On the Materiality of Festivity

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KEYWORDS

celebrations

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1. Reference to Arjun Appadurai, "The Thing Itself," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (1 January 2006): 15–22; and Peter-Paul Verbeek, "Introduction: To the Things Themselves," in *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2005).

When I tell some folks that I am a historian who specializes in gender and sexuality and celebration studies and investigates drag pageants and carnivals I am sometimes met with puzzled looks. On occasion, I have to dispel awkward interactions with people who seem to think that my work is not "serious" enough with something along the lines of: "What can I say? I like shiny and colorful things." After a while I began to proudly embrace that description. I used to think that it was the adjectives that mattered in that sentence. Yet, as the process of guest editing this issue progressed, I became more conscious of the importance of the "things" themselves.¹ Things allow my fairy research godmother, Paty Piñata, to transform prosaic materials into magnificent scepters, crowns, swords, and wings through which I live *la fantasía* with her (fig. 1). Harnesses help me immediately identify the Lords of Leather contingent in Southern Decadence's pageantry (fig. 2). Outfits and emblem designs distinguish the different groups of devotees in the Guadalupana celebrations (figs. 3 and 4). Colors, shapes, and banners also help us affirm our affiliation and solidarity with particular struggles and causes (figs. 5 and 6). Crowns and makeup build queens and kings (figs. 7–9).

Figure 1. [Paty Piñata's](#) Chronos look for the "Mythology" challenge of the digital drag competition [Toma mi Dinerita](#). July 2020. Photo by [Christian Jhovanny Camacho](#). Figure 2. Lords of Leather contingent at the New Orleans Southern Decadence parade. New Orleans (USA), September 2015. Author's photo.

Figure 3. "El Viejo de la danza." Fiestas Guadalupanas (Celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe). Monterrey (Mexico), December 2017. Figure 4. A family's altar at the Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Fiestas Guadalupanas. San Pedro Garza García (Mexico), December 2017. Author's photos.

Figure 5. "Marcha de la Diversidad Monterrey." March/parade to celebrate sexual diversity. Monterrey (Mexico), June 2019. Figure 6. "Não Vai Ter Golpe!" In Brazil, and especially in Bahia, political protests are often accompanied by music, dancing, and capoeira. This was one of the many protests that occurred throughout the country to try to stop the impeachment of (or coup against) President Dilma Rousseff. The color red, as well as the white star and the number 13 symbolize the Worker's Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores/PT). Salvador (Brazil), April 2016. Author's photos.

Figure 7. Mexican artist/performer Bracho getting ready for a drag performance as their character [Silvana Proietti](#). Austin (USA), March 2020. Figure 8. Drag performer and activist Alfredo Baez getting ready to perform at a Drag Queen Story Hour event as his character [Lilith Bardó](#). Ciudad Apodaca (Mexico), July 2019. Author's photos. Figure 9. Queen Richard IV ([Richard "Rain" Perez](#)) at the IV annual Order of Osiris ball. Mobile (USA), 1985. Author unknown.

2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Science Brief: SARS-CoV-2 and Surface (Fomite) Transmission for Indoor Community Environments," Updated April 5, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/science-and-research/surface-transmission.html>.

3. Laura Forlano, "Towards an Integrated Theory of the Cyber-Urban Digital Materiality and Networked Media at Multiple Scales," *Digital Culture & Society* 1, no. 1 (2015): 73–92.

4. The Times Picayune and The New Orleans Advocate, *Porches on Parade: How House Floats Saved Mardi Gras* (Battle Ground, WA: Pediment Publishing, 2021); and Mobile Porch Parade, *Mobile's Porch Parade: The Oldest Carnival in America Celebrated in a New Style* (Battle Ground, WA: Pediment Publishing, 2021).

5. Leandro Boechat, "Mesmo proibido, olhai por nós: Liberdade de expressão, censura e religião no carnaval carioca," *Policromias – Revista de Estudos do Discurso, Imagem e Som* (December 2020): 819–32.

I believe I started conceiving this introduction when I wrote the [call for papers \(CFP\) for the current issue](#) almost two years ago. At that time, I was teaching Philosophy of Design to interior and industrial design students. Ontological debates regarding the nature and agency of material culture and/or materiality oriented that class and became an intellectual concern of mine, so I initially planned to write something that engaged more deeply with that scholarship. Yet this past year I was constantly confronted by the empirical consequences of things. Hence, this introduction is informed and shaped instead by the experience of spending the past festive season (winter or summer, depending on the reader's geographical location) at a time when public celebrations were canceled and denounced as super-spreaders of a deadly virus (itself unquestionably part of the matter that composes the world we inhabit). Also, despite studies affirming that the surface contact spread of the COVID-19 virus is not that significant, objects have become a source of anxiety to many.² Not to mention how the pandemic changed the way we eat and dress, the places we occupy, and how we physically interact with other bodies.

I wondered what would happen to celebrations, which seemed to have all migrated to a virtual setting (not necessarily immaterial, as Laura Furlano would attest),³ and to the material things that made them possible. I followed on social media how friends and acquaintances on the US Gulf Coast devised "porch parades" by recycling, borrowing, and renting the bits of floats and decorations that would have composed the canceled Mardi Gras parades.⁴ I learned how to cheer virtually for Mexican friends competing in digital drag contests. Walking on the beach in Lauro de Freitas (Brazil) on February 3, the day after the Iemanjá celebration, I witnessed the material records left by those who had placed their offerings to the goddess of the sea the night before, even though public festivities were canceled there as well. That reminded me of one of the most iconic moments in Rio de Janeiro's Carnaval, when, in 1989, the artist Joãozinho Trinta wrapped an image of the city's famous Christ statue in black plastic with the inscription "Mesmo Proibido, Olhai Por Nós!" (Even forbidden, look after us!) after a court order secured by Rio de Janeiro's archdiocese prohibited him from displaying Jesus as a beggar in the parade (fig. 10).⁵ This year, we needed the mother-goddess's blessings more than ever, when a government's criminal negligence resulted in the unnecessary loss of so many lives. At the small, controlled,

and officially sanctioned ceremony in Salvador, Iemanjá's devotees used the procession to denounce the government and mourn the grim landmark of 224,504 COVID-19-related deaths the country had reached by February 2, 2021 (we have since more than doubled that figure) (figs. 11 and 12).

Figure 10. Parade by the Escola de Samba (Samba School) Beija Flor. Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), February 1989. By Orlando Abrunhosa (Creative Commons).

Figure 11: Boat carrying a black flag in protest of the COVID-19 deaths in Brazil at Iemanjá Day celebration. Salvador (Brazil), February 2021. By Arisson Marinho, courtesy of [Jornal Correio](https://jornalcorreio.com.br).*

6. The 1996 inaugural editorial for the *Journal of Material Culture* defined material culture studies as “interdisciplinary research in ways in which artifacts are implicated in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social identities” and as the “investigation of the relationship between people and things irrespective of time and place.” “Editorial,” *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 1 (March 1996): 5–14. Daniel Miller defends material culture’s “freedom from disciplinary foundations and boundaries” and “diversity of its subject matter.” Daniel Miller, *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (London: Routledge, 2003), 4. The diversity of approaches and themes covered by the first two issues of the *Journal of Festive Studies* already attest to the interdisciplinarity of the field. In pieces for the journal’s inaugural issue, Alessandro Testa mentioned the “legion” of “scholars of sometimes very different disciplinary perspectives ... investigating festivals or simply acknowledging the importance of festivals for the study of societal configurations;” while Laurent Sébastien Fournier pointed out that a “growing number of academic disciplines have been concerned with” festive studies “in the last decades.” Alessandro Testa, “Doing Research on Festivals: Cui Bono?,” *Journal of Festive Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019): 6; and Laurent Sébastien Fournier, “Traditional Festivals: From European Ethnology to Festive Studies,” *Journal of Festive Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019): 17.

7. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to*

Figure 12: 2019 Iemanjá Day celebration. Salvador (Brazil). By Marina Silva, courtesy of [Jornal Correio*](https://www.jornalcorreio.com.br).

A little over two years ago, in an email accepting Aurélie Godet’s invitation to guest edit this special edition of the *Journal of Festive Studies* (JFS), I commented: “This could be a truly interdisciplinary collaboration.” The brilliant contributions we received confirmed that prediction. Our CFP invited works that considered the material record of celebrations “from all time periods and geographical areas,” noting that we welcomed “submissions of original research and analysis rooted in a variety of fields.” In addition to traditional academic articles, we invited materials that incorporated different media. While we suggested a few possible questions and avenues of inquiry, we were not sure exactly what to expect from submissions to an issue that combined two fields of study that are, at their cores, so diverse and interdisciplinary.⁶ Even though all three of this issue’s editors are historians, we have very different backgrounds and approach our understanding of both materiality and celebrations in different ways, so we were each excited to see what the other collaborators would bring to this dialogue.

In reviewing the submissions, we agreed to define materiality and material culture in the broadest way possible, not necessarily adhering to any particular theoretical framework. Personally, I believe the current moment urges a broad definition that considers the importance and agency of the nonhuman world and the interconnectedness of different objects/subjects while decentering human-centric discourses, based not only on European theories (such as Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory/ANT), but also on indigenous epistemologies that have, for quite some time, recognized the importance of nonhuman actors and our interdependence.⁷ Hence, I agree with Daniel Miller’s call for a definition of materiality that goes beyond artifacts “to consider the large compass of materiality, the ephemeral, the imaginary, the biological, and the theoretical; all that which would have been external to the simple definition of an artifact.” I also support new materialists’ defense of a “cultural theory that does not privilege matter over meaning or culture over nature” and is free from reductive dualisms.⁸

Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); "On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications," *Soziale Welt* 47 (1996): 369–81; and "On Recalling Ant," *Sociological Review* 47, no. 1 (May 1999): 15–25. See also Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Gloria Elizabeth Chacón, "Material Culture, Indigeneity, and Temporality," *Textual Cultures* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 49–69; Denise Y. Arnold and Elvira Espejo Ayka, *El textil tridimensional: La naturaleza del tejido como objeto y como sujeto* (La Paz: Instituto De Lengua y Cultura Aymara, 2013); Andrew M. Jones and Nicole Boivin, "The Malice of Inanimate Objects: Material Agency," in D. Hicks and M. C. Beaudr, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Frank Trentmann, "Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices, and Politics," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 283–307; Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019).

8. Daniel Miller, "Materiality: An Introduction," in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 4; and Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 85. See also Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

As far as I can tell, this is the first compilation of materiality of festivity studies. Yet several scholars (from a variety of disciplines) have previously investigated the material record of celebrations in different contexts and from different perspectives. While Neil Jarman analyzed how banners and flags display identity through color in Belfast's Orange Parade, Nir Avieli questioned why we consume (or abstain from consuming) certain foods during festivities in a discussion of Protestant Christmas celebrations in central Vietnam. By dissecting the polemics surrounding a photograph of two *baianas de receptivo* (women who serve as hosts at private and public events dressed in traditional Afro-Brazilian garb) working at the birthday party of a white Brazilian socialite, Vanessa Castañeda revealed a process of "double erasure of agency" of Black Bahian women. Castañeda's keen reading of the misinterpretations of the *baianas'* garments and labor provides a lesson in the importance of "the careful and political act of listening." Discussing Cape Town's Minstrel Carnival, Nadia Davids not only looked at the revelers' bodies as a space where race is performed but also at how the city's changing landscapes, the product of sociopolitical changes and turmoil, affected the celebration and its revelers' use of space. Patricia Tamara Alleyne-Dettmer claimed the centrality of masking to the celebration of Mas (in Trinidadian and in Notting Hill's Carnivals). Ellie Reid surveyed and contextualized the material culture of British historical pageants. Laurie A. Wilkie centered a whole archaeology textbook on Mardi Gras beads, while David Redmond wrote an ethnographic account (and produced a documentary feature) that covers the lifespan of the plastic adornment from its exploitative production in China to the sexual economy involving its exchange on Bourbon Street during New Orleans' Mardi Gras. Dominic Horsfall and Katerina Kerestetzi argued that "place and setting can influence religious practices" and rituals in their analysis of the relation between materiality, spatiality, and feeling in Afro-American religions, while Frederico G. Settler examined the use and meaning of quotidian objects in new South African religious movements.⁹ This is by no means an exhaustive list of works that have, in some way, investigated how materiality (very broadly defined) affects and is affected by our celebratory practices. Yet, a space where different approaches to the theme could be placed in dialogue was overdue.

The variety of methodologies and subjects covered in this issue attests to the potential of this topic. Individually, the collaborations reveal the infinite possibility of an exciting new field. In conjunction, they form a more complete picture of a fruitful interdisciplinary and transnational conversation about the material record of celebrations. At first, I was not sure how the pieces of this puzzle fit together, but it was fascinating to start finding the connections between works that apparently didn't have much in common. (On a personal note, I would love to discuss the similarities and differences between the coronations of King George, Regias del Drag, and Mobile Mardi Gras with Danielle Kinsey and Laura Patricia Alvarez.)

The articles section begins with a look at how some of Rio de Janeiro's revelers, contending with Jair Bolsonaro's necropolitics, reinvented their celebratory practices and inverted Brazil's street/home Carnival dichotomy this past festive season.¹⁰ By showing that the carnivalesque is political, especially in moments of crisis, this piece would just as likely be at home in [JFS #2](#). Yet, by using netnography to analyze the digital materialities of the COVID-19-era celebrations, ethnomusicologist Andrew Snyder brings an important dimension to this issue's dialogue on the nature of festive materialities.¹¹

9. Neil Jarman, "Material of Culture, Fabric of Identity," in *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, ed. Daniel Miller (London: Routledge, 2003), 121–45; and Nir Avieli, "At Christmas We Don't Like Pork, Just Like the MacCabees': Festive Food and Religious Identity at the Protestant Christmas Picnic in Hoi An," *Journal of Material Culture* 14, no. 2 (June 2009): 219–41; Vanessa Castañeda, "Mucamas or Baianas?: Black Female Empowerment and Cultural Representation in Bahia," *The Latin Americanist* 65, no. 1 (2021): 9; Nadia Davids, "It Is Us: An Exploration of 'Race' and Place in the Cape Town Minstrel Carnival," *TDR/The Drama Review* 57, no. 2 (2013): 86–101; Patricia Tamara Alleyne-Dettmers, "Ancestral Voices: Trevini - A Case Study of Meta-masking in the Notting Hill Carnival" *Journal of Material Culture* 3, no. 2 (2016): 201–21; Ellie Reid, "After the Show is Over ... Souvenirs and Mementos: The Material Culture of Historical Pageants," in *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, ed. Bartie, Angela, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton, and Paul Readman (London: UCL Press, 2020); Laurie A. Wilkie, *Strung Out on Archaeology: An Introduction to Archaeological Research* (London: Routledge, 2014); David Redmon, *Beads, Bodies, and Trash: Public Sex, Global Labor, and the Disposability of Mardi Gras* (London: Routledge, 2015), and *Mardi Gras: Made in China*, directed by David Redmon (Boston: Carnavalesque Films, 2005); Dominic Horsfall and Katerina Kerestetzki, "The Spirit of a Place: Materiality, Spatiality,

A few pieces here investigate race and performance and pageantry in the Americas. Latin Americanist Miguel Valerio takes us back to eighteenth-century northeastern Brazil to show how *pardo* brothers (mixed-race Afro-Brazilians) defended their maligned racial identity and asserted their place in a racist society through pageantry and displays of devotion and affluence. Valerio also makes an important intervention by discussing the correlation (or lack of correlation) between material wealth and social status for people of color in Latin America, and by showing "how subaltern subjects" leverage the material culture of celebrations "to make potent statements about their subjectivities, or understanding of their personhood, sense of belonging, and beliefs, as well as their economic and artistic agency." While the argument is made here specifically in relation to early modern festivals in colonial Latin America, this framework is useful for other times and places.

It is reflected, for instance, in Maggie Washington's "claims to the streets and public places" in Wilmington, North Carolina (USA), as shown in cultural historian Elijah Gaddis's analysis of the Jonkonnu masking tradition in the US South in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. Both pieces show how, by occupying public spaces, marginalized groups of people were able to assert their places in different racist societies. Gaddis links the evolution of the celebration to sociopolitical developments and shows how the processional celebrations of Wilmington's Black community served as an "exercise in civic power." The piece's discussion of white racist appropriation and mocking performances of Blackness, and of the US South's "infrastructural white supremacy," is carried on in my collaboration with musicologist Emily Ruth Allen. Our piece articulates the importance of pageantry and public performances in perpetuating racist discourses in Mobile, Alabama (USA), in the second half of the twentieth century, claiming that parades, processions, and other material elements of the city's Mardi Gras pageantry have served as memorials and monuments to the Lost Cause of the Confederacy. The two articles complement each other as our study brings Gaddis's story to the more recent past, establishing a longer tradition of white supremacist/racist/appropriative performances in the region.

We end this section that deals with race and processional culture (as Gaddis articulated it) with a historical sketch of the Danza Azteca-Chichimeca by Chicano activist, danzante Mexika, and historian Ruben A. Arellano. Arellano shows how the body can serve as a conduit of memory and a space of resistance, community building, and honoring ancestors on both sides of the US–Mexico border. The piece also points out how the material elements of the performance/ritual such as vestments, incense, and musical instruments have different meanings to different audiences and how indigenous epistemologies are transmitted through bodily practices across generations.¹² As Renzo Aroni Sulca and Margot Olavarria noted in their study of the Ayacucho Carnival, "The remembrance of the recent past flows through music and dance, which involve the body itself as the raw material of corporeal and social memory."¹³

Moving away from historical investigations to ethnographic explorations of festivities, the collaborative piece by anthropologist Juana de Oliveira Santos, geographer/Latin Americanist María Elena Martínez-Torres, and anthropo-sociologist/Latin Americanist Maristela Oliveira de Andrade provides a bridge from the Americas to Europe in a comparative study of two sea urchin festivals, the Suape Bay Ouriçada (Brazil) and the Carry-le-Rouet Oursinade (France). Their article also skillfully connects materiality theory and celebration studies to "challenge the culture-

and Feeling in Afro-American Religions," *Journal de la Société des américanistes* 104, no. 1 (2018): ix–xxvi; Federico G. Settler, "Race and Materiality in African Religious Contexts," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 31, no. 2 (2018): 36–56.

10. See Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, trans. John Drury (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

11. See Forlano, "Towards an Integrated Theory." On "netnography," or internet-based ethnography, see Leesa Costello, Marie-Louise McDermott, and Ruth Wallace, "Netnography: Range of Practices, Misperceptions, and Missed Opportunities," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (2017); Patricia Zavella, *The Movement for Reproductive Justice Empowering Women of Color through Social Activism* (New York: NYU Press, 2020); and Tom Boellstorff, *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

12. While looking at a completely different experience and place, Nadia Davids articulates this well in an analysis of Cape Town's Minstrel Carnival. Davids, "It Is Us."

13. Renzo Aroni Sulca and Margot Olavarria, "Choreography of a Massacre: Memory and Performance in the Ayacucho Carnival," *Latin American Perspectives* 43, no. 6 (2016): 53.

14. Jerry T. Watkins III, "Queer

nature dichotomy." Another collaboration (this time between two cultural anthropologists) that investigates transnational iterations of a particular phenomenon, Graham St John and Botond Vitos's exploration of Dada's legacy to the Burning Man phenomenon, uses art projects in Israel and Germany as case studies. As a series of events centered around the building and destruction of spaces and artifacts, "Burner" culture in general already provides a rich text for an analysis of materiality. Yet the authors' description and analysis of specific performances and installations related to excrement and waste provide an interesting avenue for exploring this issue's topic.

Barbara Grabher also views a contemporary celebration through an anthropologist's lenses, discussing a specific iteration of a larger celebratory phenomenon. The LGBT50 Celebration of Hull, UK City of Culture, that Grabher examines can be understood as part of the larger group of LGBTQIA+ Pride events that take place in different parts of the globe. By providing a critical analysis of the use of (or refusal to use) rainbow colors in the physical manifestations of an event dedicated to celebrating LGBTQIA+ identity and expressions, Grabher contributes to an important conversation about the pitfalls of "pink capitalism." This "bourgeois neoliberal identity politics" that "led to a rainbowification of everything," as Jerry T. Watkins III would put it, is a process that can often lead to accommodationist assimilationism rather than radical change.¹⁴ By using the concept of the carnivalesque to frame the discussion, the author also facilitates a connection between celebration, materiality, and LGBTQIA+ studies.

Staying in the same general geographical location but returning to a historian's perspective, we close the articles section with Danielle Kinsey's discussion of the diamonds in King George IV's 1821 coronation. In reframing an event that had been previously studied through different perspectives, Kinsey shows how a materiality of festivity approach brings new light into familiar territory. The historian paints an evocative picture of the sensory experience of the event, using thing theory/material culture studies to show the agency and affect of things. On the other hand, Kinsey also explains how the study of festivals provides an opportunity for material culture scholars to investigate particular artifacts and commodities "in specific contexts" and "within a fuller world of goods and embodied experiences." Hence, the piece perfectly encapsulates the potential of this emerging field.

Speaking of royalty, Laura Patricia Alvarez transports us to [Mama Bree's Illusions Empire](#) through stunning portraits of northern Mexico's drag queens and the photographer's meditation on their experiences capturing them. If there has ever been an artform that testifies to the power of objects and materials it would have to be drag. As Alvarez's photos show, through wigs, heels, makeup, padding, sequins, and false lashes, ideas and ideals about gender, race, class, ethnicity, and body shapes and abilities are recreated, reaffirmed, and/or defied and mocked.

Last, but most certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge the artworks that not only adorn this issue but actively contribute to our dialogue by providing another perspective on the materiality of festivity. I should note here that, while we specifically called for a variety of contributions, we originally only received more traditional academic articles, which attests to the necessity of those of us who have the privilege of being in charge of academic publications reaching outside of our circles to encourage truly transdisciplinary dialogues. The pieces here

Spaces in the 20th-century South," panel comments delivered at the annual meeting of the Southern Historical Association, November 7–10, 2019, Louisville, KY (USA). See also Richard Goldstein. *The Attack Queers: Liberal Society and the Gay Right* (London: Verso, 2002). For a look at "homocapitalism" in a postcolonial context, see Rahul Rao, *Out of Time: The Queer politics of Postcoloniality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

were commissioned, so I am extremely thankful for the artists' time and talent. When I learned that this amazing textile and print artist was working on a project called "Celebration of One," I knew that it would be a great addition to this issue. As our editor Ellen Litwicki noted, Valeria Molinari's piece encapsulates "the meaning and connections of material culture to rituals and memory." I was quite touched to learn how these prosaic personal rituals connect people in different parts of the globe. As a child in the northeast of Brazil, I also learned with an elder how to throw back the peel of a fruit to reveal my future true love's initials (only we did it with an orange instead of an apple). An informal social media poll revealed that other friends from different parts of Brazil, as well as other countries, remembered similar rituals. (Those of you who might be interested in attempting the spell, it only works if you manage to extract the whole peel in one piece). The other incredible artist who lent us their talent by producing the gorgeous image that graces our cover is Alfredo Bisset. Bisset [recreates classic works of Mexican art](#) through their drag character [Rebel Mörk](#), so I asked them to create an image that represented their reading of US Mardi Gras, and the results exceeded my expectations. Finally, Daniel Wildberger designed the cover and Laura Patricia Alvarez's piece.

The journal's online format provides a great opportunity to take this interdisciplinarity further as it allows us to also include audio-visual materials. Hence we were excited to add Tenille Bezerra's poetic documentary, *Ventania no Coração da Bahia* (Windstorm in the heart of Bahia), about the relationship between the Saint Barbara/Iansã festivities and a popular market in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Through archival research and video ethnography, the filmmaker captures the essence of a celebration that so beautifully encapsulates Afro-Bahian religions' syncretism. Here, through the same material culture (objects, clothes, colors, symbols), the devotees simultaneously worship and celebrate both the Catholic saint and the Afro-Brazilian deity.

Not being bound to print also made us rethink how we engage with new publications in the field of festive studies. Thus we included not only book reviews but also New Books Network podcast interviews. The reviews section contains Guillaume Marche's review of *Queer Festivals: Challenging Collective Identities in a Transnational Europe* by Konstantinos Eleftheriadis; Eric Négrel's review of *Fêtes et folies en France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* by Didier Masseau; Courtney Micots's review of Raphael Chijioke Njoku's *West African Masking Traditions and Diaspora Masquerade Carnivals: History, Memory, and Transnationalism* (2020); François Laroque's review of *Medievalist Traditions in Nineteenth-Century British Culture: Celebrating the Calendar Year* by Clare A. Simmons, and Aurélie Godet's review of Alessandro Testa's *Rituality and Social (Dis)Order: The Historical Anthropology of Popular Carnival in Europe* (2021). For the interviews section, we have four episodes of the [New Books in Celebration Studies](#) special series: Emily Ruth Allen's discussions of *The Routledge Handbook of Festivities* (2018) with Judith Mair and of *Festive Devils in the Americas* (2015) with Milla Cozart, Angela Marino, and Paolo Vignolo; and my conversations with Jack Santino about *Public Performances: Studies in the Carnavalesque and Ritualesque* (2017) and with Rebecca Hope Dirksen about *After the Dance, the Drums Are Heavy: Carnival, Politics, and Musical Engagement in Haiti* (2020).

Since I expect this to be just the beginning of a fruitful dialogue that will continue in future *JFS* editions, I will wrap up this introduction by acknowledging some of the ground we did not have a chance to cover. To begin with, it would be interesting to know how these discussions apply

15. Jessica Glenza, "Coronavirus: How Wealthy Nations Are Creating a 'Vaccine Apartheid,'" March 31, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/30/coronavirus-vaccine-distribution-global-disparity>; Reuters, "World Has Entered Stage of 'Vaccine Apartheid'—WHO Head," May 17, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/world-has-entered-stage-vaccine-apartheid-who-head-2021-05-17/>.

in a broader geographical scope, as this issue focuses exclusively on Europe and the Americas. Some of the articles in this issue hint at an important discussion that needs to be taken further by future *JFS* contributors: the commodification of historically marginalized communities' celebrations. (The upcoming special issue, which will include two thematic sections, "[Festival Economies](#)" and "[Film Festivals](#)," could be a good place to start that discussion.)

As folklorist Jack Santino noted in our interview, the *Journal of Festive Studies* provides a space for the creation of a community of scholars, artists, practitioners, organizers, and activists who think critically about celebrations/festivities. My hope is that this issue will contribute to our awareness of the material realities of the people and places we study. While I am excited about the future of festive studies and look forward to accompanying this journal's trajectory, I can't help but worry about how the current "COVID-vaccination apartheid" will affect the next summer/winter festive season.¹⁵ Yet I am trying to join my compatriots mentioned in Snyder's piece in believing that 2022's carnival will be "legendary."

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