The end of feasting

Our festivities are reduced to a shadow of what they once were. Cocktail parties and receptions are enclosed like contagious diseases within the rigid limits of a time and space measured with avarice. Oozing the ennui of carefully controlled excitement, followed by the anxious calculation of one’s successes and faux pas, our modern festivities transmit an impoverished image of what festivities once were. As Jules Michelet mourned: “We don’t have parties any more that expand and dilate our hearts. Such cold salons and horrible dances! It is the opposite of festivity. One is more dried up the day after, and even more haggard.” ([1870] 1895: 583)

From the second half of the seventeenth century onward “the victory of work over free time in the organization of life became irreversible” (Bercé 1976: 152). But the process of rationalization begins earlier, in the field of religion. During the Council of Constance (1413), Jean Gerson had already proposed a reduction in the number of feasts, which according to him were too numerous to be adequately sanctified. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, more than one day out of three was a feast: it was inevitable that non-ritual activities (seasonal work, markets) should profane festive periods. To avoid this
confusion between sacred and profane, holiday and work, the Church sought to reduce the number of feasts and to control their organisation (ibid.: 136–50). With the constitution *Universa* (1627), Urban VIII reserved for Rome the right to establish feasts and limit their number. In the Protestant camp, the elimination of feasts dedicated to saints extended the time reserved for work. Montesquieu and Voltaire saw the consequences: the “marchandise catholique” was disadvantaged with respect to the “marchandise protestante” (Voltaire [1764] 1769). And it was not long before the interests of the saints were to be declared contrary to those of the people (Villette 1792).

But monarchical absolutism, the clergy, and utilitarian rationalism had already been fighting together against feasts for a century. From 1669 onwards Colbert’s directives had the effect of reducing by a third the number of feasts in a large number of dioceses (Bercé 1976: 153).

For the rationalist mentality, the feast was an activity and a form of association which is not motivated by utility and therefore intrinsically subversive. The feast seems to sum up everything against which the *philosophes* fought: laziness, wastage, superstition, vice, ignorance, fanaticism, enthusiasm. . . . For Voltaire, there was no doubt that inn-keepers were the ones who had prodigiously multiplied the number of feasts, above all in accordance with the tastes of the religious customs of the peasants and artisans who knew only the cult of getting drunk on saints’ days. It was on those days of idleness and dissoluteness that all the crimes were committed. For Voltaire, therefore, feasts are what fill up the prisons and keep the clerks of the court and executioners in business. Voltaire believed moreover that feast-days perpetuate poverty: in Lyon feasts constrained silk-workers to idleness for eighty-two days a year. It is not festive sloth but work that “sanctifies.”

Forty or so years later, the archbishop of Dijon, in a pastoral letter, seems to echo Voltaire: “The habit of work is the guarantee of morality; we become immoral only when we are unemployed; we must not sanctify festive days with the cessation of work, but with religious works; those who lament the suppression of feasts and want to celebrate them by abstaining from work sanctify them less than those who work” (quoted in Bercé 1976: 155).

And in an imperial edict, Napoleon I announced the sad age of the religion of work: “One realises how ruinous, rather than useful, is the Sunday rest; one sees in how many arts, in how many trades this interruption has regrettable effects” (quoted in ibid.: 230).
By this time, however, Rousseau had already denounced the contradictory character of a concept that seeks to reduce the social bond to pure utilitarian rationality. Taking feasts away from the people takes away their will to live and in this way eliminates their very motivation for working (Rousseau 1759). Above all, individuals become isolated, making them “bad” (ibid.: 264), the occasions that promote sociability are eliminated and thus the foundations of society are destroyed. “Make the spectators themselves the show, make them become actors themselves; do it in such a way that each one sees and loves himself in others so that all may have stronger bonds of friendship” (ibid.: 269). Feasting was “the true cradle of all peoples”; thanks to primitive feast-days “we became milder with one another; struggling to make ourselves understood, we learned to explain ourselves” (Rousseau [1761] 1781, Italian trans.: 221). From here emerged language and the social contract.

Mindful of Rousseau, the revolution was to put an end to the traditional feast-days and festivity only to substitute for them its own (Ozouf 1976; Mastropasqua 1976; Durkheim [1912] 1965). But the revolutionary festivals managed neither to supplant the old ones nor to eliminate the conflict between festivity and utility in modern ideology. The feast continues to be seen either as an organicist utopia in a society fragmented and threatened by individualism, or as a phantasm of transgression. From both sides of the barricades, until “May ’68,” revolution and feasting have appeared synonymous.

Theory of the feast

The feast as transgression

According to Freud, a “feast is excess that is permitted, or indeed offered, the solemn infraction of a prohibition. Men do not abandon themselves to excess because of some command they have received. Rather, excess is part of the nature of every feast; the festive humour is provoked by the liberty of being able to do what is otherwise prohibited” (Freud [1912–13] 1952, Italian trans.: 144). Certainly, Freud affirms that the festive sentiment coexists with its opposite; but there remains the fact that for him the feast is essentially a legitimate transgression of rules. This point of view is decidedly one-sided. In the first place, the freedom to violate the customary rules of behavior is not always associated with festive joy. To give but one example: both in Africa and Polynesia, the death of a king is followed by excesses, and
by the legitimate violation of all the usual norms. However, these collective transgressions are not accompanied by joyfulness and are not in any way festive (cf., for the Hawaiian islands, Stewart [1828] 1830: 216; Ellis [1839] 1842 IV: 177). In the second place, feasts are not necessarily transgressive. On the contrary, many festivities (corteges, processions, triumphal parades, etc.) consist in the representation of hierarchy and social values, and serve to reaffirm them solemnly (cf. Heers 1971: 13–43). Freud’s theory thus takes account of only one category of feasts, or only one aspect of the feast.

The same objection applies to René Girard’s theory. He, like Freud, William Robertson Smith (1972: 253–68), and Roger Caillois (1950), associates the feast with sacrifice. For Girard, the sacrifice of a scapegoat has a cathartic effect on the violence that accumulates in society and that risks destroying it: “The feast is based on an interpretation of the game of violence that presumes continuity between the sacrificial crisis and its resolution. By this time inseparable from its favourable resolution, the crisis itself becomes an object of jubilation” (Girard 1972: 172). But the nature of the violence that periodically reforms within society only to dissolve itself once again into the act of sacrifice, remains totally mysterious.

Nor is the idea that the feast is a beneficial catharsis for society a new one. It is found in Confucius and in a letter of the Faculty of Theology in Paris (thirteenth century) that attempts to refute it: “But—they say—we behave this way for fun and not seriously, as is the ancient custom, in such a way that once a year the frivolity that is innate in us disperses outside and evaporates. Is it not perhaps true that wine-skins and barrels would often burst themselves were their orifices not opened every now and then? We are just such old wine-skins, such ruined barrels, through which the over-fermented wine of wisdom that we toil to compress for an entire year in the service of God would be dispersed in vain, were we not to abandon ourselves now and then to foolish jesting. Therefore every now and then it is necessary to joke in order then go back to maintaining wisdom more effectively” (in Migne, Latin patrology, CCVII, col. 1171; cf. Lucotte du Tilliot 1741: 30).

According to Georges Bataille ([1933] 1967), feasting is motivated by an immeasurable need for destruction and wastage that is satisfied in traditional society and suppressed in the bourgeois one. While the latter has made acquisition into an end in itself, in the traditional society wealth must be squandered if one wants to achieve honor and
rank. The opposition between the two societies, one based on the principle of the feast, the other on its radical negation, is therefore irreducible. However, in declaring that feasting is revolutionary exactly because it is destructive, Bataille does nothing more than to take up again, in his own way, the image that the feast has assumed in the utilitarian ideology that he is combating.

**The feast as spontaneous production of society**

Resuscitating Rousseau and his revolutionary adherents, Michelet imagines a spontaneous feasting, in which the artificial barriers between humans and society fall, and society becomes a harmonious unity (cf. Ozouf 1976: 26–27). In the history of the revolution, “successful feasting” is for Michelet the sign of the “successful revolution.” Since it establishes or restores harmony between men, the revolution cannot fail to culminate in a feast. Reciprocally, if there is no festivity, there is no revolution (Michelet [1870] 1895: 583–88).

But it is in Émile Durkheim and his pupils that Rousseau’s idea of the feast as a periodic restoration of the origins of society finds its most coherent elaboration. In a famous essay, Marcel Mauss shows that two forms of association correspond to the two seasons that govern the rhythm of Eskimo life. During the summer groups are dispersed, the intensity of social links is reduced to the minimum, and rituals are few and private in nature. In winter, to the contrary, the population is concentrated together, relations and exchanges intensify, religious life is rich and collective in nature. “One can . . . represent all of winter life as a kind of long feast” (1904–05: 97). Thanks to the increased “social density” (ibid.: 128), “a chronic state of effervescence and hyperactivity” (ibid.: 125) is created in which representations and actions that justify society are spontaneously produced. Feasting is this state of effervescence in which the group becomes visible to itself as such. Durkheim ([1912] 1965) explains the feasts of Australian tribes in the same way.

But in order that the material reality, the “body” of the group, can become the symbol of its ideal identity, the latter must already exist. The material intensification of relations presupposes the social bond that it ought to explain and does not necessarily imply an increased solidarity. Mauss’ and Durkheim’s theory is based on a circular logic.

One of Mauss’ students, Caillois, tries to take account of the festive phenomenon in terms of beliefs and representations rather than invoking “social density” or the psychological phenomenon of catharsis.
In Caillois’ interpretation, festive excesses recreate the originary phase of undifferentiation from which order was born. Exceptional powers are associated with the primordial age because everything then was possible. It was the age of metamorphosis: the golden age and at the same time the age of chaos, in which every form was unstable and crossed over into every other form. Periodically recreating a situation of undifferentiation, the feast reproduces the dawn of society and draws on its powers to repeat the process of forming order. But for Caillois (1950), as for Durkheim, the festive commemoration is efficacious because it is a real, not solely symbolic, reproduction of the genesis of social order. Feasting must be defined as the “paroxysm of society” that purifies and at the same times renews.

But it is erroneous to maintain that the symbolic can be efficacious only if it is mingled with the reality that is assumed to correspond to it. Such an idea contradicts the very premises of Durkheim’s theory of society.

The theories that we have briefly expounded highlight aspects of feasting that are sometimes important, but none offers a definition of it that includes all of its forms. Feasting is not necessarily transgressive, as Freud, Girard or Bataille, for different reasons, would want to have it. Nor does it necessarily recreate a state of undifferentiation and of Gemeinschaft, as Michelet, Durkheim, Caillois, and also Harvey Cox (1969) suppose. On the contrary, many feasts represent marked differentiations among social categories. Feasting can have a distributive function, rather than being motivated (as Bataille supposes) by a tendency toward wastage and destruction. Finally, anyone who has studied actual feasts knows that these require organization, work, and sometimes complex direction. Far from being the chaos supposed by some theorists, feasts in many societies are more often the culmination of organized activity, and justify the perpetuation of confraternities, guilds, neighborhood associations, and other forms of grouping that have a permanent endurance and a constant influence on the global society (cf., for example, Dundes and Falassi 1975 on the palio in Siena).

The theories that we have expounded reflect in each case the ambiguous status of feasting in modern ideology and society. Other than in sporadic cases, feasting is no longer part of our experience.
The essence of the feast
What, then, are the differential features of feasting? There are two, it seems: first of all, feasting is any ritual activity related to the social organization of time; secondly, feasting is a pleasurable social activity. Obviously, the two characteristics are interdependent. Being pleasurable, a feast is recorded in memory and anticipated in the imagination: it therefore tends to repeat itself in time.

The idea that feasting is linked to the social organization of time is certainly not new. It was advanced, for example, by Henri Hubert, for whom, as for Durkheim, the sacred is simply that which is an object of prohibition ([1905] 1929: 222). The sacred is therefore necessarily indivisible and outside time: its continuity presupposes the continuity of the prohibition. But on the other hand, the prohibition can not be continuous without preventing action: the sacred must therefore be able to be interrupted, to become divisible, without however being abolished. How then do we reconcile “divisible time and the undivided sacred that disintegrates in time” (ibid.: 196)? By means of a sacred time, rhythmic but indivisible (ibid.), that is realized in feasts. In fact, feasts continue to make their effects felt even when they are over. They therefore combine the indivisibility and the duration characteristic of the sacred with the divisibility of the profane (ibid: 225–26). The result is a rhythmic, pendular time.

But if this reasoning is valid, then rhythmic time presupposes divisible time. The feast determines a temporal form that coexists with another. Yet it is rather the case that, in the absence of measurement instruments, feasts create the very possibility of perception of a collective time, whether cyclical or irreversible, introducing collective discontinuities into individual perceptions of duration. This is recognised by Edmund Leach (1961: 134), for whom the “discontinuity of repeated contrasts” constitutes the most elementary notion of time. The sacred/profane contrast determines others of equal importance in the festive cycle. In fact, not only are feasts opposed to the intervals that separate them as the sacred is opposed to the profane, but the passage from the profane to the sacred, which opens the feast, and the passage from the sacred to the profane, which closes it, constitute another pair of contrasts. Each of these contrasts corresponds to different behaviors. The sacred is characterized by behavior that is the inverse of that of the profane to which it is opposed: the culmination of the feast is therefore associated with “role reversal”; men dress up like women, people walk backwards, etc. The same goes for the rites of entrance.
and exit into and out of the feast: one is characterized by “formal behavior,” the other by a “masquerade.” The temporal pendulum is realized therefore through behaviors that follow one another according to a prescribed order.

This outline is seductive, but difficult to accept, since its relationship to actual feasts does not seem evident. It is true that “formality,” “inversion,” and “masquerade” are often present together in feasts, but not necessarily in the order postulated by Leach; nor are these behaviors motivated only or even mainly by the pendular structure of time. Furthermore, Leach, like Hubert, maintains wrongly that feasts are linked only to a cyclical notion of time. On the contrary, a number of feasts constitute the reference points of an irreversible and linear time, whether in individual life (baptism, confirmation, marriage, initiation, funeral, etc.) or in collective life (victories, celebrations of peace, visits of famous personages; marriage, coronation, death of a prince, etc.). The tendency to accentuate the importance of feasts of this type to the detriment of cyclical feasts obviously corresponds to a change in the perception of time, so it should not be surprising that this type of feast is particularly emphasized in the modern age—for example in Medicean Florence—which offered an example of this to the European courts (cf. Minor and Mitchell 1968; Jacquot 1957).

But more than a radical change, we are talking about a change in the relative importance of two notions of time that we always find associated in every festive system. In fact, cyclical feasts never repeat themselves in a completely identical way; each one is individualized in collective memory. One might think in particular of Carnivals, of Mysteries, of civic festivals. Often each occurrence of these feasts is associated with an “invention,” a central theme, which individualizes it, or with memorable events (for example, the visit of an important personage, the victory of a certain individual or party in a battle). The Antwerp _ommegang_ and the Lord Mayor of London’s parade constitute particularly eloquent examples of the association of the two temporal forms (cf. Bercé 1976: 93–111; Williams 1957).

Let us consider for example the _ommegang_. This is a procession whose circular itinerary begins and ends at the Antwerp cathedral. All the city’s important organizations participate: religious confraternities, guilds, municipal builders. Spectacular floats with religious and profane subjects parade by. Alongside the fixed elements, which are repeated identically year after year (Williams 1957: 352), there are variable elements, intended to furnish interpretations of contempo-
rary events. A theme, which subsumes even the fixed elements, gives the festival its unity every year. Contingent events are thus incorporated into the perennial framework of the festival, but the latter in turn acquires a new sense of its relation to history, the political context, and so forth.

As Williams and Jaquot have shown (1957: 362–63), the ideology of the *ommegang* (and of the 1561 one in particular) is expressed in the famous verses found in the work *Les proverbes anciens flamengs et français correspondants de sentence les uns au autres* (1568):

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Peace engenders prosperity,
from prosperity comes wealth,
from wealth pride and pleasure,
from pride ceaseless contention,
contention entails war,
war engenders poverty,
and poverty humility,
from humility peace returns;
thus return the deeds of man.

[Païs engendre prospérité
de prospérité vient richesse
de richesse orgueil, volupté,
d’orgueil contention sans cesse,
contention la guerre adresse,
la guerre engendre povreté,
et povreté humilité,
d’humilité revient la paix,
ainsi retournent humains faicts.]
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But there is no doubt that alongside and in a dialectical relation with this cyclical notion of time, there exists another, of a time both linear and without order, that is expressed in an inscription on the first float of the procession: “That everyone should note here the course of the world. / with what inconstancy it turns at every moment: / it is the strangest of God’s works, / without beginning, without end, and without foundation, / called a sea of movement by the wise” (quoted ibid.: 363).

Cyclical time and irreversible time, structure and history thus find their equilibrium in the feast, which reduces chaos, the contradictory and senseless world, to order. But in the seventeenth century, when royal power robbed the city and the countryside of festivals and concentrated them at court, this equilibrium (which the civic festival still
preserves) was altered in favor of linear time, punctuated by unrepeatable events.

In France, above all, the process of expropriation of collective feasting on the part of monarchical absolutism coincided with the expropriation of all the correlates of these festivals: the cities’ financial and administrative autonomy (Bercé 1976: 113–18), freedom of association (the societies that organized festivals—for example the *Infanterie dijonnaise*, the *Comards* of Rouen and of Evreux—were dissolved or phased out [cf. Welsford 1966: 205–12]), freedom of political critique. Royal power took over festivity, integrated it into the etiquette of court, and used it as an instrument of political propaganda.

In a society in which magnificence—always present in feasting—is still a necessary attribute of political power, this attribute must become a “virtue of princes alone” when princes want to concentrate all power in themselves. This is underscored by Tesauro, a court writer and creator of ideas and librettos for the festivities of the Dukes of Savoy: “Among the most noble objects of Magnificence, virtue of princes alone, are numbered Popular Festivities, because Sumptuousness generates Majesty, Joviality the Love of the People” (quoted in Viale Ferrero 1965: 63). From being spectators of themselves in festivities, the people become spectators of their princes. The code of the cyclical feast disappears to leave room for new and always different inventions. The feast transforms into theatre, in which the lead actor is the prince. At the wedding festivities given by Mazzarino for the marriage of Louis XIV, for example, the king and queen danced in the opera *Ércole amante* (1660) and in the *Fêtes de Bacchus* (1651) (ibid.: 52). The young Louis had danced in Lully’s *Amour malade* (1657). In the feast the king gave at Versailles in 1664, he played the part of Ruggiero (Voltaire 1751). Charles Emmanuel II was an even more versatile actor who, in the famous festivities of the court of Turin, disguised himself from time to time as a woman, a clown, Hercules, the King of the Alps, a Turk, Achilles, etc. (Viale Ferrero, 1965). At the end of the seventeenth century, court festivities, already eminently theatrical, ended by losing ground in relation to true theatre, particularly the theatre of opera (cf. ibid.: 63–65).

The entire process is clear. At first collective feasting is expropriated by the king and the court becomes a theatre in which actors and spectators are conflated. In the end, the court itself becomes spectator. The ceremonial is increasingly distinguished from the feast, the actors from the spectators, the real from the imaginary. Feasting is
driven into the closed and increasingly shameful spaces of the theatre. Not much time was to pass, however, before the theatre was also to be entrusted with the function of being a “mirror of reality.” From the seventeenth century onwards, then, there is a progressive reduction of the space and time left to the imaginary. Energy is increasingly concentrated on work and serious activities. The term for this process is “Realism,” in which the spectacle, the last, pallid reflection of the feast, is charged with sanctifying day-to-day squalor on stage.

The transformation that we have outlined briefly coincides with a transformation of social time, which, from being predominantly cyclical and reversible, becomes predominantly irreversible and mathematicized. Wristwatches from Geneva have taken over our festivities. Between the mathematical time of the watch-maker god and the solitary, subjective perception of time, the mediation of the social time of feasting has become minimal.

There is no doubt that the feast, whatever form it may take, is associated with the fruition of a certain pleasure. But to claim that this pleasure derives from the transgression of normal rules of behavior is to isolate arbitrarily an aspect of the feast that can never be totally dominant.

A totally transgressive feast, in which the only rule was the suspension of every rule, would not in fact be associated with pleasure, but with anxiety. “None does offend, none, I say, none” (Shakespeare, King Lear, Act IV, scene vi): the absolute lack of differentiation between good and bad, king and fool, is tragic, not festive, because it entails the suspension of every social bond. The latter entails the absence of all predictability in the behavior of one’s neighbor and thus a great deal of tension. At its extreme limits, the “transgressive” conception of the feast coincides with the absurd idea of a purely individual and private kind of feasting. To the contrary, feasting is characterized by the increased predictability of one’s neighbor’s behavior, and by a more intense social solidarity, which manifests itself in regulated activities that cannot be explained by a simple emotional state.

There is always a difference between the rules of feasting and the rules of daily life, but not necessarily a relationship of inversion. Feasting can oppose itself to “normal” society or, on the contrary, represent it in a synthetic and ideal form in which it becomes easily perceptible as a totality. In both cases, feasting is an experience of transparency, an increase in meaning whose effects extend into “normal” society. If in fact meaning consists in the perception of relations,
a decrease in the obstacles that prevent us from perceiving these relations constitutes an increase of meaning.

Feasting is exactly such an increase in the perception of relations since it unites in experience that which is normally separated: spirit and material, superior and inferior parts of the body (cf. Bakhtin 1968), before and behind, right and left, high and low, king and fool, the fragmented parts of self and society.

It is not by chance that the central character of the feast should be a representation of totality, of the unity of categories that are normally separated. Carnival is at the same time king and fool, “madman” and wise man. Carnival is a scapegoat which represents the death and rebirth of the community (Welsford 1966: 69 ff.; Toschi [1955] 1976: ch. VII-IX; Frazer 1911-15), uniting life and death and revealing their profound relationship. Carnival masks represent the dead re-united with the living (Toschi [1955] 1976: 166-72).

Originally an infernal character (ibid.: 196-208), Harlequin is, more than any other masked character, a symbol of festive totalization, which is symbolized by his costume itself, sewn with different-coloured pieces and scraps of material. Harlequin is the trickster who re-integrates the vestiges of order, who unites that which is separated. If he introduces disorder, it is to create a different order. A symbol of totality, Harlequin is often represented as a hermaphrodite (Willeford 1969: 181). The meaning of the fool or the madman, often at the centre of feasting, is the same (ibid.: 59).

Holbein, in his illustrations for Erasmus’ *In praise of folly* (1509), represents the fool in the act of contemplating his own image in a mirror or in the doll attached to his scepter (Saxl 1943). These designs seem to stage the essence of feasting itself, which not only renders visible that which is invisible, but reconciles the self to the other. The latter is revealed to consciousness by the discrepancy between the internal and external images of the self. It is in recognizing one’s self in others and others in one’s self that one enters into the festive spirit; and it is for this reason that feasting consists of an increase in solidarity and renews the social bond.

The transgressive aspect of the feast should therefore be seen as a reflection of its fundamental characteristic, which is the creation of a transparent totality of relations. If in the feast separations fall away and chaos seems sometimes to infiltrate its way into the cosmos, it is not because the feast is the negation of order, but because it represents
order as totality. It is therefore necessary that what is set apart as dangerous and rejected as disorder in daily life should be part of feasting.

If the essence of feasting consists in the immediate and unimpeded experience of relations that we are not permitted or not easily able to perceive in day-to-day reality, one must suppose that pleasure, with which it is always associated, is produced by this experience.

In many cases, this is analogous to the pleasure that a witty remark sets off. According to Freud (1905), the latter consists in the unification of representations that are normally kept separate. The pleasure that derives from it is produced by the “economy” of psychic energy necessary to keep these representations separated. The energy is freed, if it is already present, or is saved, if it is about to be used.

But it is not necessary to suppose that the unification (or association) of representations that are normally separated is transgressive, and that its only function consists in the liberation of unconscious contents. The cognitive dimension of feasting is more important than its transgressive element, even when this element exists.

More profoundly, festive pleasure can be compared to aesthetic pleasure, as Franciscus Hemsterhuis describes it. According to him, the soul judges most beautiful that from which it can form an idea in the shortest possible time. This actually derives from the dialectic between a “reduced model” (Lévi-Strauss [1962] 1966)—in which separate things are perceived as a whole—and daily experience, which determines separations and oppositions.

Feasting constitutes a “reduced model” of society, but never simply its “icon,” even if inverted as is a mirror image. Like a work of art, festivity has a complex relationship with reality. It is not simply the reproduction or inversion of meaning, but—in totalizing experiences that are normally separated—it gives meaning to that which in daily life escapes it. Between the festive world and the day-to-day world there is a relationship of complementarity.

More than as an autonomous institution, feasting can be defined as a ritual activity in which traits (like aesthetic pleasure and the scansion of time) that are present in other ritual activities become predominant and thus distinctive. For this reason, it is in a global theory of ritual that the differential traits of feasting and the deep bond that links them can find their fullest explanation.