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Protestival: Global Days of Action and Carnivalized Politics in the Present

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ABSTRACT   *Investigating the significance of carnivalized methods of protest in the present, this article explores the characteristics and recent history of the protestival, the carnival of protest which has flourished with the advent of the alter-globalization movement. Heir to the carnivalized politics of the 1960s, and drawing from radical avant-garde movements and guerrilla theatre, the 'protestival' inherits much from the kinds of 'symbolic challenges' thought posed by post-1960s social movements. Immediately downstream from Reclaim the Streets, demonstrating a resurgence of autonomism, anarchism and direct democracy, and developing within the context of global opposition to neo-liberalism and the War on Terror, the Global Day of Action would become the template for popular direct action: in particular those events nominated 'Carnivals Against Capitalism' or 'For Global Justice'. While new social movement theorists have recognized the significance of movement cultural politics, new approaches are needed to understand the festal and carnivalesque character of the contemporary activism. Recently scholars have indicated that summit sieges, autonomous convergences and other recent reflexive events constitute transnational 'carnivalesque rituals', politico-religious 'pilgrimage' destinations, or spatial reconfigurations critical to the renewed opposition to capitalism. The 'protestival' provides an ambiguously nuanced heuristic sufficient to comprehend those performative moments simultaneously transgressive and progressive, against and for, by which the marginal may take their grievances to the physical and symbolic centres ('summits') of neo-liberalism, where alternative logics and spectacles are performed. Unpacking its expositional and revelatory logic, the article uncovers the roots of the 'protestival', undertaking an exploration of intentional carnival, festal hacktivism, direct theatre, tactical frivolity and (un)masking to reveal a significant action template in the present.*

KEY WORDS: Carnival, protest, street theatre, culture jamming, anarchism, alter-globalization movement

Introduction: Carnivalized Politics

On 16 May (M16) 1998 a Global Street Party took place in thirty cities on five continents coinciding with the Group of Eight (G8) summit in Birmingham, England, and the following week's World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial in Geneva. This was the first Global Day of Action, a transnational mobilization signifying the emergence of the alter-globalization movement. Called by those identifying with the People's Global Action (PGA),[1] the M16 Global Street Party was pivotal, since it signalled the re-emergence of a carnivalized cultural praxis which Brian Holmes – in the most comprehensive testament

to the activities and events of the alter-globalization movement, *We Are Everywhere* – deems a 'carnivalesque ritual' (in Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 346).[2] Momentous in this regard, the 1960s has been identified as an experimental laboratory of emancipatory cultural politics (see Stephens, 1998). A context for the emergence of guerrilla theatre and other nascent tactical media practices associated with an anti-disciplinary protest in which a 'new parodic political language' (Stephens, 1998, p. 25) was being forged, the period was the 'privileged era of carnivalized politics' (Stam, 1988, p. 136). In the interventions of the Situationist International, the Youth International Party (Yippies), the Diggers (an offshoot of the San Francisco Mime Troupe) and other avant-garde, theatrical and political groups the carnival's 'perennial repertoire' of gestures, symbols and metaphors had, according to Robert Stam (1988, p. 135), been 'deployed to give voice to desire for social and political justice'. But while the carnivalesque possesses deep historical roots, and the repertoire adopted and translated by social movements in the 1970s and 1980s, it would experience an explosive resurgence as the Carnivals Against Capital (and For Global Justice) mounted on numerous Global Days of Action from the late 1990s provided vivid proclamation of the emergence of a movement mobilizing against neo-liberalism and war, and for autonomy and peace. Massive anti-capitalist and anti-war convergences signalled the emergence of the *protestival* as a variegated complex of action performances enabling exposure and revelation.

'Protestival' is a term coined by radical technician John Jacobs,[3] and offers a useful heuristic for contemporary events simultaneously negative/positive, transgressive/progressive, aesthetic/instrumental. Becoming virulent in a period which has seen an increase in political mobilizations deviating from those conventional to social movements, these events constitute a creative response to the traditional political rituals of the left: those 'ritual marches from point A to point B, the permits and police escorts, the staged acts of civil disobedience, the verbose rallies and dull speeches by leaders' (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 174). Embodying the increasingly attractive principles of 'diversity, creativity, decentralization, horizontality, and direct action', such events would thus hold principles found at the heart of what is understood to be an ancient form of cultural expression: the carnival (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 174). The carnival seems to provide an apposite framework for contemporary activists since it is a potent and diverse storehouse of cultural and political possibility. Carnival is understood to perform multiple tasks: 'as political action, as festive celebration, as cathartic release, as wild abandonment of the status quo, as networking tool, as a way to create a new world' (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 180). Importantly, as Stam (1988, p. 135) recognizes, while constituting 'a demystifying instrument for everything in the social formation that renders collectivity impossible: class hierarchy, sexual repression, patriarchy, dogmatism and paranoia', carnival is simultaneously 'ecstatic collectivity, the joyful affirmation of social change, a dress rehearsal for utopia'.

This article explores this polyvalent tactic as it has been reclaimed by the alter-globalization movement. The locations and times that transnational financial organizations and political elites are most visible (i.e. G8 summits, WTO ministerials and World Economic Forum meetings) are also where/when global neo-liberalism becomes most vulnerable. Such manifestations become contexts for the concentration of enmity and dissent, where accumulated grievances resulting from economic injustice and political oppression are expressed and mediated. These centres/summits provide occasions in which participants in the alter-globalization movement can converge, either on location (such as

'convergence spaces' during G8 summits) or in-simultaneity (such as the Carnivals Against Capital, and For Global Justice).[4] Thus, as Nick Crossley (2002, p. 685) observes, it may be 'the emergence of a more identifiable structure of power within the global field that has created conditions conducive to the emergence of protest activities and movements within it'. The most visible sites of neo-liberal globalization then become the most obvious sites for dissenting voices. These sites have become the context for 'transnational collective rituals' (Routledge, 2003, p. 341) such as summit sieges, autonomous convergences and other reflexive 'plateau events' (Chesters, 2003, p. 49) where the globally aggrieved are drawn to challenge, momentarily, the 'crushing inevitability of history' (Butigan, 2000, p. 46). These mobilizations build on the meta-political tactic of 'heightening the visibility of power' located in the 'symbolic challenge' posed by new social movements (NSMs) (Melucci, 1989; Bartholomew & Mayer, 1992, p. 146), only now they do so within a renewed climate of opposition to neo-liberalism illustrated, for instance, by the popularity of the ideas of Hardt & Negri (2000) and the global resurgence of autonomism, anarchism and direct action. Exposing the mechanisms of power and oppression at these powerful, albeit vulnerable, sites – or indeed in absentia – becomes highly innovative, and the carnivalized/festal tactics employed within the contexts of these increasingly popular transnational rituals are the subject of this article.

A Brief History of Protestival

It is first worth exploring the role of the festal within counterculture, as it would come to bear on the cultural politics of the present. In the wake of the 'privileged era of carnivalized politics', dissidents, utopians, freaks and other descendants of the 1960s 'happening' were actively reviving, re-creating and re-inventing semi-nomadic traditions through free festival cultures. These invented traditions were as much efforts in maintaining or reclaiming a folk culture, often embracing indigenous world-views and expressing re-enchantment with the natural world, as they were efforts at forging a new, alternative, culture. In the UK, those sometimes named 'New Age' Travellers (though rarely self-identifying as such) sought temporary exodus from modern Britain in the Stonehenge Summer Solstice festival, the early Glastonbury Festival and other events (McKay, 1996, 2000; Hetherington, 2000). From the early 1970s in the US, the Rainbow Family would hold major annual (eventually international) free gatherings (Niman, 1997), and in Australia, counterculturalists first journeyed to the Aquarius Festival at Nimbin in 1973, a precursor of the annual ConFest (St John, 2001).[5] The countercultures were seeking autonomous sites, laboratories for experimental discourse and practice and the forging of alternative lifeways. These festal realms were alternative cultural heterotopia, contextualizing the exploration of proliferating and sometimes conflicting alternatives to patriarchy, militarism, capitalism and 'monophasic' consciousness. They would threaten property and propriety, circumstances provoking the state's efforts to eliminate or contain them, as in the Conservative government's crushing of the mobile seasonal alternative travellers known as the Peace Convoy en route to the Stonehenge Summer Solstice Festival in 1985 (Worthington, 2005),[6] or inspiring capital's insidious capture and recuperation of the 'cool' alternative.

Achieving their fullest expression in the festal, in the 'temporary autonomous zone' (or TAZ; Bey, 1991), these counter-tribes seemed to exemplify those micro-cultures that Michel Maffesoli (1996) holds as symptomatic of a post-Second World War society characterized by a voluntary, passional, networked and unstable neo-tribalism, the

principal commitment of which is 'being together'. While this may be the case, the actual characteristics of their 'empathetic sociality' (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 11) need circumscribing. Such contexts would be arenas in which official culture is intentionally transgressed and subverted. And since radical creativity would flourish within the context of a self-identified *tribalism*, an empathetic counter-sociality reputed to accommodate diverse differences, these were contexts perhaps more accurately articulated via the radical conviviality of Hakim Bey's 'Immediatist' (see Bey, 1994) philosophy than Maffesoli's 'orgiasm' (see 1993). Yet attending to the rootless, fragmented and tragic characteristics of the present, such perspectives neglect the *movement* in sociality, discounting the activist subject who, like Tim Jordan's (2002) 'Activist!', is passionate and morally committed, albeit not unexposed to the fragility and impermanence of contemporary social life. On the heels of a useful though troubled effort to comprehend the fluid and empathetic character of contemporary society, one can detect a 'passional' sociality pervading the present which, given the emergence of 'post-citizenship' movements (Jasper, 1997, p. 7), is morally purposed and motivated by a *cause* other than its own reproduction.[7]

While Melucci and those he influenced have sought to make the internal complexities of 'new social movements' apparent, and while cultural and performance traditions are known to be integral to social movements (on music, see Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Mattern, 1998; on theatre, see Kershaw, 1992; Cohen-Cruz, 1998; Moser, 2003), the cultural politics of contemporary movements ranging against the neo-liberal New World Order remains under-researched. Appropriately nuanced research on 'cultures of resistance' (McKay, 1996), protest subcultures (Martin, 2002), 'individualized and extended milieus' (Jowers *et al.*, 1999, p. 114), and performative politics with regard to protest ritual (Szerszynski, 1999) or the alternative reconfiguration of space in opposition to free-market strategies (Nield, 2006) offer useful paths forward. The particular activist subjectivity that Jordan discusses is 'transgressive'. Unlike reactionaries who press reinterpretations of the past into present efforts to forge a future, or reformers who 'pit the present against the present in order to shape the future', transgressive movements and subcultures look to the unknown future for their inspiration (Jordan, 2002, p. 40). A desire to *reclaim the future* is performed by living the 'future in the present', a tendency particular to autonomists and anarchists, whose practices – e.g. social centres and other experimental autonomous spaces – have experienced a resurgence globally since the mid-1990s (see Shantz, 1999, pp. 60–61; Day, 2005). Inheriting from feminist, environmental, peace, post-colonial, sexuality and disability movements, a 'global anarchism' recognizes the complex character of power (Bowen & Purkis, 2004, p. 5), their struggles for autonomy and self-empowerment often juxtaposed with traditional modes of contestation and protest in a sea of flags and banners and a cacophony of chants and protest mantras apparent within the new protest environment. Here, *the cause* (e.g. local autonomy, global justice, and peace) contextualizes and characterizes the non-hierarchical TAZ, the 'convergence space', and the *being together* of participants, itself constituting an effort 'to form the structure of the new world in the shell of the old' (Shantz, 1999, p. 61).[8] Since counter-tribes would harness a future-directed anarcho-liminality, the Maffesolian perspective (of transgression for transgression's sake) should be approached with caution.[9] While the free festival 'happenings' had served as sites of *indirect action*, the TAZ would be mobilized in pursuit of the cause, often mounted in direct opposition to the circumstances which compelled (by choice or otherwise) participants towards a festal life (to live as 'travellers', itinerants, 'feral') in the first place.

The temporary festal would become a critical tool in the activist repertoire. In European traditions, since the Roman Saturnalia, the Feast of Fools and the Greek Dionysia, festival has been a time of inversion, intensification, transgression and abstinence – a theme, and term, commonly interchanged with 'carnival'. A season of festive events culminating in two or three days of massive street processions, carnival is rooted in Roman Catholic pre-Lenten festivities occasioning 'release from the constraints and pressures of the social order, generat[ing] relationships of amity even among strangers and allow[ing] forbidden excesses' (Cohen, 1993, p. 3). Integrated into twentieth-century social movements, these occasions for excess and intense participation would become implicated in direct action at least as early as the late 1950s.

According to George McKay (2004, p. 430), amidst a carnival atmosphere and eventually propagating a 'youth lifestyle protest movement', the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament's (CND) annual marches to Britain's nuclear weapons research facility at Aldermaston were significant in this regard. While the Aldermaston March of Easter 1958, and later CND-related events, saw a carnival of protest travel from the 'imperial centre of London to the countryside', around twenty years later the Greenham Common peace camp in Berkshire signified a similar passage from the city (McKay, 2004, p. 431). Peace camps such as those at Greenham (Roseniel, 1995; Cresswell, 1996) and Seneca in New York State (Krasniewicz, 1994) would become a protest template where women made spectacular vigil upon the military industrial apparatus, their often uncovered bodies forming an abject contrast to the phallic nuclear missiles harboured behind the wire. The grotesque and undisciplined body was emigrating to contested locations on the margins, and at remote sites such as nuclear airbases, uranium mines (e.g. Australia's Jabiluka) and migrant detention centres (the outback detention centre at Woomera) participants affected ever newer ways of attracting sympathetic media (rather than withdrawing from the media). Drawing from *Bomb Culture* (1968), in which Nuttal discusses the presence of jazz and the 'spontaneous and creative interventions' of the beats in early CND activity, McKay (2004, p. 431) declares that the association between protest and festivity had gathered pace by the early 1960s.[10] The association developed as counter-tribes were taking their grievances – *and their carnivals* – back to the city and centres of power. Indeed, in the year after the first Aldermaston March, the route was reversed, with the festival descending upon Trafalgar Square, a tradition which would continue (and which would see 100,000 CND marchers and supporters occupy Trafalgar Square in 1961, the numbers growing throughout the decade as opposition to the Vietnam War escalated (McKay, 2000, pp. 88–89). In 1970, raising opposition to the ongoing war in Vietnam, carnival was launched on the lawns of the White House (Kershaw, 1997, pp. 261–264).

Having flourished at the margins, the habitués of the autonomous carnival were reassembling in the (city) centres and, with regard to the UK, Scott and Street (2001, p. 43) afford insight on how this transpired. Identifying how 'carnival seems now to have been elevated to the defining characteristic of the [protest] event, transplanting the language of the mid 1980s hippie convoys and free festivals into an urban context', unlike efforts by travellers to reclaim marginal sites like Stonehenge at the summer solstice, or contest remote places, the new protest tribes of the 1990s – those that Tony Blair would derogate as an 'anarchist travelling circus'[11] – would directly contest the meaning of powerful and iconic sites, such as the City of London.[12]

Described as a performance where 'the poetic and pragmatic join hands' (Jordan, 1998, pp. 132–133), Reclaim the Streets (RTS) was instrumental in such spatial contestation.

Emerging in London in 1995, immediately downstream from the anti-road protests and rave culture, and providing the platform for disparate groups uniting against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994, RTS proliferated across Europe and around the world with the assistance of the communications and organizing capabilities provided by the Internet. RTS had targeted that most conspicuous symbol of material wealth, fossil fuel consumption and critical source of carbon emissions – the motor car – obstructing its progress along major thoroughfares of the contemporary metropolis, the temporary autonomous carnivals disrupting traffic and business-as-usual. Avoiding conventional and increasingly uninspired forms of mobilization such as *the demonstration*, RTS and successive anarchist 'dis-organizations' (such as London's Wombles)[13] were effectively subverting the normative function of space through a kind of carnivalesque hacking. Here, the most overt and immediate (local) expressions of transnational (global) power are effectively 'dis-alienated' or 'de-reified' (Uitermark, 2004, p. 711). What Uitermark calls the 'deprogramming' of space offers a revelatory mobilization, and we witness one critical path towards comprehending the protestival. The festival as hacking event. Here, the *hack*, not exclusively a negational practice, is radically creative since it involves the intentional disruption, disorientation and de-programming of 'consensus' reality. Just as the protestival is an intervention which is more than a blockade or obstruction, the hack is not confined to blocking, erasing or destroying information, but potentiates the re-program-ming of reality. Here, hacking approximates that which has been dubbed 'artivism', which in its inferred amalgam of aesthetics and instrumentalism is analogous to our main focus. Festal hacktivism is a ritual of de-reification which renders power and contradiction visible at its most central and reified sites, practices which enable the performance and construction of lived alternatives.

Such festal re-programming is orchestrated variously – from women's Reclaim the Night rallies, to RTS occupations of the High Street, to the disruption of 'summits' and meetings of 'peak' transnational financial and political bodies. When the 'pulsing, computerized, hyper-competitive brain of the beast' – the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (or LIFFE) building, which houses the largest derivations market in Europe – was hacked on 18 June (J18) 1999 during the Carnival Against Capital;[14] or when the WTO was successfully hijacked on 30 November (N30) 1999 in the 'Battle of Seattle'; and when the 'jugular vein of consumer capitalism', Oxford St., was re-represented along with other London landmarks on the Wombles' May Day Monopoly brochure distributed prior to the May Day protests in 2001 (Uitermark, 2004, p. 717), we witness the festal rupturing of critical sites of capitalist representation. Efforts to lobotomize 'the brains of the beast', or rupture the 'jugular vein' of capital are performed at the sites of its vital organs, at its most visible/vulnerable points, which become magnetic to diverse actors who are compelled to seek out the source of their oppression, misery and discontent. Targeting 'centres' whose visibility is exploited in the effort to expose its 'truths', to de-legitimate its ideology, festal hacktivism corresponds to that which we know as 'culture jamming'. From the performative hijacking of 'flagship' stores to the 'liberation' of billboards and websites at focal points in the urban landscape (and indeed the global cyberscape), such activities flourish within the context of the protestival. The journey to the centres, and spectacular focal points of neo-liberalism, those summits where its power is reaffirmed and extended, is likened to a pilgrimage for those who intend to jam its otherwise unperturbed flows of meaning, destabilize its agendas and challenge its hold on 'reality'. Claiming that Seattle was the context for the emergence of a

'new politico-religious pilgrimage' consistent with earlier journeys from bondage to freedom (such as that of Gandhi), Ken Butigan presciently observes that

> the urgency of this journey came from a deep intuition that the great web of violence in which we are caught today is spun by large economic and political forces, and that the instructions for this 'web design' for the next decades were about to be codified in a very few short days on the shores of Puget Sound. (2000, p. 46)

This 'journey to the centre' would enable an armada of aggrieved pilgrims and pirates to hack the design.

Intentional Carnivals: Against Capitalism and For Global Justice

Signifying the growing popularity of direct action/democracy, RTS was an emergent flourishing of anarchistic logic providing the template for Carnivals Against Capitalism (CAC) and other festivals of resistance proliferating across the global North from the late 1990s, and converging on local centres and conspicuous symbols of global capital. The first CAC, on J18, occurred on the heels of the Global Street Party of 16 May 1998 (and would be the immediate precursor for N30, Seattle). Like M16, J18 was a 'Global Day of Action'[15] called by the People's Global Action, and would coincide with the G8 summit in Köln. While leaders of the International Caravan for Solidarity and Resistance paraded through the city at the end of a month's protest tour of Europe, there were street parties in twenty cities around the world and actions in another twenty. One of the largest J18 turnouts was naturally in London where the carnival had been reclaimed by anarchists as a tactic of resistance and insurrection, and where the Barking Bateria marching band took to the streets.[16] It is understandable that RTS and CAC activists would adopt the carnival as a medium for action, since – without hierarchy, determined by principles of self-organization, direct democracy, conviviality and noise – the carnival is an anarchist demesne, whose legacy can be discerned in British youth subculture. In his analysis of the 'cultural anarchism' expressed in post-Second World War UK youth subcultures, Neil Nehring (1993) discusses how the medieval marketplace, the carnival clown and the transgressive power of the carnivalesque was transmuted into 1970s punk. The contumacious and irreverent character of punk possessed a *form* of response to the social order consistent with Mikhail Bakhtin's (1968) carnival: emerging from below, from the folk, from the working class, society's forgotten. According to Nehring, punks served the function that Bakhtin attributes to clowns in carnival: 'the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all "languages" and dialects [in] a lively play with the "languages" of poets, scholars, monks, knights, and others'. This play was parodic, 'aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273, in Nehring, 1993, p. 318). Yet, in a development Nehring neglects, while the 'guerrilla semiotics' of punk are known to have contributed to the formation of a 'hardcore', or authentic, punk identity, the progressively motivated transgression which came to be concentrated within the UK *anarcho-punk* scene would see the carnival (and the expository character of the carnivalesque) adopted in more specifically emancipatory – that is 'hardcore activist' – endeavours.[17]

As carnival's deep historical roots were recognized, its reclamation united contemporary habitués with those hardcore compatriots imagined to have occupied

such 'worlds' throughout history – an underworld or interzone of fellow insurrectionaries such as those of the Paris Commune of 1871. As has been acknowledged (Grindon, 2004), anarchists and other activists enthused by such identifications appear to have invented a 'tradition of carnival as libratory insurrection', with those organizing and facilitating contemporary events drawing on and synthesizing the ideas of theorists and practitioners of the carnivalesque in order to build such a tradition. Appropriating the writing of Bakhtin, RTS anarchists valorized the carnival not as an entertaining sideshow but as something of a temporary autonomous breach in which occupants are empowered to participate in the forging of 'a new world'. As stated in the online document 'The Evolution of Reclaim the Streets', a carnival

> *celebrates temporary liberation from the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchy, rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.* Crowds of people on the street seized by a sudden awareness of their power and unification through a celebration of their own ideas and creations. (My emphasis)[18]

Bakhtin's 'grotesque realism' is also evident in an essay in *We Are Everywhere* entitled 'Carnival: resistance is the secret of joy' (in Ainger *et al.*, 2003, pp. 172–183). The following is one of the most compelling passages from this piece:

> In carnival the body is always changing, constantly becoming, eternally unfinished. Inseparable from nature and fused to other bodies around it, the body remembers that it is not a detached, atomized becoming, as it allows its erotic impulses to jump from body to body, sound to sound, mask to mask, to swirl across the street, filling every nook and cranny, every fold of flesh. During the carnival the body, with its pleasures and desires, can be found everywhere, luxuriating in its freedom and inverting the everyday. (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, pp. 175–176)

In such commentary, activists acknowledge their kinship with inhabitants of the folk culture that Bakhtin refers to as 'the people's second world' rooted in at least late antiquity, where participants are enabled, temporarily, to ridicule authority and perhaps, according to Lachmann (1988, p. 131), dispel the cosmic fear of death through laughter. Then, from the same source:

> The pleasures of the body have been banished from the public sphere of politics and the excitement of the erotic pushed into the narrow private confines of the sexual realm. But carnival brings the body back to public space, not the perfect smooth bodies that promote consumption on billboards and magazines, not the manipulated plastic bodies of MTV and party political broadcasts, but the body of warm flesh, of blood and guts, organs and orifices. (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 175)

There is evidence here of the carnival as a response to the conditions of life under capital. It is not difficult to read encouragement from members of the Situationist International, especially *Society of the Spectacle* (1970) author Guy Debord who pined for authentic, indeed utopian, situations constructed 'on the ruins of the modern spectacle' (Debord, 1981, p. 25, in Pinder, 2000, p. 270), a spectacle such as MTV which, we are told, mediates and thus separates humans one from the other. Also legible is the Surrealist

Marxist Raoul Vaneigem who penned *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1972), for whom carnival, not a subordinate nor temporary 'second world', was a separate, ideally autonomous, world generated in response to conditions in the official world. Contrary to the deferred revolution of Marxism, the carnival was the revolution realized, lived everyday. As noted by others (see Luckman, 2001), Situationist ideas would be available to contemporary artivists through the net-enabled dissemination of the work of Hakim Bey, a poacher and synthesizer of radical theory.[19]

Cultural critics have long been sceptical about the role of the carnival/festival, questioning its countercultural or emancipatory value. Is it an instrument of political opposition or 'ritual of rebellion' (Gluckman, 1954), an artificial revolution like Fasnacht at Basle, 'a savage form of class struggle' which 'enables the underprivileged class to make revolution without really performing it' (Weidkuhn, 1976, p. 44)? Are carnivals temporary outlets ultimately ensuring the maintenance of structures of privilege (see Eagleton, 1981)? Would they be evidence of 'repressive desublimation', which Marcuse thinks allowed 'just enough freedom to disrupt and integrate discontent – but not enough to endanger the discipline necessary for a stable industrial order' (in Roszak, 1995, p. xxii). As Lane Bruner (2005, p. 140) infers, ruling authorities may actively endorse such events since, as official periods of 'sanctioned transgression', they are 'capable of "magically" reinforcing the normal moral and political order by revealing the limits of that order in more positive ways than outright physical and/or ideological repression'. Would RTS, CAC and neo-Situationist enthusiasm function as 'safety valves' permitting participants 'revolution' before returning to their consented roles at school, in the office, on the footpath? Are TAZs the privilege of middle-class rebels practising 'lifestyle anarchism' (Bookchin, 1995). While the Situationists and Bey have been challenged for being privileged white men, elitists promoting a 'bourgeois deception', this did not deter J18 activists from distributing 50,000 metallic gold flyers featuring a line attributed to Vaneigem, and smacking of Bey: 'to work for delight and authentic festivity is barely distinguishable from preparing for general insurrection' (from Blissant, 2006). The adoption of such language signalled an earnest sympathy with the Situationist practice of recapturing utopia as a process of becoming, a process believed to be 'already geographically realizable within the interstices of everyday urban practice' (Swyngedouw, 2002, p. 161).

But in the attempt to answer the above queries and challenges, it must be recognized that carnival is essentially polyvalent. There are varied reasons why people participate in carnivals, as Stam attempts to outline in relation to its attraction to the left. Thus, the carnival is:

> (1) a valorization of Eros and the life force (appealing to a Reichean left) as an actualization of the ancient myths of Orpheus and Dionysius; (2) the idea, more relevant to the left generally, of social inversion and the counter-hegemonic subversion of established power; (3) the idea, attractive to poststructuralists, of 'gay relativity' and Janus-faced ambivalence and ambiguity; (4) the notion of carnival as trans-individual and oceanic (appealing ambiguously to the left and right alike); and (5) the concept of carnival as the 'space of the sacred' and 'time in parenthesis' (appealing to the religiously inclined). (Stam, 1988, p. 135)

Others regard carnivals as ambivalent, featuring complex subtexts of manipulation and desire. According to Notting Hill Carnival ethnographer Abner Cohen, carnival is poised

between genuine opposition *and* means of domination. Like a 'grand joking relationship', carnival/festival is characterized by 'both conflict and alliance' (Cohen, 1993, p. 128). Moreover, sweeping statements, dismissive or celebrational, are unhelpful since each event, and each occurrence is, as Stallybrass & White (1986) and Stam concur, characterized by 'shifting configurations of symbolic practices whose political valence changes with each context and situation' (Stam, 1988, p. 135). But with regard to CAC, it needs to be recognized that these events are acts of civil disobedience, neither sanctioned nor tolerated by official culture (as were the medieval carnivals inspiring Bakhtin). These are direct action festivals, often, and certainly in the case of RTS, driven and organized by anarchist principles, and thus hardly sanctioned by the state, nor becoming easily recuperable. In Grindon's view (2004, p. 160), dismissing or embracing the carnival unequivocally is less productive than 'examining it as a heterogeneous set of theories that at the very least offer a valuable cultural approach to the prefigurative societies that are so common in contemporary anarchist thinking'. The contribution to *We Are Everywhere*, with more than a hint of Vaneigem and Bey, appears to respond to some of this criticism:

> The revolutionary carnival may only last a few hours or days, but its taste lingers on. It is not simply a letting-off of steam, a safety valve for society, enabling life to return to normal the next day. It is a moment of intensity unlike any other, which shapes and gives new meanings to every aspect of life. The everyday is never the same after one has tasted a moment that is ruled only by freedom. Tasting such fruit is dangerous, because it leaves a craving to repeat the exhilarating experience again and again. (In Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 182)

In a true reflection of the internal dynamic of carnival as both negative/positive, transgressive/progressive, by 11 September (S11) 2000 – when Melbourne hosted the Carnival for Global Justice on the occasion of the meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Kerry Packer's Crown Casino, the carnivals on the Global Days of Action would be acknowledged to be as decidedly *for* 'justice' as *against* neo-liberalism. This mood would become clearer in the wake of 9/11, and the subsequent global 'War on Terror'. Thus, by 18–20 March 2006, when protests marked the third anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq,[20] the Global Day of Action template had become instrumental to a transnational movement united against war and for peace.

The paraphrasing of Bakhtin above is particularly curious in the light of the view (attributed to him by Lachmann, 1988, p. 132) that while 'in the pragmatic realm of official culture normative actions engender certain consequences, the carnivalesque counter-ritual remains without effect in the realm of politically and socially relevant praxis: in the carnival, *phantasma* replaces *pragma*'. Yet the carnivals of the alter-globalization movement (those against capital and for justice) do not conform to the idea that the realm of *phantasma* (or perhaps that which Maffesoli calls the *passional*) effects a temporary cancellation of the realm of *pragma*, since in the protestival the Dionysian is harnessed in the service of the cause. While there may be little telos to CAC, actions are designed to be efficacious, to effect outcomes – ultimately a 'global civil society' (Chesters, 2003, p. 49).[21] An historical chronology of progressive 'public political performances' opposing and/or relieving oppression would demonstrate that such carnivals possess a lineage. As Bruner points out, most have been officially sanctioned carnivals whose contexts potentiate and

trigger subversion and 'controlling control', thus 'modifying the society as a whole in the direction of social change and *possible progress*' (from Ladurie, pp. 313–316, in Bruner, 2005, p. 139). But while it is speculated that the carnivalesque may be 'a resource of political *action* ... [which] destabilizes the kinds of certainties that lead to "political illness", especially as manifested in forms of the humorless state' (Bruner, 2005, p. 151), under certain historical conditions the carnivalesque has been adopted as a tactical means of opposition.[22]

The Cultural Politics of Masking: The Carnival Unmasked

It was around noon in London on J18 when 8,000 people emerged from the underground at Liverpool St. station. Most, we are told, 'found themselves holding a carnival mask, in the colors black, green, red, or gold – the colors of anarchy, ecology, and communism, plus high finance' (Blissant, 2006). The reverse of the masks stated:

> Those in authority fear the mask for their power partly resides in identifying, stamping and cataloguing: in knowing who you are. But a Carnival needs masks, thousands of masks ... Masking up releases our commonality, enables us to act together ... During the last years the power of money has presented a new mask over its criminal face. Disregarding borders, with no importance given to race or colors, the power of money humiliates dignities, insults honesties and assassinates hopes. On the signal follow your color/Let the Carnival begin ... (Blissant, 2006)

The revelatory power of masking is significant here. The idea that becoming unidentifiable (to authorities, the media and each other) magnifies commonality and enables collective action signals another form of masking which would obtain a spectacular presence on these occasions (particularly in Seattle). This is the practice inherent to the Black Bloc whose masking is pragmatic (remaining unidentifiable to police), social (maintaining anonymity in accordance with the anarchist/autonomist principles of 'no leaders/no followers'), and symbolic (in the sense that collective black-clad anonymity actually enhances visibility). This is indeed the view of the Zapatista's humble balaclava-wearing Subcommandante Marcos, a veritable icon of the alter-globalization movement who once announced that the Zapatistas are 'The voice that arms itself to be heard. The face that hides itself to be seen' (in Starr, 2005, p. 127). The Black Bloc tactic enables a spectacular anonymity contiguous with Zapatismo.

Mass-masking re-emerged at the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) summit protest at Quebec City on 20 April 2001. Involved in the production and distribution of thousands of screen-printed bandanas printed 'with a laughing face on one side, a gagged face behind chain-linked fencing on the other', Brian Holmes describes the philosophy of masking:

> During carnival, as in rebellion, we wear masks to free our inhibition, we wear masks to transform ourselves, we wear masks to show that we are your daughter, your teacher, your bus driver, your boss. Being faceless protects and unites us while they try to divide and persecute. By being faceless we show that who we are is not as important as what we want, and we want everything for everyone. So we will remain faceless because we refuse the spectacle of celebrity, we will remain faceless

because the carnival beckons, we will remain faceless because the world is upside down, we will remain faceless because we are everywhere. By covering our faces we show that our words, dreams, and imaginations are more important than our biographies. By covering our faces we recover the power of our voices and our deeds. By wearing masks we become visible once again. (2003, pp. 346–347)

Once again, Subcommander Marcos is not far removed. As a means of exposing, or indeed unmasking, the operations of the 'spectacle', masking is central to carnivalesque ritual. Collective 'masking up' attracts attention to one's cause (rather than one's self), contesting the field of appearances through a kind of tactical disappearance. Since collective 'disappearance' effected via mass-masking attracts (media) attention to itself (the cause), it becomes an effective form of 'tactical media'. Raising the curtain on the world, provoking critical inquiry, illuminating unseen 'truths', have reflected an avant-garde project inherited and conveyed through the Situationist practice of *détournement*, and passed down to us via the influential symbolic and visual disturbances we know as culture jamming.[23] In its most effective and non-elitist forms, where authors lie unseen or where a collective identification pertains to the performance, culture jamming is characterized by an anonymity paralleling masking. Such might have occurred, for example, as Winston Churchill was transformed into a punk on May Day 2000 (when his statue in Parliament Square was given a Mohawk hairstyle – see Goaman, 2004, p. 167), or as a mock statue of George W. Bush was toppled in London on 19 November 2003 (on the occasion of the US President's visit), and in other performative humiliations of official objects and people in subjunctive rites inherited from carnival.

Ideally a marriage of art and life, and like an 'embezzlement of convention', *détournement* refers to counter-spectacles designed to interrupt everyday experience and expectation provoking a reorientation towards the familiar (see Plant, 1992, p. 86). As ostensibly anti-capitalist art forms, such moments of *jouissance* are said to rehearse

the immiseration of life and work that stemmed from a society in which commodification had become the totality of things. Created situations demystified the spectacle of the commodity and the superficiality of life, and showed what the 'commodity' really is, an emptied-out receptacle that has taken the place of non-alienated life. (Swyngedouw, 2002, p. 157)

In his discussion of montage, Nehring demonstrates that *détournement*, and thus 'culture jamming', is contiguous with what he calls the 'Benjamin/Brecht position':

With a similar sense of strategic purpose, [Walter] Benjamin describes montage as an effort to prompt some analysis of social relations, not just to interrupt familiar cultural contexts. The 'melting down' of the conventional distinction between art and mass culture, exemplified by Brecht's use of new media to generate the alienation effect, should help compel 'the spectator to take up a position towards the action'. Facilitating astonishment, by disclosing the real 'conditions of our lives', constitutes a 'situation' [for Benjamin], just as it does in Situationist theory. (Nehring, 1993, p. 279)

Far removed from the approaches of the traditional left, with their masquerade, noisy juxtapositions and their facility to prompt analysis, carnivals of protest are ecstatic montage.

Tactical Embarrassment: Direct Theatre

As the reference to Brecht reveals, the protestival inherits as much from the language and practice of the theatre (performance) as it does from the carnival. Although the two overlap, the theatrical character of the protestival enables us to distinguish it from pure carnival, the perennial people's world. It possesses a performative element, motivated to impact and modify the world beyond the performance. In this way, they may be direct and efficacious 'public rituals' in the sense articulated by Szerszynski (1999), who identifies tactical performances designed to achieve local anti-corporate and community goals. Their performative character can be clarified further as 'cultural dramas' in possession of a 'redressive' function in the sense articulated by Victor Turner (1982). That is, not a form of 'resistance through rituals' primarily productive of identity in the fashion contemplated by scholars at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (see Hall & Jefferson, 1976), and not TAZ-like realms of difference existing beyond the reach of the major media where habitués seek disappearance from 'the grid of Alienation' (Bey, 1993), these counter-spectacles effectively dramatize the causes (e.g. autonomy, justice, peace) of participants, and expose exploitative relationships, neo-colonialism, permanent war. Where the intent is to influence public opinion or policy through non-pejorative mass media reports, this amounts to 'direct theatre' in the manner identified by William Schechner (1992, p. 104), who observes theatricalized political activity organized as 'a raw material for the universally displayed second theatre: TV news'. The profound pessimism that Debord held for televisual and electronic media is challenged as tactical theatre is performed for the purpose of transmitting routinely unreported images (such as the dead bodies of women and children killed in military campaigns)[24] via the corporate media. Furthermore, the adoption of theatrical tactics by non-hierarchical protest communities – where the traditional performer/spectator distinction may be ruptured – may facilitate change through example. Much is owed to the alternative theatre emerging in the 1960s. Ron Davis, the founder of the San Francisco Mime Troupe – which combined Brecht and the techniques of the *commedia dell'arte* to produce popular political theatre – coined the term 'guerrilla theatre' to designate an action that aims to 'teach, direct towards change, be an example of change' (Kershaw, 1997, p. 264).

There is no space here to detail the history of such improvisational and living theatre, but suffice to say that it appeared to have become embodied in the activities of Italy's Tute Bianche (or White Overalls)[25] who were prominent during the Global Days of Action in Genoa, 19–21 July (J20) 2001.[26] Wearing elaborate padding 'from foam armour to inner tubes to rubber ducky floatation devices, helmets and chemical-proof white jumpsuits', the Tute Bianche were a mock army which pushed through police barricades 'all the while protecting each other against injury or arrest, the ridiculous gear seem[ing] to reduce human beings to cartoon characters – misshapen, ungainly, foolish, largely indestructible' (Graeber, 2002, p. 66). Seeming to swarm up from the streets, their networked semi-autonomous organizing demonstrated an immediate contrast to that of the police, with its hierarchical command structure. But, in addition to this, by seeking out, facing off and drawing violent counter-responses from heavily armed and black-clad riot police

supported by water-cannon-mounted armoured vehicles and tear gas launchers, these ridiculous Michelin Men and Women consciously generated an extreme visual paradox, their absurdist street battles mounted like a shifting corporeal montage in the heart of the modern metropolis. The Tute Bianche pilloried and embarrassed the state through the most absurd means at their disposal.

Such stylishly radical juxtaposition would become infectious amongst participants, where 'tactical frivolity' evolved as a serious response to both state aggression and what was perceived as violent (or to use the emic phrase, 'spikey') direct action methods. Tactical frivolity is described (at www.g8illegal.lautre.net, and in Starr, 2005, p. 242) as a 'creative, joyous, diverse, fluid and life affirming form of direct action and civil disobedience. A self organising mongrel of party and protest based on values such as autonomy, solidarity, diversity, initiative, indiscipline and mutual aid.' Avatars of the protest party, the 'Pink and Silver Bloc' emerged in Prague for the Global Day of Action (in which 110 cities would participate) coinciding with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund summit there on 26 September (S26) 2000, where women 'dressed in outrageous pink dresses, wild bouffant wigs, and nine-foot-high fan tails danced towards lines of confused Czech police waving magic wands and feather dusters' (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 179). As 'drag imagery, queer high femme, riot grrrl and glam feminism as well as gender bending for pink clad men' (Starr, 2005, p. 239) became common to such protest, the rupturing of normative gender performances particular to carnival (e.g. the Carnivale in Rio) was carried into anti-capitalist protest. And by displaying a queer aesthetic, participants would not only subvert common forms of confrontation but, half-naked and without protection, they would expose themselves before the state, a courageous practice critical to exposing its perceived hypocrisies, deceits and contradictions. In the wake of the Bush administration's deception regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which justified the pre-emptive US-led invasion in March 2003, CodePINK activists – such as those young women taking to the streets in pink underwear reading 'EXPOSE BUSH' – exemplified a form of protest as expositional as it was exhibitionist. With the goal of revealing *the naked truth*, adopting the most extreme form of self-vulnerability, and forming a kind of *raw semiotics*, Bare Witness[27] participants descend upon critical centres/sites (such as the lawns of Parliament Square, London), with their uncovered bodies forming simple messages (like 'No War'). It doesn't get much more hardcore than this. Practising total and collective disclosure, individuals effectively become anonymous in a fashion similar to that of masking-up. Emboldened by their collective states of undress, they would be shielded from the embarrassment associated with breaking this taboo. And, in their raw semiotics, the shame normally linked to transgressing this cultural rule may be transferred to officials whose agendas have been publicly undressed. At least that appears to be the logic. If such activities are understood to be as much a product of the desire to alter the world as to reproduce an 'activist' identity, we can observe the idealism which has arrived in the present via anarcho-punk and elements of the counterculture before it. More than joyous abandon and a context for the expression of a queer identity, frivolity, states of undress and other improprieties are tactical precisely because they constitute *extreme performances* – offering a radical visual, sonic and corporeal contrast to the agents of the state, whose own contradictions, hierarchy, violence and oppressive measures are effectively outed. Of course, this is an ideal perspective which discounts the power of the corporate media to routinely 'dress' the state and perhaps even re-establish its dignity and control. What is important here is that the body is the principal vehicle

of dissent, arresting the senses of those who witness, from bystanders to police and perhaps even the viewing audience of Fox News. Via a street theatre of the absurd, through the extreme juxtaposition presented by horizontally networked cartoon-like or naked freaks and the immaculately attired representatives of the state, the tactically frivolous like the Tute Bianche, Pink and Silver and Bare Witness, actively expose the power of the state.

By the turn of the millennium, absurdist techniques would proliferate. In Quebec City, April 2001, a group wearing cooking pots on their heads, and calling themselves the 'Medieval Bloc', manoeuvred a giant catapult which launched soft toys over the high fence separating protesters from the FTAA summit. Such pranksters, like Philadelphia's Revolutionary Anarchist Clown Bloc, and others performing an 'irresistible resistance',[28] were harnessing the power of laughter, dispelling fear and enabling courage. These groups would influence the UK's Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA),[29] an apotheosis of fools founded in November 2003 to 'celebrate' Bush's visit to the UK. Disenchanted with direct action tactics, CIRCA claims that 'rebel clowning' is a 'serious attempt to develop a form of civil disobedience that breaks down the binary and oppositional thinking that is still so inherent in protest movements' (Kolonel Klepto and Major Up Evil, 2006, p. 244). Another path veering from the strictly confrontational is that of 'conscious partying', the practice advocated by London's Synergy Project[30] founder Steve Peake. Less confrontational than RTS – where the rave party was recruited in the service of the cause – a multi-genred dance/music space is a context for the transmission or reproduction of values. For groups like CIRCA, the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (formed by several CIRCA members), or the Synergy Project, 'the psyche, the body and the streets should be seen', state CIRCA's Kolonel Klepto and Major Up Evil (2006, p. 247), 'as equally important zones of struggle and areas in need of radical transformation'. Combining 'the ancient art of clowning with contemporary forms of civil disobedience' the approach recognizes the importance of revivifying the activist sense of self, at the same time as being an effective direct action technique.

Tactical frivolity, dancing, clowning and other extreme performances are part of a protestival tradition, which, as Baz Kershaw (1997) demonstrates in his analysis of the dramaturgies of protest (and the theatricalization of politics) from 1968 to 1989, has evolved since the 1960s (see also Scalmer, 2002). The carnival would become implicated in alternative media, a protean exemplar of 'the people' *being* 'the media'. The propitious carnival on the lawns of the White House on 9 May 1970 was, unlike regular carnivals, 'beyond the law', contextualizing an unlicensed and transgressive demonstration. The intervention would be more 'other directed' than carnival, since not only 'a face-to-face statement against the most powerful authority', it would be 'a gesture made for the media, an image that can be captured and transmitted through the world's airwaves, reproduced and read across national boundaries' (Kershaw, 1997, p. 263). The 1960s could be seen as a context for the emergence of proto 'dramas of protest' which 'in the form of procession or occupation' were events which 'became multi-vocal, polyphonic, as much an expression of difference as unity'. Events were fuelled by a new dramaturgy, practitioners of which would include the Bread and Puppet Theatre, the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Inspired by Brecht and Artaud, guerrilla theatre 'spoke of the power of the symbolic to penetrate the real, to intervene so fundamentally in the real as to render its hegemonic oppressions entirely transparent and so subject to radical change' (1997, p. 264). Yippies Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman (who wrote *Revolution for the Hell of It* [1968]), were leading theorists

and practitioners of media stunts – such as the infamous 'Raising the Pentagon' in 1967 – events which 'always aim for a radical liminality which draws authority into a new relation with the potential for change initiated *beyond its domain*' (1997, p. 275, emphasis in original).

The Domain Beyond Starts Here: Towards Another World

Protestivals are designed to make a difference in the world. Themselves 'other worlds', they constitute pragmatic efforts to render 'the official world' transparent, while simultaneously demonstrating that 'Another World is Possible'.[31] Appropriating the cultural legacy of 'the people's second world', as anarchistic laboratories and storehouses of action far from unofficial domains residing comfortably adjacent to business as usual, the Carnivals Against Capital and For Global Justice are autonomous convergence sites. By aesthetically and collectively de-reifying high streets, corporate centres and summits of power, re-inscribing such places in the name of 'the people', 'democracy', 'peace', 'justice', etc., such reclamations seek fundamental alterations in the composition of the official world (neo-liberalism). Here, the 'culture of laughter' and the language of the carnival are not related in a regenerational fashion to official culture, since it is intended to be generative of an alternative future.

'Another world' would indeed come to life during the other world of the carnival. As protest dramas these events would resemble those which Kershaw (1997, 264) identifies as being 'increasingly aimed to produce for both participants and spectators an image of an experience that gave a glimpse of the future as pure freedom from the constraints of the real, a hint of utopia'. The Global Days of Action and other convergence spaces would constitute a *freedom from* corporate fundamentalism enabling a *freedom to* experiment with alternatives. The inversion generated in these 'plateau events' (Chesters, 2003) makes possible a subversive or subjunctive mood. In the context of a 'progressive public transgression', the inversion of hierarchies, the reversal of binaries, and the wearing of masks are 'ultimately capable of serving a much greater purpose: allowing subjects to enter a liminal realm of freedom and in so doing create a space for critique that would otherwise not be possible in "normal" society' (Bruner, 2005, p. 136, 140). As N30 in Seattle and ensuing events effectively problematized the ideology of 'free trade', breaking 'the spell of inevitability and unquestioned authority of global capital' (Butigan, 2000, p. 47), they would become heavily mediated moments for the exploration and dissemination of alternative approaches. At convergence after convergence, familiar patterns emerged. At S11 Melbourne (11–13 September 2000), activists 'embraced the power of the carnival to "de-naturalize" the rhythms and expectations of everyday life … upsetting conventional expectations' with regard to appropriate behaviour around Crown Casino (Scalmer & Iveson, 2001, p. 229). At the convergence space dubbed the 'hori-zone' (since it was a horizontal space) at Gleneagles for the 2005 G8 summit, temporary autonomous neighbourhoods facilitated, through direct action, spokescouncils, Indymedia and the preference for 'direct' over 'representative' democracy (and 'revolutionary' politics), a 'living alternative to capitalism' (Pickerill & Chatterton, 2006, p. 9), in a way not unlike the squats, housing cooperatives, social centres, health clinics and other autonomous projects which 'allow an unpacking of the power working at different levels through governments, corporations and local elites' (2006, p. 7). Only now, like a spectacular anarchist carnival.

Returning to the Carnival Against Capitalism in Quebec, April 2001, 'another world' emerged as the 'old world' was exposed. In his report of the events, Brian Holmes states: 'so many individuals – from the blackest-clad anarchists to teachers, local residents, intellectuals, artists, children, average folks if there were such a thing – all felt the need to touch the violence of the state, to feel and shake the wall it builds around corporate interests, to taste the tear gas it spits into the faces of the crowd' (2003, p. 347). Such an experience is revelatory since it compels inquiry: 'How to create new forms of expression, exchange, and debate? How to maintain them over time? How and where – at what scale – to institute new spheres of popular decision-making, and how to link these spheres together in the planetary society?' (2003, p. 347). Holmes further describes how such a sensationally autonomous time-out-of-time enabled the kind of reflection formative to alternative organizational forms:

> The ethics, the intelligence, the analysis, the openness, the energy, the creativity, the disruptiveness, and the violence of this dissidence are changing my life, changing the lives of everyone touched by it, from near and far. The stakes are the autonomy and coexistence of all the varieties of human time, against the clock and grid of market exchanges. When we reflect, read, and debate for years, not as experts but as passionate amateurs, it's a very different kind of time. When we dance all night around a huge fire beneath a freeway bridge, drumming with rocks and sticks, it's a different kind of time. When we talk between the bursts of tear gas and the intense work of our own projects, we open up an infinite well of freedom. We are fighting for another time, and for each other's time. (2003, p. 347)

Quebec, he enthuses, was 'the biggest party you've ever seen, maybe the beginnings of a new political party. It was collective Dionysian political theatre. And everyone knows it' (2003, p. 350). The statement suggests that one cannot comprehend the experience until one becomes a part of it.

And as the protestival becomes a direct assault on neo-liberal agendas, the carnival becomes a threat to the state, with its agents seeking either to make its meetings impregnable, or eliminate the cause of disruption and embarrassment. In the first instance, conference centres are transformed into maximum security operations, protected with higher fences, more water cannons, tear gas, and other non-lethal crowd-control weapons, and with greater numbers of police and so-called 'pop-up armies' (Warren, 2002) whose tactics include 'kettling' (trapping and separating) protest participants, and enforcing 'no-protest' and 'free speech' zones. Surveillance increases, public transport systems are shut down, activists are detained or turned back at national borders (for instance, at Prague, the Czech Republic completely shut down its borders to anyone suspected of being a protestor), and suspected protest leaders are arrested pre-emptively. When these efforts at shutting down mobility and silencing opposition fail, political leaders and transnational financial organizations seek to reconvene at isolated and inaccessible locations. In November 2001, the WTO ministerial was held in Doha in the Middle Eastern Kingdom of Qatar. In June 2002, the G8 summit was held high on Alberta's impenetrable Kananaskis. And in June 2001, the World Bank meeting was convened on the Internet (instead of Barcelona, as originally planned). In the second instance, far from overseeing its incorporation (as in the tradition of carnival), the state seeks to crush the carnival of protest. This can happen in various ways. Firstly, through

increasingly brutal and repressive measures. In Washington (16 April 2000 – IMF meeting), Philadelphia (29 July 2000 – Republican National Convention), London (J18) and Gothenburg (15 June 2001 – EU summit) police raided convergence centres, confiscating food, equipment, art, etc. At Genoa, 100 people were beaten in their sleeping bags at the independent media centre (sixty-one hospitalized) and a protestor was shot dead. And repression occurs through more covert methods. Italian police are widely suspected to have infiltrated the Black Bloc at Genoa, with *agents provocateurs* manipulating events to justify brutal suppression (Juris, 2005, p. 422). On occasion, all participants in a Global Day of Action are held accountable for the aggressive actions of a few (e.g. Black Bloc), undermining the legitimacy of the protest action, and criminalizing dissent. Often ignoring peaceful protest, the media focus on images of violence, constructing a new form of folk devil whose own social, political and ethical grievances are silenced and discredited through their association with criminal behaviour (Donson *et al.*, 2004). As Juris (2005, p. 423) points out, the mass media 'appropriate and reinterpret images of protest violence as "senseless", defining its purveyors as social problems rather than legitimate actors'. Furthermore, especially since the masked faces of the Black Bloc have been reported to 'operate as signs of a "savage other", resonating with received terrorism iconography' (2005, p. 423) the protestival is regarded as an official threat to the state,[32] a response consistent with efforts by the right to assimilate elements of the alter-globalization movement with networked terrorism (Holmes, 2004, p. 349). In 2002, the FBI added the Carnival Against Capital to its list of 'most wanted' terrorist groups (in Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 179). Since then, 'homeland security' measures in the USA and the UK's Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (2005) (authorizing 'protest free zones' around parliament) have further enshrined the carnival as an enemy of the state.

Conclusion

As an unpredictable intervention, the 'other world' of carnival envelopes and destabilizes neo-liberal centres and spectacles. A protestival most apparent in the Global Day of Action, it has flourished in recent history in the face of efforts to repress it. While this action template inherits much from the 'symbolic challenges' posed by post-1960s social movements, the contemporary challenge is performed within the context of a complex confrontation with neo-liberalism, signified by the resurgence of global autonomism, anarchism and direct action. New social movement theory needs to keep up with these developments. While NSM theorists have recognized the significance of movement culture and symbolism, new approaches are needed to understand the festal and transnational character of contemporary activism, especially that associated with the alter-globalization movement. Recently scholars have indicated that summit sieges, autonomous convergences and other recent reflexive events constitute transnational 'carnivalesque rituals', politico-religious 'pilgrimage' destinations, and alternative spatializations critical to the renewed opposition to capitalism. In this contribution to the study of the performative dimensions of contemporary protest, I have suggested that the idea of 'protestival' provides a suitable heuristic to enable comprehension of carnivals of protest; those moments which are simultaneously transgressive and progressive, against and for; which are ultimately expositional and revelatory of the workings of capital and war-bent administrations; and which demonstrate the legacy of the avant-garde – from the

practices of the Situationist International, and alternative theatre, to RTS and the extreme performances of the Carnivals Against Capitalism and For Global Justice. Tactics of the margins and the marginal, these protest carnivals are a means via which 'centres' are targeted and 'summits' scaled, through which the vulnerabilities of the powerful are exploited, contradictions exposed and truths unmasked – means all the more important in a period (post-9/11) when fear-based ideologies are successfully mobilized to legitimate violence (war and repression) and mask the systemic acquisition and control of finite global resources.

Notes

1. The PGA was a decentralized and autonomous philosophy, the idea for which was born at the 2nd International Encounter for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism (or *encuentro*) held in Spain in 1997 by Zapatista supporters in the Italian Ya Basta! (or Tute Bianche). The PGA was founded in Geneva in February 1998 (see Style, 2004).
2. The title reproduces that of Jerry Rubin's book published in 1971: *We Are Everywhere* (New York: Harper & Row). Among several other recent books on this movement, the collection edited by Eddie Yuen *et al.* (2004) offers a comprehensive evaluation of what is acknowledged as 'unfinished history'.
3. Pers. comm. John Jacobs has been heavily involved with numerous anarchist and artistic projects in Sydney, including the Jellyheads alternative music project, Vibe Tribe, Sydney Reclaim the Streets, Catalyst community activist technology project (http://conway.cat.org.au/), and Wheelie Good Sound System (http://www.wheely.cat.org.au/).
4. Paul Routledge (2003, p. 341) calls the former 'localized global actions' where different movements and resistance groups coordinate around a particular issue or event in a particular place, and the latter 'globalized local actions' – initiatives that transpire in different locations around the globe in support of particular local struggles, or against particular targets (which may or may not occur simultaneously).
5. These transhumant pilgrimages to rural, remote or exotic locations would become the signature of more recent festal cultures, such as the European and North American techno music festivals known as 'teknivals' (Rietveld, 1998), Nevada's Burning Man festival (Gilmore & Van Proyen, 2005), or the psychedelic trance (or 'psy-trance') festivals whose antecedents journeyed the Eastern-oriented 'hippie trail' (especially that terminating in the former Portuguese colony of Goa) (see D'Andrea, 2004).
6. The incident, known as 'the Battle of the Beanfield', transpired a decade after police brutally repressed the Windsor Free Festival, with both events, as McKay (1996, p. 33) points out, following Conservative action taken against striking miners.
7. Unless by this we mean its own survival (as in a human species whose perpetuity is reliant upon the maintenance of ecological balance and harmonious inter-ethnic relations).
8. Shantz paraphrases the Preamble to the Constitution of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).
9. As discussed elsewhere (St John, 2003). See also Martin (2002).
10. For further discussion on the historical merger of music subcultures and political activism, see McKay (2007) on street music and marching bands.
11. The comment came following protests at the EU summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, in June 2001. The phrase was subsequently adopted by protestors.
12. Though it should be acknowledged that campaigns mounted on the geographic margins continue to expose the hypocrisies and injustices of industry and government. For example, in Australia, the campaign opposing the Jabiluka Uranium mine in the Northern Territory's Kakadu National Park in 1998, Earthdream 2000 in central Australia (St John, 2005), and the 2002 Festival of Freedom at South Australia's Woomera Detention Centre (see Monson, 2003), all served to illuminate the environmentally damaging, racially prejudiced and oppressive policies of the Howard government.
13. Wombles (White Overall Movement Building Liberations through Effective Struggle), Available at http://www.wombles.org.uk/
14. Activists 'bricked up' the building, cementing bricks to a height of five feet, resulting in the evacuation of the building (Blissant, 2006).
15. For an incomplete (as in not updated) Global Days of Action list, see http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/global/index.htm

16. A precursor to the 'tactical mobile rhythmical unit', the Infernal Noise Brigade (INB), which formed for N30. The INB is addressed by McKay (2007) in a discussion of the politically regressive and progressive characteristics of protests.

17. See St John (2007) for an elaboration of punk and hardcore activism.

18. See http://rts.gn.apc.org/evol.htm. The italicized sentence closely paraphrases Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*, for whom the carnival celebrated 'temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions … hostile to all that was immortalised and completed' (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 10).

19. As most famously articulated in the essays of *The TAZ* (1991). 'Chaos: The Broadsheets of Ontological Anarchism', the 'Communiques of the Association for Ontological Anarchy' and the poetic tract 'The Temporary Autonomous Zone' were collectively published as *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* in 1991. See http://www.hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont.html

20. Which would attend to ending the US-led occupation of Iraq and express concern for the growing likelihood of an attack on Iran.

21. Of course, outcomes are predicated upon formalized movement processes and structures (from 'spokescouncils' to the World Social Forum and proliferating regional social forums), which are themselves subject to intense debate (see Sen *et al.*, 2004).

22. Bruner cites the Orange Alternative in Poland in the 1980s along with alter-globalization activists.

23. Which might include the 'subvertisements' of the Billboard Liberation Front or Adbusters (Lasn, 1999), the 'shopping interventions' of Reverend Billy and his Church of Stop Shopping (Lane, 2002), the electronic civil disobedience of the Critical Art Ensemble (1994, 1996) and so-called 'smart mobs' (Rheingold, 2002).

24. An example was when members of CodePINK attempted to deliver a mock coffin to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's house in Washington DC on 19 March 2003, the night the invasion of Iraq began. Dressed in their characteristic pink, these female anti-war activists held dolls wrapped in red-stained blankets (signifying dead Iraqi children). For CodePINK see http://www.codepink4peace.org

25. The White Overalls emerged in September 1994 when activists took to the streets of Milan dressed in ghostly white overalls, after the mayor ordered the eviction of the Leoncavello social centre stating: 'from now on, squatters will be nothing more than ghosts wandering about the city' (Ainger *et al.*, 2003, p. 43). Associated with the Italian autonomist-Marxist movement, the Tute Bianche would later give birth to the *Disobbedienti* and influence the UK's Wombles.

26. A convergence organized by the Genoa Social Forum to coincide with the G8 summit, and which saw 300,000 people take to the streets.

27. See http://www.barewitness.org/

28. Like the parodic Billionaires for Bush; see http://www.billionairesforbush.com/

29. See http://www.clownarmy.org/. More recently CIRCA brigades have formed in the US focusing on border control issues: http://circasd.org/us-clown-brigades.html

30. See http://www.thesynergyproject.org/

31. The slogan embraced by participants of the World Social Forum, first held in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil (when the annual World Economic Forum met in Davos, Switzerland).

32. In May 2001 the Director of the FBI stated before the Senate that 'Anarchist and extremist socialist groups – many of which, such as the Workers World Party, Reclaim the Streets and Carnival Against Capitalism – have an international presence and, at times, also represent a potential threat to the United States.' Statement for the record, Lious J. Freeh, Director, FBI, on the threat of terrorism to the USA. US Senate Committees in Appropriations, Armed Services and Select Committee on Intelligence, 10 May 2001. See http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress01/freeh051001.htm.

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