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POLITICS
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Editor's Note

Introducing FCRE's new Journal of Festival Culture Inquiry and Analysis

I am delighted to welcome you to our newly-launched open-access journal, which publishes outputs—though not exclusively—from Festival Culture Research and Education, our online community and network. 'Power, empowerment, disempowerment' is the theme of our first issue, which coincides with our second International Symposium on Festival Culture held in 2021.

In addition to exploring what is powerful about festival culture, contributors were also asked to examine whether government control can influence, disrupt, interrupt, empower or disempower people. Do we actively participate in the development of festival culture, or do we passively accept its presentation?

The opening article provides a brief overview of the symposium. The other two papers presented at the symposium focus on Caribbean carnivals and power interrelationships in festivals. There are six paper submissions, along with a report on a symposium workshop exploring Bakhtin's relevance to discourses about Trinidad's carnival. Submissions illustrate a variety of perspectives from which to explore festival culture, such as Jo Buchanan's case study of heritage in Cornwall's local community analysing the valorisation of festival heritage, Emmanuel Chima draws attention to the experiences of African refugees within the context of festivals, Andrew Martin presents a comprehensive historical review of the Caribbean Festival of the Arts, Andrew Snyder discusses the process of improving accessibility in Rio's carnival, first perceptions and its developments, Malvika Lobo shares the collection, transliteration, and translation of traditional songs carried down from generation to generation, and Rhonda Allen provides a brief review of her mini-UK carnival tour of 2022.

With regards to design, our journal aims to find creative and exciting ways to interrogate ideas about—but not

limited to—academic journal design, how sensory experiences are communicated through print and digital media, and how the journal complements our online presence.

JFCIA shares festivals, stories, and experiences within the field of festival studies so that we can advance ideas and acknowledge progress. In designing this publication, I sought to convey some of the experience of the Trinidad and Tobago carnival by incorporating strong photography to awaken the senses. In contrast to printed words, festivals provide a multi-aesthetic, multi-sensory experience that some believe cannot be matched by words. A unique balance between photography and the printed word could, however, provide a more thorough sense of context. It is my hope that combined with our network the journal will further facilitate a forum for communication, networking, and insightful discussion. Furthermore, it might serve to remind us of why festival culture can be so enjoyable, its benefits, and why we devote so much time to it.

A distinguishing characteristic of the Caribbean is its energy and vibrancy. It should also be noted that Trinidad and Tobago stands out as the epicentre of carnival around the world, inspiring dozens of other carnivals. This includes the Brooklyn Labour Day Carnival in the United States, Caribana in Canada, and the Notting Hill Carnival in the United Kingdom, among others. Moreover, while North and South America and the Hispanic Caribbean have their wars of national liberation to provide myths of origin, both English and French Caribbean cultures refer to culture as a mark of distinction.

Our featured photographers for Volume 1 are based in Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout their work, each captures aspects of culture that will pique our readers' interest in learning more about the twin islands, from moko jumbies to mas camps. Both photographers are experienced practitioners and are driven by capturing sensory experiences that tell a story. Photography, typography and layout reinforce the spirit of playfulness within the culture. Although to some, this may create a magazine look and feel, it is vital for us to showcase the liveliness and sensuous nature of rituals, festivals, gatherings, etc. Photography, as well as videography, are essential parts of festival culture. Interested photographers and videographers are invited to contribute to future volumes.

I would like to thank the authors for their contribution. Without your articles, this journal would not be possible. Our gratitude extends to all of our supporters, as well as to our editors who worked so hard to peer-review and proofread articles. Preparing Issue 1 has been a laborious and exciting journey, and we look forward to a magnificent future.

Thank you,

Dr R. L. de Matas

Editor in Chief

Announcements

International Symposium On Festival Culture 2023

Look out for next year's symposium. The call for papers will open in 2023 and we are looking forward to receiving your submissions.

Call for Papers: Bakhtin for the 21st Century

Guest Edited Issue by:

Dr Ivan Stacy (Beijing Normal University)

Deadline for submissions:

28th February 2023

Foreword by Prof Sue Vice, author of *Introducing Bakhtin*. This edition was born out of last year's ISFC 2021 workshop with Dr Kim Johnson and Dr Jarula M.I. Wegner: *A New Paradigm, Moving on from Bakhtin*. Dr Stacy had the idea that there needs to be further discussion on Bakhtin in relation to festival culture, and will be curating strong and serious contributions to this special issue. We are happy to invite submissions to the call for papers.

Find out more at:

festivalculture.co.uk/bakhtin

Call for Papers: Caribbean Culture

Deadline for submissions: Ongoing

We are committed to developing an understanding of how festive, ritual, celebratory, etc culture impacts aspects of Caribbean life, and vice versa.

Find out more at:

festivalculture.co.uk/caribbean-culture

Call for Book Reviews

We invite book reviews (700 - 1,200 words) on work on the following topics, but not limited to: Carnivals (business, entrepreneurship, combined arts, performance), Caribbean Festivals, Celebrations, Community Festivals, Festival Cities, Festival/Celebration, Night Life, Festivals and Fiestas in South America, Gatherings (crowds, fans, activities), Medieval Festivals, Celebrations and Events, Music Festivals, Religious Events, Ritual Culture, Pan and Panyards.

We also invite reports (5,000 words), review essays (should focus on 3–5 books on a similar topic or theme), analysis of festival events, and interviews (between 800 and 1,200 words).

Find out more at:

festivalculture.co.uk/call-for-reviews

Call for Peer Reviewers

We encourage and welcome you to join our growing roster of reviewers. Please be aware that papers may explore festivals quite broadly or perhaps from an inter-, multi-, cross-, and trans-disciplinary perspective.

Interested in peer reviewing? Peer Reviews are vital and ensure we attain very high standards, ensure originality, and improve and raise the quality of scholarly work.

Find out more at:

festivalculture.co.uk/peer-reviewers

Author Bios

Dr Hanna Klien-Thomas

Dr Hanna Klien-Thomas is a research fellow in Creative Industries and her research is situated in transnational screen studies, visual and popular cultures. Based on a digital ethnographic approach, her current research project explores media practices and notions of public culture in the context of Caribbean Carnival in the UK. Her PhD project focused on Bollywood audiences in the Anglo-phone Caribbean and was funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. In 2012, she spent a year as an affiliate scholar at the Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, working on intersectional perspectives on gender, ethnicity, and youth. Hanna obtained an MA in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, an integrated BA/MA in Spanish as well as Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna. Previous work includes an ethnography of the 'second generation' in the Cuban Hip Hop movement, various publications on Hindi cinema and stardom, and exploratory research on Caribbean feminist hashtag campaigns.

Michael La Rose

Michael La Rose was born in Trinidad and migrated to London in the early 1960s. He was the second ever Chair of the George Padmore Institute between 2006 and 2016. Michael is a cultural and political activist, writer, researcher, and lecturer on popular culture of the African diaspora. He is a director of New Beacon Books and was band leader and mas' designer of the Peoples War Carnival Band. Michael was elected vice-chairperson of the Carnival Development Committee (CDC) and later founded the campaigning Association for a Peoples Carnival (APC) and Reclaim Our Carnival (ROC). He is currently director of Savannah View, a cultural and educational promotion group.

Prof Lisa Gabbert

Lisa Gabbert is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Utah State University, where she served as Director of the Folklore Program from 2013-2019. She received a combined PhD in Folklore and American Studies from Indiana University in 2004. She has served on the executive board of the American Folklore Society and was a visiting professor in the Department of Communication at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto in 2015. Her research interests are landscape and folklore, festivity and play, and humor in medical contexts. Her first book, *Winter Carnival in a Western Town* (2011) explored the interrelationships between community, identity, festivals, and socioeconomic change. Her current book project, *The Medical Carnavalesque*, argues that there is a significant carnivalesque element in modern hospital culture. She is also interested in the overlap of festivals and monstrosity.

Prof Leon Wainwright

Leon Wainwright is Professor of Art History at The Open University. A recipient of the Philip Leverhulme Prize in the History of Art, his research is interdisciplinary and has a transatlantic scope. He has brought out seven books, including the single-authored titles *Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (2011) and *Phenomenal Difference: A Philosophy of Black British Art* (2017), and together with Paul Wood and Charles Harrison, the latest volume in the successful series of anthologies *Art in Theory: The West in the World* (2021).

Dr Jo Buchanan

Dr Jo Buchanan is an Independent Specialist in Cultural Heritage and a member of ICOMOS-UK Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Committee. She is involved in projects to increase visibility and viability of ICH in the UK, which recognises the complexities and diversity of heritage, including minority heritages. The latter work includes exploring potential benefits of ratification by the UK Government of the UNESCO Convention 2003 on the Safeguarding of the ICH. She holds a doctorate from Northumbria University and her thesis is titled 'Valorising Cornish Minority Heritage: UNESCO and

Performative Heritage'. The research was undertaken in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences and aimed to explore the complexities of how heritage is valorised, and the importance of creating dialogue on cultural diversity. The study has contributed to a report to the UK Government on creativity and heritage (Heritage Alliance, 2019) and will be in a forthcoming book by Routledge on performance and heritage. Previous to her PhD, she studied for an MA whilst she worked as manager of a historic house open to the public. Her extensive work in the cultural heritage sector has involved close partnerships with creative practitioners in creating annual exhibitions and festivals within the heritage space. Dr Buchanan approaches her work from a trans-disciplinary perspective linking research and practice. Her research interests include ICH, democratisation of culture (with a focus on minority heritages) and the role of creative practitioners in heritage-making.

Emmanuel Chima

Emmanuel Chima is a PhD student at Michigan State University School of Social Work. His research focuses on psychosocial wellbeing among refugee youth and older adults. His current research centers on the community at Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi.

Dr Andrew R. Martin

Andrew R. Martin, Ph.D., is Professor of Music at Inver Hills College, St. Paul, Minnesota where he teaches courses in music history, music analysis, percussion, and directs the African music ensemble and steelband. Martin's research explores globalization, Caribbean music and mobilities, tourism, American music, and exotica. His research has appeared in several print and digital journals, newspapers, blogs, and in reference works such as the Grove Dictionary of American Music. He is the author of the books *Steelpan Ambassadors: The US Navy Steel Band 1957-1999* and *Steelpan in Education: A History of the Northern Illinois University Steelband*.

Dr Andrew Snyder

Andrew Snyder is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the

Instituto de Etnomusicologia at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. With an interest in public festivity and radical politics, he has written about alternative brass band movements in his monograph, *Critical Brass: Street Carnival and Musical Activism in Olympic Rio de Janeiro* (Wesleyan University Press); two co-edited volumes entitled *HONK! A Street Music Renaissance of Music and Activism* (Routledge) and *At the Crossroads: Music and Social Justice* (Indiana University Press 2021); and articles in *Latin American Music Review*, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, *Ethnomusicology*, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, and *Yearbook for Traditional Music*.

Malvika Lobo

Malvika Lobo is a Ph.D. student at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. She is also a freelance translator who hopes to systematically document Konkani songs that are orally recited and retained through memory. Her research interests lie in fields such as oral literature, spatiality, postmodernism, and the digital humanities. Currently, her work focuses on geocritical analysis of diaspora literature. Simultaneously, she is also working on various rituals of the western coastal region of South India.

Rhonda Allen

Rhonda Allen is a former Director of the Sheffield Carnival involved in organising its first virtual carnival in 2020. She has judged costume competitions in Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the UK. She has also served on the Sheffield Theatre's judging panel to select plays for performance. Additionally, she worked on the Preston carnival's costume-judging program creating and developing the judging criteria and training the team. In 2022, Rhonda was also in full costume for the Luton Carnival. She has many years of experience working in carnival in various capacities which has encouraged her to focus on carnival costume judging, its traditions, practices, and contemporary perspectives. Her research focuses on carnival, in particular, the aesthetics of costume design and performance and how it is judged both in Trinidad and Tobago and the UK. Currently, she explores costume making, costume design and performance, embodiment, tradition, heritage, the costumed body, and personal narratives.

Photographer Bios



Catherine Sforza

[instagram.com/sforzamedia](https://www.instagram.com/sforzamedia)

The love of photography started with her father when she was 8 years old. She got into the cultural arts through Carnival in 2017. She was the road manager for Moko Somokow (an award-winning Moko Jumbie band) in 2019 and 2020. These experiences inspired her to venture into Project Management and continue with her passion for art. She is passionate about preserving and documenting Trinidad's stories. She has been doing so through 1000mokos, the Alice Yard Lost and Found project and her collaborations with Method Moda. Don't be surprised if you see her walking on stilts through the streets of Port-of-Spain some morning.

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Sforza, Catherine, 'Moko Jumbies', *Journal of Festival Culture Inquiry and Analysis*, 1.1, (2022), 52-63

Shaun Rambaran

[instagram.com/shaun_rambaran](https://www.instagram.com/shaun_rambaran)

Shaun Rambaran is a photographer whose passion for Trinbagonian history and culture has led him away from a fifteen-year career in commercial work, to devote his time to Trinbago Mas' and Carnival, stick-walking, Moko Jumbie, Trinbagonian street life, and architecture. Among his favorite photography memories is photographing 'Mariella, Shadow of Consciousness' during the 2019 Carnival Queen Preliminaries, the first on-stage appearance of the 2019 Carnival Queens. As well as meeting, and later interviewing, the legendary Moko Jumbie, Dexter Stewart, he also met and interviewed Andrew 'Moose' Alexander, Masman and Maker for Peter Minshall, Keylemanjahro, and his own Watusi Jumbies. Shaun's

photo, 'Jab Madonna', featuring Moko Jumbie Shynel Brizan breastfeeding her son, became viral across multiple social media platforms in 2019. In 2022, Shaun was among several other artists featured in Annim's Art Galleria's Carnival exhibition, 'Band Together', as well as The Rotunda Gallery's April exhibition, 'Universe'.

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Rambaran Shaun, 'Carnival and Culture', *Journal of Festival Culture Inquiry and Analysis*, 1.1, (2022), 10-12, 15, 17-19, 26-27, 33-35, 73-75, 91-93, 110-113, 124-125, 129-131

2ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON FESTIVAL CULTURE

ISFC June 2021:
Reports on conference
proceedings



Recentering Festival Studies

Report of the 2nd Annual International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC)

Dr Hanna Klien-Thomas
Research fellow in Creative
Industries at Oxford Brookes
University



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© Shaun Rambaran

Over two days in June, researchers and practitioners from different fields discussed current trends in festival cultures at the 2nd Annual International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC). Setting themes of power, empowerment and disempowerment in festival culture, the keynote lectures focused on Caribbean Carnival, including scholars from institutions across North America, Europe and the Caribbean itself. This report seeks to identify the commonalities in approaches to festival culture presented at the event and to show how a perspective taking the Caribbean and, in particular, its cultural form of Carnival as focal point benefits the discussion of contemporary global festival cultures.

As a region and cultural space, the Caribbean is characterised by its forceful subjection to early

globalisation processes located at the beginning of modern racism and colonialism. Consequently, experiences of diaspora, mobility, ethnic diversity and racial inequalities have been at the core of its socialities. Situating the Caribbean at the centre and as a counterpoint can provide insights into power dynamics of the present moment. Applied to global festival cultures, this perspective highlights inequalities laid bare in the pandemic as well as the creativity and agency of social actors in festival cultures faced with the enforced restructuring of public culture. Thus, the inclusive space of the symposium—much like Caribbean Carnival itself—made it possible to negotiate and understand current changes, while at the same time remaining grounded in the specificities of different festival cultures.

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Caribbean Carnival Festivals in the time of Pandemics

Welcome speech delivered at the 2nd Annual International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC)

Michael La Rose
Cultural and political
activist, author, researcher
and lecturer

First, welcome participants, academics and supporters of festival cultures to the second International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC). Events like this, organised by FCRE, allow discussions and exchanges between artists, academics and administrators, and provide opportunities to learn from each other's festivals through various artistic and financial models and practices. This is vitally important for the progress and development of festivals based on popular culture in this time of pandemics.

I come from the experience of the culture, art and struggle of the Caribbean Carnival and its global diaspora, including the Notting Hill Carnival. Founded over 300 years ago, these festivals can be traced back to before times of slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean, created by everyday people from marginalised and oppressed communities. These celebrations of popular culture have grown to become hugely attractive to a wide range of people across the world, through their rituals, art, music, masquerade, dance, song, inclusion and spectacle.

There is social significance in this festival art and, most importantly, they have the commitment of the everyday people—both trained and untrained—who produce the various artistic elements and organisation of the Caribbean Carnival festivals. In 2017, I gave a talk at the International Conference on Caribbean Carnival Cultures at Leeds Beckett University, where I outlined the culture of resistance developed in the Caribbean Carnival. An edited version is included in *Caribbean Quarterly: A Journal of Caribbean culture* Vol 65 No 4 Special Issue with other presentations from that conference, though this will not be discussed in this paper.

Festivals of popular culture have been stopped and banned due to the global Coronavirus pandemic. This began in 2020, continued throughout 2021, and 2022 is not looking hopeful. I want to briefly set out the major issues for popular festivals like the Caribbean Carnivals in the future, discussing both how the festivals have responded in the past, and how they propose to address this new phase going forward.

I suggest 4 issues which may have an impact on the future of festivals:

- 1) Health pandemics or epidemics
- 2) Climate Change Emergency
- 3) Social Justice movements
- 4) Cultural identity and artistic transformation

Health Pandemics or epidemics

The Coronavirus pandemic is not the first and will not be the last health risk that threatens popular festivals. In 1925, Trinidad suffered a major outbreak of rabies in livestock, which was then transmitted to humans via vampire bats. This was compounded by a local folk tale character: The Soucouyant, a flying blood sucker. Listen to kaiso "Soucouyant" by Lord Blakie [Youtube link <https://youtu.be/yR576U0z>]. Though this generated much concern in society—especially with regards to attending events—the Carnival turned fear into art, by producing huge dancing Vampire Bat or "Bat masquerade". More of that later.

In 1972 a Polio outbreak stopped Carnival in Trinidad, and it was postponed until May. This decision was very unpopular, and due to poor planning, the May Carnival was rained out and a complete disaster. Lord Kitchener made commentary in his Kaiso (Calypso) Rain-O-Rama popularly known as Mas in May [Youtube link <https://youtu.be/4SfiFGsdzNE>]. "Polio or no Polio. We want we mas".

The Bird Flu or Avian Influenza epidemic in Asia in 2005 threatened the production of "pretty mas" or "bikini and beads mas" in Caribbean Carnivals. The feathers that dominate this type of mas could not be imported due to risk of infection, so Mas producers had to source producers had to source feathers from elsewhere, or creatively replace real bird feathers with artistic substitutes.

Festival organisers and creatives must use the time festivals are not happening due to the global pandemic to actively look at how to improve the festivals when they return. We must take advantage of enforced leisure. Remember, the steel pan was created by young, unemployed creative geniuses in Trinidad, when the Caribbean Carnival was banned for a few years during the war period. The newly created steel pan instrument emerged in Trinidad the day the Second World War ended.

In 2021, the banned Carnival communities in Trinidad, Brazil and other areas globally created a new way to experience the spirit of the Carnival: by organising a Backyard Jam themselves, at home. This was supported with the precise instructions and music from the Soca song and video produced by Farmer Nappy "Backyard Jam" [Youtube link <https://youtu.be/HQyKZeioUrs>]. In the banned Notting Hill Carnival 2020, individuals in full masquerade paraded solo around the carnival route. Others in masquerade engaged in the rituals of Carnival and visited all the significant sites in the Carnival area like Trini Hill, the Judging Point and Under the Bridge at Ladbroke Grove.

The Coronavirus pandemic has really challenged festival organisers. One solution has been "Virtual Carnival" online. For many people in the Caribbean Carnival community this has received a mixed reaction, and met with suspicion. Attendees interviewed on TV were seen protesting, "this is NOT Carnival. Carnival cannot be virtual!", though it is clear that big business sponsors and advertisers appear to be attracted to this format of culture. It would be interesting to see what academic demographic studies have seen about the impact and influence of the Virtual Carnival.

Despite the mixed reaction, the Virtual Carnival appears to be useful for communicating history and education and being acceptable for concerts and musical performances. It is clear festival organisers

will continue to be creatively challenged, although it has certainly raised the question of cultural identity, purpose and origin. "What is the Caribbean Carnival? What culturally defines it?"

The Climate Change Emergency

The Climate Emergency is an ever-growing influencing factor on Carnival, and on all festivals, with businesses big and small needing to address and adapt to the crisis. Festivals of popular culture will have to respond to this in practical ways, and will need to influence their performers, audiences and spectators. Caribbean Carnivals, with their origins in the poor and dispossessed, have tended to be champions of recycling by using waste materials, transforming the material and creating something artistic and new, like masquerade and musical or percussion instruments.

Examples are the steel pan orchestras made from discarded 55-gallon oil drums, Tamboo Bamboo percussion bands created from different cut lengths of bamboo, scrapped cars to provide brake hubs for percussion "Iron" for "Iron Sections" making up the "Engine Rooms" of steel bands, old conch shells used as horn-type musical instruments, the cutting of short lengths of wood to make "toc toc" instruments and calabash gourds filled with seeds used as shakers. This sentiment is also evident in the masquerade: Crocus and flour bags were stripped and cut-up for mas across the Caribbean – a prime example being the Sensay mas in Dominica. Old plastic bags have been used by various Carnival designers as a material for making mas in Notting Hill and other carnivals, while cardboard and paper are used to make colourful, intricately decorated masquerade in the Junkanoo festival of the Bahamas. Natural products like grass and banana leaves have been used to make "Fig" and "Ju Ju Warrior" mas. These natural materials are cheap and recyclable and help to recreate the African mas traditions of Caribbean Carnivals globally.

On the other hand, the Trinidad business Carnival model that dominates festivals globally uses fossil fuels for its sound trucks and generators. There are many ways many ways this unsustainable use of energy can be reduced. One way is smaller less-polluting vehicles – for example, a Brazilian mas band in Notting Hill Carnival uses an electric tug to pull its Carnival floats and PA on the Carnival route, protecting their masqueraders and spectators. Another issue is



Image
© Shaun Rambaran

that modern global mas production in the Caribbean Carnival rarely uses local materials. Costumes, headpieces and mas materials are imported from thousands of miles away in Asia, though it must be noted that authorities in Notting Hill Carnival have weaponised health and safety as a tool, and seemingly use it as a means of regulating and curtailing the Carnival. Festival organisers must employ their own qualified experts to counter this abuse.

Festival organisers can influence the crowds, stallholders and bars in popular Caribbean Carnivals to use recyclable biodegradable plastics for cups and utensils. Festivals can easily reduce their carbon footprint by monitoring and setting targets to reduce waste, particularly limiting their use of plastic.

Additionally, if festival organisers encourage and facilitate more acoustic music participation (such as steel orchestras, Afro Blocos and iron and rhythm sections) which don't require the need for generators or trailer trucks will not only have a positive environmental impact, but will also encourage more live music and diversity in our festivals. Finally, creative businesspeople employed by the festival can monetise

the tremendous waste produced after the events end and produce a money stream for the festivals. This can diversify the festival's income streams, and will also take action in response to the Climate Change Emergency that affects all our futures.

Social Justice Movements

The clamour for democracy and accountability globally during the pandemic is not likely to abate. Black Lives Matter, Hong Kong, Myanmar, the Palestinians and Gaza, Uighurs, and justice for the victims of the Grenfell Tower Fire are social justice issues that will dominate our lives for a while.

Transparency, accountability and financial justice needs to be instilled in our popular festivals as well. Social Justice will be an aspect of many popular festivals and, in turn, so will the opposition to these movements from the authorities. The Caribbean Carnivals have engaged in social justice struggles for a long time. They constantly used the double entendre of the Kaiso songs and the themes of their masquerades to oppose and remind us of the horrors of slavery. This is in the form of Traditional mas or Ole

mas, which I prefer to call Foundation Mas, as it exists and persists in the masquerade of Caribbean Carnivals to this day.

Masquerade such as Jab Jab, Jab Molassie, Moko Jumbie, Midnight Robber and Dame Lorraine all come from the end of the slavery period. The Caribbean Carnival has regularly used anti-colonial and Black identity in its masquerade themes and portrayals like the "The Feast of Mansa Musa" and "Back to Africa" by bandleader George Bailey.

In 1983, bandleader and designer Peter Minshall produced the epic trilogy of consecutive mas themes, which questioned the inhumanity of technology and pollution versus nature in the "The River", "Callaloo" and the "Golden Calabash". Minshall introduced us to the revolutionary Man Crab individual mas, which represented the evils of technology and its attendant pollution. All of this is captured in Dalton Narine's prize winning film, *The Minshall Trilogy: Modern Fable as Street Theatre*. In 1985 Minshall designed the individual masquerade "The Adoration of Hiroshima", which was paraded in the Washington anti-nuclear march that commemorated the 40th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. Brazilian Carnivals in Rio and Salvador have also long used these social justice themes in their masquerade.

Further examples are the formation of Afro Bloco drumming bands in Salvador Bahia, which served as a response to anti-Black racism, appropriation and for instilling Black pride. The Notting Hill Carnival has also responded to the horrors and deaths of the Grenfell Tower Fire—the site of which is within the Carnival area—by marking the disaster with green mas, decorations and signs, as well as a unified solemn period of silence in the middle of the noisy Carnival event, as remembrance and a sign of respect.

Finally, 2017 saw the formation of Reclaim Our Carnival (ROC), following large public meetings within the Carnival community. They demanded accountability, transparency, democracy from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and the Notting Hill Carnival organisers. Lack of unity in the Carnival movement would eventually not allow ROC to pursue these goals further, however this was a hugely important development for the local people of RBKC that supported the Notting Hill Carnival. They demanded improvements and developments at the

Carnival, accountability from the organisers (Notting Hill Carnival Ltd.) and consultation with the local community. Recently, representatives from Residents For Carnival spoke directly to RBKC who are, at the time of writing, being consulted on their views. The struggle for social and financial justice at the Notting Hill Carnival continues.

Cultural identity and artistic transformation

Festivals globally—the Caribbean Carnivals in particular—have to define their cultural identity, or it will be defined by others. The commodification and appropriation of the Caribbean Carnival pose the economic question: "How can the Carnival's creators and originators get a percentage of the money made at the festival, and how should that be divided?". Part of this struggle will depend on the Caribbean Carnival doing its own validation of its cultural identity and self-definition of its art and form. The role of conferences and symposiums like this are invaluable in that process.

When John La Rose (Trinidad & Tobago), Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados) and Andrew Salkey (Jamaica) formed the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) in 1966 in London, this self-validation and definition of Caribbean Arts was exactly CAM's purpose. There has also been the International Conference on Caribbean Carnival Cultures at Leeds Beckett University in 2017, and UWI's University of the West Indies' brilliant "Panchayat; The Mas(s) in We (Re)claiming de People's Festival. A virtual research and arts symposium" this year in Trinidad. These events must be the standard for how we explore and validate festivals of Caribbean Carnival arts, creativity and cultural identity.

We must transform the Caribbean Carnival festivals culture, focusing and building on our Foundation mas, in particular, to improve affordable participation and creativity. Devonish and Baptiste's said, "Peter Minshall takes the traditional worldview of an agrarian 18th century Trinidad and converts it into a late 20th Century discourse on industrial development, materialism, moral values and development." That is the purpose and power of the Caribbean Carnival festival culture. What an incredible transformation of what is at the core of our art.

Remember the Vampire bat rabies scare? The Caribbean Carnival transformed that event into The

Bat masquerade with the masquerader dancing and swooping like a bat with extended wings. This existing Foundation mas is further transformed into the towering, creative, individual kinetic mas that is so impressive in both the Caribbean Carnival and mas in the Americas.

Let us go forward, transform and develop our festivals during the pause that the pandemic imposes. Time to self-validate, define, develop and progress the art, embed our cultural identity and address the finances of our festivals. Crucial to this process is the demand for democracy, transparency, accountability, and financial justice. After the pandemic our festivals must come back improved and culturally renewed. Our festivals must come back with a bang!

Thank you.

This symposium is now formally open.
Let us exchange and learn.

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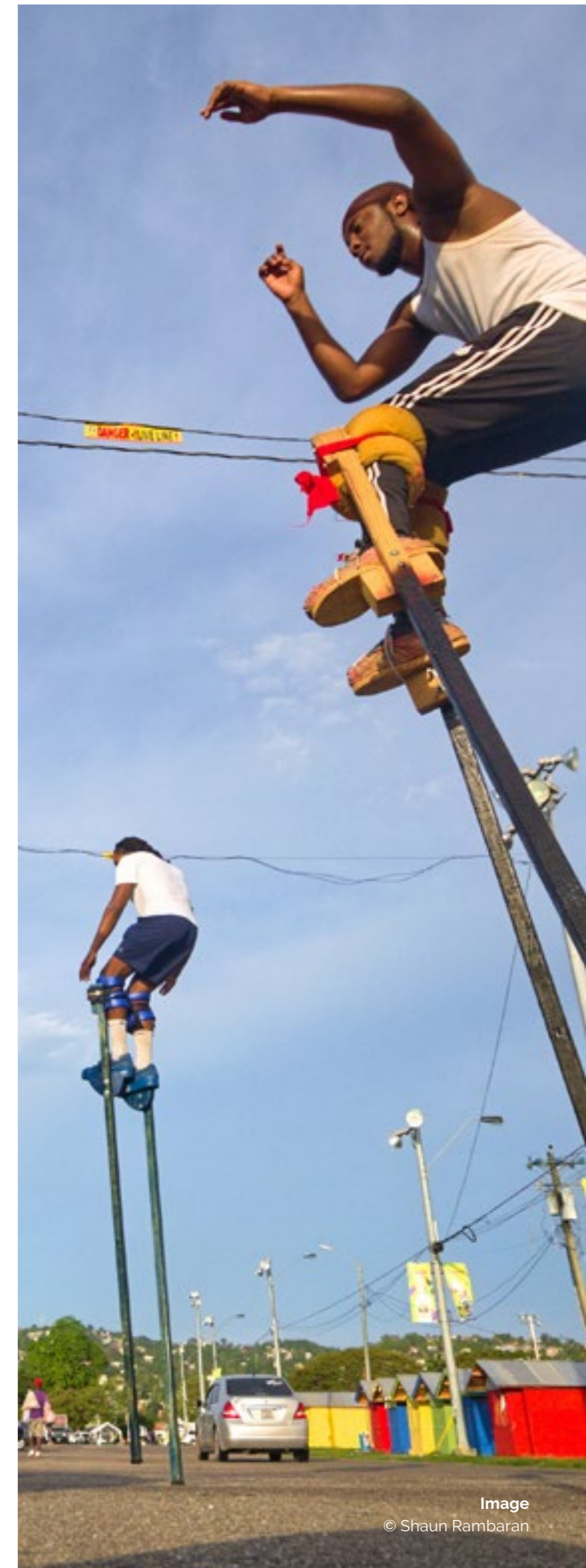


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Interrelationships of Festival, Community and Power: A Case Study

Guest speaker speech delivered at the 2nd Annual International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC)

Prof Lisa Gabbert
Associate Professor
of English at Utah
State University



Image

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This paper outlines some thoughts on festivals and the power of a local winter carnival by examining the organization of communicative and actual resources. It also examines rhetoric and beliefs about community. In particular, I examine how the locally believed notion that Winter Carnival is "good for the community" both disempowers and empowers local people. The local inhabitants, including both organisers and the general public, frame Winter Carnival as being "good for the community"; this is the most common way Winter Carnival is described. I argue that on the one hand, this framing device uses the rhetorical, emotional imperative of community for hegemonic purposes. I also argue that, on the other hand, the imperative of community is a tool through which local people enact their own ideals while reflexively thinking about and critiquing those ideals. This means

that the festival is both a tool of empowerment and an instrument of disempowerment at the same time.

These ideas are based on twelve years of research, conducted between 1998-2010, some of which are elaborated in *Winter Carnival in a Western Town* (Gabbert 2011). Here I first offer a brief overview of the history of the Winter Carnival. I then explore the logic of community in relation to the festival by unpacking local ideas about money, volunteerism, and the social pressure that arises from this event. I conclude by illustrating how this festival is embedded in discourses of community and power.

First, to clarify, the phrase "winter carnival" does not refer to a pre-Lenten carnivalesque "Carnival" celebration with a capital "C." The festival I examine is called a carnival and is influenced by Carnival and Mardi Gras aesthetics, but these are global and commercial influences that are more recent. This particular carnival originated in the early twentieth century as a winter sports festival and is similar to the traditional Finnish pre-Lenten sledding festival called *Laskiainen*.

Winter Carnival is held in the village of McCall in the Rocky Mountain in the state of Idaho, the mountain west region of the United States. The village has a year-round population of about 2,500 people, is located in a remote part of the state, and traditionally receives heavy snowfall for five or six months of the year. Snow is a central facet of its culture and identity, which is as a destination resort. Today, the primary economy is summer and winter tourism. Until the early 1980s, however, the primary economy was the timber industry, while tourism was a secondary source of income.

The first Winter Carnival was held in 1924 and was a winter competition. It is possibly related to *Laskiainen* since the area was settled by Finns who emigrated either directly from Finland or who came from mining communities in Wyoming and other areas. This festival featured dog sled races and early forms of skiing. It is tied to the rich history of skiing in the region and the development of professional sports nationally. The festival was held on Payette Lake, which froze during the winter. People experimented with skijoring, for example, which is where one skis while being pulled behind horses. They also experimented with early forms of technology, such as being pulled along by

wind power. Dog sledding races also were part of the festival's activities, and these races attracted competitors both nationally and from Canada. There were ski jumping competitions for both children and adults. This incarnation of the Winter Carnival was held until 1939, when, for a variety of reasons, it was disbanded.

Winter Carnival was revived in 1965 by the local Chamber of Commerce, a quasi-government agency that encourages economic development and tourism. The reason for reviving the festival was to promote the newly developed local alpine ski resort, Brundage Mountain, which opened in 1961. It was thought that a Winter Carnival, held at the end of January, would attract tourists to the area during a slow time of the year. Newspaper advertisements from this period, which feature glamorous, young couples on skis, illustrate that promoting skiing was an instrumental aspect of the festival. This tied the revived festival back to its historic roots as a winter sports carnival.

Local organisers also decided to build snow sculptures and enter them into competition with each other as an additional attraction to supplement the theme of the festival as winter-oriented. The idea to build snow sculptures likely came from New Hampshire, where students at Dartmouth already had a tradition of creating winter snow sculptures. One organiser I spoke with told me that he had written to Dartmouth asking for advice about how to create sculptures, but never received a reply. Instead, people began experimenting and teaching themselves how to build them. Examples of well-known early snow sculptures from this period include a sculpture of Paul Bunyan and his Blue Ox; a winged Pegasus that was painted red; and a scene depicting King Neptune sitting on a dias surrounded by mermaids.

The construction of snow sculptures continues today, although other kinds of events have been added over the years. Additional events include a second, statewide snow sculpture competition, a children's torchlight parade; a Mardi Gras parade; casino night; and various games and competitions. Skiing itself has become a less integral part of the festival as the industry has become more industrialised and globalised. Today the festival lasts ten days and is estimated to attract 100,000 people over that period of time. I will return to these sculptures and activities as they are important: they are festive objects produced

and used within discourses of community and embedded in a complicated web of social relationships, economics, aesthetics, and politics.

Festivals have long been linked to the notion of community. Émile Durkheim (1912)2001) argued for religious events as collective representations; Victor Turner (1969) developed the notion of *communitas* that can emerge in festivals as a state of undifferentiatedness; Bakhtin's (1968)1984) communal carnivalesque forms degrade official values; Richard Bauman (2001) explains that festivals are linked to community because of generic expectations; and Roger Abrahams notes that "Festivals are ultimately community affairs... in which many of the basic notions of community are put to test" (1987). These are just a few ways that scholars have viewed festivals in relation to community.

As an ethnographer, I am also interested in what locals have to say. What are the local ideas about festivals and community? As noted above, in McCall, local people link their festival to community by saying that Winter Carnival is good for the community: this is not just promulgated by organisers but also by the general public. Nevertheless, the term "community" is quite vague and abstract (cf. Creed 2006; Joseph 2002, 2007). What does it actually mean? Upon further investigation I found the term "community" meant something like "economic interdependence entailing generalised reciprocity and moral obligation." Unpacking this idea and how it operates with respect to the festival sheds light on issues of power.

First, people say the Winter Carnival is helpful for the community because it contributes to the local economy by bringing tourist dollars into the town. What they mean is that the festival is profitable for neighbourhood businesses and shopkeepers. As one business owner told me, "Winter Carnival is a boost for the local economy. A lot of merchants need that...it services them."

The value of Winter Carnival to local businesses extends beyond the business owners themselves. The local population also wants local businesses to succeed because of the way people think about money. Money is imagined as circulating locally. There is a proverb in English that says, "what goes around, comes around." This proverb suggests a circle. When applied to the community economy, it means that

whatever money is spent in the community (that is, "what goes around") will benefit other parts of the community ("comes around"). I was unable to verify whether or not this was factually true. However, that is what people believe, and in many ways that is more significant because people operate on that belief. The belief that money circulates locally stems from the fact that most businesses in McCall are small, local businesses rather than national chains or multinational corporations. Unlike corporations, these businesses don't rely on a national headquarters to support them when times are difficult; they rely only on the customers who come through their door for their survival. As one local resident told me, "the economy of this town affects everybody...Everybody who lives here is affected by the success, or failure, of local businesses because this is where we live."

If "what goes around, comes around" is believed to be true with respect to money, then according to this logic as a shopkeeper, if one's friends and neighbors are doing well financially, they will spend their money in one's own store. Similarly, if a store owner is doing well financially, presumably that profitable business benefits others—for example, by providing employment opportunities. Regular employment is very vital in this area, which in the past has had unemployment rates as high as 18%. This is an imagined communal economic relationship in which one's own financial well-being is perceived as being dependent on the financial well-being of others.

Because people presume themselves to be economically interdependent, the classic anthropological economic concept of "generalised reciprocity" also operates. Generalised reciprocity is the notion that people will do something for the general good without expectations of an immediate tangible return. That is, people contribute to society without expecting immediate concrete payback, at least in the short term.

This is essentially what happens at the Winter Carnival. Winter Carnival is run entirely by volunteers. This volunteer time and effort that people put into the festival is key to understanding how the festival operates in terms of power (cf. Olgilvie 2004). People contribute a significant amount of resources to it, and they do so without expecting immediate benefits because Winter Carnival is thought to be "good for the community" and the money it generates presumably

circulates around and comes around. One local resident illustrated this point by saying, "Winter Carnival is supposed to be a community effort to bring tourists to the area. Additionally, it is good for the rest of the community regardless of whether we benefit from it or not. We will in some way, whether it's immediate or not."

Just as an example, it takes a lot of time, effort, and energy to make a snow sculpture. I volunteered on a team to build a sculpture one year and we worked every day for two weeks for eight hours a day. At any point in time, there were at least four people working, often more. It was tiring work. It also costs a lot of money just to buy water. Then of course there are many other events that require volunteer effort such as organizing parades, competitions, and so forth. People volunteer by organizing an event, donating money, making a sculpture, chairing a committee, or something else. So people contribute in ways that benefit others, because what is given out is supposed to eventually come back. There is a presumption of future returns.

The idea that Winter Carnival is "good for the community" combined with the "what goes around comes around" belief about money means that contributing to the festival is also something of a moral imperative. A moral imperative is a force, drive, or organizing principle that compels someone to act. Because the festival is considered to be good for the community and because it is believed that what is good for the community is good for the self, then there is something of a moral duty or moral obligation to support the festival. This moral imperative is evident in a statement by a local resident who said that, while the town's hardware store does not make money during the festival, the store participates in the festival because it is the "right thing to do."

Snow sculptures, which as stated earlier are festive objects caught up in a web of social relationships, economics, aesthetics, and politics, are a compelling example. They are an incredibly public and visible statement about one's relationship to the community. As a community member, one is morally obligated to contribute to Winter Carnival by (for example) making a snow sculpture so that tourists will come and spend their money so that my neighbors and myself will benefit. The sculptures are a visual representation, crystallised into snow and ice, of people's commitment

to community ideals. In building a snow sculpture, one is visually "performing" these ideals. This is of course what festivals do: festivals put values on display.

Given that participation is something of a moral obligation, it is also not surprising that local people judge and critique the snow sculptures. The reality is that one's neighbors are the audience for the sculptures, not tourists; tourists are a secondary audience. People talk about who built sculptures, who did not, which ones were good, and which ones were poor. In doing so, they evaluate others with respect to the articulated ideals of community. Businesses who do not construct snow sculptures or otherwise participate are subject to the disciplining talk that is typical of small towns, especially if that person/business is perceived as benefitting from the Winter Carnival directly. They are thought of as not contributing to the greater good. So social pressure comes into play: people are aware of their own contribution in relation to the contribution of others and they make moral judgements about the relations of others to the community vis-à-vis visible participation in the festival. And of course, people who do not contribute make their own statements as well.

So what do these dynamics tell us about festivals and power? One aspect is that the Winter Carnival is a tool of hegemony. The rhetoric that Winter Carnival is "good for the community" is accepted as true by nearly everyone, yet as is true with hegemonic ideas the reality is that only a very few businesses, such as gas stations, hotels, and restaurants immediately benefit. Not all businesses prosper: some even close down during Carnival to avoid the crowds and therefore lose money. From this perspective, the festival and associated ideals of "community good" are a tool of power that benefits the few.

On the other hand, the Winter Carnival also empowers local people and does so in two ways. First, the festival is a device that enables the actual enactment of community. Recall that community in McCall means "an economic interrelationship entailing generalised reciprocity and moral obligations." Winter Carnival is a tool for literally putting that definition of community into practice. The festival makes the abstract notion of "community" concrete by providing a framework to enact the realization of economic interdependence, generalised reciprocity, and moral obligations to a larger whole. It empowers people to act out their own

ideas and definitions in ways not immediately available anywhere else.

Further, having put their own ideals about community into action, Winter Carnival then becomes a means of evaluating and reflecting on these ideas. This is what is meant when festivals are described as "reflexive." People do not just blindly follow hegemonic directives by uncritically volunteering. Local people are quite aware of who makes money and who does not. They also know how much time and effort it is to volunteer and participate. They know the sacrifice in terms of hours of free time and donations, and they evaluate the social pressure and moral evaluations they put on themselves and on others. The main topic of conversation throughout the village was whether or not the festival was worth all the inconvenience. People asked: Why I am I doing this? Who is it for? By asking whether or not the festival was worth their time and effort, people queried and tested ideas of economic interdependence, generalised reciprocity, and moral obligation. These concepts constitute emic definitions of community. There was no escaping this debate; every year, everyone wondered whether or not the town should have the festival. Winter Carnival caused people to consciously think about community because they were putting the ideals of community into practice. By putting the ideals of the community into practice they thought about, evaluated, and critiqued the limits of the community. They also thought about what the ideals of the community were, and what they should be. Therein lies the power dynamics of this particular festival. It is both hegemonic and empowering at the same time, drawing opposing ideas together, as festivals do, within a single framework.

I conclude, then, with a plea for including these kinds of tourist or economic festivals within the umbrella of festival studies (Gabbert 2019; Fournier 2019). Winter Carnival is typical of rural, small town festivals throughout the United States, which often have some kind of agricultural or environmental theme and are produced for economic purposes, often by attracting tourists. Yet such festivals often are overlooked because they are not thought to be very significant in terms of culture. They frequently are dismissed as too ordinary or obvious in their meanings. Nevertheless, they are common, and because they are common, they are relevant. While I cannot speak for all such festivals, this one provides a useful window into how

local culture, politics, economics, and aesthetics operate on the ground in people's everyday lives. Such power dynamics exist outside of the festival as well, but they become more visible and observable when played out in a frozen, festive public sphere.

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A New Paradigm, Moving on from Bakhtin

Report: Workshop session conducted during the 2nd Annual International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC)

This was an engaging, workshop-styled session, with presentations by Jarula M.I. Wegner and Kim Johnson, who addressed the theme 'A New Paradigm: Moving on from Bakhtin'. Along with several points and questions taken from the wider group, and discussion between the presenters, the session became a lively debate about matters of methodology and theoretical approaches to the study of Trinidad carnival, and of carnival in a more global sense.

Dr Wegner, setting out a survey of perspectives on Bakhtin, gave a concise look at the appropriateness of this celebrated thinker to better understand Trinidad carnival. He also reflected on the extant ethnographic research on carnivals elsewhere in the world. Narrating his personal experience of Trinidad carnival since 2009, focusing heavily on notable strands of intellectual debate on the festival, he made a strong case for taking a new direction in this field. Dr Wegner recommended that research on Trinidad carnival should seek to reconcile existing attitudes to inquiry, and aim for the 'mutual empowerment' of scholars who appear otherwise methodologically divided. On the one hand, assumptions have been made about Trinidad carnival being simply another site of Bakhtinian poetics, without due and proper attention to context.¹ On the other, carnival—when framed as an ethnographic phenomenon—has been subject to an excessive and deadening degree of contextualisation. Reductively explained away for its social function, or else claimed by a paternalistic effort to 'salvage' a tradition thought to be in decline, the cultural sovereignty and creative potential of carnival have been utterly traduced by ethnography.²

Being mindful of each tendency, Dr Wegner has looked to bring together these divorced parts in a fresh and dynamic fashion. He briefly illustrated what such a 'dialectical' theorisation may resemble, with reference to the 'mas man' (carnival band leader) Peter Minshall. He claimed that Minshall's recent address to ideological fields—such as the emergence of Trumpism or the global climate crisis—is intrinsically reliant for its effectiveness upon the opportunity granted through carnival for public participation and creative spectacle.

Dr Wegner assumed of his audience a firm, prior awareness of Bakhtin's writings on carnival, which enabled him to explore the often-expressed

Prof Leon Wainwright
Professor of Art History
at The Open University

¹ Max Farrar, 'The Caribbean Carnival: Yearning for Freedom', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 65: 4 (2019), 553-574.

² Jeff Henry, *Under the Mas: Resistance and Rebellion in the Trinidad Masquerade* (San Juan: Lexicon Trinidad Ltd., 2008).

points of critique that Bakhtin has been subject to. They are points that speak to the general and the particular: Bakhtin has little grasp of how carnival anywhere can be much political, while Bakhtinian accounts of Trinidadian carnival seem incapable of capturing its local idiosyncrasies.³ If both would make Bakhtin perforce irrelevant to carnival research, Dr Wegner asked that we think again. The tide of criticism against Bakhtinianism is prone to mischaracterisation, wherein his writings on the 'carnavalesque' are divorced from their own fraught political beginnings.⁴ Far more is offered by Bakhtin than this: fascination for carnival's salient qualities of escape and entertainment, for instance. There is scope still for a grounded political economy, capable of understanding where carnival may help to deliver historical and social change.⁵ When Dr Wegner suggested that scholars ought to 'move with Bakhtin, beyond Bakhtin', he urged us to continue to wrest with this complex thinker, so that both the history and the future of Trinidad carnival research remain fruitful.

If Dr Wegner had called for scholars to account for the aesthetic and political dimensions of carnival in a more dialectical way, Dr Johnson's presentation proved to be a fully contingent and fitting response. Less concerned with characterising the surrounding scholarship on Trinidad carnival than in tracing the genealogy of carnival itself, Dr Johnson gave vivid introductions to diverse aspects of the festival, moving lightly across the *longue durée* of two centuries, from the cultural crucible of plantation slavery, into the present day.⁶ His was a fluent and expansive account of how carnival can itself be 'theory generating'; he advocated for the telling of carnival histories in a mode of discovery, recovery and affirmation. As such, the starting point for Dr Johnson's presentation was not a seminal text such as that of Bakhtin, nor any other founding treatise on public freedom, democracy or creative expression, but was centred rather on discrete instances of carnival practice, which this speaker carefully drew together through an overarching explanation.

Dr Johnson explained the 'evolution' of carnival as a means to meet the existing scholarship on common ground. He signalled clearly that general scholarly interest in carnival's ability to offer a means of 'resistance' has held the unfortunate result of misrecognising (even to the extent of downplaying) the role that power holds in carnival. As Dr Johnson debated, given that power has myriad aspects, our interest in resistance needs to be nested within more complex, 'problem-based' approaches to the study of carnival. Thus, a great many further and related historiographic problems present themselves, ranging roughly from the diachronic to the synchronic – an approach that repeats Bakhtin's own commitment to historical materialism and the philosophy of language.⁷ Certainly, diachronic questions issue from a key problem of trying to understand the drivers for the evolution of carnival. Yet they can barely help to explain why the festival has so many faces, quite so many interchanging elements, and so diversifying a character. For this, a synchronic method—albeit mindful of historical change—can offer a direct look at the material components of carnival as they interact in any given situation. Dr Johnson alighted on the suggestion

³ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), p.8.

⁴ Graham Pechey, 'Bakhtin and the Postcolonial Condition', in *Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. by Caryl Emerson (New York: G. K. & Co., 1999), pp. 347-354.

⁵ Samuel Kinser, *Rabelais's Carnival: Text, Context, Metatext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 11 (fn. 1).

⁶ For a history of Trinidad Carnival, see: John Cowley, *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso: Traditions in the Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Errol Hill, *Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972); and Hollis 'Chalkdust' Liverpool, *Rituals of Power and Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad and Tobago—1763-1962* (Chicago: Frontline Distribution, 2001).

that carnival is itself a 'trinity', or 'three body problem', comprising of 'mas' (masquerade), pan (group musical compositions played on the steel drum), as well as kaiso and calypso (sung, highly lyrical and improvisational performances).⁸ These unfold further, he showed, through a proliferation of components that include costume, oral arts (song and speech), dance, drumming, and weaponry (namely sticks and whips). Almost any instance of carnival will see a combination of these, which morph into one another through interaction and exchange.

Against this background of explanation, Dr Johnson was able to probe the core issue of what has encouraged the individualistic responses of the many participants in carnival; and a concomitant issue of what such responses may enable for those individuals and their national community. For this, we return to a concern with ideas of the collective and practices of identification and identity, in a way that tries to make sense of carnival's changing and multiple manifestations as a register of power. Although here, in a surprising move away from part-versus-whole/individual-versus-structure explanations, Dr Johnson briefly theorised why it may be that the temporality of carnival could provide the key to understanding its deeper significance. He argued that there has been an over-reliance on the Roman Catholic calendar in trying to explain carnival, i.e. as a pre-Lenten indulgence of the flesh that anticipates a season of abnegation and fasting.⁹ In place of that explanation, carnival has to be seen more complexly and in contrast not with Lent but with Christmas: marking a contrast between carnival's public show of individual self-realisation on the one hand and, on the other, the family-based, domesticised time of celebration that Christmas has largely become. Since the latter has nothing of the liberatory complexion of carnival, this play of stark differences has as much to do with the optics of celebration —aesthetics in the broadest sense—as with the place of those actions and their desired critical effects.

Perhaps more importantly for the symposium as a whole, both Dr Wegner and Dr Johnson argued powerfully that the resulting analytic deriving from the Trinidad context may be generalised out of its Caribbean context, without forsaking the radically particular structure of its origins. In discussion, that prompted various questions including the following:

- To what degree does the current scholarship on carnival continue to address issues of political economy and aesthetics as if they were separate matters of concern? What lines of thinking or intellectual work have led to this point?
- What are the benefits as well as the limitations of this separation; where do its analytical uses begin and end?
- To what degree is such thinking generated from the experience of carnival? Which carnival or carnivals, and why?
- Does commentary on carnival and its histories in Trinidad intersect with a wider discourse of Caribbean exceptionalism? What particular challenges does this present for scholarship?

⁷ Valentin N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. by Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

⁸ Peter van Koningsbruggen, *Trinidad Carnival: A Quest for National Identity* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1997), p. 37.

⁹ Samuel Kinser, *Carnival, American Style: Mardi Gras at New Orleans and Mobile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1990), p. 21.

- What is the relationship between academic discourse on carnival and carnival practices themselves? What scope is there for two-way traffic between them?

Chair's discussion

An abiding debate here is about how to recognise carnival as an effective form of popular resistance, and to query whether this may be taken for granted as a reading of it. Carnival here has been forcefully sanctioned by the nation state ever since Trinidad and Tobago's political independence. It was colonised even during the high point of the British Empire, such as through commercialisation and direct sponsorship, which brought a system of competition and anti-democratic gestures such as title- and prize-giving for individual performers and carnival bands. Rather than remain caught within this preoccupying dilemma, however, these two speakers had worked to unpack and complicate concepts such as resistance.

My own understanding of Bakhtin's and all such linguistic-based approaches is that they have to be undergirded by attention to perception – what Réa de Matas in her doctoral and published work has called 'sensory embodied experience'. That could mean 'bracketing' Bakhtin in the manner of the phenomenological epoché, which involves taking a completely different methodological approach that starts with listening to the participants of carnival and trying to understand the specificity of their experiences. Inquiry could then move on to considering how to enfold those participants' personally-held explanations and narratives, as well as the meanings for carnival derived through auto-ethnography, etc. Let us be clear, however, that would involve contending with the materiality and emotionality of carnival, areas that Bakhtin does not cover. Clearly the 'new materialism' and historical materialism are not interchangeable approaches.

This might all be rather wishful thinking and fanciful reasoning in the area of project design, however, as I will briefly try to explain. What both of the papers by Dr Johnson and Dr Wegner revealed is that there are barriers in the way of any sort of thoroughgoing evaluation of the appropriate theoretical frameworks for understanding Trinidad carnival. That is not to say that carnival is without a tradition of intellectual reflection and theoretical claims. I do not see the Caribbean as having succumbed to a self-impooverished utilitarianism in the way of a rejection of 'theory' or anything along those lines. Rather, I would highlight the general discourse of 'exceptionalism' that circulates within the English-speaking Caribbean. This is so widespread as to have the effect of making it harder to recognise how a theoretical approach which originates outside the region can have any or much purchase at all. The same attitude may be extended to the identity and location of those who are doing the research; it has not helped the path of academic research on the Caribbean in general, in my view. A commonly made claim is that Trinidadian culture stands apart and that it is opaque to academic study. However, the terms of that difference only tends to return us to already

quite familiar academic categories and concepts (freedom, democracy, individualism, nation, community, difference, change/continuity, etc.). These are long-debated in both academia and in the mainstay of mainstream humanistic thought, as well as in foundational models of postcolonial criticism.

As I see it, the main imperative for carnival researchers within and without the region is to remain in dialogue. They must retain all the opportunities presented to the academy through connection and comparison. Part of the assumption of Trinidadian and Caribbean 'exceptionalism' is a reluctance to undertake theoretical work per se—an intellectual conservatism that tries not only to leave theory aside in local representations but to disenable if not disempower the effects of theoretical work. Any talk of an innovative 'experiential' post-Bakhtinian phenomenology of carnival is likely to be ruled out by that attitude. There is a paradox here, given the ample evidence that Trinidad carnival can be 'theory generating', as our speakers have clearly shown. As such, we need a compassionate and explanatory look at this context, with the acceptance that knowledge about carnival can take a variety of forms and that 'ownership' of that knowledge deserves to be contested.

This returns us to the central objective to consider a 'new paradigm' in this panel, where I see a danger of us being in a muddle about how this all sits within a research field. Effusive first-person reflections, historical or otherwise, and enthusiasm for carnival in Trinidad expressed on a nationalistic register ('we culture' etc.) are hardly a research method. Those emotions and knowledge are actually more like data, and so need to be allotted a different (and probably much better place?) in this field.

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POLITICS
POWER
CREATIVITY
EMPOWER
SPACE
DISEMPOWER

Responses to the call for papers, following the 2nd Annual International Symposium on Festival Culture (ISFC)



Cornwall's Festivals: A Space for Festivity, Subversion and Empowerment

Dr Jo Buchanan
Cultural Heritage Specialist



Abstract

Cornwall, in the United Kingdom, is a place where the performance of heritage in public is intrinsically woven into the community calendar. Three hundred and sixty-eight festivals take place each year in its villages and towns (Kent 2018), of which this paper will explore three: St Germans May Tree Fair (a revived, community-led festival), Trevithick Day and Golroos (both reinvented, community-led festivals). This formed part of research into how heritage is defined and valorised in Cornwall, conducted between 2017 and 2019. These case studies focus on valorising of heritage through living performances, as a reflexive cultural process where values and symbolic meanings are seen in action. When viewed as an active process, 'heritage' is seen as an empowering, performative space for negotiation and recognition of a plurality of values. Integral to this empowering process is a specific mode of behaviour, termed the festive form, of convergence, revelry and subversion. Subversion is explored as

Image

St Germans May Tree Fair
(author's collection)

Keywords

Festivals, Subversion,
Empowerment and Intangible
Cultural Heritage

¹ Reinvented tradition is a newly formed contemporary festival that enacts the festive form of convergence, revelry and subversion.

both a temporary subversion from everyday life, but can be mobilised strategically to increase visibility and longer-term change. Subversion is first explored in the context of personal agency and empowerment. The next section explores festivals and empowerment as longer-term subversion of wider societal concerns, including recognition of alternative heritages and democratisation. The final section shows that although increasing recognition and support for festivals and other forms of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)² from official bodies is welcome, in some cases this can lead to disempowerment. Tensions can emerge as powerful stakeholders become involved in decision-making. These longstanding issues continue to create a delicate balance in the empowerment potential of festivals. Throughout the paper, Cornwall's festivals are described as an unofficial process and 'grassroots'. These were adopted to explore collective cultural heritage processes by 'ordinary' people, as distinct from that mobilised by professionals or official leadership (governments or heritage bodies).

The conceptual and methodological approaches I chose for my study involved a critical heritage approach within a cultural studies framework, both of which used a mixed methods participatory methodological approach that centres primary experience and the concept of giving voice. The study used a qualitative approach to explore how groups of people interact and construct their world, and collected ethnographic and phenomenological qualitative sources of data, supplemented with a questionnaire and document searches. In addition interviews, observation and focus groups provided greater depth, explaining more fully the complexity, dynamism and negotiation of behaviour, cultural production and power/knowledge relations. The methodological approach chosen not only connects to a broader notion of cultural politics and democracy (Giroux 2000), it 'enacts an ethics of respect' (Denzin 2003:237). In addition adopting a collaborative approach, conducting research 'with' not 'for' communities, is key to critical ethnography (Manning 2017). Approaches to data collection were deployed that reflected this critical methodological stance and looked at dynamics, positionality and aimed to empower participants, using data techniques that collected the expression of 'heritage' as they emerged through public performance of heritage.

1. Festivals and Empowerment

Several scholars explore social heritage practices (festivals, carnivals, rituals) as an empowering process that can create space for subversion and negotiation. The spatial and temporary interruption of social order created by them reflect Foucault's concept of heterotopia³, where value lies in creating multiple transformational spaces (Quinn and Wilks 2017). Turner (1982), in looking at the liminality⁴ of ritual practice, describes such sites as alternative, more liberated and inclusive ways to be socially as humans. Both concepts of liminality and counter-sites help us understand how festive events can create space for subversion and negotiation. These hetero spaces reflect Bakhtin's (1968, 1984) 'carnival sense of the world', that pushes aside seriousness (inversion) and makes

² Intangible heritage is a concept that describes the everyday emotions, expression and performance of heritage. UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) also adopts the term ICH, describing performative acts (storytelling music, dance), social practices (festivals, rituals), traditional crafts and knowledge. Their Convention on Safeguarding ICH (2003) aims to provide a framework for governments to support community's express, (re) create and pass down their idea of heritage.

³ Foucault (1986) refers to heterotopic sites within cultures as 'counter-sites' that offer simultaneously space for contestation and representation.

⁴ Turner writes how the liminality in cultural performance becomes a space for subversion, 'an embodiment of mutational forces' (2016) p. 12. The inherent instability and in-betweenness of this liminality allows social norms to be suspended or challenged. In the case of many festivals this is a temporary disruption of norms for example road closure for processions.

room for a multiplicity of voices and meanings. Oldenburg uses Bakhtin's concept of 'third space' to describe informal public socialising as timeout away from everyday routine, 'life duties and drudgeries' (1989:21). Kent (2018) also details the break from conventional order of living and inversion of norms that operate in the texts and performances of Cornwall's many festivals. He writes of the plethora of processions in the Cornish calendar ritual as reflective of 'a mysterious past, embodied in strange and mystifying festive practice' (2018:418), describing an ancient mode of behaviour of convergence, revelry and temporary subversion. Kent further explains these public events are still valued today as important for the greater good of the community, offering a sense of belonging for social, religious or geographical groups and in the 'long term contribute to group cohesiveness' (2018:15). Intrinsically, this idea of 'heritage' is passed on because individuals or groups choose to do so, and the replication of this heritage, as a sense of inheritance, imbues its social value (Robertson 2012).

1.1 Empowerment and Ownership

St Germans May Tree Fair is one of Cornwall's calendar festivals, where the local community of St Germans and neighbouring villages come together in a celebration dating back to 1284 (Orme 2000). It is an example of a revived tradition, in that the community at different times did not perform it (Manley, interview 2018; 2019). The community revived the May Tree Fair in 2012, which coincided with the loss of the annual community carnival at the adjacent Port Eliot Estate. Helen Manley involved in organising this event said:

"I think I benefited greatly from various events about Cornwall as a teenager, but as I've become older yet still perceived as a younger person within the circles of people who tend get involved in community committees/groups, it's a case of realising if you want something to happen, it's down to us that make it happen and create that opportunity for others." Interview 2018

From the beginning, an important aspect of this community-led event was ownership. The May Tree fair committee explicitly wanted it to be their event, and that it would take place central to the village, in contrast to the St Germans Carnival that had been held on the adjacent Port Eliot Estate. Placing the event in a community space, away from this powerful stakeholder, offered an alternative community gathering to the carnival and to Port Eliot Festival (which also took place on the Estate). The St Germans May Tree organising committee were predominately village residents, in professional or skilled employment, often-creative practitioners (OCSI report 2009), and members were also involved in other village social networks. For example, the researcher noted from attendance at meetings that members organised children's social groups like the St German's Youth Club, Rainbows (social club for young girls), or tended to work in the village (SGMF meetings 2012-2018). One anonymous interviewee commented that it was all 'very hippy', which suggests that some of the stakeholders appeared from a distinct group

(interview, 2019). The committee welcomed new members to contribute, but there was a lack of representation from black or ethnic minorities, which reflected the wider low representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) in Cornwall's official culture (DCMS 2018) and Cornwall ethnicity of 98.2% white in the UK Census (2011). The May Tree Fair was also community-driven and encouraged co-production. For example, local school children were involved in the event, and the 'May Tree Tune' was circulated on social media to encourage the community to play along (observation 2012-2019). The May Tree Tune was also part of the village's heritage, as it was adapted from a 10th century Medieval Latin mass dedicated to St. Germanus. The event was therefore driven by local stakeholders, with the wider community being invited to take part. Co-production was integral to this way of doing heritage, all of which created a sense of ownership. Grassroots festivals are a living practice of heritage, and intrinsically place people as consumers and producers of the past, not passive or marginalised. Viewing festival as an active practice, foregrounds what people experience. Termed the felt expression (after Thrift 2008), 'heritage' becomes seen as a living, embodied performance of meaning-making.

1.2 Empowerment and Sense of Self

The ability for grassroots festivals to be dynamic and driven by the local community was critical, as motivations to perform heritage varies according to the perceived need of individuals or groups. Individuals and communities decided to continue, increase the frequency or even discontinue performances, however they defined it and, importantly, official safeguarding and protection did not determine this process. St Germans resident Will Halwyn was key in the revival of the event, motivated by the idea of revelry and bringing people together:

"It was a description of the St Germans mock mayor and May celebrations in the book 'Popular Romances of the West of England' that made Will want to do something, simply as he'd found the entry funny and the fact it happened in the village we grew up in motivated him to look up further. Initially Will envisioned something smaller and more like a group of friends /garden party-type celebration, but after holding an open meeting and finding support from others, there was the real possibility of making it a larger community event." Manley, interview 2018

The community who perceived a need to have the village of St Germans coming together again, annually, supported the revival of this tradition as they had in the past. Interviews with residents reflected positive emotional impacts:

"What's great about it is it's almost like the beginning of summer...it gets everyone together and is a wonderful feeling of relaxation and everybody processing and ending up at the pub and hanging out together." Video, May 2014

This desire reflects Turner's concept of 'spontaneous communitas', in which he describes how 'all cultures recognise the need to set aside certain times and spaces for community creativity and celebration' (1982:11).



Image
St Germans May Tree Fair
(author's collection)

⁵ According to legend, St Piran, the Patron Saint of Cornwall was washed up on the sandy shores of Cornwall at Perranporth beach. 'Under the order of the Irish King (who was suspicious of Piran's powers) Piran was cast to sea off the Irish Coast tied to a millstone. Piran decided to build an oratory here in Perranporth to promote Christianity and the story goes that his first disciples were a badger, a fox and a bear' (Perranporth leaflet, 2018).

Cornwall's festivals were an example of a practice that brought the community together for socio-cultural benefits. The research affirmed how these festive spaces enhance bonding of social actors, providing a sense of community, be it a local connection, or a 'felt connection to the cultural tradition' (Quinn and Wilks 2013:28), reinforcing identity (Ashley 2020) and contributing to wellbeing (Jepson and Walters 2021). Such festivals celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity (Getz, 2010). They only take place because the communities come together to make this happen and value it enough to continue this form of heritage each year. Continuance of Cornwall's grassroots festivals was therefore a driving force for why they continued to be performed. This was rooted in a motivation to help people connect with their past and engender a sense of belonging.

"It's part of our heritage. It's passed on from generation to generation and it's nice to keep it alive. A lot of them like Padstow Obby Oss and Helston Flora day are peculiar to that area. To give a reason why...I don't know...it's just a good thing to do." Oldham, FG 2018

Fundamentally, these are socially interactive processes and embodied enactments. This was also communicated in the repetition of performances of heritage at Golroos Festival, which takes place at Perranporth⁵ is significant in Cornish culture, as the beach is where St Piran was first washed onto these shores.

Golroos Festival is a gathering of Cornish musicians and dancing led by the collective Nos Lowen, which includes a community procession on

the beach. Cathy Bennet, violinist/fiddle player in the Cornish folk band 'Black Eyed Nancy', who played at Golroos in 2018, agreed that she has made close friends through the folk scene, Josh Simmonds added:



Image
Golroos (author's collection)

"Yeah it's like a close knit community. Something is always going on and that is part of why everyone gets on so well and are close." FG 2, 2018

Positive impacts were linked to actively taking part and accounted for a high rate of volunteering at Cornish events and festivals (observation 2017-2019). The positive impact of taking part can be described as an example of communitas. The audience celebrated together, and interactions created chatting, smiling and applauding. Focus group participants also commented on a spontaneous communal social interaction and how this created value for them:

"It was great to see people there that you knew as well as a get together bonding thing." Charlotte, FG 2018

This is a social relationship theorised by Turner (1969) that generates (somewhat fleetingly) something communal and shared, richly charged with effects that can be transformative. Cathy Bennet explained the importance of social interaction:

"My mum is very involved in the Cornish folk scene. Therefore, I have been involved for like my whole life. So, like that Cornish music going on at this folk festival is like normal – It's just what happens all the time. Loads of my friends and people I know are part of this folk music scene. It's like a big family." FG2, June 2018

The research demonstrates how bonding of social actors is important. This social capital is further explored by Walters and Jepson, who highlight the role of families and collective memory for quality of life at events, identifying three indicators: 'physical well-being, psychological/emotional well-being and relationships with family' (2019:34). These interactions, described by participants in all case studies, are why groups value a social bond – a shared experience and behaviour that is

rooted in the past. It appeared that the impact of this social interaction and how it was valued was situational and was affected by being embedded (or not) in the community. The researcher, taking part in these Cornish festivals during the study, observed this. Events appeared to have different affective dimensions and impacts, from feelings of belonging (as a resident in St Germans) or alienation (as a tourist at Trevithick Day). This created diverse forms of valuing produced by these different experiences with layers of meaning, values and symbolic meanings.

2. Empowerment and Temporary Subversion

In Cornwall, the value behind performance of heritage in public was not only about coming together and revelry, but also about enacting at some level, subversion. Festivals have the ability to temporarily invert social order and this was observed at the St Germans May Tree Fair. This played out through the tradition of an election of a 'Mock Mayor', which satirised civic procedures. The community chose the Mock Mayor on the Saturday night in the Eliot Arms pub, before the procession on Sunday. Subversion of the everyday was not only integral to this contemporary heritage process, but it was also described in the records of this tradition (Manley 2019). Subversion was also performed during the May Tree procession, which went through the centre of the village, enacting the communities' ownership of space. The crossing from the adjacent Port Eliot Estate, owned by the Earl of St Germans, is distinct, as the area is poignantly within earshot of the village procession.



Image
The Mock Mayor
(author's collection)

This subversion enacted in the St Germans fair created an inverted image of the normal world, pushed aside hierarchies (Bakhtin 1968, 1984) and created a third space of informal public socialising (Oldenburg 1989). Bakhtin outlines how calendar carnivals have a long provenance dating back to the medieval period, where they have been seen in parish and manorial feast days, adding that festive forms are not just fleeting or



Image
May Tree Procession
(author's collection)

⁶ The writings by Stuart Hall (1999) are central to challenging or unsettling 'the' official heritage, and he refers to British heritage, as that deemed valuable in relation to an authored, national story. In particular he addresses the state of heritage and museums in a British postcolonial context and argues for a more inclusive representation of the 'forgotten other' of British history and nationhood (1999) p. 225.

meaningless: they shift the way history is told. This subversion within festivals was only a temporary release from the everyday, and organisers needed to be complicit with authority (Quinn and Wilks 2017). The May Tree Fair required a road closure and a Temporary Events Notice, authorised by Cornwall Council, but the subversion or temporary deviation from social norms that was enacted was desired by the village to connect with the past (ancient practices), and to perform an important social role. This practice from the past shows that heritage is still valued, and demonstrates a need for freedom from structural spaces. The questionnaire (2018) results showed that coming together socially as part of the community in these festive events was a core motivation: 20% attended because it provided family togetherness and 71.4% said they attended because it was a community event. The motivation to bring a community together and celebrate was therefore an important factor that drove these festive practices in Cornwall. This was enacted in an ancient festive form of convergence and revelry, a connection with the past that was still needed in contemporary communities. Bringing a community together to celebrate cultural heritage and identity through festivals had much more than an economic value – it put on display the values of that group. Quinn argues that 'festivals are more than an industry and are a socially sustaining device extending beyond tourism' (2006:288); a way that a community actively reproduces shared values and beliefs systems, and that cultural meanings are intentionally produced to be read by the outside world. This form of heritage, viewed as a cultural process, then becomes a creative dialogue, more than the end value of a practice or static thing. In doing so, subverting a Western centric idea of heritage, towards alternative or private spaces.

3. Empowerment and Social Action

As outlined previously, festivals can provide a temporary subversion from everyday life, but can also be mobilised strategically to increase visibility and enact change. This includes unsettling 'the heritage' (Hall

1999).⁶ The dominance of valuing built heritage, by UK experts, has been long-standing, which has not only hampered progress in democratising how heritage is valued, but has also overlooked diverse cultural forms, the complex ways that cultural heritage is experienced and how people engage with it (Waterton 2010). More recently in the UK, there has been a shift in cultural policy, which calls to attention the way heritage is used and celebrated in informal processes and practices (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016; Cornwall Council, 2022). These debates have occurred in cultural studies circles for years, especially around popular culture. James Clifford suggests that local structures produce histories, rather than yielding to history. These provide new dimensions of authenticity (cultural, personal and artistic), 'reconceived as hybrid, creative activity in a local present-becoming-future' (1989:126). His work is supported by other research in Latin America, where expressive forms—particularly festivals—rather than being eliminated, have reformulated and thrived (Guss 2001). Researchers describe performing culture in public, as a social drama (Brady and Walsh 2009; Conquergood 2016), while Guss (2001) suggests the performance of culture in public is a battleground and a site for social action. It acts as an important form of historical remembering, particularly in helping to reconstitute the community in a time of crisis. Dynamically shifting constantly between elite and popular meaning, filled with ambiguity and contradiction, it provides a space to produce new meanings. Guss maintains that cultural performances are 'recognised as sites of social action where identities and relations are continually reconfigured' (2001:12). He refers to a 'folklorization process' (2001:20) that is multivocal and multilocal, expressive form, suspended between the worlds of ritual obligation and a national spectacle, with competing interests between government, media, tourists and the locals. Kent makes reference to Guss' work and asserts that Cornwall's folk dramas (festivals) are inherently performative⁷ in this way – at some level involving subversion and social action. He argues that Cornwall's festivals are a drive to devolve power and leave behind its peripheral status, and 'provide an alternative way to assert difference and identity' (2018:365). He adds that the large numbers of festivals in Cornwall are symbolic of disempowerment and tensions, acting as a safety valve.

3.1 Empowerment and Recognition

The final case study, Trevithick Day, illustrates how grassroots festivals play an important role in increasing visibility, including the distinctiveness of Cornwall's cultural identity. Trevithick Day takes place on the last Saturday in April, with interviews (see Table 1 for detail on data collection) revealing that people travel long distances to attend this social event each year.

Trevithick Day celebrates and puts on show Cornwall's mining heritage and takes place in Camborne—an ex-mining town, and part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS)—and is an example of a reinvented tradition. The heritage event is organised and funded by the Camborne community, and celebrates the ingenuity of Richard Trevithick – a well-known Cornish mining engineer and steam-engine inventor.

⁷ Ervin Goffman describes 'frames,' (1974) to discriminate areas of sociocultural practices from general community life. 'Frame breaking' is to section off community social practices, images and symbols to be scrutinised, relived or re-valued. Some social dramas, like festivals, are multiple frames in a hierarchal arrangement, and allow for this deep reflexion and examination. Butler's (1993) concept of performativity engages with Goffman's frame analysis where breaking the frame allows room for slippage and potential change.

⁸ Cornwall and West Devon's mining cultural landscape was recognised and designated a WHS by UNESCO in 2006.

From observation in 2018, the event attracted large crowds of all ages, having a carnivalesque atmosphere with bands playing, trader stalls and fairground music. The shops and cafés were brimming. The event included dancing by local children as Bal Maidens, and later in the day adults showed their traditional Cornish Scoot dancing, accompanied by the Camborne brass band and a variety of steam engines, which were driven along the main road through the town centre.



Image
Trevithick Day © Colin Higgs

⁹ Gorsedh Kernow is a grassroots group that exists to 'maintain the national Celtic spirit of Cornwall. The tradition of preserving Celtic history and culture through poetry, song, dance, music, art and spoken word stretches back to the storytellers – the Bards of ancient Celtic countries' (Gorsedh, 2019).

Interestingly, at the end of the festival route in 2018, there was expression of a hybrid nature of Cornish identity as an industrial Celt, for example The Ad Nos' stage performed Cornish Celtic folk music and dancing. Alongside this social event, there seemed to be a shift towards longer-term subversion or social/political recognition, including representations by Cornwall's heritage interest groups as trader stalls turned into information stalls and the presence of the 'Cornish Embassy Bus'. The latter was literally a vehicle to explore the concept of Cornishness and was funded by a Cultural Fund from the Government in 2017. Trevithick Day was a celebration, a temporary change from everyday life, but also included a push for social action. The performative nature of this festival created a space for subversion, but also calling for social action and increased awareness of Cornish culture that might be seen as a 'heritage movement'. Cornwall has been seen by some academics as geographically and politically peripheral in UK decision-making, creating tensions from changes to Cornwall's culture largely by 'outsiders' through tourism, regeneration and gentrification in cultural policies (Deacon and Perry 1988; Deacon 2017). Despite the Localism Act (2011) and some devolved decision-making (Devolution Deal 2015), this has resulted in a grassroots movement from within Cornwall that called for social action. This subtly subversive process by grassroots groups like Gorsedh Kernow⁹ drew unofficial Cornish heritage into the mainstream. These groups appeared motivated to increase the visibility of Cornish cultural heritage and recognition of cultural diversity. Importantly this heritage movement by grassroots groups interacted with state and quasi-state groups. They sought to counterbalance central or state



Images
Trevithick Day © Colin Higgs

¹⁰ *The recognition of the Cornish as a national minority through the Council of Europe (1995), provides legal protection as a racial group under case law.*

government-led processes as simultaneously the insider and the outsider.

The publicness of all these festivals was an important aspect of this subversion. An increased expression of ICH in public spaces, including Cornish scoot dancing and speaking/singing Cornish, was observed. The performance of culture in public symbolised (re)claiming space (Ashley and Frank 2016). Performing Cornish culture is connected to increasing the status and legitimacy of minorities in the eyes of statutory bodies and decision-makers, ensuring empowerment and fairness (Saltern 2011). This is, importantly, a transnational process that includes the Cornish diaspora, and in this sense reflects a wider sense of community, echoed in the inclusive concept Cornishness – a term embracing those who were born, live or love Cornwall.

The festivals in this paper were, therefore, a temporary change from everyday life, but also included a push for social action driven by grassroots interest groups. These events created a cultural battleground for recognition of Cornish culture (recognised as a National Minority¹⁰ in 2014) and an emerging confidence. It is important to note that 'heritage' (in this case festivals), when linked to a need for increased visibility and recognition, results in a shift towards negotiation and respect of all cultures and plurality of voices. Although recognition of a plurality of heritages is a welcome shift from homogenic and essentialising debates (Tilley, 2006), diversity and perception of difference, it needs to be managed carefully. Heritage, difference and cultural diversity then become a series of qualities, which must be 'constantly chosen, recreated and renegotiated in the present' (Harrison 2013:165).

4. Negative Impacts and Disempowerment

Like other forms of heritage, however, festivals can create negative impacts and disempowerment. The research demonstrated that

unofficial heritage tended to be driven by the local community and was valued as intrinsically socially interactive. There were also some additional undesirable impacts to members of the community who were not taking part in festive events. During the St Germans May Tree Fair, road closure, noise and disruption were issues, particularly in the first few years of the revival, when some of the community were upset that the road through the village was temporarily shut for the Sunday procession. The impact was negated in subsequent years by improved communication to the residents of the village, informing them that this was going to take place each year and its duration. In addition, music and large crowds engender noise. This supports research into rural community festive events by Quinn and Wilks (2017) who outlines similar negative impacts caused by disruption.

Negative effects from disempowerment can also occur when powerful stakeholders become involved in community festivals. Cohen (1993) highlights complexities of ownership within Notting Hill Carnival (UK), describing a shift from grassroots black community-led, to containment by councils, police and funders. From the study, funding heritage related festivals remains complex and tensions emerge with (over) commodification. Kockel et al (2019) consider heritage festivals as tourism events and consider their economic role. Arguably from this research, festivals can contribute to the local economy, but participants expressed concerns over ownership when grassroots festivals became linked to official motivations including economic benefits creating tensions over ownership and accountability (Manley, interview 2018, 2019). Official processes could change the feel of an event from a community base to a commercial festival framework. For example, Penzance's Golowan Festival was revived in 1991, and was sponsored by Arts Council England and the National Lottery Community Fund. This formal funding had implications on how this Cornish festival was evaluated (Anonymous, interview, 2018) and shaped the event to reflect current cultural policy objectives. Traders also contributed to the funding of the festival, and paid for an area within the site. For them, the success of this event and how it was valued relied on organisers attracting audiences to provide them an economic benefit. The research demonstrates how some festivals act as a governmental tool, mobilised for a strategic good (tourism, regeneration, social cohesion and inclusion), but also social control. Termed the institutionalisation of marginality (Walters and Jepson 2019:23), mainstream, institutionally generated programmes when critically analysed control cultural production and the marginalised.

In contrast, the St Germans May Tree Fair committee, decided from the beginning that they would be the 'drivers of the cultural agenda' (Ashley 2020:14) and did not want to rely on external funding, as this could create tensions between artists. Therefore, all of those involved would be unpaid volunteers, and today the festival relies on personal funding and on volunteers' goodwill and social networks to organise events. There were elements of event infrastructure, however, that needed resources, including road closures, event licences, and insurance. St Germans May Tree Fair found support for these elements from various sources such as

pub quizzes. More recently, funding for the creative elements has been gained by the award of a 'Festival Enhancement' grant of up to £1,000 by FEAST (ACE funded) and the Cornwall Community Foundation Partnership.

Support from public funding can be welcome, however a critical approach is needed to prevent disempowerment, posing a question of who 'the community' is, and how transparent are their motivations within cultural power. There are an increasing number of calls for sustained support for ICH from the UK Government (Nic Craith et al, 2019), including ratification of UNESCO's Convention (2003)¹¹ but it is critical to adopt holistic models (Stefano 2022) that effectively ensure local benefits and centralise community in decision-making. For example, China has ratified the 2003 Convention, however state policies have disrupted Uyghur community expression of Meshrep, replacing and promoting a national community version (Harris 2020).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has explored Cornwall's community-led festivals as a performance of heritage in public, which enact empowerment. They take place irrespective of professionals, policy or legislation and place people as active agents. Importantly, this process was therefore an embodied enactment of 'heritage' constituted from the community who lived in it. These festivals were transmitted through socially interactive, affective modes and an active process of 'doing' heritage, which shaped how this 'heritage' was perceived, valued, and by whom. This research argues that recognition of alternative heritages, including festivals, is centred around empowerment. The research highlighted the complexities of heritage and explored alternative ways of 'doing' heritage to official processes. Festival performance could be seen as a conscious lens, mapping connections between embodiment festive form and social action, creating a crucible for recognition and cultural diversity. The performative nature within these festivals (subversion) provided an unstructured heritage-making process and created space for multivocality and a plurality of values. It provides a platform to view multivocality in valorisation, promoting democratisation of heritage as active production and recognition of diverse voices that may have been omitted or marginalised. There were, however, some tensions over ownership and potential for (over) commodification, emerging from levels of disempowerment as community festivals are linked to official processes. Providing public funding and recognition of community festivals, although welcome, has the potential to change the feel of an event, but a critical approach can help negate appropriation, loss of local ownership and embrace socio-cultural and socio-economic values when evaluating public benefits. Festivals remain an important piece of human activity and experience, a cultural process of empowerment that has transformative potential.

¹¹ *The UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) aims to ensure long-term viability of intangible heritage within communities and groups. For the purpose of the Convention, ICH means the practices, expressions, representations, knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. ICH manifests in the following areas: Oral expression, traditions and language as a vehicle of ICH; Performing arts; Social practices, rituals and festive events; Knowledge and practises concerning nature and the universe; Traditional craftsmanship.*

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APPENDIX

Document Search

Documents ranged from media coverage, UK and international policy, reports at Cornwall Council and festival programmes.

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St Germans May Fair archive Cornwall Council

Trevithick Day Programme 2018

Observation

Observation of community-led festivals, were key to a performance-centered approach and helped capture affective moments and dynamic creative forms of valuing. This included the use of mixed visual data from filming that provided verbal and non-verbal data. Film data produced at same time as the researcher's own was included to aid reflexivity and representation. This aided co-production, and representation, following the action of participants, their stories and emotions. In this way the researcher did not control the visual process. This participatory approach where mixed visual data co-produced are strikingly different to purely observational research approaches (Pink 2013).

St Germans May Tree Fair: Ethnographic observation of social groups involved in organising and attending the St Germans May Tree Fair between 2012-2019. This included follow-up analysis of audio-visual footage captured by participants at the festival.

Observation of events (Port Eliot Festival, 2017-2019). Live and recorded audio-visual data.

Black Friday, (2017-2019) observation of the band playing at St Germans May Tree Fair and the Rod' n Line pub in East Cornwall.

May Tree committee (2012-2018): Observation of meetings for the St Germans May Tree organising committee, Eliot Arms, St Germans.

Video (2014): Observation of film footage of St Germans May Tree Fair in the 'Voices of St Germans,' 25th May 2014, produced by Diana Laugharne and Paul Joyce (permission given for use).

Trevithick Day and Golroos Festival: Data included live observation of the event and follow up analysis of audio-visual footage by other participants.

Additional observation data from performance of Cornwall's heritage in public.

Edfss (2018): English Folk Dance and Song Society, conference 21st June 2018, Liskeard Public Hall.

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Gwenno (2018): Observation of Gwenno Saunders performing music in Cornish, 28th July 2018, Port Eliot Festival, Cornwall.

'Kernow in the City': Observation of St Piran's Day celebration in London (2010, 2011, 2017, 2018).

Music sessions (2018): Observation of Celtic music sessions at 'The Dolphin', Plymouth second Sunday of the month and the 'Barley Sheaf', Liskeard.

Observation OCS (2018): Observation of the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society, August 2018 at Stuart House, Liskeard.

Observation (2018): Observation of St Piran's Day Perranporth.

Tom O'Reilly and the Swaggers (2016) Performance of band at the Pan Celtic Festival, 3rd April 2016, Carlow, Ireland.

Interviews

Four Interviews:

Jack Morrison (FEAST). Cultural brokers that are Arts Council England funded.

Helen Manley in connection to St Germans May Tree Fair.

Anonymous interviewee x 2 in connection with festive events in St Germans and Penzance.

Focus Groups:

Focus groups were conducted to provide group interviews that gather qualitative data from individuals who have experienced a particular situation, which serves as a focus of the interview. Focus groups are seen as a form of oral history, a history making process, as tools to recover hidden pasts or those that do not run in state archives, often increasing the visibility of marginalised communities. To challenge the power relations, the researcher took part in the groups and shared personal stories.

FG June (2018): Focus group with 'Black Eyed Nancy' band during Golroos Festival, 30th June, 2018 at Seiners Arms,

Perranporth, Cornwall.

FG August (2018): Focus group with Liskeard Old Cornwall Society 1st August 2018, Stuart House Liskeard, Cornwall. This group included Brian Oldham, Paula Arthur and Jackie Jenkins.

Questionnaire (2018) On-line survey with structured and unstructured questions, distributed to festival organisers, funders, cultural heritage sector and participants in Cornwall (n=89).

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PHOTO
ESSAY
MOKO
JUMBIES

By Catherine Sforza,
Photographer and
Carnival Practitioner





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...Festivals encouraged all of the African communal arts: highly rhythmic music, dance, masking, verbal displays, martial sports and parades of hierarchic, competitive organisations.

Johnson, Kim, *The Illustrated Story of Pan*,
(University of Trinidad & Tobago Press, 2011)



...Carnival is about transformation. It is a celebration of the novel, the eccentric and the transgressive.

Johnson, Kim, *The Illustrated Story of Pan*, (University of Trinidad & Tobago Press, 2011)





*With different groups jostling
in the city for cultural space,
Carnival became an arena.*

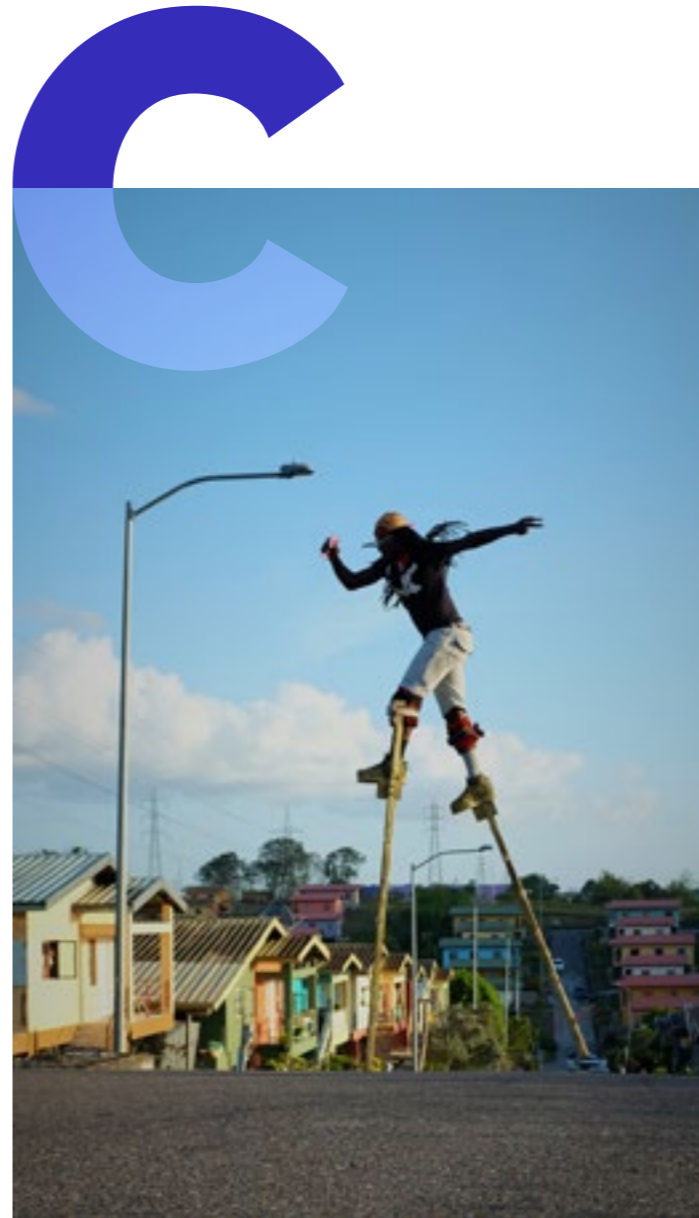
Johnson, Kim, *The Illustrated Story of Pan*,
(University of Trinidad & Tobago Press, 2011)





“
*...Collective manual labour
was performed to call-and-response
singing and the annual feasts
were passionately celebrated
with highly rhythmic music.*

Johnson, Kim. *The Illustrated Story of Pan*.
(University of Trinidad & Tobago Press, 2011)



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Sforza, Catherine. 'Mokos Jumbies'. *Journal of Festival Culture Inquiry and Analysis*. 1.1. (2022), 52-63

Looking back and facing forward: Lessons from the Tumaini Festival

Emmanuel Chima
PhD student
Michigan State University
School of Social Work



The public pedagogue whose work, the Tumaini Festival, is the focal point of this paper is Congolese refugee artist Trésor Nzengu Mpauni. He is self-described as “a multi-lingual slam poet, Hip Hop artist, and writer” with the stage name Menes la plume.¹ The name Menes takes after the ancient Egyptian dynastic pharaoh of the same name whereas the French la plume, which means feather, is symbolic of the power of the pen for communicating to effect change. Prior to his forced displacement from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mpauni spoke up against the injustices of his country of origin, which resulted in his persecution by the government. Spurred by such personal lived experiences and channeling them through his art, in 2014 Mpauni founded the Tumaini Festival, which is held annually within the confines of the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi.² “The festival is an innovative cultural event, developed and delivered by refugees and the host community, which uses entertainment and artistic expression to promote economic empowerment, intercultural harmony, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence”.³ Following Springgay in her analysis of the art collective The Torontonians⁴, this paper’s inquiry into the Tumaini Festival does not seek to unequivocally demonstrate how it achieves a pedagogical effect, but rather how the festival lends itself to some opportunities for the public to learn about issues of refugee concern and wellbeing. This examination additionally problematizes the colonial and sociopolitical histories of Malawi, as relates to the prevailing treatment of refugees presently hosted in the country, and centers the sensitizing nature of the festival and its cultural production in tackling anti-refugee sentiment, while fostering an alternative refugee imaginary.

¹ Menes La Plume, *About* (2021) LinkedIn <<https://www.linkedin.com/in/menes-la-plume-a1116291/>> [accessed 10 December 2021].

² Clyde Macfarlane, ‘The Malawi Music Festival Bringing Hope to Its Refugee Residents’, *The Guardian*, 17 November 2015.

³ Trésor Mpauni, *Breaking the Mold for Refugees: Founding the Tumaini Festival in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi*, WorldBank Blogs Nasikiliza, (2019) <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/nasikiliza/breaking-mold-refugees-founding-tumaini-festival-dzaleka-refugee-camp-malawi>>.

⁴ *Stephanie Springgay, ‘How to Be an Artist by Night: Critical Public Pedagogy and Double Ontology’, in Problematising Public Pedagogy, ed. by Jake Burdick, Jennifer Sandlin and Michael O’Malley, (New York: Routledge, 2013) pp. 157-172*

Festivals, as traditionally conceived, are spaces where communities gather to celebrate a plethora of causes. Such cause for celebration can vary from national observances, from Saint Patrick’s Day in the United States to longstanding religious traditions like the Holi Festival in India. Some notable aspects of festivals are performances, music, displays, costumes and food, which Gabbert characterises as the materialization of primary festival energy.⁵ In addition, there is simultaneously a crucial secondary re-configuration of social energy, as festival participants and organisers across social groups, with varying interests, engage and interface through the duration of the festival. Finkel highlights how the festival space can thus draw attention to social differences of power and class, while also serving to both reproduce and reinforce them.⁶ Since festivals do not occur in a vacuum, but rather within sociocultural spaces that are inherently hierarchical in nature, the festivals by extension reflect the status quo and existing power dynamics of their societies.⁷ How a festival is organised and staged reveals whose patronage is welcome and prized, therefore festival culture evokes commentary on the nature of social relations. Nasr and Bagader show how beyond form in festival organizing and showcasing, such commentary is also facilitated by the artistic content of the festivals themselves.⁸ In their study of Al-Ges—a women’s festival based in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, that was stopped in 1925—they demonstrate how the festival challenged and openly mocked the patriarchal organization of their society. The festival space allowed for the suspension of social mores that would otherwise have inhibited such free expression of thought and opinion, and the exercise of artistic license this way remains a part of various festivals.

In fact, parallel can be drawn between festival culture and aspects of public pedagogy, which “has been largely constructed as a concept focusing on various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond or outside of formal schooling” (2).⁹ In the realm of the public sphere, there is a constant curation of information and experiences for the consuming masses, that serves to achieve a sensitizing effect on matters of particular concern for the curating parties. Such intentionality of meaning-making is visibly evident in billboard advertisements and television commercials that communicate more than just the availability of particular products and services – they hold up and present particular values and ways of experiencing life, to which they tactfully invite consumers to experience and embody. As Ellsworth posits, there exist numerous places of learning, including multimedia projections and public events, which present a pedagogical force emanating from their qualities and design elements.¹⁰ “We are constantly being taught, constantly learn, and constantly unlearn” (1).¹¹ Denzin espouses a framing of public pedagogy rooted in performance and performative action, where meaning is superimposed on situations and events allowing for the imagination of alternative ways of being.¹² Transformative practice of this nature is fostered by creative opportunities of interaction between people and their circumstances. “In this interactionist epistemology, context replaces text, verbs replace nouns, structures become processes” (195). Giroux further submits public pedagogy functions as a form of performative practice by operating

⁵ Lisa Gabbert, ‘Situating the Local by Inventing the Global: Community Festival and Social Change’, *Western Folklore*, 66 3/4, (2007), 259–280.

⁶ Rebecca Finkel, ‘Re-Imaging Arts Festivals through a Corporate Lens: A Case Study of Business Sponsorship at the Henley Festival’, *Managing Leisure*, 15 4, (2010), 237–250.

⁷ Jennifer A Sandlin and Jennifer L Milam, “Mixing Pop (Culture) and Politics”: Cultural Resistance, Culture Jamming, and Anti-Consumption Activism as Critical Public Pedagogy’, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 38 3, (2008), 323–350.

⁸ Ahmad A Nasr and Abu Bakar A Bagader, ‘Al-Gēs: Women’s Festival and Drama in Mecca’, *Journal of Folklore Research*, (2001), 243–262.

⁹ Jake Burdick, Jennifer A Sandlin, and Michael P O’Malley, *Problematising Public Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2013).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2005).

¹¹ Jennifer A Sandlin, Brian D Schultz, and Jake Burdick, *Handbook of Public Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2009).

¹² Norman K Denzin, ‘The Call to Performance’, *Symbolic Interaction*, 26 1 (2003), 187–207.



alongside cultural processes to achieve social change.¹³ Embedded within culture is its capacity to educate through the texts, images and representations that it produces. Public pedagogy then necessitates that as these products are consumed and creatively engaged with they also be critically examined.¹⁴ Such examination ought to yield ongoing self-reflexive thought and action, ultimately culminating in social transformation. An increased authentic visibility of the refugee community in Malawi is paramount to counter the growing public buy-in to a nationalist refugee monolith that has spurred anti-refugee sentiment in the country. Refugees are generally perceived as a security threat and unfair competition to the local population in the informal marketplace.¹⁵ Through sustained festival culture at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp, new imaginaries of identity and belonging start to be constructed – refugees can be seen as contributing members of society and part of the social fabric.

Echoes of colonial hegemony

Inadvertently, the festival's efforts mirror, and work to challenge, the co-creative nature of colonial hegemony and the cultural spaces in which it operated.¹⁶ From its onset, colonisation infiltrated the local populace and worked alongside it to advance its own agenda. The colonizing mission was achieved with the help of the natives. In his essay "Invention, Memory, and Place," Edward Said foregrounds how an imperial foothold on colonised peoples was achieved by co-opting local traditions and redefining relationships: "a way of creating a new sense of identity for ruler and ruled" (178).¹⁷ Explicating how constructions of "we" and "they" operate with regard to nationalism, Said states "National identity always involves narratives - of the nation's past, its founding fathers and documents, seminal events, and so on. However, these narratives are never undisputed or merely a matter of the neutral recital of facts" (177). It is therefore incumbent upon citizens of post-colonial, independent states to engage continually with their histories and question the official national narratives that exclude non-native born residents such as migrants and refugees.

A close extended examination of Malawi's history, well beyond the period immediately preceding its independence from British colonial rule, yields the discovery that it has strong migratory roots. The origins of Malawi can actually be traced back to the sixteenth century Maravi Kingdom, which was formed mostly as a result of migration from the Congo basin.¹⁸ There is multi-ethnic contact written into the history of the nation that gives a foothold for extending hospitality to refugees. Turning to the decade leading up to Malawi's national independence in 1964, the territory was part of the British Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, with Rhodesia comprising the present day nations of Zambia and Zimbabwe.¹⁹ The federation was crystallised out of both political and economic expediency. Nyasaland as Malawi was then known provided both raw materials and notably human labor. The ultimate dissolution of the federation is attributed to the rise of African nationalism. This brief turn to more recent history is itself instructive on the migration and

¹³ Henry A Giroux, 'Public Pedagogy as Cultural Politics: Stuart Hall and the Crisis of Culture', *Cultural Studies*, 14 .2, (2000), 341–360.

¹⁴ Jeanne F Brady, 'Public Pedagogy and Educational Leadership: Politically Engaged Scholarly Communities and Possibilities for Critical Engagement', *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 3 .1 (2006), 57–60.

¹⁵ Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland, *Malawi (Rwandans): Reports of Rwandans (or their Businesses) Being Targeted or Attacked in Malawi in 2010 or 2011: Reports of Rwandans Fleeing Malawi in around 2010 and 2011 Because of Human Rights Abuses, Discrimination and Attacks by Society and the Authorities.* (Legal Aid Board, 2015) <<https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2005652/95387.pdf>>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Refugees Demonstrate Entrepreneurship and Creativity*, (2017) <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/4/58e37af94/refugees-demonstrate-entrepreneurship-and-creativity.html>>.

¹⁶ Ajit Chaudhury, 'On Colonial Hegemony: Toward a Critique of Brown Orientalism', *Rethinking Marxism*, 7 .4, (1994), 44–58.

¹⁷ Edward W Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 .2 (2000), 175–192.

¹⁸ John G Pike, 'A Pre-Colonial History of Malawi', *The Nyasaland Journal*, 18 .1 (1965), 22–54.

¹⁹ Daniel N Posner, 'The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi', *American Political Science Review*, 98 .4 (2004), 529–545.



sociocultural processes that have transpired in the region, including a shared struggle for liberation. Presenting for consideration the challenging innerworkings of the emancipatory tools of postcoloniality, Radhakrishnan writes:

In regard to the relationship between tools and those using them, the post-colonial situation presents itself as a complex and interesting instance. If both modernity and nationalism are historicised as a derivative discourse in the Third World, how can the derivative discourse be owned agentially (as against just being assimilated or instrumentalised) by the non-West? How bad and crippling a stigma is "derivativeness," and is there any way of redemption over and beyond it? Can derivativeness be negated, or is there a way of working through and beyond derivativeness into a realm of originality and one's own-ness? (321).²⁰

The ways in which formerly colonised people now perform nationality is modeled after a European notion of the nation. "[T]o put it more sharply, it is the moment to recall the obvious, that decolonization historically went hand in hand with neo-colonialism, and that the graceful, grudging or violent end of an old-fashioned imperialism certainly meant the end of one kind of domination but evidently also the invention and construction of a new kind" (184).²¹ There is a continuing bureaucratization of borders to whose attachment is a requirement for nationality. In the absence of such affinity as is the case for refugees, there emerges a second class status which creates the dichotomy of privileged group and subject group much like ruler and ruled, coloniser and colonised. The Tumaini Festival then calls into question the largely unchallenged allegiance to passively received nationality, which is predicated on colonially demarcated states. The festival's counter-hegemonic practice is comparably derivative of its preceding hegemonic experience of postcolonial, in-country discrimination – there is no decolonial without colonial, and likewise with the postcolonial.

Historically, the majority refugee population in Malawi was from neighboring Mozambique. This was owing to the protracted civil war in

²⁰ Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, 'Globalization, Desire, and the Politics of Representation', *Comparative Literature*, 53 .4, (2001), 315–332.

²¹ Fredric Jameson, 'Periodizing the 60s', *Social Text*, 9/10, (1984), 178–209.

Mozambique between 1977 and 1992. Malawi hosted up to a million refugees in 1991, ultimately prompting the creation of a refugee framework by the government that did not previously exist.²² Its creation was, in part, informed by growing concern that the local hosting communities were becoming eclipsed and burdened by the refugee population.²³ Consequently, the laws that were enacted and the policies which emanated from them extensively restricted refugee integration and incorporation in civic life.²⁴ These laws included limitations on mobility, naturalization, employment, and market access. The resulting, and intended, refugee stigma and discrimination has persisted well beyond the Mozambican Civil War and now adversely impacts the more recent, resident refugee population in Malawi. Indeed, the political landscape that informed policy in the 1970s and 1980s has starkly changed. Local hosting populations are not facing the same challenges that propelled the political expedience for the creation of the existing national refugee framework. The contestable reasoning that served policy-makers at the time should be made subject to the prevailing circumstances surrounding the refugee experience in Malawi. To that end, and the other concerns raised, both curated and incidental cultural production from the stages of the Tumaini Festival can augment its ability to serve as a “public site of resistance” (g).²⁵

Dzaleka Refugee Camp: “Breaking the mold for refugees”

The Dzaleka Refugee Camp is the overarching context out of which the artistry of Trésor Nzengu Mpauni materialised the Tumaini Festival. An understanding of its own sociopolitical history is informative for an appreciation of the artistic engagement that is the focus of the Tumaini Festival. The camp was established in 1994 by the Malawi government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).²⁶ It came into operation following increased conflict in East Africa and the resulting forced displacement, particularly of surviving victims of the Rwandan genocide. Those displaced made their way to Malawi—mostly through the neighbouring nations of Tanzania and Zambia—before arriving at the camp, which is located in both a rural and peri-urban part of the country.²⁷ The site of the refugee camp was formerly a notorious prison of the same name, which derives from the phrase “N'dzaleka” in the local and national language of Chichewa, which translates to “I will stop or never do it again”.²⁸ In its day, with a recorded population of 80 to 100 prisoners in 1960, the prison housed what were deemed political dissidents and enemies of the state during the dictatorship of Dr. Kamuzu Banda between 1964 and 1994, following national independence from British colonial authorities.²⁹ The refugee camp now hosts more than 50,000 refugees with the majority from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda.³⁰ Beyond the prison's old structures and administrative center, the camp has extended outward towards surrounding villages and has itself become a microcosm of rural village life albeit with a much tighter cluster of huts and houses. The remote location of the camp made its seemingly haphazard expansion possible, however there is limited access to basic amenities such as electricity and running water.

²² Jerelyn Eddings, ‘Mozambican War over, but Refugees Still Crowd into Tiny, Dirt-Poor Malawi’, *The Sun*, 10 November 1992; Levi Duma Mvula, *Refugee Status Determination and Rights in Malawi*, Workshop Discussion on RSD and Rights in Southern and East Africa, Refugee Studies Centre (2009) <<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/refugee-status-determination-and-rights-in-malawi>>.

²³ Mary Battiata, ‘Mozambican Refugee Tide Overwhelms Malawi; Savage Civil War Drives Hundreds of Thousands to Tiny African Nation’, *The Washington Post*, 10 August 1988; Jane Perlez, ‘Glut of Refugees Beginning to Strain Malawi Borders/1 of 10 Malawians is a Fleeing Mozambican’, *Houston Chronicle*, 8 April 1990.

²⁴ Mvula.

²⁵ Burdick, Sandlin, and O'Malley.

²⁶ Colin Baker, ‘Come Walk with Me: Three Visits to Dzaleka’, *The Society of Malawi Journal*, 64.1, (2011), 34–41.

²⁷ Catherine Makhumula, ‘Re-Imagining Dzaleka: The Tumaini Festival and Refugee Visibility’, *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 5.1 (2019), 1–18.

²⁸ Emmanuel Chima, ‘Life in Malawi's Prison-Turned-Refugee Camp’, *Africa in Fact*, (2020), 36–41.

²⁹ Baker.

³⁰ Baker; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Malawi Factsheet August 2021*, (2021) <<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88529>>.

The essence of the Tumaini Festival has been self-described and labeled as “breaking the mold for refugees”.³¹ “Across the six previous editions over 99,000 people have attended the event, and 304 performing acts from across Malawi, Africa and the world shared the same stages with performers from Dzaleka. Tumaini Festival has united 18 nationalities of performers: DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Norway, Japan, Brazil, Mozambique, Belgium, UK, Italy, Somalia, Poland, France, South Africa and South Korea. The festival gained national and international media coverage. It has so far achieved a media reach estimated at 50,000,000 people worldwide, presenting a genuinely different and positive story about refugees”.³² The weekend-long festival that takes place in the last quarter of the year, typically in either October or November, comprises a myriad of activities that extend well beyond the artistic production of the festival itself. The activities include sporting events, arts and crafts vending, mobile restaurants and specially mounted food stands, as well as a homestay program for visitors to the camp. The homestay program specifically aims to provide “firsthand knowledge of the reality of challenges refugees face, their resilience and strength, in order to break down prejudices people have towards refugees”.³³ A promising potentiality of the Tumaini Festival is for it to function as a decolonial strategy of representation.³⁴ This cultural strategy facilitates a shift in perspective, moving the focus from refugee identity—derived solely from forced misplacement—to the colonial nature of the national borders, which act as a form of violence themselves. Decolonial representation in addressing refugee discrimination cannot only appeal to the dignity and inherent value of human life in itself, but also argue for its location across places, especially national borders, which have been politically constructed and socially accepted as the norm.

A border-centric frame of reference is starkly evident in refugee protection discourse as, after fleeing persecution, refugee status not readily established. Instead, it needs to be accorded under the auspices of both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the governments of the host nations, as national interests, considerations and concerns arise. This process attempts to unequivocally separate “bona fide” refugees from other asylum seekers. Martorella provides a foundational understanding of what it means to be a refugee³⁵ and this understanding, which has informed refugee frameworks and policy across the globe, is grounded in the 1967 Protocol of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.³⁶ To meet the criteria of ‘refugee status’, one must have left their country of origin due to the experience or fear of persecution, for reasons that can include their social group or their holding of a certain political opinion. Martorella also aptly highlights the limitations of the protocol's definition, which does not account for those who flee internally, are in anticipation of persecution, due to the conditions resulting from the persecution of others, or for other reasons such as economic factors that impact personal safety and wellbeing. He makes the case that these groups of people are just as much in need of protection and consideration as those that are deemed “bona fide” refugees.

³¹ Mpauni, *Breaking the Mould for Refugees. Menes La Plume*, (TEDxLilongwe, 2015); Mpauni, (2019).

³² Tumaini Festival, *Home*, (2019) <<https://www.tumainifestival.org>>.

³³ Tumaini Festival, *Home Stay Program*, (2019) <<https://www.tumainifestival.org/home-stay-program/>>.

³⁴ Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Decolonial Possibilities in South African Higher Education: Reconfiguring Humanising Pedagogies as/with Decolonising Pedagogies’, *South African Journal of Education*, 38.4 (2018), 1–11.

³⁵ Peter H. Martorella, ‘Refugee Issues in a Globally Interdependent World’, *Educational Horizons*, 71.3 (1993), 157–160.

³⁶ United Nations General Assembly, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Treaty Series, 606, (1967) <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html>> (p. 267).





By espousing a reimagined representation of refugee nationals, further discourse of hospitality can emerge on the supposed worthiness of individuals to be received and afforded admittance outside their immediate places of national origin. In his conceptualization of hospitality, philosopher Jacques Derrida delineates between guest and parasite.³⁷ He lays down the need for jurisdictional parameters which are essential for the former group, especially in the case of refugees who present with a particular vulnerability. While the territorial boundaries of sovereignty make possible the granting of refuge to the persecuted, they also alienate refugees as belonging to and having their home elsewhere in a territory where their security, protection and enjoyment of human rights is no longer guaranteed. Herein lies a problem with national borders that were, at their inception, arbitrarily imposed by colonial authorities and later upheld by the nation states that emerged after decolonization. For refugee populations, a relationship to the nation of origin is disrupted. They must subsequently contend with starting to belong to a new sociopolitical space, as global trends between 1974 and 2014 show that, on average, refugee crises persisted for more than ten years.³⁸ Dzaleka Refugee Camp is undoubtedly among the world's protracted refugee situations, which UNHCR defines "as those where at least 25,000 people have been forcibly displaced for more than five years".³⁹ Moreover, "less than one per cent of refugees are resettled each year" to another country where they can permanently integrate.⁴⁰ The local site of immediate refuge, conceived as a traditional refugee settlement,⁴¹ is therefore significant because it is where the majority of refugees start to rebuild their lives. To the benefit of refugees, these settlements typically resemble their countries of origin which can foster and appeal to familiarity versus strangeness, and solidarity versus alienation. Cultural artefacts like festivals and other artforms which inspire and advance reflexivity in the public domain are the result of human enterprise, therefore their pedagogical nature can also be traced back and attributed to their creators.

During a 2015 talk given in exile, Mpauni performed his poem titled "Imagine", which contains the lines "Imagine one day because of your opinions, because of a poem or song denouncing inequality and

³⁷ Peter Benson, 'Xenos: Jacques Derrida on Hospitality', *Philosophy Now*, (2017) <https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/Xenos_Jacques_Derrida_on_Hospitality> [accessed 2021].

³⁸ Nicholas Crawford, John Cosgrave, Simone Haysom, and Nadine Walicki, *Protracted Displacement: Uncertain Paths to Self-Reliance in Exile* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2015).

³⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Left behind: Refugee Education in Crisis*, (2017) <<https://www.unhcr.org/59b696f44.pdf>>.

⁴⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Resettlement*, (2021) <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement.html>>.

⁴¹ Miriam George and Jennifer Jettner, 'Migration Stressors, Psychological Distress, and Family—a Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee Analysis', *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 17 .2 (2016), 341–353.

misdeeds of a corrupt regime, and in the end the government pursues you for disruption, running the risk of disappearing in the weeds without leaving a trace or being imprisoned and then being released with poison in your body. Will you stubbornly accept this or will you flee until the regime changes to return home to your country with pride?".⁴² Like countless others, Mpauni found himself a victim of post-nationalist African regimes who, after assuming power, embarked on predatory politics against their own people.⁴³ Historian Achille Mbembe aptly reminds of "the violence of brothers against mothers and sisters, have occurred since the end of direct colonization" (60).⁴⁴ Mpauni further relayed in his talk of related experiences of ill-treatment and discrimination by public officials in Malawi on account of his refugee status, all of which collectively informed the founding of the festival. Gershon foregrounds the status of musicians as public intellectuals, who meaningfully contribute to the consciousness raising of their societies by intentionally curating their artwork.⁴⁵ The artwork itself extends from the sociocultural context within which the musicians as artists find themselves and are located.⁴⁶ For Trésor Nzengu Mpauni and the Tumaini Festival, that is the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi.

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⁴² Mpauni, (2015).

⁴³ Achille Mbembe, 'Afropolitanism', *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 46, (2020), 56–61.

⁴⁴ Mbembe.

⁴⁵ Walter S. Gershon, 'Entertaining Ideas and Embodied Knowledge: Musicians as Public Intellectuals', in *Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education and Learning beyond Schooling*, ed Sandlin, J. A., Schultz, B. D, and Burdick, J, (New York: Routledge, 2009), (pp. 628–638).

⁴⁶ Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

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Holiday Island(s): Artistic Mobilities and a Caribbean Festival

Dr Andrew R. Martin
Professor of Music
at Inver Hills College



Abstract

“Cruise to the Isle where they began the Beguine,” proclaimed an enticing 1950s Alcoa Cruise Ship advertisement. Aimed at capturing the imagination of prospective travelers, the advertisement wove a lyric fantasy that described the Caribbean archipelago with flowery prose, wrapped around vibrant graphic artistic illustrations of local Martinique and Guadeloupean dancers. Alcoa surmised that for their prospective customers, the Caribbean was not just a place, but an idea, and the company sought to control the narrative.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Caribbean region, much like the rest of world, underwent dramatic postwar economic and cultural changes. Many Caribbean nations were in the process of shedding their colonial tethers and eager to forge new economic opportunities out of the embers of the former plantation economies of the region.

Image

Brute Force Steel Orchestra
(1952). Author's collection.

Keywords

*Tourism, Mobilities, Carnival,
Steelband, Remade Traditions,
Post-Colonialism, Caribbean
Independence*

Some Caribbean islands—such as Antigua and Barbuda, St. Thomas, and the Bahamas—had brokored in luxury tourism since the beginning of the twentieth century; however, by the early 1950s the government and economic leaders of the Caribbean region sought to leverage their biggest commodities—sun, sea, and sand—and focus on developing tourism.

An early effort to foster more robust tourism came from the Caribbean Tourism Association which, in 1952, sponsored a ten-day festival in Puerto Rico, bringing together musicians and dance troupes from across the Caribbean. The program of music, dance, and mas (masquerade) offered visitors a cultural tour through the archipelago, celebrating each country through its unique “folkloric” artistic heritage. The festival spurred enthusiasm in the region for celebrating Caribbean artistry and would later serve as the model for the current CARIFESTA festival.

The cultural tourism presented at the 1952 Caribbean Festival of the Arts, though, is deeply entwined with American and European cultural tastes and their transoceanic mobilities. As Caribbean tourism resumed following WWII, many Caribbean countries faced cultural reckonings and worked to remake and rebrand elements of their unique cultural identities and heritage festivals (music, dance, Carnival), attempting to create a single Caribbean-wide “island paradise”, that would be ambiguously located but easily marketable by the tourism industry. Later dubbed “Holiday Island” by the Alcoa Cruise Ship company, this newly-imagined pan-Caribbean identity resists modernization, and instead clings to a colonial past while projecting an innocent present. It also marks a shift in the power dynamic for many people in the Caribbean, who saw their government and economic structures shift from colonial power to corporate power in the span of little over a decade.

This study will examine and contextualise the Caribbean Festival of the Arts as a facet of the broader reaches of Caribbean tourism development – especially the influence of American cultural imperialism and Caribbean nation building. In particular, this study explores the work of pioneering anthropologist Lisa Lekis in curating representative Caribbean dance and music participants for the festival as well as the power balance—and subsequent imbalance—created by the organisers of the Caribbean Festival of the Arts who empowered local Caribbean artists to celebrate and foster their heritage while also simultaneously manipulating them to adapt and remake their cultural products into marketable commodities more closely aligned with the island fantasy promoted by the tourism industry.

Introduction

“Cruise to the Isle where they began the Beguine” proclaimed an enticing 1950s Alcoa Cruise Ship advertisement. Aimed at capturing the imagination of prospective travelers, the advertisement wove a lyric fantasy that described the region with the flowery prose, “the Lovely

islands of the West Indies stretch like stepping-stones across the blue Caribbean", wrapped around an artistic depiction of local Martiniquan and Guadeloupan dancers¹. Alcoa surmised that for a majority of their prospective customers, the Caribbean was not just a place, but an idea, and the company sought to control the narrative.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Caribbean region, much like the rest of world, underwent dramatic postwar economic and cultural changes. Many Caribbean nations were in the process of shedding their colonial tethers and eagerly forged new economic opportunities out of the embers of the former plantation and industrial economies of the region. Some Caribbean islands—such as Antigua and Barbuda, St. Thomas, and the Bahamas—had brokered in luxury tourism since the beginning of the twentieth century; however, by the early 1950s the government and economic leaders of the Caribbean basin sought to leverage their biggest commodities—sun, sea, and sand—and focus on developing tourism.

One such early effort to foster more robust tourism came from the Caribbean Tourism Association's Caribbean Festival of the Arts, which

¹ *The art for the advertisements was created by noted graphic design artist James L. Bingham. See Mimi Sheller, 'Cruising Cultures: Post-War Tourism and the Circulation of Caribbean Musical Performances, Recordings and Representations', in Sun, Sea and Sound: Music and Tourism in the Circum-Caribbean, ed. by Timothy Rommen, Daniel T Neely (eds) (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 73-100.*

² *Alcoa Cruise Advertisement, art by James Bingham. This image along with text written by Lisa Lekis appeared in several magazines such as Holiday Magazine starting in 1955.*

was held in Puerto Rico in 1952. This study will examine and contextualise the Caribbean Festival of the Arts as a facet of the broader reaches of Caribbean tourism development – especially the influence of American cultural imperialism and Caribbean nation building. In particular, this study explores the work of pioneering anthropologist Lisa Lekis in curating representative Caribbean dance and music participants for the festival as well as the power balance—and subsequent imbalance—created by the organisers of the Caribbean Festival of the Arts who empowered local Caribbean artists to celebrate and foster their heritage while also simultaneously manipulating them to adapt and remake their cultural products into marketable commodities more closely aligned with the island fantasy co-created and promoted by the tourism industry.

Caribbean Tourism of the 1950s

American and European tourists have a long history in the Caribbean that began in earnest at the start of the twentieth century and greatly expanded following the close of WWII³. The post war period of economic prosperity and the booming American economy (amongst others) saw a newly-emerging middle-class, eager to explore the possibilities of their new-found disposable income. Facets of this growing wealth were reflected in the global expansion of the travel industry which, thanks to the solidified route agreements of the airline industry, could connect patrons to the most remote areas of the world at a moment's notice. With their newfound mobility, tourists became increasingly interested in traveling to island destinations, Hawaii or French Polynesia for example, which were previously only accessible via long ship or cruise ship voyages. The proximity and ease of travel to the Caribbean Islands saw the archipelago emerge in the late 1940s and early 1950s as one of the premier exotic vacation destinations for many burgeoning middle-class Americans and Europeans⁴.

Fueled by the post-war economic boom, the semiotic trappings of this new brand of Caribbean tourism relied heavily on foreign impressions and interpretations of local culture and art. Following the austerity of WWII, the burgeoning American and European middle class was the target market for most Caribbean tourism, and the resulting cultural tourism is thus deeply entwined with contemporary American and European cultural tastes and their transoceanic mobilities. As Caribbean tourism resumed following WWII, many Caribbean countries faced cultural reckonings brought on by the influx of tourists and dramatic waning of colonial industries, such as agriculture (sugar cane, for example)⁵. Many Caribbean countries worked to remake and rebrand elements of their unique cultural identities and local heritage festivals. The vibrant music, dance, and Carnival traditions found throughout the Caribbean were, in some cases, altered while attempting to create a single Caribbean-wide fictitious "island paradise" ambiguously located but easily marketable by the tourism industry. The concept was later dubbed "Holiday Island" by the Alcoa Cruise Ship company, and sociologist Mimi Sheller argues that this newly-imagined pan-Caribbean

³ See Joshua Jelly-Schapiro *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017), pp. 2-20; and Colleen Ballerino Cohen, *Take Me to My Paradise: Tourism and Nationalism in The British Virgin Islands* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 1-36.

⁴ For more information on American post-WWII tourism, see http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/Postwar_years_of_Route66.html *The National Park Service, Christopher Endy, Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Adventures into Mexico: American Tourism Beyond the Border* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

⁵ For more information on the modernization of the plantocracy in the Caribbean, see C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1963).

Image
Alcoa Cruise Advertisement (1955)²



identity was especially potent because it resisted modernization, and instead clung to a colonial past while projecting an innocent present⁶.

Caribbean Festival of the Arts

A prime example of the tourism industry's influence on cultural remaking was in Puerto Rico in 1952, where the Caribbean Tourism Association sponsored a ten-day festival that brought together musicians and dance troupes from across the Caribbean. The Caribbean Festival of the Arts (hereafter Caribbean Festival) featured a rich program of music, dance, and mas (masquerade), offering a rich cultural tour through the archipelago, and celebrating each country through its unique "folkloric" artistic heritage, as identified by festival organisers. According to the official festival program, this included the "history, music, tradition, superstition; Christianity and Paganism; song, dance, color, artcraft [sic] and ingenuity resulting from adversity' the story of many peoples, the story of many races, the struggles of legions of plain human beings; in short the high folklore of the Caribbean Sea."⁷



⁶ Sheller, "Cruise culture," p. 93.

⁷ Anonymous Author, *Caribbean Festival of the Arts: Souvenir Program* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Imprenta Venezuela, 1952), p. 2.

⁸ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, p. 9.

Image

Description of Trinidad, Caribbean Festival of the Arts Souvenir Program (1952)⁸

The cross-regional Caribbean Festival was a novel concept in 1952, and was part of a larger, Caribbean-wide unification movement that would later spark the short-lived West Indian Federation (1958-1962) and serve as the model for the CARIFESTA festival, established in 1972⁹. The theme of unification was central to the Caribbean Festival's attempts to celebrate the diverse music and culture of the Caribbean as a collection of individual countries. According to host Dona Felisa Rincon De Gautier, mayor of San Juan, "from this interchange of old-time songs and dances and stories, will surely come a closer feeling of fellowship among all of us, the countries of the Caribbean. Fellowship based on understanding and sympathy – isn't that just what the world needs today?"¹⁰ Though earnest in their attempt, the fellowship and understanding of culture and art championed by the Caribbean Festival was, despite their efforts, more consistent with that of World's Fairs than organisers might have realised. Following WWII to the 1980s, the focus of World's Fair participants changed from one of technological discovery to one of cultural exchange and globalization. As the connection of the globe in both an economic and cultural sense became self-evident post-WWII, superpower countries such as the United States and Russia sought to promote carefully selected perceived strengths of their culture for international audiences. Scholar Scott Nelson calls these efforts the "Disney performance tradition", and I further suggest that one could pair the Caribbean Festival's program with Disney's EPCOT center in Orlando, Florida, as one in the same, due to their ability to reflect what Nelson calls "the tastes and preconceptions of its day, while still retaining a suitable degree of novelty and authenticity."¹¹

The daily schedule of the Caribbean Festival was filled with parades, concerts, events, expos, fashion shows, dance performances, and handicraft tutorials. Festival organisers referred to the program as a "show of shows" with significant collaboration among the performers of participant nations. Events were held in venues spread throughout the city of San Juan, Puerto Rico and the opening ceremonies, for example, featured a parade from Plaza Colon to Plaza Baldorioty that included torchlight processions featuring Antigua's Brute Force Steel Orchestra, who played on foot, while leading contingents from Trinidad, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Surinam, Guadeloupe, US Virgin Islands and Curacao, in a spectacle reminiscent of Olympic opening ceremonies. After arriving to the Plaza, there was a lengthy Decima dance contest followed by a ceremony to introduce the various dance groups. This was followed by another short performance of steelband music by Antigua's Brute Force Steel Orchestra and dances led by the Geoffrey Holder-led Trinidadian dance troupe. Every evening, the Caribbean Festival featured a primetime concert or performance, followed by grand displays of fireworks. This was followed by street dancing to the music of Antigua's Brute Force Steel Orchestra for attendees leaving the nightly performances.¹²

In presenting a collection of the cultural heritages of the Caribbean, the Caribbean Festival struck a balance between novelty and authenticity, therefore organisers made significant efforts to evoke the lore of the

⁹ John Hearne, *Carifesta Forum: An Anthology of 20 Caribbean Voices*, ed (Kingston, Jamaica: Carifesta 76, 1976).

¹⁰ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, p. 3.

¹¹ Steve Nelson, 'Walt Disney's EPCOT and the World's Fair Performance Tradition', *Drama Review: TDR*, 30.4 (Winter 1986): pp. 106-46.

¹² *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, pp. 17-18.

Caribbean's past while also celebrating and inspiring the region's just, verdant, and prosperous future. Yet, ugly chapters of the Caribbean's story (slavery and colonialism) were omitted, and underwriting most decisions governing the festival and its production was tourism, present and future. Festival executive director Waldemar Lee was frank in his assessment that the idea of celebrating a Caribbean Festival was recognised by the Caribbean Tourist Association as the "most effective joint enterprise to promote the development of the tourist industry in the Caribbean."¹³ The strategy of celebrating the uniqueness of individual countries in order to promote the Caribbean region as a whole was a prevalent theme tracked throughout the newspaper coverage of the Caribbean Festival. For example, the New York Times announced winter travel packages to the region in the same article covering the cultural program of the Caribbean Festival, and the Chicago Tribune meticulously chronicled the Caribe Hilton, Condado Beach Hotel, and other resorts at which festival events were to occur.¹⁴

Lisa Lekis

For the selection and vetting of the performers and cultural products for the Caribbean Festival, executive director Lee relied on Lisa Lekis, an intrepid American anthropologist who specialised in Caribbean and Latin American dance, as artistic director. Lekis and her husband Walter featured prominently as performing artists and teachers throughout the national folkdance scene in the United States. Lisa Lekis was a trained anthropologist and ethnomusicologist—she would earn a Ph.D. in anthropology in 1956—with an eclectic background. Born in Mississippi and raised in Montana, she earned a degree in psychology from Stanford University, attended the University of Chicago school of social work, was a founding member of the California Federation of Folk Dance, and taught courses in Latin American folklore for the American Institute of Foreign Trade. Lekis also worked in advertising and publicity for several large corporations in New York and the American Southwest. From 1950-1953, she worked for the University of Puerto Rico, where she directed the dance program and established an initiative teaching and studying dance in rural schools of Puerto Rico.¹⁶

An inquisitive researcher, talented dancer and dynamic personality, Lekis was dedicated to the study of regional and ethnic folk dances. Determined to bring these unappreciated, unknown, or dying folk dance styles to the public, Lekis followed in the footsteps of pioneering anthropologists Katherine Dunham and Alan Lomax with their attempts at bringing these folk dance styles to the mainstream public. Lekis was also inspired by the efforts of Trinidadian dancer/anthropologists Beryl McBurnie and Geoffrey Holder to bring the traditional dance styles of the Caribbean to the American stage and dance hall.

Following the wartime and post-war boom of swing and big band jazz music across North America, by the early 1950s, Caribbean music and dances were circulating through recordings and dance halls into mainstream "white" America. During this decade, Latin Dance crazes

¹³ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Leslie Highly, 'Caribbean Festival: Puerto Rico to Play Host To Inter-Island Exhibit', *New York Times*, 15 April 1951, p. 255, and 'The Tribune Travelers' Guide: All Caribbean Isles to Join in Huge Fete', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 June 1952, p. H5.



Image
Dancer and Anthropologist
Lisa Lekis (1952)¹⁵

¹⁵ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, p. 5.

¹⁶ This biographical information comes from an unpaginated biography that accompanies the dissertation of Lisa Lekis. See Lisa Lekis, *The Origin and Development of Ethnic Caribbean Dance and Music*, diss. (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1956).

such as the mambo, rumba, pachenga, and later calypso, succeeded in capturing the imagination of the cultural mainstream, enabled by several factors including the wartime memories of W/WII G.I.'s reassimilating back to civilian life, post-war tourism, and anthropologists such as Lekis who scoured the Caribbean, searching for intriguing and culturally important folk dance styles. In 1956, Lekis submitted her Ph.D. dissertation "The origin and development of ethnic Caribbean dance and music", which was based on fieldwork that she had conducted during 1951 and 1952, while preparing for the Caribbean Festival. Her fieldwork further yielded the core research for two books published on the subject of Caribbean dance, *Folk Dances of Latin America* (1958) and *Dancing Gods* (1960).¹⁷

Caribbean Festival Selection Process

The Caribbean Festival featured participant countries from the southernmost Caribbean (Surinam) up north to Haiti and many in between, though precisely how the various countries were selected for inclusion at the Caribbean Festival is unclear from surviving historical records. What is clear, however, is that the process was governed by the economic interests of member nations of the Caribbean Tourism Association and influenced by the US State Department. Though the Caribbean Tourism Association was interested in promoting and preserving the unique cultural products of the individual islands, the primary goals of the Caribbean Festival was to generate media attention and to drive tourism. These dual interests, seemingly mutually exclusive, were intertwined in an effective advertising campaign. The US State Department would later make this type of personal face-to-face diplomacy an essential part of government policy during the Eisenhower presidential administration (1953-1961).¹⁸ Known as the P-Factor, the State Department made it a policy of hiring anthropologists and ethnomusicologists to conduct fieldwork and work on public diplomacy initiatives in developing nations throughout the globe. These field operatives promoted American policy, democracy, and in many cases imperialism, while also generating legitimate, peer-reviewed scholarly research.¹⁹

The organisers of Caribbean Festival, in hiring Lekis to conduct fieldwork research and search out suitable folk music and dance acts for the festival, unknowingly foreshadowed the US Government's effective policies of public diplomacy by several years. Interestingly, Lekis and her husband Walter had aspirations of one day joining the US foreign service and their adventures to the various outposts and backwaters in the Caribbean only fueled their desires for linking anthropological research and foreign diplomacy.²⁰ Yet despite their worldly ambitions, Lisa Lekis, like many Americans of the era, was the first to admit that she knew little of the Caribbean's vast folk dance styles prior to her fieldwork in the region. Moreover, she appears to have fallen victim to many of the mainstream assumptions of the Caribbean which were, mainly, a propensity of grouping the entire basin's countries and their individual cultural expressions together, referring to Caribbean folk dance as a

¹⁷ Lisa Lekis, *Folk dances of Latin America* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1958); Lisa Lekis, *Dancing Gods* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1960).

¹⁸ Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 260-70.

¹⁹ See also Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015) pp. 1-18.

²⁰ Walter Lekis was Canadian and had yet to earn a Green Card at the start of the couple's fieldwork in 1951. Ray Funk interview with Andrew Martin (10 August 2021).

²¹ Lisa Lekis, 'Choreography in the Caribbeans', *Dance Magazine*, July 1952, p. 18.

"wild jumble of rumba, ruffled shirts and maracas."²¹ Nonetheless, Lekis was a dedicated anthropologist who truly believed in the importance of discovering, studying, and celebrating folk dance styles of the world's peoples. She would later argue in a scholarly article when describing the Caribbean Festival that it was important for dancers and artists of different countries and cultures to explore one another because, "An interchange of ideas helps clarify an awareness of cultural differences and similarities, and may possibly continue to stimulate the expression of a people to whom dance is very vital and subtle means of expression."²²

Lekis held the position of artistic director at the Caribbean Festival from 1951 until 1953, and leveraged this to its fullest advantage. She used the post to facilitate the extensive fieldwork throughout the Caribbean, which was necessary in order for her to create a comprehensive survey of the region's many folk dance cultures. Her drive to document unique folk dances in the Caribbean was informed by her work in rural Puerto Rico, where she realised that through assimilation and modernization many of these traditional, especially rural, dances were being lost. The greater Caribbean region was slower to modernise, in her estimation, and Lekis noted during her fieldwork that, "frankly, my own feeling is that this island [Puerto Rico] is poorer in material than any other of the West Indies group," and she further lamented that unfortunately, "so much of the ethnic music of the island [Puerto Rico] is gone or going fast."²³

Puerto Rico served as a home base for Lekis from which she travelled to the various countries in the Caribbean, conducting fieldwork for two to three weeks at any given stop. Member nations of the Caribbean Tourism Association sent local agents to meet Lekis at each stop and help ascertain local folk music and dance suitable for the Caribbean Festival. Finding local talent and unique folk dance cultures was easy; but, identifying a professional group capable of performing to a consistent standard was more challenging. Add to this the need for travel documents/papers such as passports, visas, etc and one can see the complexity of the situation at hand. The anthropologist in Lekis was, nonetheless, committed to documenting all of the folk dance cultures encountered during fieldwork trips and she carried along a video and audio recorder with her to each stop. These field recordings were intended to familiarise Caribbean Festival organisers with the incoming groups; however, despite Lekis' limited skills as a recording engineer, many of her audio recordings were of a quality high enough to be collated and issued by Folkways Records as the album *Caribbean Dances* in 1953.²⁴ The recording devices sparked curiosity from many of the dancers and musicians in the field, as the *Miami Herald* noted, "Everywhere she went during the weeks she travelled in the Caribbean Miss Lekis and the idea of the festival were greeted with enthusiasm. The only hesitancy came from a remote group of bush negroes [sic] in Surinam, who eyed Miss Lekis and her recording machine with considerable doubt."²⁵ The casual racism notwithstanding, as of 1952 very few researchers had traveled through the remote reaches of the Caribbean, fewer still with audio/video recording equipment, and a woman no less, making the newspaper's depiction, though editorialised

²² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²³ Letter from Lisa Lekis to Harold Courlander, November 25, 1952. This document is held in the Moses and Frances Asch Archive, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington, D.C.

²⁴ Walter Lekis, and Lisa Lekis, *Caribbean Dances*. (New York: Folkways FP 6840. Smithsonian Global Sound for Libraries, 1953).

²⁵ Horace Sutton, 'Caribbean Dance Carnival Ready', *The Miami Herald Miami, Florida*, 20 July 1952, p. 72.



from an imperialist American perspective, somewhat convincing. Still, despite Lekis's attempts to comprehensively document folk dance and music of specific countries, her primary duty to the Caribbean Festival was to identify the most representative folk dance and music of a given island's culture in order to further assess its marketability by the Caribbean Tourism Association.

Culture Winners and Losers

The 1952 Caribbean Festival in Puerto Rico succeeded in showcasing many important music and dance styles of the Caribbean to a wide audience. The festival was, however, not without unintended consequences as it simultaneously empowered Caribbean artists while also manipulating them to adapt and remake their cultural products to more closely align with the island fantasy envisioned and promoted by the tourism industry. A subtle side effect of the type of festival cultural tourism presented at the Caribbean Festival was the ways in which agents of the tourism industry picked de facto winners and losers among local cultural products and performers. In singling out specific and purportedly "unique" local culture ensembles, festival organisers ignored the cultural pluralism of the region and instead reduced the cultural diversity of individual islands to their hand-picked representatives. The festival program further highlighted these choices, noting that the "kaleidoscopic combination engendered in each island is different and unique " and further "Curacao and Aruba have their bula waya; Trinidad its calypso; St. Croix its Jig player; Puerto Rico its bomba,

Image
Prince Family Clown Mas Troupe and Brute Force Steel Orchestra, Antigua 1952.²⁹

²⁶ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, p. 2.

seises and plena; Haiti, all its mysterious voodoo; Jamaica its strange rituals; Guadeloupe and Martinique their exciting beguine; Surinam its exotic East-Indian and primitive bush negro rhythms; Antigua its steel band and clown dancers; and Grenada its unique cocoluter."²⁶

The above comments further indicate how the Caribbean Festival took a complex set of musical genres and cultural practices with roots and interconnectedness across the Caribbean archipelago and reduced and purified them into singular "typical" genres that, in their eyes and ears, were characteristic of the diversity of each individual island. By immobilizing and encapsulating "the folk" in time and space, these cultural practices/artifacts became more easily consumed by American and European tourists.²⁷ Posterity suggests that festival organisers succeeded in their efforts, as foreign tourism has steadily increased in the Caribbean for the past seventy years. Detractors, too, were many, and some such as Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul famously argued that the nations of the Caribbean were, "in the name of tourism, are selling themselves into a new slavery."²⁸

Reducing a country and its people to a single representative art form is problematic at best, and one need not look any further than the clown mas and steelbands of Antigua and Barbuda as examples. Clowns can be found in Carnivals throughout the Caribbean, as well as in the diaspora in New York, Toronto, and London. With their jingles and reflective metals and mirrors dotting their costumes, the jovial clowns were some of the most beloved Carnival characters for the people of Antigua and Barbuda during the 1950s, especially Christmas celebrations in the early and mid-part of the decade and Carnival celebrations starting in 1957.

Cherished as they may be in Antigua, clown mas has served an important role for people throughout the Caribbean diaspora since the nineteenth century.³⁰ In the Trinidad Carnival, for example, clowns were often partnered with bats, and sometimes Pierots, who recited verses from classical literature (Shakespeare, etc.) and these characters would later morph into today's jab jabs.³¹ Caribbean scholar Kim Johnson has long argued that transported Africans across the Caribbean diaspora and the globe used any opportunity to practice masking, drumming, and dancing in processions. The combination of these mediums in practice was, and continues to be, important for their collective psychological survival. He notes, "hence places like Congo Square in New Orleans, the Catholic countries had Carnival and the Protestant countries had Christmas or Cropover, Junkanoo in Jamaica and Bahamas, St Kitts had mummings at Christmas, other islands used Easter."³² In Trinidad and elsewhere, clowns are one of several dozen Carnival mas characters and their popularity ebbs and flows every few years, based on the public tastes of the current generations of masqueraders.

In Antigua, clowns were often paired with bulls, (another traditional Carnival mas character) creating a contrast between the whimsy and macabre that embraces the bacchanal of Carnival. Notes Antigua Jim

²⁷ Andrew Martin and Mimi Sheller, 'Kaleidoscopic Combinations': Artistic Archipelagoes and Touristic Mobilities in the Making of the Caribbean Festival, paper delivered at Archipelagic Imperial Spaces and Mobilities Workshop, (University of Leipzig, July 16 2021).

²⁸ V.S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 210.

²⁹ 'Clown Mas,' *postcard, produced by the Tourism Association of Antigua and Barbuda, 1952.*

³⁰ Daniel J. Crowley, 'The Traditional Masques of Carnival', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 4. 3/4, (March, 1956 June, 1956, p. 218.

³¹ Kim Johnson, *Email correspondence to the author* (March 23, 2021).

³² Kim Johnson, *Email to the author* (March 24, 2021).

³³ Andrew Martin, Interview with Jim Nanton (April 22, 2021).

Nanton, "I was terrified by bulls as a child, but seeing them also meant that clowns would be close behind—and they were pure joy."³³ Clown mas characters of Antigua also enjoyed the frequent accompaniment of steelbands in a spectacle for the senses. The charm and fantasy of the experience caught the attention of Lisa Lekis, who was enraptured by the clowns and steelbands of Antigua during her fieldwork trip to the island in April of 1952. As noted above, Lekis was searching for cultural acts to document and promote for the Caribbean Tourism Association's upcoming Caribbean Festival in Puerto Rico, and chose a clown dance troupe led by the Prince family (Roland and Sydney Prince) and the Brute Force Steel Orchestra to represent Antigua.

Antigua's brand of clown mas dancers was also celebrated for its "uniqueness" at the Caribbean Festival, which reads as racialised code for their adaptation of European dance elements. In contrast to their counterparts in other Caribbean islands, Antiguan clown mas dancers often added old English and Scottish country dances (performed in what was described as a "West Indian" Fashion) to their repertoires of traditional African/Caribbean-based clown-type dances. This made them more accessible to practitioners of American folk dancing keen to try something a little more exotic. Caribbean Festival organisers called the Antiguan clown dance troupe "truly fascinating" and "Antigua is developing its own folklore—a movement of the people themselves to establish their own tradition of dance and music." Festival organisers, however, were also quick to note that the folklore of Antigua is perhaps more accessible for the American cultural mainstream than one might think, noting "the primitive rhythms and art patterns have crept into our [American] everyday life to a much greater extent than we realise."³⁴

In 1952, while the steelband movement struggled with street violence and acceptance in Trinidad—its place of origin—the Caribbean Festival organisers saw the potential of the instrument's sound and image as a marketing tool. Steelbands were first introduced to Antigua in 1946 by oil workers travelling to and from Trinidad. The first Antigua Panorama steelband competition was held in 1949, and innovative and talented Antiguan panman swiftly developed steelpans in the 1950s that, in some cases, surpassed the quality of their Trinidadian counterparts. Steelbands quickly established themselves as an integral component of the tourism industry in Antigua, and Caribbean Festival literature highlighted the reformed reputation of the Antiguan steelbands movement, noting that it was "once disreputable and ostracised is now becoming more respectable and is recognised as one of the few new musical discoveries of the modern age."³⁵ In an attempt to further distance them from their counterparts in the greater Caribbean, organisers continued to praise the Antiguan steelband movement, stating "in Antigua the steel band [sic] has been particularly well developed" and "the Brute Force Steel Band from Antigua is one of the finest of this new medium."³⁶

That steelband, the other Caribbean artform singled-out by Lekis, was presented as most-reflective of Antiguan culture and society is

³⁴ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, p. 23.

³⁵ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, pp. 23-24. *In 1957 Antigua and Barbuda created a Carnival during the summer months (opposite its traditional place during Lent) to boost offseason tourism and commemorate emancipation of Antiguan slaves on August 1, 1834. Included in this Carnival was an annual Panorama competition, further cementing the connection between steelbands and tourism on the island.*

³⁶ *Caribbean Festival Souvenir Program*, pp. 23-24.

somewhat peculiar. Since its humble beginnings in Trinidad during the late 1930s, the steelpan has steadily developed into a finely crafted instrument and serious musical art form. While it is true that in Trinidad and Tobago steelpan is very much a form of cultural expression and community identity, one cannot deny that for the past 70 years the global growth and development of steelpan and steelbands outside of Trinidad and Tobago—both the musical and sociological trajectories—is substantial. Other Caribbean islands, Antigua and Barbuda for example, embraced the instrument as early as the 1940s, creating vibrant—and not at all insular—musical scenes dotted across Caribbean archipelago. Presently, the unmistakable steelband sound has firmly asserted itself as the representative music of the Caribbean. Steelbands are ubiquitous among major tourist attractions across the globe from Disney World (Florida) to London to Tokyo, and steelpans can also be heard in popular music from rock to hip hop to western classical orchestras.

The roots of this global steelpan takeover were well underway in 1952 and Lekis could have quite as easily chosen Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, and perhaps Guyana—each with substantial steelband scenes—as worthy holders of the steelband crown. As noted above, Lekis recorded steelbands during her fieldwork trip to Antigua in the Spring of 1952. One of the steelbands she recorded was the Brute Force Steel Orchestra performing "Mambo #5," and this track was later issued on the record *Caribbean Dances* in 1953 by Folkways Records – one of the earliest known commercially released steelband recordings. The Brute Force Steel Orchestra was a fine ensemble, but they may, at the time, only have been the third best steelband in Antigua. By 1952, Trinidad and Tobago boasted well over one hundred steelbands.

Despite the fact that benna, a calypso song precursor, and calypso were arguably more culturally important to Antiguans, the Prince family clown dance troupe and the Brute Force Steel Orchestra represented Antigua and Barbuda at the Caribbean Festival. These two artforms (clown mas and steelband) were touted as the country's unique artistic heritage because they could be distilled away from other forms of cultural expression. Steelbands and clown mas were visually and aurally stimulating, distinctive, and reproducible, and thus highly prized for their marketing and branding potential. Since the 1950s mas, calypso (benna), soca, and steelband have competed for the soul for most Antiguans; however, the Caribbean Festival ensured that only clown mas and steelbands competed for the spoils of the present and future tourist industry in the country.

Conclusions

Following the completion of the Caribbean Festival in 1952, Lisa Lekis returned briefly to her work in the dance department of the University of Puerto Rico. She left the post in early 1953, taking a job as an advertising consultant for Alcoa Cruise Ship Co., in New York where she employed many of the tools and techniques learned in Puerto Rico the years prior. Alcoa advertising created by Lekis ran constantly in major American

newspapers during the 1950s and early 1960s, and was heavily influential in establishing the holiday island perception many Americans had, and still have, of the Caribbean as a tourist destination. As impactful as it may be, Lekis' work for Alcoa should not, however, exclusively define her legacy, as she was a pioneering anthropologist in nearly every aspect of her career. As a female operating in a largely male dominated field, she succeeded in documenting Caribbean music, dance, and cultures – some of which are now lost to time. Despite her prolific output and accomplishments during the 1950s, Lekis shifted her attention away from academic projects in the 1960s, focusing on teaching dance throughout the West Coast, including places such as the Santa Barbara Folk Dance Conference. Despite her relative obscurity among current scholars in the field, Lisa Lekis's key role in the formation, artistic direction, and curating of the Caribbean Festival of 1952, numerous scholarly articles and publications—including two monographs, earned doctorate in anthropology, and *Caribbean Dances* album released on Folkways records, combine to construct a curriculum vitae practically unrivaled by any anthropologist active during the 1950s.

The Caribbean Festival of 1952 was, in hindsight, a collection of elements of racial capital from throughout the Caribbean region. By selecting and subsequently promoting specific marketable cultural products, the Caribbean Tourism Association succeeded in producing new modalities of racial capitalism through its promotion of Caribbean tourism, dance, music recording and visual arts, which let tourists bring "a little bit of the islands home" from their vacations.³⁷ By simultaneously empowering and disempowering local artists, the 1952 Caribbean Festival serves as an important example of the ways in which the mobilities of tourist and the influence of the foreign tourism industry shaped the local and regional cultural products of many Caribbean nations. Considering that currently (2022), benna is nearly gone from Antigua and Barbuda while steelbands are thriving, many of these influences continue to shape the present and future Caribbean.

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Revelry, Inclusion, and Disability in the Street Carnival of Rio de Janeiro

Dr Andrew Snyder
Integrated Researcher in
Brass Band Movements



Abstract

In Rio de Janeiro, the vibrant world of the diverse ensembles of "street carnival" known as "blocos" is distinct from the world-famous samba schools and has been expanding exponentially in the last two decades. Central to the ethics of many of these blocos has been a commitment to being participatory, free, democratic, and inclusive. These blocos have diversified considerably in the last decade along lines of race, class, and gender. However, until recently, a notable absence has been a focus on inclusion of people with disabilities. One of the major "alternative" ensembles of street carnival, Orquestra Voadora, has sought to rectify its previous lack of explicit attention to disabled people, seeking to combat ableism in its carnival practices.

In 2018, the group formed a working group of band members, accessibility specialists, and disabled participants, aiming to make their carnival practices more inclusive. Recognizing that "disability" is

a word that encompasses many diverse realities, the band has sought to adopt general strategies to make their events more accessible and also respond to individual needs, responding through accommodations but working toward a broader culture of accessibility. In 2021, Voadora produced documentary videos of this work along with interviews featuring the testimonies of disabled participants. Based on discussion of the project as presented in the videos and building on nearly a decade of work on Rio's street carnival, I explore in this article Voadora's initial strategies to militate for a more accessible carnival future.

Introduction

Carnival has many animating myths—it is ideally subversive, democratic, and an experience of freedom—but perhaps none is aggressively defended in Rio de Janeiro as the belief that carnival is a space of free participation for a wide variety of diverse communities. In contrast to the samba parades, which are expensive events to witness, street carnival blocos—mobile, participatory, music ensembles—are indeed financially free, as they happen in public space at no charge and, theoretically, anyone is invited to participate. However, saxophonist André Ramos, who helps organise the efforts of Orquestra Voadora's bloco to include people with disabilities (pessoas com deficiências), reflects, "I dispute this idea that this carnival that we here in Rio call 'free' (livre), the street carnival, is really free... Imagine that everyone you know is going to street carnival and having fun, and you can't be there because that space has excluded you in some way" (2021). As he writes in the declaration of the broader accessibility project with which Voadora acts in partnership, "carnival's essence is its democratic nature, but for the ideal to be truly achieved, it must be equally accessible to all and include people with disabilities" (Ramos et al. 2020).

Indeed, from the perspective of people with disabilities, street carnival, an enormous community of blocos not associated with the city's famous and elaborate samba schools,¹ has many barriers to access. Voadora's gigantic bloco, which plays on the Tuesday of carnival, typically involves around 300 musicians playing brass and percussion under Rio's baking sun for an audience that grew every year until the pandemic, and numbered over 100,000 in 2020. This multitude is jammed with revelers who aim to get as close as possible to the chord (corda) that separates them from the musicians, where they can better hear the music and witness the spectacle that includes stilt-walkers, puppets, flags, standards, and a wide variety of imaginative costumes (fantasias). Ramos explains that, in such a setting, a person with a disability might have to put in a Herculean effort to be part of the event. He muses that one might react upon seeing a person in a wheelchair at a crowded bloco with "a first line of thought that is 'how cool that guy is here,' and yes it is very cool individually. But there is nothing cool about something that requires a major overcoming of barriers (superação) to be there—that really is something that the collective has to change. We have to find a way to welcome these people" (2021).

Image

Orquestra Voadora's carnival bloco in 2012. Courtesy of André Ramos.

Since 2018, Orquestra Voadora has developed an “accessibility group” (grupo de acessibilidade) made up of band members, participants with disabilities, and accessibility professionals. This group works in partnership with the project “Acessibilifolia,” organised by the Projeto Um Novo Olhar (The New View Project), which fights for accessible arts education. The project is supported by Brazil’s National Arts Foundation (Funarte) and the School of Music at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro where Ramos was completing a Master’s degree in music as of 2021. “Acessibilifolia” is a neologism that unites the Portuguese words for accessibility (acessibilidade) with “folia,” or revelry, and the project seeks to promote accessibility in various forms of celebration throughout Brazil.

In alliance with Acessibilifolia, Voadora’s accessibility group has sought to make logistical and social changes in the broader world of Voadora in order to make participation at all levels more accessible to people with disabilities, including playing an instrument, conducting sound engineering, participating in event organization, and celebrating as a folião/foliona (audience member or “reveler” in masculine and feminine). Though these efforts to increase accessibility are still in initial stages, Voadora’s project highlights the right of people with disabilities to cultural engagement – in particular in forms of cultural engagement that are volatile and relatively uncontrolled, distinct from spaces of “high culture” such as concert halls and museums, where some progress at accessibility has been made. Camila Alves, one of the participants with disabilities in Voadora, draws attention to the importance of making liminal events accessible beyond everyday life, suggesting, “this is an important initiative for us to push for the idea that people with disabilities can be in all spaces. We need more than medical actions... but places of culture, happiness, and festivity” (Projeto UNO, Episode 7).² In an effort to “provoke people to think about the accessibility or lack thereof of cultural and educational spaces as well as the city as a whole” (Ramos et al. 2020), Ramos produced a series of short documentaries, containing testimonies from people with disabilities who participated in Voadora, called “Inclusion and Revelry” (Inclusão e Folia), which was also the first action of the larger Acessibilifolia project. Based on the testimonies of these participants emerging from these videos and an interview with Ramos, this article examines Voadora’s strategies to make carnival more accessible, as they developed before the pandemic temporarily prohibited the continuation of their activities.

For Voadora’s accessibility group, such an effort requires structural changes and a collective confrontation with ableism (capacitismo), what disability rights activist TL Lewis defines, in the first part of a working definition, as “A system that places value of people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity” (2021). In a text produced explaining the project, Voadora argues that, rather than festivities making the world more free for people with disabilities, “the ableism and inaccessibility that characterise life in cities are reproduced and often accentuated in festivities” (Ramos et al. 2020). Only a conscious action

¹ *Though Rio’s important samba school tradition has received the bulk of scholarly attention, the resurgent street carnival festivities are increasingly being studied as well. Rio’s street carnival blocos have experienced a momentous “revival” since Brazil emerged from its military dictatorship in 1985 with an ever-increasing number of blocos appearing in the streets, numbering over 500 in the last carnival of 2020 before the pandemic hit (see Snyder 2022 and Fernandes 2019). More broadly, carnival in Brazil is a national obsession—with particular fervor in Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife, among other locales—and Voadora’s project seeks to use their project as an example to this broader carnival world.*

² *This is a point Alves develops in her book *E Se Experimentássemos Mais* (2020) in which she theorises “aesthetic accessibility” specifically in the context of making museum spaces more accessible. More broadly, there are various attempts globally to make festivals more accessible and create festivals focused on disability (see Snyder and Mitchell 2008 for only one example), though the subject of disability and festivity is very poorly studied. Voadora’s efforts at including people with disabilities in such a raucous event as Rio’s street carnival is without parallels in the literature I have surveyed.*

of structural transformation can combat ableism in festive practices. As disability studies scholars broadly argue, disability, like other social categories such as race and gender, is a social category created by an ableist society that normalises exclusive practices and discrimination based on individual capacities.³ For Ramos, deconstructing these norms requires constant attention to how a group like Voadora has “naturalised” culturally constructed oppressive practices. For him, this work is a condition for creating a distinctly anti-ableist carnival culture.

I argue that, beyond promoting the rights to culture of people with disabilities in an ableist world, Orquestra Voadora rejects a separatist model⁴ of disability arts and music,⁵ one that Alves describes as encompassing “events tailored to people with disabilities who knows where, with a ton of people with disabilities” (Projeto UNO, Episode 1). Instead they embrace an inclusive model, one that prizes accessibility but is not only inclusive at the margins, and rather demands structural changes for all involved, even if this a goal that remains to be fully realised.⁶ Ramos characterises the participation of people with disabilities in Voadora as a “meeting” (encontro) of people with diverse experiences and needs, and he stresses that this is not a “perfect meeting—it’s one that has many questions remaining to be resolved—but it is a powerful encounter with a great deal of potential” (Projeto UNO, Episode 1).

One way that this “imperfection,” or incompleteness, might be understood is based on the distinction between accommodation. This generally refers to an individualised change granted to a person with a disability, presuming a burden of proof of the disability, and access, which provides structural changes aiming to make a space accessible to a person with a disability, without needing to request accommodation. Much of Voadora’s initial work has been based on finding solutions to inclusion for particular people based on their individual needs in ways that might be considered closer to accommodation, but these steps point towards a larger goal of accessibility, represented in the project name Acessibilifolia. An ultimate goal for the bloco could be understood as akin to the concept of “universal design,” a term coined by Ronald Mace to describe “barrier-free” environments that are useable by anyone (Mace et al. 1998). Embracing the belief that festive experiences can resonate beyond the ephemeral experience, they hope that participants’ experiences in these events will make broader changes in the social culture of Voadora, participants’ personal lives, and festive events in Brazil in a broader sense. Ultimately, Voadora rejects a zero-sum framework whereby the gains of rights by people with disabilities might be seen as limiting those of non-disabled people. They suggest instead that these efforts to promote access will create a more inclusive, empowering, and caring culture for all participants to thrive.

Though the data for this research was collected virtually during the pandemic, the article is also based on my longstanding ethnomusicological research since 2013 on Orquestra Voadora and Rio’s larger street carnival community of which the group is a part.⁷

³ *Growing out of the disability rights movement, the interdisciplinary field of disability studies has offered a sociopolitical analysis of disability as a constructed category and critiqued the medical interpretation of disability as deficit and disorder to be normalised (see Davis 2016; Shakespeare 2016).*

⁴ *This project can, for example, be distinguished from Bloco Senta que Eu Empurro (the Sit While I Push Bloco) founded in 2008 in Rio, which is specifically created for people with disabilities, as opposed to Voadora’s goal of including people with disabilities into a space not designed solely for them.*

⁵ *The intersection of disability studies and music/performance is a growing focus of research (see, for example, Howe et al. 2016; Bakan 2015a, 2015b; Lerner and Straus 2006; Straus 2006, Sandahl and Auslander 2005).*

⁶ *Dylan Robinson might call the addition of marginalised people at the margins “additive inclusion” in distinction to actions that dismantle and renew social structures (2019).*

⁷ *See Snyder (2022; 2021a; 2021b; 2020; 2019a; and 2019b).*

As a trumpet player, I played with Voadora and many other brass bands and blocos, and I taught in Voadora's music classes (oficinas) that prepare the musicians to participate in the annual carnival bloco. This research that was particularly intense during doctoral fieldwork from 2014 to 2016 when I, by contrast, did not witness disability to be a foremost concern to participants. An early draft of this article was distributed by Ramos to those who participated in the documentary, and they were encouraged to give feedback which was incorporated into the final version in a process of "dialogic editing" (Feld 1987). My thinking on anti-ableism has been strongly influenced by the anti-ableist organizing work of my wife and our relationship with her brother, who has Down syndrome. I do not (currently) identify as disabled, and I experience many privileges in the world as a white, cis-hetero, US American man.

Orquestra Voadora: Band, Bloco, Class, Movement

Orquestra Voadora was founded in 2008, and first participated in street carnival in 2009, which it continued to do annually until the pandemic's unprecedented cancellation of carnival in 2021. Influenced both by the revivalist brass blocos of street carnival that played traditional Brazilian carnival genres and by eclectic styles of brass and popular music from New Orleans to the Balkans, Voadora's repertoire is an eclectic mix of music that is a unique Brazilian twist on "world music" (Snyder 2019a). "Orquestra Voadora" (The Flying Orchestra) can refer both to a presentation performance band of twelve members, who play gigs professionally, and to a participatory bloco. The latter is theoretically open to anyone that has an instrument, along with the desire to learn the bloco's repertoire and perform it at carnival in a massive spectacle. The bloco rehearses every Sunday afternoon for about five months before carnival, and in 2013 the band also opened an oficina, or band-led class of around 300 participants that runs throughout the year on Tuesdays, devoted to instrumental instruction and open to beginners (2019b).

The bloco and oficina led to an exponential expansion of new musicians and bands that play a wide variety of repertoires in Rio's public spaces. This community grew to be an increasingly definable movement that came to be known as neofanfarrismo, of which Orquestra Voadora is one of the most popular, professional, and influential representatives. As brass bands from other countries, especially France and the United States, began to visit the city beginning in the 2000s, the movement increasingly networked with the transnational network of alternative brass bands that had consolidated around the HONK! Festivals of Activist Brass Bands, a festival network that had emerged in the Boston area in 2006 and spread around the world (Snyder, Allen, and Garofalo 2020). In 2015, the Carioca movement held the first annual HONK! Rio Festival of Activist Brass Bands, which gave the movement a definitively activist identity. The HONK! festival network has since spread around Brazil, with five HONK! festivals in the country. The neofanfarrismo movement has defined its avowedly leftist activism in diverse ways, including participating in protests, playing for free in public space, and



Image
Voadora's weekly oficina.
Photo by author in 2014.

adopting inclusive strategies that promote the musicianship of those with no experience in music, especially those of marginalised communities.

In line with the HONK! ethos, in a musical sense, the band has offered a critique of the concept of ability from its inception, but one initially limited primarily to non-disabled people. Unlike the earlier stage of brass ensembles that revived traditional repertoires of Rio's street carnival, not all of Voadora's band musicians were professionally trained players. The bloco they manage is formed by a wide range of interested musicians, from professionals to amateurs to beginners. By rejecting the notion that a certain kind of musical ability is required to participate in Rio's iconic festivity, the band and movement opened the door to many people engaging in musical projects for the first time.

However, this revision of musical ability did not necessarily offer access to marginalised communities, as Voadora and the neofanfarrismo movement are also manifestations of one of the more privileged communities in Rio de Janeiro – what many referred during my fieldwork as the "alternative middle class." Many neofanfarristas are university-educated, the movement is much whiter than other popular scenes such as the samba schools, and it has been largely male-led. As the movement took on an increasingly activist identity, it has diversified impressively in the past decade – all-women groups were born out of Voadora's oficina as the ranks of female musicians have exploded, and brass band projects from favelas and peripheral areas of the city have been founded (Snyder 2022). One could see Voadora's suggestion that the inclusion of disabilities is a logical extension of the band's interest in creating an evermore diverse, democratic bloco, and therefore living up to a conception of a truly free carnival. Until 2018, however, disability rights were largely not on the community's radar – a problem that Ramos associates with a broader neglect of the issue in the left's focus on class, race, and gender.

Voadora's Accessibility Group

In the introduction to the documentary series "Inclusion and Revelry," Ramos explains that the band had always attracted a wide range of people and saw itself as facilitating "carnival's power of encounter" between diverse communities. They had also always had the participation of people with disabilities in their bloco and oficina in small numbers, and they were welcomed in a "natural and spontaneous way," but without a conscious, collective approach. In 2018, the group resolved to take a "structured action" (Projeto UNO, Episode 1). Founding the accessibility group, they began to conduct interviews with participants with disabilities to better understand what kinds of barriers to access and participation they faced. They started to think about logistical questions for their carnival bloco and pedagogical questions for their oficina. They put out public calls specifically inviting people with disabilities to take part, and explaining that they were willing to put in the work to make carnival an accessible space for those who wanted to participate.

A principal preoccupation in this endeavor has been thinking about how to increase the "representivity" (representividade) of people with disabilities in Voadora's social sphere, that is, how to break what Ramos calls the "vicious cycle of exclusion" that occurs when the lack of people with disabilities becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. How to create a space in which people with disabilities are not "excluded a priori? Since there is no one with disabilities in a [given space], a person with disabilities might believe that any such events are exclusive to begin with" (Ramos 2021). To break the cycle, the accessibility group agreed that this effort must be led by and in coordination with people with disabilities themselves, in alliance with the well-known slogan associated with the disability rights movement, "Nothing about us without us." The non-disabled participants of the band could not effectively arrive and apply their own frameworks for accessibility without them.

In this work with people with disabilities, they aimed to move from the realm of the abstract to concrete actions. For Ramos, this shift from the abstract to concrete had a personal dimension, marked by the birth of his niece in 1999, who has the rare chromosomal condition of 5p-, or "cri du chat":

"When she was born, I felt remorse—how could I not have thought about this before? Why was it that I only started to think about this when it happened to person close to me?... Unfortunately we live in a situation of such great exclusion [of people with disabilities] that when there is no one in your radar, it remains abstract." (2021)

In this case of carnival blocos, similarly, as Ramos explains,

"You can imagine what a person with a disability might need in the abstract, but this changes completely when this person is a concrete person that you know and have exchanged with...These days, it's no longer something abstract, like 'what do we do if there is a person with a disability at the bloco?' No, that person is Fernanda, it's Antônio." (2021)

As the numbers of people increase in participation, they hope that presence will build on itself exponentially, bringing concrete questions to be resolved and accommodated in order to make the space more accessible.

This concretization has been especially important in the group's thinking about the diverse actions necessary to welcome people with such a diverse range of needs. Disability, as Ramos explains, is a word that "encompasses many different realities" (Projeto UNO, Episode 1)—visual, auditory, physical, locomotive, cognitive—and "within each of these disabilities there is also an individual with their specific capacities and needs" (Ramos 2021). Building an accessible carnival culture requires both general structural changes—including physically changing the spatial layout of carnival events or creating legible materials through sign language, braille, audio captioning, and reading text aloud—as well as responding to individual needs. In their text explaining the project, it is clear that this aspiration to make carnival more accessible does not stop short at accommodating a few people who might be interested in taking part, but an entire structural transformation of the group's roles and activities in search of accessibility:

"Making carnival accessible means facilitating the participation of people with disabilities in all the spaces that make up this environment. We must guarantee their representivity not only in the audience of carnival, but equally in the organization of blocos and parades, in the production of music, dance and other forms of art, as well as in the world of work created by carnival." (Ramos et al. 2020)

But how are these lofty goals manifested in practice?

The documentary video series entitled "Inclusion and Revelry" that Voadora released in partnership with Um Nova Olhar offers the perspectives and testimonies of some of the people with disabilities who have been most involved in these efforts. The videos themselves are meant to be accessible to people with auditory and visual disabilities. Each video opens with the visuals explained simultaneously by the voice over: "At the center of the white screen, the title in braille appears and letters flash 'Um Novo Olhar.' Confetti on the screen. At the top of the screen emerges in red 'Accessibilifolia.'" The video often pauses so that the voice-over can describe each person's physical features and their surroundings as well as footage of the interviewees participating in carnival and Voadora's bloco. Audio captioning in Portuguese appears at the bottom of the screen along with a sign language interpreter, and all written text, such as the credits that appear at the end, is also read aloud. The rest of this article examines the testimonies and perspectives offered in the videos regarding Voadora's aim to create an accessible carnival bloco.



Image
Screenshot of documentary series intro showing braille translation.

⁸ See Maior (2015) for context on the history of disability rights in Brazil.

Inaccessible Carnival

The documentary testimonials describe the diverse ways that carnival is an inaccessible space for people with disabilities. Connecting the physical attributes of the street to the practices of street carnival, the interviewees argue that inaccessibility is not just limited to the blocos' social and cultural practices, but to the physical architecture of the street and the city more broadly. Foliãna Fernanda Shcolnik, who has low vision, describes Rio de Janeiro as a city where the "sidewalks are badly kept, and there are holes in the street and varying levels [of pavement]" (Projeto UNO, Episode 3). Foliãna Camila Alves, who is blind, argues that "street carnival brings with it the mark of inaccessibility... Street carnival is as inaccessible as the street is inaccessible" (Projeto UNO, Episode 3). The diverse forms of urban accessibility interact with the varying needs of each person with a disability in different ways. For Shcolnik, infrastructural problems greatly hamper her vision at night, while a bloco in a hilly neighborhood such as Santa Teresa is particularly inaccessible in a wheelchair.

Saxophonist Heitor Luiz, a wheelchair user, notes that in a city as unequal as Rio "accessibility is widely variable from neighborhood to neighborhood, which has a lot to do with socioeconomic conditions." Indeed, accessibility equipment can be expensive, and middle-class neighborhoods with more accessibility infrastructure, including those that line the Bay of Guanabara (such as Ipanema and Copacabana), are generally flat, offering radically different challenges from the hilly, poorer, and not up-to-code favelas that jut up between middle-class neighborhoods. Orquestra Voadora, like much of the street carnival, remains predominantly an expression of the city's middle classes, despite its many efforts to diversify, and the interviewees with disabilities themselves appear to be primarily middle-class and towards the whiter end of Brazil's racial spectrum. Without broader structural efforts that radically remake the architecture of the city and the extreme inequalities that are woven into it, cultural practices like those of the city's blocos are limited in their impact. They seek to better navigate inaccessible architecture over which they have limited power, while broader political fights push for structural advances for disability rights.⁸

However, if based in an unexamined ableist worldview, the blocos' cultural practices, as Ramos argues, can also accentuate an already

inaccessible city. Interviewees speak especially of the problems of crowding at street carnival events, which, unlike the samba school parades which have assigned seats,⁹ involve a mostly entirely uncontrolled competition to get closer to the music. Joana Vargens recounts that when her daughter Maria, who uses a wheelchair, was smaller, she went to participate in Voadora in the early days of the bloco, but "it got really mega big, really crowded, tons of people, and I basically quit. I told myself, no, it's impossible, it's a hassle. And there were two years when we just didn't even stay in Rio during carnival" (Projeto UNO, Episode 5). Finding a place away from the crowded areas left them far from the sound and energy of the event, and even then taller people would block Maria's view. André Rola, photographer of carnival events among others and father of Bárbara who also uses a wheelchair, relates that they had to "force" themselves to be present at carnival events, what Ramos describes as "overcoming barriers."

Crowding is, of course, also a problem for everyone – I myself often felt almost crushed in masses of bodies at street carnival events, unable to make my way through a crowd to exit. One way that blocos have sought to reduce crowding is limiting information to the whereabouts of events – relying on word of mouth and secrecy instead of public advertisement. But Ramos argues that if "you parade with a secret bloco and you don't tell anyone except your friends that you will roll at 4:30 in the morning at a distant location, you will create something limited to only a small sector with your group of people" (2021). In other words, this ableist strategy of withholding information to make more accessible events creates other barriers to accessibility.

Making Orquestra Voadora (More) Accessible

Voadora's first public and major action to include people with disabilities, resulting from the formation of the accessibility group in 2018, was to create an "accessibility section" (ala de acessibilidade) for 2019 carnival bloco. "Alas" refer to the differentiated sections of carnival parade groups, which reach a high degree of complexity in the samba schools in particular. In Voadora, there are alas for each instrument, as well as for stilt walkers, sound car managers, and other participants. The aim was for this accessibility section to be primarily for foliões with disabilities who wanted to enjoy the experience in an uncrowded space inside the chord, that differentiates the bloco from the audience with others accompanying them as needed. Joana Vargens and her daughter Maria, who had stopped participating in carnival as described above, heard about the ala and participated in 2019. Joana relates with delight,

"It was the greatest carnival...we were inside the bloco, next to the sound, and we managed to dance, participate, and move around. To be with all the people in tranquility...Maria loved it...she was glued to the music and the vibrations, enchanted with the stilt walkers."

(Projeto UNO, Episode 5)

⁹ Outside of the scope of this article, the samba schools have been working to make their events more accessible as well, which is in some ways an easier endeavor due to higher level of organization and control of their events. The high level of chaos of street carnival, for many a crucial element of the event's carnivalesque authenticity, presents a different array of accessibility questions to be resolved.

Foliona Camila Alves, who is blind, likewise reflects emotionally about her experience participating in the accessibility section: "To be in the middle of the band, amidst the stilt walkers, to be among other people with disabilities too, which I hadn't experienced in carnival until then, this was all very powerful—this sensation of belonging in carnival" (Projeto UNO, Episode 2). She was accompanied that carnival by three friends who had pledged to help her experience the blocos, but because of Voadora's accessibility section her experience there was distinct from other spaces where her friends had to make sure to help and protect her amidst the carnival chaos: "to be with them inside the chord, have fun with them, and not be in this alternation of who is going to have fun and who is going to take care of me, this was also very powerful" (Projeto UNO, Episode 2).

The accessibility section received similar praises from other interviewees, but after the first year the accessibility group raised new questions about having a distinct section for people with disabilities. They worried that this practice reinforced separation, even segregation, between participants with disabilities and the non-disabled. But the question of mixing foliões into band spaces brought other logistical concerns. Ramos notes that if he, as a saxophonist, were to enter the space of the percussion, it would cause disturbances: "the 'free space' of the band isn't really free... circulation is already quite limited" (2021). Beyond this issue, the diversity of needs of the foliões with disabilities shifted this practice of maintaining a separate accessibility section somewhat in the following year of 2020 when foliões with disabilities were dispersed more according to their needs and interests.

In line with the goal of integrating people with disabilities in all spaces of the bloco, Voadora has sought to provide musical education at the oficina to people with disabilities, preparing them to participate musically in the bloco. These efforts have required the oficina teachers to combat the ableist naturalization of musical pedagogy concerning how the body supposedly should interact with an instrument to produce music. Heitor Luiz, who is interviewed in the film and uses a wheelchair, chose the saxophone to play in the bloco and became Ramos's student. Ramos describes his work with Luiz as a change of the prism through which he



Image
Screenshot showing celebrations at Voadora with sign language and captioning.

sees the world, as he shifted his standard pedagogy in his work with Luiz: "Instrumental pedagogy," he argues, "presupposes a normalization of the body. You have to be open to new and different ways to hold the instrument, how to breathe. You have to be open to another conception of the instrument, sound, and space" (2021). This insight reflects a desire not only to accommodate his pedagogy to Luiz, but to create a more accessible pedagogy for all.

The participants with disabilities offered other practical advice to Voadora's planning group to accommodate them. Luiz, for example, gave the simple idea of planning to have access-support people ready to accompany wheelchair users from the metro to the bloco practice areas and parade starting point. Folião Antônio Bordallo, who uses a wheelchair and participates in Voadora, argues that blocos can develop not only accessibility sections but use the internet to facilitate participation in them so that people with disabilities can sign up to participate.

Beyond general and individualised responses that can facilitate the participation of people with disabilities, the interviewees argue that it is necessary to develop a culture of accessibility among participants that is fundamentally receptive to the diverse needs that can never be fully anticipated. Foliona Fernanda Shcolnik, who has low vision, refers to the need for Voadora to develop "attitudinal accessibility" (acessibilidade atitudinal), which

is the question of people's attitudes. For example, crossing the street is a situation when it is great when people help, or at least offer help. You can ask, 'do you want help?' 'What do you want me to do?' Often people don't feel they know how to help or even how to ask—'how would I know how to help a blind person? I don't know what to do.' Well, you can speak to them normally. They might not see, but they will talk to you. (Projeto UNO, Episode 4)

Attitudinal accessibility aims to shift the responsibility for accommodation from the individual person with the disability to the collective culture's concern with reducing barriers to access.¹⁰

"Everybody Wins with Accessibility"

As described above, the strategic effort to include people with disabilities follows several other efforts to diversify Orquestra Voadora, which began as a primarily middle-class, whiter, and predominantly male group, but has in the 2000s become much more diverse along lines of class, race, and gender. The interviewees connect the accessibility group's work to a larger preoccupation with the intersectional inclusion of all marginalised communities. This effort connects to the second part of TL Lewis's working definition cited above which continues by arguing that ableism promotes

¹⁰ Shcolnik's insight points towards disability justice movement leader Mia Mingus's concept of "access intimacy," "that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs... Disabled people's liberation cannot be boiled down to logistics. Access intimacy is interdependence in action" (Mingus 2011).

constructed ideas [that] are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and 'behave.' You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. (2021)

Similarly, the interviewees suggest that the creation of an accessible bloco does not only improve the lives of people with disabilities, but rather, as Fernanda Shcolnik argues, "everybody wins with accessibility."

Camila Alves notes a "synchronicity" in Voadora's 2019 carnival parade, which was the first after the formation of the disability group and the year the bloco made a public homage to councilwoman Marielle Franco. Franco was a Black, lesbian member of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSoL), who had been assassinated the year before, possibly by those allied with extreme-right president Jair Bolsonaro, in power since 2018. Her image appeared all around Rio as the left mourned her loss, and she became the face of persistent resistance to Bolsonaro's dismissal of the rights of marginalised communities. In 2019, Voadora placed a massive banner of her face on their sound car, bloco participants were encouraged to visually commemorate her, and Franco's partner, Mônica Benício, spoke to the crowd in remembrance of Franco and her work, ending her speech with the fullhearted claim that "carnival is resistance" (Projeto UNO, Episode 6). Though Voadora had already been preoccupied with diversification and activism, the 2019 carnival was a heightened space for these concerns when, as Alves explains, "we were talking a lot about the rights of minorities and resistance" (Projeto UNO, Episode 6). Heitor Luiz notes that with "all the discourses against feminism, against Black people, against the LGBT+ movement, the responses impact the movements of people with disabilities as well" (Projeto UNO, Episode 6).¹¹

Beyond this intersectional convergence of movements fighting for the inclusion of diverse marginalised communities within the world of Orquestra Voadora, Fernanda Shcolnik argues that accessibility



Image
Screenshot of Fernanda Shcolnik using cane walking with small group of Voadora musicians.



Image
Franco's partner speaking to Voadora bloco from sound truck above Franco's image.

¹¹ This intersectional analysis points towards a framework of "disability justice," which considers disability and ableism in relation to other forms of systemic oppression, such as racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. Conceived by queer, disabled women of color, disability justice critiqued previous disability rights movements such as those that led to the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 for their limited focus on physical disabilities, often leaving aside intellectual disabilities. Similar to the depictions of second wave feminists by third wave feminists, they argue that the advocacy of previous disability rights movements has often been limited to people with disabilities who have other privileged racial, class, and gender identities (see *Sins Invalid* 2019).

has positive, practical impacts on everyone involved. For example, a broken sidewalk, as many are in Rio, might be an insurmountable barrier for a person with a disability, but it is also a danger and burden for anyone trying to use it. Antônio Bordallo notes that if blocos construct corridors through crowds of foliões for people with disabilities to securely reach the bloco, these could also be used by anyone in case of "emergency or someone having a difficult time with heat or alcohol" (Projeto UNO, Episode 4). Throwing trash on the ground, as many blocos leave a littered landscape in their wake, is especially disruptive for the mobility of people with disabilities, but it is a problem for everyone.

For Shcolnik,

When you have an accessible space, it is a democratic space for everyone because accessibility doesn't harm people who don't have disabilities. It often helps them too because accessibility is not only for people with disabilities, but for a mother with a stroller or an older person with a cane... This is good for everybody.
(Projeto UNO, Episode 6)

A More Accessible Carnival Future

Orquestra Voadora's work to include people with disabilities has initially been focused on creative solutions to promote the integration of diverse peoples in physical space. Of course, as with any effort to physically draw people together in space, Voadora's accessibility efforts—along with almost all other activities—were drastically disrupted by the pandemic, which descended in 2020 right after the second carnival parade since the accessibility group's formation. In response, at the time of writing in late 2021, Voadora had shifted its oficina to an online format and produced online material for the 2021 carnival show, but their activities have been very restricted. Initially, Ramos explains, they had aimed to "use the period of isolation to further plan accessibility strategies... [as] all the debates about carnival after the pandemic... must include people with disabilities in the discussion" (Projeto UNO, Episode 1). Inevitably, however, he relates that the experience of the pandemic has been profoundly un motivating. Despite some accomplishments towards this goal, the pandemic "hasn't been a moment as full of potential that we thought it could be" (2021), as everyone

has experienced crisis, death, and deprivation from the sociality of musical community that can make thinking about carnival feel less relevant.¹²

As with so many elements of life, the accessibility group's efforts that are still going have shifted online. Though many blocos and bands have simply ceased operating, others have produced live, virtual performances. Though several have started to use sign language interpreters, Ramos noticed how few of these videos used any accessibility materials and has publicly pushed other blocos to add them to online materials. Ramos has continued to work with Um Novo Olhar to make Voadora's carnival materials more accessible, including launching the video documentary series examined here. Voadora aspires to motivate every bloco in Rio and Brazil to develop strategies to include people with disabilities. Using the resources of the internet and the opportunities of virtual communication during the pandemic, they aim to spread the idea of making such cultural activities accessible beyond the Carioca carnival community through the various global communities of which they are a part, such as the HONK! Festival circuit, which links bands like Voadora all over the world in alliance with diverse conception of musical activism.

Many elements of increasing accessibility to people with disabilities in Orquestra Voadora remain to be confronted. The video series prominently features people with physical and visual disabilities, but it does not engage with people with cognitive disabilities. Another Carioca world of people with disabilities is almost entirely absent due to the socio-economic and racial divides that characterise life in Rio de Janeiro. Specific strategies that can truly make Voadora a welcoming space for people with disabilities to play any role remain works in progress. Voadora often begins by learning how to accommodate individual people before conceiving of how to build a more accessible culture for all.

Nevertheless, in its militancy for the cultural rights of people with disabilities, Orquestra Voadora's accessibility group is ultimately focused on planting the seeds of a more accessible world in a much more ample sense than disability rights groups often strive for in their primary focus on the logistical. When Voadora takes back to the streets, they will surely build on these efforts, but they are very clear that they are only in an initial phase of inverting what Ramos calls

the cycle of exclusion. As we bring more and more people together, this will increase the representivity of people with disabilities, this will feed on itself, and so I see a possibility of advancement, of an improvement much greater than where we are now. (2021)

¹² See Snyder (2021b) for more on how street carnival participants adapted online tools during the pandemic, using sign language interpreters to increase accessibility.

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PERSONAL NARRATIVES AUTO ETHNOGRAPHY

Storying self
in culture



Personal Narrative of The Festival of Roce: Gender, Kinship and Premarital Celebrations among Konkani Speaking Catholics

Malvika Lobo

PhD student at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India

Abstract

The ceremony of roce (translated: coconut milk) is a premarital tradition practiced by Konkani speaking Roman Catholics residing in the western coastal regions of South India.

Aiming to teach and transmit values and customs in the community, the festival involves bathing the bride and groom with coconut milk, dancing, exchanging gifts, and reciting Voviyo songs. Voviyo are Konkani folk songs that have been passed down for generations, exclusively sung—and often, composed—by women in the community. The tradition of singing folk songs during the ceremony remains alive among the Konkani Catholics today, and have not changed significantly over the years. This study discusses the rituals performed at the roce ceremony from an ethnographic interpretive framework, including the traditional food served, the celebrations and the exchange of specific, significant objects, in order to understand the kinship that underlines community practices. It presents a literary and anthropological analysis of Voviyo that have been collected and translated through extensive fieldwork. By unearthing female subjectivities, gender roles and relationships propagated through these Voviyo, the paper argues that the ceremony of roce represents and reproduces notions of femininity based on the patriarchal and religious practices that dominate women's lives in the community. The study maps recurrent gender images, defined gender roles and the community's expectations of an ideal marital relationship, as described through these songs.

Introduction

Voviyo are traditional marriage songs, sung by the members of the Konkani-speaking Catholic communities residing in and native to the western coastal region of South India. These songs are predominantly performed during marriage

ceremonies, which are significant occasions in the community that span across two days. This article is an ethnographic study of the premarital ritual of roce, and explores the festivities and songs that are exclusive to and associated with it, also providing English transliterations and translations of these Konkani folk songs, documented through fieldwork based on Gladys Quadros' (2017) collection. The analysis on these songs will provide the foundation for an investigation into the intersubjectivity and community of Konkani-speaking Catholics. The songs recited primarily for the bride are selected and viewed through the lens of gender roles and their valuation in the community, with reference to traditional gender relations and notions of womanhood reflected in the songs.

Roce is a Konkani word referring to the milk extracted from the pulp of dried harvested coconuts, which is then applied to the bride or groom. The ritual begins with the Christian liturgical prayer recited in Konkani, with the roce of the bride and groom held on the same day in their respective houses. The ceremony is preceded by the head of the ward that the bride and her family belong to, attended by a priest and, occasionally, nuns. Wards are sub-communities divided and assigned by the church, determined by the residents' geographical locations. The bride or groom is anointed with holy oil, and the audience then take turns to pour coconut milk on the bride. In recent times, these ceremonies have also included the exchange of gifts, as the family members bring their agricultural produce and place it on the stage. The process takes place through a theatrical skit, where the family members dress up in colourful traditional costumes, pose as other family members and carry gifts such as arecanuts, vegetables and fruits, while merrily singing and dancing, while the aunts of the

bride grate dried coconuts on the stage to mark the commencement of the festivities. After the roce is poured on the bride, the relatives gather to share a traditional meal and join in the dance celebration of baila. The food usually consists of pork cooked in bafat powder (a traditional mixture of ground spices, used to make meat), pulses, lamb curry, idli/dosa and chicken cooked in coconut paste, accompanied with a locally-grown variety of red rice, with celebratory alcoholic beverages—specifically whiskey and beer—also served. Alessandro Falassi (1987) suggests that several constituent parts (referred to as ritual acts or rites) are 'quantitatively ever-recurrent and qualitatively important in festive events' (p. 4). The festival of roce is not only a religious rite of passage that marks the transition between virginity and marriage, but also a rite of conspicuous display and consumption (Falassi 1987, p. 4), wherein objects that are of importance to the community are displayed, invoked and consumed, usually consisting of crops such as coconuts, arecanuts and other vegetables. The ceremony is marked by colourful displays of flowers, grand clothes, gold ornaments and singing and dancing, while elders of the family—who are the guardians of the culture and authority figures—lead the festival through the Voviyo, which helps to propagate the shared values of the community. Though the festival of roce is religious in nature, it is performed outside an institutional setting, such as in farms, houses and backyards.

Methodology

This article draws from my own experience of the Konkani Catholic community and experiential data I gathered in 2019. I was born into, and grew up in, the Konkani-speaking Catholic community of Mangalore, located in the southern state of Karnataka, India, where a variety of festivals are celebrated throughout the year, including the harvest festival of rice and the anniversary of the church. Every wedding celebration in the community is accompanied by the pre-marital ritual of roce, and the tradition of singing folk songs during the ceremony remains alive in the community today. The community is tight-knit, and weddings are grand, large-scale events, therefore over the years, I have heard the music of roce ceremonies firsthand. The data for this study was gathered after two rounds of fieldwork, where I actively listened to the recitation of these songs, which I collected by conversing with the women who performed them during the

ceremonies, transcribing them in real-time (using Devanagari, as Konkani does not have its own distinct script). Through one of the singers that I interviewed, I was acquainted with Gladys Quadros' compiled book of songs and prayers, 'Kanim Ghale The!' (2017), which I went on to translate along with the Voviyo collected from the women that I observed during my study. The songs gathered are an integral part of the Konkani Catholics' culture, and contribute to the understanding the ritual practices in the community. Collected from the Udupi-Mangalore region of Karnataka, the songs can also be found in other regions in South India in Goa and Kerala where roce is performed, since the ritualistic practices are interlinked.

Orality

Studying oral histories is an essential practice, and is used as a means of preserving the Konkani language and the lived experiences of its people. The practice is primarily designed to capture the voices of ordinary people and their everyday lives, described by Kathleen Blee (1998) as 'people who, historically speaking, would otherwise remain inarticulate' (p. 334). Ruth Finnegan (1977), defines oral literature as 'the means through which the people's culture, ideologies and belief systems are propagated, with the purpose of teaching and maintenance of social control' (p. 44). These aforementioned songs are repeated and are traditionally preserved through memory, serving as an expression of cultural identity. Even though they are documented in the local dialect, with every new generation they are under the threat of being lost and forgotten. The Konkani language lacks its own scripts and is iterated using the Devanagari, Kannada or Malayalam script, depending on the region. As a result, scholarship on Konkani literature is minimal. Manohar Sardesai (1982) has extensively studied novels and poetry written in Konkani, noting that riddles are innate to Konkani folkloric tradition among Konkani Catholics, visible in the cryptic idiomatic language of the Voviyo, however studies on oral Konkani folksongs remain sparse (p. 118).

Murphy (1978) states that 'use of oral literary forms as communicative strategies in social interaction' (p. 113). These are central to the study of oral literature in the 'social context and involve the key anthropological topics of cultural meaning and social structure' (ibid:113). The technical notion of 'speech community'

aptly constitutes a group of people 'who habitually interact with each other linguistically that defines the social unit' (ibid:115-6). Oral literature is defined as a set of speech genres that constitute parts of the linguistic resources of the community that uses a specific language to communicate. By conceptualizing 'speech communities advocated for the study of oral history that further aids our understanding of the relationship between social life and the language' (ibid, p. 116) by the community.

Orality is an essential feature of the Konkani Catholic community. They have a rich tradition in music interwoven with religion, and have a wide variety of songs for many occasions, including harvest, festive seasons and weddings. These are predominantly performed by women, but it is not uncommon in some families to see men joining in. In fact, during the sacrament of marriage and the vopsun divnche—when the bride joins the bridegroom's household at the end of the marriage ceremony—the songs are sung by the entire community. The vopsun divnche ceremony is the official departure of the bride to her husband's family, wherein a male elder or a father figure of her family gives her "away" to her husband's family. The husband's family pledges to keep the girl happy and forgive all her missteps.

During the ceremony of roce, the singing crowd is made up of a large group of women, consisting of one lead vocalist while the others stand behind the sitting bride, while the attendees pour the coconut milk. The Voviyo are very short. Each song consists of two parts: the first being one or two lines recited by only the lead vocalist, followed by a refrain sung by the whole group, and sometimes the audience too.

Rhyme is an important characteristic of the Voviyo, with all songs recited using a very similar, specific tone and tune. Each Voviyo contains a pair of rhyming words. The repeating refrain begins with the word 'vove', followed by one of the rhyming words used in the first sentence and the subsequent repetition of the second part. The short nature of these songs and the rhyme is not accidental, as they are easier to memorise.

An interesting aspect of the Voviyo, as is evident from the translation, is that there does not need to be a linear transition in the meaning from the first line to the second – the first line exists for rhythm and rhyme only,

to convey a specific observation made based on people's daily lives or a general observation of the surroundings. The audience, in their reply, repeats the second line.

The second line is the most important, as it conveys a message directed to the bride or the groom and, occasionally, to the other community members. This repetition, seeks to evoke feelings for the bride, who will soon move out of her own house to live with her husband's family in her conjugal home. It is not unusual to see the bride crying and praying, particularly as these messages often acknowledge deceased loved ones.

The collected Voviyo in this article are divided into two categories: The Songs of Guidance and The Songs of the Dead.

The Songs of the Dead:

1. आप्रोस पोसुथ टे णिड्ल मुयन्थ ननःया
Remember your dead elders

एक उतार जाण्या तुज्य पूवज्यक
Peace to them, may god grant.

2. इतले सक्कड असों होकले कितले तुका उणे?
What is the use of having everything, dearest bride/groom?

अवय बापय नतले तुजे रते: जेने:
Without your father and mother, your life is empty

4. मंडूर मेज़र घल्ल्ली गॅडी
Arranged on the table is a flower pot

सरगार घाल्या धिंबी बप्यन होकले तुज्य
Offered in the heavens are prayers of your dead father that are well thought.

5. सरगार असल्या बपाय कित्ये तुका उणे
Oh, Father of the bride praying in heaven,

होकोल दीता ढेणी अत्या मीस
On earth, your daughter attends a mass for you at seven.

6. मेज़र देवर्ला एक वोडलो धिल्लस

There is a glass kept on the dining table

सरगार बोरेल्ला नाव होकले तुज्या

In heaven, your ancestors' names are written on marble.

7. सारगरच्या वाटेक आड असा रुक
The way to heaven is blocked by a tree

एक काड दुख अजिएक तुज्या
Shed a tear for your dear departed grandmother

8. बापय ना मुनोन होकले नाका कोंकु चिंता
Don't you worry about your dead parents,

बापय सरकी मान दिया भाव होकले तुका
Your brother will bless you in place of your father

9. घरा आईल्ल्य सावंक दे तू होकले वाइन
To the guests at home, dear bride, serve wine,

सरगर असल्या बोहन उडस कर होकले तुज्या
For your dear departed ancestors, you pine.

10. सकाली कदल्ली फुला बावल्ली
The flowers we have picked for your roce ceremony have withered

सरगर तवून पवल्ली होकले रोसाक तुज्या
Oh, look, dearest bride, the ceremony is attended by the departed.

The Songs of Guidance

1. आयिल्ल्य साइर्यंक बोरे मुक्नोन होगोल
Praise the relatives who visit your house

शेज़ार मोगाल तुज्या गुणाखल
Through good behaviour gain a good name.

2. पोदा वे लि पोद वे र्सावे लवि र्स
The girl from the neighbourhood knows how to sing

सदा शे कय ते र्स टूज्य कुंभुनत
Make sure you recite the rosary for your elders without fail.

3. लगी मावडों माहणुन सदा तेय वसनाका
Do not visit your hometown even if it is nearby

घराचे कःबर बहिर सगनाका
In your in-law's place, do not gossip and do not spy.

4. सक्कड काम करून मगिर तिक्के बोस
After finishing all the work, make sure you get adequate rest

माय मवान सोड्ल्यर कुलरा बोस
Obeying your dearest in-laws is for your best.

5. आमच्या घोटयांत सुबरोनीचे झोत
In our cowshed lie a lot of brooms

संगलों सत मवाक होकले तुज्य
To your father-in-law, oh bride, you must always speak the truth.

6. आमच्या घोट्यंथ गाव असा गाय
The cows in our shed are plenty

चार पाँस बुगी जाय होकले कुतमंथ तुज्या
Make sure you have at least four or five children

7. यजमानेच्या अंगार उदोन घाले चीतल
The vessel cleaned twelve times needs to be washed once again

रंदक जाय नितल मयंक तुज्या
Your mother-in-law, oh bride, wants everything to be very clean.

8. आमच्या घरा मूकार साँलू गेलो कोंकनो
The worker is passing in front of the house

काम संगीनत्यर माँव गलति देण्डो
Your father-in-law will be angry if work is not given by rule.

9. बितर गल्ली मन्द्री बयर वोरनिका
Don't pull out the mat that is on the side

पेंश्च पोडलर माइक सोडिनाका
Never desert your mother-in-law when she is sick

10. अमचा घरा पअतल्यन वोड एक पज़ बरा

- Behind our house lies a huge boulder, dear bride
- पोयले भाज्र होक्ले मावक तुज्या
Your father-in-law for twelve days, expects everything fried.
11. खोल्या बितर खोलो कसूले चो खोलो
Behind our house, there are plenty of trees
- सकडवारनि बोरो होक्ले देर तुजो
Tremendous hunger is what characterises your brother-in-law.
12. मीसाक वतना शव्ल सोडूनाका
As you attend mass, do not forget your dupatta
- मवाक दूक पवयनका
Similarly, do not forget to care for in-laws.
13. रुकर असल्लो अंबो दाधव्न पयिे वंक नाका
Trying to ripen a mango forcefully is in vain
- विंगड रव्या मुहण होरे ताक शेके यनका
Do not incite your husband into staying separately.
14. वोयले घर तुका सकेले, घर मका
Lower house is yours; Upper house is mine
- एका बायच्या ऊतका कातिर जगदनका
Do not fight for the water from the same well tomorrow.
15. यजमाने च्या कंदयर विडून घेल्ली चीठल
Do not jump on the roof of your house lady
- रंदाप जाय नेथल मवाक होक्ले तुज्या
Your father-in-law prefers that food cleaned and cooked freshly.
16. खोलया भितर खोलो कसूले चो खोलो
The plants planted behind our house have given pend
- सकडवारवी भूक सड होक्ले देरक तुज्या
Your brother-in-law, dear bride, is always hungry.
17. मत्यान्थवन पोठा रोस होक्ले तुज्या
Coconut juice is flowing from your head

गोरवांक पोस होक्ले तुज्या नोवे घरा
The cows are waiting for you in the shed.

In most religious practices, spoken word is integral to ceremonial and devotional life. In stating the relationship between the oral word and the sacral, Walter Ong (1982) suggests that the 'interiorizing force' of the spoken oral word relates to the sacral in a very special way, and speaks out the concerns of human existence (p. 72). In this context, the constituted framing for the ritual of the roce is religious in nature, despite not taking place in a religious site.

The Festival of Roce

The roce is as important as the marriage ceremony itself, as not only is it an integral part of the community members' socialisation, but the Voviyos that it contains can have huge religious sentiment to Konkani Catholics. The roce ceremony begins with the bride and groom's religious anointing. The ritual is liturgical, with Voviyos often containing Catholic prayers, communal prayer and interpretation of the gospel, evoking the past tradition of Christianity (Stephenson 2015:80). Simultaneously, it is also a ceremonial practice, celebrating a version of a civil Christianity that involves other elements such as dancing, drinking, eating, theatrical mimicry and performances. The roce is symbolic of a 'vernacular religion that incorporates in it what fixed liturgical marital rituals fail to express' (Magliocco 2014:2).

Roce is a purifying ritual, where the bride and groom are symbolically cleansed as coconut milk is poured on them by the guests one by one, taking place separately, in their respective households. A group of selected relatives from the bride's family attend the groom's roce and vice versa, as this is an act of extending hospitality to the guests to welcome them into the family. The coconut milk pouring symbolises a bath of purity, in which the bride and groom are rid of their virginity as they enter the new phase of life in marriage. In 'What is Social in Oral Poetry?', Samuel Schreger (1998) explores the relationship between oral history and social reality, claiming that oral narratives are full of messages on social realities (p. 285). Since these narratives are sung from memory, they assist in preserving the community's tradition, and propagate age-old cultural values from one generation to the next.

In 'Songs Of The Dead', deceased ancestors play a significant role in the culture of the Konkani Catholics. The songs call out to ancestors to attend the ceremony in spirit, while also recounting memories with loved ones who have passed. Each member of the community is considered significant, with special Voviyo composed if the bride or groom have lost close relatives. These ancestors serve as role models to the bride and groom, who are called upon to continue their legacy.

The songs that I have chosen convey two types of messages. 'The Songs of the Dead' contain nostalgic laments that remember the bride's ancestors and her relatives who have passed, and hope to receive blessings from them. They serve a dual purpose: firstly to pay respects to the dearly departed and acknowledging their spiritual presence in the ceremony, and secondly as a recollection of the bride's childhood and the time that she spent with her family.

'The Songs of Guidance' have the singular purpose of guiding the bride on how to perform a multitude of tasks in her new household. These songs also signify each family member's specific desires and expectations, as well as their individual characteristics to give the bride an idea of what her life in her conjugal home will be like with her new family – which the bride must respect. The reprise and rhythm serve as a form of emphasis on the messages communicated to the bride through the Voviyo.

Among the community members, parental authority is scared and the ceremony takes place with the parents' consent. The Konkani Catholics are a traditional patrilineal family, and the woman is required to move to the husband's house after her marriage. The marriages take place among the members of the same community and, in most cases, the bride or groom's region is not of importance as long as both belong to the Konkani Catholic community. The well-defined rules of the roce and the celebrations that follow reflect the community's communal values.

The Mangalorean family is traditionally a patriarchal monogamous family, headed by the oldest male. The 'Songs of Guidance' speak about the bride's transition period as she prepares to move from her natal home to her new conjugal home, where she must reside until her death. In her new house, she is expected to respect her mother-in-law and father-

in-law and tend to them unconditionally. To make the transition easier, the songs highlight the good nature of her in-laws. The bride can only visit her maternal home during her pregnancies and cultural festivities, once she finishes her duties at her husband's home. Her stay in her husband's house comes with specific duties assigned to her, including cooking, household chores, childrearing, looking after her elderly in-laws, instructing the workers on the fields and helping with agricultural activities. She is also instructed to impress her relatives with her good nature, and is urged to maintain high standards of cleanliness. Her eating habits are also monitored, as she is required to eat only once the older family members have been served and taken care of.

The festival is a combination of the community's cultural values and religious beliefs, which are heavily interlinked. The rules of the roce are dictated by local elders of the community, and institutions such as the Catholic Sabha. Such institutions gather information and monitor the ceremony, to make sure all the cultural practices are followed according to the mandate prescribed. A participant mentioned, however, that young people are changing the tradition – for example, now the groom can be seen attending the bride's roce, and vice versa, while traditionally this should not be allowed. Institutions are taking steps to make sure they keep such changes in check, and certain guidelines are not violated. The practice of roce is supplemented by prayers directed by the respective church, and the cultural practices are performed based on the advice of family's elders, who will have witnessed countless ceremonies. The host of the ceremony often asks the public to refrain from mirth and merriment during the blessing and prayer, requesting that the audience wait until the end, when Bollywood and Konkani songs are played, before they begin to dance. I noticed that the cultural practices such as the exchange of commodities, singing, dancing, and recitation of certain jovial Voviyo were more causally performed, and had an element of fun to them. During the more religious aspects, such as the blessing of the food served and the recitation of communal prayers, the audience engaged themselves by joining hands, closing their eyes and reciting them silently.

Family is a hugely important part of the ritual, and this sentiment is reflected in the songs recited. Family is revered in the community, and the songs reiterate the

importance of keeping this unit together by living in harmony and peace. Traditionally, there are specific roles for men and women, where the man is the provider and the woman takes care of the household. The Voviyo explain that performing these roles will ensure a harmonious relationship among all family members, reminding the bride to 'behave like a woman' and that she must wear a shawl on her head. There is also a focus on her procreation, and she is encouraged to bear multiple children. The woman is asked to continue the family by taking care of her household, raising their children to observe all the values reflected in the Voviyo. These Voviyo become a roadmap, dictating the woman's life within the community.

The traditional bride follows the messages communicated through these Voviyo, as they resonate with the traditional teachings taught since childhood in the family household. The general assumption is that by following these Voviyo, the bride can have a fruitful and happy married life, however these values are deeply in line with the patriarchal nature of the community. For the most part, the women are encouraged to confine themselves to household activities and cater to their husband's family members, prioritising their needs over her own. However, with changing times and the rise of nuclear families, many women no longer follow some of these rules. Women prioritise their needs, are financially independent and vocal, and are active participants in decision-making in the family. Despite that, these songs continue to be recited in every Konkani Catholic marriage ritual, and most of the messages conveyed in the voviyo remain unchanged.

Summary

There are plenty of other roce to be studied and translated, such as the Voviyo recited during the application of the roce, the wedding, religious Voviyo of prayer and the anointment with holy oil. I have tried to preserve rhyme in my translation, though sometimes this cannot be maintained in English in order to avoid the complete meaning and authenticity of the Voviyo being compromised. The Voviyo highlight the patriarchal nature of the community, and as a researcher I noticed that it disseminated different expectations on brides and grooms. Interviews with several elders also indicated that the roce of the

bride tends to be grander than the roce of the groom. Through most of the women are becoming self aware and opting to not follow some of the Voviyo, the region has witnessed the birth of conservative religious circles that call for a return to patriarchy, and perpetuate the idea of a restricted notion of 'womanliness' and family. Further studies could study the influence of religious groups on roce.

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A Review of UK Carnival 2022: A Personal Narrative

Rhonda Allen

Former Director of the Sheffield Carnival and international Carnival judge

"...in both the Leeds and the London carnivals, costumes are worn by people of all shapes and sizes, and the aesthetics standards are mainly judged according to the artistry of the costume, rather than the beauty of the wearer" (Connor and Farrar 2004:265)

The 2022 carnival season in the United Kingdom has been a busy time for many carnivalists in the Caribbean diasporic community, having moved from online and virtual events and returned into the public space. The utopic feeling of being able to socialise outdoors with others, being able to hug, laugh, dance, whilst observing and sharing the sights, listening to the musical sounds, taking in the smell of Caribbean food cooking at the food stall, the colourful costumes and the crowds is, in itself, everything that encapsulates and celebrates what carnival means to me. I felt that I needed a refill of those moments and the atmosphere, and so I attended a few carnivals this year.

In the carnival sphere I wear a few different hats: masquerader, judge, organiser, even playing pan (musical instrument), and supporting big and small bands with making their costumes. My other persona as a carnival costume judge (as both a spectator and participant) was equally exciting, acting as a judge in Preston. I enjoyed seeing the people come out to Leeds and Huddersfield to support the carnival, particularly after such a challenging past two years and—iif that was not enough carnival for one enthusiast—I attended yet another event: this time the samba festival in Liverpool. To wrap up my carnival season tour, I attended a live music performance. Admittedly, I am a die-hard soca fan and could barely contain my excitement at seeing and experiencing soca artist Bunji Garlin in Manchester.

It was an exhilarating feeling to be back in costume in Luton as a masquerader, and the thought of wearing a costume again brought me so much excitement. The night before performing in Luton I was anxious,

because I still enjoy the euphoria or adrenaline rush of wearing a costume and seeing the reaction of the audience, as I dance and parade behind the music truck playing soca music. My costume portrayal was an interpretation of peace, love and unity for a sickle cell organisation in the UK, and was all white – a white headpiece, adorned with white feathers, embellished with beautiful and sparkling beads that sparkled in the sunshine, with a white top and tabard, leggings, arm and leg bands, and a white dove in flight as our backpack. The designer, who was the queen of our section, wore a costume themed 'peace', displaying a white dove with a red beak, flowing white sleeves, white trousers, and a magnificent headpiece similar to the one I wore.

Through my personal experience, I will now explore a few things that I noticed in the various cities I visited. Some were attention-grabbing and empowering, others frustrating and disappointing. Based on my experience wearing a costume and as a carnival judge, I noticed some troupes (bands) were able to deliver creative and colourful designs that had a theme and a focus, however, others perhaps could have done a bit more. For example, I felt that some bands seemed to



Image Luton Carnival 2022, courtesy of the author

have been grouped together as one troupe, with little thought about different themes, and some costume ideas and design demonstrated either a lack of time, imagination or creativity beyond simply feathers and beads.

In Luton there were adults and children showcasing their costumes, and we had to battle with the weather elements—rain, cold and then hot sunshine—throughout the event. The audience in Luton consisted of varying ethnicities and ages, lining the streets as they cheered on the troupes while we paraded through the city centre in costumes of varying colours, sizes, heights and weights. I enjoyed still being able to wear a costume, as this keeps me grounded in understanding the concepts of designers and sharing that feeling of being a participant, whereby the onlooker and the participant are sharing the same space public space.

The carnival in Deighton was a smaller event, with a few costumed masqueraders. The parade began in the local park, and went through the local community before returning to the starting point. I enjoyed the experience of 'chipping' behind the music truck through the streets of the local community, and felt happy and excited seeing the children and families coming out of their houses to wave. Some joined in with parents, others joined the procession on their bikes, feeling a sense of belonging and that they were welcome to join in the carnival activity.

The samba festival in Liverpool was smaller in size this year, with less bands performing. However, there was still a feeling that people wanted to come out and support the parade, as it was an opportunity to see friends, dance and enjoy the carnival-like atmosphere. The drumming was enjoyable and the costumes had the Brazilian feel and the dancing that entertained the crowd.

At Preston carnival, I joined a team of judges, where we were responsible for looking at the costumes and performances. It was an interesting experience as there were not many troupes, but the hearts and passion of the masqueraders filled that space, and seeing the live steelband playing on the back of the truck was an added bonus. Unfortunately, the weather once again had an impact on the day's procession. Though the sunshine fought to come through, sadly the rain won over, and in the end the troupes returned



Image Samba festival, Liverpool 2022, courtesy of the author

to the park to perform for the audience and judges despite the rain, as it did not dampen the enthusiasm of the masqueraders as they danced their rehearsed performances.

In Leeds, as there was not a judging element of costumes and troupes, I was able to attend with my friend and enjoy the proceeding as a spectator. Additionally, I escorted the Mayor and his wife around the carnival event at the Potternewton Park in Chapel Town, highlighting the Caribbean cuisine, beverages and, of course, the costumes on parade. I truly believe that Soca music is made for carnival to be performed on the road, and there were some elements during the event that I feel should be addressed. I feel there was a limited amount of Soca music being played on the road, there should be a better balance of old and newer songs, and updated Soca music for the troupes and onlookers to appreciate how the music has evolved, which is the complete opposite of the costume designs that I witnessed. In fact, soca artists produce soca songs for the carnival troupes and this shows the level and commitment, creativity and versatility of the artform to create music annually.



Image Costume Judging on the road, Preston Carnival 2022, courtesy of the author

I also attended to a soca event at the Madhouse in Manchester, featuring Bunji Garlin: a soca artist from Trinidad and Tobago. The event was well attended, with popular soca DJ's and eager 'soca lovers'. It was an exciting, vibrant and inclusive event, with nationalities from all over the world displaying their country's flag and all enjoying themselves to the infectious and powerful soca music. Garlin did not fail to deliver, performing his renditions of old and new songs, such as 'Big Bad Soca'. The event made me feel nostalgic, bringing back memories of attending soca parties in Trinidad and Tobago for the carnival season. The hype and energy that soca music brings to an event evokes a feel-good feeling that truly transports you. In the appropriate reflective words of the Rector of All Saints Canon Richard Jacob:

"...we believe God is the source of all that is creative and good. We celebrate what is good and uplifting and give folks an opportunity to rethink how we express that God-given creativity at carnival" (Rector of All Saints' Cathedral, Trinidad and Tobago)

In my opinion, (based on the events attended, mentioned above) the costumed troupes seem to be getting smaller, while the crowd of spectators is growing larger. Spectators stand near by the static sound systems, blocking the costumed troupes from performing. Carnival organisations are concerned that they are hosting a carnival where soca music—one of the most important elements of carnival—is not being played at the events, replaced by reggae music. If UK carnival is to survive, the organisers need to look



Image Sharing a moment with Simon Bundy, Leeds Carnival 2022, courtesy of the author

at the history of carnival, beyond the buzz words of inclusivity and cohesion, and include soca music as the true accompaniment for the culture. My sentiments are shared by soca artist Mr Killa 'if you don't like soca what you doing here'. I am pleased that carnival has returned to streets and the community, as this offers an opportunity for people to improve their mental health and wellbeing by enjoying the outdoor ambience, to meet, greet, laugh, dance, sing, enjoy good food, be in costume or stand on the sidelines, whichever way one was part of the carnival event. Hopefully, this will allow all the stakeholders in carnival to bring fresh and new design ideas, rethink, regroup and recharge.

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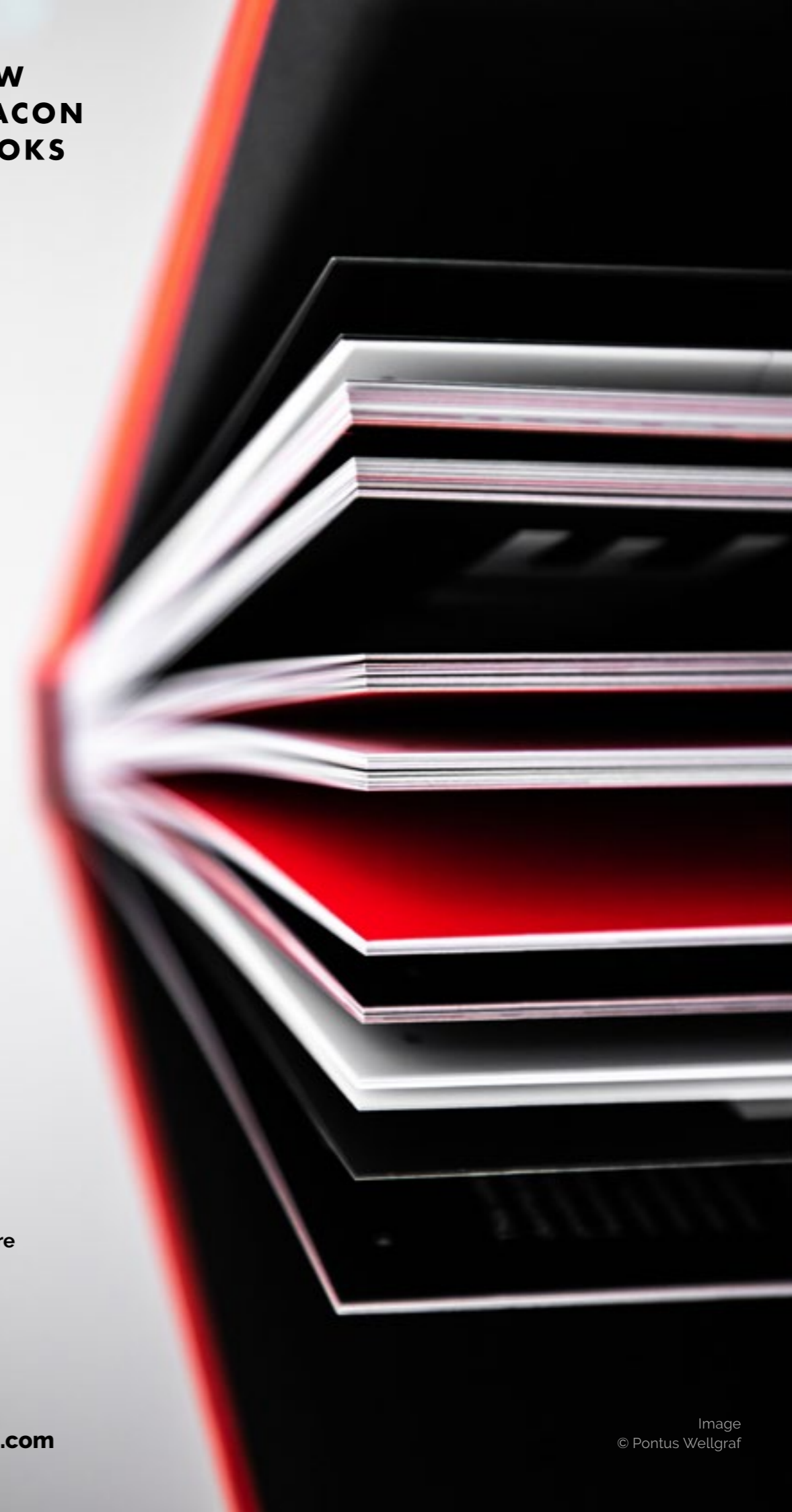


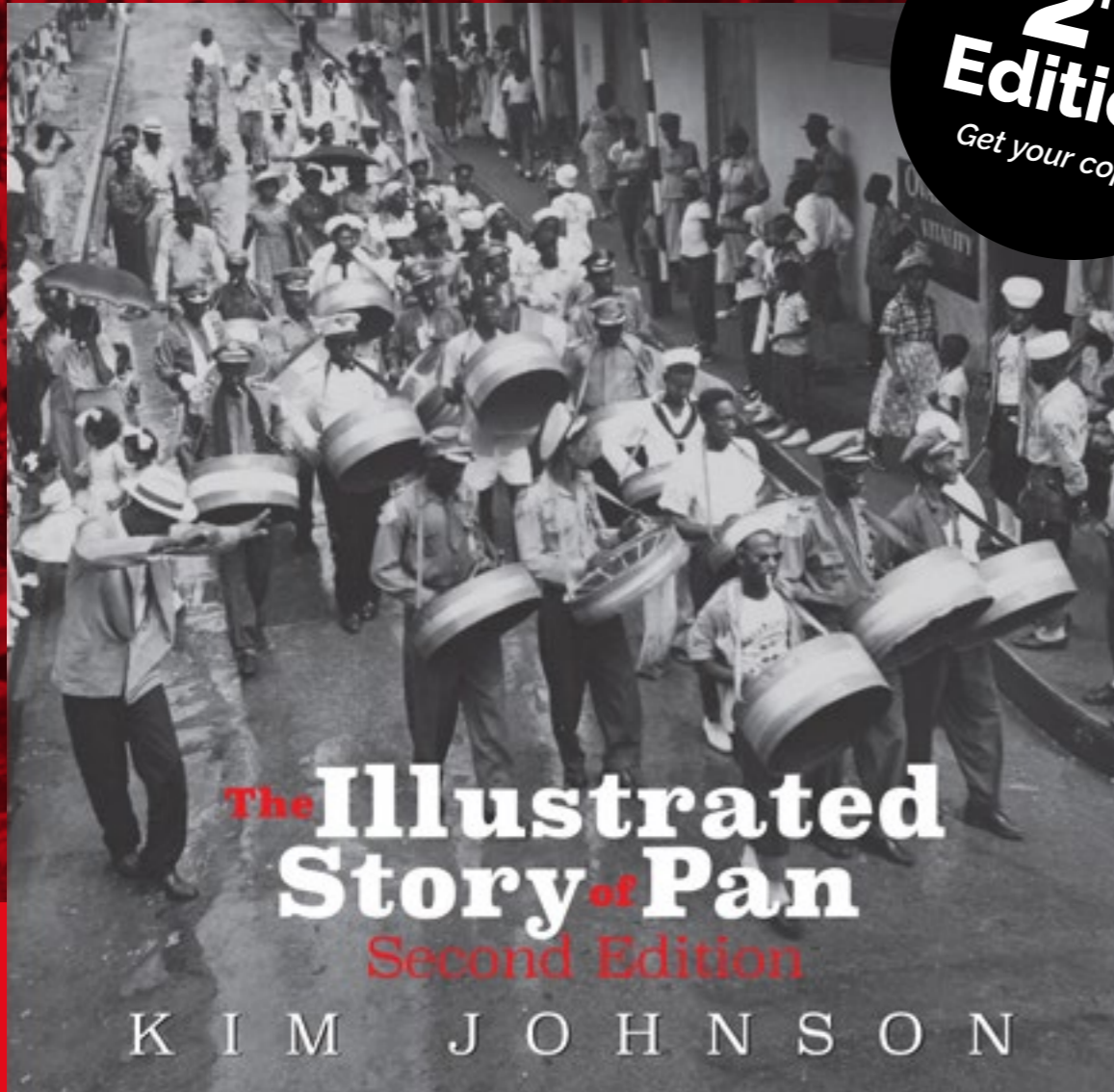
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