

graphic record of the five hundred or so objects displayed. Since the National Museum of Natural History provided us with the majority of our objects, it was a matter of course that we should turn to its curators for permission and advice on the borrowing of treasured items from their collections. We are particularly indebted to William Crocker, whose responsibilities include South American Indian artifacts, and who has contributed an article on the Canela of Brazil to this volume; William Sturtevant, the famed editor for the definitive series of volumes on the North American Indians; and Gordon Gibson, in charge of the African collections. The exhibition was housed in the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art. Lloyd E. Herman, Director of the Renwick, has invariably given us sound advice on the aesthetics of our presentation, translated and elaborated by the consummate craftsmanship of the Renwick's Michael Monroe, who designed the exhibition. Their approaches have been transliterated into many aspects of this book. Sadly, Joshua C. Taylor, Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art, and a preeminent American art scholar, my former colleague at the University of Chicago, and a staunch supporter of our endeavors at the Renwick, died suddenly in his prime as this book was going to press. He was a great scholar and a teacher without parallel. Many more have contributed, both directly and indirectly, to both book and exhibition. One can scarcely forbear to mention Martha Breidenbach, who compiled film materials; Claudine Weatherford and Vince Wilcox, of the National Museum of Natural History, who took care of the physical existence of the objects entrusted to them; and Richard Derbyshire, Photographic Archivist of the Folklore/Folklife Program. Finally, Felix Lowe, the Director of the Smithsonian Institution Press, and his lieutenant, Managing Editor Maureen Jacoby, worked hard to make this complex study a publishable reality, as did Press editor John Harris.

V.T.

Introduction

Victor Turner

*Celebration: Studies in
Festivity and Ritual. Ed.
Victor Turner. Washington, D.C.:
Smithsonian P., 1982.*

This book is the twin of an exhibition entitled *Celebration: A World of Art and Ritual*, organized and mounted by the Folklife Program of the Smithsonian Institution at the Renwick Gallery in the spring of 1982. It is not, however, an identical twin, although its arrangement into sections corresponds closely with the exhibition's division into galleries. It is, rather, a fraternal twin having a similar parentage and background: folklife and anthropology. It is not a mirror image; it has its own distinctive features. Whereas the exhibition necessarily directs attention to objects, to material things, to what can be immediately seized by the senses, the book focuses on the meanings behind the forms, the inner significance of the objects, whose eloquent silences "cry out" for interpretation. The book, too, reflects the design governing the celebratory process, the scenario interlinking its events.

Washington, home of the Smithsonian, has, of course, been the scene and stage for many a celebration. America's ceremonies of respect, festivity, and rejoicing—our Independence Days, presidential inaugurations, state funerals, our national triumphs and tragedies—have been most signally celebrated at the capital. The Smithsonian's numerous exhibitions of art, technology, science, history, and anthropology represent a kind of perennial celebration of America's past and present achievements. But more than America is celebrated in its museums. Scientific and military expeditions, private collectors, missionaries, administrators, and foreign allies have loaded the Smithsonian's stores with objects of every kind, practical, quaint, precious, beautiful, massive, filigree, acquired from thousands of cultural sources as gifts, purchases, and sometimes, alas, booty. Among these objects are many which owe their very existence to those "high tides," "peak experiences" in social life which mark an occasion or an event with ceremony, ritual, or festivity. People in all cultures recognize the need to set aside certain times and spaces for celebratory use, in which the possibility of

personal and communal creativity may arise. Celebrations may and do spring up spontaneously in response to unlooked-for good fortune, but they are generally connected with expectable culturally shared events, such as life experiences (birth, puberty, marriage), work (planting and harvesting of crops, quilting bees), seasons of the year (Christmas), religious beliefs (Jagannath processions, the Ghost Dance), upward shifts in social status (African staff ornaments and potlatch feasts and valuables), and shared community celebrations (Thanksgiving and Seder). Some of these events are tied in with the individual life-cycle; others are located in the family, the neighborhood, the village, the city, or the nation. Although the span and range of celebration are highly variable, events are framed by it in such a way as to draw on the innovative potential of participants. Each kind of ritual, ceremony, or festival comes to be coupled with special types of attire, music, dance, food and drink, "properties," modes of staging and presentation, physical and cultural environment, and, often, masks, body-painting, headgear, furniture, and shrines.

Abundant opportunities are offered for personal inventiveness within the culturally defined celebratory frame, for example, in musical composition, choreography, costume design, the use of ceremonial space, iconography (pictorial illustration, stylization of art forms used), enactment of ritual or dramatic roles, and so forth. Group stylistic traditions, sometimes of great power and beauty, may develop in ritual or festive frameworks, for example, the calypso music of Trinidadian carnival with its ironical improvised lyrics on topical subjects, or bridal dress in Muslim North Africa.

The Folklife Program at the Smithsonian has for thirteen years organized an impressive Festival of American Folklife, which has attracted millions of visitors to the Mall in Washington to enjoy its presentation of live performances of folk music, drama, carnival, and puppetry, as well as demonstrations of traditional American arts and crafts, regional, ethnic, and occupational. Ralph Rinzler, the Program's Director, was not alone in being impressed by the creative initiatives of many of the participants recruited from across the nation. Leading scholars of the Smithsonian, notably the anthropologist Peter Seitel of the Folklife Program, were convinced that among the resources of the Institution's many museums would be found a sufficient number of objects to form the basis of a major exhibition on the theme of celebration. Each object would be a product of the celebratory process, a precipitate from its eventful flow. The exhibition would retain the character of this process by the insertion of craft demonstrations, films, slides, music and other audiovisual aids, and a monthly presentation of actual ethnic celebrations at appropriate points in time and space. More than five hundred objects were eventually selected by qualified folklorists, art historians, and anthropologists from ten Smithsonian museums, representing sixty-two world cultures, requiring for their display the entire floorspace of the Renwick Gallery.

As we scanned the Smithsonian collections, my fellow researchers and I made several interesting discoveries. We found, for example, that by comparison with both the folk and high cultures of Asia and Africa and the preindustrial ("tribal") cultures of both Americas, of Australia, and of Oceania, the United

States was only sparsely represented by objects originating in religious celebrations. The exception to this finding consisted of images, icons, religious furniture, altars and their equipment, sacramentals, vestments, and other religious articles and adornments characteristic of the religious culture of immigrant minority groups now permanently residing in the United States: European and Latin American Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jews, Chinese, Muslims, Vietnamese, and so on. Moreover, Europe was surprisingly underrepresented by celebratory objects of all types.

How may we account for such an apparently capricious and certainly uneven distribution? Let me hazard a few hypotheses. The New England Puritans in the seventeenth century, and after them many other religiously radical colonists, undoubtedly regarded Europe, especially in its religious aspect, as the Great Babylon or idolatrous Egypt, and their westward flight across the ocean as a new Exodus. An unsullied democracy, conceived as Christ's government in church and state (which were to be separate) was to be carved out of the wilderness. Obedience to God, not to earthly rulers, was man's supreme duty; the individual, dependent on his own conscience and finally responsible to God alone, was the ethical unit, and government was a compact between free individuals. Such a world-view was clearly opposed to postfeudal hierarchical political governance and to ecclesiastical hierocracy. The early Americans turned their backs on the Europe of kings, nobles, and priests. Similarly they rejected the visible symbolic system which gave expression to the political and religious *anciens régimes*. Sacredness was interiorized; human beings were made in the "express image and likeness of God"; the individual rather than the corporate group was the basic unit of worship. The Word was to be heard, not the icon or image seen. The naturalistic and individualistic tendencies of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment reinforced this rejection of perceptible sacred symbols. In the cyclical rituals of preindustrial and agriculturally based cultures, the past, mythical and quasihistorical, is "carried" by certain key or dominant sacred symbols. The unchangeable character of the cosmic and cultural orders and the notion of life as a repetition of structures are expressed by *sacra* ("holy things"), objects and activities believed to be charged with supernatural power, which are presented for worshipful attention in religious celebrations. In American culture there has been a general desacralization of objects, and celebrations focus on the immediacies of joy in human achievement, represented by such means as brisk or rhythmical bodily action, dancing or marching, and the music of marching bands. In museums this rational, naturalistic approach to the individual and culture has led to an emphasis on the collection of objects which have technological, artistic, political, scientific, historical, and economic significance, at the expense of objects held to have perennial sacredness or holiness. At least such a view holds true for things American. The *sacra* of other cultures, often including the most beautiful and striking articles in museum holdings, have always fascinated the Western public. Perhaps this is because they make visible what Westerners have thrust from conscious awareness in order to effect their rational conquest of the material world. Just as the capacity to dream and fantasize, though not immoderately, is considered by psychologists to be indispensa-

ble for mental health, so, likewise, exposure to those objectified dreams and fantasies which are thrown up by celebratory enthusiasm may be necessary for social health. Perhaps, paradoxically, we confront our own personal, singular depths more fully in these collective forms than we do through introspection, for they arise from a heightened sense of our shared humanity, even if they clothe themselves in the guises of a thousand different cultures. Whether laid down or crystallized in durable images and structures or expressed in the immediacy of social "peak experience," a celebratory performance rejoices in the key values and virtues of the society that produces it, and in a history whose high points of success and conquest (or even noble failure) exemplify qualities of moral and aesthetic excellence. The Smithsonian exhibition attempts to express the North American celebratory type by enlarged photographic prints ("blow-ups"), audiovisuals (sound filmstrips), and similar devices which stress the "processual," "becoming" character of this restlessly linear industrial civilization.

As we worked our way steadily through the Smithsonian collections—that world of storage drawers secluded from the viewing public—in fourteen museums, it became clear to us that an exhibition premised upon aesthetic "form"



Figure 1 Mask, Yaka People, southwestern Zaire. Mbala is the most important mask in the Yaka initiation rites. Often the masks depict a surprising scene: this one shows a woman in childbirth assisted by a midwife.

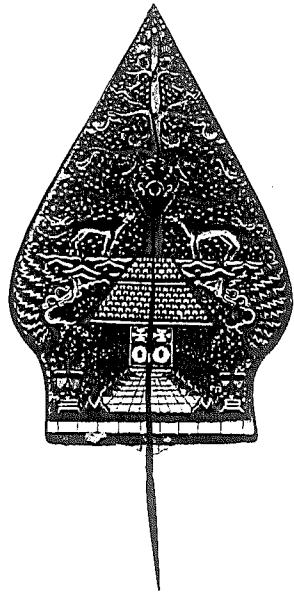


Figure 2 Shadow-play signal, Java, Indonesia. In Javanese shadow-puppet play, this figure signals the beginning and end of a performance. The translucent leather figure represents a mythical mountain where the tree of life grows.

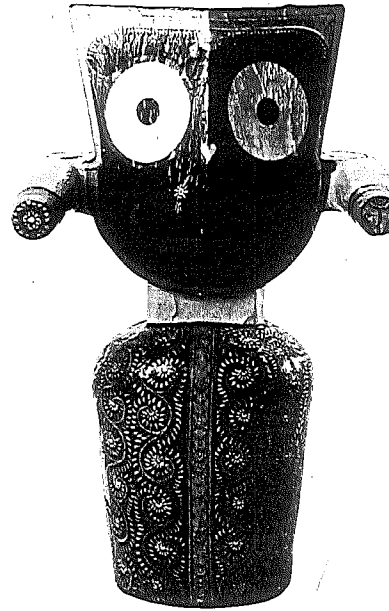


Figure 3 This image of Jagannātha, Lord of the Universe, is worshiped at the shrine of Puri in Orissa, India. The most famous festival in which Jagannātha appears is the Ratha Jātrā or huge Car Festival.

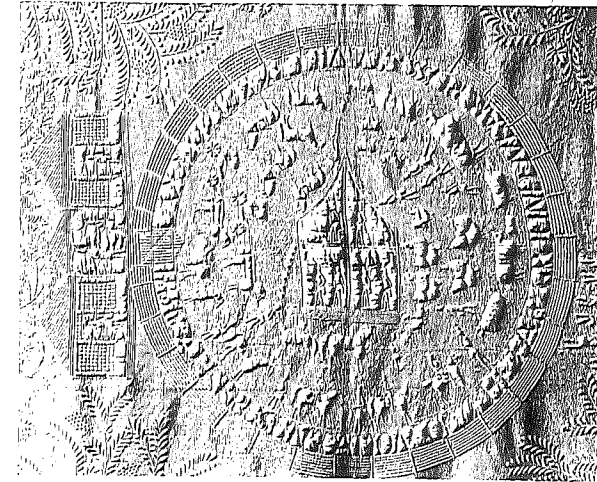


Figure 4 Detail of trapunto quilt depicting horses, riders, carriages, livestock, and visitors to the Logan County Fair near Russellville, Kentucky.

alone would conceal as much as it revealed about the nature of celebration. "Meaning" had to be taken equally into account. We had decided that the first hall entered by the public should be designated "Objects Speak," but it was obvious that some translation was required. The objects, unexplained, remained mute, though clearly charged with repressed eloquence. Those chosen by researchers were vehemently held by them to be the most beautiful or striking in the collection. Their selection was perhaps arbitrary and even sometimes ethnocentric, but it produced some lovely, bizarre, and suggestive pieces, including: facial masks used in boys' initiation rituals among the Yaka of Zaire (fig. 1); a shadow-puppet figure from the Javanese *Wayang* shadow plays (fig. 2); a bull-roarer from Bororo initiation rites in Brazil; an awesome image of the Jagannātha deity from Puri, Orissa, in India (fig. 3); and, from North America, a Tlingit "totem pole" and a Russellville County, Kentucky, "white work" quilt, representing the Logan County Fair of 1856, a celebration re-created from memory by Miss Virginia M. Ivey in a quilted representation containing 1,200,600 stitches (fig. 4). Objects certainly "speak," that is, they directly communicate a message through visible and tangible qualities such as form, color, texture, size, and so forth; but the "message" is greatly enhanced and expanded when the objects are recognized as being culturally specific symbols to be decoded and set in

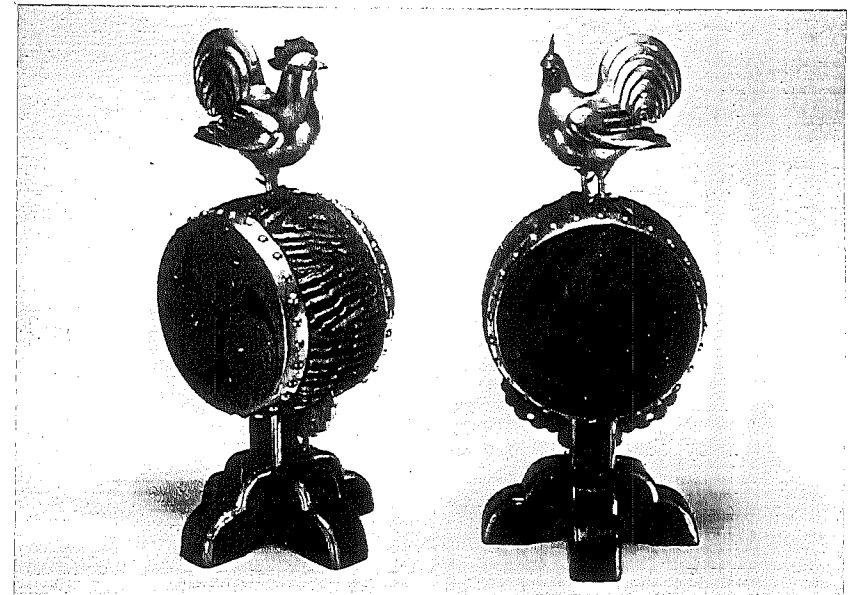
their proper celebratory context. A symbol is something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention. Spoken or printed words, for example, are symbols. But celebratory objects are, first and foremost, material objects, though they represent ideas, objects, events, relationships, "truths" not immediately present to the observer, or even intangible or invisible thoughts and conceptions. Such celebratory symbols, moreover, usually stand for many things and thoughts at once. Technical terms for this capacity are: *multivocal* (literally "many voiced"), "speaking" in many ways at once; *multivalent*, having various meanings or values; and *polysemous*, having or being open to several or many meanings. When a social group, whether it be a family, clan, village, nation, congregation, or church, celebrates a particular event or occasion, such as birth, harvest, or national independence, it also "celebrates itself." In other words, it attempts to manifest, in symbolic form, what it conceives to be its essential life, at once the distillation and typification of its corporate experience. The word *celebration* is derived from the Latin *celeber*, "numerous, much frequented," and relates to the vivacity—akin to what the great French sociologist Durkheim called "effervescence"—generated by a crowd of people with shared purposes and common values. When artists, craftsmen, songsmiths, and musicians are invited or commissioned to "make" something for a celebration, their work is inevitably informed by lively memories of that effervescence and equally lively anticipations of its next embodiment. In a way such "makers" become the articulators of the otherwise inchoate celebratory "spirit," and the ephemeral events they choreograph, or the permanent artworks—altars, statues, masks, totem poles, paintings, temples—they shape or construct, become a kind of shining language in which a society formulates its conception of the universe and its cultural philosophy. It is this heightened awareness and moral earnestness—in the midst often of tumultuous joy—that gives the best of celebratory objects a capacity to compel attention, even when they are products of a culture hitherto unknown to the observer.

When we see objects in an exhibition or a museum collection, we see them detached from the resonant ambiance of celebration. We see them in ingenious settings of background or lighting designed to restore in some measure the effervescence of their social matrix. But we are also able to some degree to trace the path back from object to meaning thanks to the labors in many cultures of a generation of symbolic anthropologists. In the first place, the external form and observable characteristics of the object give preliminary clues to its significance. The natural material from which it is made is seldom accidental: if an image or a throne is made of wood, for example, it will not be found arbitrary that a hardwood is chosen over a softwood or vice versa, or that the chosen wood is white, black, red, or mottled in hue. What kind of color or material is chosen will depend on a culture's system of classification: in Chinese culture, brides wear red, in European Christian culture, white; white garments are typically worn at Chinese funerals, black at European obsequies. The name given an object may also open a way to its meaning. Among the Ndembu people of Zambia in Central Africa, the root *kisbi* stands for "ancestor" or "ancestral power": with the prefix *i-*, the term *ikisbi* stands for a fiber-and-gum mask representing a remote tribal ancestor; with the prefix *mu-*, *mukisbi* designates a wooden figurine

representing a recently deceased relative. The meaning of an object may be partly inferred from features and attributes imparted to the original material by the artist. Here cultural convention plays a major role: the image of a water deity may be represented with a fishtail, a hunter deity may hold a bow and arrow. Several articles in this book—for example, Barbara Babcock's chapter on a Pueblo potter—discuss how the personal style of a gifted artist can powerfully affect the tradition within which he or she works. These bases of meaning, substantial, linguistic, and artifactual, pertain to the sensorily perceptible form of the symbolic object—what De Saussure called the *signifiant*. They may or may not be directly connected to the "invisible content" of the symbol, its *signifié*, the set of mental images, concepts, ideas denoted and connoted by the *signifiant*. Usually, there is a link between a symbol's perceptible features and aspects of its meaning: red often means blood, white a state of unblemished purity (though it may also represent semen, sunlight, milk, or blankness!); black may stand for the implicit fertility of black rain clouds, or it may mean death or feces. "Natural" resemblances are culturally selected. When the connections just listed are explained to us, they seem reasonable and familiar, facts of general human experience, but it is by no means easy to predict the precise association a culture will choose to make between "signifier" and "signified."

Further work is needed to discover the "field" of meaning in which a celebratory object has its potential for arousing thought, emotion, and desire. It is,

Figure 5 Drums of peace (kanko), Japan. Traditionally beaten in an appeal for redress, these kanko now connote good government and peaceful society. The circular gold design was an emblem of creation, and the gilt cocks represented peace and prosperity.



of course, important to know what the society which engenders and uses it says about it, if indeed it says anything at all. For not infrequently a key symbol, particularly one used in religious celebration, may be refractory to standardized verbal interpretation. It may be compared in this respect with a poem, which is its own interpretation and special kind of language. Here paraphrase and individual guessing at meaning may be possible, even frequent and fashionable. Local "theologians" and ritual specialists may declare the symbol to be what Western divines would call a "mystery," something beyond human knowledge or understanding, part of an undergirding structure of being (like Kant's "categories" or Jung's archetypes) that is impenetrable to total rational understanding. But in many cultures, persons will be found who are generally regarded as "exegetes," experts in the explanation of symbols. Often, the "explanation" of a celebratory or ritual symbol will be assigned by exegetes to its role or place within a religious myth or heroic tale. Analysis thus stops at myth, which replaces a representational mystery by a verbal mystery. In the exhibition, for example, images of Jagannātha (see fig. 3) are related to myths involving the Hindu god Vishnu, especially in his Krishna incarnation, while the decorative iconography of Northwest Coast Indian "potlatch chests" is connected with myths in which Raven and Bear are transformed into humans and vice versa. By "myths" I designate the creative deeds of gods, heroes, and ancestors who established the cosmic and social orders, often in struggle with powers of chaos. Myth and morality vary independently; indeed, some divine and heroic exploits violate what a society normally considers its standards of goodness or righteousness in conduct or character. Deities commit incest and parricide, tempt and deceive mortals, practice cannibalism. Great heroes have fatal flaws of character. Myth portrays generative power as transrational and transethical. Quite often, celebrations have mythical "plots," and are based on narratives of divine intervention in human affairs. Celebratory objects may remind participants of those myths, and of the primal energies they *re-present* (that is, make present again to the senses, changing the symbol into what is symbolized).

However, by no means all symbolic objects are explained by myths. There is also a form of interpretation which may be termed "piecemeal exegesis." Here the native interpreter can assign standardized meanings to certain qualities or characteristics of objects taken to be or formed into celebratory symbols. For example, the Ndembu of Zambia find significance in the color of an object, in its texture, in its slenderness or thickness, its hardness or softness, its rareness or typicality; in its location in water or on land, in cultivated land or in the bush; in its form as an animal, bird, reptile, vegetable, or mineral, or a plant bearing much fruit or a single fruit; in conventional designs incised as cicatrices on the human body; in marks carved in wood; or in paintings made on masks and walls. Naturally, exegetical knowledge is not shared equally by all, nor is the capacity to offer verbal interpretation. A ritual specialist, who knows how to conduct a complex sequence of rites involving many symbolic objects, may have difficulty in explaining their meaning in words. He has operational knowledge akin to a carpenter's who "knows the feel of the wood" even if he is no dendrologist, no tree botanist. The exegetical problem may also be compounded by

secrecy: the "true" or "inner" meaning of a symbolic object may be known or shared only by the initiated few. In many secret societies, for example in West and Central Africa and Papua-New Guinea, as well as among the guilds of Western Masonry, there is a system of grades through which initiates pass. In some societies, the same objects may be differently interpreted as the novice moves from a lower to a higher level. The esoteric knowledge imparted at the highest level is held to be the "real truth," the final *gnosis*, annulling all previous interpretations. However, the exegesis of objects used in public celebrations is seldom dominated by a group of privileged specialists. Such objects are the product, center, and soul of a social group's self-manifestation. They are created to "speak" to at least the members of the culture they embody and manifest. And if they speak they are also "heard," for they have been brought forth from experiences shared with those of their "receivers." The fabricators of these celebratory objects share "social being" with all other members of the celebrating society, its history, traditions, religion, contemporary triumphs and tragedies, its hopes and fears for the future. There is perhaps no need to render into words what the symbols "say," for they transmit their messages in a number of sensory codes simultaneously. Moreover, we are seldom dealing with separate symbols but with clusters made up of objects, actions, sounds, states, odors, contacts, each unit, act, or thing, at once itself and standing for more than itself, the ensemble making up more than the sum of its parts. In the celebratory process we cannot detach the participants from what they participate in, the subject from the object. From the subject's sensorium, his "withinside," such clusters are no longer experienced as detached from him, held at arm's length, merely cognized. They invade him, alter his mode of perceiving, daze or dazzle him. He is made vulnerable to imprintment by whatever message is being conveyed by the symbolic cluster. In celebration, private space is thus socialized, enculturated; social space is correspondingly made private.

Yet celebrations end, and in most human groups certain people try to put into words, however lamely, what they have experienced in the "meta-experience" of culturally stimulated action. I call it "meta-experience" because celebration distills all other kinds of experience to draw out the part that is essential to each of them. Language is, no doubt, only the tip of the intersubjective iceberg, the dead husk of the living celebratory fruit, but it remains the most efficient means of expressing and communicating thoughts and feelings among members of a human community. Perhaps only celebration can adequately understand celebration, but language can give an approximate rendering of it and some semantic perspective on its products, the symbols it uses and leaves behind. Eugene d'Aquili and Charles Laughlin (1979:169) have argued that humankind has a "need for order as a cognitive imperative." There is clearly an equal need for the repetitive, motor, visual, or auditory driving stimuli, combined with the cadence of words and chanting which many kinds of celebration provide, producing arousal, heightened activity, and emotional responsiveness. The anchoring or "dominant" symbols of celebration, when these can be interpreted by native cognitive specialists, often betray this bipolarity. Even in the case of language we can see a migration of verbal meanings to opposite poles.

At what may be described as the "normative" pole we find that an anchoring celebratory symbol "stands for" or "signifies" a number of aspects of the moral, social, and political orders. At the opposite pole, the attributed meanings or "senses" point to physiological processes, such as sexuality or lactation, or metabolism. Sometimes, they designate aspects of human anatomy. Often, as in the case of blood symbolism, they represent violence and its sublimated equivalent, sacrifice. Earlier we saw that important celebratory symbols are multivocal, "saying" many things at once. They say many things about the social and moral order and many things about the natural and physical order *at the same time*. The natural-physical pole may be called the *orectic* pole of meaning, since this term in philosophy and psychology characterizes appetite and desire, wishing and feeling. Perhaps this duality or antinomianism in meaning is connected to the complementary functions of the two hemispheres of the human brain, as J. Bogen, S. Dimond, R. Ornstein, and D. Kimura have suggested; the left hemisphere being the domain of logic (and by extension social structuring) and the right hemisphere that of emotion, pattern recognition, and holistic, synthetic thought, but with limited linguistic capability and no sense of linear time. It might be suggested that the normative pole is left hemispheric (verbal, linear, time-binding), while the orectic pole is right hemispheric and also possibly connected with biological rhythms controlled by the autonomic nervous system. When symbols are "fed" into a celebratory process, the semantic poles are transformed from clusters of abstract "meanings" into agencies and indicators of social arousal. It is perhaps in this process that complementary interaction between the components of the central nervous system is at its maximum. The oppositions work/play, cognition/orexis, duty/pleasure, individual/group are overcome, or they mutually tincture/impregnate one another to produce a third, heightened state conducive to public creativity.

But interpretations offered by specialists and laypersons are not enough to give us an adequate understanding of celebratory symbols. We have to view them in action, in movement, in becoming, as essentially involved in process. Much of an object's "meaning" is equated with its use: we must observe what a celebrating group does, not merely what it says. We must find out how they act toward an object, what attitudes group members publicly display when they use it, handle it, venerate it, destroy it, dance around it, or otherwise orientate themselves toward it. Is their behavior defined as sad, penitent, joyful, derisive, aggressive, respectful? Furthermore, we must ascertain what kinds of persons compose the group: males, females, old, young, or all together? Persons of high rank or social status in everyday life, or low status, or both? Members of a family or kin group, neighbors, or total strangers? Members of a single caste or a multicaste group? We should also inquire why certain persons and groups are absent on given occasions, and if absent, whether and why they have been formally excluded from the presence of the important celebratory symbol. I would call this level or field of "meaning" the *operational meaning*. Social structure, social organization, and social psychology are all involved here. Unlike *exegetical* meaning, operational meaning is largely discovered by trained observation. It is the province of the social scientist. For example, when an anthropologist

studies a celebration in a preindustrial society, he has usually already derived from his empirical data (censuses, genealogies, budgets, land tenure surveys, legal case histories, investigations of political and administrative structures, and the like) a set of models of constant and consistent social relationships, the sum of which approximates a hypothetical representation of the social structure as it exists at the time of investigation. He has also ascertained the forms taken by social conflict in the social field articulated by that structure: what types of persons are likely to have antagonistic interests, what groups are likely to collide over political issues or economic goals. Any major celebration, since it brings many members of a society into a single sociocultural space for a limited period of time, brings into proximity persons and groups with either endemic or transitory antagonisms. Celebration may be said partly to bring about a temporary reconciliation among conflicting members of a single community. Conflict is held in abeyance during the period of ritualized action. Perhaps the euphoria associated with the stimulation of "right-hemisphere" capacities and functions leads to that perception of shared emotional states I have called *communitas*. This might also involve a deemphasizing of "left-hemisphere" control over logical, linear, and classifying functions associated with social structuring, and the conflicts arising from structural oppositions.

A celebratory object may also be interpreted on a third level, its *positional* meaning. The positional meaning of such an object derives from its relationship to other symbols in a configuration, a Gestalt, having properties that cannot be derived from its parts or be considered simply as their sum. The object may be part of a cluster of similar or different objects; it may occupy a central or a marginal position. It may be strikingly contrasted with another object. Position has to do with time as well as space. Thus an object may form part of a series successively exhibited in a celebratory process. These spatial and temporal relationships modify an object's meaning. They may do this by selecting only one of the object's many possible designations as appropriate to a given situation. Anthropologists who follow the noted French structuralist Lévi-Strauss regard the positional dimension as providing the true key—through structure and positioning rather than through exegetical content—to the interpretation of symbols. Such writers also tend to find the key to meaning in the relations between the vehicles or *signifiants* (the objects of sensory perception) rather than between the systems of *signifiés*, the "senses" or "designations" assigned to them by the people, or directly inferable by an investigator thoroughly familiar with the themes and idioms of the culture. Those who stress the importance of looking for pairs of symbols, regarding them as "binary oppositions," then looking for a third symbol to serve as a "mediator" between them, as *the* key to the scientific analysis of symbol systems, are almost compelled to direct attention to their "vehicular" or "*signifiant*" aspect or to regard the symbols as "univocal," having a single, sharply defined sense, "meaning," *signifié*, or "nature." This is because it is difficult to make sharp antitheses between complex bundles of designations, many of them associated with emotions and desires. What we are confronted with here, it would seem, is a kind of cognitive chauvinism. Symbols are probably products, markers, and registers of behavior motivated by both cere-

bral hemispheres in conjunction with the autonomic nervous system, all triggered and fired into action by selective cultural stimuli, themselves the creation of centuries of cultural and ecological experience. As such they bear traces of their complex neurophysiological sources both in their "appearance" (how they impinge upon the senses) and in their semantics (the notions or conceptions the group using them holds about them, whether stereotyped or legitimately speculative). To reduce this wealth of "objectivized" mentality to the merely cognitive is to wantonly impoverish one's capacity for scientific explanation of the most human of human phenomena: symbol-making.

To be sure, if one looks at ethnographic accounts of ritual (constituting a sort of retrospective "score," "script," or "scenario"), one cannot escape the fact that many symbol-vehicles or "objects" are arrayed in antithetical pairs (red objects against white, left against right, "male" things against "female" things, hard against soft, and so on) during certain episodes or phases in a ritual or celebratory process. Here the objects' *relationships* (of opposition or complementarity) may decisively influence the *meanings* they *situationally* possess. But the same symbol-vehicles may be arrayed in threes, fours, or other plural formations, in company with other symbol-vehicles in other phases or in other types of ritual in the same culture—or may appear alone, opposed, or qualified by no other symbol even by implication. Again, wherever in ritual or secular celebration symbolic objects appear in clusters, they may or may not be arrayed and organized as a hierarchy, that is, with one object dominating or focal to the others, or with a graded array into symbols with more or less prominence or semantic importance. Looked at successively, whether from left to right, right to left, top to bottom, bottom to top, as units in space, or in linear order through time, symbol-vehicles, like words, may be grouped to form complex "messages" in what one might call "sentences" of symbols. The "positional" dimension of symbol interpretation might also include consideration of asymmetrical pairs of symbols, where the meanings of one are subordinated to those of another. Ethnographic experience in several cultures has shown me that where one has managed to obtain reliable information about the "exegetical" and/or "operational" meanings of a given symbol-vehicle or "object," it is demonstrable that even though only a single designation of that symbol is situationally manifest or emphasized (perhaps by opposing it patently to another symbol in "binary" terms), the "penumbra" (the vague, indefinite, or borderline area) of latent senses (to be manifest in other "positional" combinations) is nevertheless present. I have shown, for example, in various studies of the Ndembu of Zambia (1967:41–42; 1968:80–82) that latent senses of symbol A may be "projected" upon symbols B, C, and D, which are present in the same "symbolic field." Thus a symbol should be anticipated to be "dense with meaning"—what Edward Sapir called a "condensation symbol"—even when only a portion of this richness (like the tip of an iceberg) is situationally emphasized or "visible" through such tactical devices as its (surface) structural relations with another contrapuntal symbol or set of symbols. Structural analysis reduces or simplifies the overt "meaning" of a symbol-vehicle, or, better, is a "grammatical" tactic for specifying which of its multiple meanings is situationally relevant at a given mo-

ment in the unfolding of a ritual or the staging of a celebration, hence actualizing or pinpointing that purport out of the vast semantic potential or latent wealth possessed by the communicative means we call "a symbol."

It must now be clear that museums have, traditionally, been at a great disadvantage in terms of conveying to the public the meanings of the objects they exhibit. For objects have been collected, in the main, as single items, divorced from their operational and positional contexts. In actuality, as we have seen, they are registers of complex processes, dependent upon one another for their meaning at a given time, and when they are quiescent, hoarded up, so to speak, in temples or shrines, they can be seen as storage jars or cells of multiple cultural and religious meanings (*signifiés*) that we can only gain access to, when lucky, through written accounts. Yet we must attempt to reanimate these silent, often lovely forms, whether in imagination or by means of the techniques available to us today—ethnographic documentaries, taped music, adorned plexiglas mannequins, dioramas, blow-ups, live performances (necessarily simulated or fabricated when done out of cultural context)—the whole range of audiovisual techniques. Alas, without time machines, we cannot use these means to capture the spirit of celebrations no longer celebrated. Here we do have to rely on sensitive and scientifically painstaking re-creation of forever-vanished events by inference from literary, archaeological, and historical sources.

Yet the endeavor has seemed to us worthwhile. The silent products of celebration or for celebration are more than utilitarian goods and chattels. Each of our lead essayists knows that though men, women, and children celebrate many achievements and many pinnacles of life or heroic death, one constant experience threads through and occasionally surfaces from all modes of celebration, solemn or festive: a transcendent ecstasy rooted in deep physiological passions and charged-up autonomic awareness but burgeoning and ramifying beyond them into transient imaginative apprehensions of the meanings inherent in self and society. The divine detritus, the holy or beautiful images and artifacts bequeathed to us by celebration, whether exalted or frenetic, testify to these moments when members of our species, scattered through every continent and clime, have exceeded their daily limits and left traces, culture by culture, age after age, to encourage the rest of us.

Richard Dorson, in his essay on "Material Components in Celebration," summarizes seven celebrations performed in cultures as widely dispersed as Peru, Trinidad, Louisiana, Africa, India, China, and Japan, paying particular heed to "the material culture props and properties . . . which might find their way into museum exhibits." He points out that "the term *celebration* can encompass festivals, rituals, ceremonies, spectacles, pageants, fetes, holidays, extravaganzas, and partakes of all these elements." His chapter is the literary analogue of the exhibition hall in the Renwick Gallery containing material components of celebration regarded cross-culturally. He finds that, in addition to the costumes, masks, musical instruments, serving bowls for festive food, and so forth, that we might expect to find, there are other objects charged with "religio-magical power." These include *images*, "key symbolic objects which represent the message and motive of the occasion," such as the image of the Virgen de la Puerta

in the Otuzco Festival in Peru, and images of Lord Jagannātha, Lord Baḷabhadra, and Goddess Subhadrā in the Car Festival observed in the month of Asadha during the rainy season ("on the second day of the bright fortnight") in the coastal city of Puri in the Indian state of Orissa. Each of these, Christian and Hindu, is the object both of sophisticated, theological exégesis and of explanation in terms of folk mythology. And each is charged with the experiential power of mass devotion on a celebratory occasion that is both solemn and festive, devout and, at times, playful. Dorson also mentions "revered ritual vehicles" such as the "towering chariot in which rides Lord Jagannātha and the fierce dragon boat paddled by the Yangtse Valley fishermen" in the *King Tu* festival on the Hupeh-Hunan Plain in Central China. Images and vehicles are more than merely representational or functional: they are multivocal symbols, "condensation symbols" as Edward Sapir called them (1933:492-93). Dorson shows us how ephemeral costumes and masks and perishable food and drink also possess multiple meanings. On the other hand, it seems to be typical of carnival and fiesta that many symbols possess what Barbara Babcock has called "an excess of floating signifiers" (1978:291-302). Fireworks, exuberantly fantastic clothing, patchwork colors, the multiplication of apparently irrelevant masks and costumes "to the point of indeterminate nonsense," suspend customary meanings. Babcock follows Jacques Derrida in arguing that "a surplus of signifiers ['vehicles'] . . . creates a self-transgressive discourse which mocks and subverts the monological arrogance of 'official' systems of signification" (p.296). She continues: "The bantering *anti*-signified of carnivalesque discourse is an insult both to the complementarity of ordinary speech and to the multi-signified of serious ritual communion. It is also a statement in praise and a demonstration of the creative potential of human signification as opposed to its instrumental and representative use" (p.296). Dorson's chapter gives some examples of this. He mentions "the almost limitless variety of costumes seen at (the Trinidadian) Carnival" and "the trait of playful aggression that marks the behavior of carnival-type celebrants." However, he also points to "the humility that characterizes religious-festival behavior [in which symbols are multivocal]. Slave figures protect the Virgin; the Swazi mourn their king; the rajah sweeps the platform of the chariots. When the gods are present, men supplicate." It would seem that both structure and antistructure are present, in varying proportions, in different kinds of celebration, and that both act, in opposition or conjunction, to enhance the understanding a society has of its own essential nature, its plural reflexivity, so to speak. As Babcock concludes: "In ritual, society takes cognizance of itself and communicates its major classifications and categories both through ordering them and through disordering them—by overdetermining *and* by rendering indeterminate customary processes of signification" (1978:296).

Babcock's view that celebrations provide frames in which groups can scan, critique, and enjoy themselves, through construction and deconstruction of self-images ideal or realistic, is shared and developed by Barbara Myerhoff in her essay "Rites of Passage: Process and Paradox." Her discussion also duplicates and comments on a segment of the exhibition—a long gallery allocated to the display of objects drawn cross-culturally from such passage rites as birth, bap-

tism, circumcision, puberty, marriage, initiation into membership-restricted associations, funerary and other celebrations of the passage of individuals and groups from one culturally defined stage of life to another in linear succession. Like the Turners in their essay on "Religious Celebrations," Myerhoff accepts van Gennep's formulation of rites of passage. These occur in three main stages of varying length and importance within and between cultures: (1) *separation* of the novices or "initiates" from everyday life, often by means of dramatic symbolic action; (2) *instruction* of novices by practice and precept in a secluded, "marginal," or "liminal" place; and (3) *reincorporation* of the now-initiated persons into the quotidian community.

Myerhoff laments the virtual absence of reliable data in anthropologists' accounts of the subjective experiences of those undergoing passage. Detailed descriptions of behavior and symbolism abound, but few have thought fit to inquire into the initiates' feelings about the transformation of their circumstances, often involving ordeals and always drastic breaks with comfortable routine. Thus, in premodern, preindustrial societies, we have a good idea of the public forms and standardized interpretations of symbols and ceremonies marking life-crises but little in the way of private reports from the participants. On the other hand, she argues, we have an abundance of reports in complex, modern societies, particularly from psychoanalysts, psychologists, and psychiatrists, on the private "rituals" of "alienated," isolated individuals, who have reacted to life-crises with neuroses or psychoses. But, as all know, there is a paucity of public rites of passage in Western industrialized societies. Christian baptism and confirmation, Jewish circumcision and Bar(Bat) Mitzvah, refer to symbolic progress through relatively restricted religious communities, not to public transformations of status-roles on the scale of the widest (plural) society. There are no communal, pan-American puberty celebrations, though commencement exercises and graduations have a rather weak functional equivalence.

On the other hand, with the increase in scale and complexity, with urbanization, specialization, professionalization, job mobility, labor migration, stress on individualism, the omnipresence of the cash economy, and so on, the occasions of personal crisis multiply exceedingly as compared with "tribal" or rurally based societies. Barbara Myerhoff makes a sound case for the "construction" of rituals and other kinds of celebration to handle such crises—those typical of our epoch and social condition. Her work during the past decade with the aged in Los Angeles, resulting in the widely read book *Number Our Days* (1978) and a short documentary film of the same title which won an Academy Award (made in collaboration with Lynn Litman) in 1977, has alerted Barbara Myerhoff to the lively possibility of a new kind of "applied anthropology." Such a program would include the "construction of performances" which would involve groups of modern individuals in assigning communal meaning to specifically modern and recurrent crises. She argues that the comparative study of celebrations on a global basis compels us to admit their "constructed" character. If our society does not provide them for us, why cannot we provide them for ourselves? For there is clearly a profound therapeutic value in the recognition and ritualization of recurrent problems involved in the maintenance and repair of human rela-

tionships and in assigning meaning to what subjectively may seem to be merely pain and loss. "What is required," she writes, "is a small community of friends or family, some symbolic and traditional resources for inspiration, a clear formulation of the change involved and its significance—and courage." She notes that in "our own society . . . in times of rapid individual mobility and social change, ceremonies of separation and disconnection are surely important." She shows how celebrations may represent an *overcoming* of difficulty, an affirmation of life in the teeth of affliction. As examples she cites "menopause, surgery, 'empty nests,' retirement. . . . a fiftieth birthday, a woman shedding her married name." All these, she writes, "can be opportunities for rites of passage, transformed from traumatic experiences or disorienting lonely episodes into commemorations that acknowledge change. The spontaneous ritual acts that we so often do alone—burning an unfaithful lover's photograph or returning gifts from one no longer cherished, the cutting of hair or cleaning house to announce to oneself that a new phase of life is beginning—all these are nascent rites of passage that can be enlarged, formalized, made to include important other people, memorialized with objects, notes, or records that are kept in recognition that the transition was successfully accomplished." Myerhoff's call is that we should be what I call more "liminoid" than "liminal," that is, take our crises and transitions into our own hands, ritualize them, make them meaningful, and pass through and beyond them in a spirit of celebration, to begin a new uncluttered phase of our lives, having learned from some of the world's oldest and most tenacious cultures a portion of their wisdom, their understanding of the human condition. As Myerhoff concludes: "Freedom is the other side of loneliness and isolation. When we take our lives into our own hands, we make ourselves author of our own stories." Her point is that we might create our own celebrations in communities of "intimately concerned individuals," instead of merely grieving over the lack of such institutionalized means in our depersonalized, industrial societies.

Roger Abrahams, in his essay "The Language of Festivals," focuses on those festivals which mark or once marked the passage of the seasons: planting, first-fruits, harvest, summer and winter solstice, May Day, vernal or autumnal equinox, New Year. He calls attention to the essential transitoriness of celebratory phenomena, for the seasonal rituals—from which festivals and carnivals derive—draw their energy and vitality from the very changes and transformations wrought by time's passage itself, the powers of the spinning year. To translate objects which are "made for the day, out of natural ingredients, and carted off to wither and die after the event (like Christmas trees and the petalled floats of the Rose Parade)," into objects of museum display, is surely to deprive them of their necessary ephemerality. No one can keep the almond blossom forever flowering in the town square or eternalize the all-but-flowering spring. Thus, for the Japanese, the cherry blossom symbolizes the heroic mutability of the warrior, for it falls in the prime of the flower, unwithered and ungathered. Ultimately, it embodies the perennial tension between Buddhism, which seeks release through Enlightenment from the pain in all changefulness, and Shinto, which affirms the fertility and sacrality of life-and-death as a cycle of eternal re-

turn. Seasonal rituals and festivals do not therefore owe their persistence to the durability of their material expressions but to their connection with recurrent communal experiences and needs. Abrahams contrasts "the languages of festive celebrations," interestingly, with those of the arts, as follows: "We memorialize creative acts by exalting permanence, by valuing the created object and keeping it in as clean and enduring a condition as possible." Museum and private collections and displays attest to this. Yet the Smithsonian exhibition of celebratory objects demonstrates that such objects often attain the status of "art," for they do embody a creativity of a particular kind. It is not the creativity of the solitary individual of the Western tradition but that of talented representatives of a raised communal consciousness, proceeding from and returning to the intersubjective ambiance of popular arousal.

Abrahams makes an important distinction between rites of passage and seasonal/calendrical festivals. Whereas *transitional* rites are often genuine crises of identity or respond to the social crises associated with marriage or death, seasonal feasts may occur "on the plateaus of the year when in fact nothing important occurs." There may, indeed, frequently be "a lull in the cycle of production and reproduction of the resources on which the ongoing constitution and characters of continuity of the community have been built." Since life-crisis rituals emerge in situations of already heightened emotion and energy, the task of ritual is to "provide an organizing set of principles, traditional ways of binding for the moment the opposing forces within the community and tying together the past with the present." But festivals have, on the contrary, to generate their own energies. They often begin, literally, "with a bang," using pyrotechnic and percussive means. Then there is the "surplus of signifiers" and extravagance of costume, masks, and cosmetics mentioned earlier. Abrahams calls attention to the "playful distortion" of the performing self characteristic of festive celebration, the "overextension of self," often expressed in gross overeating and excessive drinking. But, he cautions, the "language of celebrations of increase emerges from everyday ways of doing things," though such ways are hypertrophied, skewed, overstated, often to the point of caricature. In *The Ritual Process* (1969:chap.5) I showed how in many calendrical or seasonal celebrations of the economic yield, there was a marked component of symbolic status-reversal; the normally poor and powerless dressed in the clothes and insignia of upper-class power and often controlled the course of the ritual or carnivalesque events (like the slum-dwelling leadership of Rio de Janeiro's world-famous "Samba Schools"), while the habitually wealthy and powerful played the roles of bystanders or subordinates. Sometimes the rich were even lampooned, hazed, or subjected to mocking songs or satirical verses to which they were forbidden by custom to reply in self-defense. In ritual celebrations in preindustrial societies, such mockery is usually confined within limits, and, indeed, the celebrations are seen as saturnalian "sacralizations" of the social order. But in those festivals and carnivals which have succeeded them—sometimes in the same calendrical slots—as major forms of metasocial commentary or deep play (to use Geertz's terms), such genres of cultural performance can be "subversive" as well as merely "reversive." They may contain, in their multitudinous scenarios, scripts,

and clown-acts, ludic models of a "protostructural" character (in Sutton-Smith's formulation), an independent critique of the society that brought them into being, and hence a possible font of alternative ideas, values, motivations, and designs (rough sketches rather!) for living. A detailed comparative study of carnival as it has developed over time in Europe and in Hispanic and Lusitanian America, as well as the civic *matsuri*-system in Japan, would reveal how individualistic and egalitarian cultural ideals and a sense of ethnic and class identity—as well as civic pride and nationalist fervor—come to be articulated and manipulated (politically and economically) in the verbal and many nonverbal (imagery, gesture, choreography, and so on) languages of festival. Such a study is overdue.

John MacAloon's essay "Sociation and Sociability in Political Celebrations" pays particular heed to "political and other rites that instrumentally maintain and regenerate social systems." He cites Simmel to show how such celebrations contain frequent episodes of play as well as solemnity and relates this regular feature to Simmel's distinction between "sociation" and "sociability." Sociation is "being with and for others in that construction of society out of contending interests, duties, and purposes," while "sociability" is "the autonomous or play-form of sociation," "the feeling . . . and satisfaction . . . of being sociated." Political and civic rites are, therefore, not merely "supreme acts of sociation, of differentiated rules, roles, and ranks answering to sober, ineluctable material interests." Their efficacy depends equally "on the generation of sociability which is, according to Simmel, ludic and democratic in character." Celebratory behavior is "framed" behavior. Anthropologists have used this concept of "frame" and "framing" in recent years to identify demarcated times and places for a particular use, such as ritual or play, by enclosing them literally or figuratively in a border (a temple, theater, playground, or court) and so creating a set of expectations about the kind of behavior or conduct that should fill the encased space-time. Different types of frames also involve different emotional moods or "atmospheres." They are also selective, including and excluding defined persons, relational styles, perceptions, values, sentiments, and social and symbolic types. Celebrations contain both ritual and play frames. Broadly speaking, ritual frames are based on the premise that "within this border what we do and say and think and feel is governed by the premise 'let us believe,' that is, trust in the truth, reality, or goodness of supernatural, transhuman beings, persons or powers regarded as the first and final causes of phenomena." Play frames, to the contrary, depend on the formula "let's make believe" or "let's pretend." While ritual frames depend upon traditional, immemorial authority (scriptures, prophecies, divinations performed by legitimate oracles, utterances by authorized shamans and visionaries, liturgies held to be transmitted from hallowed antiquity), play frames allow participants to escape from the "should" and "ought" character of ritual—more compelling than the very "laws of nature" in the view of some religions—and see themselves as free to fabricate a range of alternative possibilities of behaving, thinking, and feeling that is wider than that current or admissible in either the mundane world or the ritual frame.

Where religious systems are still "going concerns," commanding the assent of

most social members, their rituals are believed to be instrumentally potent, to have effects on the natural and social orders. The messages communicated in play frames, on the other hand, are held to be disengaged from "reality" and free from the constraints of mundane existence. Play, within its privileged context, is "freewheeling," able to sound off. But in this very capacity inheres its social value. For ritual is bound by the sanctity of its frame to censor the commentaries on human life and society that it generates. Play in the guise of drollery and folly and in the ephemerality of its presence is licensed to comment on a great range of issues. Play thus becomes paradoxical, for it is revealed to have a serious function, a curious objectivity. Seemingly amoral, its moralism may cleave more sincerely and closely to the facts of contemporary life than the moralism of ritual, which can "cover up" distasteful social and political facts, that is, become hypocritical. Play's flexibility contains within it the possibility of *exploring* new ways of doing things. MacAloon, as we have seen, shows how Simmel relates "sociability" to "play," by calling it the "play form of sociation." Sociation, disengaged from the "business" of survival, production, and profit, appears in celebration as sociability—which, so says Simmel, "creates an ideal sociological world in which the pleasure of the individual is closely tied up with the pleasure of the others" (1950:47–48). The pure spirit of sociability can sometimes be seen in carnival, but it appears melded with ritual seriousness in the hybrid contexts of political and civic ceremonies, as MacAloon shows in some detail and depth in his discussion of the political rites of democratic peoples and the performative structure of the transnational Olympic games.

In celebration, then, much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion, in brief, of *communitas*; on the other hand, much of what has been dispersed over many domains of culture and social structure is now bound or cathected in the complex semantic systems of pivotal, multivocal symbols and myths which achieve great conjunctiveness. The objects selected for the exhibition are, in the main, just such many-layered symbols. And they emerge from and vitally emblemize the *communitas*, the joyous shared flow or solemn communion released by passing into the liminal, "betwixt-and-between" state intervening between the "safe" but dull domains of routinized and classified life. Several of our authors have indicated that celebrations have their perilous side, for they expose the chaos and indeterminacy that lie around the lighted areas of culture. Grimes, for example, actually defines a public celebration as "a rope bridge of knotted symbols strung across an abyss. We make our crossings hoping the chasm will echo our festive sounds for a moment, as the bridge begins to sway from the rhythms of our dance." But even as they expose our demons and chaos-dragons, celebrations also affirm our vitality and resolve to continue. They proclaim that our society has rich meaning and has experienced glories and triumphs which it insists upon reliving, sometimes as play, sometimes as ritual drama. The incredibly diverse forms of the celebratory objects exhibited manifest the lineaments of fear and glory, *communitas* and structure, faith and skepticism, masked and muted in the trivia of the everyday but given their proper entrancing shape in the world of art and ritual which is celebration.

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