

## FROM CARNIVAL TO THE CARNIVAL OF CRIME

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In the autumn when darkness begins to descend earlier and earlier the sound and flashes of fireworks exploding in the distance begins to herald the coming of bonfire night. Each year on November the fifth, a festival of fire and fireworks is celebrated throughout Britain that literally lights up the country in a veritable carnival of noise and destruction that excites all classes and all ages. When I was a youth I watched with increasing excitement as people piled old furniture, boxes and all manner of possessions into colourful mountains that I knew we would soon be allowed to destroy by fire. It is a celebration that not long ago was held in backyards or at the end of streets but is now held at official public venues such as parks or school grounds. Whereas once as participants we felt close to the force of the fire and destruction so now we are distant and mere spectators. Once it was a night of transgression, danger, and disorder now it is commercially sponsored, regulated and ordered.

At the same time that we have civilised and sanitised 'bonfire night' so the incidence of arson is on the increase with school buildings often the target. Now when cars are stolen they are often paraded, performed with and ceremoniously burnt. In the French city of Lyon more than 1000 cars were burnt in 1998 whilst the 'sport' of fire bombing attending firemen prompted the banning of sales of petrol in containers to young people under the age of eighteen years. All this was explained by sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar as being because, "When firemen put out a car that is burning, they stop the show that people are enjoying as a break from their daily lives." (Times 27/4/99). In the Northeast of England the district of Tyne and Wear has over 30,000 illegal fires a year being mostly the work of young people who target the oppressive institutions of their lives of schools and bad housing whilst in America the Burning Man fire festival celebrates the creativity of destruction in a feast of flames as 25,000 people of all ages descend on the desert to transgress through an orgasm of pyro-fetishism, all bringing together both carnival and crime. The question that we need to explore here is how have we moved from carnival to crime; from carnival to the carnival of crime?

Carnival is a much used and abused term, but it is nonetheless the most appropriate frame with which to discuss the performance of excitement and transgression with which this book is most concerned. Let's overcome one hurdle at the start. The transgressive excitements of carnival performances are not assumed to be all positive, neither am I proposing that all artefacts of popular cultures and countercultures are pleasurable. In the ecstatic, marginal, chaotic acts of carnival, damage is done, people are hurt and some 'pleasurable' performances reflect on or articulate pain. In other words carnival can be both violent and break the law. The film *Trainspotting* is an example of these complex engagements, where the consumption of the film may well be in part enjoyable (it is 'well' written, 'well' directed etc.) yet it depicts a world that is ambivalent in its attitude to the cause and effect of pain. The film neither demonises nor glorifies the use of heroin, at times the lives shown are full

of pleasure, at times that pleasure is shown to have a dear price. The consumption of the film is as complex as the content. Here there is an artefact of popular culture, depicting an act of counterculture showing neither to be easily boxed.

Carnival then is the ritualised mediation between order and disorder par excellence; furthermore it is a domain in which the pleasure of playing at the boundaries (social and personal) is most clearly provided for. Within the period of carnival the negotiations between the powerful and the people, as described in the chapter above, are ritually rehearsed, not however in the debating chamber but in the streets (or the social domain), and not with solemnity but laughter, however cruel.

Our purpose here is to explore the excitement and cultural necessity of carnival in everyday life and to further explore how in a post modern society it is no longer enough to 'do' carnival once, twice or three times a year but under the 'unbearable' rationality of modern life acts of carnival becomes a daily need for social survival. I do not propose that carnival can be taken as an explanatory cosmology for all the acts described, it does however suggest that carnival (as a performed event and as a critical discourse) is one way one might interrogate these acts, a paradigm by which performed acts of excess and excitement may be discussed. Furthermore it is possible to use theories of carnival, and examples from carnival's history to critique aspects of our contemporary culture.

### ***THE CARNIVAL WE KNOW***

Popular, participatory, indulgent or transgressive festivities have been performed by cultures throughout recorded history. While this is not a chapter on cultural or ritual history it is necessary to remind us of the breadth and depth of these excessive performances, to fully appreciate the central role that these occasions played in the way that communities regulated themselves and identified themselves. Probably the first recorded carnival, although not of course going by that name, was the Egyptian festival of Osiris. Celebrated in a designated 'time out of time', 5 days that were seen as outside of the traditional calendar, and being outside of ordinary time they were host to behavioural codes outside of the norm. Osiris, who was born on the first of the five days, having been murdered and dismembered by his brother was revived by his sister Isis, and became lord of the dead. The celebration of Osiris was thus a festivity of birth, death and rebirth, held in the passage of winter to spring, seasonal rebirth. The festival itself, involving procession, animal and genital imagery, effigies of Osiris and ritual sacrifice, was of course in part a ritual of fertility and rebirth, a plea for the revival of the land and reinvigoration of the people. We may now all know more about the passage of the earth through the sky, but our remaining seasonal festivities (few and lamentable though many are) still aim to revive our souls in the dark of winter in preparation for the new cycle. Only of course winter is now less potent, we can work and be kept warm and fed in winter, so we need to ask where our down times are that need to be filled with festive pleasures. The answer I suggest is that in a world which is daily 'down' there is a daily need for festive pleasures and a daily need for carnival. As Durkheim clearly points out the isolation of modern individualism can only be compensated for by separating out 'effervescence' from daily (everyday) life. (Durkheim, E.1982) The five days of Osiris are with us now all the time, Bank holidays, the weekend, Friday nights, Girls nights out. In an organised industrial society, based on rationality, efficiency and effectiveness then the 'down

times' become a daily part of everyday life and the need for the carnivalesque becomes a part of it.

The Greek festival of Dionysus, mythologically complex though it is, had, at its heart, celebrations of the vine, of feasting and of liberated, violent and ecstatic physical performance. Symbolised by the bull and the (dismembered) phallus Dionysos has come to symbolise the complexity of pleasure par excellence. He is paradoxical, his nature is that he represents both joy to the world and savage madness, god of the vine as source of fruit, pleasure and intoxication. Although represented by a phallus he is separated from it, and rather than the god of birth (although born twice) he is the god of eruption and appearance.

In ancient Rome the two festivals of Kalends and Saturnalia are recorded as clearly exhibiting performances of excess and transgression. Masking, often as animals, was central to these (and most other) festivals, taking on the mythological and actual facets of these 'natural' creatures. At Saturnalia slaves were temporarily freed and served on by their masters (although the universality of this practice is open to debate); feasting, sex, combat, games, pranks, fruits of the land, sacrifice and mockery were all important ritual elements, variously performed throughout a festival period that occupied a significant part of the winter. Seneca describes this as a period of indulgence, hedonism and transgression from the norm. We must be careful of course not to essentialise these performances, it is too easy to use the distance of history to frame these events with a simple narrative of indulgence and fertility ritual, universally celebrated. Within any of these performance texts we must assume complex layers of levels and intentions of involvement. The symbolic motivation and components of many aspects are unclear or debated, and sources are questionable; and while it is clear that elements of the ritual allude to the power of magic one must presume that its observance was as much down to its social power and its role as carnal rejuvenator in a time out of time.

### ***CARNIVAL AND CHRISTIANITY***

These festivals of magical and social ritual, of worship and subversion, pleasure and violence existed in cultures across Europe, ritualising the relationship of humanity and nature, providing a structure of myth and expression to articulate a communal vision of the order, and disorder, of things. The emergent mono-deism and religious tolerance of Christianity, sought to incorporate these festivals into its own ritual structure, attempting to contain what was seen as a threatening and 'pagan' set of values while still providing contexts for celebration. The need for carnival was accepted and to some extent tolerated as a senseless time full of senseless irrational acts that appeared necessary even 'natural' in the rhythm of the year.

The few lines above do not do justice to the centuries of complex cultural negotiation between church and people, the former seeking in various ways to facilitate the traditional celebrations of the latter while ensuring the dominance of the Christian orthodoxy. Dionysian and carnal revelry, turning the world upside down, did not sit comfortably with a faith in one merciful but moral God. This process is nowhere more clear than in the manipulation of the event now known as carnival, and the associated festivities of the feast of fools. Although the precise origin of the term carnival is unknown it is likely that its root is in *carne vale*, farewell to the flesh, and specifically referred to the period of festive excess, particularly the feasting on meat, prior to Lent; it also of course refers to a more general indulgence in carnality before

the Lenten fast. The festival itself varies across time and countries but is effectively a ritual of indulgence, reversal, performance, mockery and excess. The church initially sought to challenge and ban these rites, but the momentum of popular belief, coupled undoubtedly with the appeal of the festival made eradication or full metamorphosis impossible, and indeed unwise. By the middle ages carnival had found its way into the activities and calendar of the church, involving congregations and clergy in rites of excess and reversal, processions, feasts and performances, partly intertwined with festivals that the church had appropriated from various pre-Christian rituals; the feast of fools was celebrated in the twelve days from Christmas to epiphany, and carnival prior to Lent. The church made moves to rid itself of the excesses of such festivals, while keeping many of the more acceptable trappings of the festivals, in part as a demonstration of its tolerance advocated by some of its members. Consequently, in the Renaissance and early modern period elements of rites of reversal and excess survived within the church, having come to be taken as an essential and natural part of religious festivals, while other aspects had been removed to more marginal arenas of social performance.

### ***CAPITALISM AND CARNIVAL***

It is not only institutions such as church and state that have sought to appropriate or control popular festivity. Elements of carnival were commercialised or appropriated by the well intentioned middle classes and the rationalising project of modernism. In these cases local processions, fire festivals or fairs came to be organised, not by 'the people' but by respectable societies or business men, the former with the intention of providing acceptable entertainment, often promoting good causes, the later offering the same but in the pursuit of profit. (This is problematic, of course; the 'people' are not one body.) Examples range from the development of Blackpool pleasures as an industrial reworking of carnival, (Formations Collective. 1983) to the still extant village and town pageants as well intentioned and edifying (however empty) reworkings. Equally elements of the carnivalesque naturally appeared in cultural output such as theatre, and with the advent of printing, cartoons and chapbooks. These forms also served to promote folk customs in general, but in the printed presentation of the material it has been argued that much of its vigorous, vernacular and topical quality was lost. Fiske (1991) has provided a number of examples of the legislative and cultural containment of popular festive practices in the 19th century which he allies closely to the fear of the bourgeoisie at losing their control over the working classes, and in an attempt to assert their control they sought to contain or condemn those leisure pursuits that they saw as unfitting, or undesirable. Such activities were perhaps condemned due to their disturbance of local highways, or their cruelty and non-productivity, but underneath there was always the realisation that the dionysian behaviour of 'the other' both threatened and challenged because it did not fit in with a set of values that sustained the middle classes. Cunningham also illustrates the appropriation of the lower-class street game of football by the middle classes, controlling and containing its whirling quasi-violent nature. Now once more we see the carnival in football re-emerge not on the field but on the terraces.

The point of this brief history is to illustrate the pervasiveness of transgressive performances throughout previous cultures, and more particularly to exemplify the complex relationship that these performances had with the dominant order; critical, potentially threatening, but in the end necessary and thus a target for appropriation

and manipulation. Here it is the 'necessary' quality that I concentrate on in this analysis of contemporary deviant and criminal behaviour.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The most important analysis of the nature of carnival, and that which has been drawn upon most frequently by modern cultural critics, is that of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin who writes of a set of values and behaviours found in the works of Rabelais. Bakhtin has often been cited and paraphrased, and it is with caution that I do so here, but an outline of his work (and others who came after) is necessary to contextualise the theoretical base with which this text approaches the idea of carnival.

What then are the constituent elements of carnival? What is it that has been extracted by contemporary cultural theorists to use as an analytical paradigm for social/cultural behaviour in the late twentieth century? Carnival was a time of great festive excess where the pleasures of the 'body' are foregrounded, in opposition to the dominant and accepted values of restraint and sobriety. Contained within this excess is the notion of transgression that is so central to the operation of carnival. Through its acts, structure and imagery carnival legitimates its participants behaviour that would be considered outside of carnival to be outside the norm, and beyond the bounds of that is generally seen as proper within the 'normal' social space and calendar of everyday life. Intimately connected with acts of transgression is the upturning or reversal of dominant authority structures. Carnival licences transgression and thus openly defies or mocks the values of the hegemony, and as such the transgressor is put in a position of power as the carnival society temporarily replaces the dominant one. Examples of these acts are legion: boys become bishops and give sermons, the fool becomes king, mock processions and crownings are held, the price of foods are reversed, slaves become masters and the normally private functions of the body become objects of popular laughter. Officers 'wait' on the men at Christmas. Men on women. (here I am thinking of the rituals of Mothers day). On 'rag' days students throw bags of flour at the police and generally enjoy disorder without sanction. It is truly the 'world upside down' full of irrational, senseless, offensive behaviour. A time of disorder and transgression and of doing wrong in an ordered world. In other words enjoyable behaviour that in the ordered world we would often accept as criminal.

Bakhtin's writing places much emphasis on the body, most particularly on the grotesque body. In this sense he sees carnival as a celebration of the connectedness of the body to the world, through ingestion and excretion, birth and death the grotesque constantly reminds us that we are not separated from nature's cycle, we are not closed off and 'above' our natural context but inherently part of it. Thus carnival celebrates orifices and sex organs, extreme youth and age, sex, stomachs, birth and death. Through this emphasis on change carnival reminds us that though we are mortal the laughing human spirit is immortal, we die, are returned to the earth and nurture further life. This position is wholly opposed to the sobriety of the classical body, separated from the process of life. Carnival, in its language and imagery is not afraid of the 'arse hole' the 'prick' or the 'cunt'. And indeed as carnival inverts the social structure so too does it invert the body for in the carnival universe the head (the location of reason) is uncrowned by the stomach, the genitals and the arse. Faeces and the fart; the burp and the belly laugh, all become an integral part of the logic and language of carnival. The performance of carnival uses the body as the stage,

claiming it back from those who wish to control it, who wish to appropriate that which it produces, civilise it, or even imprison it. Carnival places the body in a trance like state where, like the carnival of Rave, one can "play with one's body and carry out a state of enthusiasm....near to the happy state of mind." (Jeanmaire, H1951). Now Artaud's 'festival of the street' takes the people not only out of their bodies but in so doing out of society in a state of ecstasy.

In the same vein carnival revels in abuse as, using popular argot, it brings down the mighty and uses language, the tool of discourse and reason, as a celebration of oaths, of colloquial language and abuse. The many popular unofficial voices of carnival shout in opposition to the monologic speech of the dominant order. Against the coherent logic and language of the talking head, the stomach and the arse speak out the belch and the fart, destroying the logic of language and in its way disrupting and destroying order. The carnivalesque becomes the language of disrespect par excellence for after all carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people but lived by them. (Bahktin, 1984:37)

Thus carnival represents a world upside down, but most importantly a world that is restructured through laughter, for alongside its images of social upheaval carnival is joyful. The laughter comes, as Eco points out, through the breaking of a rule, and this laughter is both deriding and revitalising, ambivalent or Janus faced. Additionally the laughter is both directed out to those in authority and is self reflexive; carnival laughs at itself while it laughs at others. Its laughter appeals as Orwell remarked in 'The Art of Donald McGill' to the "Unofficial self, the voice of the belly protesting against the soul." (Orwell, G. 1941:144) Humour rightly understands the law, its weaknesses and its true lack of rationality. It truly transcends the law and carnival humour looks to the consequences. Here in carnival is the 'survival ' humour of Nuttall and Carmichael (1977) which challenges and contests, turns inside-out and upside down the efforts of authority to maintain law and order. Crime is here the subversion of bourgeois order.

Since authority structures are challenged and upturned it is possible to perceive carnival as the voice of those below, those on the social margins, but more properly carnival must be seen as many voiced since the last thing that the contingent and shifting authority of carnival attempts to do is unify or polarise. Neither are the victims of carnival only those who wield power. The carnival body may terrorise (actually and metaphorically) the weak as much as the strong. The oppressed as much as the oppressors. Rather than offering a fixed, albeit reversed position, the world view offered by carnival seems to question the supremacy of any authority, replacing it with relativity and foregrounding the popular and grotesque body above the fixed and static. On a simple level carnival may be seen as a time when low becomes high and vice versa, but more deeply carnival throws into question certain fixed notions of high and low, articulating their questionable status and claim to authority. It is in other words the 'counter rites of the masses'. (Bouvier, J.M .1994)

As a period of licensed misrule classic carnival is faced with the ultimate closure, Lent must arrive and carnival must end. Thus one line of argument proposes that far from providing a space for the normally disposed to offer an alternative commentary on the world carnival simply reaffirms the supremacy of the dominant order. Officers go back to being waited on by the 'men', and women go back to waiting on their menfolk. This it does by two means: on the one hand carnival proposes only one alternative to the status quo which is seen as a world of chaos and disorder, on the other hand where carnival satirises extant power structures it does so

by mimicry thus finally validating the potency of the hierarchy. We may see a further 'conservative' function of carnival in its ability to unite communities as through communal celebration the people create close ties with their community and effectively celebrate their present identity despite the impositions of the dominant social order. (such as the conservative carnival Crews of old New Orleans where orders such as the Mistake Crewe of Comes enacted out behind masks the old racist relationships of previous years.) Taken to its furthest extreme such a position also suggests that through the act of collective mockery and festivity the carnival community exhausts its need for genuine revolution, effectively letting off steam until the next festive season comes around. although the 'safety valve theory' hints at conspiracy, that is to say those in power promulgate and promote carnival in order to maintain the status quo, it must also be understood that carnival comes from the 'people' in collusion with the 'state' and that the people are complicate in its closure. This model therefore proposes that carnival is both allowed by those in power in order to maintain harmony, but more significantly the people themselves wish to reaffirm their own position within a harmonious collective existence. Even within the restructured world of carnival the hierarchical structure of conventional power is recreated and acknowledged to be reversed, thus there is still a ruler and subject, even if the roles are reversed, or the power wielded by the king is seen as ludicrous. Therefore rather than offering an entire alternative structure carnival offers a distorted reflection of the structure.

The complexity of carnival is that it functions as a playful and pleasurable revolution, where those normally excluded from the discourse of power may lift their voices in anger and celebration, and as the vindication of the dominant order (and a demonstration of its liberal pluralism as an added bonus). This knife edge balance, or ambivalence, may work to the benefit of both parties, allowing expression and harmonious reintegration, this balance may be seen as serving the needs of all involved, since as Durkheim observes 'harmonious collective life is beneficial to its members'. To say that carnival is either a tool for oppression or a vehicle for potentially subversive expression is too simple since it is both of these things; each articulated through a series of symbolic and cultural actions.

However there are many moments in the history of carnival where behaviour has broken free of festive restraint and licence and enacted, within the framework of the celebration, a real and violent revolution or rebellion. Examples range from the well documented riots in the 1580 Carnival in Romans, the 1571 May Day celebrations in London and St Giles Fair in Oxford, the anti-salvation army demonstrations in Worthing 1834, and in more modern times the Notting Hill carnival of 1976. Richard Schechner talks of the violence in American carnival during the turbulence of civil rights protest in the 1960s when during carnival processions black marchers hurled black and gold painted coconuts 'like cannonballs at white spectators' (Schechner, R.1993:74/5) In some of these cases the grievance that caused the violence was exacerbated by the carnival, in others the carnival was used as a mask for the aggressive act. Of course many of the outbreaks of violence were an extreme of festive excess, often responding and in opposition to its imminent closure. However the act of carnival has at its heart a dialectic drama, the peoples' voice and the display of festive reversal are held against a discourse of normality and restraint, carnival must propose an argument. It is however the nature of the event that the argument is rarely transparent or clearly articulated, rather it is, at least in part, an anti-argument, rather than making a point through conventional discourse many

aspects make their point through lack of discourse. Therefore tied up in any carnival event there may be an underlying social opposition to a hegemonic position, but in the act this argument is rarely apparent. The argument of the body is foregrounded in opposition to that of the head. Ecstasy and laughter versus rationality; dionysian versus apollonian. Laughter is not an argument against another. It is a solution to it, temporarily disempowering the other. It is impossible therefore to see carnival as a strict dialogic opposition but rather as a different way of being, thus an argument without any possible resolution. Nihilistic or anarchic in nature.

### ***THE EXPLODING OF CARNIVAL IN POSTMODERN CULTURE***

And so we come to the late 20th century and the main thrust of the argument. The acceleration of the dominance of capitalism throughout this century coupled with the more cultural aspects of what we have come to term post modernism have provided the context for a hugely complex fragmentation and reworking of carnival where the debris of carnival litters everyday life. Carnival is no longer a 'parodic reversal' but now a 'true transgression'. (Carlson, M1996) If this process was in train during the period of rationalism, science and industrialisation, it has become virulent in a period where commodity and consumption is all, and where the idea of the fixed or the authentic has largely become meaningless. Indeed it is my contention that not only does contemporary mass culture make free use of the idea of carnival in the service of the promotion of excitements, but its very nature is in part carnivalesque. It may be the case that there are very few 'authorised' public performances which are anything but a shadow of Bakhtin's carnival, however the 'second life of the people' is threaded through our culture, often wholly dislocated from the original functions of carnival. It is the nature of carnival to resist containment and closure.

So potent are the excitements of carnival that the pleasure and leisure industries have utilised carnival as a form and as a metaphor, providing commodified carnival experiences and excitements in a variety of contexts, some mainstream, others far more marginal. True to the paradoxical nature of carnival and its apolitical leaning to ecstatic and transgressive pleasures, it does not discriminate whether its articulation is generated from an oppositional or illegal position, or from within legitimate institutions, part of its operation is to turn the acceptable into the unacceptable and make the unacceptable palatable through joyful humour. In other words carnival laughter and transgressions are as likely to appear in mainstream television (Spitting Image or Blind Date) (Hunt, L. 1998) as much as in 'illegal' rave gatherings, Internet sites or joyriding (Fiske, J. 1991) ( Docker, J. 1996)

Social processes have contrived to suppress carnival in its 'authentic' sense. Demographics and communications have changed the nature of community, and industrial and post industrial working patterns have removed from the calendar many of the universal points of 'time out of time'. It is increasingly difficult to 'take to the streets' or indeed to 'party'.. However a number of critics have found a wide variety of instances where elements of carnival have emerged in other contemporary forms of social and symbolic activity. It is as if, through the dual processes of scientific rationality and containment, carnival has shattered and its fragments and debris are now to be found in a wide variety of contemporary forms, but hardly ever, ironically, in the remaining shell of what is still called carnival. (Stallybrass, P. & White, A. 1986)



Significantly we may be able to take a step back from our own society and see that the very tensions that operate within what we call a post modern world are the tensions that are central to carnival. Where carnival questions the absolute nature of authority, so does post modernism; where carnival laughs at 'truth' and order while also laughing at itself, so too does post modernism; carnival, like late capitalism revels in the excitement of consumption, and the media, like carnival, permeates our entire world. Carnival and post modernism both seem to exist in tension between their critical and conservative functions, but both are finally obsessed with their own contingency. The humorous and the serious, the radical and the conservative, all tensions and paradoxes that are both implicit within carnival and identified time and again within our culture. Carnival, like postmodernism pays no homage to the author/authority, as texts and artefacts are borrowed and manipulated, contesting the canonical notions of modernity. Culture, and ownership of culture, is pliant. In the case of post modernism this plasticity has been variously attributed to the supremacy of consumption, manipulating culture to find the most easily, ecstatically consumable form, a response to (or perhaps boredom with) the great rationalising project of modernism.

It is too easy however to simply cite carnival as a 'resistant' form to dominant culture. We must always bear in mind (and Docker reminds us) that both carnival and our contemporary society are far more complex, and an easy polar position of folk and court cultures is a taxonomy only of convenience. It is possible to suggest that the notions of court, church and state have been superseded by the mediating avenues of mass culture, and it is in the relationship between the desire for excessive carnival pleasures and the supply of those pleasures that the carnival tensions exist.

The basic premise of my argument is straightforward, without a partly licensed carnival forum to satisfy our second life, it emerges more haphazardly, unrehearsed and often unannounced, and explosions of carnival into the social field only represent aspects of the carnival, complete carnivals do not (cannot) spontaneously erupt, and if they do they are seen, as Eco notes, as riot. Now only elements of carnival erupt, sometimes appearing outside the domain of cultural production and legitimate activity, sometimes they appear within cultural products. However, by being incomplete they do not manage to balance the paradoxes that Bakhtin's carnival does and without coherence it is relatively easy to separate the unpalatable or savage performances from the acts of pleasant social entertainment.

The question must remain, if carnival bears a resemblance to postmodernism, where are the fragments and debris of carnival in our culture? The list of national and international carnivals that actually exemplify the carnivalesque is slim, and while other celebratory and quasi authorised events may claim some allegiance to traditional notions of the carnivalesque it certainly does not appear that the 'second life of the people' has much room for expression in any way that might be formally recognised as a carnival event. There are of course many events called carnival, but most of these are safe commodified affirmations of dominant values and celebrations of local community and charity rather than times of excess, laughter, reversal and ecstasy. A procession of local charities, a military band, majorettes and a local princess might have the faintest whiff of carnival in its form, but its celebration of high moral values is nothing close to 'the second life of the people'. If these images of carnival are not carnival, where does the debris of the carnivalesque lie? Where is the 'second life of the people' lived?

We can of course find elements of carnival in satirical comedy, in novels and films but here the act has been committed, and the only remaining act of production by the people is the selective and active reading of the carnival texts. It is certainly true that these exist in a complex two way relationship between reader and producer, and that carnival images in these authored texts are open for appropriation and reworking by more marginal bodies. The fragments that we are interested in here are acts of performance that involve the performers in the production of symbolic and transgressive and sometimes joyful carnival acts.

In the acts of body modification, S&M, raving, recreational drug taking, hotting and rodeo, gang rituals, the Internet, festivals, and extreme sports, lurk the marginal performance of carnival fragments in the late 20th century. Other acts undoubtedly contain carnival elements. Schechner and Kershaw have considered political demonstrations and found them evidencing carnival elements in their performance, but these elements are to a certain extent subsidiary to a greater cause. Similarly many artefacts of mainstream media have been found to demonstrate carnival laughter or carnival resistance; but in these cases the carnival has been appropriated and redelivered, it is for want of a defining phrase secondary carnival. These are products of culture, and often reflective of culture but they are not participatory performance acts. These artefacts are a manifestation of carnival desires, and while perhaps not as ersatz or degraded as advertising images, nonetheless lack the participation in the pleasures of carnival performance. Let us be clear about one thing, these events are not carnival in their entirety, nor are they carnival exclusively, but they all contain elements of the performance of pleasure at the margins in opposition to the dominant values of sobriety and restraint. Interestingly these acts are not simply the anomic performances of a dispossessed youth but have become entwined with fashion and performance art, as associated items of counter-cultural capital (Thornton, 1995) emerge around them existing across boundaries of acceptability and illegality. Effectively these are the locations in which the processes of commodification and marginalisation are being played out, the carnival performance sites of cultural negotiation. These are acts of performance and meaning making and while it has been ably and frequently demonstrated that the apparently passive act of consuming culture involves the creation of meaning, such consumption cannot be classed as performance. Though the acts listed, and the many others mentioned in this book, are involved in active negotiations (readings and rewritings) with mass produced culture they all involve the participant in the process of creating their own performances and artefacts.

As carnival explodes into everyday life so the notion of closure collapses along with it. And as a result the Bahktinian notion of a return to law and order and integration can no longer take place. Victor Turners notion of reintegration at the end of any dramatic carnivalesque performance is left unfinished leaving the performers of post modernity socially suspended and isolated from each other. Instead we are left with disappointment, dissatisfaction, discontent and the expectation that the carnival of crime will be performed, must be performed, again and again. (Turner 1983) It is why Braithewait's notion of shaming and reintegration as a part of the criminal justice system's punishment inventory simply can't work outside of anthropological situations, for there are no longer any events in social life in which such re-integrative processes could take place. In a sense acts of carnival contain no shame. It is an alien emotion which has no place either in carnival or the carnival of

crime. Without shame the excitement and carnival of crime runs seamlessly through everyday life with reintegration no longer a possibility.

### ***THE CARNIVAL OF CRIME***

In 1991 and throughout 1992 a number of cities throughout Britain were thrust into the limelight as sites for Joy riding. Not the odd one off 'TWOCing', but persistent, large scale ritualised joy riding. One of these cities was Oxford, although the 'hotting' itself was very much focused on the Black Bird Leys housing estate just to the south of the city; a location that, particularly compared to the rest of Oxford, was not only geographically marginalised, but hosted a large percentage of unemployment, relative poverty and racial heterogeneity. The events that took place here in 1992 were linked to job losses at the nearby Cowley car manufacturing plant. The whole estate existed under the shadow of the car factory, its history and existence intimately connected with the production and consumption of cars. Cars were both the first and second life of the estate. In the first life they created them and in the second life they celebrated then destroyed them. As I have pointed out elsewhere:

The act of joyriding is aptly named being rich in excitement and a dramatic break from the boredom of being wageless and wealthless in a consumer society. The skills needed to steal a car, which car to steal, how to gain entry, and how to start an engine without a key, all emanate from the culture of male working class life. (Presdee 1994)

For those on the Black Bird Leys estate this was particularly true as their joyriding became a celebration of a particular form of car culture that was carnivalesque in nature, performance centered and criminal. The sport of joyriding went something like this: a team of local youths would spot a hot hatch (the car of choice) and steal it (or arrange with others to have it stolen), it would be delivered to a further team who would do it up, delivering it finally to the drivers. In the evenings the cars were raced around the estate. Not aimlessly but in a way designed to show off skill, furthermore two competing groups (teams) were involved each attempting to outdo the other. These displays were watched by certain residents of the estate who, the story goes, were charged a pound for the pleasure, sitting in picnic chairs at the sides of the road. Often after these races the cars were burned on deserted land.

The police were understandably cautious in taking action, car chases in residential areas are problematic, and although they maintained that the estate was not a 'no go' area it was difficult territory to control, furthermore, as the police well knew a chase only added to the excitement of the circus. Elite (1992), described how 'the risk of being caught supplies the major thrills, driving along the thin line between arrest and escape'. However when a local man was seriously injured in a knife attack after he had complained about the hotting, the police, necessarily, moved in with some force. After a period of nightly confrontations the spectacular displays waned.

Black Bird Leys hotting clearly displays elements of classic carnival. First, of course, the event was for no material gain but purely for the pleasure, participants frequently made reference to the thrill and excitement of the displays and any chase that may later have ensued. The pleasure can be seen, I suggest, to derive from two key elements: the proximity of danger, both from the law and from accident or death; and its oppositional status, unashamedly a celebration of doing 'wrong'. It is a challenge to death and to authority; neither being allowed power over the participants.

Furthermore there is a symbolic topsy-turvyness involved. The cars used are generally GTIs and other 'hot hatches', expensive and showy, worn as a badge of temporary kingship, only the best are taken to be abused, finally to be sacrificed in the 'fire' their existence wiped from the world of consumption. It is of course also, whether intentionally or not, an ironic comment on consumption; the image of the car is that of the most desirable in its class, the most expensive and the most protected-the ultimate goal of the car consumer! Its theft, and driving and destruction, with no material gain subverts its commercial value yet celebrates both its advertised and utility value: providing an exciting drive. But also too it reflects their position in the rational production process. They in a sense repossess the very product they produce but can't afford. They become acquainted once more with their alienated selves. A process that is typical of the carnival. In the ordered world we often cannot possess that which we produce for the affluent. In the carnival of crime we can. Joyriding is "an offence to ownership, intellectual or vehicular, being in the end a kind of pure or total gesture of travel, wherein the vehicle, the streets, moving quickly and being out of time and place are enjoyed for themselves, foregrounding the act and skill of driving, not the possession of a car, or the promise of a destruction." (Hartley, J.1994:400)

The reworking of the streets is important, the event contests, and symbolically at least takes control of a public domain. The performing on the streets of theatre with cars is, at least in part, a celebration of the occupation of the streets in opposition to a municipal ownership, although of course this control is contested between the two rival teams. Most importantly, and this is referred to by those interviewed about the events, the hotting was about identity, demonstrating ones belonging to a group through communal display, constructing an identity of excitement and opposition.

In the end there is no shred of official licence in the Blackbird Leys 'event', its status is not in doubt on either ethical or legislative grounds, it was simply 'illegal', criminal, transgressive. However one may argue that it occurred because, for those on the estate, there is no other site of carnival, and furthermore the police seem to agree that the spectacle of driving fast is an enjoyable commodity. As a spectacle, statement, act of defiance, it remained unclosed, unresolved, evidence of the daily fragmentation of carnival containing the debris of performed dissent, identified by all as criminal rather than carnival. Yet in reality the experience for the young people of Blackbird Leys concentrated on the carnivalesque rather than the criminal and as such was truly a carnival of crime. This fragmented carnival performance of defiance through driving may now be becoming a more general response to the constraints of time and travel we now live in as Groombridge (1996: 19) and Lynge (1998) suggest we now live in a more generalised 'joyriding culture' where many men and women drivers attempt everyday to fulfil their emotional needs through the excitement of driving, hence the emotionality of 'roadrage' and 'joyriding'.

In France it is no surprise that the performance of carnival has also attempted to reclaim the streets. The Friday night and Sunday morning mass inline roller skating on the streets of Paris totally disrupts movement in the city. An average of 30,000 people of all ages embark on a route even unknown to themselves as they twist and turn at great speed through the most congested streets of Paris.(fig ) Their sounds of jubilation at the sheer joy of carnival can be heard for miles. Predictably the Authorities are close behind as the law is prepared for change, and strengthened to criminalise the use of rollerblades on the roads. The criminalisation of carnival once more chases the carnival of crime.

Ironically a later exercise in popular carnival, the Reclaim the Streets marches, created the celebration of carnival on major public roads in Britain to temporarily close them down as a protest at the amount of traffic on the roads. Later on June the 18th.1999 Reclaim the Streets organised their first carnival against global capitalism in the City of London that contained all the elements of carnival without closure. Later on November 30th. they repeated their performance at Euston station at the same time that 100,000 others plus further hundreds of thousands on the Internet, made carnival in full view of the world in Seattle in America to protest at the meeting of the World Trade Organisation.(Known on the net as J18 and N30) Authority again attempted to close it down with over one and a half million pounds of policing in London brought to bear on the carnival whilst the use of curfews, armoured cars and National Guardsmen plus violence were used in Seattle.

In the same way that joyriders targetted 'hot' cars and young people target schools to 'fire' so the carnival against global capitalism targeted the icons of the global economy. Starbucks coffee shops and MacDonalds restaurants became the targets of carnival excess and through the Internet the western economy experienced its first major global carnival demonstrating that the Internet is now not only a site of popular pleasure and transgression but also too a truely international site of carnival with all its potential to disrupt and disorientate the dominant discourses of global power. The Internet is fast becoming the safe site of the second life of the people. In London the police were beginning to see connections with other carnival performances as they began to see similarities between the carnival on the streets and the underground rave dance culture (Times 1/12/99).

Although the term 'carnival' is rarely used to describe them, social performances such as raves also clearly exhibit these tendencies, perhaps more closely than any mentioned above, ecstatic, of the people, participatory performances; they are excessive, foreground the body and celebrate (or celebrated in the late 80's) their position as an opposite to work, indeed the form originated in part as a recreation of the club culture of Ibiza. The laughter was represented in the most famous symbol of the movement, the smiley face; it was in many ways a most clear example of 'the second life of the people', well some of them anyway. The history of the rise and containment of rave is well discussed and described elsewhere in this book, (se Ch.8) illustrating a move by both legislature and mass media to contain and own the phenomenon, the former introducing legislation to outlaw the outdoor and warehouse gatherings, the latter commodifying many of the elements of the event. However, as noted by the likes of Rose and Thornton, the packaged carnival never tastes as sweet. In this conflict Rave clearly illustrated itself as a far deeper cultural performance than the act of going to a disco. At certain points in its history, as now, Rave has been contested and it is at these moments it enters carnival territory.

Both in Bakhtin's carnival and in its (post) modern equivalents there is a sense in which the participant revolts against the boundaries that keep them 'protected' from life/death, these boundaries, positioning the performance in the liminal space between the acceptable and the unacceptable, are what makes the activity appealing. The threshold is wide; at one end we have the carnival elements of popular culture such as the licence to humiliate in Blind Date; in the middle SM and Rave culture perhaps occupy a clearly contested and criminal domain. So what about the far extreme? Does, for example, joy riding really contain elements of carnival? Those very fragments of carnival created by containment?