problems, but to reveal new and different ways of understanding a phenomenon (Moules et al., 2015; Smythe et al., 2008).

For Norris (2009), the starting point for hermeneutic research is different than other qualitative research methods because hermeneutic research is looking for a different type of truth. Jardine (2006) proposes that hermeneutic truth cannot be found in simply collecting new knowledge but is rather about creating something new and recovering or remembering what has been hidden or lost. Smith (1998) adds that, “Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it” (p. 42). The meaning that is created in a hermeneutical research process is going to be influenced by the researcher's own subjectivity, worldview, and how they go about interpreting the phenomenon. My research will be influenced by my experiences in the field of OE, my previous studies and participation in rituals, and my worldview which is critical of the dominant colonial mindset.

Hermeneutic research embraces the researcher's subjectivity. Research is always situated and “soaked in taken for granted assumptions” (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1393). Therefore, researcher's need to make their own bias and subjectivity clear (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). However, one cannot ever know or make clear all of one's assumptions and prejudices (Gadamer, 1975; Smythe et al., 2008). Just as a complete interpretation is not possible (Moules et al., 2015), a complete disclosure of all one's biases is not possible either (Smythe et al., 2008).

During the interpretive process of hermeneutic research, researchers make explicit statements of the historical and philosophical ideas guiding their interpretations, as well as making presuppositions as to what has motivated their research (Lavery, 2003). I am already invested in the field of research I have chosen, from the years I've spent working in OE, to the honours thesis I wrote on ROP, to the strong feeling that our culture needs more effective and

meaningful ROP and rituals. I believe that we live in what Bly (1990/2015), Sheppard (1982) and Plotkin (2008) refer to as a predominantly adolescent society and that ritual is needed, or can be used, to help people transition into more mature relationships with themselves, community, and place. This in turn may help the modern world transition from their adolescent society into an adult one (Plotkin, 2008).

Whiling engaging in this research, I came up against my own biases multiple times. I have been interested in ritual for many years, and have identified a yearning and naïve understanding that I have had of ritual. This was an understanding I had before this research project, but became more apparent as the research went on. I had to examine where my interest and desire for ritual comes from, and why I am so interested in it. In pursuing this research, I have come to believe that my desire for ROP can never be fulfilled, and the culture that I am part of is not capable of offering the initiatory experiences that I craved as an adolescent. I have also come to believe that much of my early interest in ROP and how I went about learning about them, was fueled by a desire to have and take that which I did not have rights to, both culturally and ethically. This now seems to me an inauthentic and unethical way of going about learning.

### **Research Question**

There is debate on whether a research question guides a qualitative research project (Janesick, 2000) or whether the research question is clearly articulated in analysing the results (Barnard, 1995). Smythe et al. (2008) argue that “what matters [most] is the quest to think more deeply about something that matters” (p. 1394). For Smythe et al. a “research question arises from a passion that calls, holds and takes one on a journey. The question paints the way, but the way is a following of what comes” (p. 1396).

Cajete (1994) writes that, “Asking names the quest and sets forth its essential goal. Asking is the initiation of a creative flow of thoughts” (p. 70). The research question that I ask now may be tweaked and changed throughout the research process, but as Cajete reminds me, asking puts the process in motion and “names the quest” (p. 70). I am also guided by Rilke (2001) when he writes to a Young Poet that what is important is to live the questions, so that one day if one is fortunate, one may live their way into the answers. For Norris (2009) asking only one question requires a researcher to go further, writing that:

Such a question becomes a vessel into which we distil our very longing and unknowing, and which opens us to new possibilities for understanding and experience. It becomes a navigational aid to finding our way through places that can be dark, terrifying, and ultimately healing (p. 108).

The research question guiding this thesis is, *How can Stephen Jenkinson’s work help to expand OE understanding of ROP?* During the writing process, this broad research question was broken into two research questions to better convey the contributions of my thesis. These two questions are:

RQ1: *How does Jenkinson understand ROP?* which is addressed in Chapter 4.

RQ2: *What can OE practitioners learn from Jenkinson’s understanding of ROP to develop their own skills?* which is addressed in Chapter 5

## **Methods**

This study uses a hybrid hermeneutic methodology of Geanello’s (2003) three-part method, Moules et al.’s (2015) *guidelines*, and Smythe et al.’s (2008) *handholds*. Gadamer (2004) writes that the focus of hermeneutic research is the fusion of horizons (different understandings), in which a new view is created.

Moules et al. (2015) advise researchers to let the phenomenon of study guide the research journey. Jardine (2014) suggests that the researcher's interest in a topic reveals that there is something important to learn there. My interest in ROP began during my undergraduate degree. During the course of graduate school my interest in ROP has shifted and changed. I began with a focus on transformative experiences in OE. Upon examining this, my focus soon shifted to the desire many non-Indigenous people seem to have for ritual. This led me to examining my own interest in ritual. I researched non-Indigenous writers who were addressing ritual desire in Western people, and came across Jenkinson's work. As a hermeneutic researcher, I was guided by Smythe et al. (2008) to research "what calls, and what provokes you to wonder" (p. 1393). I certainly felt this in Jenkinson's work. However, I had to be wary and think critically about Jenkinson's work, focusing on what arose for me. Finally, I tried to follow Smythe et al.'s (2008) advice that the quest of hermeneutics is "to invite researchers to make their own journey, to be exposed to the thinking of others and to listen for the call of their own thinking" (p. 1393).

### **Textual collection procedures**

Sources for analysis of Jenkinson's work included his books, interviews, blog posts, videos, podcasts, speaking and CD's. Sources were found by looking at Jenkinson's website, internet searches, a search of iTunes, Soundcloud and Podcast Player (for podcasts), and searching Google Scholar and UVic Library Databases. The search identified four books, three published books, and one book to be published in June 2018; three multi-hour live recordings of workshops and speaking events; four films, including one feature length documentary film, two five-minute short films, and one film trailer; 29 interviews, 27 as a one-two hour audio files, of which two were transcribed. I also attended a day-long speaking event in Vancouver, BC on November 18, 2017.

The main document of analysis was Jenkinson's latest book, *Die Wise*. This book presented the most comprehensive version of Jenkinson's ideas. Interviews were helpful sources, as they provided Jenkinson opportunities to expand on and explain certain topics of the book. Two of the published works and one of the live-recordings were available through the University of Victoria's library system and were not analysed. Searches of Google Scholar and the University of Victoria's library were done to find voices critical of Jenkinson's work. These searches did not find any scholars or writers critiquing or questioning Jenkinson's work. Thirteen academic papers were found building upon Jenkinson's work. Twelve of these papers were focused on grief and palliative care, while one was a masters' thesis about initiation in fairy tales. The later paper was procured and read to see how Jenkinson's ideas were being used.

Certain themes of Jenkinson's work were not included as they were not deemed applicable to the current study. For example, one theme of Jenkinson's work is the politics of palliative care in North America. Although death is an important aspect of ROP (Eliade, 1958; Raphael, 1988; van Gennep 1908), the politics of palliative care was not relevant to my study of ROP in OE.

### **Interpretative Process**

First, I watched all of Jenkinson's videos and listened to 10 interviews to get an idea of the main themes and philosophies central to Jenkinson's work. Second, I read *Die Wise* making notes and highlighting key ideas, themes, and recurring phrases. Also, I made note of important passages to go back and re-read. At this time, I noted questions that I had about the text and ideas being presented. Third, I grouped the important passages that I would re-read into themes. I also checked the index for these themes and to corroborate the passages that I had identified; as well as to see if there were any other passages to add to my themes. Fourth, a careful reading was

done of each of the passages. I kept detailed notes of Jenkinson's understanding of these themes and any questions that arose. Finally, during the writing process, I went back and reread passages, notes, and listened to interviews multiple times. I conceptualised this process as the 'conversations' I had with Jenkinson.

### **Chapter 3 – *The Crossing of the First Threshold: Literature Review***

This chapter is a literature review of how Outdoor Education (OE) understands rites of passage (ROP). I start with discussing ritual. Second, I discuss the ROP model in more detail. Third, I discuss how OE has used ROP. Fourth, I discuss critiques of the ROP model. Finally, I present Norris' (2011) suggestions for OE practitioners using ROP.

#### **Ritual**

Ritual is a vast, complex, and interesting topic. The academic field of ritual studies began in the 1960's, but Western European study of ritual originated in 19<sup>th</sup> century England in the fields of cultural anthropology and ethology (Post, 2015; Stephenson, 2015). In my experience in OE and youth work, ritual is a powerful tool, technique and idea for creating meaningful experiences for youth. Grimes (2006) notes that:

We are witnessing the emergence of groups and individuals who consider it obvious that ritual is one, if not *the*, answer to the environmental conundrum. They consider it urgent that humans learn, or relearn, ritual ways of becoming attuned to their environments (p. 132, emphasis in original).

Grimes emphasizes his view that health and mature human development are linked to the reversal of environmental degradation. Grimes (2006) notes that ritual can also “insulate people from nature, makes ‘others’ seem different from ‘us’” and as “tools for wreaking environmental and social havoc” (p. 134). In these two statements, Grimes highlights the contradictory nature of ritual. In my experience, outdoor educators note that ritual is, largely absent in Western culture; but, acknowledge that ritual is beneficial in practice. Ritual is a complex and multifaceted practice that can be used to indoctrinate people to a variety of different beliefs and values. Related to this is bell hooks (1994) contention that educators who are not “self-actualized” use

their classrooms “to enact rituals of control [are] about domination and the unjust exercise of power” (p. 5). Grimes (2006) goes on to argue that ritual is an essential part of creating a sustainable environmental ethic:

For attitudes to become definitive, they must be cultivated by practice, and the name for sustained, value-laden attitude practice is ritual. In ritualizing, human beings discover, then embody and cultivate their worldviews, attitude, and ethics. Rites are not only about confirming views that people already hold but also about divining new ways to behave in changing circumstances. (p. 134)

Grimes’ discussion seems to offer support for outdoor educators who are looking use ritual to enhance their programs, and provide youth with new and different ways of learning. However, educators should be warned, that rituals can be used to dominate and belittle the youth they work with (hooks, 1994).

### **Ritual Studies and the Rites of Passage Model**

The ROP model is a popular way of framing OE programs (Norris, 2011). van Gennep is credited with coining the term rite of passage and for developing the three-stage model (1909/1960). Other scholars have used, developed or expanded upon the three-stage (e.g., Campbell, 1948/2008; Eliade, 1958; Foster & Little, 1998; Plotkin, 2004, 2008; Turner, 1969). The ROP model is linked to cultural anthropology and ritual studies (Stephenson, 2015). In this section I will provide an overview of ritual studies and a discussion of the ROP model.

Ritual studies as a distinct academic field started in the 1960’s, but academic scholarship on ritual goes back much further (Post, 2015). Ansloos (2017) outlines three major movements in the study of ritual which gave birth to the field of ritual studies. The first movement, the Functionalist Approach, began in the 1940’s and 50’s. The major proponents of this movement

were anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown. This movement was interested in what function ritual played within a society, especially its role in maintaining social order. The second movement, the Systems Approach, was largely influenced by the work of Claude Levi-Strauss. This movement saw ritual as being a way to organize social structures. The third movement, Symbolic Approach, emerges from the work of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz. In this approach ritual gives one a framework for how the world is, and how the world could be in an ideal situation. Ansloos (2017) calls this a model of reality, and a model for reality.

Stephenson (2015) argues that the Western study of ritual originated in 19<sup>th</sup> century England in the fields of cultural anthropology and ethology. English cultural anthropologists study of ritual was during a time where ritual was seen as primitive and old fashioned. During and following the Enlightenment, ritual was seen to belong to an earlier, less advanced time of human evolution (Stephenson, 2015). James Frazer (1890) and the “Myth and Ritual School” of early twentieth century Europe came about as a reaction to the diminished worth of ritual (Akerman, 2013). These scholars purported that myth came from ritual, and therefore we can learn about ancient rituals by reading ancient texts (Stephenson, 2015). For Frazer, there is a universal pattern that runs through all myths and rituals, that is focused on death and rebirth, and through this rebirth the world is made new again. Frazer also wrote that there were three defining aspects of ritual: that the original rituals were a form of blood sacrifice; that they were replications of natural processes or mytho-historical events, and; that they were inherently acts of magic.

The Myth and Ritual School inspired the Cambridge Ritualists who believed that theatre also came from ritual. Following the same logic, they believed ancient rites could be discovered by reading ancient plays (Stephenson, 2015). Both the Myth and Ritual School and the Cambridge Ritualists have been largely discredited as their claims were not supported by their evidence

(Stephenson, 2015). The universal claims of Frazer and his followers have been questioned, as well as the belief that myth is a template for all ritual (Grimes, 2000). However, the influence of this approach is still evident in modern scholarship. For example, Joseph Campbell's (1949) Hero's Myth is often used as a template for the stages one goes through in a ROP. Martin Shaw (2011) also uses myths to reveal the hidden meaning of rituals. Stephenson (2015) writes that scholars are often searching through the past to find answers for their current world problems. In the late 19th century in Europe there was a nostalgia for ritual (Stephenson, 2015). Since the middle ages ritual and theatre had been ostracized by the Church (Grimes, 2014). In addition, ritual's worth had diminished as a result of the Enlightenment's focus on positivism and rationality. In reaction to this, the Cambridge Ritualists created a rational explanation for the inherent worth of ritual, built upon the argument that myths were stories of ancient rituals.

Arnold van Gennep (1909/1960) is widely credited with coining the phrase "rites of passage" in his seminal work *Les rites de passage*. van Gennep's work was in reaction to Frazer's (Stephenson, 2015). While Frazer was more interested in the symbolic and mythological side of ritual, van Gennep's area of study was the use of ritual, thereby making him a part of the functionalist movement. van Gennep believed that all ceremonies marking transition between different life stages (birth, adolescence, marriage, and death) had the same universal three-part structure. van Gennep divided these ceremonies into three different categories: (1) *rites of separation*, which involves leaving the previous stage that one was a part of; (2) *rites of transition*, a stage during which one enters a liminal zone; and (3) *rites of incorporation*, where one reenters society into a new and clearly defined role. For van Gennep the rites were about transitioning out of and into a clearly defined social status.

Mircea Eliade (1958), in his work *The Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, also develops a three-part model for explaining initiation ceremonies. Eliade's data were mainly ethnographic studies of Indigenous people living in Australia, but he also examined ethnographic studies from Indigenous people in North and South America. For Eliade, initiation into adulthood requires a symbolic death of the child, a return to the generative origins of the cosmos, and a rebirth into adulthood which renews the community. This notion of death and rebirth is also found in Frazer's work (Stephenson, 2015), and has been taken up by modern OE writers (Grof, 1996) as an essential component of a rite of passage. Eliade's membership in the Romanian Fascist Party have led certain scholars to believe that his work was ideologically driven (Stigliano 2002).

In 1960, van Gennep's *Les rites de passage* was translated into English, which provided cultural anthropologist Victor Turner a way to conceptualize his own studies on ritual in Africa. Turner (1966) used van Gennep's model as a way to understand the creative and generative aspect of ritual. For Turner "true" ritual was generative and created a change in the society and person, while any rite that did not produce a change he called a ceremony. In looking at the generative side of ritual, Turner was mainly interested in the *liminal* phase of van Gennep's model. In this stage the socially constructed identity has been undone and not yet been reformed, creating a space for something new to emerge (Turner, 1969). For Turner, this liminal stage seems to have an isomorphic quality, in that it can allow something from within to take an outward form. Turner's work is important to OE because he proposes that ROP move participants through states and not just social status, which can include personal transformation (Turner, 1966).

### **Rites of Passage in Outdoor Education**

ROP models have been strongly taken up by the OE community (Andrews, 1999; Norris, 2011). Norris (2011) writes, ROP "models appear to be deeply ingrained in the culture of [OE]

and have become a philosophical cornerstone of contemporary practice” (p. 109). However, many leading OE scholars use ROP in a simplistic and generalized manner (e.g., Bettman et al., 2016; Gass, 1993; Russell, 2001; Russell & Hendee, 2000; Norton et al., 2016). Russell (2001) describes ROP as an important theoretical aspect of OE programs but provides little discussion on what he means by this term or how it is applied to programs. Tucker et al. (2016) write that ROP are an important aspect in facilitating change in OE. However, again, there is no discussion on what they mean by this or how it is used in programs. Gass, Gillis and Russell (2012) write that the structure of an OE trip provides the opportunity for participants to experience a ROP. In this description, the wilderness environment can provoke powerful transformation and the practitioners serve as guides able to reflect the transformative process back to the participants (Gass et al., 2012). These authors see OE as a way to provide meaningful ROP for youth. OE scholars seem to be drawing from Bacon (1984) who mapped van Gennepe’s three-stage model onto the 21-day Outward Bound course (Gass et al., 2012; Rutko et al., 2013). However, the scholars and programs drawing from van Gennepe and Turner’s models leave out important aspects of the model. For example, Turner (1987) believes that communication of sacred and mystical knowledge is the essence of ROP. The scholars, cited above, use Turner as a model for ROP in OE, but there is no discussion of the sacred. Further, van Gennepe (1908) wrote that ROP are part of a larger ritual system and that they are connected to changes in the natural world, such as seasons. Many OE programs claiming that they use/are ROP are not connected with participant’s communities (Bell, 2003), making it impossible to connect with the larger ritual system of those communities, if there is one. Due to the logistical constraints of OE programs, such as in Canada, many of the programs are in summer due to youth not being in school and when the weather is more favourable for outdoor living and travel. This makes it hard to align

programs with the seasonal and environmental changes taking place. However, in the OE literature on ROP, there is little discussion of this being a factor in OE conception of ROP.

Norris (2011) writes the ROP model has fallen on fertile ground in OE because ROP offer: (1) a clear trans-cultural model for helping young people navigate times of transition; (2) a map for leaving behind outworn identities; (3) powerful and evocative elements, such as fire, solitude, fasting, drumming, body-painting, the arts and dancing, that are attractive to participants and practitioners; (4) confirmation of a central tenet of OE, that by separating someone from their familiar environment and having them undergo strenuous and challenging ordeals, you can bring about lasting change; and (5) a link to what many perceive to be healthier and more meaningful cultures.

As discussed, ROP models are found throughout OE. However, there is no one single understanding of the models; most practitioners and programs have a different understanding of ROP models (Norris, 2011), or may not be familiar with the ROP model at all. Norris (2011), goes on to give examples of the different ways the ROP model is used: programs using wilderness fasting rites, marking life transitions that are rooted in specific cultural traditions, addiction treatment programs, and programs with staff who are interested in ROP.

## **Critiques of Rite of Passage Model**

### **Theoretical Critiques**

Ronald Grimes, credited as being the founder of ritual studies (Post, 2015) and of ritual criticism, (Stephenson, 2015) wrote the seminal work on ROP entitled *Deeply into the bone: Re-inventing rites of passage*. In this, Grimes (2000) critiques van Gennep, Eliade and Campbell's universal and timeless claims of their models. He also makes the distinction that these models are inventions and were not discovered (Grimes, 2000). For Grimes (2000), all ROP are cultural

creations which are specific to a culture, place, language, and time. However, the three-stage model of ROP is treated as a universal truth, making it problematic (Grimes, 2000). Grimes goes on to write that the trouble is when invented rites are purported to be discovered and then prescribed “as if they were laws determining how rites should be structured” (p. 107). He also warns of accepting three-part theories as universal, as he sees them stemming from a Western intellectual tradition that prefers threes; for example, the Holy Trinity.

Grimes (2000) is critical of the purported timeless, unchanging, universal structure of the ROP model. In his study of the ethnographic data on ROP Grimes argues that only approximately one-half of the world’s societies mark the passage into adulthood with rituals. van Gennep (1909/1960), Eliade (1958), and Campbell (1948/2008) claims of the universal nature of the tripartite model of ROP are common in OE. For example, Leighton (2014) calls the ROP model “the oldest universal myth-story” and paraphrasing van Gennep, “that *all* initiatory journeys moved through and shared three distinct and primary stages” (p. 8. Emphasis mine). Norris (2011) and Foster & Little (1989) write that fasting in nature is a pan-cultural ROP. Plotkin (2008) uses the three step model as a template for how one goes about becoming fully human. While Blumenkrantz (2015) writes of how van Gennep’s three stages are found in all ROP. Grimes (2000) is critical of the universal claims of the tripartite model and how myth has been used as a principal source of information for van Gennep, Eliade and Campbell, writing that “initiation is not a kind of acted-out adventure story” (p. 116). Campbell (1948/2008) has been a principal contributor to the use of myth as a way of making sense of coming of age, and conceptualising ROP. Campbell writes “it has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward” (p. 11). van Gennep, Eliade and Campbell have been important scholars in purporting the universal and misleading claims that all cultures have three-stage ROP.

For Grimes, there cannot be a universal ROP model, as each ROP is rooted in the language, place, culture and time where the rite is taking place. Because of this, rituals, including ROP, are constantly adapted and reinvented. Grimes believes that “reimagining [ritual] is essential on both a theoretical and a practical level” (p. 121). OE can and must build on Grimes suggestions. If OE programs and practitioners are going to incorporate rituals into programs or try to create programs based on the three-stage ROP model then they must be rooted in the language, place, culture, and time that are meaningful for participants.

Bell (2003) challenges the assertion that OE programs are ROP. Central to Bell’s (2003) claim is that OE programs do not involve the community the participants are from, and therefore do not include the third-stage of the ROP model, reincorporation. Further, once participants return from an OE program they are often not treated differently by their family and community, nor given different societal roles (Bell, 2003). This critique is similar to Jenkinson’s belief that ROP must be culturally endorsed and needed by youth or communities. An essential part of a ROP for Jenkinson is that the youth need to complete them to become an adult in the community. The community also needs the youth to complete them. In OE, there is not a mutual need between youth and community.

Norris (2009) identified a subgroup of OE practitioners who were critical of sudden and dramatic qualities that are often ascribed to the ROP model. These practitioners saw change as occurring, in part, “from a deeper embodied connection to community, culture, and place” (p. 173). Norris writes that “transition itself is the product of a much longer and deeper learning and development process” (p. 173). Most of these practitioners still conceptually used the model, but sought for a more complex understanding of it. Their focus was on creating “healthy, whole human beings” versus enacting dramatic and invigorating rituals. Norris (2009) goes on to argue for “the

need for outdoor educators to build, strengthen, and situate their work within communities and relational networks that can support the learning outcomes they seek and provide a foundation for the emergence of sustainable patterns of culture” (p. 386).

### **Cultural appropriation**

Mullins, Lowan-Trudeau and Fox (2016) propose that OE is based on a colonising foundation. They suggest OE perpetuates the archetype of the heroic Western explorers conquering the wilderness, and the stoic Indigenous people whose ceremonies and worldview that help young people overcome the softening effects of urbanisation and industrialisation are pillars to this foundation (Mullins et al., 2016). Norris (2009) discusses the ways in which OE programs have used Indigenous traditions in unethical and inappropriate ways. This includes:

1. Fraudulently exaggerating or claiming cultural rights, traditions, relationships, permissions, knowledge, or status that do not belong to you
2. Taking ceremonies and traditions out of the rich community, ancestral, geographic, and historic contexts from which they derive so much of their power and meaning
3. Advertising, selling, altering, or otherwise commodifying collectively held traditions, where such behaviour runs counter to accepted community protocol
4. Basing programs and practice on romanticized, inaccurate, stereotyped, distorted, or otherwise fictitious accounts of Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

My literature review found that most mentions of ROP in North American OE did not include an acknowledgement or recognition of colonization and the violence and cultural genocide that impacted on Indigenous people of North America. For example, Harper et al.’s (2017) critique suggested that OE program literature often views the land on which OE programs are conducted as a wilderness or a place with no human history. Viewing land as an empty place with no human

history further perpetuates the concept of *terra nullius*, which was in part, used to justify the removal of Indigenous people from their traditional territories. Davis (2003), a professor at Naropa University who runs OE programs, discusses the complexity of cultural appropriation. Davis (2003) does challenge the Western relationship to land, claiming that the land may teach humans certain rituals. However, he does not discuss the history of Indigenous people living on and being removed from that land. This claim seems to be viewing land without a human history. Davis writes that “some forms of earth-centered ritual practice are native to a place and not just to a people” (p. 13). Meaning that people from different ethnic backgrounds may come to practice the same rituals if they live on the same ground. Related to non-Indigenous people of North America’s cultural heritage, is the history of colonization in North America. Davis suggests that rituals are place specific, but omits the thousands of years’ Indigenous people lived on their territories before European contact, the history of violent removal and oppression, as well as the different ontological beliefs and relationship Indigenous people have to the non-human world. It seems unlikely, at best, that settlers could gain this kind of understanding from land, and at worse, can be viewed as an attempt to negate Indigenous people’s intrinsic link and claim to their land.

The concept of wilderness, a natural place untouched by humans, is still common in OE today. There have been scholars who have questioned this concept since the 1960’s (Nash, 1967/2011). Berry (1977/2015), Cronon (1995) and Nash (1967/2011) all discuss and critique the Western notion of wilderness, as a place uninhabited by humans. The field of OE is beginning to question and challenge the romantic, colonial and Christian ideas of wilderness (Harper et al., 2017). Challenging the concept that North American wilderness is a place untouched by humans is related to settler colonisation and the use of Indigenous knowledge by non-Indigenous people.

Norris (2009) states that for OE practitioners to use Indigenous knowledge in their programs, they must first develop a sense of deep reciprocity with the communities the knowledge comes from in addition to a deep sense of authenticity, regarding their own cultural traditions and motivation for using Indigenous traditions. Horwood (1994) makes similar recommendations for practitioners asking them to (1) rediscover, re-examine, and draw on their own cultural heritage and traditions; (2) develop a deep and intimate relationship with place and allow this relationship to guide the emergence of authentic ceremonial expression; and (3) do the hard cultural work of learning from Indigenous teachers who are willing to share. Meanwhile, Plotkin (in Norris, 2009) believes that ceremonies and rituals used outside of their cultural context lose much of their meaning and effect. Plotkin questions,

can you take the role of a shaman out of a shamanistically-based culture and have it mean anything? It might be equivalent to having a quarterback in a baseball game. So, I think a lot of what you see in these derivative programs . . . these programs that are derivative from Native American cultures might be that kind of thing. (in Norris, 2009, p. 217).

## **Moving Forward**

In this section I present Norris' (2011) six suggestions for OE practitioners and programs using ROP and Norris' (2009) skills of ritual sensibility. Norris' (2011) analysis of the ROP model in OE suggests using the ROP model as an opportunity for practitioners to think deeply about their work. He warns practitioners to avoid "simplistic, stereotyped, and inaccurate generalizations" (p. 118) and to avoid using the model in a formulaic manner. Norris (2011) lists six actions for OE practitioners to address the theoretical, ethical, and practical challenges of using the ROP model.

1. *Be authentic*, practitioners are warned to only use cultural traditions that they are a part of or have permission from the community the traditions come from.
2. *Be connected*, practitioners must be aware of the community and cultural context in which they are situated. This social ecology is key for using the ROP model.
3. *Ritualize mindfully*, practitioners must be aware of the day to day rituals of the program as well as the “deep ritual structure” and if they are aligned with the developmental outcomes the program looks to provide.
4. *Shift focus from transformation to development*, rituals are ways of marking a change and may not necessarily create the change. Practitioners should focus their work on helping participants develop and not get too hung up on transformation.
5. *Design programs at the level of the staff delivering them*, OE programs which use ritual effectively are most likely to be run by staff that have a well-developed ritual sensibility.
6. *Articulate the change model*, be clear on how you are using the ROP model, which traditions you are drawing from, and whether you see a ROP as being a transition between social status (van Gennep) or between more nuanced states (Turner).

Norris (2009) discusses certain skills and practices that OE practitioners with a well-developed ritual sensibility use. These include, but are not limited to, ritual mindfulness and gratitude; ritual speech such as a council (Zimmerman & Coyle, 1996) or a talking circle (Weller, 2015); ritualising inner processes; creating ritual space; and providing a ritual structure to a program (Norris, 2009). Further, Norris discusses “ritual meta-skills” found in many traditions, which include “being able to hold space with mindfulness, to speak from a place of depth and authenticity, to invite people into processes, to listen with reverence, to move from a place of deep

centeredness and connectedness to source” (Norris, 2017, personal correspondence). Norris (2011) also states ritualists often undergo training as rigorous and long as that as of a physician. However, Norris seems to be purposely vague and doesn’t provide descriptions of how these skills are developed. Perhaps this vagueness stems from the lack of one set approach, instead, practitioners must develop their own skill based on their community, their unique skills, mentorship, and cultural heritage.

ROP are place, language, time, and culture specific (Grimes, 2000). OE programs using the ROP model must develop and incorporate elements that are unique to their culture (program and societal), location, and participants. Norris’ actions and skills may help OE practitioners use ritual and ROP in a more nuanced and culturally appropriate manner. Practitioners can also use these suggestions to think about how they understand human development, the purpose of an OE program, and what can be accomplished in a program. Importantly, Norris’ (2009, 2011) work calls for OE programs to work with participant’s home communities and to emphasize creating mysterious and numinous experiences for participants. Norris (2009) argues that much of OE “remains unconsciously rooted in a mechanistic, individualistic, and programmatic worldview that may reinforce a view of nature as being subtly distinct from our everyday reality. It becomes ... a place that we go to when we are not engaged in our ‘real’ lives” (p. 384).

This chapter followed RQ 1, *How does Outdoor Education understand Rites of Passage?* As articulated in this chapter, there have been calls for OE to further its understanding of ROP and to not accept the ROP model uncritically. The history of ritual studies and the ROP model were examined, as well as theoretical and cultural critiques of the ROP model. This thesis attempts to take up Norris’ call for practitioners to further complexify and examine one’s motivations for using rituals and ROP.

## **Chapter 4 – *The Road of Trials* – RQ1: How does Jenkinson understand Rites of Passage?**

In this chapter I will discuss the hermeneutic conversation I had with Jenkinson's work following Research Question 1: How does Jenkinson understand rites of passage?

This chapter begins with my preamble and reflections on how my research question changed while participating in the hermeneutic conversations with the texts. Second, I will discuss Jenkinson's term *Orphan Wisdom* and its relevance to rites of passage (ROP). Third, Jenkinson's understanding of home and cultural appropriation will be discussed. Fourth, Jenkinson's understanding of ritual and initiation is shared. Finally, I will discuss the skills Jenkinson's suggests to help one become wise. Throughout the chapter I discuss Jenkinson's ideas and present my interpretations of them. I find that Jenkinson's work has a hermeneutic quality to it (Caputo, 1987, 2015; Moules et al., 2015), and applies the teachings of Prechtel (1999, 2004, 2005, 2013) out of context and location.

### **Preamble**

In conversation with Jenkinson's text it became clear that this research question must not be exclusive to ROP. Culture, ancestry, and place heavily inform Jenkinson's understanding of ROP and are integral to this discussion. Further, these conversations highlighted the fact that this research question was indicative of something greater. What was emerging from the hermeneutic conversations with the text was not strictly about ROP or initiation, but rather about developing as a human, particularly, how one becomes wise. Jenkinson's book is entitled *Die Wise*. He is not writing about how people can go about dying wisely, but understands his teaching as a way people may be a wise person when they die. I find congruence here with Norris' (2011) suggestion that OE practitioners shift their focus from transformation to development. Jenkinson

suggests that people should live in a way so that they continue to develop throughout their lifetime so that they may die a wise individual.

Jenkinson's experience in palliative care illustrated that many individuals are not prepared for death, and upon death, are not wise. (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2015b). He believes that exposure to death, grief, and sorrow early in life is essential to developing the skills necessary to manage one's own death (Jenkinson, 2015a). Jenkinson recognized that helping people gain this wisdom, while on their deathbed, was not practical or possible (Jenkinson, 2016). Implicit in this belief: these skills are important to becoming wise and integral to a good death.

Much of the ROP literature claims to show people how to become more mature and wise humans (Mahdi, 1994; Plotkin, 2004, 2008; Shaw, 2011). My personal interest in this topic is tied to how we can mature and find meaning in life. Jenkinson's teachings contribute to this body of literature by shifting the focus from individual to lived human experiences, and relationship with place, one's own cultural heritage, and ancestry. Further, they highlight the importance of learning the limits of one's own life.

In his speaking and writing, Jenkinson can make seemingly grandiose and generalized claims. Gonzalez (2006) states that in hermeneutic research one must take the truth claims of the text seriously. This is what I did through a broad reading and listening of Jenkinson's materials. I read sections multiple times to try and understand his claims. Moules et al. (2015) write that in trying to understand the truth claims of the author, what is important is a researcher's own interpretations. Presented below are my interpretations of Jenkinson's truth claims and my conversations with them.

## **Orphan Wisdom**

An important aspect of Jenkinson's ontology is the term Orphan Wisdom. This is also the name of his school (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017, n.d.). The term seems to be a container for many of his main ideas. Much of Jenkinson's work tries to change what he calls, the dominant culture of North America (DCNA). Although Jenkinson uses this term often, he never gives a definition, or explains who is and isn't a part of this culture. He claims that this generalized term refers to similarities towards death and dying that he experienced during his time in palliative care. Jenkinson (2015a) witnessed many people who were afraid of death and dying, looking for technological solutions to all problems, concerned with filling their needs, and needing to be in control of their deaths. While a palliative care practitioner, Jenkinson (2013) noticed a "wretched anxiety" around the end of life (n.p.). This led Jenkinson (2015a) to classify the DCNA as a place where people refuse to die. In other words, people were unwilling to abide by the natural order of things; they wanted to be able to control all aspects of life. This seems similar to a reflection of Scott (2013), who upon attending a medical school graduation, heard a commencement speech that characterized doctors as "heroes in the fight against illness and death" (p. 252). Scott wrote that "death had become other, the enemy: not part of the cycle of life" (p.252).

Jenkinson (2015a), also views the prioritization of individual needs above all else as an integral part of the DCNA. People who are part of and those that created the DCNA have caused destruction to the natural world, in the name of fulfilling personal needs (Jenkinson, 2015a). For example, there has been a tremendous amount of mining done so that the majority of the population can have a cheap smart phone. Underlying this is the economic system – capitalism – that the DCNA uses. It implies the Earth can be owned, and should be turned into profit.

Jenkinson (2015a) uses this as an example of how the DCNA serves to satisfy immediate personal needs without long-term consideration or concern for future generations. As previously mentioned, Jenkinson's term and description of the DCNA is a broad generalization. He is not specific about who he considers to be a part of the DCNA, nor who is exempt. However, he does recognize that he is a part of the DCNA (Jenkinson, 2015a).

Contrasting these generalizations, Jenkinson (2013, 2015a) seems to recognize and highlight the importance of place and context-based knowledge. He often begins talks or interviews, stating that the knowledge he has comes from a particular place, culture, and experience; and as such may not be applicable to other locations and contexts (Jenkinson, 2013). Conversely, he makes generalized and universal statements about the DCNA. Jenkinson seems to be suggesting that there are similarities among large portions of the different cultures in North America. This is problematic, there are a wide variety of unique cultures in North America. More discussion on the problematic use of this term will be done throughout this thesis.

My interpretation of Jenkinson's use of the term DCNA, is that there are similarities in how people in the DCNA relate to place and the non-human world. Jenkinson creates a distinction between people in the dominant culture, who view themselves as separate from and entitled to the non-human/natural world despite the environmental consequences, and, those who see the world as entrusted to them. Those who view the world as entrusted to them, are in a familial or kinship relationship with the world, and, believe that they have a duty to ensure life goes on. This relationship to the natural and more than human world is an important consideration for OE, as it may allow a more nuanced understanding of the land that OE programs are run on.

OE is based on the Western notion that humans are separate from nature (Brookes, 2003; Norris, 2009). The idea of the individual going out into the 'wilderness' to 'conquer' is at the heart of many people's understanding of OE (Loynes, 2010). I found that the separation between humans and the rest of the world is one of the primary characteristics of Jenkinson's classification of the DCNA. Norris (2009) writes that,

much contemporary outdoor education appears to be a curiously jovial expression of a deeper loneliness and grief at the heart of our modern world. It is an all too often superficial ritual re-engagement with the natural world that can never replace the loss of intimacy and immediacy that we have bartered away (p. 384).

It seems that Norris is suggesting that this separation from nature has created a deficit of sorts within many people. Further, Norris is suggesting that OE will never be able to fulfill or soothe this pain. The loneliness and grief that Norris discusses seems similar to Jenkinson's notion of cultural poverty that will be discussed later in the chapter.

The term Orphan Wisdom is a response to the cultural poverty that Jenkinson sees in the DCNA and the people within the culture (Jenkinson, 2017). Jenkinson is implying that there is wisdom within this cultural poverty. Cultural poverty is an important term for Jenkinson, and one that I found important in my research. It applies to feeling a lack of connection to culture, connection to land and home, rituals, and ancestors (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017). Jenkinson argues that this cultural poverty has led many in the DCNA to feel a sense of self-hatred for their culture and their ancestors (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017). However, this cultural poverty is also a source for wisdom (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2017). Jenkinson (2017) has claimed that his school is about teaching this cultural poverty. Jenkinson asks people to examine their cultural practices, where they came from, and how they affect other cultures, their own well-being, and

the Earth. He suggests that it is through this examination that one may feel a sense of shame or guilt for what their culture, ancestors, and selves have done. For example, my family has lived on land for the last four generations that was forcibly taken from the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Yaqaan Nuki people. I feel a sense of shame and guilt for these past actions, as well as the current systems in place that discriminate and repress Indigenous people. By examining and feeling these emotions, it allows me to question the culture that I am a part of, and be in the world differently, not perfectly, but differently to try to create a different way of living, both with the natural world and Indigenous people.

Jenkinson (2015a) argues that people in the DCNA are orphans as our worldview and lived experience does not place us in communication with our ancestors. The word orphan refers to living in a way where one does not communicate with one's ancestors (Jenkinson, 2017). Watts (2013, 2016) highlights how Anishinaabe see their ancestors in and as the land. The land also serves as a mentor, guide, and teacher (Watts, 2016). In my own experience, I am from a culture that does not communicate or readily acknowledge ancestors, or the teachings they may offer. However, I have personally felt it important to visit the land(s) where my ancestors are from, and where they are buried. The journeys that I have taken to see, feel, and in a small way know a part of the land where my ancestors came from, and now are, have been important and moving experiences in understanding who I am, and where I come from. Jenkinson's term cultural poverty, initially seemed to describe what I felt when I embarked on those journeys. I felt like I didn't know where I came from and was not part of any important traditions. In other words, I was culturally impoverished. But having gone through a process of learning where I come from and embarking on those journeys, I don't know if it is that simple. In a sense, my culture, family, and experience gave me the skills to explore and discover my ancestors. I was

not encouraged or guided to do this, at least not by other humans. But I had very rich and moving experiences that changed the course of my life, and I believe, have made me a better person.

Maybe this is what Jenkinson means by orphan wisdom, that there is wisdom within what seems like cultural poverty, and it is through the process of examining and searching these feelings that leads one to wisdom.

Jenkinson's term orphan wisdom creates a paradox. The term describes us as orphans because we are separated from connection with our ancestors, which for Jenkinson (2017) allows for a capacity for home, but this separation gives us access to a different kind of wisdom. He states that his school is about selling the cultural poverty of DCNA. This suggests that he is teaching of the wisdom that comes from learning of one's cultural poverty. Jenkinson (2015a) writes,

The wisdom we seek is found ... in learning about suffering. In our time that means learning the inconvenient and deeply sorrowful sort of indebtedness that our way of life has incurred. Wisdom will come from learning the cost of all our entitlements, all the rights we have exercised at such considerable cost to the world around us and to our mutual life. It will come from learning what our kind of privacy and individualism has done to our ability to practice any ceremonies, rituals, or shared understandings of the mysteries of life not utterly purloined from indigenous traditions not yet riven by our poverty on this matter. It will come from learning what those mysteries – including the mysteries of being born and dying – ask of us (p. 169).

In this quote I find many of the main themes that I associate with Jenkinson, and what he can add to OE conception of ROP. First, there is what I think of as an ontological shift. He writes of the “indebtedness that our way of life has incurred.” I see viewing western society as indebted

to the world as vastly different than viewing the world as a place where one goes to collect resources, build upon, or recreate. This perspective seems to place us into a mutual relationship with the world, and not see ourselves at the top of a hierarchy. Second, Jenkinson is not advising that we should be shameful of the way that we live. Rather, I see him suggesting that wisdom may come from learning where this way of living came from, and what it takes, from people and the planet to live this way. For me, this is different from many critiques of the DCNA. For example, much of environmentalism has an underlying tone that the world would be better off without humans (Bookchin, 1987; Sylvan, 1985). Third, Jenkinson highlights the importance of community, shared traditions, and openness in regards to rituals. He seems to be suggesting that rituals and understandings of the mysteries of life are unique to a culture, as people in the DCNA cannot simply take Indigenous traditions. Fourth, I find his notion that the mysteries of life ask something of us important. It hints of us not only being in relationship with place and non-humans, but also with things like mysteries and big ideas.

## **Home**

From my interpretations, I find that the relationship to the natural world is an important characteristic of Jenkinson's definition of the DCNA. Jenkinson (2015a) explains how he understands human's connection to the natural world, which he calls home. I have found that there are two important components of his understanding of home. First, there is obedience to place. Second, there is a connection of one's own ancestors to the landscape and the non-human life that lives on/in/at a place.

### **Obedience to place**

Jenkinson is specific in what he means by obedience to place. He begins by writing,

Being at home in a given place means *learning*. It is only coincidentally a ‘feeling.’ Specifically, it means learning the way that the place has of being itself. This is what I mean by obedience. It means having an enduring recognition and knowledge of a specific place and finding your clan identity in that endurance. ... Being at home in a given place means recognizing the rocks, the plants, the winds, and the waters and stars of that place in your own body, and your body in the rocks, the plants, the winds, and the waters and stars of that place. It means more than having memories associated with a given place. *It means learning again how you and those you love and admire, in every physical, metabolic, chemical, mythical, and spiritual sense it can be meant, are made of the things that make the place you belong to.* This is the alchemy of belonging. This is where home comes from (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 250-251).

Jenkinson (2015a) describes the etymological roots of obedience as a “willingness and ability to listen to what is” (p. 51). He goes on to state that with the “skill of obedience, every natural thing knows above all how to be itself” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 51). A common idea in the ROP literature is that humans are the only part of creation that have to be taught to be human (Blumenkrantz, 2015; Foster & Little, 1989; Plotkin, 2004, 2008; Shaw, 2011; Whyte, 1997). This idea is shared by Jenkinson (2014) who believes part of being human is to forget to be one at times. Culture, place and ancestry are important aspects for how one remembers to be human (Jenkinson, 2014, 2015a, 2017). The concept that one has to be taught to be human is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Jenkinson’s understanding of obedience to place is tied to how he understands human needs. He is critical of the assumed cultural supremacy of the DCNA and believes there are other less destructive ways of living. Jenkinson (2015a, 2016, 2017), believes that certain cultures

lived in obedience with a place, and lived in a way that did not diminish the land. This way of life is based on the idea that everything that one needs to live comes at a cost (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016). A culture can repay this cost in their manner of living, worshiping and loving (Jenkinson, 2015a). However, if the cost is greater than what they can repay, it is unnecessary and therefore not a human need (Jenkinson, 2015a). In this description, the world is a living thing, which people are dependent on and have an obligation to. There is also an understanding that any debt taken from the natural world must be paid off or is passed on to future generations (Jenkinson, 2015a).

This description of obedience to place is very similar to Prechtel's (1999, 2004) idea of *mutual indebtedness*. Prechtel is a teacher of Jenkinson (Jenkinson, 2015a; Wilson, 2008). The concept of mutual indebtedness sees the world full of organisms which need to consume others to survive. For example, a cow needs to eat grass to live. This consumption of others creates a debt, and since ever thing needs to consume something in order to survive, this creates a cycle of debt, or mutual indebtedness. This creates a natural cycle of sorts, where everything in life is feeding something else. Prechtel and Jenkinson (2015a) see humans as the most dependent organism in this cycle, meaning that nothing is solely dependent on consuming humans. However, this seems like an idealised world view. There are many viruses and bacteria that thrive and are dependent on humans. Further, there are plants and animals that are dependent on humans for their survival (Pollan, 2001). For Prechtel, the debt that humans occur can in part be paid off by creating beauty. Humans have the unique gift of being able to craft things with their hands, create music, and speak beautifully, by doing these things, creating beauty; in service to the world or the Holy is how humans can, in part, pay off their debts. Prechtel sees this as one of the principle functions of ritual. However, this is a cycle of debt that cannot be broken, as one or

a culture always needs to consume to go on living. This concept is not just applied to what humans eat, but to everything harvested or used. For example, cutting down a tree required a certain amount of beauty created through rituals, not only that but the axe that one made would have to have a certain amount of beauty and rituals for it done as well. This cycle of indebtedness is one of the reasons Prechtel (1999, 2004) argues Indigenous people did not produce iron and steel, not because they lacked the knowledge or innovation, but because the amount of time and energy that would have to go into creating the rituals, and the cost that it takes from the natural world, would place themselves and their descendants in too great of debt. This description of Indigenous people, seems to create a certain definition of Indigenous people, while excluding other cultures that are often described as Indigenous. For example, the Aztec and Inca cultures practiced various forms of metallurgy, which require large amounts of heat and energy. Prechtel's argument seems to present a romantic notion of Indigenous people, or confine indigeneity to small locally based groups that do not practice metallurgy.

Jenkinson and Prechtel seem to be describing an idealistic view of certain cultures. Many Indigenous cultures had slaves, fought wars, created empires, and created new tools (Wright, 2004). However idealistic these concepts may be, I am caught by Jenkinson and Prechtel's ideas. In Jenkinson's obedience to place, I see him describing a way of living that places the larger life of a landscape above an individual's life. It is not that there are not wars or death, but that life itself was more important than one's individual life. Included in this life, is the life of the land, plants and animals. I am reminded of Rong's (2009) description of Mongol culture. He writes that the *big life*, that which is the most important and provides life for others, is the grass and plant life, nothing was more important than the grasslands. Jenkinson seems to be suggesting something similar here. Being obedient to place, suggests that one must learn what the big life is,

and place its worth above one's own. This seems to require an ontological shift from the dominant world view in the West. It places humans as dependant on the natural world, rather than seeing the world as a place where one can go and satisfy their needs. A further interpretation of this concept of obedience to place is that an individual's life is most fully realised in relationship to the larger life. In a way you can be most fully who you are as part of this larger system.

I am also struck by Prechtel's concept of mutual indebtedness. It is an idea that has found much accord in my own life and is a way that I often try and make sense of the world. First, it places us as humans in relationship with the world, and not at the top of a hierarchy. Second, there is a recognition that to live, other things have to die. In my life I have noticed that there are many people who don't want anything to die, that we are in a war against death and it is something to be fought against. Prechtel's concept seems to accept that death is a part of the life cycle, and is needed so that life can go on. Third, mutual indebtedness offers a way to view humans as having unique gifts for the more-than-human world. I find the idea that we must create beauty for those that allow us to go on living, a particularly moving and a helpful framework for making sense of my life. Upon finishing my undergraduate degree, I was particularly fortunate and felt that the world had offered me many gifts and opportunities. However, I didn't appreciate those gifts, take care of or give thanks for them. Shortly afterwards my wife unexpectedly became pregnant. I remember a moment of clarity where I thought, well if you are not going to create beauty for all of the things you have been given to make your life richer, then the world is going to create something more beautiful than you can ever imagine.

There are many generalizations in Jenkinson's concept of obedience to place. For example, how he describes all smaller scale cultures as having the same understanding of place.

Jenkinson (2015a) does not specifically call this way of living Indigenous, but it seems to be implied. He often recognizes or acknowledges these generalizations (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016). However, they are still grand generalizations that seem to essentialize Indigenous cultures and view them as being better. Jenkinson argues that there are similarities in many Indigenous cultures in their relationship with place (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016; Wilson, 2008). Cajete (1994), a Pueblo Indigenous scholar, also writes that there are commonalities found across Indigenous cultures writing that,

Indian people traditionally understood the human psyche and the roots of human meaning as grounded in the same order they perceived in Nature. They experienced Nature as a part of themselves and themselves as a part of it...This perception is found in one variation of another among the traditions of Indigenous people throughout the world (p. 83).

Armstrong (1995), an Indigenous Okanagan scholar, writes, as people “we join with the larger self, outward to the land, and rejoice in all that we are. We are this one part of Earth. Without this self, we are not human” (p. 321). Armstrong’s understanding is place and location specific, but the same understanding is held across places. Indigenous Blood scholar Little Bear (2009) conducted a study of Indigenous knowledge and learning across North America. The deep reciprocal relationship Indigenous people have to land is a commonality across North America (Little Bear, 2009). For a specific example, the Anishinaabe conception of place is not limited to physical space, but rather includes the spiritual realm (Watts, 2016). Watts (2016) writes that “place is the material and non-material space of inheriting” (p. 151). By this she means that place is a way of knowing, experiencing and relating to the world. Inheriting here means that one gains the understanding of one’s human ancestors as well as the teachings of the non-human world

(Watts, 2016). Anishinaabe also understand their physical bodies to be the land (Watts, 2016).

This is understood as the materiality of their bodies, their spirit, mind, and emotions are all connected to the land. This connection of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of one's own body to the place one is makes place an important aspect of Anishinaabe ceremony. Watts (2016) discusses the history of colonization and the importance of connection to land:

As Anishinaabe we are of the land, and the land is alive, then it follows that our thoughts, systems, and understandings of the world are essentially tied to place. It is not just a physical displacement that is risked through continued dispossession of lands; our ability to think, act and govern also becomes compromised (p. 152).

The findings of Little Bear (2009) and teachings of Cajete (1994), Armstrong (1995), and Watts (2016) have similarities to Jenkinson's conception of home. In both the Indigenous and Jenkinson's understanding, place is a location where one sees one's ancestors and feels a connection to the more-than-human world. A problematic aspect of this similarity is that Jenkinson is implying that people from the DCNA should come to know North America as their home, in a similar manner as Indigenous people. There is a tension here because non-Indigenous people in North America are complicit in the infliction of systemic, cultural and physical violence on Indigenous people for generations (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). It has been commented that the ontology and ceremonies are the latest thing that non-Indigenous are trying to take from Indigenous people (Watts, 2013). Jenkinson would argue that his understanding of home and obedience to place are something that all humans used to practice and only by this practice are humans able to be at home (Jenkinson, 2015a). However, there seems to be conflict with his idea of not being able to reclaim one's cultural heritage. On one hand, he argues that if

one does not have lived experience of one's cultural heritage, then one cannot go back to it (Jenkinson, 2015a; 2016, 2017), and on the other hand, he is implying that the DCNA needs to reclaim an obedience to place that all humans used to practice (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2017).

Jenkinson may argue that he is not implying that the DCNA reclaim obedience *to* place, but rather learn to live in obedience *with* place. The difference being that one should not look to the past to try and recreate or reclaim a cultural heritage. Rather one should live in a way, in the present, which may allow oneself and future generations, to live in a way where they are obedient to place.

Even with this rationale, there still is tension with Indigenous people of North America. Indigenous people have lived in North America for millennia and have suffered greatly upon the arrival of Europeans (Angus, 2015; Daschuck, 2014). Jenkinson (2015a) is suggesting non-Indigenous people to become obedient to land, which may be interpreted as trying to become Indigenous. However, what if this process of learning obedience from place actually leads to a better relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people? Indigenous (Manuel, 2017) and non-Indigenous (Ralston-Saul, 2008) scholars have both noted that neither group is going anywhere. Jenkinson seems to be asking those of the DCNA to stop living as if this land was disposable and that once they consume it they will move on to somewhere else. Rather he is saying, stop trying to get away from your history, inhabit the cultural poverty you carry with you, and try to develop a capacity for home (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017). This is related to the statement "dying wise is a political act" (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 15). Meaning, becoming obedient to place is an aspect of dying wise, which in turn can help create political change. I find congruence between Jenkinson's attempts to challenge the DCNA and Indigenous

writers such as (Simpson, 2017) who are trying to change the colonial capitalistic society of Canada.

Seeing oneself as a part of and in relationship with place is found in the western fields of ecopsychology (Fisher, 2002/2013; Louv, 2005; Plotkin, 2008; Roszak et al., 1995), religious literature (Berry, 1999; Rohr, 2011), philosophy (Abram, 1999; Drengson, 2010; Macy, 1998; Naess, 2008; Wilber, 1998) and therapy (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). However, there are differences between these Western perspectives and Indigenous perspectives. Hawaiian scholar Meyers (2008) writes “The land is our mother. This is not a metaphor” (p. 219). I wonder what OE would look like if it promoted and taught this unique relationship to place. Norris (2009) writes any OE that attempted to do this would have to change greatly. For example, a central teaching in many OE programs is *Leave No Trace* (Norris, 2009). Underneath this teaching is the philosophical idea that humans are separate from the natural world in that there is a belief that one can go into the natural world and not leave a trace. An OE that taught of a profound kinship and reciprocity with the natural world would require an ontological shift away from seeing humans as separate from nature. Norris (2009) suggests that if this was the focus of OE than programs “would explicitly focus on creating magical and memorable experiences for young people to deeply bond with nature” (p. 155).

Even though there are commonalities across different fields of thought on connection to place, Jenkinson’s writings still tend to portray a romantic notion of Indigenous cultures and argues that their way of life is better than the DCNA. If this is accepted as true, then it is an easy next step to appropriating these cultures. Further exploration of this is warranted and is discussed in more detail in the section on cultural appropriation.

I find Jenkinson's source of knowledge troubling. He discusses two important teachers in his life, Martin Prechtel and Brother Blue (Jenkinson, 2015a). Brother Blue was an African American musician and storyteller, who Jenkinson traveled and played with in his youth. However, Jenkinson does not provide much more information on Brother Blue. Jenkinson also speaks some Anishinaabe (Wilson, 2008) and learned from Anishinaabe elders, who call him a "great rememberer" (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 396). However, throughout his generalized statements he doesn't acknowledge the source of his information, where it comes from or if he has permission to share it. Further, Jenkinson often speaks outside of specific contexts or locations. In much of his writing I see similarities to Prechtel's (1999, 2004, 2005, 2012) work. Prechtel writes about a specific Indigenous culture in a specific time and place. Jenkinson seems to have taken those teachings and generalized them as human universals. This observation will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

### **Ancestry**

Jenkinson's understanding of home is closely tied to ancestry. For Jenkinson, learning to be at home in a place is not a metaphor or a set of teachings but stems from lived experience with place (Jenkinson 2015a, 2015b, 2016). He describes how a culture can learn to be at home and what is required of them,

Being at home is knowing your obligation to your home and proceeding accordingly.

Being at home is a competence born of deep knowledge of your belonging to and your obligation to all that has been and will be for that belonging. That knowledge included – it *requires* – knowing where the bones of your dead are, and knowing where your dead feed the life that you are learning to obey (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 252).

Chiefly this involves understanding in a literal sense that the place that feeds you is sustained by the bodies of your ancestors, meaning that one's ancestors have literally been transformed into the grass, soil, water, air, and animals that feed off the place (Jenkinson, 2015a). Jenkinson (2015a, 2016) believes this is done through placing the dead into or on the ground, so that they may give life to those that live on the place. This is an example of how Jenkinson's universal generalizations do not hold up. Many cultures don't practice burying their dead. I struggle with the universality that one must bury their dead to see one's ancestors in the place. Seeing oneself and ancestors as part of a place is a commonality among many Indigenous people (Armstrong, 1995; Cajete, 1999; Little Bear, 2009; Meyer, 2008; Watts, 2013, 2016). I see Jenkinson trying to provide a framework based off of common Western burial practices in, perhaps, an attempt to give members of the DCNA a way to live and die and become part of the landscape. Essential to this idea is the ability to remember where ancestors are buried (Jenkinson, 2015a), as well as a fundamental shift in world view. There would need to be a shift from viewing the earth as solely a resource to viewing the earth as animate and familial. This seems to be what Jenkinson describes as the skill of being at home,

learning one's home place does not happen by a feat of imagination or fantasy, or by socialization, or by the transcendental yearning for things to be different. It happens by an act of interment. You plant your dead in your home place, and the bodies of your dead sustain that place. The same place that once fed them feeds you now as food and water and air and ground. Time goes on, life is lived, and then you can recognise – meaning *know again* – your dead in the grass and the animals the water and the air – in the *nature* – of your home place. *Being at home is not a feeling*, any more than your dead are “how you feel about them”: *Being at home is a skill*. It is a skill of recognition and belonging,

the skill of inextinguishable obligation. Obligation: not “*to owe*,” but “*to be bound to*.”” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 251, emphasis in original).

While writing this master’s thesis, I have noticed a connection between ancestry and certain blockbuster movies. *Moana* (2015), *Coco* (2017), and *Black Panther* (2018) all highlight the importance of communicating and receiving guidance from one’s ancestors. The protagonist in these movies are racialized, and the main setting of the movies are not North America. However, these were all movies produced by major North American studios, and were very successful in North America and around the world. Does their popularity suggest that North Americans are recognizing the importance of ancestry and one’s cultural heritage? Or are they suggesting that people from European heritage do not have access to this type of knowledge? Or is this another form of cultural appropriation and essentializing other cultures?

In grappling and encountering the generalizations in Jenkinson’s work I am reminded of Gonzales’ (2006) suggestion for hermeneutic researchers to take the truth claims of the text seriously. Related to this is Moules et al. (2015) guideline that in hermeneutic research, one is not looking for a literal meaning, but rather what arises for the researcher. In hermeneutic research, it is not about the literal claims of the author, but what opens up in the dialogue between those claims and the researcher (Moules et al., 2015). What opens up for me is the hermeneutic quality of Jenkinson’s work. In his generalizations I find a very specific, place and time-based way of living. His concept of being obedient to place is going to be different for every person based on the time, place, and culture they are living in. How one sees or doesn’t see their ancestors in the land is also specific to that person’s time, place and culture. The generalizations in Jenkinson’s work are in contrast to the focus on the specifics in his speaking engagements. Jenkinson (2013, 2015b, 2016) says that what he has learned has come from his

own specific cultural background and from a specific time, culture and place. He goes on to say that his teachings are not a final version or solution for the problems of the DCNA, but maybe they will be translatable to other specific locations and contexts (Jenkinson, 2013). In reflecting on Jenkinson's work, I find a distinction between what seems like his grand theories on initiation and ancestry and that of cultural poverty and appropriation. Jenkinson is painting with broad strokes in his grand theories and misses or paints over much of the complexities of culture, context and individual motivation. Ironically, Jenkinson is critical of previous cultures and people who have been proponents of grand theories. I am left wondering what, in Jenkinson's work, attracts such a following? Is it the search for culture that many feel is lacking in the DCNA? A different take on history and life? Romantic versions of conception to place? I myself have felt a draw to Jenkinson's work. He is an amazing speaker, who teaches in a beautiful and poetic style. I relate to him as he struggles with how to live as a man of European descent, whose family has been in Canada for multiple generations; and finding a way to live in this place without further destroying it, and the cultures that have lived here before Europeans. His perspectives on cultural poverty and appropriation seem to be based on his own lived experience and not theorizing on abstract topics. I find his discussion on cultural appropriation and poverty to be at the heart of his work.

### **Cultural Appropriation**

Cultural appropriation is an important aspect of Jenkinson's work. He sees cultural appropriation as a spiritual form of colonization (Jenkinson, 2015b, 2017). Jenkinson (2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017) believes that the desire to take Indigenous practices and rituals stems from a sense of cultural poverty.

Jenkinson (2015a, 2016) sees the appropriation of Indigenous cultures as a yearning for members within the DCNA to have what is missing from their culture. He writes that, “initiated humans can make you feel like you *should* be from where they’re from, that something vital is missing if you aren’t” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 232, emphasis in original). For Jenkinson (2015a) this feeling shows that one is not connected to home. He compares these feelings to a “phantom limb” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 169, 2016). In this analogy, the phantom limb is the feeling amputees often have for the limb lost, and that is like the people of the DCNA’s feeling of not having a cultural tradition that connects them to place or ancestry (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016). Like a limb that has been amputated, people who experience cultural poverty do not have access to their ancestor’s cultures or experiences, meaning that one cannot go back to or reclaim them, just as one cannot reclaim a leg which has been amputated (Jenkinson 2015a, 2016, 2017). He suggests how one might proceed with this type of longing,

Rather than fill the hole, rather than stop the hurt, rather than seek relief from the loneliness, rather than arbitrarily and in a lazy way or assumes that there is a regal root that is still affirming you, we could start with a lot more humility and at a smaller scale .... We could say something like this, if we are willing to inhabit the poverty that we are trying to get away from, this willingness itself becomes the love song that we keep trying to hear. That we sing it first, that the singing takes the form of the willingness to know in a deep way the time that we are in (Jenkinson, 2017, n.p.).

Jenkinson argues that this feeling and desire to be like Indigenous cultures comes from the cultural poverty of the DCNA (Jenkinson 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017), and that trying to use or consume those practices is a spiritual extension of colonization (Jenkinson, 2015b). However, he is not specific on who within the DCNA has this desire. Jenkinson suggests that, “sorrow is a

saner response to this poverty than trying to fill it up with somebody's culture achievements, what's left of their cultural achievements" (Jenkinson, 2017, n.p.). He sees trying to appropriate other cultures as an attempt to flee this poverty and appropriation will only perpetuate these feelings (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017). For Jenkinson (2015b, 2016, 2017), dealing with this cultural poverty requires recognition and acknowledgement of it. After this pivotal first step, it's necessary to question how the situation arose (Jenkinson, 2017). What are the events, the worldview, and choices that led to feeling a sense of cultural poverty? Jenkinson (2017) then asks, what will the consequences be if present day people who feel this sense of cultural poverty disown their own heritage in pursuit of somebody else's cultural practices, so that they no longer have to feel that poverty? He says that "What might be required is knowing our poverty, our disfigurement. By doing so, we may begin to appear somewhat trustworthy to saner people, because we are not going to them for absolution or salvation. Instead of flocking to their ancestors we begin to sing a mournful song to our own" (Jenkinson, 2015b, n.p.).

In the film *Griefwalker*, Jenkinson was told by various non-Indigenous people that he was a dead ringer for an Indigenous person, based off the knowledge of the land he had, and for making things out of natural material (Wilson, 2008). Jenkinson sees himself as hard to mistake for someone whose ancestry is from the British Isles. He suggests that this statement showcases the underlying belief that Europeans experience self-hatred. Meaning the people who say these things to him, or believe that he is Indigenous to North America, hold this implicit belief that any one from Europe is not capable of having this type of knowledge. For Jenkinson, this is an aspect of the cultural poverty of the DCNA; that there is a belief that only Indigenous people can have this type of knowledge and relationship with place (Jenkinson, 2017). It seems this belief

contains the assumption that non-Indigenous people are meant to wander or flee from one place to another, causing destruction or consuming all of the resources and moving on.

Jenkinson's understanding of Orphan Wisdom, home, and cultural appropriation all inform his understanding of ritual, which I will now discuss.

## **Ritual**

Ritual is an important aspect of Jenkinson's work. In the west, ritual is "very deeply not well understood", in other words an ingrained misunderstanding of ritual prevails, despite the appetite for it in DCNA (Jenkinson, 2013, n.p.). A concept central to Jenkinson's understanding of ritual is: it is entrusted to participants, who act as its servants (Jenkinson, 2013). Their role runs beyond participating or enacting part of a ritual, and encompasses more than their individual or human selves. This component of ritual is contrary to the DCNA's focus on individualism, requiring alternate forms of learning and the ability to give agency to a non-human. Related to this is Jenkinson's (2013) suggestion that ritual has nothing to do with what the people think or feel, either before, during, or after.

To me, Jenkinson's description of ritual challenges certain Western intellectual ideas. The belief that humans are the most complex and advanced beings in the world is prevalent in Western philosophical ideas (Aristotle, 2012), leading, in part, to the Enlightenment belief that we can be in control of everything. Jenkinson's description of ritual challenges this focus on control. It suggests that we are not the most powerful or advanced beings in the world, and that much can be learned from being in service to something else. It also challenges the assumption of the supremacy of that which can be seen, felt, and measured. Jenkinson's understanding of ritual, gives agency to that which is not quantifiable. This seems to highlight an important area of debate in ritual studies about the worth of ritual and how certain scholars struggle to quantify it

(Grimes, 2014; Stephenson, 2015). I wonder what my own interest in ritual, and especially Jenkinson's description of ritual suggests. It seems that I am not satisfied with the emphasis, or supremacy of the physical and quantifiable aspects of life, but rather am drawn to what I perceive as mysterious, which seems to require a different way of learning and knowing. Wrapped up in these thoughts, is a shift from an individualistic human centred philosophy.

Jenkinson seems to be referring to rituals that are complex and involve various aspects of one's experience, such as spiritual, emotional, mental, performative, and social. Bell (2010) uses the term ritualization to describe a strategic way of acting that gives certain actions special meaning. For Bell (2010) ritualization imbues sacredness to certain actions, places, and objects. I find congruence here with Jenkinson (2013). I sense that Jenkinson (2013) strives to highlight that ritual is guided by a different way of thinking than one's everyday worldview, and that in ritual one learns to be obedient to that other way of being. However, reflecting on this interpretation, I notice myself thinking of particular types of ritual. In my experience viewing experiences through a mythological, sacred, and/or symbolic understanding have given these experiences a greater sense of meaning, and made me consider them rituals. For example, there are multiple ways of viewing the car crash I was in as a seventeen-year-old. I can simply view it as a young male acting recklessly. Alternately and perhaps more mythologically, I was speeding through my life too fast in the wrong direction (I was on the wrong side of the road when I crashed). During this time, I was getting ready to play for a junior hockey team and the car crash drastically changed the course of my life. Considering this event through mythological and symbolic lenses helps me gain meaning from the crash.

Jenkinson (2013) likens ritual to playing music written by someone else. Important to this is his idea is that ritual is not solely about self-expression (Jenkinson, 2013). I don't find

Jenkinson saying that there is no self-expression in ritual, but that is not the primary purpose. Jenkinson suggests that a part of ritual is being guided by something other than one's experiences or thoughts. I find this an important distinction, because it requires one to release control. I have noticed that I often want to be in control of a situation or outcome, both in relation to ritual and in my life. Blackie (2018) and Jenkinson (2015a) find this need to be in control a central aspect of people in the DCNA. The idea that ritual is about being in service to and following mystery is something that resonates with me. In the most meaningful rituals that I participated in, I did not feel in control, and felt I was following something greater than myself. This didn't take away from my individual experience, but enhanced it.

Jenkinson's understanding of ritual seems to be influenced by Prechtel (2004, 2005, 2012). Prechtel (2004) discusses the importance of eloquent speech in ritual, while Jenkinson (2013) discusses the importance of speaking beautifully in ritual. For the Tzutujil Maya, creating beauty through music, ceremony and eloquent speech was a way in which humans could repay some of the debt that they incurred from the world through living, which is Prechtel's concept of *mutual indebtedness* (Prechtel 1999, 2004, 2013). Jenkinson (2013, 2015a) also discusses ritual as a way of repaying some of the toll that humans make by living.

Jenkinson's view that ritual is not understood in DCNA despite the hunger for ritual among modern people, rings true for me. As discussed in the introduction I have had an interest in ritual for years which has largely guided my university education. I find a relationship between Jenkinson's concept of cultural poverty and that of ritual. Jenkinson's (2013) description of ritual seems to be related to a connection with place, ancestry, and culture, which are key factors of his concept of cultural poverty (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2017). I have felt a hunger to be a part of, what I have perceived to be, authentic rituals. Jenkinson's concept of cultural

poverty has helped me reflect on where those desires come from, and a way for living that does not include stealing other people's practices. In my own experiences, the most powerful and moving rituals have involved acknowledging the lack of ritual knowledge that I carry with me, as well as, incorporating land and my ancestors into ritual experiences.

### **Initiation**

Jenkinson defines *initiation* as a maker of humans (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2015c). By humans, he means a person who is “deeply obedient to the natural world, inextricably bound to the health of the world for our health, permanently indebted to the world for whatever gives us the capacity to be human” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 95). Related to this definition is Jenkinson's view of humanhood in the DCNA, stating that,

in the dominant culture of North America, humans are born. Being human is not so much a right in this culture as it is an inevitability. Most of us can't help but be human simply as a consequence of having been born, and something has to go horrendously awry for our membership in the family of human beings to be in doubt or in jeopardy (Jenkinson, 2015a, p 195).

Jenkinson stresses that in the DCNA humans are not made, but rather born (Jenkinson, 2014). This is an important distinction for Jenkinson, but is not without its issues. Classifying certain types of people as human or not, has been a tool of oppression. Race, sex, religion, and sexual orientation have all been used to strip person or humanhood from certain people (powell, 2015). Jenkinson is in dangerous territory here. What is the purpose of classifying certain individuals as human, while others are not? Prechtel (2004) discusses' the Tzutujil Maya belief that becoming human is a lifelong achievement, and only elders reach the fulfillment of this. I see hints of Prechtel's understanding of this Maya belief in Jenkinson's writing. I wonder

though, what is being lost by translating this teaching outside of its language and cultural context? Is there a universal aspect to this claim, or is it location, language, place, and time specific? Jenkinson is vague on who the people who do not fit his definition of humanhood are. Are they non-humans, the not yet fully human, or something else? If a child is not a human, or has not learned to by one yet, then what is he or she? Conversely, I also wonder if this argument, that one is human or non-human is a trapping of Western philosophy and the English language. By this I mean, Western thought and the English language often creates dualism and either/or situations. What if it is a case of both and?

I find Jenkinson's claim of humanhood related to his concept of the *natural order of things*. He makes the argument that many in the DCNA are *death phobic*, or unwilling to abide to the natural life cycle. Jenkinson (2015a) then makes the leap, that this unwillingness to follow the natural course of one's life is grounds for the belief that one needs to be taught how to be a human. The belief that one needs to be taught to be human, or that humans do not know, the natural order of things, is often an argument for the importance of ROP (Blumenkrantz, 2015). Gilmore (1990) highlights that this is not a universal rationale for ROP. For the Tewa people, only boys needed to be made into men by ROP (Gilmore, 1990). This is important for two reasons. First, Indigenous cultures beliefs around male ROP have falsely been applied as universal claims for all people. Second, becoming a man or a woman is not the same as becoming human. In pondering Jenkinson's definition of humanhood, I am reminded to look past dualisms. What if humanhood is not an either/or situation, but rather, building on Prechtel, a process of becoming? Race scholar John A. Powell (2015) believes, "being human is about being in the right kind of relationships. I think being human is a process. It's not something we are just born with. We actually learn to celebrate our connection, learn to celebrate our love" (n.p.). Powell seems to

suggest that humanhood is something that needs to be taught, or is something that is learned. I'm left wondering, how does framing humanhood as a process or a spectrum change how we live in the world?

The notion that one becomes fully human by undergoing an initiation ceremony is found in other scholars of ROP (Eliade, 1958; Mahdi, 1994; Prechtel, 2004; Raphael, 1988). Plotkin (2008) writes, "we live in a largely adolescent world" (p. 7). He goes on to describe the industrial world as a pathological adolescent, characterizing it as "materialistic, greed-based, hostilely competitive, violent, racist, sexist, ageist, and ultimately self-destructive" (p. 7). Plotkin (2008) uses the term *fully human* to describe his model of human development. This eight-stage model discusses different levels of maturity throughout human development. Plotkin makes a distinction between what he calls ego-centric and eco-centric cultures. He believes that healthy human development takes place alongside the natural world and is therefore eco-centric. It is by learning the mysteries of one's soul, and relationship with the larger world that one may become fully human. For me, the notion of becoming fully human, finds congruence with Jenkinson's (2015a) thought.

As discussed earlier, Prechtel (2004) sees initiation as how humans are made. He writes of the yearlong initiations of the Tzutujil Maya. To be eligible for these ROP, youth had to reach a certain level of maturity (Prechtel, 2004). However, part of the ROP was personal transformation and new understandings of one's village and the sacredness of the world (Prechtel, 2004). These ceremonies transformed individuals from being self-focused, to people connected to their ancestry, community and the place they lived. Eliade (1958), who writes predominantly of the male experience, believes that learning of the sacred, death, sexuality, and providing for oneself and community are essential parts of ROP, and by doing so one becomes a

complete being. Eliade (1959) writes, “initiation rites express a particular conception of human existence: when brought to birth, man is not yet completed; he must be born a second time spiritually” (p. 187). Raphael (1988) builds on Eliade and believes that one is not fully human until they have dealt with their own mortality and spirituality. In America, this is largely a self-directed and personal exploration (Raphael, 1988). Tewa scholar Cajete, a research participant of Norris’ (2009), suggests that “the essence of indigenous models of education involve creating a vehicle to help the individual find themselves, find their centre” (p. 157). He goes on to describe this process of maturing as “‘becoming complete’ which involves finding your identity, passion, and vocation within a relational context. You become complete as that sense of relationship expands to include not only yourself, but your family, your tribe, your clan, and finally the whole cosmos” (in Norris, 2009, p. 157). Cajete suggests that this Indigenous knowledge and understanding can be used as a wellspring for non-Indigenous people. On reflecting on Cajete’s suggestion, I find that this is at the heart of my interest in ROP. How do we help people learn of what Norris (2009) calls one’s “deeper self” (p. 157), and that this deeper self includes the relationship that you have with your family, community, ancestry, culture, and the whole cosmos?

Jenkinson makes a distinction between ROP in the DCNA and what he understands as initiation, writing,

The things we think of as ‘rites of passage’ are mostly empty, sentimental, and nostalgic gestures, because no one believes that they *make* anything of the young person. They are rubber stamps, not alchemy. The teenagers don’t ask for the rites of passage and don’t seem to need them any more than the culture seems to need the teenagers (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 343).

Initiation for Jenkinson (2015a) requires one to come to know the limits of their own life. Raphael (1988) writes of the minor role that graduation and religious confirmations play in North American life. These events are “not consuming events that can alter the everyday functions of the entire society for months or even years on end” (Raphael, 1988, p. 17). Raphael (1988) sees North America as a pluralistic and individualistic society, in which the consumer culture functions to create more losers than winners. For Raphael (1988), ROP in America are not meant to create healthy whole individuals and communities, but rather consumers who are in constant competition with one another. However, Western culture is a very powerful and, in some way, successful culture, that has spread across the world. The ROP and ways one indoctrinates youth seem to have been successful in helping to spread the culture. That being said, Western culture with its focus on growth, individuality and dominion over the natural world, has caused great destruction to other cultures and the environment (Berry, 2015; Blackie, 2018). As discussed in the previous chapter, Grimes (2006) sees ritual as an important part for transitioning to a sustainable culture.

Tacey (2011) argues that there is an inherent drive towards initiation in youth. Initiation for Tacey, in part, involves a shift from a person being self-centered, or ego-driven, to one that is transpersonal. Tacey includes connection to one’s ancestors, the larger than human world, and one’s own community in this transpersonal centred state. He writes that one of “the lessons to be learned [in initiation] is that human existence does not only serve human ends” (Tacey, 2011, p. 55). Important for Tacey, is that one learns of sacred forces and to move beyond an ego-driven life. This approach is similar to Plotkin (2008), who sees the early years of one’s life as focused on building a healthy ego and learning the cultural ways of one’s community. In adolescence, Plotkin (2004, 2008) believes it is the individual’s task to move from an ego centred life and

begin to “explore the mysteries of nature and psyche” (p. 232). There seems to be a difference between ROP that mark, prepare or give one the skills to function in society, such as getting one’s driver’s license or graduating high school, and, what I’ve called, initiation which includes a change from being individually focused to having a transpersonal focus of one’s life. In this sense ROP allow one to enact cultural values and participate in various aspects of a culture, while initiation involves a learning of self, how one connects with the world, and maybe even, how people can contribute their unique gifts in service of the world.

Jenkinson (2013) discusses a story of corn that is central to the initiation ceremonies that he has been a part of. As discussed earlier, a central issue I have found with Jenkinson’s work is that he does not discuss the context, cultures, or location that his teachings come from. This is again the case with this story. This story goes like this,

when corn starts to grow it reaches straight up growing as high as it can, it seems to never stop and just keeps going, but when it looks like it will never stop growing, the leaves point down to the ground which creates a break of sorts from the stalk. From that break comes the fruit that allows it to continue next generation (Jenkinson, 2013).

This story suggests many things about initiation. First, it shows a different way of teaching that may coincide with change in the adolescent brain, altering how this group sees the world, allowing them to interpret meaning in different ways. Second, it requires attention to the way plants live. Third, the story is used to teach human development. The story seems to say that during the early stages of life, one wants to grow and reach the sky; to be as big as one can be; but that something happens when one is able to create new life, and that is, they look back to where they came from. For Jenkinson (2013, 2015a) this is about learning your ancestry, connection to place, and cultural heritage. The story suggests that one should bow their heads to

that which gave them life, and by doing so, something inside of them breaks or cracks. From that crack, comes the thing that will allow new life, the next generation to continue (Jenkinson, 2013). In this story, there is recognition that growth can't continue forever, and that when physical growth stops, it is time to examine roots.

### **Death in Rites of Passage**

Jenkinson (2015a) describes the importance of death to initiation. Initiation is meant to occur around puberty. The goal is not simply self-actualization or self-affirmation, but rather to connect with the community life, the land and one's ancestors (Jenkinson, 2015a). In my interpretations of the writings of main ROP scholars (e.g., Campbell, 2008; Foster and Little, 1989; Leighton, 2014; Mahdi, 1994), I've noticed that the focus seems to be on individual development. Foster & Little (1989) discuss an individual's preparation for a vision quest. Specifically, in the preparation phase participants choose their *people*, meaning people they feel connected to and would like to share their experiences with. Fasting can evoke intense experiences and probably should not be shared with everybody; however, Foster and Little's suggestion that the individual can *choose* the people, reveals the individual focus of their work, and the culture it is based in. Sharing one's experience with other people is a collaborative experience, but the emphasis on a person choosing those people is based on individual preference, which I find in much of the Western writing on ROP (e.g., Campbell, 1948/2008; Foster & Little, 1989; Grof, 1996; Mahdi, Foster, and Little, 1994; Plotkin, 2004, 2008). This is not surprising; as Western culture places a high value on one being able to make individual choices that suit oneself. In Jenkinson's work, I find him trying to move away from an individually focused society, and incorporate ancestors, place and cultural heritage. The shifting

away from the individual focus of ROP toward community, culture and place is an important contribution that Jenkinson makes to the Western understanding of ROP.

For Jenkinson (2015a) love, death and the relationship between them are important aspects of initiation. Jenkinson (2015a) remarks on the importance between initiates becoming aware that they will one day die and its relationship to loving another. Jenkinson (2015a) suggests these ceremonies begin at puberty because,

Initiation makes personal death the initiate's lifelong, faithful, and just companion. And why is this typically undertaken at puberty? Because puberty detonates the full-bodied, unchildish capacity for being drawn by the looming, urgent tidal sway of another body, another person. Indigenous wisdom knows that learning how to love someone well means learning the inevitability of one of you leaving the other by dying. Love and death co-conspire. They fertilize each other and become true only in each other's presence (p. 342).

Jenkinson never defines what he means by Indigenous wisdom. He does suggest however, that it comes from obedience to place (Jenkinson, 2015a). The emphasis on land being humans' mother and teacher is found in the writing of Indigenous scholars (Armstrong, 1995; Little Bear, 2009; Meyers, 2008; Watts, 2013). However, Jenkinson's use of these terms is problematic. How does a 'white guy' from Ontario gain access to Indigenous wisdom? Is it something that can be taught or given by Indigenous people, or are non-Indigenous people able to learn it directly from the land? Jenkinson's lack of discussion on where his teachings came from is problematic and are easily critiqued as appropriating Indigenous cultures.

Jenkinson (2015a) discusses how many youth have a fascination with death, and writes that this interest in death seems like "a sign of a yearning for some kind of initiatory event, some

kind of purposeful intensity, some visitation from the Other World” (p. 345). The death of childhood is found in many Western scholars understanding of ROP (Campbell, 1948/2008; Eliade, 1958; Foster & Little, 1989; Grof, 1996; Henderson, 1967; Mahdi, 1994; van Gennep 1909/1960). Eliade (1958) sees the symbolic death of childhood as an essential part of a ROP, where Jenkinson (2015a) seems to be suggesting that this is not symbolic but does not explain what this entails. Raphael (1988) and Gilmore (1990) suggest that many cultures craft versions of masculinity that include strength, endurance, aggression, confidence, courage, and self-reliance. For Raphael (1988), these strengths are not compatible with the tender, vulnerable, and dependent traits of childhood. Therefore, Raphael argues that American males are instructed or forced through ROP and socialisation to eradicate childhood traits to make room for the male traits. Gilmore (1990) highlights the emphasis in Tewa culture on the transformation of boys to men, done through violent ROP. Girls in Tewa culture undergo nonviolent initiations, but there is no belief that they need to be made into a woman (Gilmore, 1990). Discussions of ROP in Western literature have heavily favoured the male experience (Grimes, 2000, 2014). Jenkinson seems to be using the same language, death of the child, in his description of ROP, but either not recognising the Western roots of this language or believes that they apply to all people. It could be argued that Jenkinson’s focus on death in ROP is related to Raphael’s (1988) assertion that certain versions of masculinity are not conducive with childhood traits. Therefore, these childhood traits have to be diminished, or killed, to make way for a different version of manhood. Jenkinson (2014, 2015a) does say that one’s childhood does not make way for humanhood. However, his version of humanhood is not based on a version of masculinity, with a focus on strength, endurance, aggression, confidence, courage, and self-reliance. Relating back to the story of corn, I think that Jenkinson is saying that one’s childhood and adolescence is

focused on growth and fulfilling one's personal needs, while his version of humanhood is focused on learning the relationship between one's self and the world, where one comes from (ancestrally, physically, and spiritually), and how one fits in and contributes to the larger world. This version of humanhood is related to Plotkin's (2008) ideas on a mature human; however, Plotkin does not place as much focus on one's cultural heritage.

Mahdi (1994) also discusses the fascination youth have with death. For her, initiation is a time to understand the symbolic aspect of death through the guidance of elders and communities. However, without that guidance, youth may literally enact this fascination with death, in attempting or completing suicides (Mahdi, 1994). She contributes the rise in suicides to youth not having initiations that teach of death, and argues that it is an epidemic. Reeves & Tugend (1994) frame suicide as a "rite of passage gone wrong" (p. 44) and see youth trying to answer the same fundamental questions in both suicide and ROP: Who am I? Where am I going? What can I do with my life? Reeves & Tugend (1994) see death as the favourite theme for adolescence. Jenkinson (2015a), Plotkin (2004, 2008) and Prechtel (2004) also discuss the draw youth have to death. In my own life and through my work as a youth worker I have noticed the interest youth have in death. Jenkinson (2015a) holds that there is a relationship between creating life and death. A new understanding towards death occurs, when one realises they are able to create life (Jenkinson, 2015a). In my experience, many adults are very frightened of youth's interest in death. Regardless of the philosophical or theoretical reasons for the interest in death by youth, I think that youth can be taught the skills and develop levels of maturity to be able to explore these interests. Doing so, may help youth lead more enriched lives.

Are there common psychological or individual processes that people go through in initiation? If these are teachings from other cultures that are rooted in their contexts what are

Western people supposed to do? Jenkinson discusses the importance of inhabiting the cultural poverty that is inherent in the DCNA, but does that extend to initiation? Do all ROP see the death of the child as essential, or is that built upon the understanding of Western scholars and Prechtel's understanding? Grimes' (2000) examination of modern ethnographic literature shows that not all Indigenous cultures practiced ROP to mark transitions into adulthood. Universal claims on ROP are not helpful but perpetuate colonial and idealised stereotypes of Indigenous people. As discussed earlier, there is tension in Jenkinson's work between how he describes Indigenous wisdom in an idealised manner, and how people from the DCNA should not, and cannot appropriate their ways of living. In Jenkinson's work, there is a tension between his own cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge that he speaks of. He suggests and hints that he carries some Indigenous knowledge, yet he comes from a European heritage. I believe Jenkinson is implying that Indigenous knowledge comes from a way of living, in which one is obedient to a place. This is similar to Ramson & Akulukjuk (2009) who see Indigenous knowledge and language derived from the land. However, they do not specify if it is possible for non-Indigenous people to learn Indigenous knowledge from the land. Tacey (2009), building upon Jung, suggests that the land itself calls and acts upon humans living upon it, whether they are conscious of it or not. A central question I am left with is, how did Jenkinson come to carry or learn of Indigenous knowledge? Was it through Prechtel or his Anishinaabe teachers, or his own way of living and learning from his own cultural heritage? Further, is Jenkinson himself appropriating Indigenous knowledge by speaking in a way that suggests that he has Indigenous knowledge?

### **Initiation for the Dominant Culture**

Jenkinson (2015a) does not believe that people in the DCNA can practice initiation, as he understands it. However, he sees potential for people from the DCNA to make use of the

teachings found in initiation, to help transform the culture (Jenkinson, 2015a). This teaching is that “the end of childhood is the beginning of personhood, and that childhood ends with a deliberate, purposeful, choreographed, culturally endorsed exposure to death” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 349). Important to this teaching is an understanding of knowing the “real limits to one’s life” and gaining some skills in suffering (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 349). Therefore, for Jenkinson, initiation is about knowing the limits of one’s personal life, and by doing so, one sees the limits of life itself. As illustrated by the corn story, the teaching in these limits also guides one back to the importance of where they came from, the land and ancestry.

Jenkinson’s notion that person or humanhood begins with the death of childhood is controversial. As discussed earlier, creating a restrictive and elitist version of humanhood is dangerous, as in the past it has been used to persecute others who were deemed to not be human. In examining this claim, I found it helpful to return to Gadamer (1968/2004). Gadamer writes that in “every true conversation ... each person opens himself [or herself] up to the other [and] truly accepts his point of view as valid” (p. 387). This seems to suggest that hermeneutic research is not about saying whether a text’s truth claims are right or wrong, but rather about examining those claims to glean new knowledge for the researcher. Instead of simply putting off Jenkinson’s claim as absurd or dehumanising, I tried to understand what led him make such a claim. As discussed earlier, I think this claim comes from Prechtel’s understanding – at least in part. But I also came to a different understanding through examining the etymology of human. According to the *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* the word human, comes to English from Middle French, *humaine*, meaning belonging to man, via Latin, *homo*. This Latin meaning can be traced back to the Proto-Indo-European word *ghemo*, meaning from Earth, which is comparable with the Latin word, *humus*, or Earth. Human was originally an adjective, and only

started to be used as a noun in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Old English noun for what we now use as human is *man*, which originally meant all human beings and was not sex specific, or *guma*, which has a similar meaning as *ghemo*, coming from and belonging to the Earth.

From these etymological beginnings, I sense that being human refers to someone who is created from the Earth and is in a kinship relationship with the Earth. In writing this, I sense the obvious connection to Genesis. However, these etymological beginnings predate Christianity in the British Isles and the Germanic languages English came from (Barnhart, 1988). It seems that Jenkinson is suggesting that to become fully human is to learn how to live in mutual relationship with the place that gives one life and know the limits of one's life. To become human is to know that you are a part of the Earth, that your own health is bound up in its health, and that all other parts of creation are your kin, as they too come from the Earth. I notice similarities to Indigenous ways of knowing, especially stories where different species are seen to be human and treated as equals (Bringhurst, 2011).

In reflecting on and interpreting Jenkinson's understanding of humanhood I find congruence between the importance he places on limits. He suggests that to be human is to learn the limits of your own life, and the limits of what the place that gives you life can afford to give you. Eisenstein (2013), Blackie (2018), and Akomolafe (2017) argue persuasively that modern humans are taking more than the world can afford to give. Is this argument related to Jenkinson's exclusion of modern people from humanhood? If we destroy the place that gives us life are we really human, or should we be able to say that we are?

I am still left wondering why Jenkinson makes the distinction between one having to become human verses being born human. He seems to suggest that one needs to be taught how to be fully human. I don't think humanhood is a dualistic, either or situation, but as stated earlier, a

process of becoming. “Fully” and “achievement” are words that Jenkinson (2015a, 2017) uses and discusses at length. To be full or to achieve something suggests finality – growth cannot continue, something is complete. Prechtel (2004) suggests that one may only become fully human right before they die, however, not everyone that dies is fully human. My understanding of Jenkinson, is that becoming fully human is a process of learning the limits of one’s life, and acting to ensure that Life can go on, meaning that one’s individual life, and the comforts or power one might seek are not more important than the life of all Life. Entwined in this, is Prechtel’s concept of mutual indebtedness, and Jenkinson’s idea that life needs death to continue. A child is still a human in childhood, just as a cedar sapling is still a cedar tree, but both the child and the sapling progress into a more complex version of themselves as they mature. Again, I recognise the slippery aspect of this argument, and how it can be manipulated into a type of elitism. The idea that one needs to be taught how to be human, seems related to Whyte (1997) line of poetry that states, humans ““are the one/ terrible/ part of creation/ privileged/ to refuse our flowering” (p. 90). This line suggests that humans are able to not become fully human. Does one have to be taught how to be fully human then? Jenkinson (2015a) and Tacey (2011) seem to believe this can be done through initiation.

Jenkinson uses Persian Sufi mystic Rumi’s poem *Who says words with my mouth?* to describe what he sees as a general coming of age question of those without a deep sense of ancestry (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 223). Rumi asks,

Who am I? And what am I supposed to be doing?

to which he answers,

I didn’t come here on my own accord,

and I can’t leave that way either.

Whoever brought me here will have to come  
and take me home

(Rumi, 2004. Trans. By C. Barks)

For Jenkinson, the longing to know who one is, addressed in the first line, can only be answered through mystery and wonder (Jenkinson, 2015a). These are important aspects of initiation for Jenkinson. This is a sentiment shared by other writers and scholars of ROP (Foster & Little, 1989; Leighton, 2014; Mahdi, 1994; Plotkin, 2003, 2008; Shaw, 2011). Even though this poem was written in Persia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Jenkinson (2015a) sees Rumi's answer to the question of who one is, as "historically, culturally, and spiritually" true for those in the DCNA (p. 223). He appears to claim that larger forces created the state of not knowing self, and that individuals cannot get out of it on their own. It is through ancestors, heritage, wonder, and mystery that one has arrived, and it is through them they can find out who they are, and what they should be doing.

Finding one's lifework is an important topic for writers of ROP (e.g. Campbell, 2008; Foster & Little, 1989; Griffiths, 2013; Leighton, 2014; Mahdi, 1994; Meade, 2011; Plotkin, 2003, 2008; Shaw, 2011). Jenkinson (2015a) addresses this topic as well. Finding lifework is a lifelong process, often an individual journey and not regularly supported in the DCNA (Jenkinson, 2015a). It is not strictly an individual process, but includes a connection to the larger world (Jenkinson, 2015a). This approach is different than some depth psychologist (Hillman, 1999; Meade, 2011; Plotkin, 2008). For example, for Plotkin (2008) finding one's lifework is largely an interior process, which involves the natural world. However, the natural world chiefly acts as a mirror for one's own interior work in Plotkin's model.

The idea of finding one's lifework as a process seems similar to hermeneutic research. Jardine (2014) writes, "there is value in spending time in the old place, value in returning there, nesting and nestling, that doubled helix of making a place whilst finding one's place, composing oneself in the fleshy composition of the world" (p. 29). I find congruence between Jardine's writing and Jenkinson's idea that by struggling to discover who we are, we return to our roots and focus on how we presently live. There is an importance in the struggle of learning, which is place, time and individually situated, as well as searching for one's place and trying to create one's place. Jardine (2014) uses the term *dependent co-arising* as an important aspect of hermeneutic research. In this research, I have found that my understanding of Jenkinson's work and hermeneutics has depended on each other. This is to suggest that there is an interplay and dependency between methodology, subject of study, and myself. The point where these three aspects meet is this thesis.

## **Skills**

Jenkinson addresses a number of skills that can help people gain an obedience to place, as well as help them to become fully human. These skills are wrestling, wonder and grief.

### **Wrestling**

Jenkinson suggests there is some important internal process of recognizing and participating in life's circumstances in a way that is engaged with the story of one's life. It is by this process of engaging in or, what Jenkinson (2015a) calls, *wrestling* that makes meaning. For example, wrestling with suffering: "Suffering, learning how to suffer, is how you make meaning from what seems random, chaotic, or pointless. This is what I mean by wrestling. Meaning comes from this kind of 'wrestling'" (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 113). In Jenkinson's work, there is an important type of learning that cannot happen through mining others for answers or knowledge,

but rather through partaking in this process of wrestling. He likens this process to a choreographed dance: “The purpose of dancing, or any choreographed thing, isn’t to get to the end, to have it be over, to resolve it, to let go, to accept. The purpose is to move, to dance” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 113). He clarifies that the type of dance he is referring to is one that involves a partner (Jenkinson, 2015a). He concludes by stating, “*Living your way of life wrestles the way life has of being itself. That is how meaning is made*” (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 113, emphasis in original).

The idea of learning and creating meaning through choreography without looking for a solution or goal is different than going about learning as something to gain or achieve. This subtle shift seems to require a relationship with what one is learning about. In the example of suffering, suffering is a negative. In wrestling, an important teaching may emerge. However, this is not a certainty, and is not the reason for wrestling (Jenkinson, 2015a). The shift also requires a different approach. One is not looking to accomplish anything in wrestling, rather they are meant to find meaning in the act of wrestling itself. Jenkinson suggests that wrestling is a subversive act against the DCNA as he classifies the DCNA as a culture that is concerned with achievement and taking what it can get, no matter what the cost (Jenkinson, 2015a). This applies to the manner in which people learn and collect information. His concept of wrestling requires engaging with knowledge, others, and life in a symbiotic relationship, where meaning is created through the dance between them, and neither partner holds the knowledge. This is in contrast to how Jenkinson sees the DCNA gaining meaning, which may be more akin to mining, where one goes in and takes what is needed with little care of the environment.

Wrestling seems strikingly similar to hermeneutic research as described by Caputo (2015), Moules et al. (2015) and Smythe et al. (2008). In this research methodology, researchers

engage with a text, different understanding, or experience in an attempt to create new knowledge. Hermeneutic research is not about collecting facts or mining data, but about new ways of understanding and questioning (Smythe et al., 2008). Caputo (1987) writes, “hermeneutics is a lesson in humility ... it has wrestled with the angels of darkness and has not gotten the better of them” (p. 258). In this statement, Caputo underscores an important point of Jenkinson’s work: winning battles with “angels of darkness” is not the goal, the wrestle or dance with them holds immense value (Jenkinson, 2015a). Caputo goes on, “it is not the function of ... hermeneutics to put an end to those games ... its function is to keep the games in play” (1987, p. 258). Similar to how an ontological shift in hermeneutics can be realized, Jenkinson’s wrestling seems to call for a shift in the ontology of the DCNA. This shift takes us from being in competition with the world and each other (Raphael, 1988) to one of relationship and wrestling with the world at large.

I found similarities between my own processes as a hermeneutic researcher and Jenkinson’s description of wrestling. Smythe et al. (2008) notes that hermeneutic researchers should be open to the research, following it wherever it takes them. As discussed in the Preamble, through reading Jenkinson and interpreting his work, my focus shifted. I have found that his work rests on a different ontology and that his ideas are meant to challenge and change the ethos of the DCNA. In wrestling with Jenkinson’s work, I have written many different drafts, and struggled with the appropriate way to convey his ideas. Further, I have struggled with how to present his ideas and my interpretations. If this document is a dance between myself and Jenkinson, it has changed many times, and I have tried to resist allowing one partner to have more influence than the other. My own participation in hermeneutic research has required my

active participation with the texts, allowing my focus and approach to shift as new levels of meaning emerged.

### **Wonder**

Related to Jenkinson's (2015a) understanding of wrestling is wonder. Wonder is a capacity that can be developed and practiced, as well as an essential shift in how one participates in life's unfolding, making it an integral part of living as a wise human (Jenkinson, 2015a). Jenkinson defines wonder as, "part fascination, part ability to believe in things as they are, part willingness to be confused, even devastated at times, by the epic mysteriousness of ordinary things" (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 117). Further, he describes wonder as a skill, suggesting that it is something that can be learned and improved upon (Jenkinson, 2015a). He often begins speaking or writing with the phrase, "Could it be ..." (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017). This is himself practicing wonder (Jenkinson, 2015a). In his wonderings Jenkinson is often critiquing aspects of the DCNA, but not providing solutions (Jenkinson, 2015a). He believes the antidote is to be found in wondering (Jenkinson, 2015a). He practices this by wondering how things got to be the way they are, and wondering if there is another way of doing things (Jenkinson 2015a, 2016, 2017).

Jenkinson (2015a) also sees wonder as an important skill "in the ragged enterprise of trying to be a real, useful human being in the world" (p. 118). How one uses and improves this skill is by asking questions (Jenkinson, 2015a). Important for Jenkinson is not to find rational or literal answers to the questions, but to wonder about them. He writes,

there are no great answers, ... but only great questions made greater when their answerers are nobly defeated by the awe and mystery of the way things are. Great questions are not problems to solve any more than great feasts are problems for stomachs to solve. They

are not lacunae in the web of our intelligence, waiting to be filled with more intelligence. Great questions, given half a chance, *are* our intelligence (Jenkinson, 2015a, p. 119, emphasis in original).

In this Jenkinson teaches, adopting a Socratic manner. He states that he wonders if things could be different, and questioning aspects of the DCNA (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017). To me, this draws parallels to Socrates' questioning of Athenian culture (Plato, 2002). Through wondering Jenkinson is practicing the Socratic technique of requiring beliefs and understandings to stand up to rigor. The phrase "earn their keep" (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017) is one that Jenkinson often uses when discussing ideas.

However, Jenkinson is not solely wondering or questioning ideas. He uses wonder to critique the DCNA, and shed light on what he sees as problematic cultural beliefs (e.g., practices around the end of life) (Jenkinson, 2015a). However, by using terms like "saner cultures" (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017), he is not just wondering about the destructive aspects of the DCNA but is also suggesting that other cultures live in a better way. Jenkinson places more worth on pre-agricultural societies, stating that they lived in obedience with the place they were living (Jenkinson, 2015a). He is clear though, that the DCNA cannot appropriate the practices of these cultures and must discover and develop its own way of being obedient to place (Jenkinson, 2016, 2017). Wonder is also a way of entering into a relationship with something bigger, invisible, or a sense of unseen forces that influence a human life. This seems to suggest there is a spiritual aspect of wonder, which in part can be found through an obedience to place.

Again, I find congruence between Jenkinson's thinking and hermeneutics. For example, Caputo (1987) writes:

In the end ... hermeneutics does not lead us back to safe shores and terra firma; it leaves us twisting slowly in the wind. It leaves us exposed and without grounds, exposed to the groundlessness of the mystery ... this intractable mystery is the final difficulty that hermeneutics is bent on restoring (p. 267).

For Caputo, hermeneutics is about evoking and honouring mystery, while Jenkinson is trying to bring mystery into the forefront of the DCNA.

*Aletheia* is a central concept of hermeneutics (Caputo, 2015; Moules et al., 2015, Smythe et al., 2008). *Aletheia* is a Greek word with the root, *Lethe*, which is one of the five rivers in Hades (Moules et al., 2015). Anyone who drank from the river *Lethe* forgot all they knew, and were in a state of oblivion. *Aletheia* has a quality of remembering or recovering something that was forgotten (Smythe et al., 2008). Moules et al. (2015) describe three different aspects of *aletheia*. First, it is an opening to new and different understandings. Central to this, these understandings are often things that have been forgotten or concealed (Caputo, 1987). Second, *aletheia* is about enlivening. It is not enough to just remember something, but it also must be brought into the world. This is related to the third meaning, which is remembering. There is much congruence between Jenkinson's work, especially wonder and mystery, and that of *aletheia*. I've come to understand much of Jenkinson's work as being *aletheia*. Moules et al. (2015) writes, "Aletheia works against what was dead bringing it to life; it remembers and unconceals what was forgotten or lost to the business and work of simply getting by" (p. 3). They go on to write:

In its work of *aletheia*, hermeneutics is organized around the disruption of the clear narrative, always questioning those things that are taken for granted. In hermeneutics,

there is a striking character of attention to the instance and the particular, rather than an effort to generalize (p. 4).

Jenkinson strays from hermeneutics in this point, and as discussed earlier, he often generalizes. I find tension in Jenkinson generalizations. He discusses the importance of context, time, and situation (Jenkinson, 2013), and seems to question the clear narrative that many have around death and dying (Jenkinson, 2015a); but then will make grand generalisations about culture or the human condition. As noted earlier, his generalizations seem to center on big ideas, such as initiation, culture, and death. While specific aspects of his life seem to be rooted in context and location. It seems that Jenkinson has applied his ontology, his experiences and how he has tried to make sense of the world to these larger subjects. He states (Jenkinson, 2013, 2015a) that what he speaks of is based on his own experiences and how he has tried to understand his cultural history and place in the world. Based on his following, he has popularity, it seems there is something in his experiences and generalizations that resonate. However, this does not mean that these generalizations are valid. Jenkinson's generalizations, (e.g., around initiation), often seem to be proposed as universal theories. There is an ironic quality to this, as he is critical of modernism and its focus on universal theories.

## **Conclusion**

There are many generalizations and grand claims that Jenkinson makes, specifically around the DCNA and Indigenous wisdom. Even with these generalizations, I find value in his work. As a hermeneutic researcher, the experience I have with these texts is the heart of this research. From my perspective, much of the ROP literature addresses how people can live more authentic lives with themselves, their communities, and the world. There is a strong sense, in this literature, that the modern world does not teach people how to be authentic. ROP, as practiced in

other cultures, work to do this. Jenkinson's work adds a layer of complexity to the existing ROP literature, shifting the focus of ROP from an individual and psychological process to one that includes culture, ancestry, place, and the individual.

I selected Jenkinson for this study because we share a similar background, Anglo-Canadian, able bodied, heterosexual male, and he offers a critique of modern western society. He also seemed to be a non-Indigenous person who struggled and is struggling to improve his relationship with the place he lives while addressing the destruction of modern culture. These seemed like important insights and knowledge that could help add to OE understanding of ROP.

That said, I'm struck by the tensions I find in Jenkinson's work. These grand generalizations and universal concepts are a further perpetuation of the practice of universal claims, which are problematic. Despite this, Jenkinson's work is indicative of a willingness to speak beautifully and view the world in a very different way, believing that this can change the dominant culture. In my critique of Jenkinson's generalizations, I am reminded of Shotwell (2016). Am I critiquing Jenkinson because he is not pure, which Shotwell (2016) suggests is impossible? There is congruence here with Norris (2011) and Grimes (2000) critiques of the ROP model. The ROP model is built on shaky theoretical and ethical foundations (Norris, 2011). Norris and Grimes do however, see the model as a helpful tool in conceptualising rituals. Jenkinson's work has problematic aspects to it as well. I see much value with in Jenkinson's work, to further complicate and expand my own understanding of ritual, as well as, being able to add to the field of OE. In this process, it has been important to think critically of these concepts and to examine the context and roots of Jenkinson's idea. The interpretations and conversations I have of his work are guided by my personal history and education. And as all hermeneutic interpretations are not final, they continually change, as I am continually changing.

**Chapter 5 – *The Crossing of the Return Threshold*: RQ2: What can Outdoor Education practitioners learn from Jenkinson’s understanding of Rites of Passage to develop their own understanding?**

I started this master’s program with the goal of building my own ritual skill set. Reflecting on this goal, I initially felt a sense of failure. This thesis is primarily reviewed literature and interpreted theoretical outcomes; I wanted to develop practical skills and knowledge. However, I remembered Norris (2009) and Moules et al. (2015) writing of gaining phronesis, or practice wisdom, in hermeneutic research. Norris (2009) defined phronesis as “the application of wisdom, generated through reflective understanding, to practice” (p. 101). The question then became, how can my interpretations and understanding of Outdoor Education’s (OE) understanding of rites of passage (ROP) transfer into practical knowledge. I initially thought that this was impossible, as I believed that to have ROP in a way that transformed a person from ego-centric to eco-centric (Plotkin, 2008; Tacey, 2011), and taught them of the limits of their life (Jenkinson, 2015a) would require vast societal change. Further, I found it problematic to believe that OE practitioners, who in my experience are predominantly privileged young Euro-western individuals not connected to participants’ communities, to be able to run ROP. Instead of offer grand or generalized solutions, I decided to start much smaller, and offer some propositions that I believe will help people develop their own ritual sensibility and capacity, believing that if, as individuals and a culture, we develop our capacity for ritual, than maybe in the future we may grow into a culture that is able to provide transformative ROP for our young people. I identified five propositions that practitioners may use to develop their own ritual sensibility: (1) rituals are hard, (2) working with the non-literal, (3) a different way of

learning and thinking, (4) inhabiting your cultural poverty, and (5) initiation, ritual and poetry. These propositions are an invitation for practitioners to examine their own understanding of ritual, and are not prescriptive actions. I refrained from offering rigid recommendations, as I have found in my own learning of ritual, that one's own personal journey, and how one engages with and charts the course through it, is an essential part of the journey. These propositions are meant as jumping off points for practitioners to examine their own practice, think deeply about ritual, and examine how they live in the world.

Cook (1999) highlights three foundations of OE. The first is character building, epitomized by Baden-Powell and the Scouting movement. The second is teaching youth to lead a better life and become connected with the natural world. This was the aim of Seton and the Woodcraft movement. The third was to develop moral leaders, which was the goal of Hahn. It is my contention that ritual offers something different to OE. It allows a different way of being in the world. One might say that it allows more mystery and non-literal ways of understanding to come into OE. By creating a ritual space, maybe it allows participants, especially youth, an opportunity for their own ritual sensibilities to emerge, and allows them a way to be in the world that is not often available in their everyday lives.

### **Rituals are hard**

When people classify events such as riding a bike in a Montreal winter, or completing and defending a master's thesis as ROP, a commonality between these activities lies in their difficulty. These things are hard things to do, mentally, emotionally and physically. One might also argue that there is a spiritual aspect to ROP (Eliade, 1958; Raphael, 1988). Atleo (2004) writes that the Nuu-chah-nulth believe rituals are things that people will not willingly do, and that they are intentionally hard. For example, during a cleansing ritual one is far from home and

people, they go without food, company, warmth, and security (Atleo, 2004). People often do not do these things willingly or outside of societal pressure; however, through this ritual they build determination, courage, endurance, patience, and faith from these experiences (Atleo, 2004).

OE is in a position to deliver programs that are mentally, emotionally, psychically hard, and that includes a spiritual challenge. The very nature, and goal, of some OE programs is to deliver these aspects (Gass, 1993; Harper et al., 2017). This, in part explains, why ritual and ROP have fallen on such fertile ground in OE.

Practitioners looking to develop their ritual skill set may look to ritualise certain challenging aspects of a program. For example, an especially challenging day could be framed by leaders as a mythological story, where what the participants are accomplishing is greater than themselves or the course. Framing challenging aspects of a course as a type of ritual or something bigger than the individual, may lead to a different type of learning and experience for participants.

### **Working with the non-literal**

A ritual is not solely logical or literal, but rather has a mysterious quality (Blumenkrantz, 2015; Grimes, 2000). There is congruence here with hermeneutic research. Certain hermeneutic researchers discuss following their intuition and learning from the non-literal experiences they have with their research (Anderson, 1998; Smythe et al., 2008).

This non-literal aspect of ritual is related to the embodied and performative aspect of ritual. Grimes (2006) writes that, “performance is currency in the deep world” (p. 152). The performative and embodied aspects are essential parts of ritual (Grimes, 2000). The use of one’s body in a physical and creative way may play a part in what makes ritual so powerful (Grimes,

2000). Music is common in many rituals (Stephenson, 2015), and may be used to help create more powerful rituals (Blumenkrantz, 2015).

The non-literal aspect of ritual seems related to Jenkinson's (2015a) notion of wonder. Raphael (1988) understands wonder, curiosity, and dreams as absent in modern American versions of manhood. In other cultures, these skills were essential to adult males for making sense of the world, and were often learned during initiation (Raphael, 1988). It seems that the non-literal aspect of ritual, which may involve questioning one's experience, culture, and relationship to place, may help people to develop a greater spiritual understanding.

Raphael (1988) and Eliade (1958) argue that an important part of ROP and maturing lies in coming to terms with one's mortality and a spiritual understanding of the world. Plotkin (2003, 2008) and Jenkinson (2015a) both see youth drawn towards questions of death and spirituality. OE practitioners would do well to recognise this, and if possible, incorporate these aspects into their programs. This could be in the form of examining the lifecycle of plants and animals on their trips and using it as a metaphor for examining mortality. Discussions of the earth and what happens when things die can also be incorporated. This could lead to discussions on Jenkinson's (2015a) understanding of what it means to be obedient to place and the natural order of things. Whether one ascribes to, or believes Jenkinson's teachings on place and death, the discussions from these teachings may help participants and staff to develop and further their own understandings of mortality and spirituality.

In working with the non-literal, OE practitioners can also help participants develop their symbolic and metaphorical understandings, which are related to mystery and wonder. Working with symbols and metaphors, as well as performance, is an important aspect of ritual (Grimes, 2000). There are multiple opportunities for OE practitioners to incorporate this into programs.

The start and end of programs are natural places where performance and reflection on what is meaningful for participants can be incorporated. Wojtkowiak, Knibbe, and Goossensen (2018) comment on the difficulties of creating rituals in pluralistic contexts. An OE program has many different contexts. However, meaning can emerge through embodied action and participation in ritualistic forms (Wojtkowiak et al., 2018). At the end of a program, practitioners may guide participants through the highlights of a course, in the form of a story or reflection. Ritualising these experiences can help provide another level of meaning to them (Blumenkrantz, 2015).

### **Different way of thinking and learning**

Ritual requires a different way of thinking and learning. This aspect of ritual arose in relation to the importance of the non-literal aspect of ritual. What I mean by this is that rituals have much to teach us, but it is up to the learner to figure out what they are teaching. This is different than some current Western education systems where the teacher is seen as the one with the knowledge and provides it to the student. There are similarities here to the foundations and teachings of experiential education, which OE uses (Beard & Wilson, 2006). For example, an instructor may allow a student who didn't have their rain gear accessible to get soaked by the rain storm, instead of insuring all students had their rain gear on as the storm was approaching. However, there has long been debate as to how involved an OE instructor should be (James, 1980).

In ritual, Jenkinson (2013) sees himself as a servant to the ritual. He also believes that one must be obedient to the place they live (Jenkinson, 2015a). A common theme here is humans are not at the top of a hierarchy, but rather are dependent on non-humans, including place (Jenkinson, 2015a). This dependency and humility can be the source of great wisdom (Jenkinson, 2015a). How would OE programs change if instructors and participants viewed themselves as

dependent and obedient to the places they were traveling through? Further, how would one's understanding of a ritual or ROP change if one believed that they were in service to that ritual?

I believe that acting as if that is so, that we are dependent on other life for our life, and that we are in service to ritual, is the first step to making it happen. But what does acting like that look like in our modern industrial world? Jenkinson might argue that it begins with being obedient to the natural course of things (Jenkinson, 2015a; Wilson, 2008), meaning we are not able to control everything and that we will die. However, these are broad statements that do not provide much direction for an OE practitioner looking to incorporate ritual into their program.

Jenkinson's understanding of the dependency of humans is similar to an ecopsychological perspective (Fisher, 2002/2013; Roszak et al., 1995). Plotkin (2008) sees the natural world as a mirror for an individual's inner processes, and through the natural world may gain a new understanding of one's self. Fisher (2002/2013) states three aspects of ROP: supporting people to find place in human and non-human community; perceiving the world beyond human centered reality; and seeing one's life symbolically mirrored and bound up in the flesh of all living things, all share similarities with Jenkinson's dependency and obedience. These authors highlight the importance of seeing oneself in relationship to the other-than-human world.

### **Inhabiting your cultural heritage**

As discussed in the previous chapter, rituals must be authentic and come from one's own cultural heritage and experiences (Horwood, 1994; Norris 2011; Oles, 1993; Plotkin 2008). Jenkinson suggests that many non-Indigenous people in North America carry a sense of cultural poverty (Jenkinson, 2015a, 2016, 2017). This idea of cultural poverty has been a helpful concept for me to understand and shed light on my own desires and interest in ritual and Indigenous

culture. Personally, I felt a type of anxiety to have meaningful cultural practices that I was connected to. This created a tension with Indigenous cultures, as I felt they had meaningful cultural practices that I was lacking. On one hand, I had a desire to be a part of a culture that had culturally endorsed rituals that were connected to place and ancestry in a way that I found meaningful and moving. On the other hand, I knew that I could not appropriate or understand rituals that I was not a part of, or had the cultural teachings and experiences to understand. Jenkinson's concept of cultural poverty helped to alleviate this anxiety. In a way, it gave me permission to not have those rituals, and that of course I could not have them because of who I was, and where I come from. It also opens up a possibility that there is wisdom in the cultural poverty that I inhabit. My understanding is, that the wisdom comes from how things got to be this way, and how to learn from that, and live in a way where it does not always have to be so. It is a process of recognizing that there are other richer ways and more connected cultures, but that is not where I am or the culture I am from. Rather, it is a process of learning and acting in a way that might lead to a day where my descendants will not have that same cultural poverty. However, how does one "inhabit the cultural poverty" (Jenkinson, 2017, n.p.)? How I have understood this is recognizing that there is something missing for many in the DCNA, particularly connection to place, ancestors and ritual. Related to connection to place is the desire many have for moving from one place to another searching for something better, whether that is a job, friends, or community. Jenkinson might argue that this movement inhibits the connection and belonging people are looking for. One needs to stay still so that one can develop this connection to place. But what does this look like in a modern world, where one is often required to move due to economic reasons? Jenkinson would argue that it is not the connection to one specific place, but rather that one has the capacity for that connection. How I understand

inhabiting the poverty and standing still is in the recognition of the cultural poverty one carries, and not trying to get away from it. I am still struggling with what this means, and when asked about it I answer with this story:

Years before embarking on graduate school my grandfather, my last remaining grandparent, died. Afterwards, I went on a trip to Europe to see the places my family came from. I walked on and felt the ground that generations of my ancestors had lived on. But there was no one there who welcomed me or knew me. The places I went to were not my home and the cultures I saw were not mine. I came back to the valley where I was born in Canada, and something had changed. I felt homeless, and I struggled to understand what this meant. I had lived in this valley for most of my life, but I began to see it differently. I met a girl, and listened to the river, and learned to speak with my own voice. A while later I went back to the land of my ancestors. On this second trip, I grieved the death of my grandfather, my namesake, and learned a different way of being. I came back, changed again, this time offering the other to be the “guardian of my solitude” (Rilke, 2001, p. 67).

I offer this story, not in an attempt to sound arrogant, or that I know the right way, or that I have tried to embody Jenkinson teaching. These events took place before I had heard of Jenkinson. Rather, I offer this story as it embodies my struggles with the cultural poverty I have inherited and carry with me, and shows the ways that I have tried to learn of and work through them.

### **Initiation, Ritual and Poetry**

Initiation is a complex and ambiguous term. It has been used in many contexts to mean different things. In this thesis, I have been guided by Tacey’s (2011) use of the term. Tacey

describes the seemingly inherent or archetypal urge that young people have to move from ego focused life to one that is transpersonal. This notion fits into my own personal experience as a young person, and what I have seen in many of the young people that I have worked with. Raphael (1988) and Tacey (1997) describe how modern western youth are often left to embark on this transition individually and with little guidance. In reflecting on this research, I found a congruence between poetry and ritual. Specifically, Hirschfield's (1994) notion of poetic thinking and learning were useful in furthering my understanding of ritual and initiation. Hirshfield (1994) discusses poetic thinking, how one learns to be a poet, and what poetry asks/demands of the poet. I found her especially fruitful to my understanding of ritual. She writes,

the poet circles his or her subject, calls to it from far off to see if it might answer, looks for the hidden, tangential approach, the truth that is apparent only by means of exile's indirection and cunning's imagination and a wide-casting, attentive silence. (p. 102)

I see this as a good approach for when one is wanting to learn of ritual. When learning of ritual, one cannot be forceful or arrogant, but rather must approach each lesson with humility. This is similar to Mindell's (1995) suggestion that "if you are too smart, you try to make something happen instead of following nature" (p, 110). I have found this important in my own experience with ritual. There have been times when I have desired to create a meaningful ritual experience. I went into those experiences with the belief that I had the skills, knowledge, and experience to create a transformative experience for myself, another, or a group. As one might expect, the experiences where I thought I was "too smart" for turned out to be experiences in humility. I have found that how one goes about learning and enacting ritual is one of the most

important parts. It is important to act with humility, follow one's intuition, and be guided by the larger world.

Hirshfield (1994) likens the poet to a hunter when she is searching for a poem. It is in this hunting or stalking that one learns how the other acts.

It is the initial invisibility of the hunter that allows the other life of the world to become visible. By removing the self from the landscape through silence and stillness ... the observer can begin to perceive from the point of view of the animal. (Hirshfield, 1994, p. 102)

It is important then to watch and listen how something else sees the world. Hirshfield suggests that this applies to nonphysical things such as poems. I found it fruitful to apply this teaching to ritual. In doing so, I notice similarities to Jenkinson's (2013) understanding of ritual. It seems to imply that ritual is an actor, and to learn of ritual one must watch how it works, moves, changes, and what it likes. Hirshfield continues,

And when we begin to see the landscape as the animals themselves see it, we enter their world in a way not available to us before. What we can see then is the life of things when they are not altered by the clamorous, scene-changing, narrowly defined self. (p. 102)

There seems to be some congruence here with Jenkinson's (2015a) concept of obedience to place. When we begin to see the larger world as it sees itself, or how it naturally acts, not as an instrument for human consumption, but as something with its own autonomy, and something that acts upon us, we begin to live a richer life, or gain a different understanding. What happens if we apply this concept to Tacey's (2011) understanding of initiation as being a transition from a self-centered life to one that is transpersonal? It seems that learning to see the world differently and not focused solely from a human centered point of view can help the transition from ego to

transpersonal. This is an important insight for OE, as programs are a great opportunity to teach and show young people how flora, fauna, eco-systems, and weather function independently of humans, and the connections between them. Hirshfield (1994) offers an important teaching which may help to further this understanding, from simply learning facts of how plants and animals live, to one that is more nuanced. She writes, “We see ... because what we see sees us... There is no difference between human and non-human, sentient and non-sentient. All being is single, alive, awake, and available” (p. 108). Offering discussions on how animals, plants, weather, and landscapes see and act upon us offers outdoor educators an opportunity to help transition young people to a more transpersonal experience, as well as allow nature to serve as a teacher. Norris (2009) suggests that the primary role of an outdoor educator is to be “a servant of nature – a teaching assistant to the ultimate professor” (p. 383).

Being willing to enter into the unknown and unknowable are important aspects of learning of ritual. Jenkinson (2013) sees ritual as requiring a different type of learning from participants and ritualists. The learning in ritual is rich with metaphor, feeling, enactment, and mystery (Grimes, 2000; Jenkinson, 2013). Again, I find Hirshfield’s (1994) teachings about poetry applicable to ritual. She writes,

The poet needs to surrender the protection of the known and venture into a different relationship with the subject? object? (both words miss) of his or her attention. The poet must learn from what dwells outside his or her capacities and language, must learn from silence and exile. (p. 110).

Those looking to learn of ritual must be willing to enter into the unknown and a non-literal way of knowing/thinking/being with ritual. I think that this also extends to the larger world, as ritual is contained within the larger world. Tacey (1997) suggests that ritual is a way

people and cultures enact and come to understand various sacred forces in the world. Hirshfield continues, “To understand the world beyond the narrow self ... it is necessary first to be available to the unknown, to be touched and transformed by it” (p. 110). It seems to me that one learns of ritual through their own initiation or transitioning into viewing the world in a transpersonal manner. It is my belief that by being willing to be touched and transformed by the unknown, we are learning a different way of being in the world, one that is non-rational or literal. I see this way of being as essential to both initiation, as I’ve discussed and understand it, as well as ritual.

In my own journey to learn of ritual and think and live outside the confines of a purely rational and literal world, I have found poetry to be indispensable. A particular poem, *Nass River, I*, by Robert MacLean (1984) has been in some ways an overture to my journey from adolescence to now.

Tent tethered among jackpine and blue-  
 bells. Lacewings rise from rock  
 incubators. Wild geese flying north.  
 And I can't remember who I am supposed to be.

I want to learn how to purr. Abandon  
 myself, have mistresses in maidenhair  
 fern, own no tomorrow nor yesterday:  
 a blank shimmering space forward and  
 back. I want to think with my belly.  
 I want to name all the stars animals

flowers birds rocks in order to forget  
them, start over again. I want to  
wear the seasons, harlequin, become  
ancient and etched by weather. I  
want to snow pulse, ruminating  
ungulate, pebble at the bottom of the  
abyss, candle burning darkness rather  
than flame. I want to peer at things,  
shameless, observe the unfastening,  
that stripping of shape by dusk.

I want to sit in the meadow a rotten  
stump pungent with slimemold, home  
for pupae and grubs, concentric rings  
collapsing into the passacaglia of  
time. I want to crawl inside someone  
and hibernate one entire night with  
no clocks to wake me, thighs fragrant  
loam. I want to melt. I want to swim  
naked with an otter. I want to turn  
inside out, exchange nuclei with the  
Sun. Toward the mythic kingdom of  
summer I want to make blind motion,  
using my ribs as a raft, following

the spiders as they set sail on their  
tasselled shining silk. Sometimes  
even a single feather's enough  
to fly.

This is a poem that I have come back to time and time again. It seems to speak to my own experiences in struggling to discover who I am, and how to live a meaningful life. Within this poem there are many deep and rich images and metaphors that speak to, and add to experiences I have had. In this poem, I see Hirshfield's (1994) words that a poem "is found ... in the meeting of known and unknown, of self and other" (p. 112) come to life. In this journey to learn more of ROP, initiation, ritual, and OE, I often returned to this poem for teaching and guidance.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this thesis, I have set out to provide a more complex understanding of ROP in OE. In exploring the literature of ROP in OE, I noticed that there is a lack of discussion on non-Indigenous practitioners' cultural heritage and how to address the desire many practitioners have for ritual. I used Stephen Jenkinson's texts as a foundation for the hermeneutic conversations that I had with ROP in OE. I proposed five propositions of ritual that may help practitioners develop their own ritual sensibility.

Throughout this research journey an important learning has been regarding cultural heritage. I began this research wondering how or if non-Indigenous North American OE practitioners could use ritual or ROP in their programs. Upon reflecting on this research, I remain convinced of the meaning and importance that ritual can bring into people's lives. However, it is of the utmost importance for these experiences to be based in the culture, location, language, and place that people are from. Jenkinson's notion of cultural poverty has

been an important concept in this learning. In my own experience, the idea of cultural poverty has provided permission for not having authentic rituals, which seems to relieve the yearning or desire that I once had for authentic rituals. It also helps explain why I cannot just take or adapt rituals from a different culture. The five propositions that I present are meant as a way to help serve practitioners to develop their own capacity for ritual and understanding their own cultural heritage.

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