

# Introduction

## *Approaching Lutherland*

The life and work of Martin Luther is, as they say, history, and history and theology have been the disciplines of choice for studying the Reformation. Luther's texts (some 120 thick, large volumes), countless texts about Luther's texts, and the historical details of the Reformation have been pored over, praised, criticized, interpreted, and pondered by theologians and historians for nearly five hundred years. The book you hold is, in a way, about the Reformation, but not the Reformation as such, not the event that took place over a number of decades nearly five hundred years ago. Rather, there is a place where Luther and the Reformation are alive and kicking, in the form of public festivity, tourism and pilgrimage, theatre and heritage performance. That place is Lutherland, and at its heart is the city of Wittenberg, Luther's home for thirty-six years, and today a venue for "performing the Reformation."

### Luther

In the year 2000, as part of the millennium craze, *Life* magazine published a list of the most influential people of the preceding thousand years. Third on the list, behind Thomas Edison and Christopher Columbus, was Martin Luther (1483–1546). Luther's claim to fame is, of course, his leading role in the Protestant Reformation. The European reform movements of the sixteenth

century constituted one of the greatest crises in the history of Christendom. The impact of the Reformation on theology, ritual, politics, commerce, literacy, education, family life, and gender roles was so great that historians typically conceive of the Reformation as a watershed period in Western civilization. The lives of the Reformers mark the transition from a medieval to a modern world; and Luther, if the *Life* magazine ranking is any indication, was the greatest Reformer of them all.<sup>1</sup>

In 1506, Luther turned his back on university studies in law to become a monk in the order of Augustinian Hermits. A year later, he was ordained as a priest. In 1508, Luther's superiors sent him to the town of Wittenberg, located southwest of Berlin, to minister to the community and lecture at the university. In 1512, the university granted Luther his doctorate in theology, and he soon became the head priest of Wittenberg's Stadtkirche St. Marien (St. Mary's Church). In 1515, the Augustinians appointed Luther vicar of eleven regional monasteries. Luther was rising in the ranks, but also headed for a confrontation with church authorities.

In the early sixteenth century, Wittenberg and nearby Torgau were home to the electorate of Saxony, a princely territory of the Holy Roman Empire. As Luther arrived on the scene, calls for social, religious, and political reform were already in the air. The decisive moment came on the eve of All Saints Day in 1517, when Luther, so the story goes, hammered up ninety-five theses against the selling of indulgences on the door of Wittenberg's Schlosskirche (castle church)—the *Thesenanschlag*. John Tetzel (1465–1519), a Dominican monk, had been tramping the roads of the neighboring province of Brandenburg, selling salvation. An indulgence was a purchased document that granted remission of penalties imposed by the church in one's lifetime due to sin. The Catholic Church was, in effect, in possession of a treasury of merit accumulated through the lives of the saints. An individual could purchase a bit of this treasure of good works, thereby circumventing any punishment owed them. By Luther's day, the church had extended indulgences to cover punishments imposed in the afterlife by God himself, the thought of which was a powerful motivator to buy. Sinners gave a bit of extra money to the church, an act that assuaged their fears. The church distributed the good works of the saints in the form of an indulgence document, using the money earned to finance hospitals or crusades or to build cathedrals. By the end of the Middle Ages, professional pardoners, like John Tetzel, were offering unrestricted sale of indulgences, and reformers, like Martin Luther, were taking offense.

When Luther learned that the Medici Pope Leo X was using the income generated from indulgence sales to finance the ongoing construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, he revved up his criticisms of the penitential system

of the medieval church: God's grace, the gospel, and faith—not church-granted penance—were the sources of salvation, he claimed. Fellow Reformers printed and circulated Luther's ninety-five theses throughout Germany, and Luther's defiant act of nailing the theses to the church door became, in time, the symbolic foundation stone of the new Protestant faith. Luther emerged as one of the Western world's culture heroes; poor John Tetzel became one of its arch villains, a not-so-shining example of all deemed flawed in medieval church and society. It came as something of a surprise, then, to walk out of Wittenberg's Schlosskirche the morning of Reformation Day to see John Tetzel out in front of the famous Theses Door, selling indulgences—but I am getting ahead of myself.

## Lutherland

Sitting in Wittenberg's empty Marktplatz (market square), early morning on the eve of Reformation Sunday, 2004, as I was contemplating Johann Gottfried Schadow's *Luther*, the neoclassical-styled monument honoring the great Reformer that was unveiled on Reformation Day in 1821, four giggling confirmands interrupted my jet-lag-induced slumber by scrambling up on to the monument's base, paper and pens in hand. Talking, laughing, pointing, searching, they turned from their papers to the monument, circumambulating it several times, and scribbling notes. They were writing in an exercise book, the kind you might see members of a school group handling as they make their way through a museum, collecting, copying, and assimilating bits of information from the exhibits. As the confirmands were working on their booklet, two trucks rolled up. The drivers and crew jumped out and set to work unloading tables and chairs, beginning the process of transforming the empty Marktplatz into the "Medieval Market Spectacle" that accompanies each of Wittenberg's two annual Reformation-themed city festivals: Luther's Wedding (Luthers Hochzeit) and Reformation Day (Reformationsfest).<sup>①</sup>

Luther's Wedding is a large-scale public festival, inaugurated in 1994, driven in part by efforts to deal with economic and social problems arising from German reunification in 1989. Since the *Wende* of 1989, Wittenberg has turned to developing its considerable cultural resources into tourism capital and receives roughly 350,000 visitors each year.<sup>2</sup> The public performance of the wedding of Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora is the centerpiece of Luther's Wedding, an annual three-day festival held in June. The festival

① See DVD: Introduction.

includes a medieval market; traditional arts, handicrafts, and cuisine; parades and processions, street performers, and concerts; and special worship services, including the opportunity to renew wedding vows in “Luther’s church.”<sup>3</sup>

Each October, Wittenberg plays host to a Reformation Day festival, a tradition whose roots date to 1617, the year marking the hundredth jubilee of Luther’s posting of the ninety-five theses. Reformation Day is part of the Lutheran liturgical calendar, recognized as one of many “lesser festivals” or “commemorations.” Like the celebration of Luther’s Wedding, a variety of events take place over the three days: worship services, lectures and seminars, special museum displays, confirmation events, concerts and plays, drinking, eating, and shopping. Luther’s Wedding draws 100,000 visitors, and Reformation Day draws in excess of 20,000—significant numbers, given that the city’s population is less than 50,000 (fig. 1.1).

In twenty-four hours, the serenity of the Marktplatz would give way to the excesses of public festivity. The noise and bustle of vendors and shoppers selling and buying; jugglers and magicians performing their acts; artisans producing



FIGURE 1.1. The “royal” couple, Martin and Katie, in Wittenberg’s Marktplatz during Luther’s Wedding, 2005. Johann Gottfried Schadow’s *Luther* (1821) stands in front of the old City Hall, overlooking the assembled festival-goers. Photograph by Ronald Grimes.

their crafts and hawking their wares; musicians playing and singing; performers satirizing medieval clerics and monastics; visitors eating sausage, drinking beer, and mingling; clergy and civic officials in full regalia engaged in the pomp and circumstance of sermons, speeches, and processions. Jet lag or not, tomorrow the action would begin. As the girls climbed down from Schadow's *Luther* and wandered off to their next assignment, one of the workers unfurled a large banner advertising Lutherbier, while his co-workers erected the Lutherbier stand. Lutherland, I quickly concluded, would be a semotician's dream.

Taking the scene in, inspired by all the work that was going on, I too set to work. I wrote in my field journal one of the first entries of a project I had tentatively titled "Performing the Reformation": "For those who live here, Wittenberg is home; but I am one of thousands of visitors who pass through the city each year since the dismantling of the [Berlin] Wall [in 1989] and the fall of the [communist-ruled] DDR. For me, for these young women going through confirmation, and for those thousands who will soon pour into Wittenberg's old town to the annual Reformationsfest, Wittenberg is not home. What kind of place is it then?" A few answers were quick to emerge.

As I watched the confirmands do their museumlike exercises, surrounded by the streets, buildings, monuments, and churches that were once the haunts of Martin Luther himself, I was aware of the presence of several actual museums and heritage homes within a few city blocks; Wittenberg can easily be imagined as a large open-air museum. The town, along with neighboring Eisleben, received the imprimatur of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. Models and posters displaying the old city in its heyday reinforce the museumlike character of the old town. City tours are led by guides in heritage costume, plaques on the buildings name the famous people who lived, studied, or passed through the city, windows and racks display guidebooks, postcards, DVDs, and souvenirs—Wittenberg is a location on the global map of heritage tourism.<sup>4</sup> One kind of place, one kind of visitor: the cultural tourist, in search of history, authenticity, perhaps edification.

But the confirmands were no ordinary museum goers. They were in Wittenberg for a specific and special reason. They were undergoing a rite of passage that would grant them full membership in the Evangelical Church.<sup>5</sup> Their elders were initiating them, confirming them in their faith. Wittenberg is more than museum, more than a heritage and cultural site—it is also Lutheran (more generally, Protestant) sacred space. Wittenberg is what Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as a *chronotope*. Chronotopes are "points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people. . . . Chronotopes thus

stand as monuments to the community itself, as a symbol of it, [and] as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves."<sup>6</sup>

Several religiously significant places and objects make Wittenberg a magnet that draws into its force field Lutheran and Protestant visitors, clergy, and officials from around the world. In addition to housing a large Reformation archive, the contemporary Lutherhaus museum is the site where Luther and his wife Katharina von Bora lived, worked, and raised a family. The Schlosskirche (castle church) contains the graves of both Luther and Philipp Melanchthon, and the famous door where Luther posted his theses against indulgences. The Stadtkirche St. Marien is where Luther preached most of his sermons. Protestant theology has long been wary of a Catholic sacramental worldview implicit in pilgrimage practices, yet local and international church-based groups in Wittenberg are actively engaged in promoting and hosting pilgrimage to Wittenberg and the surrounding Lutherland. They sponsor another kind of place: chronotope, sacred site, shrine; and other kinds of visitors: pilgrims, devotees, initiates, clergy in training, and students of religion, like me.

A third way of imagining Wittenberg is as a stage. It has become commonplace in the humanities and social sciences to use performance and dramaturgical metaphors in the study of social behaviors, structures, and processes, but academics are not alone in thinking in terms of performance. The city of Wittenberg Web site and promotional materials refer to the city as "the original dramatic stage of the Reformation."<sup>7</sup> The message is clear: Here is where events of world-historic significance took place. If "all the world's a stage," some five hundred years ago high drama took place in Wittenberg, as Luther and his colleagues took on the might of the Catholic Church. The scholars who have produced the rich body of case studies and theorizing of ritual and cultural performances over the past thirty years—Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, Barbara Babcock, Clifford Geertz, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, John MacAloon, Edward Schieffelin, Ronald Grimes—do not simply analogize social and ritual action by means of performance. These and other scholars are interested in comparing and exploring the relationship between such genres as theatre, ritual, games, tourism, and festivity, as well as the impact of these on social and cultural life—on religion, politics, media, class, gender, taste, and identity. These writers and scholars are the significant others of my academic life. Their work provides the context, ideas, and methods informing this study, so it is no surprise that sitting in Wittenberg's Marktplatz that chilly October morning, I jotted down some notes titled, "Wittenberg as stage—Wittenberg is a stage."

© A short list of relevant Web sites is available in the "Extras" folder on the DVD, accessible by loading the DVD into a computer, and then opening the disk icon.

We can consider Wittenberg a metaphorical stage—but it is more than that. The preparation for Luther’s Wedding, billed as one of Germany’s “top-ten summer festivals,” involves setting up more than a dozen actual stages. In 2004, residents and a local theatre group literally turned the old city into an open-air stage for the event, *Wittenberg auf der Bühne* (Wittenberg on Stage). In this theatrical performance of scenes from Wittenberg’s past, the city’s streets, buildings, and squares became the set pieces on which present-day residents, with the aid of professional actors and directors, were transformed into the notable figures of Reformation-era Wittenberg.<sup>7</sup> Walking the streets were Lucas Cranach, Johannes Tetzl, Katharina von Bora, Frederick the Wise, Albrecht Dürer, Giordano Bruno, Thomas Müntzer, Georg Spalatin, and, of course, Martin Luther. In recent years, Wittenberg has hosted an open-air performance of John Osborne’s play *Luther*, utilizing Wittenberg’s buildings, streets, and squares in the staging. A new Luther Opera has played in Wittenberg, as have a Luther Oratorio and a Luther Burlesque. In 2008, Wittenberg launched The Luther Decade, kicking off a decade-long series of events and performance to culminate in the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. Stage space calls into existence yet more identities: performers and audiences, not to mention directors, promoters, investors, critics, and, as is said in German, the *Ausgebildete*, social-cultural elites.

Victor Turner describes social processes in terms of patterned, dramatic action, which means that certain places, at certain times, become the ground on which is performed tension-filled or conflict-driven social crisis. The Reformation, or the Wittenberg movement, as it was originally called, was such a crisis. The drama of ritual and performance propelled the Wittenberg movement. There were protests in the streets, mock burnings of the pope, one of history’s great trials, public debates, the public burning of the papal bull calling for Luther to recant, and the wedding of a defiant monk and an escaped nun (Luther and Katharina von Bora).

In the past one hundred fifty years, Germany has witnessed more than its fair share of what Turner termed “social dramas.” The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the rise of the German empire under Bismarck and the ascendancy of the Prussian state. The same era involved the *Kulturkampf* (culture war) against Catholics, as well as the secularization of society and battles between cultural Protestants and devout Pietists. The fighting of two world wars; the Holocaust; the division of the country into east and west; and the reunification, the *Wende*, of 1989—these events mark the tumultuous recent history of Germany. The *Wende* is a social drama that is still playing itself out, as the former East tries to find its footing in the new Germany and the new Europe.

The remembrance, celebration, and propagandizing of Luther have been front and center in German politics, religion, and culture since the man penned his ninety-five theses against the sale of indulgences. Luther has been a renewable resource through which to enact, resist, and process social change, and a touchstone of Lutheran, Protestant, German, and even Western identity. In the course of these social dramas, Wittenberg, as the “city of Luther,” has witnessed many main-stage events.

As the crews continued building the Medieval Market Spectacle, I recalled that the National Socialist Party rallied on Reformation Day in Wittenberg’s Marktplatz. The Nazis found in Luther’s belligerent anti-Jewish writings fuel to fire their crazed ideology and atrocities. Early in his career as a reformer, Luther was sympathetic toward Jews, and even published a tract titled, “Jesus Was a Jew,” in an effort to win Jewish converts. When this did not happen, an older, harsher Luther published “On the Jews and Their Lies,” a tract that painted Jews with the brush of medieval prejudice and even called for the burning of synagogues to force Jews out of Lutheran territories. The Nazis would later put Luther’s writings to use in their pogroms.

The year 1933 was the four hundred fiftieth anniversary of Luther’s birth, and the newly installed Nazis, drawing on the legacy of Luther’s belligerent anti-Jewish tracts, helped organize and actively participated in Luther’s birthday jubilee. Officers of the SA and SS flanked and joined the archbishop and mayor in the requisite procession through Wittenberg’s streets, gathering in the Marktplatz, where I now sat. Looking up from my table past the old city hall, I could see the street sign bearing the name *Judenstrasse*, physically marking the absence of a presence in the heart of this festive city. I tried but failed to imagine what that street’s residents must have thought and experienced on Reformation Day, 1933, and I wondered if the word *Judenstrasse* was in the exercise booklets of the confirmands.

Fifty years later, in 1983, the five hundredth anniversary of Luther’s birth, a very different kind of Luther celebration took place in Wittenberg. Following the *Festgottesdienst* (festival worship service) on Reformation Day, Friedrich Schorlemmer, pastor of the Stadtkirche (town church), led his flock from the pews through the streets to the Lutherhof, the large, open garden area that fronts the Lutherhaus museum. Timed to echo Luther’s protest of institutionalized corruption and irrational authority nearly five centuries earlier, the group, over anvils, literally beat swords into plowshares, an act expressly forbidden by the communist government that ruled East Germany with an iron fist. Residents of Wittenberg, their actions on that night echoing and embodying a historical narrative of religiously motivated protest, played their role in the pro-democracy movement, the Peaceful Revolution, which culminated six years later in the fall of East Germany and the reunification of a divided land.

If Wittenberg was and remains a stage of theatrical performance and symbolic, dramatized action, it is also fast on its way to becoming a Disneyfied space, a combination of Reformation theme park and near-permanent festival center. The gravitas and intensity of the *Wende* slowly fading from memory, citizens of the former East Germany are getting on with business, and business is brisk in Wittenberg, at least during the tourist season from April to the end of October. Tour buses drop visitors at the *Schlosskirche*, and pick them up at the other end of town, at the *Lutherhaus*. In between, you can have your photo taken at Luther's grave, attend a worship service and sing "A Mighty Fortress," and have a Luther or a Katharina von Bora beer with lunch. Afterward, you can buy a pair of red socks with the famous (apocryphal) line uttered at the Diet of Worms, "Here I stand, I can do no other," stitched on the sole. If you stay late, perhaps a dinner theatre with Martin and Katie is in store. The celebration of Luther and the Reformation, once firmly under the control of church and local government, and dominated by ecclesiastical and civil religion, now includes market performances, the aims and interests of which are not necessarily those of faith or the shaping national identity and the politics of the state, but rather the making of revelry, local community, and money.

Graffiti sprayed near the *Schlosskirche* read *Kapitalismus abschaffen* (do away with capitalism), but Wittenberg's *Marktplatz* is living up to its name. Luther and the Reformation have become lucrative commodities for a city and a region struggling with nearly two decades of high unemployment (between 20 and 25 percent) and the transition from a communist to a capitalist economy. Once the center of the DDR's chemical industry—in the late 1960s, the government attempted to rename the city by replacing *Lutherstadt* with *Chemischestadt* (chemical city)—post-*Wende* Wittenberg has been transformed into a tourist destination.<sup>8</sup> The old city is the recipient of the tourist's gaze and the tourist's desire to dip into the sea of culture and heritage tourism. Museum, shrine, stage, theme park—the inner, old town of Wittenberg offers a little something for everyone. Gazing back up at the composed yet somewhat defiant Luther of Johann Gottfried Schadow's imagination, I played one of the favorite games in Wittenberg: I wondered what Luther would make of the festival scene that was about to play itself out in his city.

## About This Book

This study involves the interpretation of contemporary public ritual associated with the figure of Martin Luther. Its setting is the region known today as Lutherland, a symbolically loaded landscape of heritage homes, churches, squares,

monuments, museums, and ritual and performance events. Historically, Luther has been a kind of cipher that maps places and objects to images, narratives, and ideals. The Lutheran tradition is a textual one, but material and performance culture has also played a central role in attempts to shape and understand the meaning and reception of Luther and the Reformation. The meaning of Luther to civil society, culture, and the church has been crafted through particular objects (for example, the Lutherstuhl, Luther's desk chair in the Wartburg castle museum), to whole buildings (the Lutherhaus museum), to an entire city (Lutherstadt Wittenberg) and now, to an entire geographical region (Lutherland).

Geographically, Lutherland is located southwest of Berlin, composed of territory cutting across the modern states of Thuringia and Sachsen-Anhalt. Historically, the region was Luther's stomping grounds, Luther's land, Lutherland. Here we find Eisleben, where the great Reformer was born and died; Mansfeld, the mining community where Luther grew up; Eisenach, where Luther attended grammar school and to whose Wartburg castle he fled in the aftermath of the Diet of Worms; and Erfurt, where Luther attended university and later became a monastic. Torgau, close to Wittenberg, is the burial place of Luther's wife Katharina von Bora and was the seat of the electors of Saxony who supported Luther's work. At the heart of the region is Wittenberg, Luther's home for thirty-six years and birthplace of the German Reformation. This list of cities may locate Luther in geographical space, but Lutherland is no mere container of historically significant sites and events. Lutherland is an event-full medium, a process of place making, a symbolic landscape through and in which particular groups and individuals continue to create meaning out of bits of history, myth, image, and gesture drawn from and tied to the figure of Martin Luther.

The study of Luther and the Reformation is not merely a historical question; nor should students of Protestant culture limit themselves to theological, textual, and ethical approaches. Luther, as the pages in this book and the chapters on the DVD reveal, is still walking the streets of Wittenberg. Since the man penned his ninety-five theses against indulgences, Luther has been a renewable symbolic resource. The historical Luther is both the Luther of the Reformation and the Luther as he has been remembered and represented, ritualized and performed, bought and sold across the centuries.

The methods and theories informing this study are drawn from the fields of ritual studies, performance theory, and symbolic and interpretative anthropology, but I also employ historical methods. The history of Luther festivity is important context for understanding contemporary dynamics. Students of ritual and performance are concerned with describing, understanding, and interpreting the role of embodiment and action in religious, political, and cultural

life—a growing counterweight in academia to decades of papers, books, and teaching devoted to discourse and textuality, not to mention textualism, the theorizing of nontextual phenomena through the extended metaphor of the text. Studying ritual and cultural performances involves examining “the embodiment of meanings in social contexts. The study of ritual is not primarily the study of ideas in people’s heads or feelings in their hearts but about meanings embodied in posturing and gesturing.”<sup>9</sup> An ethnographic approach to Christianity is relatively rare in the field of religious studies, and ethnographic treatments of Protestant culture are rarer still. Lutherland is a site of pilgrimage, public ritual, and heritage and theatrical performances, and the following chapters entail the description, analysis, and interpretation of the meanings of these practices.

On four different occasions over a two-year period, I traveled in Lutherland, visiting, attending, photographing, and filming the places and events that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. In addition to photographic and video documentation, participant observation, and informal conversations along the routes to Luther, I conducted formal interviews with academics, clergy, tourists, pilgrims, performers, actors, and others involved in organizing and producing Lutherland’s busy annual event calendar. Classical ethnography involves long-term study; my time in Lutherland more closely resembled excursions or forays into the field, returning home to add to the cache of ethnographic and historical material that has given birth to this book. The timing (and focus) of my visits was shaped by the rhythms and content of the festival calendar. I spent most of my time in the field in Wittenberg before, during, and after its two annual Reformation festivals. Most scholars traveling to Wittenberg do so to study the historical and theological dimensions of the Reformation, making use of the extensive archives that are part of the Lutherhaus museum, and receiving insight and inspiration from Luther’s native surroundings. My interests were not historical or archival but ethnographic, though I have utilized historical and textual methods in the course of my research and writing. I witnessed most of the rites and performances discussed in the book at first hand, though I also draw on some retrospective accounts collected in the field, and occasionally on secondary textual, film, and photographic sources.

My fieldwork generated about forty hours of digital video footage, several CDs worth of photographs, a half-dozen high-density minidisks of audio interviews and sounds, a packed field journal, stacks of print literature—posters, postcards, event programs, newspaper clippings, maps, guidebooks—and a few choice souvenirs. As the reader will be aware, this book contains a DVD—but “contain” is the wrong word. The two, text and DVD, are meant to be parts of whole, neither containing the other. The book spins out into the DVD, but

much of the multimedia material on the DVD consists of primary data used in the writing of the book. The reader is free, of course, to go about the joint task of reading/viewing as they see fit. The footnotes that appear periodically in the text suggest one option, referring the reader to a particular item on the DVD, a “relaxed link” that suggests “go here now, if you like.”

Following the links into the DVD is a way to add sound, color, and motion to textual description and interpretation of places and events. One aim of combining text and DVD is to utilize advances in digital media technology to bring religion and culture to life. Lived religion—ritual practice, for example—is not simply a matter of assenting to certain beliefs or holding certain values; rather, it is a sensuous activity. Ritual is a practice, a using and forming of the body, a way of bodily knowing and communicating. With video we can see and we can hear lived religion—and if a picture is worth a thousands words, well then, why not?

Yet the DVD materials do more than render the events discussed in the book visually compelling. The production of a DVD was driven by more than the desire to jazz up black marks on white paper. The DVD contains illustrative material and short films, but also data. In picking up this book, you become more than a mere reader. You also become a viewer-observer of the events I observed (or, at least, a record of those events). You can use ethnographic sensibilities and techniques in studying the multimedia materials, a process that may lead to interpretations and ideas at odds with those I develop in and through text and film. Authors are meant to be masters of their craft, but in granting readers access to material collected in the field, the ethnographic process is made more transparent. The combination of book and DVD should offer the reader insight into the relationship between theory, method, and scholarly interpretation. The reader will also find reflection on theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the study of public religion and ritual, including consideration of the use of video in ethnographic research.

Most of the DVD materials are not “raw.” Rather, they represent various stages of “cooking”—dishes flavored by decisions about who, what, and how to shoot, by theoretical and methodological assumptions, and, importantly, by the process of editing. In terms of style or genre, the DVD includes a mix of the expository, the observational, and the impressionistic. Can scholars utilize digital video not just for recording data and observations but also for doing their work: explaining, analyzing, interpreting, and theorizing—not through the scholarly paper or the academic book but through the genre and medium of film? Can film stand alone, as Jay Ruby and others have suggested and advocated, as a statement of the academic’s discoveries, conclusions, and critiques? Some of the items included here move in this direction, or so I would like to

believe. Such a possibility, largely because of the media involved, suggests the scholar-cum-artist, a being rarely sighted in the hallways of academia. I do not consider any of the materials on the DVD “art.” Nor do I make any great claims of methodological originality. Ethnographers have long been using a camera for the purposes of research; the past twenty years have witnessed vigorous discussion over the assets and liabilities of “visual anthropology,” and there is now a tradition of ethnographic film extending back to the first cameras, some of which borders the domain of the artist, if not crossing over into it. The combining of text and DVD creates something of a new beast, the exact species of which I have yet to identify—but which I hope will not prove too unruly to handle.