

BROWN

You know, some of the rituals I really love. And certainly the necessity of ritual. In our community recently, we had three funerals right after the other. It was brutal. Fucking brutal. There was one young person who was disabled, a ninety-four-year-old woman who had a great long life, and a sixty-four-year-old who just fell over—boom—from a heart attack. And we all gathered there, and we all had the meal, and the priest sprinkled the water, and there was the incense, and we were just all like, okay, here's stuff we don't understand. We're really sorry, and we're going to say the prayers we've been saying for 2,000 years, and we will see you in heaven, or not, but we will remember you in this way.

Everybody dies. But in a community with sacraments, it's not like they just die, and we go home and watch TV. We come together, and we say the old words and water and wine and song. One thing about structured religion is having other people to help you along. Of course, the downside is having other people tell you what to do, you know, don't be gay, don't be a woman, have this kind of sex but not that kind, all that, which I guess a lot of structures have.

But there was something about it, you know? I love classical music. I love classical art. That's very Catholic, all of that western culture stuff, and then once a week, I go to a hospital and I take Holy Communion with people. Most of these people are in trouble—I mean, they're in the hospital. But they want this, and they want to be with their family and say the old words they know. It's this profound thing—we're going to hold hands and say the words and eat this little thing together, that kind of ritual. There's something bigger than us. Some people don't think so, but I do. I'm sure there's something greater than heaven or earth, as the philosophy goes.

SPIRO

Do you have rituals when you write?

BROWN

Not really. I don't write every day. I have long periods where I don't write, months of not writing. I forgot this, but my friend asked,