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Roger D. Abrahams

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In confronting festive events, one preliminary theoretical concern of scholars should be nomenclature. In this article, Roger Abrahams outlines the semantics of the festive vocabulary for American English and the fields of meaning for several key terms.

The premises of Abrahams's discussion may be found in the works of John Dewey and the behaviorists which give a preliminary definition of social behavior. Individual experiences of special intensity and significance form an event. If the event takes place on a special occasion, it receives a further "charge" of semantic meaning. And if there is a preagreement as to how people might act and feel in common, the event constitutes a celebration which can be either festive or ceremonial. At this point the argument draws on a classic concept, Emile Durkheim's pair of opposites sacred and profane. The statement has been updated by Victor Turner's parallel distinction between liminal (obligatory, highly formalized) and liminoid (optional, free-flowing) social events and behavior. In discussing religion and society, Robert Bellah pointed out the present progressive secularization of postindustrial Western culture. In many traditional cultures, elaborates the author, high fun and seriousness are strictly united in the "work of the gods." In postindustrial cultures, the new meaning of festival must be investigated after acknowledging the separation of holy work and revelry.

Given the general background of these premises, Abrahams's argument remains based on the opposition between ritual (sacred) and festival (secular) in contemporary America. Both occur at highly charged times in community life, but their social function and consequences, their distinctive features and symbolic meaning are in opposition. Ritual arises out of shared apprehensions in the face of individual and social changes; devised in order to cope with them, it gives names and definite borders to transitions and transformations. Festival, in contrast, goes against customary confirmation and pacification, with subversive disorder and dramatic juxtaposition. Ritual underscores continuity and confirmation. It reinforces the harmony of society and intensifies authority. Festival questions authority and challenges social harmony. Ritual is "for real"—a serious occasion whose transformations and consequences carry into everyday life; festival is "for fun"—not to be taken seriously: its consequences should only affect the make-believe world. Ritual reenacts to some extent the way the natural and social world are put together; festival takes its meaning precisely from opposition to the everyday and the workaday, which it represents with symbolic inversion and the topsy-turvy in a game of distorting mirrors. Ritual takes energy already accrued in the social fabric and reinforces it regularly. Festival provides its own explosive energy and tears it to pieces periodically. Indeed, firecrackers and fireworks, suggests the author, are the most striking signs of festivals since they command attention and spectacularly consume themselves in a brief moment.

Besides presenting in his discussion a strong case for Durkheim's semantic pair of opposites sacred/profane and its classificatory importance for contemporary American celebrations, Abrahams's contribution is also important because it sketches the diachronic evolution of the meaning of his terms, the introduction of new ones, and the rising importance of others in America's festive vocabulary. The discussion then shows the rising importance of the fair, display of products of a rural year cycle celebrating the economy and glorifying the quality, merit, and usefulness of daily objects and produce.

Fair now tends to become synonymous with festival, especially in urban environments, says the author, and its stress on usefulness and production is replacing the festival's ancient, carnivalesque indulgence in conspicuous waste and destruction. To fair is now attached a connotation of nostalgia for an American Arcadia, a way of life with economy and technology simple enough to allow individuals to do everything by themselves.

The importance of festival in America is decreasing, states the author, and the variety and fragmentation of social life have introduced new "play events" into the festive vocabulary, with ceremonies intensified at the individual and familiar dimension. Holidays from quasi-religious occasions tend to become family-oriented functions; the party is more and more important for a society praising spontaneity, sincerity, "sharing," and egalitarianism in public occasions. And finally there is the weekend, the last novelty of postindustrial society. Successor to the day of the Lord devoted to rest, to restore energy and contemplate His works, the weekend is a longer time in today's miniaturized calendar which alternates work and holiday. It is devoted to play, fun, and festive activities on a private, individual basis in which Americans can also replay their imagined past of warriors, pilgrims, farmers, hunters, or gatherers.

On the whole, Abrahams's contemporary vocabulary of festive events reflects the

postindustrial freeing-up of time and energies and their investment into different, fragmented social events and individualistic celebrations. The future of festival, it seems, has already started.

An American Vocabulary of Celebrations

Roger D. Abrahams

Let me begin with a self-evident observation: the study of any culture is affected by the basic terms around which the description and analysis revolve, and where these terms are also key ones in the language and culture of the observer, the description itself will constantly be open to ethnocentric influence. Perhaps in humanistic and anthropological studies there ought to be no necessity to state something so obvious. Yet the degree of sensitivity in matters of this sort has been little greater than in any other writings about other cultures. To be sure, many ethnographic reports today attempt to couch their descriptions of key scenes or events of the culture under observation with reference to the native terms for the event, its constituent parts, and the shared feelings that emerge, ideally, as part of the experience. Yet we still employ a great many of our own resonant terms without having analyzed their fields of meaning. We cannot, therefore, make explicit where our patterns of practice and our approved sentiments differ from those of the culture under analysis, and thus we do not regularly check ourselves to see how our own way of thinking and organizing will affect the ways in which we cast the practices of others.

The central terms of a discipline are especially subject to such semantic pressures: not only do *tradition*, *civilization*, *community*, *society*, even *culture* itself have different meanings in different languages, but the relationship between these terms is constantly under negotiation in American English, both as they are used in everyday speech and as terms of art in folklore and anthropology. This is equally true of the terms employed in describing ceremonial acts and events: *ritual*, *festival*, *festivity*, *pageant*, *party*, *game*, *get-together*, and *ceremony* itself. *Ceremony* and *ritual*, moreover, often refer to the formalized and formulaic dimension of everyday activities in certain vernacular uses, and thus may carry with them the feeling that such nonspontaneous activities are examples of how empty and inauthentic formal social acts may become.¹

It therefore seems useful to explore the range of meanings of some of these key terms in American English as they are drawn on in the vernacular for two compelling reasons: to bring any semantic "pull" to the surface, so that we can protect ourselves from imposing our own meaning for the term on cognate phenomena found in other cultures; and, conversely, to see if, by such reflexive examination, we can discover ways to study ceremonial activities cross-culturally in a more responsible manner. The exploration is especially appropriate in the vocabulary for celebrations in public (that is, out of the home), inasmuch as American English commonly opposes *ritual* and *festival* somewhat in contrast to the way in which the terms have been used in previous ethnographic descriptions. For a number of reasons, most of them having to do with the growing secularization of American life, we have assigned the names *ritual* and *rite* primarily to activities taking place in sacralized spaces, and *festival*, *festivity*, and related terms to our playful and profane domain.

This change in our discourse on public congregating has come about as a by-product of the proliferation of events celebrating our "secular religion," as Robert Bellah has called this complex of developments. But we can also cite the growing alienation from any kind of public formality in speech and carriage arising from the long-standing American tendency to distrust those ceremonial behaviors in which status or rank differences are dramatized. We reserve for such institutions as the church, the courts, and some other governmental activities the right to act formally and to maintain a discourse system by which the priests and judges may continue to act authoritatively. These are the only ones who have maintained the power of "performatives" in our system of speech acts, i.e., words which do what they say they are doing ("I find you guilty . . ."; "I now pronounce you man and wife . . ."), and even those performatives we don't trust or believe fully, as our divorce rate shows. On the other hand, talk in more casual situations has been shorn of the overtly formal. American speakers regard such talk as unfriendly and empty, even to the point of questioning the greeting system beginning "How are you?" if the speaker doesn't really care. Reflecting both this move toward sincerity and an egalitarian attitude toward talk, the American system of interaction seems to value exchanges that are freely and spontaneously carried out, in which the willingness simply to enter into a sharing of energies and information is the primary reason for conversing.

We now seem more concerned with the smaller meanings-in-common that go into personal encounters arising within self-constituted groups as they occur in our daily encounters. What are the assumptions, the "givens" that members of a group carry into life that assent to and maintain group membership? we seem to be asking. And can there be any doubt that it is precisely this concern that has brought about a change in the way the anthropological disciplines have redirected the use of the very term *culture*, shifting its center of gravity from institutional systems to the agreed-upon regular practices of a group.

This is not to argue that we have totally undercut the value of the activities by which institutions and ideals are made explicit—that is, in rituals, festivals, ceremonies, and other kinds of public events. But the change of emphasis has opened up a new set of questions, ones that ask for connections between everyday activities and "the rite side of life."

Here we take our cues from the ways in which the norms and practices of the everyday are intensified and social roles, statuses, memberships are thereby confirmed; but we also are highly tuned to the use of such norms as a point of departure in developing alternative worlds. These framed and prepared-for activities borrow from the everyday but are transformed by stylization and sometimes by the spirit of license which encourages the inversion of everyday values and practices, even to the point of acts of transgression. We will proceed in this analysis of activities from the term that lies at the center of the American discourse on culture: *experience*.

From such a perspective, recurrent patterns of experience provide the basis for the study of behavioral traditions. Here we are concerned with the distinction made in our vernacular between *experience*, or the flow of happenings as lived by individuals, and *an* experience, the recognition that this flow has somehow carried more pressure and volume, and has become more significant. These experiences steal up on us, enliven us as they produce fear and/or thrill. They produce the events that become our stories insofar as they are interesting, typical, and retellable. When the intensity

and significance are shared by a number of people, an *event* is upon us. When these events are experiences for which people prepare and anticipate in common how they will act and feel, they are usually *celebrations*—either festive in intent or principally focused on ceremony. In either case, they are the most focused of all cultural encounters. But whether the event is anticipated or not, we can say that the more eventful the experience, the more focused the encounter will be. More simply stated, both the excitement of the acts and the meaning of the activity are available to shared meanings and feelings. Finally, the more tied the event to an *occasion*, the more ceremonial or festive it becomes.

Most important, perhaps all cultures build anticipation into life by having such celebratory events incorporated into the yearly calendar of community life. When these occasions re-enact, in some part, the way in which the social or natural world is put together, we interpret them as rites. These tend to be traditional—that is, memorable, learnable, repeatable, susceptible to accumulating important meanings and sentiments. The meanings, indeed, are often translated into *messages*, value-laden *lessons* explicitly spelled out. In the case of rituals and ceremonies attached to institutions such as church or school, they arise out of shared apprehensions in the face of the inexorability of somatic or social change.

There are other named and recurrent happenings, however, that have become detached from confirmation or transformation. Though they may also mark off important times in the flow of group life, they are often practiced “for the fun of it.” Anthropological study has shown that in many societies, especially the noncosmopolitan ones, “the work of the gods” conjoins fun and seriousness, juxtaposing them as one means of attaining community. But as societies become tied to the marketplace as well as the temple and other holy places, the two tend to become disassociated. “High” seriousness becomes the special responsibility of the priest. “Low” play and the carnivalesque spirit is put in the hands of the strange ones, the free spirits, or those commonly excluded from the center of ceremonial life. In such a society, play is carried out in defiance as well as for renewal. This is the condition from which our contemporary sense of festival tends to emerge.

Yet festivals and rites still seem part of the same human impulse to intensify time and space within the community and to reveal mysteries while being engaged in revels. Cultural objects and actions become the foci of community actions carried out in common, when the deepest values of the group are simultaneously revealed and made mysterious. But in our secularized world there *is* a felt need to distinguish between holy work and revelry. While rites in contemporary culture are still often accompanied by festivities, and a festival often has a designating rite at its core, surely we have progressively associated rituals with being “for real” and festivals with “fun.” While rituals alone are involved with developing our individual sense of the authoritative, both rituals and festivals enter into the process of self-authentication. The distinction is far from trivial, for it speaks about our most important states of being. Moreover, the primary vocabulary of ritual underscores such motives as continuity and confirmation; the transformations put into practice are responsible for maintaining the flow of life. Festivals, on the other hand, commonly operate in a manner that confronts and compounds cultural norms, and therefore operates for the moment in a way antagonistic to customary ritual confirmation.²

Rituals in such a discourse system are shared reactions to those disturbances

arising as the result of a constant flow of changes. Rituals give names to these changes and draw on the group's shared anxieties in the face of the transitions and transformations. They provide focus, then, for undistributed energies, energies which arise naturally as a group confronts the changes in social state and marks them in marriages, funerals, or migrations.

Festivals, on the other hand, operate during those very times when the life of the group seems most stable, in the "flat" times of the year; festivals manufacture their own energies by upsetting things, creating a disturbance "for the fun of it." While ritual underscores the harmonies and continuities in the expressive resources of a culture, emphasizing the wholeness of the world's fabric, festivals work (at least at their inception) by apparently tearing the fabric to pieces, by displaying it upside-down, inside-out, wearing it as motley rags and tatters.

Festival—like other terms for complex traditional events, it takes a major semantic dimension from the ways it contrasts with the everyday, especially the workaday world, and the ways it differs from other such intense and planned-for cultural activities. It is through such dramatic contrasts that festivals achieve meaning within the idea of *tradition*. By this we mean that the festival has an existence apart from the specific participants as it is "put on" for any given occasion.

In addition to festivals, there are other events included in the domain of festive occasions. Especially important here are the less public occasions for "a good time," events like parties and other kinds of social gatherings, most of them occurring in enclosed places, ones not open to public scrutiny. There are also conventions, inaugurations, and other events connected with our civic lives which combine public and private activities. Such *festivities* often accompany focal ceremonial confirmations. *Festival* itself conjures up notions of openness, either through the opening of the doors of the community (and other such readjustments of the boundaries of private or family space), or through a taking to the streets. *Festivities*, in general, mean the evocation of the spirit of fun, of play and games. Festivals draw on the languages and techniques of play to intensify them.

Festivals seize on open spots and playfully enclose them. Spaces are found and are invested with the meaning of the moment and the power of the occasion. This is, of course, what happens on the streets during parades; spaces become transformed and activated, a place for diversity to be displayed within certain rules and between the boundaries made for the occasion. Festivals thus draw their own boundaries for the occasion and redraw the boundaries of the host community, ironically establishing themselves in areas that, in the everyday world, have their own boundaries.

In this place those who choose to play come together and play roles which, given the everyday ways of labeling, are usually marginal. Thus, the opening up is social as well as spatial and temporal. In this way, festivals embellish the edges and margins of the community under the closely monitored conduct of play; for in play of any sort, the codes of behavior, as well as the roles, role relationships, motives, and moves are severely restricted. Play events appear to be liberating only in contrast to selected features of the everyday world, inasmuch as they playfully depart from some of the most restrained features of social interaction. But it is enough to note that play is being carried on in festivals, involving a motive and a way of operating that are certainly encountered on many other occasions in our lives. Indeed, encounters in

our everyday lives are often open to some kind of playfulness, even when serious discussions are carried out.

Openness, central to our experience of festival, is temporal as well as spatial. Festivals are complex, calendared events. Many of them come from the older agricultural year, and take place when nothing central to the cycle of production is occurring. In a sense, an open spot in the calendar is found, enclosed, and valorized. Ritual and festival both mark points of life transition in intensive and stylized traditional ways. But in ritual, the work of the gods is truly being carried out, inasmuch as personal and social transformations are made possible by being re-enacted according to the gods' examples. Transformations occurring within the spatial-temporal frame carry authority out of that frame, into the "real world." Rituals rely on the powers of the gods as served by ritual officers to bring the viability of these potential transformations to our notice. While play often occurs in a ritual—as when a minister uses a joke within a sermon—clearly it is not central to the proceedings. We certainly identify the ritual process with motives of serious purpose, and the process itself with the highly sequenced, the formal, and the ceremonial. Indeed, *ritual*, *ceremony*, and *serious occasion* have become virtually synonymous in our lexicon of acts and events. The invocation of the spirit of play occurs merely as one device among many to call attention to the significance of an event, to intensify it through employing all the stylized effects the community has available. And perhaps most important, rituals emerge at points of transition, even in the face of crisis. Unlike festivals arising in "open" areas of life, then, rituals emerge in impacted zones.

Both rite and festivity involve stylized, imitative, repeatable acts, carried out in highly charged times and places. Both invoke learned and rehearsed speaking and acting "routines," and gather their power to focus attention on the contrast between ordinary times and the extraordinary occasion. Both tend to transform the world and the individuals within it. But with festivals, the transformations are for fun, to be maintained only within the special world. With rituals, transformations, if they occur, are carried into the everyday. Thus the power of the transforming performer is quite different in the two, for in ritual the role tends to be an intensification (or perhaps a reauthorization) of an everyday role, while in festival, the transforming figures tend to be clowns or magicians, performers not to be taken seriously.

Perhaps the difference can be more keenly felt in the ways repetition is carried out in the two "worlds." In the ritual world, repetition is commonly carried out to intensify. Things done in unison convey the message that community exists and communion is possible. In festival, repetition is as central to the proceedings as it is in ritual, but with a different anticipation and result. Here, having fun is the key to the occasion, and having fun often means making fun, imitating for comic purposes.

What occurs at the point that imitation becomes mimicry? Is this not the point of dramatic transformation, whereby the real becomes, simultaneously, the real and the unreal? This leads to a dramatic juxtaposition of polar opposites so immediately contradictory that we can only respond by laughing: a paradox that we must experience every time we engage in fun-making. Under the *nul* conditions of festival, all social life becomes available for this inversive display in which everything is done with mirrors. But such imitation almost always results in distortion, a misshapeness which in "real life" would be regarded as grotesque. Indeed, the mirrors held up to society

in festive times often resemble those one finds in the funhouse, the type that misshapes, miniaturizes, makes into a balloon.

Transformations brought about within the festive world are precisely the sort that cannot be carried into the world beyond festivities; to allow them here would be to open ourselves to charges of craziness.

The different worlds are also contrasted by the sources of their energies and how these energies are deployed. While rituals seize the accrued energies attendant on the common perception of transition (whether in crisis or not), festivals must provide their own energy source. The festival does this in the following ways: through enforced confrontation; by role play involving dressing up or dressing in rags; by making a lot of unusual noise and large-scale movement, including singing and dancing; by engineering arguments and developing heightened contests and notions of chance taking; and by invoking the spirit of nonsense and the topsy-turvy. The essence of the festival world is articulated by the temporary and fragmentary objects associated with this kind of celebration. Here I refer to festive employment of exploding devices, pieced-together costumes made in high-contrast and high-intensity colors, and to the temporary character of the inventions, like the decorations on animals, carts, floats, and people.

While festivals in the past provided a summary statement of community (and every community had its own festival), festivities of the present have become various and fragmentary.³ Public open places are now used for other kinds of inversive behavior such as parades, protests, and other kinds of linear public displays. Surely it is significant that during festivals the major symbolic movement was "making the rounds," whether that meant mummery, caroling, or simply making a procession. Now, the one-way parade that goes only through the town or city center has become the most important statement of ensemble activity within the community.

In the form of *processions*, parade-like activities in the agricultural festival complex are the occasions on which the most powerful object of the community is brought forth and carried around to enliven it, perhaps even bring it back to life. But parades also have an ancestry of military muster, militia in uniform, practicing to go off to war, or re-enacting past bellicosities. Today the parade is a congeries of festival shapes, colors, and actions derived from the diverse displays, put in a line, "paraded by" a review stand, and judged by criteria of display, not power and awe. The gigantic and distended object, in the past associated with the major crop or with fertility in general, has literally ballooned; now it is transmuted through pageantry into any comic figure who can be represented in blown-up or stuffed form. The hock cart, developed into the pageant *triumph* now becomes the *float*, mysteriously propelled from within. And through it all, the special festive noisemakers intrude: the rattles, whistles, and firecrackers.

Perhaps the firecracker carries the message of festival most fully as a noisemaker that demands attention as it consumes itself. And, in the fireworks show, it becomes the most dramatic and temporary of all of the festival arts, made for the moment of display only, destined to self-destruct, come apart, and disappear. Like the firecracker, festivals "go off"; they are exciting and exist only for the seized moment.

Just as ceremony offers a useful contrast to festival on one side, the fair exists on the other, as a related cultural event which inhabits and valorizes the same kind of open spaces. Emerging again out of the agricultural calendar, and occurring in the inactivity between seasons, fairs are intended to display products of the growing season.

Though one encounters most of the same attractive devices and even the same range of play forms as in the festival, in fairs these features are found on the peripheries. Indeed, from the structural point of view, fairs and festivals seem like mirror images. For what is central to the festival is on the peripheries of the fair, and vice versa. Many of the same foods, drinks, and ways of decoration and display are found at both events. But at fairs, people come to discuss and judge the ways things of merit and usefulness are made, while the destruction of such items is central to the festival. The fair features private and homey things cleaned up for public viewing. But the objects remain things of the home, utilitarian objects and confections, and animals that are judged in terms of their breeding, feed, and care. Fair performances tend to be tied to occupations, such as stylizations of the old methods of working on the farm, the ranch, the lumber camp, and the mining camp. As the old ways fade, the fair becomes less oriented to the utilitarian and leans toward the languages and devices of display. Thus, in the urban environment especially, the *fair* and the *festival* merge to become almost synonymous.

Both fair and festival operate in the zone of nostalgia, as reminders of life in a simpler economy and technology, when individuals "could do for themselves." Now mainly consigned to weekends and rigidly calendared in to give us long weekends every quarter year, our major festivals ask us to remember and reminisce. Ironically, the communitarian message of agricultural festivals has been transmuted into the family morale, "the family" now meaning little more than whatever remains of the nuclear unit. Here the festive moment becomes more directed toward parties.

Festivals are ultimately community affairs. Indeed, they provide *the* occasion whereby a community may call attention to itself and, perhaps more important in our time, its willingness to display itself openly. It is the ultimate public activity, given its need for preparation and coordination of effort, and its topsy-turvyness, in which many of the basic notions of community are put to test. Inasmuch as communities no longer have such an important place in our symbolic lives, the place of festival in our system of celebrating has been largely taken over by family occasions focused on smaller groups and the individual's place within them.

We witness the direction of change in the history of the term *holiday*. For what was once a quasi-religious time of celebration becomes, rather, an occasion for a *family function*, a *get-together*, a *do*. Moreover, the word *season*, with its origin in agricultural festivals, is now associated with family occasions. "Christmas Season" and "Easter Season" have become events for getting together with "those we hold most dear." These seasons each call for a new costume or wardrobe, thus tying patterns of clothing to those of feasting. Once they were occasions of displaying production through conspicuous consumption, but now only the latter is evidenced. Holiday feasts now are "given" for the children and the old ones, the people least involved in producing anything. On most holidays, we try to stuff ourselves—especially the children—with food and gifts, almost as if they are an energy resource for the future.

The other successor to festivals as play events is, of course, the *party*. The party is grouped in our native category system with holiday dinners as *get-togethers*, or *functions*, and include such diverse types as *dinner parties*, *receptions*, and *cocktail parties*, among others.

Parties have become the most significant kind of planned-for event in American culture and elsewhere in the West. A great many of the occasions are calendared, but

usually in reference to an individual or family activity. Parties are talked about and judged according to the degree they allow us to "be ourselves." Such discussions may contrast "good parties" with how we "have to act" on the other kinds of familiar big events, when either we have to dress up and be on our best behavior or we put on costumes to get away from our usual roles. "Being ourselves" seems to mean obeying the rules of casual conversation, "having a good talk" if you will, meeting new people and making new friends—friendship being defined in terms of the relationships that can develop out of discussing one's personal experiences and the meanings derived from them.

The importance of such occasions intended to encourage a certain kind of spontaneous behavior underscores the fact that the same values tend to be brought to the fore in everyday interactions and these more special times. A dialogue is established between the expressive resources of everyday interactions and those which commonly enliven these specially set-aside and planned-for events.

We carry on this dialogue within ourselves between the everyday workaday worlds and the "big" times, when we relax and have fun. Our latest calendrical invention, the *weekend*, is contrasted by us with the *week*, and our new "high holidays" are the long weekends fixed on the calendar. The contrasts are endowed with enormous meaning, for the week is when we work, when we do "what we have to do," and the weekend is when we devote our energies (at least ideally) to what we want to do.

To be sure, this contrast arose out of the old holidays that responded to the agricultural work year. Now however, relieved of the anxiety of food gathering, one of our luxuries is to replay our imagined past; we become weekend warriors, summer emigrants and pilgrims, farmers or hunter-gatherers. Thus we regularize our procedures for "getting away from it all," and connect our runaway acts with a structure of sentiments in which high entertainment value is placed on past practices, especially the "fun" ways of celebrating. Our repertoire of observance includes more festivities than ceremonies or other ritual devices, but the ceremonies of confirmation and commemoration of individual and familiar identity have been intensified. Not only have we preserved Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other such family occasions, but we have elaborated birthdays, anniversaries, reunions, and other such calendared occasions. To be sure, many of these planned-for events are "excuses" for having fun; they unite the generations in a spirit of license and permit them to depart from the strictures of family life. But at the center of such occasions is some kind of ceremonial dressing-up, using our best dishes and silverware compounded by attempts to be on our best behavior.

Our American vocabulary of celebrations reflects, then, the effects of a post-industrial liberation of our time and energy and their reallocation into a diversification of our display events.

NOTES

1. Any writing on the language of festivals today is indebted—directly or indirectly—to the work of Arnold van Gennep, especially *The Rites of Passage*, and the development of

his ideas by Victor W. Turner in a series of works commencing with *The Ritual Process*. I am more directly in Turner's debt as I worked with him in a number of capacities, most

recently in an exhibition at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution entitled *Celebrations*, 1982–83. He edited a book that accompanies the exhibition, *Celebrations: Studies in Festivities and Ritual* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), which includes my piece “The Language of Festivals” (pp. 161–77). A related essay examining the field of meaning of the term *experience*, especially in contrast to *event*, “Ordinary and Extraordinary Experience,” is found in an anthology which Turner edited with Edward Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

2. Here this essay draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965) and Clifford Geertz’s discussion of the Balinese cockfight in his *Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 412–53. The notions of inversion explored by the contributors to *The Reversible World*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), were very important in launching my thinking on the subject. And the work of Beverly Stoeltje on a West Texas rodeo (see her “Riding, Roping, and Reunion: Cowboy Festival” in the present volume) has provided a useful ongoing discussion of the subject.

3. This section on *experience* and *event*

arises from my reading in the American pragmatists, especially William James (see esp. *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition*, ed. John McDermott [New York: Random House, 1967]), and John Dewey (see esp. his *Experience, Nature and Freedom*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein [New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1960]). Here I want to thank my colleague Ralph Ross, one of the editors of the Dewey papers, for leading me through the arguments of his mentors. Some of my previous articles in the area of festival and play include “Ranges of Festival Behavior” (with Richard Bauman), in *The Reversible World*, ed. Babcock, pp. 193–208, “Play,” in *Proceedings of the Centennial of the Folklore Society*, ed. Venetia Newall (London: The Folklore Society, 1981), pp. 119–21, “Shouting Match at the Border: The Folklore of Display Events,” in *And Other Neighborly Names*, ed. Richard Bauman and Roger D. Abrahams (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 308–21, “In and Out of Performances,” in “Folklore and Oral Communication” in *Narodna Umjetnost* (Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1981), pp. 69–78, “Play and Games,” *Motif* 2 (June 1982), no. 1: 5–7. A number of the articles dealing with West Indian festive behaviors are reprinted in my *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).