

The Form and Meaning of the Festival

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The festival: a time of feasting and celebration, my dictionary states; a periodic season of entertainment. Modern man is prepared to be entertained by a festival. But he is uneasy about participating in a festival.

Consider Roget, that splendid collector of words. The notion of festive doings is embedded in two chains of word associations, from which we may excerpt: festivity, merry-making, fête, festival, revels, revelry, carnival, brawl, saturnalia, feast, round of pleasures, dissipation, a short life and a merry one, high jinks, bonfire, fireworks, holiday; display, show, flourish, parade, dash, splash, glitter, strut, fuss, magnificence, splendour, grand doings, tomfoolery, pageantry, spectacle, procession, gala.¹ Amid the flow of words, one is aware of an unspoken frown of disapproval. It is the disagreeable *mien* of a culture that came to distrust pleasure and to value sobriety, in a bleak and dismal world where only the crafty and the watchful saved themselves from ruination. It is the disagreeable mien of old Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge was a lonely man, a man who lived only for himself, a mean and miserly man, I suppose; that is what we always take him for. But he is significant to us because he has done what we all must do, in some measure: he has devoted himself diligently and wholeheartedly to attaining financial security for himself, in a world that does not countenance failure and is merciless toward those

1. A selection from categories 840 and 882 of the *Thesaurus*, titled Amusement and Ostentation, respectively.

who cannot provide for themselves. But in his willful, purposeful determination to provide himself with an island of protective security, he has lost one affection. He has forgotten what we have all forgotten, how to enjoy a festival. How to *participate* in a festival. How to abandon oneself to simpler, childhood pleasures, just for a week, just for one blessed day of the year. Dickens warns us that in a society oriented towards commercial enterprise, one easily becomes so absorbed in the pursuit of the margin of profit that he risks losing his ability to return to his own simple humanity. And while all around him men suspend their commercial concerns for a time to enjoy the holidays with singing, family gatherings, overeating and merry-making, games and drinking, poor Scrooge (he is a figure to be pitied) finds he cannot. He begrudges his clerk the day off, he brands the festival a humbug (delightful word!). Dickens is warning us: as Scrooge has forgotten, so may we all forget.

Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* turns the message around: Prove that you can enjoy a festival, and you have proven your manhood, and your humanity. But it is the same message, and the same perception: Modern man has lost the gift of the return to innocence. It is not an American disability, it is not a British-American disability; not any longer. It is now a world disability. Do most Americans think that in Japan, poets write only quaint little three and five line verses about autumn moonlight, and bamboo? A contemporary Japanese poet writes:

Curiously enough
I like
The aftermath of a festival.
In the midst of the festival
In the throng of people,
I seldom lose myself.
I look on—
I only look on...²

If we are going to inquire into the whys and wherefores of festivals, if we are going to elicit the meaning and milieu of the festival, we must ken our own attitude towards the festival,

2. "Festivals," by Fuyuhiko Kitagawa. *The Poetry of Living Japan*, ed. Takamichi Ninomiya and D.J. Enright (New York), 1958, p. 70.

our own difficulties in participating in the communal fête. For our culture (call it western culture, call it modern culture) has proven itself inhospitable to the festival in its completeness. We have in fact all but dispensed with festivals. Christmas hardly qualifies; it is too much a family observance and too little a community observance, and it is spoiled by the churchman's persistent peevishness over its modestly pagan merriments. The family has become a household of children, each with its set of parents; the community is a cluster of houses with garage attached; patriotism and piety have become formal and spiritless; and all our celebrations (Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July) are simply extended weekends.

There is perhaps an exception; but not for adults, for children. I am thinking of Hallowe'en. And if that remarkable holiday survives in our midst as an authentic mini-festival, it must be because our children live, as Iona and Peter Opie say, in "a thriving unselfconscious culture . . . which is as unnoticed by the sophisticated world, and quite as little affected by it, as is the culture of some dwindling aboriginal tribe . . ." ³ Like the savage, the child does not simply respect custom, he venerates it. ⁴ Our schoolchildren only appear to belong to the twentieth century; but "ancient superstitions, even if only half believed in, continue to infiltrate their minds . . ." ⁵ And so on that spooky night at the end of October they carve their Jack o'Lanterns of hollowed pumpkins, they blacken their faces and put on false noses or beards or wigs, they put on odd and tattered clothing, and they go about the town, from door to door, begging and doing mischief and pranks, all the while looking out for black cats, and wondering a little about the possibility of ghosts. Some, of course, take the short-cuts provided by the supermarket, with its ready-made costumes and masks. Sometimes the masks are stamped "Made in Japan." So much the better! Our children can disguise themselves as the red and green devils (*oni*) of Japanese children's lore!

Hallowe'en is of course related to a church holiday, All Saints Day, November first. Following All Saints Day is All Souls Day, November second, a day for remembering the dead

3. *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (London, 1959), pp. 1-2.

4. *ibid.*, p. 2.

5. *ibid.*, p. 208.

and visiting their graves (Europe's equivalent of the Japanese *higan*). Church bells ring to remind the people to pray for the souls in Purgatory. But the Eve before All Hallows Day, Hallowe'en, is not a church holiday, it is a folk holiday. The church will have nothing to do with it.⁶ It is in fact the ancient Celtic New Year's Eve, still very much alive in the sub-culture of our children. In the Druidic cultus, New Year's Day, the first of November, celebrated the feast day of the Lord of the Dead (Samhain). All who died in the course of the year were obliged to await the end of the year for release from this world. Until Samhain's Day came, their spirits entered animal bodies (animals are sinful people), in expiation of sins committed. At the end of the year, Samhain gathered all the spirits of the dead, sacrifices were offered by the living, and the year's business was concluded. That is why the night of October thirty-first is a bad night to be out: it is the night all those disembodied spirits and ghosts, witches and goblins, are gathering for their (which word shall we borrow from Roget?) high jinks. How did this festival of spirits become a festival for men, and then for children? European folk festivals always contain hints, it seems to me, of the now long defunct European cult of witches. Most of us need to be reminded that witchery is not a fiction, nor (as it admittedly did later become) a symptom of cultural neurosis in a Puritan society. Witchery, in our dim past, was almost a separate religion, and a kind of counter-religion. The witches (Jules Michelet understood them well), as members of a suppressed cult which was therefore an underground cult, met at night, in forest groves. Estranged from the church, suppressed by the church, excluded from the life of the church, they celebrated festivals that suited their destitution. Hallowe'en was one such festival, and comes down to us today, via these people, despised and rejected, as the private festival of a sub-culture of our society, the sub-culture of our own well-fed but neglected children.

But American soil is a poor place to look for a living festival, and Hallowe'en is but a poor shadow of the festive spirit. Richard Dorson recommends Japan, a "high civilization

6. See for example Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs* (New York, 1963), p.192.

in which the folk culture is still vital and functional.”⁷ The Japanese year is crowded with all manner of festivals. There are new year festivals, year-end festivals, mid-year festivals, planting festivals, blossom festivals, harvest festivals. Even political demonstrations take on a festive air. The generic term is *o-matsuri*, and the classic *o-matsuri* is the annual renewal festival of the neighborhood *kami*. The *kami* is a divine spirit (not a god, really), who is tied to his locale, and to his community. The annual festival accomplishes the renewal of the *kami*'s obligation to his community, and the community's obligation to the *kami*. It lasts for several days, and is really quite a complex mixture of proceedings. These proceedings have no clear and obvious point of beginning or ending, for the townspeople. The *matsuri* is a circle of events, with a steady flow of the *kami*-presence out from his sanctuary to the streets and by-ways of the village, and, in response, a steady flow of villagers towards the shrine, where they may offer their thanks, be further purified by the divine presence, and then bring some of this sanctity of the *kami* and the festival back to their homes, to continue to purify them throughout the coming year. These are the basic themes—the very meaning—of the festival: purification, reaffirmation of mutual obligations, and reciprocity between profane and sacred. The realm of the sacred and the realm of the profane flow together and co-mingle for the three days and nights of *o-matsuri*, and the life and spirit of the community are restored and refreshed for another season, another year.

From the point of view of the *kami*'s participation in these proceedings, the festival begins in the sanctuary of the shrine, where the *kami* either resides, or which he comes to occupy once a year, at festival time, descending from some lofty abode in the heavens, or in the remote mountains of the interior. Sometimes the festival begins with the *ujiko* (parishioners) erecting a lofty pole for the *kami* to descend, fire-house fashion, and an invitation to him to come down and be in their midst and share

7. Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Studies in Japanese Folklore* (Bloomington, 1963), p. 31. Dr. Dorson is right in stating that the festival is still a living affair in Japan, though certainly no longer everywhere. Many festivals are revived or kept alive artificially as attractions for domestic tourists and are then not much more than theatrical performances.

in the festivities. In other regions, the townsmen understand that the *kami* resides in that little house at the head of the stairs at the far end of the shrine hall. The holy of holies is his abode, his year-round residence. In any case the festival, in the eyes of the shrine priest (*kannushi*), begins with the calling down and calling out of the *kami*, an invitation to him to assert and affirm his power and his strength. It is time for the people to be rid of the impurities they have accumulated during the past year, and only the *kami*-presence has the needed power to cleanse and purify.

But to go among his people, the holy spirit needs a vehicle, some means of conveyance, a sacred ark. That ark is called in Japanese *o-mikoshi*, and is a splendidly ornamented and decorated gilt carriage, with silken cords and golden bells, and a golden phoenix at the top. It is carried by the young unmarried men of the village, who sometimes fast the day before the festival begins, and spend the night inside the shrine, in the presence of the holy. When the sun dawns on the festival, they don uniform *happi* coats (over their undershorts), powder their faces white (sometimes adding lipstick and eye make-up of red and green), and (after the priest has invited the *kami* to depart the holy of holies and enter the *mikoshi*) they begin jogging down the streets, zig-zagging all through the town, chanting a work chant, and gradually surrendering themselves to a dizzy state of ecstatic exhaustion. The *mikoshi* is heavy, and although the town elders go along to guide them and to try and prevent them from injuring themselves or damaging property, the *kami*-presence gradually takes over, and their procession becomes more and more erratic and exuberant. The *kami*, with their help, is going among his people's homes and dispelling evil influences, driving out infirmity, and bringing vital energy to all. The community is transformed, work slows or stops, and the children beg to be taken to the shrine, which has been transformed into a fairground. Men and women, adults and children, dance (in the style of *bon odori*) in the streets, or in an open place. Their dance is a simple circular folk dance, centering around what James Kirkup called "a bamboo tower with a roof of reed," housing a giant drum and other musical instruments, or else simply a record player and the drum. This communal dance, some say, is built around the

gestures of the simple sower of seeds, or of the fisherman drawing in his nets and casting them out again into the sea; a harking back, for this island people, to their beginnings, living off the fruit of the soil and the fruit of the sea. The dancers move slowly and gracefully, their hand movements accentuated by the loose flowing long sleeves of their summer *kimono*, and the pounding drum beats are heard for miles around, in the night air. The rows of paper lanterns push back the boundaries of night with a warm glow and a rainbow of colors.

On the grounds of the shrine itself, temporary shop-stalls have been set up, and a small carnival is in progress. Balloons, candies, pet goldfish and turtles, all that delights the children and puts their parents in a reminiscing mood is there. Nostalgia blends into excitement; and as the shrine visitor strolls towards the sanctuary, new and curious sights and sounds greet him. On the stage of a sizeable outdoor theatre, men in elaborate costume and wearing wood lacquered masks perform ancient mime dances retelling the narratives of the creation of the earth and the descent of the gods to the hallowed islands of Japan. The music of this dance-drama is very different from the rolling sing-song of the folk dance done in the streets. It is primitive and subtle, exuberant yet sometimes ghostly and ponderous. It is all flutes and drums, sometimes played by the old farmers of the village. But it is intricate music, with constant and sudden changes of mood. The dance that accompanies it is full of thrusts, leaps, struts (Roget again); full of solemnity and bravado, as the dancers act out the ancient deeds of Japan's national gods and heroes. The street dance is profane dance, the villagers infused with the spirit of the holy, and dancing in celebration of his presence. But this shrine dance (called *o-kagura*) is sacred dance, done for the entertainment of the *kami* in the sanctuary as well as for the enjoyment and edification of the people who come to the shrine to pay their respects, danced in a sense by the gods themselves. For when the dancer puts on the god-mask, and then solemnly glides onto the polished stage floor, it is the god who enters, not the dancer. Were it otherwise, the dancer's offering to the *kami* would be an unworthy offering.

And the *kagura* drama, this reliving of the Age of the Gods, brings us back to the sanctuary. The festival begins with

the invitation to the *kami*, the outrush of *kami*-power from the sanctuary, and the infusion of that power into the community. To this point the festival has consisted of the young men's ecstatic procession with the sacred carriage, and the lyrical, minuet-like communal folk dance. Its forms have been affirmation forms: affirming the *kami* presence, affirming the community. But the festival may also be said to begin with the invitation (extended by the *kami* in his outrush) to the folk of the village to come to the shrine and participate in a time that is outside time: expressed in the bazaar, which is a child's dream world; expressed in the masked possession dance of leaps and thrusts and unearthly movements, which is even more intensely the realm of dream; and finally in the ritual forms executed by the priests inside the shrine hall. The core of these forms is the *norito*, the solemn prayer that is recited by the chief priest, his voice quavering, beginning in a near whisper, and gradually building into a crescendo of kabuki-like declamation. The forms of this phase of the festival are not affirmation forms; they lack the bravado and boyancy and ebullience of that other phase of the festival which takes place in town beneath the hill-top shrine. These forms are forms of awe, in which the terror of the *kami*-presence is acknowledged. They are also submission forms. The priest addresses the *kami* with a tremor in his voice. And the *norito* prayers are interspersed with fragments of a very eerie kind of music, called *gagaku*. This truly is dream music, and the dream is a glimpse into the world of surrealist vision, in which the awesome and grotesque and terrifying has at the same time an unearthly beauty about it. Just as the music of the street dance is music of the folk, this music of the sanctuary is music of the *kami*. In its affirmation forms, the festival serves to renew the community; in its forms of awe and submission, the community renews its obedience to the divine power.

All that I have said about the Japanese shrine festival conforms to what that extraordinary French philosopher Roger Caillois has said. The festival constitutes an in-gathering of the community. It comes usually at the end of the community's main work season, and hence presents the community with a break in the routine. By contrast with the workaday routine it seems like another world. It presents the community with

an occasion for social catharsis, "a sudden explosion after long and strict repression."⁸ There is a return to childhood joys and freedoms, and excesses of eating and drinking and carousal of all sorts. But it is also a time of purification, and "a time of intense emotion and a metamorphosis of his being."⁹

Caillois, in his classic study of the festival, goes on to suggest that the festival presupposes a world-view in which there is a yearly unwinding of the cosmic energy, a kind of archaic or primitive notion of cosmic entropy. In this view, the function of the festival is to mark the annual time of cosmic exhaustion (the Celtic Samhain's Day would be a good illustration of this), to gather together all the remnants of evil pollutions of the past year and sweep them out, and then make the world ready for a brand new beginning. How is this rebirth and renewal of the cosmos effected? By having the community re-enact the creation of the world, the first beginning, the *Urzeit* (even a Frenchman must borrow a word from the Germans in discussing such weighty matters!).¹⁰ The *Urzeit* is the mythical dream-time, which is located "simultaneously at the beginning and outside of history."¹¹ The Age of the Gods lies at the beginning of time, but at *o-matsuri*, it is now. That is the meaning of the *kagura* drama in the Japanese shrine festival.

What happened at the beginning of history was that with the transition from the *Urzeit*, the sacred withdraws or recedes from the world, leaving it profane. And the sacred hedges in its separateness from the profane world, its otherness, by boxing in the human race with taboos, the rules of daily life. What the festival does is to reverse the process: the community breaks the rules, violates the taboos, and plunges the cosmos back into the *Urzeit*. Therefore festival time is a time of chaos, a time when the rules of polite society are temporarily suspended: when, in fact, it becomes a sacred obligation to break the rules laid down by the sacred when time began. King Carnival reigns, social values are turned upside down, the princes of the festival mock the princes of polite society in

8. Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred* (Glencoe, 1959), p. 100.

9. *ibid.*, p. 99.

10. *ibid.*, p. 103.

11. *ibid.*, p. 103.

masquerade and mime, and the orgy begins.

And so we arrive at the curious fact that all festivals are, in a way, religious festivals, yet all festivals have an air of irreligion about them. The spirit of the festival is at once both religious and counter-religious. The festival in some way embodies a spirit of release (short-lived, but intense) from conventional religion and ecclesiastical authority and control. The festival, if it is a true festival, must be primarily in the hands of the folk, not the church (that is, the religious institution). Shinto priests (and others) understand this, but Protestant ministers are apt not to. One, who was stationed in Tokyo during the post-war years, told me that one year he was walking up the long avenue leading to the great Yasukuni shrine at festival time, and discovered, among the many entertainments lining both sides of the path, a burlesque show! He went to see the shrine's head priest, and told him how shocked he was to find the *sutorippu* (strip) show brazenly there, so close to the sanctuary; the priest half shrugged and said, "What can I do?" In Japan, the priest is responsible for what is done in the sanctuary, and the *tekiya* (itinerant merchants who move, gypsy-like, from festival to festival), and the folk of the community, are responsible for what happens on the shrine grounds and on the streets. I once asked the priest of a small neighborhood shrine in Tokyo about a rumor that the *tekiya* merchants who worked his shrine were involved with, and managed by, gangsters and racketeers. He smiled, and said, "I don't really know much about them. Their boss (*oyabun*) comes the day before the festival, and allots each man his space. Then, at the end of the festival, he comes again, bows, says *domo arigato gozaimasu* (a very polite thank you), makes a gift to the *kami* (a donation to the shrine), and leaves." When I pressed him for more information on these marginal men, he replied: "I don't want to be familiar with such people!" Their activities were no concern of his. In the same way, I suspect, the Yasukuni priest was not really concerned about the strip show; if he was, he is a most unusual (and difficult) man.

This separation of ecclesiastical concerns from the folk dimensions of the festival extends, I believe, into all cultures and all religions. I have tried for years to bring my students

to the chapel of a small Catholic college for girls in our neighborhood for the May observance of the crowning of the Virgin (sometimes held outdoors, in a bower, with one or more of the girls dressed in bridal costume, placing the crown on the image of Mary, with flowers all about); my friend the priest becomes quite vague and absent minded about it all, and usually suggests: "I'd rather you brought them over to see a real Eucharist." May celebrations of this sort, by the way, also have their origins in Celtic times, and May Day, coming precisely six months after Hallowe'en, is the calendric and spiritual counterpart of Samhain's Day, signifying beginnings rather than endings, life rather than death.¹²

Festivals tend to have their place within the annual round of religious observances. Whether the church sanctions the folk observance, or merely tolerates it, or actively encourages and participates in it, seems not as important as one might expect. What is essential is that the festival represents a folk culture that is largely untouched by the ecclesiastical culture. The true festival is of, by, and for the people. And it must be an expression of the life of the whole community. The festival, understood in these terms, is not so much a religious activity of the community as it is the community's response to formal religion. It is the folk's response to the *ecclesia*, and they answer in unison, and their answer is not a verbal answer. They answer with a shout, rather than a formula. But this too is religion, and in this sense all festivals, if they are true festivals, are religious festivals. For religion has two faces. It has its solitary face, when the Indian student of a *guru*, or a Chinese Taoist poet, or a British "mod," asks the ultimate question: What's it all about? Who are we, and why are we here? This is the face that religion takes for the mystics and the psychedelics. It is the face of religion that students tend to be most absorbed in, because they find themselves in sudden urgent need of self-understanding. The other face of religion is the communal. University students little understand this aspect; they have finally broken free of family and community

12. Of May Day's demise, Charles Dickens wrote in 1836: "...we began to be a steady and matter-of-fact sort of people, and dancing in spring being beneath our dignity, we gave it up..." My thanks to Jay Rogers for uncovering this quote in *Folklore Quarterly* (London) for 1949, p. 218.

ties (which were, after all, not of their making), and they must first re-form their self-image before rejoining the wider community. University professors too tend to be absorbed in the solitary face of religion, and neglect the communal, perhaps because they are attentive to their students' needs, perhaps because they are rather like their students. But the communal face of religion represents the great mass of mankind's attempt to answer the questions we ask in our solitude—and at the same time to drown them out in a joyous din. If we study festivals, we do so in the hope of learning something about human nature. The festival is the religion of the folk. It is not the religion of solitude, which is the province of the saint, the mystic, the holy man. Nor is it the apologetic religion of the academicians and theologians who transfer religion's concerns from the heart to the intellect. This religion, the religion of the festival, tends to stand free of theologians and hierarchs. And it is what Scrooge had lost, and it is what the Lost Generation had lost, and it is what that Japanese poet who cannot lose himself during a festival but just looks on—it is what he has lost, too. It is lost to much of the world. But by no means to all of it. In Japan, the community festival is very much alive. It is not, however, a massive communal return to the *Urzeit*. It is not a time of utter chaos. It is joyous and exciting, but not nearly orgiastic enough to fit Caillois' conception. My impression is that it never was, and that the carnival inversion of values is somehow necessary to some festivals but not others.

But my difficulty with Caillois is rather more fundamental than this. For him, I think, a festival (that complicated round of events whose composite we call a festival) tells a story. It is a kind of *Ur*-narrative, and relates a kind of *Ur*-philosophy, of time and space, gods and men, sacred and profane. And here again, religion falls rather neatly into one of two bins: it is either what men say (their world-view, their philosophy, their spiritual experience and their ideals and aspirations), or it is what men do (their ceremonial, their ritual, their moral action rather than their announced moral principles, their etiquette, their manners). For Caillois, we examine what men do (in this case, their festivals) in order to discover their philosophy, which in the case of the folk is apt never to have been verbalized. Caillois seeks to verbalize what was left un-

verbalized. But this seems to me an ill-conceived, an illegitimate endeavor. That is what I meant when I said that the festival is perhaps a folk answer to the deep questions of human existence, but an answer in the form of a shout, a joyous din, rather than a verbal answer. To try to verbalize this shout is like trying to verbalize Picasso's *Guernica*, or a Calder mobile, or one of Henry Moore's Mothers (Erich Neumann has tried), or for that matter a Renoir pasturale.

Perhaps I am overstating the dangers of extracting a philosophic narrative from what others have chosen to express in a non-verbal fashion. But there are, after all, subtle ways of speaking without words. The festival may well have something to communicate to us, but its communication must be received as we receive communication from works of art. The festival is a masterwork of the community whose affections it expresses. Its range of expression can be symphonic, going from a boisterous street chant to a carefully modulated voice in prayer or song, from folk *rondo* to sacred mime, from the awesome silences of the sanctuary to the cacaphony of the gypsy bazaar. That is why, I believe, we must turn our attention away from what we may suppose to be the "message" of the festival, and toward what we might call the "forms" of the festival. The meaning, I believe, is to be found in the form.

What, then, is the "form" of the festival? Festivals vary from culture to culture, of course; but one can, I think, discern a basic pattern. First, festivals involve a bursting of its bounds by the divine presence, an explosion of its territorial confines, and a consequent invasion of profane space by the sacred. There is an outrush of the sacred (both sacred good and sacred bad, both *kami* and demons) and an invasion of external space by the spirit world. Spirits benevolent and spirits terrifying, ordinarily confined and spatially restrained, are suddenly unleashed on the world and given total freedom of movement. In Japan, the *kami* emerges from the closet-like confines of the shrine's holy of holies and takes his wild ride through the town. Even our Hallowe'en, that battered relic of the Celtic New Year, retains its initial meaning as a time when spirits are loosed. In both cases, festival time is a good time for divination, because the spirits are in the midst of the folk and free to assist in the divination.

A further thought on this question of spatial relations:¹³ the holy, even when it is understood to be physically present in a sanctuary, is elevated and somewhat distant from the worshipper. But when the festival begins, the holy dismounts his place of elevation, so to speak, and is close to the devotees: in the *o-mikoshi*, or in the image carried in the Hindu street procession or the Latin saint's day procession, or as the Body of Christ in the monstrance of the Corpus Christi procession. The holy presence exchanges distance and remoteness for proximity and an informal sort of fellowship with the folk. He accepts a brief and temporary democratization of his relationship to his people (this is true at least of the first phase of the festival, as in the outrush and affirmation phase of the Japanese festival, but not of the second phase, the return, in which the laity reaffirm their awe and respect for the holy).

Second, the festival involves a battle against the environment. This in a way is the human counterpart of the role of the holy. The holy bursts his bonds and explodes into the prosaic life of the folk. But the folk themselves become assertive, and work at temporarily pushing back the boundaries of their existence. Man extends his environment, and in some cases attempts to demonstrate his extended mastery of his environment. This may take a gentle form, as in the illumination of the town and the shrine grounds with colored and white paper lanterns in the Japanese festival, extending the merry-making of the day far into the night. In some festivals in Japan, lighted lanterns are set on small paper boats and floated out into the nearby river or harbor, and thence out to sea. This setting lights afloat is a characteristic feature in fact of all summer festivals in Japan, including the *O-Bon*. In winter festivals in Japan the emphasis is less apt to be on the extension of the environment spatially than on extension of one's mastery of the rigors of the season. What January visitor to Tokyo will soon forget the picture in the newspaper on the traditional "coldest day of the year" showing the annual *gaman-taikai*, or

13. My thoughts on this owe much to the seminal writings of Marcel Mauss, Henri Hubert and Emile Durkheim in *Année Sociologique* on collective representations, village layouts, and the use of space; and, much more recently of course, to Edward T. Hall's unusual little book, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, 1966).

endurance party, at the Kanda Myojin shrine? A dozen or two men, standing outdoors in the wintry cold, have stripped to their undershorts, and are dumping buckets of icy water over their bodies. Or the winter games in the coastal town of Oiso, at the annual *dondoyaki* (New Year's burning of old decorations) festival: a tug of war on the beach, with the losing team landing in the icy Pacific, and then, when the young men are all properly drenched and blue with cold, dancing through the streets wearing considerably less than their confreres in Kanda, performing their "naked *kagura*."

Probably all winter festivals constitute at least in part a gesture of defiance of the restrictions of the winter environment. In a town in the Adirondacks, in upstate New York, a winter festival is held every February. It has been held there for over seventy consecutive years, and is probably a variant of the pre-Lenten Carnival, though it has no obvious religious significance to the townspeople of Saranac Lake. There are sled derbies, skating races, snow shoe races, a wood chopping contest, an under-the-ice treasure hunt for hardy scuba fanciers, and a greased pig contest. In the days preceding the carnival, a massive ice palace is built atop a high hill, and the highlight of the three-day carnival is the storming of the ice palace, and fireworks display: a struggle against the cold, a dispelling of the night.

Venturing out on Hallowe'en night is an assertive act, too, an act of bravery and a shaking of one's fist at one's own fear, a challenge to the dark spirits adrift in the night for mastery of one's territory, even on that (once) dread night. A festival is in part a battle, an act of aggression and self-assertion.

Finally, at the festival, an arena is established: an arena for acting out a drama of cosmic significance. The *kagura* stage in Japan is an illustration; another might be the arena for bullfights at the Spanish or Mexican saint's day festival. I have no personal knowledge of the *fiesta*, and must rely on what others have written. But I gather that the bulls of the *fiesta* are more persons of a drama than they are animals of a sporting contest. They are bred to fight and to die in the bullring at festival time, and they are valued as *toros bravos*, brave bulls, fighting bulls with a will to fight. The bullfight is a primal drama in which man confronts danger and possible death with

great courage and bravado (a Spanish word). He does not risk death, he challenges death, in order to regain life. What is done in the arena at festival time must be of epic, mythic proportions. The basic myth of the culture, of the folk, must somehow be acted out. On Bali, it is the warfare between Rangda and Barong, between the witch and the dragon, between mother and child or between woman and man. In the Jewish folk festival of Purim, the synagogue hall is the arena, and the drama is the conflict of Jew against anti-Semite recorded in the *Megillah* (or Book of Esther). As the *Megillah* text is recited, it is the custom that at every mention of the name of the villain (scapegoat) Haman, there is loud stamping of the feet and whirling of noisemakers to drown out the sound of the evil name. Bella Chagall, the wife of the painter Marc Chagall, has recorded her childhood memories of the excitement of this annual event in her parents' household in a delightful book called *Burning Lights*. She recalls how the rabbi read with such fervor that it was almost as though Haman had run out of the scroll and "that I am to hit him, kill him on the spot. I bang my rattle on the table, I stamp my feet, I yell. . . 'Haman! Haman!' the reader now cries out with each minute, as though not one but a thousand Hamans had crept out of the scroll. The din of our voices becomes fearful. . . What if we don't manage to kill Haman? Will he strike us through with his drawn sword? Where are you, Esther? Hurry, hurry! . . ."14 When the reading is over, the scroll is returned to its place, and the reb says to them: "'So only you three have heard me?'" and Bella Chagall remarks, "It seemed to him that he had recited the *Megillah* to the whole world."15 And in a way, of course, he had.

I said earlier that religion has two faces. It is psychedelic (consciousness-expanding, contemplative, meditative, mystical, solitary), or it is communal. I now venture, in conclusion, this thesis: The communal aspect of religion reaches its consummation in the festival. And the festival is itself an act of consciousness-expansion. One almost cannot avoid employing territorial imagery here: the human consciousness is expanded, the boundaries are pushed.

14. Bella and Marc Chagall, *Burning Lights* (New York, 1962), p. 183.

15. *ibid.*, p. 184.