Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Festive Studies*. It has been a rather long time coming, but we believe that you will find it worth the wait. As we noted in our initial call for papers, the journal's aim is to draw together all academics who share an interest in festivities, including but not limited to holiday celebrations, family rituals, carnivals, religious feasts, processions, parades, and civic commemorations. We invited submissions considering some of the methods and theories that scholars have relied on to apprehend festive practices across the world, the specific contributions of disciplines or areas of study touching on festivity, the methodological issues faced by scholars doing qualitative research on festivities across the globe, or analyses of specific festive occasions. There has been much groundbreaking work in what is clearly an emerging academic subfield, and we are delighted to present some of this exciting scholarship here. We hope that the journal (in tandem with its parent network, H-Celebration) will become a forum for showcasing and debating new theories and innovative methods. Our first issue provides a look at the emergence and development of festive studies since the late 1960s. It features articles that examine the state of festive studies as well as articles that consider festivity from a variety of methodological perspectives. Four book reviews round it off, allowing you to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field.

We would like to extend a hearty thank you to H-Net (the interdisciplinary forum for scholars in the humanities and social sciences located at Michigan State University), under whose auspices this journal was born and is published, and H-Net’s president, Patrick Cox, who conceived of this project back in 2016. We particularly thank our production editor, Yelena Kalinsky, who has guided this new journal almost every step of the way, and our amazing managing editor, Cora Gaebel, who has been the glue that has held this enterprise together. We also extend our appreciation to our excellent copy editors, Basia Nowak and Charlotte Weber, as well as to Réa de Matas, who designed the journal’s banner, logo, and layout. We thank the scholars who gave generously of their time to review the submissions, as well as the scholars who agreed to serve on our newly constituted editorial board. And finally, we thank the authors of the articles published here, who have borne with us patiently through this process and without whom we would not have an inaugural issue. We invite you, dear readers, to sample the richness of their offerings.
In his pithy opening piece, ethnologist Alessandro Testa explores the reasons scholars have studied festivals, rituals, and other collective events since the early twentieth century. He also explains what his own diachronic, multi-sited inquiry into festive events in Europe has taught him—mainly, that cultural performances can reveal more about the social life of a group than, say, their electoral behavior. For this to happen, however, Testa believes that a healthy combination of methods must be employed, including analogical reasoning, ethnography, and historical work. His hope is that such interdisciplinary work can be used by a variety of social agents (politicians, nongovernmental organizations, social workers, etc.) in order to deal with pressing issues such as immigration and integration, social resilience, and collective well-being.

In this issue’s second essay, Laurent Sébastien Fournier also blends his own experience as a European ethnologist with his intimate knowledge of the existing literature in order to produce a wide-ranging appraisal of the field. From Ovid’s descriptions of Roman festivals to the latest scholarship on the commodification and standardization of contemporary festivals, from James Frazer to Dorothy Noyes, Fournier explains how festive studies came to emerge as a distinct, interdisciplinary field. He then summarizes the challenges that scholars currently face when studying so-called traditional festivals. Finally, he considers possible avenues of research and advises scholars to “open their own minds and accept the seeming nonsense of the situations they document” in order to truly grasp the “otherness” of festive behavior.

In a piece soberly titled “The Archive and the Festival,” Lisa Voigt builds on Diana Taylor’s well-known archive/repertoire dichotomy to analyze colonial Latin American and early modern Iberian festivals (1500–1800). More specifically, she offers important methodological advice to those who may want to use archival records to reconstruct early modern festive repertoires. First, she shows how a comparative study of the multiple textual and visual representations of a single festival may mitigate the seeming inaccessibility of the original event by revealing conflicts and tensions that official accounts of the festival were meant to conceal. Then, she uses the example of Philip III’s entry into Lisbon in 1619 to remind us of how the archive can actually precede and even shape the repertoire, thus complicating a traditional view of the archive as a more reliable documentary record of festivals. Third, she uses an example taken from her work on festivals in colonial South American mining towns to remind us that, like the repertoire, the archive does not only belong to the elites but can be appropriated by marginalized communities to defend their own interests. Finally, she draws attention to the biases created by the “digital turn” in historical research and advises scholars of festivals not to rely too much on the archive and to immerse themselves in the repertoire of present-day festivals that have survived in the places they study.

Naomi Milthorpe and Eliza Murphy’s approach to festivity differs markedly from Testa’s, Fournier’s, and Voigt’s, in that it apprehends festive sociability through the lens of literature, more specifically the writings of English satirist Evelyn Waugh (1903–66). In Waugh’s novel *Vile Bodies* and his short story “Cruise,” private, elite parties are depicted, not as “utopian occasions for transformative jouissance,” but rather as unpleasurable waste. Referencing Roger Caillois’s theory of games, the authors explore this notion of “wasteful play” and argue that literary texts, inasmuch as they provide evidence of “the felt and imagined experiences of social and moral transgression, bodily, mental and affective transformation, and class, race, gender, and sexual boundary-crossing” occasioned by parties, should be considered as key to our understanding of the cultural history of festivity.
In his essay, Thibaut Clément reflects on the cultural impact of Disney theme parks and their own brand of merry-making by looking at another oft-neglected type of discourse: that of fans. Known for their enthusiasm and near-devotion, Disney park fans often act as data collectors, curators, even historians, thus bridging the gap between fandom and scholarship. While fan labor is conducive to valuable expertise, Clément shows that in their attempt to preserve older attractions and protect the park from overwhelming commercialism, “Disney historians” often turn into “Disney custodians,” meaning they tend to issue a set of prescriptive attitudes on how to engage with the parks. Ultimately, Clément analyzes fan-created historical works as just another arena for fan participation in the parks, inasmuch as chronicling Disney history grants additional meaning and depth to the parks and allows fans to “actively shape and promote a favored mode of engagement with Disney products.”

With John Paul’s article, the journal experiments with a different academic format: that of the photographic essay. In the fall of 2016, Paul traveled to North Dakota as an invited guest of the Standing Rock Sioux to document the tribe’s early mobilization efforts against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) on Native American land. His photographs record the emergent encampment of American Indians and their allies, while his text provides a useful history of the DAPL project, followed by a stimulating examination of the scholarly concept of “protestival,” which has been used by participants and critics alike to describe the festival-like dimension of many alter-globalization movements. As a whole, the essay points to various ways in which photography can complement and enhance qualitative field research on festive events.

Adrian Franklin’s article focuses on Dark Mofo, a midwinter festival organized since 2013 by the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) in Hobart, Australia. After describing its origins in the postcolonial imagination, its irreverent aesthetics, and its innovative use of urban space, Franklin assesses its social, cultural, and economic impact using a mixed methodology of participant observation/ethnography and nonrandomized sample survey. His conclusion is that by scaling up the museum’s carnivalesque exploration of sex, death, and the body to a citywide celebration of mischief and misrule on the winter solstice (June 21 in the Southern Hemisphere), the festival has played a major role in local urban regeneration and has helped narrow the gap between the art world and the residents of Hobart and neighboring Glenorchy, Tasmania.

From Australia, we move on to the Paraíba do Sul River valley in southeastern Brazil with Luciana de Araujo Aguiar’s article on jongo, a dance and musical genre rooted in the experience of slavery and related to umbanda, a syncretic religion that blends African, Roman Catholic, spiritualist, and Native American beliefs. Based on fieldwork conducted in 2014, the author shows how the quest for an “authentic jongo dance” often leads to disputes among various groups claiming to stage a “purer” or “truer” version of it. To her, the quest for “African authenticity,” that is, the recognition and legitimization of African origins during jongo performances, is a key aspect of identity construction among Brazilian blacks. This paper therefore focuses on the jongo rodas as a festive, yet competitive, event that exhibits the African ancestral past of Brazilian blacks as well as the signs and symbols of a contemporary Brazilian black identity.

We encourage you to dig in and enjoy this inaugural issue of the Journal of Festive Studies. We hope you will find the articles and reviews to be as fascinating and provocative as we did.
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STATE OF THE FIELD

Doing Research on Festivals: *Cui Bono?*

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ABSTRACT

With this opinion piece, the author highlights certain methodological and thematic patterns characterizing his ten-year-long research into festivals, public rituals, and collective events, completing such recapitulation with a statement of ongoing commitment as well as with ideas about possible further scholarly developments. His final aim is to show how research about festivals, festivities, and festive events has benefited and still benefits from being conducted on the basis of a methodology involving critical comparison, intensive and in-depth ethnography, and a thorough study of historical sources.
As Émile Durkheim convincingly argued in his rightly renowned masterpiece about the religious life of Australian tribes, the study of festive events is an essential element to understanding social life. This is particularly true where such events acquire the characteristics of “total social facts,” a penetrating definition coined by Marcel Mauss, one of Durkheim’s most significant epigones. No wonder, then, that over time, scholars from sometimes very different disciplinary perspectives (folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, psychologists, etc.) investigating festivals or simply acknowledging the importance of festivals for the study of societal configurations, collective life, and political orders have become legion. Having been exposed to historical and anthropological literature about festivities for years, and having myself undertaken extensive ethnographic fieldwork investigating carnivals, I have come to the conclusion that Durkheim, his disciples, and other academics perhaps not sharing his arguments and theoretical stance but surely sharing the opinion about the heuristic importance of investigating public events were fundamentally right: the study of festive events is a crucial tool to understanding social life.

In some of my writing and often during classes, I like to recite three quotes that substantiate my opinion on the matter certainly much better than my own words could: 1) “In a sense, every type of cultural performance, including ritual, ceremony, carnival, theatre and poetry is an explanation of life itself…. Through the performance process itself, what is normally sealed up, inaccessible to everyday observation and reasoning, in the depths of sociocultural life, is drawn forth” (Victor Turner); 2) “Social history has learnt to appreciate festival as a valuable window on society and its structures” (Thomas Pettitt); and 3) “For the ethnographer, public events are privileged points of penetration into other social and cultural universes” (Don Handelman). All these rather bold statements stress and articulate, from different angles, the importance of studying festivals to better understand societies and cultures.

The critical and diachronic study of festive events as I conceive it rests on three main methodological pillars: critical comparison, intensive and in-depth ethnography, and a thorough study of historical sources. The synergy between them guarantees a heuristic grasp that, if not total, can nonetheless aspire to some degree of holism.

Comparison, whether cross-cultural or undertaken within more homogeneous sociocultural settings (for example, within the same country), is an irreplaceable methodological tool. After all, it is no accident that it lies at the very foundation of several different and interconnected modern disciplines, such as history of religions and anthropology (but one could mention biology and geology as well). In my own experience, studying festivals in different contexts and then operating comparison has always been very informative and, at times, even illuminating. Once concerned mainly with the search for commonalities and “universals,” today’s comparisons, drawing from different sources—like semiotics and the differential or relational paradigm—are equally useful in the effort of theorizing about cultural differences and social transformations. Since festivals (or better, collective rituality) are a cross-cultural, even “universal”—one might say—feature of humankind, it is needless to stress any further in how many different ways comparison can be a beneficial methodological instrument.
Just like comparison, ethnography is not only a method but also a veritable epistemological paradigm, one that has been recently "rediscovered" outside anthropological research and borrowed by a rather diverse set of disciplines, such as economics or political sciences. Doing participant observation—the practice at the very core of all sorts of ethnographic investigations—has taught me to leave the safe harbor of the library and dirty my hands, so to say, with the matters real social life is made up of, especially during the dense, pulsating moments of collective effervescence. Undertaking it in different European contexts has taught me about how similarities and dissimilarities, cultural continuities, and social transformations not only are a matter of theories and methods but also exist "out there" and drive—and are driven by—the lives of actual people performing, reproducing, contesting, and discussing their own cultural goods, much like what occurs in festivals. Theorizing and reflecting upon my own ethnographic endeavor has taught me that no sphere of social life is insignificant, no matter how trivial it might appear at first, and that literally everything counts, as anthropologist Victor Turner differently put, when it comes to understanding that thing called culture—even though some pretend it does not exist.³

Historical work—whether undertaken in archives and libraries, or differently, for example, in the case of the "ethnographic" methods used in oral history—is likewise important, especially to better understand social transformations in time and the diachronic dimensions of cultural life in general. I think that such an endeavor is of paramount relevance not only for historians (or for those interested in historiography more in general) but also for social anthropologists, folklorists, sociologists, and other categories of scholars who are normally associated more with the synchronic study of societies and cultures. In fact, both comparison and the study of the past can enlighten present matters—normally approached using said ethnographic methods—in many different ways: the case of festivals is exemplary because it is precisely in the fabric tightly interwoven by the synergy of historical factors, traditional constraints, the inventiveness and unpredictability of the present, the genius of the individuals, and the force of the many that such manifestations of the sociocultural effervescence of people reveal all their charm and complexity.

The fast-growing literature about this rich and diverse set of things we call festivals, festivities, public events, collective rituals, etc. demonstrates that studying those phenomena matters—at the very least to scholars.¹³ But cui bono? Certainly, all disciplines inside the ivory tower of academia benefit, in their respective ways, from understanding what is going on out there, in piazza, how such an effervescent and chameleonic phenomenon like a festival works; which symbolic mechanisms make it function; and what social meanings and functions it reflects. On the other hand, it is no mystery that, quite unfortunately, anthropological literature has still too little an impact on society. Rulers mostly ignore this literature, focusing rather on philosophy, political science, economics, and geopolitics. Still, as many studies have convincingly shown, studying festivals can provide important insights into pressing topics like immigration and integration, nationalism and political configurations, and identity construction and social resilience, and perhaps lead people to act on these issues accordingly. We cannot but wish that with time, a wider variety of social agents, such as politicians, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social workers, and others, will make a greater and better use of the knowledge we offer about the festive dimensions of sociocultural life.
For all the reasons stated above, I warmly welcome the emergence of a disciplinary “conscience” of autonomy in the (sub)field of festive studies, which has the potential to fruitfully and transversally cut through several disciplinary traditions and epistemological paradigms and thus successfully join the broader family of studies focusing on rituality, performance, and collective behavior.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Alessandro Testa is a historian and anthropologist—he has not yet decided which identity suits him better. As a scholar, he likes to teach, especially in central Europe, and to write; in fact, his publications include three books, three edited volumes, and numerous articles in journals and chapters in volumes. Over the last fifteen years, he has studied, worked, and/or undertaken ethnographic fieldwork for extended periods of time in Italy, France, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, and Spain (Catalonia). He has presented the results of his research at conferences in some twenty countries.
STATE OF THE FIELD

Traditional Festivals: From European Ethnology to Festive Studies

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ABSTRACT

This essay considers both the history of the growing academic field of festive studies and the history of my own involvement in this field. I first rely on some of the major works of accepted scholarship to show that social scientists and ethnologists had been concerned with festivals and public celebrations for a very long time before this field transformed into a specific area of research. I then show how my own practice in the ethnology of European traditional festivals and rituals evolved toward the idea of interdisciplinary festive studies in the two last decades or so. After connecting these two scales of time—the history of social sciences and my own path as an individual researcher—I eventually suggest possible avenues for future research in festive studies.
In this essay I would like to consider a complex set of questions that have structured the study of festivals and public celebrations in the last century or so, a long time before festive studies transformed into a specific area of research. Early folklorists first put the emphasis on traditional rituals as a whole, but it quickly became evident that many comparable social practices had to be taken into account, too. For instance, what distinguishes rituals from festivals, fairs, celebrations, and spectacles? Is it just a matter of categorizing things or are there deeper differences between these terms? Should we follow the accepted distinction between religious and secular festivals or propose other distinctions adapted to the different fields we study? Within the context of the new society of leisure, is the traditional opposition between work time and leisure time still valid? Furthermore, should researchers consider traditional festivals (when people do not work) and paid art festivals in the same way? All these questions progressively led my own research away from the ethnology of traditional festivals and rituals to more interdisciplinary festive studies. In the last two decades I have been especially concerned with the category of traditional festivals, looking at them in the context of traditional European societies as well as in contemporary societies where “traditions” are increasingly claimed as new cultural resources and eventually revitalized or invented. After connecting two different scales of time—the history of social sciences and my own path as an individual researcher—I will eventually suggest some possible avenues of research for festive studies.

Origins and History

When I first became interested in the ethnology of festivals in the 1990s, I was struck by the fact that festivals, although often disregarded as nonserious and unimportant matters, had nevertheless generated a whole set of theories by some of the most prominent scholars worldwide. Tracing back to the origins of the fascination with festivals, it is striking to see classical poets like Ovid already finding an interest in calendric rituals.\(^1\) The way Ovid describes the Roman months, the ritual values connected with the different festival days in Rome, and their various links with the planets and astronomical knowledge of the time shows how important festive systems were to the structuration of collective life in antiquity. To Ovid and his contemporaries, festivals were clearly connected with mythology and cosmology: they regulated time and were a direct result of the invention of the first calendars in the Neolithic period or in early Babylonian times.\(^2\) Of course, as a form of collective behavior, festivals might be even older than that. They probably existed in nomadic and prehistoric societies, for instance, if we interpret correctly the dancing figures painted in some prehistoric caves like Lascaux.\(^3\) But with the first agricultural settlements in the Neolithic period there was a new need to articulate the social year with the natural rhythm of the solar year, in order to keep in step with seasonal changes. The first calendars, up to the ancient Roman calendar, included some special days to make up for the gap between the cultural calendric year and the natural solar year. But with the introduction of the Julian calendar in the first century BC, men brought the calendar back in line with the exact 365.25-day length of the solar year and filled in the gap between the cultural and the natural year.

Since then, festivals have had this extraordinary potential to connect nature and culture. This feature helps to explain their ambiguous status. Throughout history, they have continuously been
associated with the sacred and with otherness. The Christian church, in Europe, built up a very structured system in which each day was put under the patronage of a special saint. At a more global level, important days of the yearly cycle were merged with the most significant figures of Christianity: the birth of Christ, for instance, corresponds to the winter solstice, while the summer solstice became the day Christians celebrate the solar figure of John the Baptist. In the early Middle Ages the church progressively forbade older, pagan seasonal celebrations and replaced them with the new Christian rituals.\(^4\) Today, the dates of all the main Christian festivals of the calendric year are still set by the pope, while Easter is fixed at the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox.

Because festivals belong to the sacred sphere, they are also connected with representations of the invisible, the otherworld, and otherness in general. Festive imagery in the longue durée has been deeply influenced by notions of excess, violence, and therefore with madness, if we follow Foucault’s views.\(^5\) When Erasmus wrote his “Praise of Folly” in the early sixteenth century, he resuscitated the ancient taste for festivals after a long period of antipaganism. In a letter to his friend Martin Dorpius, he lauded Plato as a levelheaded man who “approve[d] of wine being poured at feasts because he kn[ew] that it c[ould] bring a merriment which can correct certain vices better than austerity.”\(^6\) “Voicing one’s opinion with a joke,” he added, “is no less effective than voicing it seriously.” A few decades later, people such as the writer François Rabelais and the painter Pieter Breughel would perpetuate this view of festivals as paradoxical moments when wisdom intersected with madness, order with excess, and reform with revolutionary violence.

It is fascinating to trace the changing perceptions of festivals in history, the ways they have alternately been prized and disparaged. Until the eighteenth century, festivals were conceived of as a safety-valve mechanism, a means of restoring social order by giving vent to feelings of tension. Historians have shown that festivals were also connected with evergetism, which assumed that the panem et circenses given to the crowds by the powerful could keep the mass of people happy and docile, that is, buy social harmony.\(^7\) But the twin Enlightenment principles of rationalism and individualism progressively led to sharp criticism of festivals. While some humanists still referred to the Renaissance tradition, arguing that festivals could help the people endure their miserable condition,\(^8\) most eighteenth-century thinkers disapproved of traditional festivals. Rousseau and Montesquieu, for instance, thought they kept the people away from work and productivity, thereby delaying human progress. Moralists championed more serious activities, and both conservatives and progressives found festivals dangerous. According to conservatives, festivals were loci of debauchery and disorder and, as such, needed to be prohibited. According to progressives and revolutionaries, festivals made citizens lazy and sleepy and prevented political activism. In France, the revolutionaries ended up inventing a new calendar, with new deities and new festivals, in order to keep the boisterous crowds of the time in check.\(^9\) Slowly, traditional festivals declined and were replaced by other activities such as modern sports and spectacles, which were centered around the individual more than around traditional communities.\(^10\)

The nineteenth century was a moment when, simultaneously, traditional festivals started to change due to modernization, industrialization, and the development of new means of communication, and scholars became more and more concerned with documenting them.
In European countries especially, the construction of new national identities generated a lot of interest in traditional festivals. Folklorists and antiquarians inventoried calendric customs among other popular cultural habits. In several European regions, their goal was to invent new popular epics likely to legitimize the newly born identities.¹¹

Nineteenth-century social science literature included many influential studies of festivals, especially agrarian ones. Cultural anthropologists like James Frazer or Wilhelm Mannhardt thus referred to the “spirits of the corn and of the wild” and to the Vegetationsdämonen as evidence that all festivals were residues of times when nature and culture were connected more closely in the popular imagination.¹² Many of them relied on the more descriptive works of folklorists, or on more general studies by historians of religion.¹³ Indeed, the founding father of French sociology, Émile Durkheim, became preoccupied with Australian aboriginal festivals when writing his magnum opus on the elementary forms of religious life.¹⁴ Durkheim defined festivals as a combination of celebration and entertainment, an original medium through which the sacred can come into contact with the profane. Only one year after Durkheim, the founding father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, added his own definition, considering festivals as permitted transgressions enabling the images of an original chaos to re-emerge.¹⁵

From then on, the study of festivals became a key chapter in European ethnology, either as a part of broader scholarship after empirical fieldwork became a staple of the discipline in the 1920s, or as a specialized area of religious and ritual studies. Three different traditions can be distinguished. The first, following Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and the French school of sociology, was more interested in festive events and festivals as periodical gatherings or specific moments of collective life. This tradition considered the relation of festivals to the structuration of time and calendars to be of particular significance. It opened to a study of the different festivals in a given society and considered festivals from the outside, in an objectivist manner, focusing on the different calendric systems and festival typologies. The second one, more connected with the Freudian hypothesis and its phenomenological developments, was more concerned with festivity as a mode of individual behavior and questioned how we can subjectively reach transgression during festivals. In this tradition festivals were grasped from the inside, with a focus on the emotions and individual experiences of the revelers. Lastly, a third tradition concentrated on the notion of ritual and was inspired by French folklorist Arnold Van Gennep, who coined the expression “rite of passage” as early as 1909. From this perspective, all festivals could be considered as implicit social structures that enable significant change in the lives of individuals or of the collective. Festivals were categorized as either life-cycle rituals or calendric rituals and the scholar’s task was to discern the structures inherent to them beyond their often chaotic appearance. Still productive today, this tradition was revived first by anthropologist Victor Turner, who opened it to performance studies in the 1970s,¹⁶ then by other scholars who showed its importance to the study of contemporary “profane” or “political” rituals.¹⁷ Moreover, the ritual approach is important because it is based on the identification of sequences that can be examined in an interactionist manner as parts of a communication process.¹⁸

The combination of these different analytical traditions led ethnologists to pay special attention to festivals in traditional societies, but also in contemporary settings. As a matter of fact, social anthropology increasingly focused on the effects of modernity and globalization from the 1970s.

onward. Innumerable anthropological works described and analyzed local festivals and their transformation in different parts of the world, using the different theoretical frameworks that were available. Festivals were deemed particularly relevant for anthropologists because they always included rituals, myths, sacrifices, or symbols. They revealed deeper elements such as social structures and their different components, age-group logics, and cultural relations with otherness. As Mauss put it when studying the famous example of the "potlatch," festivals could be considered as "total social facts" enabling the anthropologist to grasp many aspects of a local culture—including its political, economic, religious, and social organization—at once. 19

In my first attempts to teach the ethnology of festivals, more than a decade ago, I tried to identify some of the most important characteristics of European traditional rituals. In so doing, I combined the different intellectual traditions just mentioned while also trying to keep in mind the originality of the different case studies I was documenting in the field. One such feature was the opposition between work and play. Working used to be strictly banned during Christian festivals in medieval and early modern times; contemporary laws forbidding work on Sundays in some countries bear witness to this prohibition. However, the situation is different for clergy or artists, for whom festivals are actual workspaces.

Another feature was the strong relationship between festivals and time, which has been thoroughly studied by François-André Isambert. 20 I have already recalled the importance of calendars in the history of festivals; it is important therefore to pay attention to the duration of festivals and their role in the structuration of time. Also of significance is the periodicity of festivals. Festivals are repeated, usually on a yearly (or biennial, triennial, etc.) basis. They mark a "holy" period that is not limited to the day of the festival itself but also often includes the preceding and following days.

Yet another important feature was that festivals always carry out special social functions: they can serve to commemorate certain events, or to gather specific groups like corporations, congregations, and families, or merely to release tensions and emotions. Lastly, festivals are extraordinary moments, cut off from the usual daily life; they allow participants to enter new states of consciousness and to create a new order, complete with new rules, new values, and new rituals. Participant observation of these different features in different festive settings can be considered as the inescapable starting point for a grounded empirical study of festivals from an ethnological or an anthropological perspective.

Changes and Evolutions

As the previous section suggests, festivals belonged to the humanities before being used by the social sciences (cultural anthropology in particular) as a prism through which social life may be documented. Different intellectual traditions later developed to form the specific field of the ethnology of festivals. However, other considerations on festivals, coming from the fields of economics, political history, and philosophy, have proved to be relevant as well, which has allowed for an evolution from the disciplinary perspective of European ethnology to a more interdisciplinary study of festive practices. In this section I will show how the ethnology of festivals recently rediscovered other analytical pathways to initiate the emerging field of festive studies.


As I noted earlier, most of the twentieth-century ethnology of festivals was influenced by the French school of sociology, Freudian psychology, and the English structural-functional paradigm of participant observation in fieldwork. This triple legacy resulted in a rejection of the more universalistic and humanistic traditions carried over by comparative anthropologists and historians of religion. It also encouraged research focusing on specific features such as time, rituals, and the sacred in the study of festivals.21

One of the tasks of the ethnologists of festivals in the 1970s was to go beyond these accepted features and try to identify aspects of festivals that had previously been neglected or undervalued. This led to interesting examinations of other types of celebrations such as festivals of death (Holy Friday, All Saints Eve, burials) or private festivals (candlelit dinners, intimate or corporate parties). Festivals could then be defined empirically, based on what people considered a festival, rather than in relation to any predefined standard typology. Thanks to social and cultural historians, new research also considered the history of festivals and the political myths behind them.22 Some studies tried to pay more attention to individual spontaneity in festivals, which had been underestimated by academics interested in more solemn and public ritualized celebrations. Another trend was to insist on the spectacular instead of the ritual, for instance emphasizing the role of tourists in festivals that were aimed more at an outside audience than at the organizing community itself.23 Lastly, gender and ethnic studies increasingly influenced the ethnology of festivals.24

All of these new areas of interest renewed European ethnology and especially led scholars to reconsider the relationship between the social sciences and the humanities in the study of festivals. Beyond the social and cultural value of festivals, ethnologists progressively learned how to document their economic and political uses. Tourism studies—for example, Jeremy Boissevain’s works on the revitalization of festivals in Mediterranean Europe—played a key role in this change.25 As an ethnologist Boissevain first concentrated on Maltese traditional rituals and then became interested in the impact of developers and tourists on local societies.26 In 1992 he put together nine European case studies to document the unexpected vitality of the field of traditional festivals in this part of the world. Due to the tourism economy, Boissevain suggested, local Mediterranean communities in search of new development resources after the oil crisis unexpectedly went back to their traditional cultures and began revitalizing their local festivals. Boissevain’s greatest contribution was to identify various modes of renewal of local festivals, including revitalization, revival, reanimation, restoration, resurrection, re-traditionalization, and folklorization. Applying Hobsbawm and Ranger’s notion of “the invention of tradition” to local festivals, Boissevain showed that village festivals that had faded in times of urbanization and industrialization flourished again when the economic context changed. Since the 1980s, numerous case studies have similarly shown the relevance for communities of restoring their local traditional festivals or creating new ones, most of them in connection with the valorization of their local past or of local agricultural products. However, since the structure and social meaning of these new festivals have changed significantly in the last decades, new analyses from an ethnological point of view are needed.

Boissevain’s work highlighted the possibility for ethnologists to study festivals in both an empirical and comparative manner, insisting on the changes incurred by traditional festivals in a modern, globalized context. In the last two decades, many conferences have assessed the extent
of those modifications and the new sort of “traditional” festivals emerging from today’s world. Comparisons help to show that festival tourism is much more than an economic resource. More consequential than the amount of money injected by festival tourism into the local economies may be the qualitative impact of festivals on local cultures. At a time when festivals have become a new cultural resource used by local communities to valorize their past or current activities, it is of crucial importance to scholars to keep in mind the old connection between festivals and local worldviews and contexts. Today, this relationship has dramatically changed: the public may enjoy a one-day fair or an invented thematic festival devoted to olive oil tasting during a short-term vacation without knowing a thing about the symbolical importance of the olive cycle in a Mediterranean community. But even if tourists do not know much about the old community-based harvesting systems, they nevertheless find interest in the new festivals when they come as tourists or short-term visitors. Moreover, not all festivals have followed this path: in some cases, old festivals have been revitalized for tourists while in other cases wholly invented traditions have been promoted, sometimes by the state, sometimes by the tourist industry. Interestingly, however, many of these new festivals claim to be traditional, which calls for ethnological interpretation.

Because festivals have changed and because they have taken on new functions and new meanings in our contemporary societies, a growing number of academic disciplines have been concerned with their study in the last decades. I myself contributed to developing a new approach to festivals a few years ago, based on a combination of European ethnology, cultural geography, cultural economy, and cultural studies.27 This first attempt to open up the accepted field of the ethnology of festivals to other disciplines proved to be productive, as it opened up new and unexpected vistas. For instance, it showed that festivals in the twenty-first century fall increasingly under the category of leisure. This is not to say that they do not contribute to the creation of individual identities any more, or that they do not reinforce corporeality through food, drink, and drug consumption. But they are now more connected with territorial ideologies and with the entertainment market. Moreover, this convergence of festivals and individual leisure activities leads to a paradox: festivals are simultaneously places of commodification and moments when the traditional representations of pleasure are still extremely strong. In other words, festivals connect the local and the global in a very modern fashion but they also perpetuate older myths and beliefs. It is therefore interesting to focus on the different actors involved in the organization of festivals: some of them are professionals who comply with the requirements of the new field of leisure marketing, while others remain amateurs who simply participate on a local level. Progressively getting into an interdisciplinary discussion about festivals eventually involves several academic disciplines (European ethnology and folklore, anthropology, sociology, geography, history, economics) but also thematic studies (public events studies, performance studies, leisure studies, body studies, subaltern studies, etc.).28

Another notable evolution in the field of festivals is related to its recognition within the frame of the 2003 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. I have suggested elsewhere that this convention was a first step toward the institutionalization of international festival politics.29 Since 2003, traditional rituals and festivals from all countries that have ratified the convention can be included on either the Representative or the Urgent Safeguarding lists of UNESCO. For the

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communities that want their festivals to appear on these lists, this process involves filling out nomination forms at a national and then an international level and documenting their practices in order to achieve UNESCO recognition. Such a process requires candidates to develop special technical skills to fill out the forms and to show UNESCO that the practices they support for recognition do not infringe on the organization’s main values. The festivals, then, must prove they contribute to reinforcing social cohesion, cultural diversity, intergenerational transmission, and local creativity. The 2003 convention, whose aim was to support cultural heritage in places or countries where material or architectural cultural heritage is absent, has led to sharp competition among countries. Each candidate tries to present its rituals and festivals in the most favorable light. Several ethnologists have pointed out the problems arising from a situation in which communities tend to valorize their rituals and festivals rather than present them in a neutral, factual way. According to them, the UNESCO convention encourages stereotypes, folklorization, and political correctness. They have also warned that, once on the lists, the different rituals and festivals will attract more and more tourists and thereby lose their traditional meanings. Several case studies30 have insisted on the threats inherent to the heritagization of traditional festivals, which can clearly be interpreted as a new means of inventing traditions.31 Meanwhile, scholars are asked to contribute their expertise to the evaluation process and may find in the new, intangible cultural heritage politics a good opportunity to find jobs for themselves and for their students. Moreover, UNESCO values are those of cultural diversity, sustainable development, and ethical responsibility, which gives a political objective for the scholars involved in the field of intangible cultural heritage. In any case, the UNESCO convention has raised a lot of discussion among ethnologists and anthropologists of festivals, many of whom are critical of the new category of “intangible cultural heritage.” At the same time, the field of “heritage studies” is growing and scholars from various disciplines have become interested in rituals and festivals, thus becoming part and parcel of this new international cultural policy.

**Festivals Today**

Due to revitalization, commodification, and heritagization, traditional festivals and rituals have changed considerably in the last decades. It is therefore urgent to find new means to grasp their new cultural significance and to adapt the accepted ethnological methods to the contemporary situation. In order to fully grasp the issues related to festive studies, I would like to explore a few examples and to suggest possible avenues of research.

First, it is important to keep in mind that despite recent changes, many traditional festivals are still performed in different societies around the world. Even if the context has in some cases dramatically changed, with new economies, new towns and metropolitan areas, and new communication networks, many people still celebrate major life-cycle and yearly rituals. In some cases traditionalism has led to maintaining unchanged ritual schemes; in other cases adaptations have led to syncretistic practices blending the old with the new. The example of carnivals is a good one to illustrate the sort of evolutions that can affect traditional festivals. Looking at carnivals in different places around the world sheds light on some of the traditional features that have been typically maintained: mumming, masking, wearing showy costumes, performing mock marriages, playing animal roles, killing King Carnival, and so on. These features seem universal and raise many questions regarding their spatial diffusion in traditional times.


They form a first layer upon which contemporary carnivals have developed. Another layer is connected with the modern globalization of carnivals. This globalization was first connected with the transatlantic diffusion of elite tastes. One Brazilian researcher has for instance documented the co-optation of Nice carnival’s flower-battle feature by Paris’s carnival, then by Rio de Janeiro’s carnival in the nineteenth century. Today, cultural diffusion takes other routes. Festivals, being very susceptible to the influence of mass popular culture, continually integrate new elements brought by the media and the world economy, bringing Disney masks to the most remote areas. The relationship between festivals and globalization is extremely complex, as is globalization itself, and includes dynamic processes such as diffusion, imitation, acculturation, miscegenation, hybridization, and folklorization. As loci of freedom and individual creativity, festivals also exhibit forms of resistance to globalization. Carnivals are therefore places where mass culture is diffused and places where people struggle against this mass culture, inventing new styles and making claims to cultural originality.

Interestingly, the mass media add to the confusion by documenting “carnivalesque” and other festive modes of behavior in sport fandom or in political contests, thus subsuming events like the football World Cup or Gay Pride celebrations under traditional festive categories. Concerning carnival itself, with its dispersion and its transformation into a metaphor for inversion and contestation, new approaches to contemporary festive cultures are from now on required. Indeed, it is impossible to analyze contemporary carnivals with the same methods as traditional ones. The new traditional carnivals are not as connected with spatial identities as they used to be and they are increasingly commoditized and mediatized. New theories are therefore needed to explain the connections with their environment. More broadly speaking, new methods and theories are required to analyze the transformations of traditional festivals and rituals today. Some researchers have revisited Mikhail Bakhtin and put the emphasis on the body or on psychological affects; others have used Antonio Gramsci or Homi Bhabha and insisted on the politics and on the importance of festive culture for the subaltern.

In any case, the transformation of traditional festivals has led to a profound questioning of the accepted paradigms in the ethnology of festivals and opened a larger field for festive studies. Apart from the changes in traditional festivals, it is important to question the changes in the meaning of the word festival itself, leading to the creation of new, invented festivals. Of course, festivals have been invented at all times and in all societies, but in the twentieth century the impact of these inventions dramatically increased. Since the middle of the twentieth century, for instance, historians have studied the significance of newly created art, theater, and music or movie festivals in places such as Avignon, Edinburgh, Cannes, Venice, Bayreuth, Newport, and Woodstock. The new arts festivals, especially, have pioneered a new formula based on thematic events, usually around a program of paying concerts or spectacles, in which anybody can participate on the basis of individual taste. Whereas traditional festive rituals involved homogeneous, predefined social groups, usually local communities or families, the new art festivals target individual aesthetes and people of taste, in such a way that they match the notion of the modern, educated individual. This model was inherited from the theaters, operas, and concert halls of the nineteenth century and it is still popular, attracting hundreds of thousands each year at Burning Man in the Nevada desert or Sziget in Hungary.
Looking more specifically at local festivals in France today, it is striking to observe how the word festival has recently been adapted to a whole set of local fairs, festive or leisure events that have gradually replaced traditional festivals. In many rural villages where the traditional communities were weakened by urbanization and industrialization in the middle of the twentieth century, the revitalization of local festivals has taken an unexpected turn, not reviving the older festivals but organizing totally new ones, with other dates and other themes. Many events have thus been created since the 1970s, with most of them focusing on the valorization of agricultural products and overtly aimed at local economic development. Most of these new festivals use a theme connected with the place, for instance a product that used to be cultivated in the village, but the connection of the festival with the theme is often very loose. In Mediterranean France, where I have collected most of my data, several hundred festivals have been created, celebrating olives, almonds, cherries, apricots, chestnuts, pumpkins, etc. Even without taking a normative view of festivals, it is interesting to note how most of these newly created events are organized. As they celebrate rural products, these events do not have any connection to the sacred, even if a priest is sometimes invited to bless the products on display. They openly target a tourist audience and do not concern exclusively the local community, as traditional festivals did. They are pure inventions, while the traditional festivals used to have a more structural role in the transmission of local values. Last but not least, they are increasingly scripted by specialized stage directors and managers whose professional skills allow them to attract the maximum number of people.

These features have major consequences for the programs and the meanings of these new festivals. The programs usually combine various elements that do not have any special relation with the central theme. For instance, at a pumpkin festival I recently attended, I observed a combination of circus, falconry, medieval tournaments, regional folklore, and a carnival parade with local street artists. Pumpkins were only a pretext for a more general celebration. Many new festivals also have schedules in which the entertainment program is repeated five or six times a day to ensure that everybody can watch the spectacle. This is precisely what differentiates these new events from the traditional festivals, which addressed smaller and more homogeneous groups. Instead of a festival, the new events propose a “festive kit” within which anybody can participate at their own level.36 Participants mostly come from outside the community and do not care about public perceptions of their performance. There is no pressure on participants except to contribute money, as festivals are being turned into fairs or open-air markets. Media presence is constant at these events: for example, dozens of announcements are made over the loudspeaker, telling participants what is going on and what to do.

The word festival remains because of its positive values, but the content has dramatically changed as festivals have adapted to a new world in which the family and the community have been replaced by the media and the market. A problem raised by this new category of festivals is that they keep the same name but do not adhere to the values traditionally associated with festivals. For instance, where are spontaneity and transgression to be found if the festival becomes a staged event? Where can gratuitousness be found if the only objective of the festival is to make money? Is there not a shift from festival to spectacle if the event is passively consumed rather than actively engaged?

When festivals become sites for local marketing, it is urgent to question the meaning of festive behavior in our modern societies. This issue is all the more important as it is also connected

with the tendency to forbid many traditional customs because of the dangers they supposedly represent. Countless traditional festivals have been overtly criticized because they were said to raise security problems. Political changes have led to the regulation of traditional games involving animals and to the watering down of many festivals, either because they displeased the new urban elites or because they raised liability issues with insurance companies. In France and in Spain, for instance, street bull games have been progressively tamed, whereas in Great Britain traditional sports such as rugby and football have been confined to stadiums because they could not be organized in the streets anymore for legal reasons. In Jedburgh, Scotland, for instance, a court tried to cancel the traditional handball game for “health and security” reasons during the foot-and-mouth-disease crisis a few years ago. Players then had to invoke an older nineteenth-century law act to keep on with the practice.37

Festive studies ultimately raise fundamental questions concerning public liberties, the acceptance of modern standards, and the ability of the people to subvert political discourses and the establishment today. Festive behavior today has dramatically changed. Traditional festivals get folklorized and stereotypified, while festive behavior has found a new home in political protest movements and parades. Despite such changes, however, festivals still exist, which leads to an interesting question: what directions should festive studies take in the near future?

**Future Directions for Festive Studies**

In spite of all the changes met by traditional festivals, I would like to insist on their continued importance to participants today. In this concluding section I will suggest that festivals are especially relevant to understand sociability, interculturality, social tastes and fashions, and the construction of cultural identities. It is therefore urgent to keep festivals and festive behaviors on our research agenda.

The importance of festivals is connected with a complex set of hypotheses explaining why people celebrate. As mentioned before, festivals can be interpreted as transgressive behavior in a psychological way. Festival-goers blow off steam by ritually breaking accepted social standards. But festivals also enable the ritual expression of beliefs and are therefore connected with the celebration of the sacred, in a more Durkheimian way. Moreover, festivals are connected with the celebration of the dead, of ancestors, and of seasonal changes. They have a fundamental anthropological meaning. But they also play a role in the resolution of conflicts and have a strong connection with local identities, in a political way. They reinforce local powers and enable the powerful to show their prestige or to convince an electorate. As sites of ritual and performance, they involve social interactions engaging different individual actors. For economists, festivals can be considered as moments when resources are consumed or when money is raised. All of these different interpretations show that festivals are connected with major scientific fields in psychology, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, political sciences, and economics.

Through their various types, the various changes they face, and the various research fields they concern, festivals eventually appear as a basic social fact. They have existed among all societies and in all times, even if some religious groups have strongly resisted festivities here and there, like the Puritans in colonial America for instance. It is then important to address festivals in themselves, as practices that cannot be cut off from different scholarly traditions.

Even if organized celebrations become less important due to individualism in the future, people may continue to celebrate on an individual level. On the other hand, it is possible to imagine a dystopian scenario in which innumerable festivals exist but nobody has fun because festivals are perceived as artificial. Interestingly, historians have noted that people have always complained about the disappearance of traditional festivals, but history has shown that new festivals systematically appeared to replace older ones.\footnote{Ozouf, La fête révolutionnaire.} Even if we can be shocked by some of the changes brought by the commodification, standardization, and media coverage of festivals today, I would rather end on an optimistic note, thinking about the inventiveness of new generations and their great ability to celebrate.

Of course festivals have met considerable changes in the last decades due to global contextual evolutions, but it is surprising and interesting to observe how small groups still locally use festivals to affirm their identities or to resist external political pressure. Such a statement clearly encourages the development of festive studies in the present and in the future. Indeed, if festivals still exist in today's world, their meaning has considerably changed, which requires us to invent new approaches and new methods to study them. The main difficulty is then to grasp both the old imaginary of the traditional festivals and the new practices. If festivals are still connected in the imaginary with notions of transgression, subversion, and excess for instance, I have shown above that they also move toward more commercial aspects when they use professional artists or managers today. This situation is a challenging one for festive studies, which need to keep in mind both the example of the older festivals and the ways new commercial festivals still try to refer to them while inventing new festive formulas.

In order to summarize the key challenges faced by scholars in festive studies, I would suggest that a first direction concerns understanding the evolution of the notion of the festival itself, from traditional to globalized societies and from the community to the individual. Another direction concerns methodology. Through participant observation and fieldwork, cultural anthropologists and ethnologists have given an important impulsion to empirical festive studies, which require deep involvement of the researcher in his field of study. Festivals, therefore, can no longer be studied from a distance, which gives a distinctive value to the researcher’s experience in festive studies. Last, but not least, because of this necessary involvement of researchers in the festivals they study, and because they share a true festive experience with their informants, sometimes staying up late into the night, reaching altered states of consciousness, drinking, dancing, and celebrating, festive studies require from researchers an ability not only to explain from the outside the revelers’ point of view, but also to understand it from the inside. One cannot study festivals today the way one would study the techniques of weaving or potato-growing in traditional societies. Because festivals are supposed to open the minds of their participants, scholars’ first task in festive studies might be to open their own minds and accept the seeming nonsense of the situations they document, instead of trying to rationalize the different festive behaviors. In this respect, studying festivals is maybe one of the best ways to understand otherness.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Laurent Sébastien Fournier is a French ethnologist. His PhD dissertation focused on the transformation of traditional festivals into cultural resources in Mediterranean France (1997–2002), before working on the history of European ethnology and on Scottish folklore. He has been teaching sociology and European ethnology at the Universities of Nantes (2005–15) and Aix-en-Provence (since 2015). He currently works on festivals, traditional games, and sports as intangible cultural heritage. He has edited several books and research articles on contemporary European festivals.

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ARTICLE

The Archive and the Festival

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a brief overview and assessment of the opportunities and challenges that written, visual, and digital records hold for the study of early modern festivals, using Diana Taylor’s terminology of the “archive” and the “repertoire” and examples from colonial Latin American and early modern Iberian festivals as points of departure. While archival records are far from transparent records of the events, they can help to illuminate the multiple, sometimes conflicting agendas behind both the festivals and their pictorial or textual representation. Digital archives promise to make early modern festivals more broadly accessible for comprehensive and comparative study, but they carry their own risks by disconnecting both researchers and records from the embodied presence of contemporary festive repertoires.
In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, performance studies scholar Diana Taylor demarcates two spheres of knowledge transmission—the *archive* of durable records and artifacts, from texts to visual art to architecture, and the *repertoire* of ephemeral, embodied practices, such as dance, ritual, and performance—in a way that is both productive and problematic for the study of festivals in the early modern period, which is the focus of my research (1500–1800). While early modern festivals clearly belong to the category of the repertoire, our only access to those that occurred hundreds of years ago is through the archive (texts, illustrations, paintings) that recorded them. The same could be said, of course, for the study of any past event, but it is the political agency and objectives that tend to get attached to these two spheres that raise questions about their use for the study of early modern festivals. Taylor acknowledges that the classification “too readily falls into a binary, with the written and archival constituting hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge,” even though, as she points out, “performance belongs to the strong as well as the weak.” Indeed, since at least the publication of Roy Strong’s aptly named *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650* in 1973 and (closer to my own field) José Antonio Maravall’s *La cultura del barroco* in 1975, scholars have tended to focus on how public festivals in early modern Europe and its overseas empires served to project and protect the power of royal, religious, and civic authorities. Of course, the festival archive—the texts and images that preserved the celebrations for posterity—was no less the purview of the powerful; as Teófilo Ruiz affirms regarding festivals in medieval and early modern Spain, “those who wrote, who had their works printed, and whose works survived were almost all imbricated into the structures that underpinned and justified royal and municipal power.” Early modern festive repertoires and their archives thus less readily fall into a binary of hegemonic power and anti-hegemonic challenge, for both seem to correspond to what anthropologist James C. Scott calls the “public transcript”: “the self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen”—seen not only by spectators but also by the readers of festival accounts, we might add.

The study of early modern festivals can challenge the application of a hegemonic/anti-hegemonic binary to archive and repertoire in another way, as well. More recent studies, mine included, have found multiple non-hegemonic motives and meanings in festivals and their accounts, not so much by uncovering a “hidden transcript”—disguised or out of view of the powerful—but by showing how non-elite groups participated in public celebrations and even the publication of festival accounts in ways that served their own purposes, even if they did not necessarily subvert those of the elite. But if early modern festivals can help to complicate assumptions about a political opposition between archive and repertoire, what—turning the question around—can these terms contribute to the study of early modern festivals? First and foremost, the distinction is useful to a literary scholar like myself who is used to treating archival representations as objects of study in themselves, and not simply as an imperfect medium for the ephemeral repertoire they document. Whereas Scott’s “public transcript” appropriates a metaphor of writing (“transcript”) to articulate a notion of performance (“Nothing conveys the public transcript more as the dominant would like it to seem than the formal ceremonies they organize to celebrate and dramatize their rule”), Taylor’s distinction encourages us to avoid such
a conflation and to think about the different agendas at work in each sphere. In what follows, I highlight four dimensions of the challenges and opportunities of the archive, broadly understood, for the study of early modern festive repertoires. Although I use examples from my work on festivals in colonial Latin America and early modern Iberia, the promise and pitfalls of the archive are far from unique to these contexts.

1. The archive of festivals is broad and diverse.

In relation to festivals, “archival sources” usually call to mind the administrative records—the actas de cabildo, or proceedings of town council meetings, account books, petitions, royal orders, and confraternity statutes—that prescribed and described the festive occasions that were repeated yearly as well as those that celebrated unique events, such as a bishop’s entry or a royal marriage. Certainly such documents are critical for understanding the festive practices of the early modern period, but Taylor’s broader sense of the archive extends to the visual and textual records that were created specifically for the purpose of conserving the memory of the ephemeral event and expanding its audience to those who were not there to witness it—widening its impact in time and space, so to speak. Paintings sometimes offered idealized representations of annual festivals, such as the series depicting Corpus Christi processions in late seventeenth-century Cuzco, Peru, which were displayed in a local parish church. Or paintings were created as grandeiose “souvenirs” of a particular festival, like the Andean artist Melchor Pérez Holguín’s Entry of Archbishop Morcillo (1718), which depicts three different moments of the festivities surrounding the archbishop-viceroy’s entry into the South American silver mining town of Potosí and which at some point made its way to Spain.9 Textual accounts of festivals extend from private letters to anonymous octavo-sized pamphlets to lavishly illustrated official festival books like João Baptista Lavanha’s account of Philip III’s entry into Lisbon in 1619, Viagem da Catholica Real Magestade del Rey D. Filipe II N.S. ao reyno de Portugal.10 A royally appointed engineer, cosmographer, and historian, Lavanha was certainly “imbricated into the structures that underpinned and justified royal … power,” but the dozens of other published accounts of the 1619 entry offer a large corpus with which to compare his version.11 Philip III’s entry is one of the few cases I have studied where visual depictions are extant as well, as described below. Another is the aforementioned entry of Archbishop-Viceroy Morcillo into Potosí, which was portrayed not only in Holguín’s painting but also in an official account written by Augustinian friar Juan de la Torre at the behest of the organizers and published in Lima in the same year as the entry, as well as in two chapters of Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Velá’s voluminous history of Potosí, Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí, completed in 1737 but never published in the author’s lifetime.12 The differences between these diverse representations of the same event are just as illuminating as their similarities. Like Lavanha’s official account, de la Torre’s surely tells us, as Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly writes, “how the body that commissioned the festival and the festival book wished the festival to be interpreted and how that body wanted to be seen in present and future times.”13 Yet the details emphasized in the painting (for example, the indigenous woman in the foreground whose dialogue with a male Spanish companion is transcribed in speech scrolls) and in Arzáns’s history (for example, the irresponsibility and greed of a local official who shirked his duty to pay for the celebrations, and of the viceroy himself) offer much different visions of the bodies and individuals involved in the festival, promoting some and demoting others.14 However inaccessible ephemeral festivities may be to us today, the multiple archival representations that
they generated are ripe for investigation and comparison, which can reveal conflicts and tensions that the festival and its official account were designed to disguise.

2. The archive is not a transparent record of festivals.

Distinguishing between archive and repertoire thus encourages us to pay attention to the different agendas and perspectives apparent in those sources, rather than to use them to try to reconstruct what really happened in the festival. Two examples related to Philip III’s entry into Lisbon in 1619 illustrate the error of interpreting the archive as an accurate reflection of prior festivities. Besides the engravings in Lavanha’s account, the entry is also represented visually in an anonymous painting, View of Lisbon with the Entry of Philip II of Portugal, held at Weilburg Castle in Germany, which prominently and curiously identifies the year of the entry as 1613. Rather than a mistake, the date probably indicates that the painting was a “preview” of the 1619 entry, created at a time when the king’s visit was already being planned at the instigation of the Portuguese elite. Indeed, as art historian Miguel Soromenho has argued, rather than representing an entry that already happened, the painting may have been part of Portuguese efforts to convince the king to make the visit. The resemblance between the painting and Lavanha’s illustrations would thus not be due to the artists’ efforts to reproduce the same reality but to the influence of one of those representations on reality.

We can find a comparable textual example in another account of Philip III’s entry, João Sardinha Mimoso’s Relación de la real tragicomedia con que los padres de la Compañía de Iesus de su Colegio de S. Anton de Lisboa recibieron a la Magestad Catolica de Felipe II de Portugal, which transcribes the play staged for the king at the Jesuit College of Santo Antão and describes the performance and the rest of the entry. Mimoso writes that at one point, when a scene was left out because they were running short on time, the king—who was looking closely at a book he held in his hands and comparing it with what he saw—ordered the play to stop and follow what was in the book. Here again we have an example in which the archive precedes and even shapes the repertoire, rather than the reverse. Both instances offer the important reminder that the archive should not be read as a documentary record of a specific festival, nor should it be judged by the fidelity of its representation. Nevertheless, the archive can render ample evidence of how the repertoire was imagined, as well as how it shaped that imaginary. If Philip III wanted the festival he encountered in Lisbon to conform to what he found in a book, perhaps he—or others—also hoped that it would correspond to the prospective painting dated 1613.

3. Like the repertoire, the archive does not only belong to the powerful.

The festival archive can thus have an agenda—and even an existence—indepedent of those of the festival itself. But does Ruiz’s claim—that “those who wrote, who had their works printed, and whose works survived were almost all imbricated into the structures that underpinned and justified royal and municipal power”—mean that the different perspectives offered by printed works only reflect the competition and negotiation for power among elite individuals and groups? As already suggested, in at least one instance in my work on festivals in colonial South American mining towns, I was able to highlight the intervention in the archive of a decidedly non-elite organization: the Irmandade da Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos (Black Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary), a Catholic lay brotherhood composed mainly of enslaved Africans and...
Afro-descendants, whose chapter in Vila Rica, Minas Gerais (Brazil), sponsored the publication of a festival account and collectively signed its dedication. This account, Simão Ferreira Machado’s *Triunfo Eucharistico*, describes the celebrations surrounding the transfer of the Eucharist from its temporary home in the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary’s church to its permanent home in Vila Rica’s main parish church after it was rebuilt in 1733, due to the population boom as a result of the gold rush in the region (fueled by the forced labor of black slaves).\(^{19}\) Although the black brotherhood’s role in the publication of *Triunfo Eucharistico* is rarely acknowledged by scholars, the title page and the prefatory material are quite explicit about its contribution. The title page attributes not only the dedication but also the decision to publish the work to the brotherhood: “Dedicado a Soberana Senhora do Rosario / Pelos irmãos pretos da sua irmandade, / e a instancia dos mesmos exposto á publica noticia” (Dedicated to the Sovereign Lady of the Rosary / By the black brothers of her brotherhood / and at their insistence exposed to public notice) (my emphasis). In the dedication, the members of the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary reveal how they—like the festival book authors described by Watanabe-O’Kelly—“wished the festival to be interpreted and how that body wanted to be seen in present and future times”\(^{20}\): “Esta consideraçaõ nos obrigou a solicitar esta publica escriptura, em que sempre o nosso afecto esteja referindo em perpetua lemnança, e continua narraçaõ aos presentes, e futuros toda a ordem de taõ magnifica solemnidade” (This consideration obliged us to solicit this public writing, in which our affection will always be referred in perpetual memory, and such magnificent solemnity in all of its order will be continuously narrated to those in the present and the future).\(^{21}\)

The Black Brotherhood of the Rosary, in other words, self-consciously turned to print publication (the archive) to make sure that their display of devotion was more enduring than the festival itself (the repertoire). The mixed-race members of a *pardo* (mulatto) brotherhood in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, may have had similar motives for dedicating (and perhaps sponsoring) the publication of a sermon proffered during the celebration of Gonçalo Garcia, a mixed-race saint, in their city: *Sermam de S. Gonsalo Garcia, pregado no terceiro dia do solemnissimo Triduo, que celebraraõ os homens pardos da cidade da Bahia ... dedicado ... pelos irmãos, e devotos de S. Gonsalo Garcia*, published in Lisbon in 1747.\(^{22}\) Like *Triunfo Eucharistico*, the *Sermam* explicitly praises a corporate rather than a singular identity; both the black and *pardo* brotherhoods appropriated the archive to defend and preserve their otherwise marginalized community’s deeds, rights, and reputations.\(^{23}\)

### 4. Digitizing the archive carries risks as well as rewards for research.

Despite the richness of the archival materials sketched in the foregoing paragraphs, much more can and should be made available to a wider range of scholars through the expansion of the digital archive. Far more common than black sponsors of publications were black participants and performers in festivals: in the accounts of Philip III’s entry into Lisbon, for example, we can find a description of a “naturally dark-skinned” student-actor who sings in Africanized Spanish and strums his guitar “al modo de los negros rudos y boçales” (in the manner of new, black slaves), as well as a reference to Philip III’s great delight at watching a girl dance on the shoulders of a black man.\(^{24}\) When his father Philip II visited Lisbon in 1581–82, he wrote to his daughters about watching blacks dance in the streets below his bedroom window.\(^{25}\) These fleeting references to the repertoire of black festive performance confirm the claims made by contemporary residents of and visitors to Lisbon about the significant black population in the city, some 10 percent of its residents.\(^{26}\)
Because of the brevity of the allusions across a multitude of texts, a comprehensive and comparative analysis of black festive repertoire in early modern Portugal is a daunting task. Fortunately, a project led by scholars at the University of Lisbon, “Public Rituals in the Portuguese Empire (1498–1822),” will make this sort of research much more feasible. The project’s goal is to create an open-access, full text-searchable digital collection of approximately 1,000 printed books describing public festivals and rituals in the early modern Portuguese empire. The resulting database, accessible through the Biblioteca Nacional Digital of the National Library of Portugal, will complement the British Library’s existing digital archive of some Renaissance European festival books. However, it will have the advantage of including a wider geographical range of sources—from all areas of the Portuguese empire, including Brazil and Goa, India—that will allow for greater cross-cultural comparisons and the possibility of tracing how European festive repertoires were used and adapted in extra-European contexts. Furthermore, a full text-searchable database, unlike the keyword-searchable British Library database, will open the archive to questions about the repertoire that we do not even yet know how to ask. Perhaps most important, this digital archive of mostly Portuguese-language sources will contribute to what historian Lara Putnam refers to in “The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast” as the “sea change” that is challenging “Anglophone overrepresentation in the digitized world.”

Putnam’s article highlights the role of source digitization and text searchability in enabling transnational research because of how extraordinarily fast, cheap, and easy it makes it to search across multiple archives (at least for those with digital access). However, Putnam also explores the hidden costs of the “digitized turn” for historical research: fewer and shorter trips to the archives (in the traditional sense), resulting in the loss of multidimensional and experiential awareness of the places under study and the local knowledge produced there; and lack of attention to the people who “stand in the shadows”—those who were not writing, publishing, or reading the newspapers and books that may become digitized. The notion of the repertoire can help to challenge both of these drawbacks of the digital archive. As scholars of festivals, we must keep in mind the participants and spectators who did not contribute to, and whose interests and activities were not always reflected in, archival representations. And as Taylor reminds us, “The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there,’ being part of the transmission.”

Present-day festivals are not unchanging repositories of elements and practices derived from earlier periods, but they are part of a living repertoire tied to specific peoples and places. The study of festivals demands our own embodied presence in these places in order for us to begin to glimpse their meanings for past audiences and their means of transmitting knowledge to future generations. We must not let our desire for greater access to the repertoire via an expanded, more accessible, and text-searchable archive cut us off from the repertoire that continues to exist in the places we study.
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HOW TO CITE


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This article outlines an approach to understanding festivity through the lens of literary texts. Studies of festivity in early twentieth-century literature center largely on the image of the party. Representations of parties in the literary texts of this period range widely, and the sheer number of parties found in this body of literature highlights the shared interest of writers of the time to explore the implications of festive sociability. Given these parameters a reader might expect the literature of the period to show parties positively: as utopian occasions for transformative jouissance leading to catharsis and (satisfying) narrative closure. Yet many texts of this time represent festivity not as pleasurable renewal but as unpleasurable waste. This is particularly the case in fiction by the English satirist Evelyn Waugh (1903–66). In Waugh’s texts, celebration tends toward destructive (rather than restorative) disorder. This article will read Waugh’s novel *Vile Bodies* (1930) and short story “Cruise: Letters from a Young Lady of Leisure” (1933), using Roger Caillois’s theory of games, to explore the ways in which parties become sites of wasteful play. Moreover, as this article will demonstrate, literary texts are central documents for understanding the cultural history and subjective experience of parties. They evidence the felt and imagined experiences of social and moral transgression; bodily, mental and affective transformation; and class, race, gender, and sexual boundary-crossing occasioned by festivity. In that sense, the discipline of literary studies can contribute to a robust interdisciplinary approach to understanding festivity.
“There is no more certain way of getting oneself disliked,” the English satirist Evelyn Waugh declared in an essay for *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1933, “than by giving an occasional party.” As a regular guest (but reluctant host), Waugh attended, observed, and satirized private festivity throughout the late twenties and early thirties in novels, short stories, and nonfictional writing, claiming “hostility,” not hospitality, as the chief affect of parties. The party host makes “permanent and implacable enemies” of people not invited, risks “contempt” from acquaintances, and infuriates their friends through “oblig[ing]” them to “waste an evening”: “It’s bound to be hell.” The social order is disturbed, and “the whole hive turns on us with buzzing and angry stings.”

Studies of festivity in early twentieth-century literature center largely on the image of the party. This is by no means accidental; indeed, the early twentieth century marks most decidedly the party’s coming of age, its diversification as a social event, and its deployment as a literary device. Representations of parties in the literary texts of this period range widely: from dinner parties, débutante balls, cocktail parties, and bottle parties to more outrageous affairs that take place in nightclubs or require themed fancy dress. Moreover, the sheer number of parties found in this body of literature highlights the shared interest of writers of the time to explore the implications of festive sociability. Festivity is frequently parsed as an opportunity for social, cultural, or political inclusion and renewal that fosters *communitas*, cultural cohesion, and the transmission of tradition and ritual. The first half of the twentieth century is recognized as a historical period of increased leisure and attendance at festive events, due in part to an increase in real wages, a growing commercial leisure industry, and new opportunities for travel. Yet in spite (or perhaps because) of the promise of these historical conditions, and contra to theories of festivity as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, Victor Turner, and Émile Durkheim, fictional texts of this time frequently represent parties not as pleasurable renewal but as unpleasurable—indeed, hostile—waste events.

Bakhtin’s carnivalesque is commonly used to frame readings of literary festivity, but the carnivalesque as a means toward positive transformation becomes increasingly marginal to understanding the parties seen in much fiction of the twenties and thirties. Evelyn Waugh is, perhaps, the English novelist most synonymous with parties (a parallel to F. Scott Fitzgerald in the United States) and thus a key figure for reading representations of sociability. In Waugh’s thirty texts—the novel *Vile Bodies* (1930) and short story “Cruise: Letters from a Young Lady of Leisure” (1933)—celebration tends toward destructive (rather than restorative) disorder, while leisure brings boredom and despair rather than pleasure. Despite their dystopian departure from the Bakhtinian scene of carnivalesque renewal, the literary parties of this period can still be read as forms of play. The sociological approach to play that Roger Caillois outlines in the work *Man, Play, and Games* (1961), in combination with an historicized account of the spatial, temporal, and affective dimensions of sociability in the period, proffers a useful framework for reading parties and festivity in interwar literature. Importantly, literary texts document the cultural history and subjective experience of parties, providing evidence for the felt and imagined experiences of social and moral transgression; bodily, mental, and affective transformation; and class, race, gender, and sexual boundary-crossing occasioned by festivity. In that sense, literary
studies contributes to a robust interdisciplinary approach to understanding festivity, as we shall demonstrate in this article.

Caillois and the Modern Party

Caillois's theory identifies four main categories of games. Agôn, or competition, refers to games such as tennis or chess, in which particular skill sets gained through practice and preparation are required in order to win.5 Alea, or chance, are games in which the winners are chosen not because of skill, but because of fate, such as roulette or the lottery.6 Mimicry, or simulation, involves the subject pretending to be other than itself: actors in a play or a person in costume, for instance.7 Finally, ilinx, or vertigo, are games that aim to momentarily destroy the stability of a lucid mind, such as dancing or walking a tightrope.8 These categories can function separately or cooperatively, although there are some limits on which categories can successfully interact. According to Caillois, there are only two “fundamental” relationships among the categories: the pairings of agôn and alea, and of mimicry and ilinx.9

Mimicry and ilinx are useful concepts with which to theorize the party. Caillois links mimicry and ilinx to the idea of the festival, which he defines as “an interregnum of vertigo, effervescence, and fluidity.”10 Together, they create a world that has no rules and is full of improvisation, guided only by a “fantasy or a supreme inspiration.”11 Caillois claims that the mimicry and ilinx combination dominates in simple societies, ushering in the feelings and behaviors of festival, such as excess and revelry. However, as societies evolve and become more complex, mimicry and ilinx are suppressed in favor of the agôn and alea pairing. Simulation and vertigo become intermittent and limited, serving only as an escape from the monotony of everyday life.12 The modern party, with its signal opportunities for dressing up, drinking, and social intermingling, is one of the occasions in complex society where mimicry and ilinx can be released.

The early years of the twentieth century oversaw a revival of festive folk genres such as the historical pageant, led by figures such as Louis-Napoleon Parker. As Eric Hobsbawm and Jed Esty have convincingly argued, however, these genres were invented traditions, nostalgic and retrospective.13 The party was, as Christopher Ames argues, a truly modern cultural successor to the festival.14 The literature of the period teems with parties: from T. S. Eliot’s anxious afternoon teas in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915) to “conscious sociability” in Herbert Read’s poem “Garden Party” (1919); from the liminal intimacy occasioned by festivity in Katherine Mansfield’s short story “The Garden Party” (1923) to the endless delay of communion in Henry Green’s Party Going (1939), in which the characters never make it to their house party (they are stuck at Victoria Station in a terrible fog). As Kate McLoughlin argues, the most prevalent characteristic of the party in the modernist period is its diversity: there is no one model for a party, whether considered in terms of spaces, times, manners, or menus: “In life and in literature, parties of the period range from tea-parties to cocktail-parties, from lunch- and dinner-parties to extended house-parties, from breakfast-parties to parties held in venues such as nightclubs, restaurants and artists’ studios, from at-homes to dinner-dances to soirées.”15

The party’s central status in the festive imaginary of the period is due, at least in part, to its contemporaneousness. Indeed, the twentieth century oversaw the development of distinctive types of sociability, not least of which was the cocktail party, invented (or so he claimed) by

6. Ibid., 17.
7. Ibid., 19–21.
8. Ibid., 23.
9. Ibid., 23.
10. Ibid., 87.
11. Ibid., 75.
12. Ibid., 97.
the novelist Alec Waugh (brother of Evelyn) in 1924. As Alec Waugh described in an essay for *Esquire*, published in 1974, the cocktail party was invented as a means to escape the dead hours between half-past five and half-past seven, in which there was “there was nothing to do on winter evenings.” While idleness may have been a primary motive, Waugh also suggests that his invention was at least partially inspired by narrative concerns. He was writing a novel, *Kept*, and needed a social occasion with alcohol, but no food, to “solve” his characters’ “amatory problems.” As Tom Perrin has noted, a *New York Times* review proclaimed cocktails and James Joyce as the “accessories of modern jazz life.” Indeed, *Esquire* tagged Waugh’s essay as “an exclusive report on the greatest social innovation of the twentieth century, by the innovator himself.” If Alec Waugh is to be believed, the historical cocktail party was invented in order that it could serve as a distinctly modern narrative device. Certainly it would become an important setting for fiction and poetry in this period: the opportunities afforded by alcohol’s social lubrication, the in-between nature of the cocktail party (between the longer tradition of tea and the more formal sociability of dancing), and the relative newness of the forms of etiquette required of these occasions, means that writers could easily exploit the dramatic conflicts that would arise at these liminal events.

Like the festival, the party is a period of excess, liminality, and transgression, aspects shown convincingly in Evelyn Waugh’s early works. As a consummate observer of sociability, Waugh set his parties in a variety of locations and times: the destructive “beano” that opens his first novel, *Decline and Fall* (1928), occurs at an Oxford college; the “riot” that overtakes a public pageant in *Black Mischief* (1932) takes place in a fictional African colony; the sexual malaise of *A Handful of Dust* (1934) is reflected in drunken scenes set in London nightclubs. In his 1933 Harper’s essay, Waugh argued that “natural repugnance” would dissuade most people from hosting, as would the inevitability of its “failure” as a social enterprise. His fiction likewise demonstrates the ugly feelings associated with hospitality and party-going. Waugh’s texts depict party-going as a frenzied experience, with characters frequently consuming too much drink, making irrational (sometimes even fatal) decisions, masquerading in fancy dress, and lurching wildly from one party location to the next. In *Vile Bodies* (1930) the Bright Young People—a group of pleasure-seeking socialites—attend parties in the usual hotels and nightclubs, but also in tethered dirigibles, train stations, nursing homes, and at No. 10 Downing Street. Almost any place or time becomes an occasion for a party. As D. J. Taylor and Humphrey Carpenter have both shown, much of Waugh’s novel was inspired by real parties given by the historical Bright Young People. *Vile Bodies* and the closely contemporaneous short story “Cruise: Letters from a Young Lady of Leisure” (1933) illustrate the importance of Caillois’s approach in understanding forms of play, and their representation, in twentieth-century parties. In particular, Caillois’s categories of mimicry and ilinx offer productive means with which to understand Waugh’s depictions of festivity. In these two texts, simulation and vertigo are continually enacted in a number of ways—such as via disguised identities and nausea-inducing settings—creating an unstable and unpredictable festive landscape. While this essay could take many of Waugh’s early fictions as its case studies, there are specific reasons for attending to these two works. *Vile Bodies*, as Waugh’s definitive “party” novel, offers a veritable thesis on party-going in the late Jazz Age, while the largely unexamined “Cruise” represents a distinctive mode of interwar sociability, that of the ocean cruise. In neither story is festivity shown to be anything other than a waste: of time, of energy, and occasionally, of life.
Vile Bodies

Vile Bodies begins on a ship at sea, a setting that serves as an early indication of the vertiginous, "sick-making" qualities of the text.23 As the boat crosses the English Channel in turbulent conditions, illness strikes the passengers, including a group of Bright Young People who compare the journey to "being inside a cocktail shaker."24 One of its brightest members, Agatha Runcible, likens the experience to "one's first parties...being sick with other people singing."25 Her comparison is apt: nausea (both physiological and affective) dominates the novel's party scenes. The novel revolves around aspiring author Adam Fenwick-Symes's on-off engagement to Nina Blount. As Bright Young People, Adam and Nina trust their relationship to fortune. Rich one day from a lucky bet on the races, they get engaged; broke the next (having lost the money), they break it off. While for Richard Jacobs, this quest for treasure (via games of alea) is one of the central aspects of the novel,26 it is our contention that mimicry and ilinx are the dominant forms of play in Vile Bodies. The narrative is episodic and frantic in its structure, capturing what Lisa Colletta characterizes as the "collective cultural condition" of "the sense of busily going nowhere."27 Conversations are shallow, gossip is rife, and parties are such an everyday occurrence that the most common feeling reported is of boredom. The novel's best-known passage offers a thesis on the multiplicity of parties, filled with alliteration and repetition that leaves the reader dizzied and dazzled:

Wild West parties, Russian parties, Circus parties, parties where one had to dress as somebody else [...] parties in flats and studios and houses and ships and hotels and night clubs [...] dull dances in London and comic dances in Scotland and disgusting dances in Paris—all that succession and repetition of massed humanity... Those vile bodies...28

The succession and repetition of parties—that is, their everydnyenes—marks parties in Vile Bodies as sites of waste. In Man and the Sacred Caillois argues that "destruction and waste, as forms of excess" characterize festivity;29 in Man, Play and Games he argues similarly that play is purely wasteful, of "time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money."30 Caillois's ambivalence counterpoints other theories of festive wasting: Georges Bataille, for example, names games and festivity among various forms of "unproductive expenditure" underlaid by the "principle of loss," which seems to echo Caillois in its gloom.31 Yet elsewhere, Bataille also recognizes festive destruction as intrinsically limited (both in scope and duration), and its ultimate tendency toward the reconciliation of the social world.32 Here, we should also comment on the role of drugs and alcohol, which appear repeatedly in Waugh's text. Caillois reads the "intoxication and euphoria" occasioned by the stimulant that "free[s] one from the burden of memory" and "the terrors of social responsibilities," as corrupting play with lasting (as opposed to momentary) effects: "the organism is slowly but permanently changed. [...] This is in complete contrast to play, which is always contingent and gratuituous activity."33 Waugh's vile bodies, constantly stimulated, are subjected to perpetual change: vacillating between a "fatal hunger for permanence" and the "radical instability" that governs their world.34 Waugh's representation of festivity as a "succession and repetition"—that is, as constant, which only replicates rather than produces—both modifies Caillois's concept of play as contingent and underlines his sense of its gratuity. Caillois's gloomy take on play and festivity, a stark contrast to the Bakhtinian theory of festive renewal, or even Bataille's writing on sacrifice and reconciliation, finds a corollary in Vile Bodies, in which death, decay, inauthenticity, and melancholy color the narrative. Prior to publication Waugh wrote to a
friend that the novel seemed “to shrivel up & rot internally”; any effect the novel would have was a function of “cumulative futility.”

Several sequences establish the novel’s interest in festivity qua waste. Early in the novel, for instance, a sequence of revelry takes the characters from a “savage-themed party” to a hotel lobby to late-night whisky at No. 10 Downing Street. The savage party is described as “repulsive” by a gossip columnist, and is so boring that Adam falls asleep (twice). Themed parties were a popular form of festivity among the younger set in interwar London and involved, by their nature, participation in mimicry. Dressing in costume assures inclusion in the festive realm: Agatha Runcible wears a Hawaiian costume and is regarded as “the life and soul of the evening,” whereas a group of stuffy young aristocrats who refuse to dress up are emphatically excluded, standing together “aloof, amused but not amusing.” Those who do not dress up wish they had: Miss Mouse longs to “tear down her dazzling frock to her hips and dance like a Bacchante.”

The party-goers’ conduct is enabled by their costumes: mimicking a “savage” grants licence to behave outside of social norms and mores, suggesting the transformation occasioned by ritual. Yet importantly, no bacchic transfiguration occurs as a result of the savage party. Instead, the dominant feelings are “tension,” “terror,” and finally exhaustion caused by posing for, or avoiding, press photographers.

After the party, the Bright Young People continue to a metropolitan hotel, Shepheard’s, but are greeted with a decidedly unfestive scene: a maid, knocked out after swinging on a chandelier at a private party. Later, it is revealed that she dies as a result of incident, marking the first of three party-related deaths that occur in the novel. Unsatisfied with the party prospects at the hotel, Miss Brown—a daughter of the new prime minister—invites the group to No. 10 Downing Street (though socially sophisticated, the Bright Young People are politically uninformed, and do not realize where they are). In one of the most formal settings possible, the younger set enjoy fine whisky and cigars, eat the kitchen’s entire supply of eggs and bacon, all while speaking in Cockney, destabilizing the official functions of the nation-state associated with the building. Vanburgh, a gossip writer, unwittingly assumes the role of head of state when he calls through his column from the prime minister’s office. His scoop, as it happens, does occasion a change in government, when the scandal of the party breaks on the front page the next day. Festivity’s unstable rearrangement of social, political, and moral boundaries continues into the next morning, when Agatha—who has stayed the night at No. 10 because she has forgotten her latchkey—finds herself in an awkward position at breakfast, still dressed in her Hawaiian costume. Displaced from her usual festive realm and social set, Agatha’s appearance and behavior confuse the straight-laced Brown family: the prime minister of the day describes her as a “dancing Hottentot woman.” In the real world—the realm in which Caillois believes that agôn and alea dominates and mimicry and ilinx are suppressed—Agatha’s manner is taboo, “shy-making,” and therefore shameful. Remembering Mary Douglas’s concept of dirt as matter out of place, Agatha’s participation in wasteful festivity transforms her into just such social waste matter, shamefully out of place.

Mimicry is used for social inclusion when the Daily Excess’s gossip writer, Mr Chatterbox (real name Simon Balcairn) is snubbed an invitation to a party given by society hostess Lady Metroland. For Simon, attending the party is a matter of life and death: “if I miss this party […] I
may as well put my head into a gas-oven. Unable to procure an invite, Simon disguises himself with a fake beard and gate-crashes in an attempt to get the latest scoop. Thrown out after being recognized, Simon goes home to dictate his final story—filled with enough slander to warrant dozens of libel cases—before committing suicide. Following through with his gas-oven plan, Simon suffers a queasy death: “the sniff made him cough, and coughing made him breathe, and breathing made him feel very ill; but soon he fell into a coma and presently died.”

In a society where the attainment of pleasure, fortune, and social success is paramount, it is not surprising that the parties in Vile Bodies become, quite literally, life or death events. Parties, then, not only waste time and energy, but also life. But this sense of waste is barely felt by the other characters in the novel: when Adam mentions Simon’s suicide to Agatha, her reaction is blasé: “Oh, that Simon. I thought you meant Simon,” confusing him with another person entirely. Simon is thus simply one more vile body, repeatable and replaceable. Brian Thill argues that “unwanted objects” become waste when they overwhelm and overtake the subject through overabundance. Here, the human subject becomes just one more of those unwanted objects, his identity elided by his role as Mr Chatterbox. Indeed, this role is a form of mimicry in itself. The position is never permanent, and is held by several characters in the novel (Simon, Adam, Miles, and temporarily, Nina). The social editor of the Daily Excess says that a week or so is “about as long as anyone sticks it.” As Brooke Allen notes, the various Mr Chatterboxes merge into one another: in taking the position, each subsumes his or her individuality into the corporate identity of the gossip columnist.

While parties by their nature proffer narrative occasions for transformation, crisis, or catharsis, Waugh shows parties to be peculiarly uneventful, even when they are nominally novel. For instance, the party held in the “captive dirigible” is said to be the first held in such a place, but rather than being exciting and uplifting, the affects it produces are negative (descriptors used in this sequence include “unwell,” “bore,” “ill,” “bogus,” “dull”). While the dirigible party is clearly intended as a spectacle, it is a poor one: “all the same faces” gather, while a crowd of louts assemble below to “jeer.” Inside, it is not much better: the rooms are “narrow and hot” with “protrusions at every corner,” connected together by “spiral staircases.” It takes only half an hour for Agatha to be covered in “a mass of bruises.” The airship also proves to be too much for the increasingly weary Adam: “Oh, Nina,” he remarks, “what a lot of parties.” The dirigible’s confusing, maze-like interior, coupled with its oxymoronic stasis (in the air, but going nowhere) shows festivity as a site of both confinement and waste, particularly when we consider Thill’s argument that waste is the opposite and corollary of desire, producing either disgust or indifference. Yet despite the nausea and fatigue experienced by the characters, they persist, leaving the airship for an illegal night club, St Christopher’s Social Club. In spite of its name, and Agatha’s assertion that it is “divine,” St Christopher’s offers no respite for these giddy social travelers: the room is hot and full of smoke, its tables “unsteady.” The most frequently used initial words here are demonstrative adverbs (“then,” “so,” “there”) and the plural pronoun “they.” Here we might pause on an observation of Anthony Lane’s, that Waugh’s “demeanor” can be registered in the word “so”: “Designed to establish a causal connection, it may equally gesture toward a run of events so fluid that cause and effect can be found giggling under the table.”

The syntax of this sequence, each sentence gesturing adverbially toward its status as the next in a run, and the group pronoun eliding the individuality of its members, tends toward the sequential (rather than the consequential) and the impersonal. The passage from airship to St Christopher’s
finally culminates in the group sitting in a private bedsit drinking whisky while the host is sick. Apart from the parenthetical “vile bodies” passage quoted above, which dazzles the reader with its catalogue of parties, the sequence is tonally flat (that is, boring)—another feature of its use of a depersonalized and sequential grammar.

Waugh’s Bright Young People frequently express boredom, which is unsurprising given the excess of leisure/pleasure time they have at their hands. Recalling Patricia Meyer Spacks’s assertion that the boredom is a uniquely modern construct, born out of the split between work and leisure, the Bright Young People are prone to boredom because they have little serious work to otherwise occupy them (ascribing Hannah Arendt’s grander banality to these figures seems over the top, but there are similarities: a lack of individual will, a desire for distraction from the humdrum). Most are unemployed, a historically inflected fact of the Slump economy as well as an aspect of their membership in the moneyed class. Indeed, even the few who are seen to labor throughout the novel—the multiple Mr Chatterboxes—do so in leisure spaces or arenas of pleasure, observing their subjects from restaurant tables or lounge rooms. The constant hiring and firing associated with the position, and the regular lack of effort undertaken by whoever happens to be in the role at a given time, signals a world full of play, but no real work. Spacks observes moreover that boredom registers an awareness of the inner life’s inadequacies, a point that seems crucial for understanding Vile Bodies. As Naomi Milthorpe has argued, the Bright Young People seem to lack any interiority at all. No wonder they are bored.

In a world in which work is play and play is work, any occasion can be transformed by festivity: a day at the motor races for Adam, Agatha, Archie, and Miles turns into a celebration once Adam learns he has a fortune of thirty-five thousand pounds waiting to be collected from a drunk major. To toast Adam’s newfound wealth, each person drinks a bottle of champagne. Drunk, the group returns to the pits to watch the race, wearing brassards denoting official team positions in order to gain access. Agatha is unexpectedly thrust into competing after the driver is forced to retire: her armband states that she is the team’s spare driver. Her decision to participate in the race signals what Caillois describes as the corruption of mimicry: the person who is disguised comes to believe that the role they are playing is real.

“I’m spare driver,” said Miss Runcible. “It’s on my arm.”
“She’s spare driver. Look, it’s on her arm.”
“Well, do you want to scratch?”
“Don’t you scratch, Agatha.”
“No, I don’t want to scratch.”
“All right. What’s your name?”
“Agatha. I’m the spare driver. It’s on my arm.”
“I can see it is—all right, start off as soon as you like.”
“Agatha,” repeated Miss Runcible firmly as she climbed into the car. “It’s on my arm.”
“I say, Agatha,” said Adam. “Are you sure you’re all right?”
“It’s on my arm,” said Miss Runcible severely.

The conversation is dizzyingly repetitive and the mostly unattributed dialogue confuses the reader attempting to establish who speaks. Of these repeated phrases the most insistent is “it’s on my arm” and importantly, they are the last words that Agatha says before she drives away.
Damon Marcel DeCoste argues that Waugh’s lack of attribution and description in sections of dialogue during several key moments in the novel restricts the reader’s access to the characters’ thoughts and motives.68 The characters instead become the words they speak, stripped of subjective identity.69 Agatha is either the spare driver—or Agatha—because it’s on her arm. The implication being, were another name or role written there, she could be something (or someone) else entirely. It is significant that the only adverbs used in the dialogue tags—“firmly” and “severely”—are attached to Agatha’s speech. These imply seriousness, resolution. However, her reaffirmation of control is contradicted by her actions in the racing car: after several erratic laps, the car leaves the track “proceeding south on the byeroad, apparently out of control,” crashing into a nearby village market cross.70 The contrast between Agatha’s verbal resolution and chaotic driving contributes to a mounting sense that the vertiginous interregnum produced by festivity also imperils the subject.

The corruption of mimicry is confirmed when Agatha, who has fled the crash scene, is found at Euston Station the next day. When prompted for her name, she can only point to the new identity indicated on her brassard—recalling her final words at the pits. Taken to a nursing home for her recovery, Agatha regains her memory but suffers mental instability. A visit from Adam quickly turns into a spontaneous party when a host of bright young visitors arrive; there just happen to be supplies for making cocktails and a gramophone at hand. The relationship between parties and gossip becomes closer than ever in this scene, as Miles, the new Mr Chatterbox, rings his column through to the Daily Excess offices while the party goes on around him. The reader hears the report dictated: “…Yesterday I visited the Hon. Agatha Runcible comma Lord Chasm’s lovely daughter comma at the Wimpole Street nursing-home.”71 George McCartney observes that Waugh’s characters are regularly engulfed by noise.72 Brooke Allen concurs, reading the talk in Vile Bodies as a type of noise, because of its mostly vacuous content.73 In this scene, the noisy talk is gossip: Miles’s report interjects throughout, creating a disquieting effect. Agatha’s nightmares while recovering from her accident reveal her perception of the relationship between people and the press: “we were all driving round and round in a motor race and none of us could stop, and there was an enormous audience composed entirely of gossip writers and gate-crashers […] all shouting to us at once to go faster.”74 As Douglas Lane Patey notes, the image of the cars speeding around the racetrack is central to the novel, symbolizing the way in which “events move faster and faster until a whole world crashes.”75 The nursing home party is the final moment before Agatha’s world crashes: she never recovers from the excitement of the party and descends into delirium, then death, still imagining that she is behind the wheel of the race car. Importantly, the scene’s talk, alternating between gossip and delirium, demonstrates Waugh’s interest in waste. Verbal waste accompanies the wastefulness of Agatha’s ultimately fatal encounter with festivity.

Writing in the Daily Mail a few months after the release of Vile Bodies, Waugh pronounced Agatha the heroine of the novel, describing her as “crazy,” “dissolute,” and “sordid.”76 Jacobs reads this as an attempt by Waugh to degrade the novel, and instead characterizes Agatha as “an emblem of the novel’s need to suspend the processes of time in a paradox of glamour and innocence.”77 But if Vile Bodies is concerned with illustrating the wasteful emptiness of party-going, placing Agatha at the novel’s center makes sense: Agatha exemplifies mimicry and ilinx, and their consequences, most clearly—from being the festive life of the party in Hawaiian costume right until her dizzying, distressing end.

69. Ibid.
70. Waugh, Vile Bodies, 148.
71. Ibid., 160.
74. Waugh, Vile Bodies, 158.
Three years after the publication of *Vile Bodies*, Waugh published a short story, "Cruise: Letters from a Young Lady of Leisure," in the February 1933 issue of *Harper’s Bazaar*. The story was later collected in Waugh’s first book of short stories, *Mr Loveday’s Little Outing* (1936). This epistolary tale, its title bathetically echoing John Cleland’s 1748 erotic novel *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, describes a cruise holiday taken by the unnamed young lady of the subtitle with her family. In letters and postcards to a friend, the young lady describes her cruise to Egypt on board the SS *Glory of Greece*, detailing life on board and visits to port towns, and narrates her various romantic entanglements with multiple fellow passengers. Like most of Waugh’s short stories it has not enjoyed (or endured) ongoing critical interest; however, it is important for discussing Waugh’s representation of festive sociability as it is inflected by the suspension of time and space enjoyed while taking a cruise holiday. Waugh’s conflation of leisure with pleasure through his intertextual title suggests that we need to read the story as being as much about sociability as about travel. The operation of ilinx and mimicry upon human subjects appears in the narrator’s retelling of several onboard party events, including a costume party, cocktails in the purser’s room, and dinner on deck. In its structure, action, and metaphors, in which causality appears to recede in favor of a vertiginous lurching from event to event, the story posits both the allure of departure from everyday life through an embrace of mimicry and ilinx, and the deflation and waste that results.

The most salient characteristic of Waugh’s exploration of festivity in "Cruise" is that the departure from the everyday is doubled: parties are an aspect of the cruise liner’s enabling of escape from ordinary routine. This setting for festivity recalls Foucault’s assertion that "the ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*," able to operate as "a floating piece of space, a place without a place." As many scholars have noted, the cruise holiday was during the twenties and thirties a byword for glamorous escape, the cruise liner a “pseudo-place” whose liminality and mobility licensed fantasy and play. Escape was a common theme of thirties writing, as Paul Fussell has memorably argued, in which the greyness, dourness, and cold of England in the Slump was contrasted with the brightness and warmth of abroad. “Momentary departures from the ordinary” likewise characterized much of youth sociability, as Eivind Grip Fjær and Sébastien Tutenges have shown. In Waugh’s “Cruise” the reader is flung, *in medias res*, into the action through the narrator’s letter, as though we are its addressee. We discover that the first leg of the journey was “rough” and that the young lady and her brother Bertie were denied sleeper berths on the boat train because of a mix-up with the tickets: “Goodness how Sad.” Once on board, the narrator says, "everything [was] a bit more alright," including making acquaintance with a "corking [i.e., agreeable] young man." She also meets the purser, whose compliment to her—that she is different from everyone else—is marked as “decent,” apparently using this epithet in the colloquial interwar way, to mean kind or accommodating. “Decent” is the most explicitly positive epithet she uses; in its historical etymology, the word means to be fit or appropriate, or satisfying a general standard. That this is her highest form of praise suggests a negative affective realm. In spite, that is, of “everything” being “allright,” what we read is a litany of minor complaints: salt water makes bathing difficult, Bertie loses at the casino, seasickness cuts short the narrator’s amorous night with the young man. “Alright” thus stands in for something less than the word suggests: as she comments, “goodness how sad.” Her slangy descriptions, alternating between “decent,” “allright,” and “sad,” reveals the uneven emotional terrain caused by onboard sociability.

82. Ibid., 113.
83. Ibid., 115.
84. Ibid., 113.
The narrative, told in irregular sections (a long letter here, a one-line postcard there) seems both formally and thematically concerned with the problem of navigating the actual and affective bumps experienced by cruise passengers. As Douglas Hart notes, cruise ship lounges, as spaces of licensed mingling between the sexes, were in the twenties among the few public arenas in which introductions were not necessary to strike up an acquaintance. This is reflected in the young lady's rapid familiarity with a succession of young men she meets in the lounge: the "corking" young man Robert, an effete fellow with a camera called Arthur, and several of the ship's employees, including the "cynical" purser, who invites her to his room for cocktails. This succession of suitors also reveals the origin of the young lady's romantic interests in the enforced idleness of travel. Walter Benjamin saw idleness qua amusement ("the readiness to savor, on one's own, an arbitrary succession of sensations"). Here, the suspension of the normal patterns of work or study in favor of unbroken leisure results in an arbitrary succession of romantic sensations engendered through proximity. The young lady is dismissive of the other passengers who are unable to assist with her pursuit of entertainment. "Who else is there? Well a lot of old ones," she tells us, along with a newly married couple ("very embarrassing") and several families from the unfashionable "industrial north." Her comment about the newlyweds, in combination with her praise word, "decent," indicates that the public nature of onboard sociability mediates and moderates the display of emotions, requiring a blasé attitude that refuses both the highs and lows of grand passions. A flippant, feminine flâneuse, the young lady saunters and lounges on the ship, both spatially and sexually, seeking pleasurable sensations with which to fill idle time.

As on the real cruise ships of the thirties, the company in Waugh's story organizes time between each leg of travel with social occasions: deck games, dinners, and a fancy dress ball. While the heroine calls the deck games "hell," she notes their importance in establishing community among the passengers—Bertie, who refuses to play, is "madly unpop." But more crucial for the young lady is the ball. Balls present multiple opportunities for the transformations occasioned by mimicry and ilinx—special costumes, decorations, dancing, drinks, and romantic entanglements. Thus a ball in a literary text can function as both historical representation of social ritual and as a standard plot device allowing for dramatic conflict, change, and crisis. Waugh frames the cruise ship ball in this manner: the young lady plans a "clever" costume—she is to go in drag in a sailor's outfit, an idea suggested to her over cocktails by the purser—that will undercut her romantic rival, Miss P. Textually positioned at the moment of narrative crisis, the reader thus expects that the young lady will triumph at the ball: her social cleverness, symbolized in her transgressive choice of costume, will be parsed as sexually superior. The young lady is also late to the ball, which is usually a narrative tool for increasing social triumph through delay and anticipation: she has been fixing her sailor's cap, which is "a corker." But Waugh ironically deflates any transformative potential offered by the costume. As the heroine discovers once she has entered the ballroom, about "twenty girls and some women" are all dressed identically. Her rival Miss P wears a ballet costume, achieving the individuality and spectacle the heroine desires, but fails, to garner to herself. The young lady receives only a "faint clap" instead of the exultant victory due to conventional romantic heroines. The rest of the party follows a similarly bathetic course of minor violence (hitting Miss P in the nose with a paper streamer), sadness (Bertie, whose costume is "horribly dull," ends up crying in the purser's cabin), and sexual failure (she "bitche[s]" another young man): events summarized in her characteristic comment, "goodness how Sad."
In place of the renewal offered by Bakhtinian festivity, or the climax seen in conventional romantic plots, Waugh proffers a festive and narrative structure that is simply one slightly disappointing event after another. The story ignites narrative energy but then wastes it in fizzling, bathetic irony.

Like Vile Bodies, “Cruise” is a story that on a formal level, as well as on the level of events and characters, instates succession, sequence, or series rather than progression, growth, or effect. Like the novel, the most frequent initial words in this story are adverbs demonstrating sequence: “so,” “then,” “well.” The young lady’s letters read as though they have been dashed off suddenly, without deep thought or revision. She spells words incorrectly, forgets the rules of punctuation and grammar, and uses capitalization inconsistently. The run-on, rambling prose demands to be consumed quickly by its reader. The letters and postcards have little connection beyond being the next in the temporal series: in terms of character development, there is only a limited sense that the young lady or any of her fellow passengers changes as a result of this festive period. As a brief example, in four of thirteen letters or postcards, the young lady reports her mother having bought a shawl. This is among the only activities her mother is shown to do. Such recurrence at the level of character activity indicates this is a narrative world dominated by repetition rather than change. Likewise, the young lady’s closing comment on Miss P in her final postcard, “Goodness what a bitch,” suggests not generosity or community but a further, acrimonious atomization of human relations.95 In the same way that “succession and repetition” characterizes festivity in Vile Bodies, “Cruise” narrates arbitrary succession rather than cathartic transformation. In place of the purifying suspension of everyday relations that refreshes the polity, Waugh presents a sociability that, in repeating endlessly, pollutes.

Martin Stannard comments that “Cruise” echoes the theme of much of Waugh’s thirties writing, of the cruelty and savagery that dominate apparently polite society.96 “Cruise” certainly shows people behaving extremely poorly, and does indeed end in a chaotic, deflated unraveling of any pretensions to sophistication suggested by the idea of a cruise holiday. However, the story is so bathetic in tone—chatty, gossipy, casual—that reading it in the grand terms of cruelty seems a little overwhelming. The story ends in ironic deflation: “So now we are back,” recounts the heroine on a postcard, “and sang old lang syne is that how you spell it.”97 “Cruise” imagines a festive wastefulness that ends not with a bang but a whimper: in the banality of a picture postcard finished with a casually cutting remark.

For Waugh and his characters, parties range from dull to disgusting, from sick to sad. Parties—iterative, repetitive, arbitrary, wasteful—occasion boredom, nausea, hostility, violence, and death, but rarely do they bring about social renewal, catharsis, cohesion, or even fun. The insights offered by Caillois’s theories of festive play offer fruitful means to read Waugh’s party fiction, pointing to further opportunities for new readings of literary texts informed by the rich interdisciplinarity of festive studies. But as our article demonstrates, literary studies has much to bring to festive studies. Literary texts document historical trends in manners and mores, deportment, slang, dress, décor and locations, food and drink, social expectations and behaviors, and a host of other sociological and economic factors implicated in parties. Through use of charged language they index the complex psychological and affective terrain of parties at different points in history and culture. By examining a text’s integration of character, setting,
symbol, plot, and language, we can further understand the ways festivity has been understood and represented throughout history. Moreover, reading literary texts demonstrates the ways in which dominant theories and discourses of festivity fail to account for the complex work of parties and the different social functions they perform. In showing scenes of everyday waste and banal destruction, *Vile Bodies* and “Cruise” highlight the idealistic assumptions behind most theories of festivity: as these texts demonstrate, modern affective and social landscapes are too complex to unreflexively read festivity *qua* renewal. It follows that any expanded field of festive studies should take into account the theoretical and methodological affordances, as well as the intellectual, imaginary, and affective evidence, provided by literary studies and literary texts. We urge those working in this field to turn to literary texts in future studies of festivity.

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ARTICLE

Fans as the Researcher’s Unwitting Collaborators: A Few Notes on Disney Theme Parks, Fandom, and Data Collection

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the notion of fan labor through Disney park fans’ work of “Disney scholarship” and “Disney history,” as well as the extent to which such data might be used by academic researchers. While it provides unavoidable entry points to academic investigations of Disney theme parks and their history, this body of knowledge reveals underlying motivations specific to fandom’s social and cultural economy. A brief history of Disney park fandom will show how fan-created works of “Disney scholarship” evidence popular expertise in often disregarded areas of culture, as well as processes of fan labor that complicate the traditional amateur/professional binary. For all their claims to professionalism, fans generally regard paid labor with suspicion and trade fan-collected data by rules typical of a gift economy. As self-styled Disney historians morph into Disney custodians, they reveal underlying motivations that help make sense of the data they produce: in their struggle to preserve Walt-era attractions and protect the park from the corporation’s commercialism, fans reveal a set of prescriptive attitudes on how to engage with the parks that inform their practices as park chroniclers. This is especially evident in controversies over proposed attraction updates, as fans set out to promote a historically and aesthetically discerning appreciation of Disney products, outside the imperatives of commercial culture.
Fans as the Researcher’s Unwitting Collaborators: A Few Notes on Disney Theme Parks, Fandom, and Data Collection

Thibaut Clément

The highly participatory nature of the form of entertainment on offer at Disneyland and later Disney parks has made them a consistent topic of interest for researchers and critics. From their very onset, the parks have thus stood out for both their symbolic value and the behaviors that they seem to encourage, allowing them to be variously identified as new public realms or modern-day pilgrimage centers for an increasingly secularized society. Less than ten years after Disneyland opened in 1955, postmodern architect Charles W. Moore thus noted that its carnival-like atmosphere allowed for “play-acting, both to be watched or participated in, in a public sphere.” This, he contended, made the park a modern-day Versailles “keyed to the kind of participation without embarrassment which apparently at this point in our history we crave.”

A decade and a half later, anthropologist Alexander Moore found the parks an analogue not of royal palaces but of pilgrimage centers, where “grand play [emerges] to take on much of the organized ritual form of the pilgrimage and to fulfill much of the ritual function.”

It is this article’s contention that, owing to their “producerly” qualities, Disney theme parks allow for still other modes of participation, including what might be termed “fan labor” in the area of Disney scholarship and history. Ever since the publication of the fanzine The E-Ticket’s first issue (1986) and earlier, Disney park fans have collectively amassed a body of knowledge that Disney researchers would be foolish to ignore—especially now that the Disney corporation has closed its archives to outside researchers. But while fan-produced scholarship offers unavoidable (though often neglected) entry points to any academic investigation of Disney theme parks, the purposes that it serves and its underlying motivations are distinct from scholars’ and need to be investigated in terms of the symbolic and social currency of fandom.

Fans’ work to uncover the parks’ history and preserve their legacy is likewise indicative of normative ways to engage with the Disney corporation and its products. As self-styled Disney historians occasionally morph into Disney custodians or preservationists, they reveal underlying motivations that help make sense of the data that they produce: in their efforts to protect the legacy of Walt-era attractions, fans reveal a set of prescriptive attitudes that inform their practices as park historians and chroniclers. Their aspirations to a historical and aesthetic connoisseurship of Disney parks repeatedly sends them on a collision course with the Disney corporation, whose business decisions, fans argue, run against Walt Disney’s very legacy.

Special attention will thus be paid to the complex web of relationships between fans and the Disney corporation, and its impact on the reliability of fan-created works. A study of controversies that have shaken Disney fan communities will eventually shed light on how, by allegedly catering to fans, fan-created works of “Disney scholarship” actively shape a specific vision of fandom while promoting prescriptive ways to engage with Disney products.

Disney Fandom: A Short History

It was in the late 1960s that organized Disney fandom first emerged, coalescing around collectors’ growing interest in Disney memorabilia—a trend intensified by Mickey Mouse’s fortieth...


7. Jim Fanning, “Disney Historian or Disney ‘Distorian’?” in How to Be a Disney Historian: Tips from the Top Professionals, by Jim Korkis (n.p.: Theme Park Press, 2016), 118. Unlike Maltin’s and Barrier’s work, Smith’s, Canemaker’s, and Thomas’s work in Disney history does not stem from “fanzines” but originates in corporate, academic, or journalist endeavors. A former UCLA librarian trained at the Library of Congress, Smith founded the first Disney archives in 1970 to collect artwork and other corporate material for artistic and legal purposes. As per his online biography, Canemaker’s BA research project at Marymount Manhattan College led him to explore the newly created Disney archives in 1973 and provided the basis for later publications on Disney animation, starting with Treasure of Disney Animation (John Canemaker and birthday and the character’s perceived innocence in such turbulent times. These efforts resulted in the creation of non-Disney affiliated organizations: first The Mouse Club (founded in 1979) and, later, The National Fantasy Fan Club (founded in 1985 and renamed The Disneyana Fan Club in 2009).4

Predating the creation of such formal organizations, fans’ first efforts at compiling what they would later term “Disney history” may be traced back to Leonard Maltin’s and Michael Barrier’s almost simultaneous efforts in this area, both of whom used their own fanzines as vehicles for their writings. In February 1967, seventeen-year-old Maltin published a filmography of Disney films in his own Film Fan Monthly, which caught the eye of studio executives and later blossomed into a book, The Disney Films.5 While initially focused on comic books, Barrier’s articles in Funnyworld (published between 1966 and 1983) soon expanded to animation, opening a career that would later see him publish a history of Hollywood animation and a well-received biography of Walt Disney, both published by major university presses.6 They, along with Disney archive founder Dave Smith, animation history professor John Canemaker, and journalist Bob Thomas, are now commonly identified by later Disney historians as the originators and standard-bearers of “Disney History.”7

Often claiming the legacy of such illustrious figures within the Disney fan community, a few Disney fans now proclaim their status as Disney historians—a designation that Jim Korkis, another such Disney historian and a prolific writer, claims to have invented. By this, Korkis refers to those who, like him, do “original research, like interview people, locate material,... verify material, and organize that material into a coherent structure” and connect the raw facts “into a story so that people can better understand” them.8 Korkis has since then bestowed this title on other fans-turned-writers, such as Didier Ghez and Jeff Kurtti—all of whom are featured in his book, How to Be a Disney Historian: Tips from the Top Professionals.9 Through his own example and with almost five decades of experience in the field, Korkis has over time established himself as an inevitable point of entry for any study of Disney fandom and set the standard for fans’ efforts in Disney history.10 His gatekeeping efforts are especially visible in the prescriptive norms of behavior described in How to Be a Disney Historian—the first attempt to formalize Disney history as a coherent set of practices. This title, along with a number of posts written by Korkis, will consequently provide the basis for much of my discussion.11

While the bulk of Disney history focuses on Walt-era animation, Disney parks emerged as a specific topic of interest in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a first generation of park fans set out to document Disneyland’s history and interview its creators. Their work has since then turned into a cottage industry, complete with specialized publishing houses (such as Bonaventure Press and Theme Park Press) for the self-publication of works created by fans and serviced by Amazon’s catch-all selection, e-reader friendly platform, and on-demand printing capabilities.

Fan-created content on Disney theme parks and their history generally fall into three broad categories: fanzines, books, and blogs. Disney park fanzines are now all defunct, and most contributors who are still active have since moved online—though some, like the short-lived Tales of the Laughing Place (2004–9), took the reverse route, moving from online to print publishing. Most prominent and fondly remembered by fans are The E-Ticket (1986–2009), created by
Robert Abrams, eds., Treasures of Disney Animation Art [New York: Abbeville Press, 1982]). Thomas, for his part, published Walt Disney’s first authorized biography in 1976 (Bob Thomas, Walt Disney: An American Original [New York: Disney Editions, 1994]). This followed an earlier biography, Richard Schickel’s much-reviled The Disney Version (Richard Schickel, The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney [Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1968]), which is considered by the fan community as poorly researched and is therefore included in fan bibliographies only with words of caution—when not excluded entirely. While some of them initially met with a measure of resistance by Disney (now a regular fixture at the studio), Maltin thus explains that his first book was seen as a rival to an in-house publication to be released at the same time), all such “Disney historians” have enjoyed access to the famed and now closed to the public Disney archives—and, in Thomas’s case, to Walt Disney himself, whom he interviewed a number of times prior to Walt’s death, in 1966.


10. JeniLynn Knopp, “Interview with Jim Korkis,” The Disney

brothers Leon and Jack Janzen, and Persistence of Vision (1992–98), which was distributed with tapes featuring interviews of major Disney artists by its founder Paul Anderson. Disney park fanzines typically alternated between interviews with Disney park employees (most prominently, Disney Imagineers, as park designers are known internally); backstories and analyses of Disney rides or parks; and, in the case of The E-Ticket, fan mail sharing fond recollections of childhood visits.

Fan-created books on Disney theme parks include memoirs and autobiographies of Disney park employees, collections of interviews with Disney artists, and “secret histories” and “behind-the-scenes” narratives—many of which are based on extensive interviews with former Disney employees. Much in the way that memoirs and autobiographies rest on an audience’s expectations that those are, to some extent, self-confessional and revealing of untold truths, self-styled “unofficial” histories and “tell-all” books likewise reveal an antagonistic approach to the Disney corporation, which stands implicitly accused of maintaining narratives friendly to its business purposes.

Disney park blogs mostly feature Disney park news, in the form of sneak peeks and previews of upcoming attractions, lands, or parks, as well as reviews thereof. Other content includes interviews with Disney artists and employees, book reviews, vintage ephemera, internal documents (concept artworks, training manuals, etc.), and the spiels (and different versions thereof) of current or long-gone attractions.

Now well into the thousands, Disney park fan websites originated with The Disneyland Information Guide (The DIG)—an amateur forum for the queries of prospective Disneyland visitors. Sometime in the mid-1990s, the forum was taken up by Al Lutz, who had started writing—mostly often critically—about Disneyland’s direction (or lack thereof) on Usenet groups. In 1996, The DIG inspired Deb Will to create an East Coast counterpart, Walt Disney World Information Guide (WDWIG), later renamed AllEars.net. The DIG later morphed into MousePlanet (2000), whose core columnists included Lutz, Kevin Yee, Adrienne Vincent-Phoenix, Shelly Smith (now Valladolid), and Jim Hill. In 2002, some MousePlanet contributors broke away and moved to their own websites: Lutz to MiceAge (now MiceChat), Hill and Valladolid to Jim Hill Media. Developing parallel to The DIG galaxy of offspring, other popular Disney park fan sites include Peter Werner’s DisneyInformationStation (formerly WDWINFO) and DISboards forums (1997), as well as Doobie Moseley’s LaughingPlace (1999), which developed from its founder’s twin ambition to compile a listing of all the windows on Main Street at Disneyland (they all carry the names of famed Disney collaborators) and a directory of all Disney-related websites.

A selection of more historically inclined fan sites (as opposed to the more news-centric sites above) notably include Werner Weiss’s Yesterland (1995), which provides photographic records of bygone attractions and lands, in addition to essays on Disney parks history; Disney History Institute blog (2009), run by Todd J. Pierce and Paul Anderson (founder of the Persistence of Vision fanzine), whose “primary focus [is] Walt himself” and his “creative legacy”; Stuff From the Park (matterhorn1959.blogspot.com), a premier source of vintage Disney parks photography and ephemera, as well as internal documents, including training manuals (Standard Operating Procedures); and DoomBuggies (1997), which began as “Chef Mayhem’s Unofficial Tribute to the Haunted Mansion” and is devoted to the attraction’s creation story.

Book writers and fanzine and blog contributors often intersect, and many Disney historians have known each other for decades, with the effect that Disney fan works are rife with cross-references, in the form of reviews of books by fellow Disney historians, occasional nods on personal blogs, or material borrowed from each other. More generally, fans now stand at the center of an ecosystem of Disney-related content, some of it fan-collected, some fan-created, and others still fan-oriented—including an expanding collection of books and magazines now officially produced and published by the Disney corporation itself, with the cooperation of self-appointed Disney historians.15

Disney Parks History as “Found Data” and “Fan Labor”

Standards of Accuracy

While invaluable in their erudite knowledge of Disney parks and their history, fan contributions also invite caution. Indeed, some fans now lay claims to intellectual authority and scholarship, while they largely operate outside academic circles.16

At stake here is how fan-created or fan-collected data may serve as documentary sources for an analysis of Disney—in other words, how they might qualify as what others have termed “found data” and how the study of their work constitutes an “unobtrusive method” to investigate a notoriously secretive or downright censorious company.17 Indeed, the fan-collected data and fan-directed works of Disney history sometimes percolate over years or decades, opening up entire swaths of behind-the-scenes territory (such as issues of labor organization) that the Disney corporation works hardest to keep out of sight.18

An excellent case in point is provided by Patrick Jenkins (who goes online by Matterhorn1959), whose blogs feature dozens of digitized training manuals (or Standard Operating Procedure manuals or “SOPs,” in Disney parlance) of the 1960s and 1970s, most likely collected at auctions or via eBay. Other examples include a variety of books released by publishing houses primarily or exclusively catering to theme parks fans, such as David Koenig’s Mouse Tales series or former head of Disneyland’s Human Resources Van Arsdale France’s autobiography.19

As fans so often accuse each other of inaccuracies and low reporting standards (as will be shown shortly), one might want to call into question the validity and veracity of the examples mentioned above. Yet, for lack of better options and direct access behind the scenes, one might find a measure of confidence in the above-mentioned sources’ remarkable consistency. Not only does their systematic collation suggest that private practices and public discourses are in this specific case generally aligned, but France’s autobiography and the SOPs also likely share the same author, as suggested by the distinctive and peculiar use of suspension points that otherwise pepper his writings.20 Additionally, all three fan-collected or fan-directed sources can be triangulated with and corroborated through external sources and third parties outside the community of fans, such as sociologist John van Maanen’s two studies of Disney parks or even Disney’s own self-help book on management methods—whose observations and terminology closely match documents unearthed by fans.21 Much in the same way, Koenig’s accounts of various events are generally consistent with their presentation in the press—as illustrated by Koenig’s reports of labor struggles at Disneyland attraction Jungle Cruise and reports in the

11. Korkis’s central position and extensive, long-cultivated networks with like-minded fans (by contrast with other Disney historians more closely associated with academia) have likewise been especially useful for my analysis of Disney fandom’s social and cultural economy.

Fan-collected data and fan-produced history are also certified through a relatively structured network of peer validation within the Disney fan community. Such efforts at cross-validation take on various forms, from reviews of fellow fans’ works (often, though not always, in favorable terms), to one’s willingness to share data or collaborate with colleagues of good standing and reputation in the community. Added to those informal methods of validation is the considerable prestige bestowed by the recognition of the Disney corporation itself (whose official publications often rely on contributions especially commissioned from Disney historians) or of the Disney family-owned, independently run Disney Family Museum. The latter not only lists some Disney historians as collaborators but also provides its tacit endorsement of The E-Ticket, whose assets it bought in 2010 and which it now sells at its gift shop.

When used with a measure of caution, primary and secondary data collected by fans can therefore be found to satisfy criteria for authenticity and representativeness. This suggests that, in the absence of direct access to primary sources (for instance, located in the Disney archives), fan-collected or fan-directed (or, for that matter, Disney-sanctioned) publications may be dealt with as “good enough” entry points.

**Fan Expertise and Distinction Strategies**

Issues of fannish expertise and recognition reveal distinction strategies, as those with access to publication and a measure of prestige often prove keen to dismiss some others as quacks, “fanboi experts,” or “Distorians”—in other words, “charlatans … who dishonor the intent of [the] original designation” of Disney historian. Judging from the outpour of criticism that they face, their most common crimes include plagiarism and failure to give due credit to other fans’ earlier efforts; inaccuracies and sloppiness (the usual result of copy-paste-happy bloggers none too concerned with fact-checking or looking up original sources); lack of originality, likewise the result of overreliance on data available online; and, lastly, an uncritical and undiscriminating love of all things Disney.

As Korkis remarks, a “Disney fan’s love of Disney is different than a historian’s love of Disney.” Such accolades and dismissals of who is truly worthy of the Disney historian label provide evidence that “fans themselves are frequently involved in the hierarchical evaluation of fannish textual productivity via feedback, recommendations, beta reading and mentoring, as well as through fine-grained fan distinctions whereby reputation/status accrues to certain fan creators but not others.” More generally, those modes of authentication and distinction give credence to the notion that some fandom testifies indeed to a form of “popular ‘expertise’ that mirrors in interesting ways the knowledge-production that occupies academia. Within the realm of popular culture, fans are the true experts; they constitute a competing educational elite, albeit one without official recognition or social power.”

We may therefore accept the conclusions of participatory culture expert Henry Jenkins that there is such a thing as fan expertise, meaning that while not all fannish productions are created equal, some can indeed be used with a certain degree of confidence by researchers. Unsurprisingly,
issues of fan expertise and their modes of certification also betray social and symbolic concerns, to the effect that the study of Disney park fandom and fans’ textual production yields not one but two strands of data: one that relates to the Disney parks and another that relates to their fans and the “communicative events” surrounding their exchanges.31

Despite their claims to “professionalism” (as evidenced in the subtitle to Korkis’s book How to Be a Disney Historian: Tips from the Top Professionals), Disney historians remain first and foremost fans. Disney fans’ claims to real “scholarship”—albeit deprived of academia’s perceived snobbishness and anti-Disney bias—thus help replicate structures of domination otherwise typical of fandom. More highly educated fans often appear keen to differentiate themselves from fandom’s “cultural proletariat” and “use [legitimate culture’s] official criteria on its unofficial texts.”32 More critically, and for all their railings against “fanbois” and assorted “Disney geeks,” Disney historians fulfill two other conditions that identify them as fans. As many insist, Disney fans’ work in the area of Disney history does not qualify as a “job” or “professional endeavor” but should rather be considered part of one’s “personality,” with Disney historians something like “ministers of faith.”33 This, in turn, makes pay largely irrelevant—to the point that one’s willingness to sacrifice time and money to accumulate data (ephemera, factoids, etc.) is usually a point of great personal pride.34 Similarly, Disney historians deal with areas of culture generally scorned by “legitimate culture” or, to reprise expressions introduced by media scholar John Fiske, work at “a form of moonlighting to fill in the gaps left by legitimate culture workers”—a work whose dividends lie not in monetary rewards but “in the appreciation of one’s peers in a community of tastes.”35 Therefore, Disney fans’ pretensions to professionalism serve more as a reference to a code of ethics than to a specific employment status.

The amateur/professional dichotomy is likewise further complicated by the changing recognition and employment history of Disney historians. As a result of tangled relationships with the Disney company itself, Disney historians’ aspirations to independence and impartiality are sometimes belied by their necessary cooperation with the corporation and some of its employees. The Disney company thus sometimes provides exclusive content to Disney historians and their blogs (such as sneak peek previews of upcoming parks and attractions), which drives traffic up. Just as importantly, some fans are now professionals in the field, some as freelancers or “Disney geeks for hire,” whose expertise and clout among “rank-and-file” fans have allowed them to contribute articles for official Disney publications or even one-off projects, such as books.36 Others still are or were at some point full-time workers at the company, working as Disney archivists or “Second-Generation Disney Imagineers”; often growing up in the direct vicinity of Disneyland and starting as fans, Imagineers like Chris Merritt eventually found employment at the Disney company (sometimes starting as rank-and-file cast members) and, from this position, set out to document the work of their elders.37 To this extent, fannish productions in Disney park history are representative of the false “amateur/professional binary” sometimes identified as central to fandom.38

Disney History as Fan Labor

Raising the issue of Disney fans’ employability inevitably entails recognizing fannish productions as works of labor (and not just “unproductive” leisure), whose worth (monetary and otherwise) expands well beyond the cultural capital of Fiske’s cultural economy of fandom. As new media
Consequently, one might conclude that "media fandom operates on a labor theory of value—not necessarily in the Marxist sense of the phrase, but in the sense that value derives from work." And while fannish productions are usually traded for free or (in the case of books) only to recoup publication costs, this, of course, does not mean they are worthless. Quoting fellow fan studies scholar Karen Hellekson, Tisha Turk suggests that "fandom’s gift economy assigns special worth to ‘gifts of time and skill’... gifts made by fans for fans."

Hellekson thus insists that the trade of fannish productions in a gift economy (rather than a commercial one) results not just from "self-protective attempts" to circumvent potential litigation for copyright infringement on the trademarked property of corporations. Rather, the exchange of fan-collected or fan-written productions evidence symbolic practices "in which fan gift exchange is performed in complex, even exclusionary symbolic ways that create a stable nexus of giving, receiving, and reciprocity."

Such a point is made clear by Anderson’s point of honor in describing his work as escaping capitalist logic or ordinary business sense, when accused by angry fans of scamming them and pocketing subscription fees to a fanzine on extended (if not permanent) hiatus. This line of defense allows him to disqualify fees as any form of "payment" and reframe not just the production of his fanzine but the whole monetary transaction as outside the commercial realm. Published in a DISboard thread, his response reads:

Hi. Paul F. Anderson here. Since there has been considerable discussion as to the situation with Persistence of Vision [POV] and my business practices, I thought perhaps it would be good to put in my two cents... First off, if you subscribed at ANY time, then you are still active in my database. Will you ever get another issue? Yes! Am I a poor businessman? Yes! However, you need to understand that POV is NOT a business. It is a subsidized labor-of-love effort. I lose far more money on the endeavor than I have EVER collected in subscription fees.... Why do I [do] POV then? Because I feel that it needs to be done and heaven knows that Disney won’t do it. Moreover, I thoroughly enjoy delving into the creative legacy of Walt Disney. To even suggest that I’m in this as a way of egging my subscribers (as someone suggested) is ludicrous. Anybody who knows me, will tell you that my heart is sincere in my endeavors to produce a quality Disney history product, whether timely or not. This list of supporters would include folks like: Diane Disney Miller (Walt’s daughter), Leonard Maltin, Dave Smith, Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, and many more.

While Anderson insists on presenting his fanzine as part of a gift economy—one that involves no "payment" per se—reciprocation remains essential to the success of Disney fandom’s data exchange, as explained in rules of thumb about sharing in Korkis’s essay “Sharing and When Not to Share.” Warning other Disney historians about “vampires who will never be satisfied [and] suck you dry emotionally,” Korkis explains that “while you should not hoard information because


18. For example, employees are not allowed to discuss working conditions in front of guests—an example of “bad show” that may result in termination. Online scholars Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis argue: “[while] it seems as if it isn’t really labor and fans don’t require payment because enjoyment is enough, or because fandom rejects capitalist logics,... fan labor also dovetails with contemporary labor practice through the rise of pleasurable work as a widespread or even normative phenomenon.” This position, they explain, “opens up appreciation for the skills involved, much as with feminist insistence on care work as labor.... The labor framework provides a powerful way to value what fans are doing, in contrast to the dismissals that have long attended fandom.”

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that helps no one, you need to be selective in how you share it and who you share it with. Also, remember that once your information is out there, anyone can use it and use it without crediting you as the source.45

Who deserves access to prized information, and on what conditions? One’s willingness to share treasured or exclusive data is a direct measure of the quality of other Disney historians’ work and serves as yet another example of the peer-validation process typical of Disney scholarship. By contrast, efforts to keep control of exclusive information or claim responsibility for its discovery might be understood as a process of “capital accumulation”—with knowledge on Disney usually the capital most readily at hand.46 This helps explain Disney historians’ occasional habits of putting a price on information requested by people outside the gift circle to make fan labor more readily understood as “work” (and hard work, for that matter), as well as restore a sense of reciprocation between insiders and outsiders. Rather than as “payments,” those claims may thus be more accurately understood as symbolic of the time and labor spent on collecting costly information.47

**Fans as Custodians: The “It’s a Small World” Controversy**

As they set out to protect the legacy of Walt-era Disney products and attractions, fans reveal a set of prescriptive attitudes on how to engage with Disney products that inform their practices as historians and chroniclers. This is especially evident in Disney historians’ ambiguous relationship toward the Disney company, as well as efforts to promote a historical and aesthetic appreciation of the parks that stands firmly outside the imperatives of the corporation’s commercial culture.

**“Bad” versus “Good” Disney**

Much in the same way that they draw a sharp difference between the “Disney brand” and the “Disney company,” or between the Disney company under Walt Disney’s leadership and its modern counterpart, fans often end up presenting themselves as the adjudicators of “good” or “bad” Disney.48 Fancying themselves (sometimes with good reason) a thorn in the corporation’s side, fans occasionally appear engaged in a losing battle for Disney’s soul. Determined to save Disney from itself, Disney park fans stand very much in the same position as Doctor Who fans, whom Jenkins, quoting cultural studies expert John Tulloch, describes as:

> a “powerless elite” who claim a privileged relationship to the series by virtues of their mastery over its materials and yet who have little or no influence on “the conditions of production and reception of their show.” What they do possess is “the power to gloss and to write the aesthetic history of the show,” the power to analyze its contents and evaluate its episodes. The Doctor Who fans Tulloch studies exert this power to criticize production decisions running counter to their own interests in the program and to police violations of a series continuity.49

As their designation as Disney historians might suggest, much of the fans’ scholarly production focuses on Walt-era developments, with particular emphasis on Walt Disney's biography and lifework, as well as on Walt-era collaborators. Judging from the output of such publishers as Theme Park Press, the Disney corporation's recent history seems somewhat less interesting or valuable—especially under the leadership of CEO Michael Eisner, whose perceived commercialism some fans find particularly loathsome. As a result, Walt and his continuators...
But there is not real ‘officialization’ or ‘certification’ of Disney histori-ans, except the trust of The Walt Disney Company, whose representatives sometimes object to the very validity of this notion. However, the archives (such as the animators known as the “Nine Old Men” or Disneyland’s original Imagineers) are consistently hailed as standard-bearers of quality, though less reverent critics like Barrier have pointed out the declining quality of the studio’s output even during Walt’s lifetime, when the latter started losing interest in the film business. Fans thus draw a sharp difference between the Disney brand (which they profess to love) and the Disney business (especially the modern media powerhouse, which they usually do not hold in high regard), suggesting that the films and products that they hold dear are somewhat independent from the corporation that produces them.

Fans’ resistance to the Disney corporation is part of their social personas, and some fan sites like MousePlanet (which started out as the highly critical The DIG) or the blog Re-Imagineering have repeatedly stood against allegedly ill-advised changes brought to the parks by the corporation’s new management. Re-Imagineering thus presents itself as “a forum for Disney and Pixar professionals to catalog past imagineering missteps and debate solutions in hope that a new wave of creative management can restore some of the magic that has been missing from the parks for decades.” Some Disney park books likewise tout their “unofficial” or “unapproved” status as badges of honor and have taken broad swipes at changes introduced from the 1980s on.

As a result, many Disney historians define their relationship toward the corporation as “adversarial,” sometimes mutually so. War stories of seasoned Disney fans are almost proof of one’s alleged self-importance (meaning that Disney has taken notice of their vocal criticism), and Disney fans often meet with the resistance and censorship of the Disney corporation. Disney thus routinely stands accused of restricting access to its private archives to exert control of its “approved narrative,” as well as retaliating against Disney fans or writers whose reporting it perceives as unfriendly. Even the designation as Disney historian is cause for friction within the Walt Disney Company, whose representatives sometimes object to the very validity of this concept.

From Scholarship to Stewardship

Indeed, fans’ efforts to document the parks and keep a record of their history frequently run against the corporation’s efforts to present the parks at their all-time best and prevent any unfavorable comparison with the past: “One of the rules of the Disney Business is that whatever is newest is the best thing Disney has ever done, and all those older things can’t even compare.… Now is the best time of your Disney life, they claim. You cannot have people thinking that something better was removed by Disney often for financial reasons.”

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Contrary to a company viewed as dismissive or uncaring of its legacy, Disney park fans and Disney historians typically display a conservationist streak. Likely the result of their historical proximity with the community of Disneyana collectors, Disney historians have since set out to keep whole fragments of Disney history from slipping into oblivion, as entire collections (including items formerly in the hands of Disney) are now auctioned off to the highest bidder. Fans’ anti-dispersal efforts thus rest at least in part on making once-privately held documents widely available and on allowing them to find their way into the public record—books, blog posts, or fan-site entries.

Fans’ antagonistic attitudes toward the Disney corporation were made especially clear in 2008 when the corporation proposed changes to its much-beloved Disneyland attraction “It’s a Small World,” first developed for the UNICEF pavilion (sponsored by Pepsi-Cola) at the 1964 New York


For such instances of collaboration, see Korkis, introduction to section 1, “The Basics,” in Korkis, How to Be a Disney Historian, 1; and Fanning, “Disney Historian or Disney ‘Distorian’?” 119; and Kurtti, “Disney Scholarship,” in Korkis, How to Be a Disney Historian, 13.


World Fair. Conflict erupted when plans were leaked that, much in keeping with earlier changes to previously character-free attractions (such as Swiss Family Tree House and Submarine Voyage rebranded as Tarzan’s Tree House and Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage), Disney’s classic attraction was to be updated with the introduction of Disney characters—a move widely perceived as compromising the attraction’s “artistic integrity” while trivializing its message of world peace. The attraction’s dolls, who represent the children of the world singing in unison, risked not just being upstaged by their higher-profile Disney counterparts but also being marginalized, critics claimed, as a “Spirited America” tableau was also considered to replace a rainforest scene.

“It’s a Small World” probably remains the attraction most easily associated with the style of a singular Disney artist, Mary Blair, whose status as an artist has systemically been pitted against the company’s perceived “crass commercialism.” Largely confined to the preproduction of animated films, Blair’s work as a color designer allowed for far more liberty than otherwise displayed in finished Disney films—a position that allowed her to develop a whimsical, markedly individual style but also made her relatively unknown beyond the circle of Disney fans. As one fan puts it, the proposed changes came to be regarded as “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” In addition to going “too far in their ‘character invasion’ of the parks,” Disney management had dealt one final blow to Blair’s legacy, following the previous destruction of her two tile murals in Tomorrowland.

Fans thus turned their efforts on presenting the attraction as a work of art to be preserved to prevent Disney management from moving forward with its update plans. In the process, fans demonstrated what Fiske has termed “fan productivity,” that is to say, efforts by fans to influence the actual product and “participate in the construction of the original text.” Yet, in a departure from Fiske (who suggests that “fan productivity” largely rests on the industrial, collaborative nature of popular culture’s commodities and resulting “contradictions, inadequacies and superficialities”), it was precisely fans’ appeals to the attraction’s status as a “uniquely crafted art-object” that were mobilized to influence the corporation.

In identifying a singular author with an attraction whose artistic integrity was now compromised and in contrasting Walt’s original vision with the perceived greed of the modern corporation, fans engaged in historiographical disputes over the meaning of Walt Disney’s legacy, in effect accusing the corporation of “revising its history into an approved narrative” and promoting only “a version of history that will help it to earn greater profits.” By tinkering with the attraction in yet another attempt to increase its cross-promotion efforts, Disney management came to be suspected of erasing (or at the very least tampering with) the memory of one of Walt’s final achievements—something that Korkis finds characteristic of the Disney business. “The Disney Business counts on Disney fans having short memories and whose attention can be diverted to a new shiny object. The memory of Walt Disney is often considered an impediment to operating the business for the greatest profit.”

To reprise fan comments posted online, the controversy was soon set in the following terms: “The question of the ‘it’s a small world’ additions is really twofold: is this in the spirit of what Walt wanted for the park and does it add rather than detract from the theme, style, and experience of the ride.” Especially at stake was whether the addition of Disney characters and a tribute to
the United States distracts visitors’ attention away from the children of the world, “trivializes the central theme,... and emphasizes global brand marketing and franchising above all else”; in “yet another prelude to selling more plush,” Disney parks have “now devolved into an elaborate hyper commercial window display, all charm and sincerity leeched from its bones.”

The controversy originated in two Disney park fan sites and soon spread to many others, with MiceAge’s Lutz first breaking the news, casually noting: “It should be interesting to see how Disneyland’s PR department spins that one, especially when the Disney purists catch wind of it.” Subsequent efforts to organize and oppose the proposed changes were in large part coordinated from Re-Imagineering, a blog maintained by Ken Bruce, “a former employee of Pixar Animation Studios” and, with at least eleven entries on the topic, the foremost avenue for fan resistance. In language typical of the debate, the first entry on the topic by Bruce (alias Mr. Banks) thus reads:

“It’s a Small World” is a work of art. Those fortunate enough to be the caretakers of a masterpiece are more than welcome to try on a new frame once in a while, to carefully restore its surface, switch out the lighting or even move the piece to another room.

But even the most fool-hardy owner knows not to paint over the original canvas.

Disneyland is your land. Don’t let this happen.

Setting the tone for much of the controversy, those arguments were reprised in later posts contributed by members of the Imagineers and Disney artists community, including an open letter (also sent to the Los Angeles Times) by Blair’s son, a former Imagineer himself. He notably writes that “the desecration of Mary’s art is an insult to Mary Blair, her art, and her memory,” while others describe the attraction as “a genuine piece of American art, created by a great American artist” and call the changes “akin to defacing any well-known work of art hanging in any museum around the world.”

Not content with reaching out to the community of current or former Disney employees, mobilization efforts even extended to casual fans, with the Los Angeles press an additional outlet to alert the public, and even campaigns to coordinate the action of rank-and-file Disneyland fans. MiceAge’s columnist Andy Castro set up a (now defunct) Save the Small World website specifically dedicated to this purpose, urging aggrieved fans to write, call, or email the corporation and “let your voice be heard, and tell Disney to Save the Rainforest and Save the Small World.”

In the face of the public outcry, the Disney corporation chose to address the controversy and get on with a counteroffensive, with then-president of Walt Disney Imagineering Marty Sklar leading the charge—an initiative that an unimpressed fan describes as “as much desperation as it was spin.” Contradicting arguments that tied the attraction almost exclusively to Blair’s creative genius and allowed it to be held in the same regard as a traditional art-object, Sklar wrote on LaughingPlace:

We all agree that “It’s A Small World” is a Disney classic. But the greatest “change agent” who ever walked down Main Street at Disneyland was Walt himself... Mary Blair’s illustrations were, of course, the spark. But this was one of those great Disney “team efforts,” and many Disney legends joined her: Marc Davis, Blaine Gibson, Rolly Crump, Harriet Burns and numerous others. And, of course, Bob and Dick Sherman added that song we can’t
Fandom, “32, 34. Fiske’s analysis builds on Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural capital and distinction theories. Bourdieu posits the existence of three distinct yet closely interrelated forms of capital, which are economic, social, and cultural. In his study of the economic and social determinants of taste, Bourdieu especially contends that apparently individual preferences serve “distinction” strategies and get out of our heads.... We are not turning this classic attraction into a marketing pitch for Disney plush toys (rumors to the contrary).... We are not “young marketing whizzes” trying to make a name for ourselves. We were fortunate to have trained, and worked with, all of Walt’s original Imagineers.24

In the face of such criticism, Disney loyalists came to adopt the corporation’s “Walt-as-change-agent” and “attractions-as-team-efforts” lines of defense. Taking note of Walt’s “plussing” efforts at Jungle Cruise, Nature’s Wonderland, or Tomorrowland 1967, one commentator thus remarked that “Marty Sklar is carrying on the tradition that Walt started himself—constantly looking for new ways to make rides more appealing to the senses, fun and relevant to the times.”26 Other loyalists likewise took offense at perceived attempts to “trot [Blair] out like a sacred cow” and give her “sole credit” for the attraction, when many other Imagineers deserve equal recognition for their creative input.27 In a nod to her costume designs for the attraction’s dolls, Jim Hill thus notes: “If Alice Davis is okay with the changes..., then I’m okay with them too.”28

More significantly, some comments reveal deeper lines of division within Disney park fandom, with opposing modes of appreciation of the parks. Preservationists’ critical attitude is conflated with “hating” from “pseudo-fans,” and their stance denounced as a deliberately antagonistic “marketing ploy” to drive traffic up or improve one’s public profile—all of which makes for self-interested “shoddy reporting” and “irresponsible journalism.”29 “Armchair Disney enthusiast” Lutz, who first broke the story, is repeatedly singled out for his sensationalistic stories and his “history of not getting his facts straight [and saying] things that are flat-out untrue.”30

Just as worryingly, it seems to loyalists that, in their somewhat artificial distinction between the Disney brand and the Disney business, preservationists are only too willing to dismiss the business underpinnings of many of the products that they profess to love, in complete ignorance of the normal workings of a private media corporation. Noting that “Disney is a company and other than the stock-holders doesn’t need to explain themselves to anyone,” some fans take a markedly pragmatic view of the company’s business decisions, concluding that “character-based rides are generating revenue that the company can then turn around and pump back into the park in order to give DCA [Disney’s California Adventure] a $1 billion overhaul or re-do the subs [at Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage], or whatever.”31 What’s more, “Walt knew his way around the marketing machine as well” and was not averse to using attractions as promotional vehicles, as notably illustrated by Crane’s or Frito-Lay’s sponsorships of Tomorrowland’s Bathroom of Tomorrow or Frontierland’s Casa de Fritos (“complete with a gigantic Frito-Lay vending machine”).32
Contrasting with preservationists’ selective appreciation, loyalists show themselves unwilling to separate the company’s products from its business strategy. Their embrace of parks and attractions as products of business rationalism thus serves to dismiss their rivals’ “artification” efforts, and much of their emphasis on the attraction’s status as a commodity helps downplay its alleged artistic merits. In a somewhat surprising reinstatement of cultural hierarchies, loyalists even seem to suggest that true appreciation of the parks rests on the recognition of their intrinsically commercial and popular nature. Stating that “this is Disneyland, not the Shakespeare or The Louvre,” they insist that the “ride is not a piece of ‘art’” and has never had any “real historical or artistic significance.”

Yet even preservationists are keenly aware of the limitations of their fight and deem their protest mostly symbolic. By speaking the language of the dispossessed and disrespected, they make the controversy an effort to take a stand, make oneself heard, and ultimately reclaim ownership and authority over the park. As Save the Small World’s Castro notes in a post signed under his online moniker of MasterGracey (after a character from Disneyland’s Haunted Mansion):

Honestly, this effort in general will likely be a waste of time. But that’s not the point. Much like with the general elections in the US, we’ve become passive, uninterested, and detached from it due to the politics of the situation. If nothing else, we should voice our opinions for something we all take so much interest in - Disneyland. If those opinions are ignored, at least they were heard.

Castro’s prediction proved right, and his and fellow preservationists’ wishes were ignored. “It’s a Small World” reopened in late 2008 with twenty-nine Disney characters (all rendered in Blair’s style) added to existing, location-appropriate scenes—save for Toy Story’s Woody and Jessie, featured in the new “Spirit of America” tableau. (Such changes were pioneered at Hong Kong Disneyland, whose version of the ride opened in 2008, and have since 2018 been brought to Tokyo Disneyland.)

Conclusion

Fans’ historiographical disputes over the attraction’s authorship and reception and over Walt’s original vision for the parks and his legacy place the “It’s a Small World” controversy firmly within the realm of Disney history—albeit a popular one, contributed by both major outlets and established figures in the community, as well as rank-and-file devotees. In their efforts to preserve the attraction and provide an interpretive framework for the parks’ historical and aesthetic significance, Disney historians seem to confirm Jenkins’s conclusions that “we need to reconsider the importance of ‘trivia’ as unauthorized and unpolic ed knowledge existing outside academic institutions but a source of popular expertise for the fans and a basis for critical reworkings of textual materials.”

While fan controversies have long been recognized as a defining feature of fandom (to the point that such heated debates have been termed “fantagonisms”), resistance to preservationists’ efforts show that theirs is a far from universally accepted vision of fandom and reveal two conflicting modes of engagement with the parks. Disney historians and preservationists work to present parks as legitimate “art” or “culture,” whose historical or aesthetic appreciation transcends their status of commodities and even occasionally runs counter to the Disney
production designers. Other Disney historians once on Disney’s permanent payroll include Korkis (who started as a street performer at Walt Disney World in 1995 and later moved on to backstage positions at the Disney Institute, Disney Adult Discoveries, the College and International Programs, and Epcot’s Disney Learning Center); Kurtti (senior marketing representative, 1991–95, and creative director at the Walt Disney Family Museum, 2005–15); Greg Ehrbar (copywriter for the Walt Disney Company for over thirty years); and Paula Sigman Lowery (who spent twenty years working for the Walt Disney Company, including fifteen years at the Disney Archives).

company’s business interests. This position never fails to infuriate loyalists, who, in their full embrace of the parks’ industrial nature, view efforts to separate the corporation from its finished products as artificial at best, and utterly misguided at worst.

To this extent, fan labor in the area of Disney history comes across as another arena for fan participation in the parks, on at least two levels. Disney historians’ work to chronicle the parks’ history and legacy represents an effort of “textual production” to assign the park with additional meaning and depth. Additionally, by bridging the gap between Disney scholarship and Disney stewardship, Disney historians and their preservationist allies actively shape and promote a favored mode of engagement with Disney products—one deemed aesthetically and historically discerning.

NOTES, CONTINUED


41. Without entirely ruling out the possibility that authors might make a profit from their book, Theme Park Press makes it clear on their website that this should not be an author’s primary motivation for submitting a project: “How much money will I make? Maybe enough to wash your car; maybe enough to buy a new car. Who can say?” (“Write for Us,” Theme Park Press, n.d., http://themeparkpress.com/write-for-us.htm [accessed February 15, 2019]).


43. Hellekson, “Fannish Field of Value,” 114.


46. , “Cultural Economy of Fandom,” 42.

47. See, for instance, the following anecdote, which Korkis shares online: “A few months ago, I was contacted by an author working on an official Disney cookbook. The author contacted me because the publisher wanted to include some ‘historical’ recipes and Walt food anecdotes and several sources recommended me. I had a pleasant talk on the phone and talked about some of the information in my research files which sparked an excited interest. I then asked how much I would be compensated and the conversation turned cold. I was told that it was felt I would just give the information in exchange for a small credit in the acknowledgments. I pointed out that Disney Historians often spend decades and quite a bit of their own money obtaining this material that doesn’t exist anywhere else… This is not a unique situation and quite often I have been asked to hand over material simply because I have it and someone else


49. Jenkins, Textual Poachers, 87.

50. In contrast to Canemaker, whom he deems representative of “High Church branch of the Disney faith,” Barrier writes: “I’m deeply skeptical of the whole ‘nine old men’ mythology. When Disney animation was at its most vital, the idea of freezing it in a mold determined by nine animators, however good they were, would have seemed ridiculous; and it was. The exaltation of the nine, beginning in the ’50s, signified the beginning of a steep decline that culminated in the dead-end Disney features of the ’70s, Robin Hood and The Aristocrats and, to be sure, The Rescuers” (Michael Barrier, “Remembering Ollie,” MichaelBarrier.com [blog], April 22, 2008, http://www.michaelbarrier.com/WhatsNewArchives/2008/WhatsNewArchivesApril08.htm#rememberingollie).


53. In a scathing criticism of Paul Pressler, a former Disney store head turned chairman of Disneyland Parks and Resorts, Koenig, writes: “Unfortunately, while Disney management clings to the image of ‘The Happiest Place on Earth’ to sell tickets, they no longer strive for perfection. Why go to the trouble and expense of providing a premium product if people will pay for adequate?… Remember that Disneyland is a show not a shop, one that should be run by a showman not a shopkeeper” (Koenig, More Mouse Tales, 13, 216). In thinly veiled terms, and in an autobiography published by Disney Editions, even former president of Walt Disney Imagineering Marty Sklar later joined in such criticisms, denouncing Pressler’s corner-cutting on maintenance as short-sighted and detrimental to the Disney brand (Marty Sklar, Dream It! Do It! My Half-Century Creating Disney’s Magic Kingdoms [New York: Disney Editions, 2013], 305–8).

54. Barrier thus notes: “Writing about ‘Disney history’ in today’s environment is a difficult and sometimes impossible job because the Walt Disney Company’s posture toward independent writers—writers who are not being paid by Disney, and whose work is not under the company’s control—is essentially adversarial. That has always and inevitably been the case to some extent, but it was much less so back in the nineties, when I shared space in the Walt Disney Archives with writers who were, like me, there at the company’s sufferance but not expected to submit to its censorship” (Michael Barrier, “A Couple of Overdue Reviews,” MichaelBarrier.com [blog], August 13, 2016, http://www.michaelbarrier.com/WhatsNewArchives/2016/WhatsNewArchivesAugust16.html#overduereviews). Korkis likewise writes: “Like any company, the Disney Business wants to control its story and, if it can, control how you write the story” (Korkis, “Disney Brand v. Disney Business," in Korkis, How to Be a Disney Historian, 67). More recently, journalists from the LA Times have been blacklisted from advance screenings of Disney films as a result of the newspaper’s critical look at Disneyland’s political influence over Anaheim’s city council (Callum Borchers, “Bob Iger’s Blacklisting of the Los Angeles Times Is a Bad Look and a Bad Omen,” Washington Post, November 4, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/11/04/bob-igers-blacklisting-of-the-los-angeles-times-is-a-bad-look-and-a-bad-omen/).

55. “The Disney Company does not have a job for Disney historian, though it has a great need for one. While working at Walt Disney World, the manager of Disney University officially decreed in memos, conversations, and presentations that there was no such thing as a Disney historian” (Jim Korkis, “What Is a Disney Historian?” in Korkis, How to Be a Disney Historian, 6).


57. Dave Smith explains that, as a result of a tight budget and space constraints, “we de-accessioned some of the items which no longer fit within our collecting policy and made them available to Disney Auctions. We have a limited budget, limited manpower, and limited space, so we had to decide what is most important to have from a business standpoint” (Jim Korkis, “Why You Won’t Get a Job at the Disney Archives,” in Korkis, How to Be a Disney Historian, 40). Beyond the collection of material items, fans’ efforts to collect soon-to-be-lost swaths of Disney history include interviews
with Disney old-timers: “Interviews are essential, and a serious Disney historian should interview as many people as possible—before it’s too late. I regret having delayed some interviews which will never happen because in the meantime the authors have passed away” (Alberto Becattini, “Confessions of a Disney Comics Historian,” in Korkis, How to Be a Disney Historian, 99).

58. This propensity to celebrate “unsung heroes” (especially from a company so prominently identified with its founder) is a typical fan strategy. Blair’s celebration as a singular artist within the Disney umbrella notably parallels that of Carl Barks, author to countless Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge comics (published from 1942 to 1966). While comics were allowed to bear only the name of Walt Disney (much as cartoons did prior to 1941), Barks’s distinctive style soon earned him the moniker of the Good Artist. Despite Disney’s, comic book publisher Dell’s, or even Barks’s best efforts to maintain his anonymity, fans eventually uncovered the artist’s identity in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with Malcolm Willits—the first fan ever to identify Barks in 1957—recording the artist’s first interview in 1962. Barks’s recognition resulted in no small part from Barrier’s own work—including the first essay ever written on Barks’s work, “The Lord of Quackly Hall,” published in the June 1967 issue of Funnyworld (“The Lord of Quackly Hall,” Funnyworld no. 6, June 1967), as well as a complete bibliography of Barks’s work, published in installments starting in September 1967. In 1982, this bibliography (along with a biographical and critical essay) was released in book form, Carl Barks and the Art of the Comic Book (New York: M. Lilien, 1982). See Donald Ault, ed., Carl Barks: Conversations (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), xxvi–xxvii; and Michael Barrier, Funnybooks: The Improbable Glories of the Best American Comic Books, 1st ed. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 324–25.

59. Patt Lewis, 2008, comment on “Disney Fires Another Salvo in Defense of ‘It’s a Small World’ Changes,” The Disney Blog, http://thedisneyblog.com/2008/04/11/disney-fires-in-defense-oits-a-small-world-changes/ (The original post is still available, but the blog’s comments section has since been removed.)


62. Ibid., 47.


64. Ibid., 61.


69. Banks, "World of Tears."

70. Blair letter posted on Banks, "BLAIR Family Speaks"; and Banks, "World of Animation Speaks."


74. Marty Sklar, “Marty Sklar Responds to It’s a Small World Issue,” LaughingPlace, April 4, 2008, http://www.laughingplace.com/News-ID10029590.asp. Sklar’s line of reasoning provided much of the rationale for the corporation's second public statement, when chief archivist and fan-favorite Dave Smith was brought in to respond to the rumored changes, writing: “With regard to the current controversy about changes being made in It’s a Small World at Disneyland, allow me, as the Chief Archivist at the Disney company for the past 38 years, to remind those who are complaining that Walt Disney never intended Disneyland to be static…. And those changes did not end with Walt’s death over 40 years ago. The Disney Imagineers have continued to follow his dream, frequently adding and changing things in the park to give today’s guests the best possible experience” (Dave Smith, “Disney Archivist Dave Smith Comments on Small World Debate,” LaughingPlace, April 11, 2008, http://www.laughingplace.com/Latest.asp?I1=ID&I2=2023).


82. DeCaro, “Tempest in a Teapot.”

83. Ibid.; and dl1955pounds, “Re: Save the Rainforest.”


85. Jenkins, Textual Poachers, 86.


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A Festival of Kinship, Defiance, and Ethnic Survival: A Photo Essay of the DAPL Protests

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2016, the author traveled to North Dakota as an invited guest of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to document the emergent encampment of American Indians and their allies who had gathered to protest the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. This work explores some of these lived protests and the festival-like realities (as well as the strengths and criticisms of the “festival” notion) that were produced in such protestive actions. Ultimately, this article has three goals. First, it seeks to document, via photographs and text, some of the mobilization efforts of protesters against a segment of the oil and gas industry operating on American Indian land. Second, it questions the scholarly concept of “festival as protest”—again, highlighting the strengths and controversies of the application of this term to the Standing Rock Protests. Third, it shows how photography can complement and enhance qualitative field research.
A Festival of Kinship, Defiance, and Ethnic Survival: A Photo Essay of the DAPL Protests

John Paul

Introduction

This is a camp of defiance and prayer. Every day we return to voice opposition to environmental degradation, corporate greed, and the dehumanization of a people. It is like a festival of life celebrating cultural survival. It reawakens the Native spirit and environmental activism. ‘Mni Wiconi!’ (Lakota for “Water is Life”)—Indigenous activist at Standing Rock.

In the fall of 2016, I traveled to North Dakota as an invited guest of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to document the emergent encampment of American Indians and their allies who had gathered to protest the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (hereafter: DAPL). In addition to previous research I have done about toxic waste on Native lands and Native identity, I am a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma and my ethnic identity helped gain initial permission to access the sites of protest.¹

This work explores some of these lived protests and the festival-like realities (as well as the strengths and criticisms of the “festival” notion) that were produced in such protest actions during my short, several-day experience and through subsequent research and follow-up with those I had come to know during my time there. More specifically, it seeks to: (1) document via photographs and text some of the mobilization efforts of protesters against a segment of the oil and gas industry operating on American Indian land; (2) question the scholarly concept of “festival as protest”—again, highlighting the strengths and controversies of the application of this term to the Standing Rock Protests; and (3) show how photography can complement and enhance qualitative field research.

In terms of structure, this article first contextualizes the DAPL protests, then examines the link between festivals and protest and suggests that protest can spur a form of festival, reviews the researcher’s modes of entry into this site as well as his general methodology, and concludes with the photographic essay.

DAPL and the Protest at Standing Rock

The Dakota Access Pipeline (hereafter DAPL) is a 1,170-mile pipeline that is designed to transfer fracked oil from the Bakken fields of North Dakota to a refinement terminal in southern Illinois. It should be noted that DAPL was originally scheduled by its developer, Energy Transfer Partners, to run north of Bismarck, the state capital, but that due to concerns from capital residents that the pipeline would endanger their water supply, the company rerouted the line to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

In response to this relocation of the pipeline—perceived as a form of environmental racism²—members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe began organizing social media awareness campaigns and erecting human and physical barriers in an attempt to prevent the development of the pipeline.³ As media outreach grew, and due to various social media invitations from

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Specifically, the protesters wished to tell the world that the route of the pipeline would take possession of ancestral lands claimed by the tribe and therefore challenge the inherent sovereignty of the Standing Rock Sioux. By law Native tribes are indeed considered “nations within a nation” and the US government is to have a government-to-government relationship with them.6 Further, members of the Standing Rock Tribe, and their Native and non-Native allies, known as “water protectors,” contended that the pipeline would harm sacred cultural lands and tribal burial grounds and worried about the catastrophic damage it would do if it were to break under the Missouri River. A mere leak would send oil directly into the tribe’s main source of drinking water.

Unfortunately, this had happened before. Indeed, such land grabs are as old as Indigenous–settler/colonial interactions.7 Examples of recent scholarship that detail this history include Peter Cozzens’s exploration of nineteenth-century acquisition of tribal land in the United States, fueled broadly by the discovery of gold in tribal lands.8 David Grann’s work has revealed a history of white incursions into Native America via criminal conspiracy and mass murder.9 In the 1950s and 1960s, the US government seized hundreds of thousands of acres of tribal land as part of a plan to build several dams along the Missouri River Basin, including a long stretch of the river in North and South Dakota that ran through the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. One of the dams, the Oahe, flooded over one hundred thousand acres on the reservation. Natural resources and wildlife along the river bottom were almost completely eradicated, including 90 percent of the tribe’s timber resources. Entire towns were destroyed and sacred sites, including gravesites, were lost.10 While DAPL activists gained international visibility in the fight against such incursions into
tribal and geographic sovereignty, they were but the most recent collective incarnation in the long tradition of Indigenous resistance and persistence throughout history.11

History of DAPL

The history of the pipeline began in 2014, when Energy Transfer Partners (hereafter ETP) filed a formal application with the South Dakota Public Utilities commission to build a new conduit for conveying oil. Standing Rock officials then met with ETP to voice their strong opposition to the project, which ETP apparently ignored.12 In December 2015, the Army Corps of Engineers released an environmental impact statement concluding that there would be no significant impact to the environment as a result of the pipeline and that construction should commence. In March of 2016, the EPA criticized the assessment, questioning why the tribe had not been consulted—and shortly thereafter, in April 2016, as construction began, Standing Rock tribal members began pursuing legal action to stop the pipeline, and the first physical camps to actively protest DAPL were erected.

In September 2016, Dakota Access bulldozers plowed through land tribal members say holds ancient burial sites and other sacred and cultural artifacts of the tribe. This action occurred while the land access was being contested in court. The tribe noted over and over again that they were not adequately consulted on this project and that the company had started building this four-state, $3.8 billion pipeline before it had all of the permits in hand. As a result, protesters and DAPL security guards engaged in physical confrontation. Videos of these incidents show protesters being bitten by guard dogs and pepper-sprayed.13 Following these initial videos, mass mobilization against DAPL grew and ultimately tribal members from over three hundred American Indian Nations turned up in support, along with thousands of non-Native allies (including college students, representatives of Black Lives Matter, various religious groups and environmental activists worldwide).

Unfortunately, violent interaction between private security, police, and protesters also grew more frequent and the area became highly militarized. Police in North Dakota made several hundred arrests between August and December of 2016 and exhausted approximately $35 million protecting the pipeline.14 ETP offered to pay $15 million of these costs, most of which was for payroll, but it was also used to purchase equipment such as riot helmets, smoke grenades, and nonlethal ammunition.15 As a result of this “militarization,” violence grew and the police were captured on video using water hoses, tear gas, and rubber bullets on protesters in twenty-degree weather.

In October 2016, Amnesty International called for the Department of Justice to investigate the use of force by police and, partly due to this public pressure, the Obama administration and the Army Corps of Engineers said it would not grant an easement for the construction of the pipeline at Standing Rock. Further, the agency said it would consider alternatives, including a previously rejected path that would travel north of Bismarck.16 In Standing Rock, the Army Corps’ decision was met with jubilant celebration by the hundreds of American Indians, environmentalists, and other activists protesting the pipeline. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and all of Indian Country will be forever grateful to the Obama administration for this historic decision.... [because of the support that we have and the people who gather and are a part of this, we are able to build...]


enough noise to help America understand [this need for activism],” declared Standing Rock chairman Dave Archambault. And Tomas Lopez, a representative of the International Indigenous Youth Council, pointed out, “Today we're celebrating. For the first time in US history, the US government is going to honor tribal sovereignty and the treaties that were signed by the US government.”

However, this jubilation was short-lived. A few days after Donald Trump was elected president, his administration exerted pressure on the Army Corps of Engineers to reverse its decision. A January 24 executive order insisted that the Army Corps "review and approve [the Dakota Access Pipeline] in an expedited manner." Trump also asked the Corps to consider withdrawing the environmental impact requirement. Reports indicated that Trump owned between $15,000 and $50,000 of ETP stock as well as shares in Phillips 66, an investor in the pipeline. Further, ETP CEO Kelcy Warren had given $100,000 to help elect Trump. Following Trump’s inauguration, the Army Corps of Engineers rescinded the previous study and gave the company permission to complete the pipeline.

Oil is now flowing through the pipeline—and crucially, it has already leaked five times as of this writing. Two leaks occurred in March 2017: 84 gallons on March 3 and 20 gallons on March 5 in North Dakota. Then two more happened in April 2017, spilling 84 gallons in South Dakota and 168 gallons in Illinois. And finally, in November 2017, there was a 21-gallon spill in Iowa.

While these spills were not deemed “significant” by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, they serve as reminders that “it is not a matter of if a pipeline spills, it’s a matter of when a pipeline spills,” as Dallas Goldtooth, the Indigenous Environmental Network campaign organizer, noted.

On June 14, 2017, the US District Court for the District of Columbia directed the Army Corps of Engineers to release a report detailing “the impacts of an oil spill on fishing rights, hunting rights, or environmental justice, or the degree to which the pipeline’s effects are likely to be highly controversial.” The Corps’ failure to release such a report has only reinforced suspicions of “stonewalling” by the US federal agency: “In response, Standing Rock Sioux leaders have accused the Corps of stonewalling [and] wondered naturally, why they and the general public have been denied access to the full report on which the memo is based.... [T]he tribe [vows] a continued fight.”

DAPL Protests as “Festival”

Standing Rock is going to be remembered. Like the Jerusalem Wall, people will come here. – Allyson Two Bears, tribal councilwoman

Academic research on festivals has generally depicted them as annual events, marked by one day or more of celebration. Indeed, many persons at the camps suggested that, despite the eventual completion of the pipeline, Standing Rock would continue to be a place in years to come that would draw in activists and serve as a place of cultural and spiritual exchange. One of the tribe’s future goals is to turn the initial protest site, the Sacred Stone Camp, into a place of ecotourism, with an educational camp built around training in sustainable living practices and environmental protection and activism.
In this way, festivals are linked with (and often originate from) protests and may be acts of resistance and drivers of social change, as illustrated by the following:

Further, one activist termed the protests at Standing Rock a “daily festival,” for they served to “celebrate Indian and pan-Indian identities” and show the world that “Indian people still exist.” This activist went on to say that such daily protest actions also worked on him at a psychological level to remind him that he too “existed” and “had purpose.” So, for him, the protest and participation at Standing Rock was a festival celebrating “living.” In related fashion, Jon Eagle Jr., the tribal historic preservation officer for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, noted that “because of what happened at Standing Rock, it gave our people hope and suicide rates among our people have gone down.” The reality has been that Native American teenagers and young adults are 1.5 times as likely to kill themselves as the national average, with suicides often clustering in epidemics that hit and fade. Saul Elbein writes:

Suicide is so common on the reservation that youth don’t bother to say ‘committed suicide’ or ‘attempted suicide.’ They just say ‘attempted’ or ‘completed’—no one seemed to pay much attention to how their lives were hard, bordering on hopeless…. But in the fight over the Dakota Access Pipeline, Native American activists achieved one of the most galvanizing environmental victories in years—and it all began with a group of teenagers…. In April of 2016 a few teenagers and mentors helped establish a tiny ‘prayer camp’ just off the Dakota Access route, on the north end of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Over the next six months that camp grew into an improbable movement that united conservative farmers with the old radicals of the American Indian Movement, urban environmentalists with the traditional chiefs of hundreds of tribes. Standing Rock gave many other youths a sense of purpose they had been lacking. It also inspired something more radical, in a way, than anti-pipeline activism: the belief that a group of lost people from scattered nations could still find kinship.

“Standing Rock was a festival of kindship and purpose,” an Indigenous anti-suicide activist told me. “It united persons behind a traditional way of life, forced people to move-in and live together in a tepee or tent and act like family.” And as Elbein notes, the Standing Rock movement “was the first experience of family for many tribal members.” In this way, festivals are also social gatherings for the purpose of crafting pride in place and social cohesion, as well as vehicles encouraging social interaction for specific social groups. Festivals are often displays of social and cultural identity that reinforce the connections and shared values within a community.

Finally, festivals have been identified as a sort of social frustration release-valve—a way to organize and release expressions of social angst and disenchantment with the “way things are.” In this way, festivals are linked with (and often originate from) protests and may be acts of resistance and drivers of social change, as illustrated by the following:

My sole purpose is to create for the youth what we did in Standing Rock at my home in Cheyenne River. To really challenge the youth in my community to follow in the lead of Standing Rock to fight for their own people. With this [pipeline] they’ve inadvertently sparked a whole generation of us Indigenous folks and everyone who wants to stand with us to fight for Mother Earth. We’re going to inherit this planet, bro, and everyone’s welcome to inherit it with us if they want. They thought they could bury us; they didn’t know we were seeds! Resistance, prayer and teaching camps have been set up to continue the fight against destructive fossil fuels and hazardous pipelines.

But some Standing Rock activists were opposed to the use of the term festival in defining Standing Rock. For example:

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My sole purpose is to create for the youth what we did in Standing Rock at my home in Cheyenne River. To really challenge the youth in my community to follow in the lead of Standing Rock to fight for their own people. With this [pipeline] they’ve inadvertently sparked a whole generation of us Indigenous folks and everyone who wants to stand with us to fight for Mother Earth. We’re going to inherit this planet, bro, and everyone’s welcome to inherit it with us if they want. They thought they could bury us; they didn’t know we were seeds! Resistance, prayer and teaching camps have been set up to continue the fight against destructive fossil fuels and hazardous pipelines.

But some Standing Rock activists were opposed to the use of the term festival in defining Standing Rock. For example:
This is not a festival... YOU ARE NOT ON VACATION. This is not a camping trip. This is not a festival... YOU ARE NOT ON VACATION. This is not a camping trip.

Some people are arriving at Standing Rock for the 'cultural experience' and are treating it like Burning Man festival. They are colonizing the camps.

Many of the 'festival kids' have come to Standing Rock due to a mix of a deep calling in their hearts, and it being the off-season for festivals. Many arrived with little or nothing to support themselves. No tent, no money, no winter clothing, and no real knowledge on why exactly they are here, which makes them an immediate drain on the camps that have been working for months to prepare for winter.

In this way, the term “festival” became a critical and sometimes disparaging term (typically applied to whites) for persons who were perceived to be disrespectful of the tribal political leadership or who were stubbornly ignorant of Native culture. During the eleven-month history of the protest, several persons were asked to leave Standing Rock for: (1) as noted above, treating Standing Rock as a party atmosphere; (2) being willfully "lazy" and exploiting camp resources such as food and water without a return in the form of labor; (3) promoting tactics that the tribal leadership thought were too extreme; and (4) being openly combative with tribal elders and pushing their agenda over the concerns of the tribe. For example, there were tensions between white-led environmental groups that wanted to focus on climate change, and Native activists, who believed the larger issue was that of tribal sovereignty and the unfinished struggle for Native American rights. Many of these white activists were described as the “Brooklyn residents” (meaning, in this context, those who gentrify, or push out the original inhabitants) or the "festival kids" of Standing Rock.

Further, various law enforcement and governmental personnel, as well as select residents of the predominantly white capital of Bismarck, also used the term "festival" to mock activists and the term become a symbolic shorthand for troublemakers, undesirables, and ignorant outsiders.

In fact, this terminology was often used to delegitimize the activists’ claims and infantilize them. For example, the then governor of North Dakota, Jack Dalrymple, argued that protesters were unable to handle the harsh winters and therefore needed to be removed for their own protection. In response, Greenpeace spokesperson Lilian Molina stated:

It is not up to Governor Dalrymple or the Army Corps of Engineers to decide whether an Indigenous sovereign nation can remain on its own lands.... Ironically, the same governor who ignored the use of water cannons in

Left: Signs in Bismarck, ND that went up in response to criticism of police tactics at Standing Rock. Right: “Nobody cares about your protest,” written as a protestive statement by a former law enforcement officer on his personal vehicle.
sub-freezing temperatures against protectors now claims to want to remove them for their well-being through the winter. If Governor Dalrymple or the Army Corps of Engineers truly cared about the health and well-being of water protectors, they would put an end to the pipeline once and for all.44

Linguist George Lakoff has noted that “most people think that words just refer to things in the world and that they’re neutral. And that’s just not true … language use fits the way you understand the world via your frames.”45 Indeed, language use is a politically loaded activity and at Standing Rock, the term “festival” was used by some activists as positive force: a dynamic gathering that built solidarity networks and celebrated life and cultural identity. For others, the term was used with derision to call out “vacationers,” “lookie-loos,” and—to borrow a term from social movement literature—“free-riders.”46 Finally, figures of authority also made the term a political one and used it to delegitimize the movement itself, saying that the protesters were incompetent or ideologically ill-informed vagabonds who had to be removed for their own protection.

In the photographic essay that follows I wish to draw attention to the way festivals are linked with (and often originate) from protests and are defined by participants as acts of resistance and drivers of social change. Before the essay, however, I offer a brief note about my mode of entry and my methodological process.

**Personal Reflective Statement and a Brief Note on Methodology**

As mentioned in the introduction, in the fall of 2016, I traveled as a guest of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to document the emergent gathering of American Indians and their allies to protest DAPL and bring attention to issues of sovereignty and land use. I am a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma and my ethnic identity helped gain me initial permission to access the sites of protest. However, I do not look traditionally (or stereotypically) “Native.”47 I am Caucasian in appearance and this hindered initial rapport-building with Native and tribal interlocutors. To help build trust and encourage participants to speak with me, I engaged in two things. First, I “got to work” immediately upon arrival to the site at Standing Rock. I spent many hours each day collecting trash and, recycling, and sorting and organizing the food pantry for the water protectors and guests to help ensure the ease of daily meal preparation. I knew that completing these tasks would facilitate psychological ingratiation and social-communal integration, but I also wish to emphasize that I believed in the movement and I wanted to “be there” to issue my support.

Second, I was able to build rapport by using my camera. I found that taking photographs during an event operated to remove perceptual barriers between me, the research-observer, and the participants. Similar to Al Gedicks’s experience of incorporating himself into an environmental conflict as a social scientist, an advocate, and a filmmaker, I found that the role of photographer enabled access and inclusion—as people wanted their own, and the collective, story of Standing Rock told.48 Please note that photographic permission was obtained by the tribe and rules specifying what could or could not be photographed (i.e., religious ceremonies) were followed. Finally, while photographs do not replace attendance, nor can they fully capture an event, they nevertheless serve as a type of experiential vehicle,49 a way to combat the casual passing of the event from our societal memories,50 and as a methodological tool to bolster recall, check reliability or augment research notes.51
During my stay, I traveled between: (1) the capital city of Bismarck, North Dakota, where I interviewed and engaged in observation and casual conversations with the predominately white population about the DAPL protest; (2) the various camps on the Standing Rock Reservation that emerged as frontline spaces of protest, where I worked and visited with tribal members and guests; (3) the Prairie Knights Casino and Resort (a casino on the Standing Rock Reservation), observing and interacting with Indigenous leadership groups, the media covering the protests, and casino workers and guests; and (4) the Standing Rock Tribal Headquarters and surrounding Fort Yates community, where I interacted with various tribal members and numerous locals. The following photos and corresponding narrative texts emerged from these experiences.

The Photo Essay

A Place of Festival, Ceremony, and Community

Left: Entrance, Sacred Stone Camp. Right: Tents and Traditional Structures, Sacred Stone Camp

Atop Sacred Stone Camp. A mixture of modern, traditional, and more permanent structures being erected at the Sacred Stone Camp. Since this land is held in private ownership (now donated to the tribe), it is not subject to the same governmental mandate of removal of persons and structures. One of the tribe's future goals is to turn this area into a site of ecotourism with an educational camp built around the training of sustainable living practices and environmental protection and activism.
Sacred Stone Camp was founded by Standing Rock’s historic preservation officer, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, on April 1, 2016, as a center for cultural preservation and spiritual resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline. In the spring and early summer of 2016, Allard and other Indigenous leaders focused on media outreach, resulting in tribal delegations and individuals coming to stand with them from around the world. As noted earlier, many considered this to be a festival of kinship and a celebration of Indigenous values within a newly built community of Native activists.

Camp Oceti Sakowin. As the numbers grew beyond what Allard’s land could support, an overflow camp was also established nearby, which came to be known as the Oceti Sakowin Camp. Oceti Sakowin (O-chet-ee-shak-oh-win) and translates to the “gathering of the council fires.” Symbolically, it refers to the meeting place of various “tribes” and had become a “parliamentary place” where representatives worked to make laws, organize camp life, and oversee protest actions. Indeed, multiple “council fires” showed up—Tribal members from over 300 American Indian Nations turned up in support and various non-native allies (ranging from representatives of Black Lives Matter, various religious groups, and environmental activists worldwide) had grown the camp to several thousand people.

Camp Interior. At its height, the Oceti Sakowin camp was a village with kitchens, a medical center, food and clothing storehouses, a grade school, horse corrals, sport sites (soccer and lacrosse, a sacred fire circle and thousands of people living in tents, yurts, trailers and teepees. It was bigger than all but nine cities in North Dakota.
A Festival of Violence: Points of Conflict

As thousands filled the camp and the police were ordered to protect access points to the DAPL construction site, confrontation arose between protesters and the local sheriff’s office. During the duration of the protest from April 2016 to February 2017, hundreds of persons were arrested on charges ranging from disorderly conduct and trespassing to inciting a riot. Further, more than three hundred were injured on or around police barricades that protected the access to the pipeline. Injuries came from batons, rubber bullets, and water from fire hoses delivered in freezing temperatures in attempts to keep protesters away from the pipeline dig site. From my perspective, police were often quick to escalate conflict, as they would culturally misinterpret prayer circles as riot mobilization and mistake ceremonial objects like Chanupa (sacred) pipes for pipe-bombs. In fact, I heard several police officers and pipeline allies term this a “cowboy versus Indian conflict,” using language ripe with cultural stereotypes that painted the confrontation as one of “savages” against persons of civility and progress. For example, the local police said (and later retracted) that protesters had aimed bows and arrows at them. For me, such attitudes were reflective of Stewart Tolnay and E. M. Beck’s use of the term “festival of violence”—a quasi-celebratory infliction of violence against perceived racial and cultural inferiors. Further connected to this concept is the implication that such violence is justified due to these perceptions of inferiority and “backwardness.” Evidence also shows that pipeline executives had hired retired military special forces members, who used military-style counterterrorism measures against what they considered an ideologically driven insurgency. Tactics included protest camp flyovers, video surveillance, social media monitoring, public relations—described in one document as “pro-DAPL propaganda”—and providing equipment and support staffing for law enforcement. However, this said, I also recognize that police were working twelve-hour days and existed in a constant state of near exhaustion and were often “jumpy” as they followed orders to protect the dig site. Thus, in this way, I also considered the police to be victims of a corporate entity endangering their well-being.

Highway 1806

There were two primary geographic points of conflict: Highway 1806 and Turtle Island. Highway 1806 passes through the Standing Rock Reservation and runs alongside the drilling site for the North Dakota Highway 1806 prior to protests.
DAPL. It was closed by police (and later militarized) for almost a year as thousands of people protested the pipeline's proposed path under the Missouri River. The following photographs show Highway 1806 before and after its closing and militarization.

North Dakota Highway 1806. Please note the green rope. This was placed by tribal leaders, urging people not to go beyond this line. The tribe did not want persons risking arrest or injury by going beyond and provoking police response. In response to the protest, a bill sponsored by Rep. Keith Kempenich, was proposed to protect non-native drivers from legal consequences if they inadvertently hit, injured or killed pedestrians who were obstructing traffic. "If you stay off the roadway, this would never be an issue," Kempenich said. "Those motorists are going about the lawful, legal exercise of their right to drive down the road ... Those people didn't ask to be in this." The legislation drew criticism from Standing Rock supporters, who worried that it could be open season for protesters on North Dakota roads. The bill failed. Prayer sessions, organized by tribal elders, did frequently occur past the rope and into the barricades — these sessions were not filmed per the request of elders.

Highway 1806 with increased militarized presence.
Turtle Island

In clashes that involved water cannons, pepper spray, and tear gas, protesters were pushed back from this highway as well as from a nearby hill (known as Turtle Island). Tribal members contended that Turtle Island contained burial sites and police made it a defensive position to keep protesters away from the DAPL construction site.

But, “even if the site is void of bodies,” said tribal archaeologist Kelly Morgan, “it remains significant to the Sioux and should not be trampled. Different cultures have different beliefs on graveyards. That’s hallowed ground. Period. And it’s offensive to have people disturbing this sacred space by patrolling on the hill.”

Turtle Island is located on land that was originally part of Cannonball Ranch and now is commandeered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Police Patrol (top) and Protestors (bottom).
Atop Turtle Island.

Base of Turtle Island.
Patrolling Turtle Island.

Protestor at the base of Turtle Island.
Youth at the base of Turtle Island. Remember, the protest movement was started and made concrete by indigenous youth.
Images of Protesters and Protest Art

While in camp, the protests I witnessed were broadly peaceful and were organized under the guidance of tribal elders. Further, they generally took the form of prayer and silent civil disobedience (i.e., sitting at the police barricades in prayer or silent contemplation). From the perspective of local law enforcement, all actions at the camp were termed “unlawful protests” and an “organized riot,” and interactions between police and camp members were often tense. I found such language and the militarized presence shocking, as weapons, drugs, and alcohol were prohibited in the camp and children and family pets routinely marched in the daily demonstrations. At camp meetings, tribal elders reminded all that they were camped out in prayer and in the friendship of the tribe, but would be removed if tribal culture was ignored and if violence was promoted.

Please note that I was asked by tribal elders to refrain from capturing images of communal prayer sessions and similar (in their words) “festivals” of kinship. Thus, I present some of the lasting images of protest art (a cultural and aesthetic record of this collective human action) as well as some images of pre- and post-gatherings.
Kill Black Snake. Lakota prophecy contains a tale that a black snake that would slither across the land, desecrating the sacred sites and poisoning the water before destroying the Earth. For many Indigenous persons that snake has a name — the Dakota Access pipeline. "There is a prophecy saying that there is a black snake, and when it goes underground, it's going to be devastating to the Earth"—Chairman Dave Archambault.

People over Pipelines.
Water is Life/ Water is Sacred. The image is of a dancing figure whose force of movement stimulates both thunder and the growth of plants from the soil (symbolic of the people's power to cultivate energy and transform life). Insert: “Thunderbird Woman” by Isaac Murdock (2016).

Left: Signage promoting tribal sovereignty as going “hand-in-hand” with environmental protections. Note the broken snake (pipeline) logo. Right: Not Afraid to Look (2016) by famed artist Charles Renouf. Located on a hill above the Sacred Stone camp, the sculpture surveys Turtle Mountain and the site of the DAPL construction. Completed in October, during a significant influx of people into the camp, the Lakota artist says of his work, “we should not be afraid to let corporate super powers know we are watching. The pipeline crosses our farms and through our water, at the cost of our sons and daughters, so we watch for any environmental crises. This humble little guy stares down the force taking over his world.”

An individual leading a group to participate in an act of silent protest and prayer—Highway1806. The banner reads: “Since 1492: One Blood.” This is meant to promote a pan-Indian ethnic identity and solidarity across tribal/national membership.

Contingent leaving a prayer ceremony held at Turtle Island.
Festivals are generally defined as annual events, marked by one or several days of celebration. Will the tradition of protest and festival continue at Standing Rock into the future, then? Many persons at the camp suggested that despite the completion of the pipeline, Standing Rock would continue to be a place that draws activists and Indigenous persons for spiritual exchange, cultural renewal, and ecotourism/engagement. In fact, an inaugural Standing Rock Nation Film and Music Festival took place in 2017. According to organizers, the film festival aimed to embolden the pipeline protest movement and showcase the work of Native American filmmakers and musicians. Time will tell if the film festival and broader eco-activism around Standing Rock will become a continued national and international event. But to tribal citizens, the DAPL protests initiated a way to organize and release expressions of social angst and disenchantment with the "way things are," and my feeling is that it will continue to serve as a gathering place that puts activism and community cohesion at the center of its cultural and social environment. Indeed, as sociologist Gary Alan Fine notes, "festivals are focused micro-gatherings," and as "the archetypal form of emergent communities" they can become the basic building blocks of society and play a pivotal role in organizing social life and developing local cultures and identities.

Additionally, the "emotional value and emotional benefits" produced by this protest festival were immeasurable. As noted by several participants, the Standing Rock movement was the first experience of a "pan-Indian family" for many Indigenous persons across the nation, regardless of their tribal identities. The experience I had, and observed in others, mirrored my reading and reflection on the 1969 symbolic occupation and reclamation of Alcatraz Island for the purpose of bringing national attention to Indigenous sovereignty. Thus, while Standing Rock had a "functional" value in generating protest, the gathering also satisfied the powerful emotional need for belonging and the creation of a symbolic kinship.

Beyond these celebratory notions, the perception and use of the term “festival” was not without controversy. At this gathering I also witnessed a “festival of violence” perpetuated by the police against activists. I define this use of festival as a quasi-celebratory infliction of violence against perceived racial and cultural inferiors. Again, from my perspective, police were often quick to escalate conflict, as they would culturally misinterpret prayer circles as riot mobilization and mistake ceremonial objects for weapons. Additionally, there were violent undertones to the language they used when describing the activists. Further, the term “festival” also became a critical and sometimes disparaging term (typically applied to whites) for persons who were perceived to be disrespectful of the tribal political leadership or who were stubbornly ignorant of Native culture. During the eleven-month history of the protest, several people were asked to leave Standing Rock for treating it as a partying site and for pushing their agenda over the concerns of tribal elders. Often these persons were mocked as the “festival kids” of Standing Rock, thus highlighting the reality that not all persons were there to support the movement or champion tribal sovereignty.

Finally, in terms of recent developments, I note that since the pipeline’s completion, it has moved 500,000 barrels of oil a day from the Bakken Formation in North Dakota to refineries in Illinois. However, in late 2018, company spokespersons said Energy Transfer Partners is considering increasing the amount the pipeline can carry to around 600,000 barrels a day. Obviously, this is a concern because increased flow means the increased potential for seepage, should a leak occur. According to Energy Transfer Partners it would take them approximately ten minutes to detect a leak and shut down the Dakota Access Pipeline should oil begin leaking into the North Dakota prairie or the Missouri River. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe calls this reaction time unrealistic given that

in reality, oil pipeline leaks frequently don’t even register with control systems and operators; a farmer will simply notice a growing stain darkening a remote field and call it in. According to records obtained by the tribe and its technical team, no one at the company would be able to tell something was amiss if less than 1 percent of the 600,000 billion barrels it transports each day was oozing out. That comes to 6,000 barrels.

With this, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has renewed legal challenges against Energy Transfer Partners and the Dakota Access Pipeline. Specifically, the tribe is seeking to challenge the recent conclusion of federal officials that a spill would not greatly impact tribal populations. They have requested a halt to pipeline operations until a broader environmental review of the pipeline’s impact on the tribe’s culture, economy (as well as the feasibility of alternative routes) can be fully accessed. This new round of litigation is currently being reviewed by a federal judge and will likely take well into 2019 to resolve. For now, the pipeline remains active.

In closing, I hope this work expands discussion on festivals as a socially meaningful form of collective action, community building, and social change. Additionally, please allow me to issue thanks to the community of activists and members of the Standing Rock Tribe for their kindness and hospitality. In the end, I agree with Standing Rock Chairman Archambault’s words that “this is not the end but the beginning.”


Where “Art Meets Life”: Assessing the Impact of Dark Mofo, a New Midwinter Festival in Australia

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ABSTRACT

In Hobart, a litany of winter festivals flopped and failed until the arrival of Mona (Museum of Old and New Art), a private museum owned by mathematician, successful online gambler, and autodidact David Walsh. Since 2013, its new festival, Dark Mofo, reignited long-somnolent traditions of midwinter festival imaginaries among its postcolonial society and proved to be an effective vehicle for galvanizing an all-of-community form of urban activation, engagement, and regeneration. It has also completely overwhelmed the city with visitors keen to participate in a no-holds-barred ritual week with major global artists and musicians keen to be on its carnivalesque platforms. While Mona has explored grotesque realism themes of sex, death, and the body in its darkened, labyrinthine and subterranean levels, Dark Mofo has permitted their mix of carnivalesque and Dionysian metaphors and embodied practices/politics to take over the entire city in a week of programmatic mischief and misrule at midwinter. Research by an Australian Research Council–funded study of Mona and its festive register will be used to account for its origins and innovation as well as its social, cultural, and economic composition and impact.

Where “Art Meets Life”: Assessing the Impact of Dark Mofo, A New Mid-Winter Festival in Australia
Adrian Franklin

Within this context public nudity, confessing sins, dancing in a cupboard and rolling on a gallery floor is acceptable—even expected.


Apart from Edinburgh’s, few festivals transform an entire city the way Dark Mofo changes Hobart.

—Brigid Delaney, The Guardian

Introduction

This article relies on findings from an in-depth study of the making of a new private museum of art, the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) in Hobart, and its impact on the city of Hobart and the island state of Tasmania, Australia—and in particular through its new winter festival, Dark Mofo, co-founded and organized with local arts organizations and the government. At the southernmost end of the southernmost state of Australia, Hobart is situated on the edge of one of the world’s most significant wilderness areas and was originally colonized by the British as a convict settlement, to transport unwanted felons as far as it was possible to take them. Its dark history continued across its agricultural frontier lands with massacres of, and then a war against, Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples that almost destroyed them. In the 1980s it became an early icon of global environmental activism and the birthplace of the world’s first Green Party. It is one of the most remote cities in the world, yet this remoteness has for a long time been the source of its appeal. Today, it joins many other secluded areas of the United States, China, Japan, and Europe as sites for art, festivity, and travel. Away from the cultural centers and arts precincts such places have been able to experiment with new forms of exhibition and immersive artistic experiences.

It is argued that the arrival of Mona has been a landmark in the recent history of arts-led urban regeneration and the so-called Bilbao Effect,2 not only because it has deliberately fashioned itself as an “anti-museum,” in opposition to conventional modern art museums, but also because its new designs for exhibitionary platforms in a festive register were scaled up from a museum to an entire city, and from a midsummer arts festival to entirely new and darker framings for art around the celebration of the winter solstice.3

This article will focus largely on Dark Mofo, which has become one of the highlights of the Australian festive scene and certainly its most successful and prominent winter festival.4 Following a first part that considers methodology and recent critical analysis of the festivalization of cities and its relationship with urban regeneration, a second section will consider Dark Mofo in its economic, political, and sociological dimensions. Whereas most urban festivals are initiatives of urban governments and are largely publicly funded and controlled with instrumental motives and aims, Dark Mofo was primarily the initiative of a private museum, the explicit goal of which was to effect social transformation among a broader art public. Indeed, Mona insisted from the beginning on the socially transformative aspirations of the contemporary art that it

2. The phrase “Bilbao Effect” refers to the seemingly miraculous success of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (over one million visitors each year since 1997) and the urban regeneration it brought about. Built on the site of Bilbao’s failed shipbuilding industry, the flagship museum designed by architect Frank Gehry enabled the city to move away from its rusting heavy industries and machine-age modernism and to restructure it around cultural industries, new service industries, and design and emerging technologies.


His World (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).


collected and on the socially transformative power of ritual and festivity in all human societies. While the museum was converted into a carnivalesque space for this purpose, the appeal of the winter solstice in Hobart was as a space and time for art where, and when, people were already intimately connected (both as residents or tourists) to a city redolent with transformational associations of a cultural, political, and natural kind.

This article will explain how in the largely Christian colonial history of Hobart, adherence to the Christian ritual calendar was diametrically out of sync with the seasons of the Southern Hemisphere, leaving the coming of the new sun, new life, and a new year unrecognized ritually as it has always been in the Northern Hemisphere—as a time of renewal, rebirth, and redemption. Winter festivals in the European tradition, particularly carnival, became associated with the presence, continuity, and indefatigability of local communities in their landscapes, where their collective body was expressed by an exuberant emphasis on the corporeal body, often in giant, fecund forms and in promiscuous association with their environment and nature, with an emphasis on the lower half of the body connecting opened orifices with each other and their world. Carnival also obtained its potent political charge as communities, especially newly walled cities and towns, used it to resist encroaching forms of military, religious, state, and commercial power. The emergence of Dark Mofo thus raises concerns commonly expressed by critics of urban festivalization: that it is driven primarily by tourist economic development, rather than a sense of place and connection to locality and culture. While such a focus is legitimate, we must also factor in the ritual significance of such places (and travel itself) for tourists who also seek transformation and redemption through art and festivity—and have done so since the beginnings of tourism. The article will try to understand whether Dark Mofo has become a vehicle for building better art publics from local communities, for building more vibrant city cultures, and for drawing significant flows of national and international tourists. Has it galvanized a stronger sense of attachment to/identification with place? Can a contemporary festival of music and art, typically so narrowly focused around central arts precincts and educated cognoscenti, be built on a whole-city scale and still engage others?

**Dark Mofo: Transgression/Liminality/Anti-Structure for an Entire City?**

Even though Mona opened in January 2011 to great acclaim and rates of visitation, the midwinter period proved to be a flat period for the museum, as it always had been for Tasmanian tourism. Consequently, Mona decided to launch its major annual exhibition at midwinter instead of summer and to stage a festival around it, “a good way,” as the creative director, Leigh Carmichael, put it, “to attract attention to a brand beyond the museum walls.” The tourism industry has often deemed the winter to be a closed season, a natural limitation to successful tourism in all places other than ski resorts or the polar regions. But Mona saw its salvation in the darkness and chill of a Tasmanian winter solstice. Arguably, midwinter festivals in Europe had always been the most potent. The solstice was a positive, powerful time that resonated with Mona’s brand and exhibitionary style, which plunged visitors into darkened spaces, used art to usher in transformative/confronting experiences, and was orientated to liberation from the past (see below for more aspects of branding and exhibition).
The Problem with Winter Festivals in Australia

For Christian colonizers of the Southern Hemisphere, the so-called ritual half-year of England in the Northern Hemisphere did not synchronize with Australian seasons or culture and it reversed whatever logic there was to the link between ritual, season, nature, and emotion. England’s intense ritual season generally began at Christmas, at midwinter, and continued off and on until June/midsummer, and that was more or less it. Not much of a communal festive character happened between St. Peter’s Eve and Christmas, except in London where St. Bartholomew’s Fair in particular provided welcome relief in late August. But in Australia, Christmas falls on midsummer rather than midwinter and Easter coincides with autumn not spring. Correspondingly, midwinter in the Southern Hemisphere (June 21) aligns with the beginning of the relative dearth of Christian feasts between midsummer and Christmas in the Northern Hemisphere (and Christian calendars everywhere) and has therefore remained unmarked by ritual or holidays at a time when the new year was most evidently beginning. So, for southern Australia, the busy period of ritual festivity of England became a protracted period of social hibernation without any significant holiday or ritual event from Easter to “Show Day” (an agricultural show with fun fairs that takes place on October 20), that is, the equivalent of up to 205 days, or 56 percent of the year.

After 1990, five attempts were made to reverse Hobart’s midwinter somnolence through the introduction of a winter festival. There was Winterfest Festival, the Oyster Festival (both 1994), the Antarctic Midwinter Festival (2001), the Festival of Voices (2005), and Lumina (2010). None of them caught on as a defining winter festival and only the Festival of Voices still exists. Australia’s leading arts festival director, Leo Schofield, said that these festivals lacked a sense of “authenticity”: they were “vaguely themed; without historical precedent and unlinked to cosmos or culture.” Art critic Peter Timms said that these festivals celebrated “when there is nothing to celebrate.” None were on the solstice or about midwinter or actually about the culture of the local people or any people. None of them made connections between the content of the festival and the arrival of the new sun, most intending to distract from (or compensate for), rather than resonate with winter.

And yet in 2013, when David Walsh (Mona owner), Leigh Carmichael (Creative Director), and Brian Ritche (musician and festival director) staged Dark Mofo, a festival to celebrate the winter solstice and winter itself, it rapidly became Australia’s most important winter festival, as some statistics reveal:

• 280,000 people attended Dark Mofo 2015 (over ten days), equating to 28 percent more than the population of Hobart (this increased to 418,963 for Dark Mofo 2018).

• 6,886 people visited Dark Mofo 2015 from interstate or overseas (this increased to 14,934 for Dark Mofo 2018).

• It created the equivalent of 401 new full-time jobs in 2015 (or 6.2 million USD in wages).

• It was advertised in twenty-seven countries over three years, with an AVE (Advertising Value Equivalent) of 181 million USD.

• It has injected more than 33.22 million USD into the Tasmanian economy since 2013.


To put this data into perspective, the Glastonbury Festival in England has an attendance of 177,000 people and the Edinburgh Arts Festival in Scotland (reckoned as the largest arts festival in the world) was around 450,000 in 2017.18

Rolling Back the Regulation of Urban Festive Space

Dark Mofo was designed to be, and duly became, an assault on the concept of the quietened (or deactivated) city where music, theater, public gathering, and traditional festive life had all but been silenced, removed, or regulated.19 Dark Mofo painted Hobart red, figuratively and literally, as it bathed buildings in red light and turned them into more arousing spaces.

As with most other Western cities, Hobart’s once bawdy tradition of carnivalesque and street life had been tamed and rendered sterile and lifeless in the late nineteenth century, not least by building a town hall for “approved entertainments” over the carnivalesque site of the town’s marketplace.20 In this, it followed the deactivation of festive London and other British and colonial cities in the mid-nineteenth century. As historian Paul Simpson has shown, section 54, paragraph 14 of the Metropolitan Police act of 1839 substantially reduced, in one fell swoop, London’s lively and rich tradition of street music, ritual, and performance. This was linked to a period of widespread urban cultural deactivation in most other cities and towns too, following the bans and restrictions on England’s rich carnival traditions and the establishment of a police force to enforce the associated stream of new bylaws and street acts.21 This certainly included Hobart, where a range of street acts and bylaws restricted most spontaneous forms of social and
cultural expression from ever taking place in public spaces. Dark Mofo can be best understood then as a thoroughgoing attempt to reverse temporarily the cultural geometries of these regulations.
In close partnership with the city council and its cultural program coordinator, Jane Castle, Dark Mofo was indefatigable in opening up long-silent public spaces for the public to engage fulsomely with music, performances, and art that would resonate with winter, the city, its people, and its times.\footnote{22}{McGarry, "Mona Effect."} Strategically, it built on the already-festive and carnivalesque space of the Salamanca Market, not Hobart’s traditional marketplace but a space that was created by local artists in the mid-1970s before turning into a drinking strip, a meeting ground, a club scene, a de facto marketplace on Saturdays, and, finally, the only place where big crowds ever assembled spontaneously. Despite Tasmania’s reputation for world-class nature and heritage sites, the Salamanca Market had been the number one tourism site since the 1980s. It was thus relatively easy to turn it into a feasting ground and to fill it with people at a winter ritual, especially with a very significant budget (a combined effort of the city council, the state government, and Walsh’s philanthropy).

But Dark Mofo was not spatially defined or confined. It aimed to expand to all ends of the city and its hinterlands and become relevant to everyone.\footnote{23}{Ibid.} It created impromptu bars across the cityscape and docklands in a network of exhibitions and musical performances, and made a public feast with the region’s foods, wines, and spirits the center of its operations.\footnote{24}{Ibid.} It created Dark Park—a huge area of barely used dockland spaces and warehouses—for play, performance, and exhibition. Doing so, it ignored or fearlessly contravened whatever bylaws stood in its way, whatever prevented it from being effective. It took over an abandoned psychiatric hospital, once a very dark and feared institution, to stage art, music, and performance. As arts commentator James Valentine observed, the very thing that made Dark Mofo successful could never have
happened in his city of Sydney (Australia’s main party city). Chastising Sydney in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, he wrote:

> and then there are the fires. Lots of them. Standing around them are groups of people warming their hands. There’s no barriers around the braziers. You can walk right up to them. It’s fantastic because what happens at a fire? You greet everyone and everyone greets you. You immediately comment on the cold and then go straight to talking about what you’ve just seen. I walked up to one as a man clapped his hands together to his friends and declared, “Alright, let’s go see some more shit we don’t understand!” … In Sydney, a symbolic fire would be lit. There would be a carefully guarded perimeter and I suspect by the time the committee finished dealing with issues of sustainability and smoke, it would be a mock electric fire powered by a battery charged on solar power during daylight.\(^{25}\)

By 2015, when the Dark Mofo organizers expressed a desire to build vertical grills to cook entire sheep (a nod to carnival as a meat binge) in an area close to public pavements, it was pointed out in a meeting with local council officials that there were many health and safety regulations preventing it. According to Castle, it was a Road to Damascus moment for the assembled council officials there. They could see only too well just how exciting, valuable, rare, and spectacular this would be and the objections were quickly stifled. Mona’s continuous crossing of boundaries eventually showed the city how to activate itself culturally.\(^{26}\)

A similar incident involved Dark Mofo’s plan for a mass “nude swim” at dawn on the winter solstice—predictably enough, choosing to stage it on the conservative social elite’s Nutgrove Beach. The Tasmania Police found many bylaws that prohibited such an event, but, within a day, a city whose decision-making was otherwise glacial overturned all statutes to make allowances for nudity on the winter solstice. For Hobart’s business and political elites, prudery and restraint...
was now considered a hostage to fortune in a city that was drawing large crowds to often very controversial forms of contemporary art and performance. Adding to this newfound permissive milieu was a new narrative of Tasmanian gothic that began to circulate around the same time Dark Mofo was launched.27

Sexual license in public places was not restricted to the mass nude swim (if we accept that it is sexual) and was distributed throughout the week, especially at the various night clubs and parties using a system of unused cellars under the city. The centerpiece of Dark Mofo 2014 was thus the inaugural Red Death Ball, a luxurious and strange masquerade ball where Hobart Town Hall, no less, was transformed into extreme burlesque theater. Loosely based on Edgar Allan Poe's short story "Masque of the Red Death," the incognito crowd and a cast of “planted” clowns allowed the ballroom to become the performer, telling the tale of an anonymous dark force infiltrating a party that slowly spiraled into debauchery and eventually "death."

As these examples suggest, Dark Mofo is not a recovery of anything like “tradition” and remains contemporary in the issues it chooses to tackle. But it does set aside a period of misrule around the winter solstice and the new sun, as a time to consider issues of rebirth, reinvention, and change, to imagine oneself differently. It asks: why do we live like this? It recognizes the coming of a new year in a more meaningful Australian context. Without any conscious effort to research and recover recurring elements of European carnival, it homes in on grotesque realism, it emphasizes the lower half of the body, and it attaches to these an exuberant sense of its own continuity and growth. The festival’s emphasis on feasting and its successful promotion of locally produced foods and drinks has ensured its persistence and continuity.28 There is a sense of fleshy exuberance and luxurious abundance, expressed through giant light beams, bodies, organs, organisms, and fire. Certain elements, such as the Indonesian ogoh ogoh sculptures that were ceremoniously burned (along with the crowd’s most pressing worries scrawled on paper) at the end of Dark Mofo 2016, have been directly borrowed from neighboring cultures. But most are associated with the Western contemporary art imaginary and popular culture and reference contemporary or future issues and themes.29

Critically the concept of Dark Mofo attracted leading artists and musicians the world over, many asking to be included in the lineup. In its internal communications Mona’s summer festival of music and art was abbreviated to “Mofo” and redeployed for the winter festival. But this not quite obvious compression had another meaning in popular “urban” culture, which few contemporary artists, musicians, and Mona’s core followers did not know: it means “motherfucker,” which can mean both bad or formidable, potent or impressive in some way. The pagan-inspired realignment of an Australian community to its own cosmology and natural rhythm, with its tropes of darkness, rebirth, reinvention, and regeneration so obviously linked to the possibility of transformation proved to be an attractive mix for the major artists and musicians that Walsh knew and aspired to collect and exhibit. In 2013 Carmichael told the bloggers Pile Rats: “As soon as we named it Dark Mofo people got it instantly. And when I saw the proposals coming in I was like, ‘I think we fucking nailed this’ [laughs]. People are onto it. They got what we were trying to do before we've even done it. It's resonating.”30 In 2016, the “demonic marching band” Itchy-O, from Denver, Colorado, United States, told of their properly festive experiences at Dark Mofo:

We knew to expect there would be the kind of compelling and challenging acts we love; however, the entire city of Hobart was taken over by art encounters curated to undermine all expectations (luminous large-scale...
installation art, luscious and brooding film, a bacchanalian Tasmanian feast, blazing fire sculptures). Dark Mofo festival is truly quixotic. From the food to the art to the music and performances, it is an extraordinary sensory overload and an exquisitely curated ode to light in the dark winter night.31

Methods

This article deploys data obtained from an Australian Research Council–funded project titled “Creating the Bilbao Effect: Mona and the Social and Cultural Coordinates of Urban Regeneration through Arts Tourism.” Over the 2012–17 period, a mixed methodology of participant observation/ethnography and sample surveys were used to understand and document the making of Mona, visitor experience at Mona and Dark Mofo, and the impact of Mona and Dark Mofo. Mona owner Walsh was interviewed numerous times over this period, as were Carmichael, creative director of Mona and Dark Mofo; Elizabeth Pearce, Mona writer; Olivier Varenne, senior curator; and Mark Fraser, who was museum director during Mona’s development years. PhD student Miriam McGarry (now graduated) carried out participant observation in the Dark Mofo festival office and at all points around the festival sites. Other honors students and I augmented other forms of data collection through participant observation among festival crowds and festival events. In addition, research on the design and making of Mona involved multiple interviews with some thirteen principal members of the team, including all curators, the Mona writer, the architect, the engineer, collection staff, and departmental managers. The unfolding impact of Mona and Dark Mofo was also captured through regular Mona Effect Seminars between 2012 and 2016, which involved Mona staff together with representatives from the cities of Hobart and Glenorchy, the state government of Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania (a corporation that promotes leisure travel to the area), local teachers, other art spaces, the food and beverage industries, and the musical director of Dark Mofo.

To evaluate the impact of Mona on visitors and document and evaluate their museum experience we also conducted a non-randomized sample survey administered either face-to-face soon after respondents exited Mona’s gallery space or online soon after they received the record of their museum tour from Mona’s O Device (a handheld information device that records everything viewed and every type of information sourced about it). A nineteen-question schedule was designed comprising a mix of Likert-scaled and other direct questions taking approximately five minutes to complete. A total of 6,410 completed questionnaires were obtained from November 7, 2013, to November 6, 2014. We wanted our survey to reflect an entire calendar year because Mona’s visitation is highly seasonal, with a very busy spring and summer season, and an intense period around midwinter during the Dark Mofo music and arts festival.

To evaluate the impact of Dark Mofo on the locality of the contiguous cities of Hobart (the capital of Tasmania) and Glenorchy (a working-class suburb to the north where Mona was built), we also conducted a representative randomized sample survey of 1,200 residents. We obtained data on rates of participation and perceptions about the contribution that Mona made to the life of the city.

Tourism, Urban Regeneration, and the Festivalization of Cities

Within the generic field of arts-led urban regeneration processes, the rise of the urban festival...
and attempts to generate significant flows of tourists to them has been significant. Yet what these have meant for the cities and their populations is not always clear; nor is it always clear what is regenerated. Some critics have seen little other than attempts to boost retailing and consumer spending.\(^{32}\) Similarly, the role arts festivals have played in advancing urban policy, contributing to urban life, facilitating the expression of cultural identities, engaging with art, and building social inclusion within art publics is far from obvious. Answering these questions is still hampered by a profound lack of detailed empirical research in the area.\(^{33}\) The research on Dark Mofo reported here should make an important contribution. In theoretical terms, this research seeks to uncover the social dynamics behind contemporary arts festivals: what exactly is “festive” about them when so many are ostensibly programs of artistic performances that descend from cultural forms based on high cultural excellence and are focused on social elites, and, more often than not, perform a role of social distinction rather than inclusion?\(^{34}\) The Adelaide Festival in Australia, the original early twentieth-century Glastonbury Festival, and Glyndebourne in England are typical examples here.

We know that in their modern guise arts festivals originated not from historical forms of European festive life such as carnival, which were grounded in popular culture, but often in opposition to, or as substitutes for, them. Indeed, ascendant Protestant industrial elites in northern Europe systematically banned carnival from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries.\(^{35}\) Some carnivals continued in toned-down or “pageantized” forms; others became commodified spectacles and representations, to join with other “improving leisures,” such as museums, art galleries, and art festivals.\(^{36}\) And yet, these mostly failed to develop the broad art publics their original founders intended and have remained predominantly the preserve of the educated middle classes.\(^{37}\) The sociological significance of Dark Mofo resides in its intervention to recover elements of the carnival and popular cultural in an experiment to broaden the appeal of contemporary art, which is often considered to be esoteric and inaccessible.

Carnivalesque celebrations have multiplied in recent decades: some of them have been revivals of existing traditions (in Basque Country, for instance, carnival was a significant celebration until it was banned by Francisco Franco in the 1930s and 1940s), while others have even been planted in places where they did not exist (for example, many of the Sussex Bonfire Societies in southern England are new to their communities). Still, such festivals are mostly confined to the social and spatial margins (for example, US Burning Man and the post-1960s Glastonbury Festivals) and rarely staged in towns or cities of any scale, though the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and the Notting Hill Carnival in London are exceptions.\(^{38}\)

The emerging seaside towns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which often had a direct connection to previous forms of carnival, revels, or wakes in the British tradition, became places where music, art, and the carnivalesque were firmly reestablished. Brighton and Blackpool are well-researched examples of these “places on the margin.”\(^{39}\) The termination of many fairs and revels across the north European rural landscape had coincided with the emergence and popularity of the first waves of medicinal sea bathing—and then seaside holidays.\(^{40}\) With the advent of the railways, entire industrial towns took to spending their traditional festival holidays at nearby seaside towns.\(^{41}\) The single largest working-class seaside town of Blackpool, for example, was recomposed and relocated from the traditional Lancashire towns’ carnival tradition of
wakes; a move enacted essentially by the Lancashire textile industries (capitalists and workers) themselves.42 There, as elsewhere, the same utopian imaginary was reassembled among a unique and new festive space and architecture.43 These, like Dark Mofo, were deliberately instituted for “festival” and seen as a benefit in and of themselves. Critically for my argument here, they were constructed festive sites for specific (traveling) urban/industrial publics. Mona and Dark Mofo were both primarily established to develop sustainable flows of tourists, though with obvious and important gains for the local community too.

In casting her critical eye over the more recent, largely tourist-led, economic motivations for festival growth in major cities, Bernadette Quinn laments the lack of attention being paid to the social inclusion of citizens/residents and “non-economic outcomes,” arguing that festivals were historically meant to express the sense of belonging specific to a group or place.44 In creating opportunities for drawing on shared histories, shared cultural practices, and ideals, as well as creating settings for social interactions, festivals engender local continuity since they are cultural texts.45 Quinn suggests that research into festival settings has shown how “a people's sense of their own identity is closely bound up with their attachment to place.”46 Here Quinn's work agrees with others who have seen attempts to grow significant flows of festival tourism as toxic on locality and community, resulting all too often in gentrification and development and the displacement of local people and culture.47

While connections between festivity and locality are important (and to that end, this article will detail Dark Mofo's impact and engagement with its locality), Dark Mofo also affords the opportunity to look more closely at the non-economic connections such festivals have had with tourists and with urban regeneration. Arguably, tourists are not the same as the tourism industry or reducible to the consumerist and economically driven narratives often attributed to them. Dark Mofo, for example, embraced tourism and saw it in opposite terms: as a potent transformative experience and force. It aimed to: a) bring a flow of art tourists to Hobart; b) allow locality, tourism, and art to resonate through arts activities that take a ritually transformative form; and c) encourage travel as a source of positive predisposition (in other words, preliminary) for festive engagement. As in other cities undergoing cultural florescence, such as Manchester, England, in the 1990s, tourism could be a positive force, interacting positively with the locality. Justin O'Connor's analysis of Manchester's revival through the 1990s recognized that cultural tourism may be embroiled in an "active consumption" where "the local and global are received, mixed and commented on," resulting in the "exchange and transformation of ideas, images, sounds, meaning."48

In Mona's design thinking then, travel was also a means for making visitors more receptive to the transformative capacities of their art and thus for creating a festive atmosphere around it. In their view, the festival provided a better metaphor for engagement with art than the classroom. It could therefore be argued that festival tourism does not necessarily reduce to economic/financial expediency and does not deviate from the proper business of festivals as celebrations of locality. Here we might say that Mona drew on a long tradition of festive and pilgrimage travel, a feature supported by the broad anthropological literature on the connections between ritual and travel and between ritual art objects and places on the social margins, as well as connections with transformative arts and representations in more recent traveling contexts, from the Grand

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41. Webb, "Bakhtin at the Seaside."

42. Ibid.


Tour through Glastonbury, Glyndebourne, SXSW (South by Southwest festival in the United States), and Burning Man.\textsuperscript{49} Where it differed was in combining tourists and local residents in an urban milieu. However, the extent to which it had succeeded (and might work elsewhere) was not known until we conducted the residents survey in Hobart.

**Dark Mofo: Community Making and Renewal**

Dark Mofo’s art public includes the majority of local residents who at midwinter are “in residence” rather than scattered to holiday destinations as they are at midsummer. While they do not have the town to themselves, this is one of the few times they are variously massing, on show, promenading, fancy milling, decontrolled, and excited by their newfound ritual public spaces and their changed status within the national arts imaginary (Hobart is now considered a leading arts city and not a cultural backwater).\textsuperscript{50} While not rising to the excesses demonstrated by the surviving carnivals of Europe (for example, some of the more lively Basque carnivals), Dark Mofo has nonetheless performed a spectacle of public revelry rarely seen in Hobart’s recent past.\textsuperscript{51} Arguably, it is as much the spectacle of a town set loose from public order regulations (dating back to the nineteenth century) as the art itself that annually pulls in a visiting public almost as large as the resident population.

Visitors are always invited to join with communities in carnival and their presence adds to the strangeness and carnival’s capacity to allow these communities to imagine themselves differently.\textsuperscript{52} After the first Dark Mofo festival in 2013, there was a unanimous call to allow Spectra, a light installation (a column of light beams that reaches into the sky fifteen kilometers above the city) by Japanese visual and sound artist Ryoji Ikeda, to be adopted as a permanent place symbol for Hobart, its Eiffel Tower. After some four years, this ambition has now come to pass, with its inauguration at Dark Mofo in June 2018. Spectra can now be seen from the

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backyards of almost every resident, and in that sense it has become both a beacon to engage and a symbol of the community.

It is important not to ascribe too much agency to Mona. To be sure, the organizers of Dark Mofo have been choreographers of immersive art experiences that, by and large, make strong statements. Such Sydney/national cultural commentators as Valentine have marveled at Dark Mofo, arguing that this could NOT happen in Sydney.53 Indeed, the urban authorities in Sydney are currently engaged in deactivating what was Sydney’s surviving carnivalesque nighttime economy, a series of large pubs in the Oxford Street area that formed a nursery hub for Sydney’s historically successful music industry.54 But one also needs to recognize that Mona has radically “underdetermined” what has come to pass in the museum and festival in order to allow others to act and create festive events. In other words, they have given artists and their publics (local and visiting) far more to do than at most festivals; they are more participants than spectators.

Local Engagement and Impact

To get a reliable understanding of how many people from Hobart and Glenorchy attended Mona and Dark Mofo, our research team carried out a representative survey of residents. We wanted to know what proportion of residents attended Dark Mofo and Mona and whether residents valued it.
As the mothership museum, Mona attracted a majority of residents from both cities. About 75 percent of the people of Hobart and 63 percent of the people of Glenorchy had been at least once to Mona in the previous year. Over 25 percent of Hobartians and over 20 percent of Glenorchians had been more than twice.

More significant, perhaps, was the numbers of local residents that appeared to have found something of value at Mona. Among those from Hobart and Glenorchy who had been to Mona at least once, we found that 62.8 percent of the non-university educated continued to visit Mona after their first trip there (with 49 percent becoming regulars). And while university-educated locals had a higher rate of attendance (75 percent continued to visit Mona after their first visit, with 60 percent becoming regulars), this degree of convergence was not expected.

To put this in context, in 2009–10 the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that only 20 percent of Australians with no university qualifications had attended an art gallery across Australia in the previous year. But they also found that only 43.5 percent of Australians with bachelor’s degrees had attended an art gallery in the previous year. So Mona, which opened in 2011, can claim an attendance rate for its non-tertiary-educated state citizens that is greater than those with bachelor’s degrees nationally. Not everyone likes all art, and we found many who did not like art at Mona. But the interesting point is that they had formed an opinion of it and could express it to the researchers. They had joined the conversation.

What about Dark Mofo? Across both cities, 65 percent of the non-university educated had attended, versus 82 percent of the university educated. Again, one would have anticipated the university educated to be more represented in attendance figures for contemporary arts but certainly not two-thirds of the non-tertiary educated.

About 75 percent of the people of Hobart had attended Dark Mofo, as had 60 percent of the people of Glenorchy. And while it is still true that a greater proportion of the university educated had attended, the difference was even less in Hobart, where there was a very narrow difference, 83 percent university educated versus 75 percent non-university educated. In Glenorchy, one of the most socially disadvantaged municipalities in Tasmania (it is in the top decile of social disadvantage across Australia), the difference was greater as expected, but it was nevertheless 81 percent versus 56 percent. These are big numbers for such a place and these numbers show that staging arts festivals in such areas can be valuable and successful. The museum has been a conduit to inclusion in this citywide festival and here we can identify a role that other museums might easily follow.

We also found that more people in each city had attended each successive Dark Mofo, and there is no reason to suppose that will not continue. A high proportion of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds attend Dark Mofo (82 percent), as do the twenty-five-to-thirty-four-year-olds (76.2 percent), whereas participation declines among the older groups (61 percent among the fifty-five-to-sixty-nine-year-olds and only 30.2 percent among the seventy+ group). As the younger groups succeed their elders, the likely impact will be more rather than less participation.

Are these figures good or bad? If your glass is always half empty, you might (rightly) point out that it is not good enough that the numbers are as unequal as they are and that so many of our
citizens do not participate. If your glass is always half full you might think that these statistics are good relative to national participation rates as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Both positions have some validity.

We should not forget that Mona and Dark Mofo are rich in contemporary art, which is typically less popular than traditional fine art galleries and festivals. To put this in context, a 2012 national survey in France found that while 23 percent of the population had been to a museum of fine art in the previous twelve months, only 13 percent had been to a museum of contemporary art.\(^{56}\)

We also asked residents of the working-class city of Glenorchy and the more middle-class city of Hobart to rate Mona’s contribution to the life of the city on a scale where 0 = no contribution and 10 = contributes a lot. Half the people from Glenorchy ranked Mona’s contribution at 9 and above and 71 percent ranked it at 7 or more; 58 percent of Hobartians ranked Mona’s contribution at 9 and above and 90 percent ranked it at 7 or more. Only 14 percent of Glenorchy residents ranked it 5 or below, compared with just 7 percent of Hobartians.

**Conclusion**

This article has described the making of a new midwinter festival in postcolonial Australia as well as key elements of its unfolding and impact. Much of the art exhibited features the grotesque body; it upends hierarchy and social convention; it is transgressive of social codes and cultural values. The curators deliberately emphasize the socially transformative subjects of art rather than its art history, so that their artists’ intended messages are more effectively communicated and resonate more with the symbolic meaning of winter as a positive time for social change.

Dark Mofo may appear to be a merely commercial, if highly unusual, festival, emanating from a museum enterprise owned by one very wealthy man. This appearance needs to be modified, not least because it was never intended to be anything other than a philanthropic gesture from Walsh. In his philanthropic support of art, he is not unusual; this is how almost every major art collection has been assembled. What is so different is his intention to use his wealth to support art and cultural expression, but at the same time, to subvert the museological apparatus in the guise of “the modern museum” that has failed to realize its potential as a socially transformative institution.\(^{57}\) By deploying a festive rather than a didactic register he hoped to be able to reach more people more effectively. One of Mona’s key aims in its original brief stated: “Create an experience for visitors—David does not object to a ‘fairground’ experience. Strong emotions are welcome.”\(^{58}\) Carmichael described Mona’s brand values in the following way: “Mona’s brand values are: reason, radicalism, egalitarianism, pedagogy and pleasure. We will be: iconoclastic, radical, controversial, fun, brave. We will not be: conventional, didactic, highbrow, dumb, serious, dictated to.”\(^{59}\)

Festivity of the carnival sort where “art meets life” was certainly the trope for Walsh’s anti-museum.\(^{60}\) He wanted artistic expression to be brought down to earth and meet its public unmediated by art history and a dubious cultural politics of “social improvement” that, in his view, never worked anyway. Working-class families like his stayed away and were never hailed by it; hence, the public exhibition of art missed its mark. He rigorously avoided becoming an alternative authority figure and has chafed at suggestions in the media that he was a new arbiter

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of taste. Sociologically, he has steadfastly played the role of a clown in the making of Dark Mofo, and, alongside a team of helpers, many from Tasmanian working-class backgrounds, he has been mocking and bringing the art establishment and conventional exhibition platforms down to earth, to the incredulity of the middle classes, who are far too cozy in their “appreciation” of art, and of the working classes who have for far too long been numbed by their alienation from it. At the same time, they have created a more theatrical and festive device to connect art to a broader social base, and they have done so by removing seriousness and authority from museum and other public art spaces and replacing it with immersive encounters, laughter, wine, music, free emotion, and sensuality. The aim is not to reject art but to connect it to its social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. Reading Mikhail Bakhtin and other accounts of the choreography of medieval carnival, we know that they were not completely spontaneous, that there were specific groups who organized, reproduced, and updated its expressive content such that contemporary crowds had something to react to, laugh at, resonate with, and find expression for. Like Dark Mofo, it was thus never merely the repetition of “tradition” but always immersion in the contemporary.

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Adrian Franklin trained in social anthropology and has held professorial positions at the University of Bristol, the Institute of Social Anthropology in Vienna, the University of Oslo, the University of Tasmania, and since 2017, the University of South Australia. His current research interests include the ethnographic analysis of festivals, rituals, travels, and "events"; art museums and art publics; art tourism; and culture-led urban regeneration, urban anthropology, and human-animal studies. He leads the Australian Research Council–funded project “Creating the Bilbao Effect: MONA and the Social and Cultural Coordinates of Urban Regeneration through Art Tourism.” Recent books include The Making of MONA (Penguin, 2014), Retro: A Guide to the Mid-Twentieth Century Design Revival (Bloomsbury, 2013); and City Life (Sage, 2012). His new book Anti-Museum will be published by Routledge in 2019.

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Festivities as Spaces of Identity Construction: The Brazilian Jongo Rodas

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ABSTRACT

Jongo is a cultural practice specific to the cities located in the Paraiba do Sul river valley, in the south-eastern region of Brazil. It is a form of expression rooted in the knowledge, rituals and beliefs of the African populations of Bantu language and which incorporates drum percussion, collective dance, and magic-religious, poetic elements. The roda, literally meaning “round,” is the performance space of the jongo. The quest for an “authentic jongo dance” at the time of the rodas often leads to disputes among various groups claiming the greater “purity” of their group, or the greater “truth” of their personal history. Indeed, during the rodas, the quest for the “afro authenticity” of the jongo becomes the ground for identity construction and for the recognition and legitimization of African origins. This paper focuses on the jongo rodas as a festive event that exhibits the African ancestral past of Brazilian blacks as well as the signs and symbols of a Brazilian black identity.
Festivities as Spaces of Identity Construction: The Example of the Brazilian Jongo Rodas
Luciana de Araujo Aguiar

Introduction

Jongo is a festive practice that developed historically among black populations forcibly brought from Africa to work on the coffee and sugar cane plantations of the Paraíba do Sul River, in the southeastern region of Brazil. In 2005, it became one of the first cultural expressions to be listed as “intangible heritage” by the Brazilian Department of Culture, following the creation of the National Intangible Heritage program in 2000. The roda, literally meaning “round,” is the major expression of this practice. This term evokes two meanings in this context. It expresses the performance of the jongo dance and a festivity where people gather to celebrate, drink and eat together, and live a convivial moment around the music and dance of jongo. As a space of performance of jongo, it is a circle (or semicircle) composed of men and women, inside of which a couple, a man and a woman, interact through creative movements and dance performance, mobilizing especially their hips. However, beyond physical performance inside a circle, the term jongo roda expresses also a moment of conviviality, collective interaction, and, in most cases, restoration. Thus, when we say “jongo rodas,” we announce the physical and musical performance of the jongo in a circle, but also a festive moment whose dance and music of jongo are the center.

This article is based on qualitative research conducted in 2014 for my doctoral thesis in ethnology, which aimed to understand the strategies used in the representation of authenticity and the policies of intangible cultural heritage. My fieldwork lasted about five months, from August to December 2014. During this period, I observed various jongo rodas in two of the four states of southeastern Brazil. One of my main objectives was to meet with jongueiros (people who are knowledgeable about jongo and/or who are members of jongo groups) from the region and with people with different views of this cultural practice. The Pontão de Cultura do Jongo, an institution in the state of Rio de Janeiro created to safeguard jongo after it gained the status of cultural heritage, was my main source of contact among the jongueiros. 1

In August 2014 in Niterói, a city located in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area, I met Suellen through a mutual friend. Suellen, twenty-six years old at the time, is a jongueira, a Pontão de Cultura do Jongo fellowship recipient, a jongo teacher in a cultural association, and one of the leaders of the group Jongo da Serrinha. She introduced me to the activities of Pontão de Cultura do Jongo and, consequently, to a network of jongueiros and other people related to jongo. Geographic proximity between my hometown, Rio de Janeiro, and some of the events I attended especially fostered communication with the following groups: Jongo da Serrinha in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Jongo de Pinheiral in the city of Pinheiral, and Jongo Mistura da Raça, located in the city of São José dos Campos. Although my research focused on the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, I was also able to meet with jongueiros from two other states (Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo) at certain events, such as the Meeting of Jongueiros, a festival that brings together all the jongo groups from the Sudeste region.

1. Brazilian policy provides a plan for safeguarding immaterial goods registered as intangible culture heritage. In 2007, the Institute of National Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN), responsible for the registration of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Brazil, conducted a series of meetings with consultants and partners to find a way to consolidate safeguarding actions for jongo. Among them was the Fluminense Federal University (UFF), which had a network of teachers involved in issues of jongo. In the same year, the Ministry of Culture issued a public call for
Notions of authenticity and tradition will serve as the analytical framework for assessing the relevance of the information collected in the field and the relationship between the jongo groups. Even if these notions are not native categories and were not present in the discourse of most of the jongo players I met, I observed in their self-presentation a desire to showcase “traditional Africa” via gestures and clothing. Most participants affirmed their own performance of jongo as the “true Afro-Brazilian cultural practice.” My article thus seeks to study jongo rodas as festive events that highlight how Brazilian blacks use the signs and symbols of a Brazilian black identity to reclaim control over their lives.

Afro-Brazilian Culture and Popular Festivities

The term jongo comes from ndjongö, a Kimbundu term from a Bantu linguistic group, which means “creation” or “descendant” and which has come to mean “family reunion” in Brazil. The Bantu linguistic group comprises approximately 450 related languages, spoken by 450 different ethnic groups. The map below shows the major language groups and ethnic groups in central, eastern, and southern Africa. Bantuphone groups are highlighted in brown.

2. Kimbundu, sometimes called North Mbundu or Loanda, is a Bantu language and one of the major languages of Angola and of its capital, Luanda. About one-third of the population of Angola of about twelve million speaks Kimbundu as their native language. See Kimbundu (Bloomington, IN: National African Language Resource Center, n.d.).
Almost all African captives brought to southeastern Brazil between 1790 and 1830 belonged to Bantu ethnic groups from the Congo, Angola, and Mozambique areas. From the port of Luanda came the Ki-Mbundu (Kimbundu or Bundo), Cabanga, Cabeza, Catungo, Cazongo, Coanza, Hanga, Manga, Ocarimba, Quisama, and Quitana groups; from the port of Benguela, the U-Mbundu (Umbundus or Ovimbudos); and from Mozambique, people from the Baronga Bar-Tonga, Shope-Ba, Ba-Senga, Senga Ba-Ba-ngnoni (Nguni), Macua, and Ajua groups. The Bantus who came to Brazil were Congo, Cabindas and Benguelas from the Congo and Angola, and Macua and Anjico from Mozambique.

The first researchers of Afro-Brazilian populations, conducting research in the 1930s, such as Raimundo Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos, considered Bantu culture to be poorer symbolically and ritually than Sudanese culture, in other words, the culture of ethnic groups located in the Gulf of Guinea region (present-day Nigeria and Benin). Most Africans who came to northeastern Brazil as slaves on the sugar cane plantations between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries originated from Sudanese groups. The role played by the ritual and symbolic practices of these groups in the formation of Afro-Brazilian religious practices, especially candomblé, was quickly highlighted by anthropologists. Candomblé actually became the Afro-Brazilian religious practice that most interested Brazilian and foreign researchers in the first half of the twentieth century. Bantu culture, on the other hand, was relegated to its linguistic aspects by the first Afro-Brazilian researchers; words of Bantu origin remain well integrated and present in the Brazilian daily language.

At the end of the twentieth century, researchers finally turned their attention to the place of Bantu cultural practices in Brazilian culture. Historian Nei Lopes was one of the precursors in this discussion. Many authors followed him, including ethnomusicologist Paulo Dias who developed an analysis of the musical heritage of the Sudanese and Bantu in Brazil. According to him, the descendants of Sudanese people, who live mainly in the urban areas of northeastern Brazil (Bahia, Maranhão, Pernambuco), left their cultural imprint almost exclusively in the field of religion (candomblé). Meanwhile, Bantu music, songs, and dances were said to have strongly permeated profane and religious culture in the rural areas of northeastern Brazil and in the southeastern region of the country, thus exceeding the limits of Afro-Brazilian religions.

Bantu musical presence had first been evoked by foreign travelers who participated in scientific expeditions to Brazil between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries—such as Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, traveling from 1816 to 1822, or Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1938), traveling from 1817 to 1820. According to researchers who, like Dias, analyzed the writings of these chroniclers, these excursioneists mainly described two types of festivities related to Bantu musical presence. One festivity, more private than the other, was carried out at night on the Sabbath in the terreiros (the dirt floor outside a house) and was called batuques by travelers. The other festivity was public. Slaves and freed or free-born individuals belonging to black Catholic brotherhoods elected a king and marched through the streets, singing, reciting improvised verses, and playing drums. These musical processions were called “black king celebrations” in the eighteenth century and conga das in the nineteenth, and are known today as “Kings of Kongo” festivals.
Various Brazilian cultural practices developed from these two categories of Bantu musicality. The congada category encompasses a variety of cultural expressions, including maracatu, congo, congada, moçambique, ticumbi, catumbi, taieira, cambinda, and catope, which can be found especially among the Afro-Brazilian population of Minas Gerais, where black Catholic brotherhoods played a key role in the life of Afro-descendants. Batuque, on the other hand, is a generic term that refers to a variety of cultural expressions currently known as jongo, umbigada batuque, candombe, zambê, tambor de crioula, carimbó, etc. These practices feature a common dance performance inside a circle, punctuated by the sound of drums.

Jongo is thus part of the heritage of enslaved Bantu-speaking African peoples in Brazil. Its musical and choreographic elements, as well as its magical-religious and poetic aspects, are all inherited from the African populations of Bantu language. An examination of jongo can thus deepen our understanding of Bantu culture and heritage in Afro-Brazilian cultural rituals and performances.

Jongo Rodas and Jongo Groups

Jongo as a dance is performed by two individuals who interact through corporal movements in a festive atmosphere. Rodas are the major expression of this cultural practice and are carried out most often within local festivals and festive occasions. Even if jongo groups regularly organize rodas in celebrations that are specific to them, they all organize a roda for two common celebrations: May 13, the day when slavery was abolished in Brazil, and November 20, Black Awareness Day. Additionally, jongueiros are regularly invited to take part in university seminars, school activities, and television programs, all of which typically end with a small jongo roda.

Roda musicians play an essential role in the event, creating a playful atmosphere through gestures and their interactions with the dancers. Yet none of these drummers are professional musicians. Individuals interested in the expressiveness of the jongo and in Afro-Brazilian musicality usually come to jongo groups via the practice of dance and some then learn how to play drums from those who have already mastered the instrument. Indeed, jongo rodas mobilize knowledge that passes through generations. As a result, jongo dance and music was for a long time transmitted primarily within communities, without any particular formal teaching. Nowadays, most of the initial practice involves learning in a jongo group.

Jongo groups were developed to organize jongo gatherings. Each group displays a specific mode of material existence and social organization; it also has a unique way of dancing and playing the drum and unique aesthetics. Jongueiros generally describe the group as a family with whom they share joys, doubts, complaints, and stories of financial trouble. In most cases, the group’s monetary resources are derived from fundraising, savings earned from festivities at their headquarters, and presentations of jongo dance at private institutions. Some groups are also sponsored by private companies or benefit from cultural programs funded by large public companies. All of the participants with whom I spoke insisted that relations among the groups are positive: “I have links with all the groups. We take a little of each and when we do workshops,
we also teach a little our own knowledge. We learn with them, just as we teach them a little about our practice.”

While their statements point to group friendliness, my experience of living with them for several days in a row revealed (subtly expressed) animosity of certain jongueiros toward specific groups.

### Afro-Brazilian Symbolism in the Jongo Rodas

During fieldwork, I attended a number of jongo rodas. This section describes three of them, performed by three different groups. In 2014, I went to a Saint Sebastian celebration organized by Jongo de Pinheiral, Saints Cosmas and Damian feast day celebrations sponsored by Jongo da Serrinha, and the Black Awareness Day celebration coordinated by Jongo Mistura da Raça. The ethnographic descriptions of these three celebrations are important because they can help locate a certain idea of Afro-Brazilian authenticity in jongo performances and show how roda acts as a paradigmatic space for the mobilization of a Brazilian black identity.

On Sunday, October 5, 2014, I left my home in Rio de Janeiro early in the morning and traveled sixty-seven miles in the direction of Pinheiral, a town located in the Paraíba do Sul River valley, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. I was invited by Fatinha, Jongo de Pinheiral’s director, to the final roda of the novena of Saint Sebastian (the group’s patron saint). I had met Fatinha during a class at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). Elaine Monteiro, a professor at UFF’s Institute of Education, had since 2014 been teaching an optional course on pedagogy titled “Jongo/Caxambu: Afro-Brazilian Heritage in Academia.” From August to December 2014 I audited this course, which allowed me to complete a lot of my fieldwork and meet several jongueiros. The day I met Fatinha, she gave a presentation in Monteiro’s course about her experience as a jongueira. After her presentation, I talked to her about my research and my desire to study her jongo group. She was enthusiastic and invited me to attend the closing feast of the novena of St. Sebastian at Pinheiral.

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15. All photographs are by author.
The festivity took place at the group’s headquarters, not far from the city center. This was the first time I visited this city and my first time participating in a Jongo de Pinheiral roda. The festivity was supposed to start at noon, and I arrived at around 11:30 a.m. The space allocated to participants consisted of two houses. The larger house includes a large living room, a bathroom, and a kitchen, while the smaller had a living room and a bedroom. Between the two houses, there was a large courtyard where the group holds meetings, celebrations, and rehearsals. The larger house welcomed visitors. I was able to admire historical objects belonging to the group and to read panels telling its history and that of its ancestors. The second house functioned as a small library on Afro-Brazilian literature. It had a computer area with an internet connection and also included a dormitory that hosted researchers and students.

16. Jongo de Pinheiral rents a space for its activities through funds provided for this purpose by the Brazilian state.
17. Food offerings to divinities, spirits, and ancestors are central in Afro-Brazilian religions. In Afro-Brazilian cosmology, the Yoruba god Ibeji was assimilated to Saints Cosmas and Damian and the offerings that are destined for this deity are sweets, such as cakes and biscuits.

18. The panel read: “The Pinheiral’s Jongó originated in the fields of the São José do Pinheiro Farm owned by the Breves family, prospering in the spreading of coffee during the colonial period and the stronghold of one of the largest black slave nuclei in Brazil. This practice has been passed on from generation to generation and is preserved to this day by residents of Pinheiral, who are very proud of this cultural heritage. Pinheiral’s Jongó is characterized by its originality and tradition. Currently, the city has a ‘Ponto de Cultura,’ which is a reference center for Jongó, a project carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Culture.” All translations are mine.

19. The panel read: “April 7, civic Jongó festival. Tribute to José de Oliveira ‘Master Cabiúna,’ a reference for Pinheiral’s Jongó (April 7, 1920–March 24, 1993). He was born on the Três Saltos farm and inherited Jongó culture from his mother Dona Ivone Maria da Conceição. He became the greatest Jongó performer in Pinheiral and the region.”


21. Arthur Ramos, As culturas

On the one hand, the large living room of Jongó de Pinheiral exhibited spiritual links to Catholicism, and on the other hand, it evoked an affiliation with black ancestors. There was a picture of an “old black man” (preto velho), who in Afro-Brazilian cosmology represents the old Africans or their descendants, wise and patient, who lived as slaves and who liked to narrate stories from the slavery period. Representations of Catholic saints in front of drums suggested the syncretism present in Afro-Brazilian religions, which associate Catholic saints with African divinities. In Jongó, African deities are symbolized by drums. A statuette of Our Lady was accompanied by statuettes of Saints Cosmas and Damian, with offerings of sweets that also reflected this syncretism. In addition, clay and calabash cups evoke more particularly slavery in rural areas. The big lounge of the Jongó de Pinheiral head office also displayed panels about the group’s ancestors and its current composition.

Posters depicted the group’s historical and symbolic references. Ancestral heritage was represented by the group’s choice to pay homage to one of its ancestors—José de Oliveira, also named “Master Cabiúna”—during the local Jongó festival, as well as the way the group presented itself in public, dressed in white. The large turbans and necklaces worn by the women of the Jongó groups also convey a certain “African” aesthetic. In 1937, Ramos had already identified certain elements of black cultures in Brazil. Among them, he cited large necklaces made with beads, long earrings, and elements of Muslim influence, such as turbans and long skirts. Currently in Brazil, wearing a turban and long pearl necklaces often means that people are faithful to an Afro-Brazilian religion, or at least sympathize with it.

At noon, the festivity began with a small procession of participants, who left the lounge of the big house carrying statuettes of the patron saints. They then stood in front of the courtyard, where they prayed the last rosary of the novena of Saint Sebastian. A small Roda followed, danced by the participants of the group. The Roda was punctuated by the sound of musical instruments, especially drums, played mainly by three or four men who, together with other individuals, formed the circle. They sang chants (religious or profane) called pontos, repeated in chorus by all those who formed the Roda. The audience also contributed to percussion by clapping.
Anyone who wished to start the dance turned toward the drummers and saluted them. Then, each participant approached a woman or a man, took their hands, and both moved to the center of the circle. They faced each other and the couple began to dance agilely, moving their hips. The performance of the couple ended when another participant wished to dance. The new participant approached the drums to salute them and then advanced toward the center of the circle. They then made a fast movement called *umbigada*, which consists of placing one’s own navel (*umbigo* in Portuguese) against the navel of the one with whom one wishes to dance. The person thereby replaced moved back into the circle and the new couple performed. Things carried on this way until the drummers ended the roda by chanting “*machado*” or “*cachoeira*.”

22. Feijoada allegedly originated during slavery when slaves added the least noble parts of pigs, rejected by their masters, to black beans before cooking them together.
to eat bought a ticket. The majority of visitors were friends and family members of the group’s participants. There were also a few students. A team of cinema majors from UFF was there to shoot a documentary about the group. After lunch, a large roda of jongo began. The roda started around 2:00 p.m. and when I left the festivity at around 9:00 p.m., the drummers were still playing and people were still dancing.

Most women wore long colorful skirts, which allowed them to perform beautiful movements while dancing. Men and women often danced barefoot, a deliberate choice because according to them, it allowed a better connection with ancestors. The songs, pontos, were intoned by a soloist, who interpreted a first melodic phrase, onto which he added the chorus. The majority of the pontos in a roda were led by men. Some were created at the time of the roda, some were part of a specific group’s repertoire, and some were commonly sung by all jongo groups. People who were not directly related to jongo groups could participate in the roda to dance but they could not be a pontos soloist or play drums.
The Saints Cosmas and Damian feast day celebrations took place on September 27, 2014, at the headquarters of Jongo da Serrinha.23 I was invited by Suellen, my first interviewee and one of the leaders of the group. The headquarters of Jongo da Serrinha was also a house in which the group rehearsed, socialized, and celebrated. At the entrance, there was a living room with a library, a computer, and pictures of the group’s “elders.” Images of Catholic saints and African orixás (gods from Yoruba origin, present in many religions of the Americas and in particular in candomblé and Umbanda in Brazil) could be seen next to books and paintings.24 Adjacent to the living room were the bathrooms and a small kitchen. The kitchen door opened onto stairs leading to a large courtyard, where there was a storage space for clothes, objects, and musical instruments. The house was not only the gathering place for the group’s participants but also a space where the children and teenagers of the Serrinha favela could learn about jongo dance and music, as well as other artistic cultural practices, such as traditional Brazilian dances and the cavaquinho (a musical instrument of Portuguese origin with four plucked strings resembling a small guitar).

23. Serrinha is the name of a favela located in the north of Rio de Janeiro, in the Madureira neighborhood. It suffers from the ills ordinarily associated with favelas, in other words, a combination of social exclusion, lack of infrastructure (water, electricity), illegal drug trafficking, and armed confrontations with the police. In Rio de Janeiro, favelas accommodate one-third of the population.

24. The Yorubas are a large ethnic group in Africa, mostly present in Nigeria, on the right bank of the Niger River, but also in Benin, Ghana, and Togo. The term brings together several peoples speaking the Yoruba language and having a similar cosmology.

The festivity began at 10:00 a.m. with a performance by children participating in artistic workshops. Afterward, the event was oriented toward university students, many of whom were studying fine arts at UFF. During a face painting workshop, for instance, students were encouraged to create their own African motifs. Morning activities ended with a small roda of jongo, conducted by the group’s participants, children, visitors, and university students.
Toward 1:00 p.m., lunch was served and the main course, offered by the group, was also feijoada. The majority of attendees were either Jongo da Serrinha members or students from the workshops, sometimes accompanied by their families. I also saw students and researchers from UFF. During the afternoon, children were honored by festivities related to Saints Cosmas and Damian. Indeed, in Brazilian popular culture, September 27 is a day to celebrate children (dia das crianças) as well as the feast of these twin saints. Families who celebrate this day prepare small bags specially sold for this occasion and fill them with sweets, some of which are all-time favorites, such as candied coconut and pumpkin. This practice has its origin in Afro-Brazilian religions and in particular in the orixá Ibeji, which consists of twins who protect children and keep the memory of the spirits of dead children. On the day of the festivity, Jongo da Serrinha members prepared a cake for children, and adults were invited to distribute candy among them. I personally prepared fifty bags of sweets for the children.

The festivity ended with a samba roda, a common practice in Rio de Janeiro. Unlike the jongo roda executed in a circle, samba rodas are a gathering of people singing and dancing around a table where musicians play instruments, such as cavaquinho and pandeiro (a type of hand-frame drum popular in Brazil), and drink beer. Usually, the songs are popular sambas known by most Brazilians.
The last jongo festivity that I attended took place on Black Awareness Day and was performed by the group Jongo Mistura da Raça in the city of São José dos Campos, sixty-two miles from the city of São Paulo, in the Paraíba do Sul River valley. Black Awareness Day in Brazil, celebrated on November 20, has been a national holiday since 2011. The purpose of this holiday is to reflect on racial discrimination in Brazilian society. The states of Alagoas, Amazonas, Amapá, Mato Grosso, and Rio de Janeiro have declared November 20 a public holiday in all of their cities through regional decrees. In other states, responsibility rests with municipalities, which decide on its implementation. The date was chosen to coincide with the death of Zumbi in 1695. Zumbi was one of the leading warlords of Quilombo dos Palmares, a fugitive community founded in the seventeenth century by insurgent slaves in northeastern Brazil. He remains an icon of anti-slavery and anti-colonialist resistance, and is a hero for Afro-Brazilians and Afro-descendants in Latin America. Thus, November 20, the anniversary of his death, is observed as the day of Afro-Brazilian awareness and resistance. On that day, I was invited by Luciana, one of the leaders of the Jongo Mistura da Raça. I knew Luciana through Suellen. They both belonged to a Pontão de Cultura do Jongo subgroup called Young Jongueiros Network, which brings together young representatives of jongo groups. The space dedicated to rehearsals, meetings, and celebrations was not the head office of the group but a building called Celebreiros, maintained by a combination of private and public institutions that promote various cultural actions, such as the Jongo Mistura da Raça and the Mobile Art Project, focusing on the diversity of hip-hop culture.
After lunch, the celebration continued with the artistic presentations of groups and associations working on themes related to Afro-Brazilian history and culture. The first presentation, "Revolt at the senzala," resembled a play on the theme of slavery. The play was performed by a capoeira group from the city of São José dos Campos. Following this, there was a presentation by a drum group named Odoyá and a congada group from São José dos Campos called the Filhos de Zambi folkloric group.

At noon, a feijoada prepared by the organizers was offered to the public for ten Brazilian reais (around four dollars). The audience was primarily composed of persons linked to the cultural institutions participating in the event. There were also relatives and friends of Jongo Mistura da Raça.

The festivity began at around 10:00 a.m. with a ceremony honoring Saint Benedict, also called Benedict the Moor or Benedict the Black, who was the first black man to be canonized by the Catholic Church. In Brazilian popular Catholicism, this saint and slave of African origin is considered the protector of black people. Devotion to him is unconnected to Yoruba cosmology. After prayers to Saint Benedict, the group executed a roda of jongo. This was followed by a conversation with the audience on the problems encountered by black people in contemporary Brazilian society: prejudice, violence, and inequalities in higher education and the workplace.

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29. A senzala was a large dwelling intended for slaves at the time of colonial Brazil on sugar cane plantations and coffee farms.

30. "Odoyá" is the greeting to the orixá Yemanjá, the Yoruba divinity that reigns over salt waters. Zambi is another name for Zumbi.

31. The maracatu is an Afro-Brazilian cultural practice from the Brazilian northeast and in particular from the state of Pernambuco. The maracatu is a combination of rhythmic music with costumes, dances, songs, and parades during Carnival. Like the congadas, the maracatu is the scene of the coronation of the king of the Congo. Taubaté is a municipality in the state of São Paulo, located in the Paraíba do Sul River valley, 130 kilometers from the state capital, São Paulo. In a capoeira roda, the capoeirists form a circle in the center of which two of them compete. The movements executed require great flexibility. The other capoeirists around the circle sing, clap their hands, and play percussion instruments. The capoeira roda is made up of a group of people, men and women, including a master and disciples. The master is the holder and custodian of the knowledge circulating in the roda.
These three celebrations reveal symbolic elements present in the Afro-Brazilian historical and cultural universe. The dates chosen may highlight Afro-Brazilian cosmology, as in the feast of Saints Comas and Damian and feast of Saint Sebastian. The former saints are syncretized with Ibeji, the divinity of the Yoruba twins, and Saint Sebastian with Oxóssi, god of hunting, abundance, and subsistence. On the other hand, Black Awareness Day represents Afro-Brazilian resistance, in a country heavily dominated by racial inequality between blacks and whites. It reflects the increasingly “racialist” and “Africanist” course that black militancy has taken in Brazil, seeking to redefine as “black,” in other words “ethnic,” cultural practices that were once thought as mixed and mestizo.32

The three festivities also reveal a special relationship between the jongo universe and the academic world and the part of the white middle class that is interested in the cultural practices of the popular classes. In fact, Brazil has a strong and enduring relationship between intellectuals and the practices of Brazilian popular culture. Since the end of the nineteenth century and into the twenty-first, intellectuals have wrestled with a question directly related to national identity: “Who are we?” For many of them, the answer to this question is found in popular (or folkloric) cultural practices, which they consider one of the most effective aspects of asserting national identity. From the 1930s these Brazilian intellectuals, mostly linked to the petite bourgeoisie, began to conceive popular traditions as a way not only to preserve the “national soul” but also to educate the “people” in the place of its practices in the construction of national identity. Intellectuals thus placed themselves in the role of revealing to the people the importance of their traditions. Though this paternalistic positioning has been increasingly criticized among intellectuals working in the humanities, it is still a reason, whether conscious or unconscious, for the involvement of many teachers and students in traditional cultural practices. Jongo also has an “Afro” dimension, which is strongly emphasized by many intellectuals in the social sciences. The promotion of Afro-Brazilian culture by intellectuals, as anthropologist Livio Sansone explains, is a creative adaptation to oppression and racism.33

Rodas and the Quest for Authenticity

Jongo rodas are legitimized as a “genuine” Afro-Brazilian cultural practice through the organization of jongo festivals. The quest for authenticity in festivities makes sense both for the persons directly involved in the practice of jongo and for the audiences. Each group tries to show...
that their jongo roda is more traditional than that of other groups, thereby buttressing their claims to authenticity. Among the aspects used to prove ancestral heritage are the pontos (songs), barefoot dancing in the terreiro, and drumming techniques. The construction of authenticity also involves the affirmation of personal and family ties with enslaved persons. In addition, people create and use new aesthetic tools, such as costumes, makeup, and hairstyles, during the performance of the jongo. Aesthetic, corporeal, and discursive strategies used in the rodas may also reveal disputes between the groups, each of which strives to legitimize their own practices by displaying the greatest traditionalism.

Among the strategies employed by these groups to exhibit tradition, playing the drum is one of the most visible and important. The drum is presented as an object embodying the traditionalism of jongo. It is idealized as the object that links jongueiros to Africa and thus legitimizes their African ancestry. During fieldwork, I noted how the jongueiros of different groups talked about the drums: “A drum, for a jongo who really considers jongo, is the best thing that exists. If a person does not know how to respect this, they cannot respect their father or mother”; “The roda is theirs (the drums), if they are not there, there is no roda”; “We who are from a traditional community cannot dance without any kind of drum rhythm.”

These statements suggest the agents (jongueiros) discursive strategies to assert their knowledge of the drum’s role in this context and at the same time justify their belonging to a traditional group. This discourse is also a way to show to other groups and other jongueiros their traditionalism and authenticity. Some jongueiros addressed their remarks to specific groups: “the group of the Serrinha has several instruments, like the guitar and the cavaquinho, while we have only two drums. The drums represent our ancestors. Our jongo is the ‘jongo de raiz.’”

The expression “jongo de raiz” refers primarily to the traditional aspect of the gathering, through the word for “root” (raiz). In this case, the authenticity of the group is defended almost aggressively.

Disputes about the traditionalism of a jongo group are also evidenced by the visual aspects that the jongueiros choose to put on display in a roda. The discourse on the importance of being barefoot in a roda serves to justify the African origin of the gatherings put forward by practitioners: “The earth transmits energy and this must be maintained and respected, it is our tradition.”

The reference to an idealized Africa is felt even more through clothing, makeup, and hairstyles, as seen in the photos below.
Although these aspects are not directly related to the "jongo tradition," since the first practitioners of jongo did not use special costumes and makeup in the rodas, they have been put into practice so that the group and its members can assert a relationship with this idealized Africa. I have deduced that the better a participant can express ties to Africa, the closer to authenticity he or she is in the eyes of the public.

Disputes and antagonisms over legitimacy and authenticity often occur among agents with different quantities of symbolic capital. Among these are social capital (established by their relations with other agents and the social networks that they mobilize), economic capital (established by their incomes and heritage), and cultural capital (established by their positions within cultural and academic institutions). In my analysis I suggest that those who own a greater amount of social capital, which in this context are those responsible for jongo groups and those with leading positions in cultural and academic institutions, occupy dominant positions in the formulation of discourses on the Afro-Brazilian authenticity of the jongo. Those with a greater quantity of such capital are more likely to “win” the disputes, either through their rhetoric or through their representation of “African signs” in their groups and the rodas.

The most typical strategies are the promotion of African traditionalism by signs that refer to this continent. In this context, the history of slavery is appropriate, with the aim of reinforcing discourse on the authenticity of the jongo. The history of the transatlantic slave trade has been mythologized, romanticized even, by some academics and jongueiros and has been appropriated by other practitioners/followers as their link with the African continent. While on the one hand, the trade of souls between Africa and Brazil was a powerful tool of Portuguese colonial control, on the other hand, it had a structural role in Africa, reinforcing internal inequalities. The African slave supply lasted for more than three centuries without the need for European and American traffickers to demand Africans as tribute. Nevertheless, in the speeches given by local scholars and defended by jongo practitioners, the role played by African elites in the consolidation of the slavery regime is not taken into account. Their most common discourse is that “Africans” were one population enslaved by the Portuguese alone.

Moreover, even if the jongueiros insist on the resistance of their ancestors who knew how to preserve the jongo, the popular image of the slave in the jongo universe is that of a suffering person. The history of slavery as written by historians, however, shows that Africans who were forced to leave for Brazil devised strategies to defend themselves from the slave system. Various forms of protest, some discreet, some obvious, were used at different times by the captives: running away, forming communities with other fugitive slaves, killing masters and foremen, and sabotaging production by slowing down work or damaging work tools.

Finally, the participants of the jongo groups legitimate the African ancestry of their gatherings through territorial anchorage. They claim that the jongo is present in the Brazilian cities with the greatest concentration of African slaves in the nineteenth century. The southeast region of Brazil, and especially the Valley of the Paraíba, is thereby designed as “black land.” Usages and discourses present in the jongo groups’ conception of this region influence how black identity is forged. The way space is elaborated by the practitioners of jongo indicates a relationship between past and future shaped by memory work.


Influenced by the results of academic research, jongo practitioners are now developing a discursive image of black Africa based on the signs and symbols of pre-slavery Bantu culture. The “Africa” highlighted by the jongueiros uses drums and words as a means of communication with African ancestors who were enslaved. The history of slavery, as conceived primarily by those who master the tools of this symbolic discourse, contributed to jongo’s definition as a cultural practice of Brazilian blacks and as a Brazilian cultural heritage. This history is constantly evoked to support the argument of a black identity rooted in the solid origins of the past and in African ancestry. Ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Travassos also appropriated this history in writing the dossier for the registration of jongo as intangible heritage, casting this dance as an authentic Afro-Brazilian cultural practice contributing to the construction of Brazilian identity.41

Conclusion: The Problem with “Authenticity”

The discourse of authenticity is implicit in statements by jongueiros that their practices are “raiz.” Methods of authenticating jongo within the festivities and rodas appear as a privileged support for the construction of collective memories and cultural references. The rodas presents itself as an identification mark that promotes the construction and social recognition of a relationship between individuals and social groups. The celebration becomes an attribute of Afro-Brazilian identity that constitutes both a resource and symbolic capital.

Jongo and the roda thus actively (re)construct cultural memory. As geographers Raymonde Séchet and Vincent Veschambre have argued, collective identities are projected, materialized, constructed, and reproduced through different markers of appropriation.42 The jongo universe appropriates drums, long skirts, white pants, makeup, and Afro hairstyles as symbolic markers that become a form of materialization of Afro-Brazilian identity, both individual and collective.43 The space of such appropriation, as Christine Servais, an information and communication scientist, has shown, is a fictitious identity based on an imaginary investment.44 Collective identity is not the fruit of intersubjective communication but is, rather, operated and reaffirmed by a process of mediation: the narration. The stories told by jongueiros about African slaves in Brazil, and especially in the valley of Paraíba, legitimize the discourses of a common social and cultural identity. The roda’s identifying force resides, as Servais remarks, in the pragmatic system of permutation of narrators and referents.45

The analytical methods used in this study reveal that actors in the jongo universe, consciously or unconsciously, devise strategies to confirm the greater authenticity of their cultural practice. Inspired by anthropologist Marie-Odile Géraud’s analysis, I would argue that jongo participants are valued by the status assigned to them, by academics and other actors in this context, as representatives of Afro-Brazilian culture.46 The singularity of their cultural expression is one of the main values defended by these agents. As reported by ethnologist Regina Bendix the desire for authenticity remains deeply embedded in scholarly approaches to cultural analysis. According to Bendix, declaring something as authentic legitimizes it and the statement can also legitimize the authenticator.47 Nevertheless, such issues as social position, education, and the ability to promote opinions also play a role here. The notion of authenticity implies the existence of its opposite, the false, and this dichotomous construction is at the heart of what makes “authenticity” problematic. The identification of certain cultural expressions or artifacts...
as authentic simultaneously implies that other manifestations are false and even illegitimate. Authentication processes thus divide communities more than they unite them.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


AUTHOR BIO

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BOOK REVIEW


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University of Cologne, Germany

This volume on *Public Performances* comprises fourteen articles by authors belonging to a variety of academic disciplines ranging from cultural anthropology, folklore studies, and popular culture studies to musicology, English, history, and theater studies. All of them are based on papers given at the Annual Conference on Holidays, Ritual, Festival, Celebration, and Public Display initiated by Jack Santino, a long-time scholar of folklore and popular culture, in 1997.

In his framing chapter, “From Carnivalesque to Ritualesque: Public Ritual and the Theater of the Street,” Santino introduces the concepts of “the carnivalesque” and “the ritualesque” through which he hopes to unify the collection:

> The essays in this book range in topic from traditional carnival to formal ritual, with many chapters examining events that fall outside that binary, dealing with both carnivalesque and ritualesque actions. […] It is hoped that the ensemble collection will help point the way, if not to a unified theory, then to a unified field of public display as emergent political popular culture, and to an understanding of public performance events as expressions of politics, of grief, of grievance, of laughter, and of protest—often all at the same time. (p. xiii)

While carnival is defined as “celebrations of great abandon, social inversion, public excess, sensuality, and the temporary establishment of an alternate society, one free of or even in opposition to the norm,” ritual is said to be “about constructing and reinforcing social categories” (p. 4). Using examples such as love locks and (roadside) shrines, Santino argues that, while some celebrations might be described as carnivalesque or ritualesque, most festivities combine aspects from both concepts. The carnivalesque and the ritualesque should thus be viewed as the two ends of a continuum.

Anthropologist Laurent Sébastien Fournier (who has an essay in this issue of *Journal of Festive Studies* as well) also approaches the volume’s theme theoretically and discusses the gradual emergence of an anthropology of festivals over the past half-century and the methodological questions this has spurred. The remaining contributions discuss public performances in various regions and times. Historian Samuel Kinser, folklorist Roger D. Abrahams (now deceased), and musicologist David Harnish all focus on carnivals and carnivalesque performances. Kinser compares carnivals in Renaissance Nuremberg (Germany) and modern Trinidad and analyzes the role of outside influences, for which he employs “the metaphor of a porous-like membrane that lets in some but not too many outside influences and does not let out, dilute, or dissolve much of a festive tradition’s enduring features” (p. 39). In his discussion of carnival celebrations in the “Black Atlantic” over several centuries, Abrahams demonstrates how those were often
reenactments of conflicts between colonized and colonizers. As for Harnish, he studies processions of Hindus and Muslims in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia, over the last few decades and argues that processions illustrate “socioreligious and political change” (p. 135) in Indonesia.

The contributions by folklorist and anthropologist Beverly J. Stoeltje and folklorist Lisa Gilman focus on the politics of performance. Drawing mostly on contemporary examples from around the world, Stoeltje shows how rituals and politics are essentially intertwined. Gilman studies how the creation of a new festival in Malawi has allowed organizers and politicians to establish (or reestablish) power hierarchies, while also considering the economic and cultural dimensions of the celebration. Anthropologist Dorothy L. Zinn and theater scholar Scott Magelssen both examine the ritual qualities of protest, be it an antinuclear protest in southern Italy or environmental protests performed on a theater stage or in a theatrical fashion in Europe and the Americas. Other authors look at the development of popular ritual performances of grief and social protest communicated through art: anthropologist Barbara Graham discusses roadside memorials in Ireland and English scholar and folklorist Daniel Wojcik illustrates the impact of large-scale art created by artists without a formal education in the arts.

Three contributions particularly stand out in this collection: “Political Percussions: Cork Brass Bands and the Irish Revolution, 1914–1922” by John Borgonovo; “¡Que Bonita Bandera Place, Space, and Identity as Expressed with the Puerto Rican Flag” by Elena Martínez; and “Music as Activist Spectacle: AIDS, Breast Cancer, and LGBT Choral Singing” by Pamela Moro. Borgonovo, a historian at University College Cork, describes Irish band culture in the nineteenth century before turning to Cork’s late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century brass band tradition. Most of the bands he mentions supported political parties in the Irish Home Rule movement and the Irish Volunteers (later Irish Republican Army) before and after the partition of Ireland. The author concludes that “parades, processions, public rituals, and other forms of public performance have been active agents in situations of social conflict” (p. 110). Borgonovo successfully demonstrates the significance of music to such performances, even to readers not acquainted with Irish brass band tradition. His beautiful prose turns a well-researched academic text into an interesting, enjoyable story.

At the beginning of her article, Martínez, a folklorist at New York’s City Lore (a center for urban folk culture), transports her readers to the National Puerto Rican Day Parade in Manhattan, with its countless flags and other cultural symbols. She illustrates how Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans (born or raised in New York) display the flag or turn it into art. She discusses the historical importance of the flag, which serves as a symbol of Puerto Rican cultural identity but is also used to mark and create Puerto Rican places, spaces, and identity. Martínez skillfully intertwines her ethnographic data with historical sources and her analysis of the flag’s symbolism and meaning. Her appealing biography of the Puerto Rican flag demonstrates that a single object has manifold meanings and uses for the people employing it.

Moro, an anthropologist at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, approaches the volume’s theme from the notion of the spectacle, which has, as she argues, similarities to rituals and festivals. She focuses on areas less examined by scholars of festivity, combining sound studies and LGBT studies in her examination of ritualized spectacles related to AIDS and breast cancer. As an example, she considers the participation of one LGBT chorus from Salem in a
performance by twenty-two LGBT choruses at Carnegie Hall in New York to raise awareness for AIDS and breast cancer. For many singers, the concert was a very emotional experience—most participants had lost loved ones to one of the diseases. Moro effectively communicates these emotions and explains that participants “sang to raise awareness, but through singing constructed their own understandings, resonant with memories and new meanings” (p. 200). With her study, she highlights that music does not only have an (emotional) effect on audiences, but also—or perhaps even more so, as suggested by her example—on the performers themselves.

This volume, particularly Santino’s introductory piece, offers a theoretical framework to study carnivals, festivals, processions, and similar cultural expressions. Readers can find a steadily growing number of publications on such public performances, but often these are approached with theoretical considerations from other (sub)fields such as ritual and performance studies, (ritual) economy, or history. The authors in Santino’s collection, in contrast, study performances from various times and regions for their ritualesque and carnivalesque characteristics and thereby work toward a unified theory of festive events, even if the connection between individual contributions and with the theoretical framework is not always expressed as such (as in most collections that try to organize scholarly pieces around a single theme, the connection is clearly articulated in some, but only implicitly in others).

In sum, the volume makes a valuable contribution to the field of festive studies. Scholars and students of anthropology, religion, history, and folklore, in particular, will gain important insights into the theoretical concepts that drive this emerging specialty as well as into a broad variety of ritualesque and carnivalesque phenomena.
AUTHOR BIO

Cora Gaebel is a cultural anthropologist at the University of Cologne. Her doctoral research focused on two Hindu festivals celebrated in East India through which she examined the relationship between ritual and economy.

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BOOK REVIEW


Vasiliki Sirakouli
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During the last decade, festivals have become a considerable public attraction even if their abilities to stimulate, stage, and evolve cultural practice and experience have not changed. The usual rubrics about festivals are condensed into such statements as festivals are "cultural performances," "a time out," or "complex phenomena." While these rubrics could be valid, current research on festivals seeks theoretical and methodological tools for the study of their nature and, above all, urges substantial contributions in their hermeneutics. Rebecca M. Brown’s *Displaying Time: The Many Temporalities of the Festival of India* launches a productive way of understanding and interpreting festivals and contributes to South East Asian studies, especially Indian art in North America in the twentieth century.

Brown begins her book with a short foreword, in which she describes her writing process, referring to her past status as an adjunct academic who had to snatch moments between research and semesters to write and acknowledging the growing number of colleagues who operate in this temporality. She mentions a number of situations along with individuals who helped her to the realization of this book. This section is usually passed by when discussing a book, but it is a candid personal deposit and a treasure of the efforts and struggles for a manuscript to get completed.

Brown then introduces her first chapter by presenting an astonishing concept: the use of the tent at the exhibitions. She uses the shelter of fabric as a metaphor for her research on the Festival of India and her exploration of its structures and experiences during its realization. Her ability to capture such a metaphor and use it throughout the book is part of her unique skill to visualize culture and further pass onto the reader the chance to temporarily acquire this skill too. Through this visualization, readers can relocate themselves back to the 1980s and take part in one of the exhibitions during the festival or follow their preparations. The Festival of India that she discusses took place in the United States from June 1985 to the end of 1986, framed by Cold War politics, neoliberal economics, and postmodern culture, during the diplomatic exchanges that were developed between the governments of Ronald Reagan and Indira Gandhi. It hosted multiple events across the states—the state of New York alone hosted fifty-four events—and particularly seventy-seven art exhibitions.

After presenting the context, next Brown places an artificial unnumbered chapter titled "Interruption." Following the tent metaphor, through the construction of this "interruption" she elaborates on her second major concept, "temporality" as an apparatus to understand the festival. The appearance of this section, of this interruption, signals the Derridean understanding...
of presence that Brown incorporates in her study. It is also placed there as if it was an invitation for practice. It prompts us to understand, focus, and refocus our temporal lenses on the minutes, the small durations, the moments, and consequently the photographs, the installations, the exhibitions, or the performances and their complexities while mixed in a festival. These moments comprise the exhibitionary fabric of the tent. Therefore, the tent and temporality shape the two core ideas that run through the whole book. The author’s insights, which embroider the conceptual fabric of the aforementioned tent, can be traced in the Deriddean way of thinking, Roland Barthes’s Camera Lucida (1980), Michel Foucault’s understanding of power and history, Paul Virilio and Marc Auge’s rethinking of postmodernity and time, Edward Said’s Orientalism, Jacques Ranciere’s understanding of the interruptive potential of the sensory experience, Johannes Fabian’s theorization of coevalness, and Timothy Mitchell’s understanding of the exhibitionary Other and the spectacle. The reader is clearly introduced to Brown’s theoretical and methodological tools and considerations in the first parts of the book and is able to follow her quite reflexive work afterward.

In her second chapter, Brown sheds light on the few exhibitions—in Brooklyn, San Diego, and Washington, DC—devoted to clay during the Festival of India. This material highlights the processes of transformation, from shaping to displaying, that can take place in an exhibition. It also carries strong connotations of time: the time needed to make an object; the duration of waiting for the making; the uncertainty of the process; the time of demonstration, recording, and performance; the time for materials to decay; and the gallery presentation time. Brown writes, “the small moments I am working with here might better be thought of as intimate and malleable durations that shape relations among things in the world” (p. 29). During the exhibition, visitors watch clay become terracotta or observe photographs of it, and they not only follow a historical narrative but also bring along their own current historical, political, and cultural milieus. These various faces and phases of the same material in different exhibitions form the dynamic interrelations of multiple, repeated, and overlapping presences. While analyzing the contexts of these three exhibitions, Brown scrutinizes different textures and uses of time during them, transforming materials to either a historical narrative or a narrative of living arts. We follow the objectification of clay along with its participation to a staged live encounter with the environment, just as what happened with the artist Nek Chand and his presence at the Fantasy Garden exhibition in Washington, DC, a stirring case study that Brown illuminates.

Then another “interruption” arrives. “Time, Interrupted: People in the Gallery” is the third chapter, which also supports the articulation of the attempt to read the Festival of India through temporality, through perception of time and the journey of the craft material to performance and demonstration. Subsequently, while the writer explores clay exhibitions focusing on the Aditi and Mela! ones, she moves away from discussing galleries as space-centered and approaches them as people-centered. This transition brings to the forefront the discussion of exhibitions and festivals as total phenomena that accumulate multiple temporalities. So where does the Festival of India stand in cultural performance genealogies? Brown follows a shift from the nineteenth-century human-on-display exhibitions, finds traces of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ objectifications and zoomorphizations, locates doses of spectacle—since it was the touchstone of Reagan’s America—and ends up intensifying a quest for determining the characteristics of a festival. In this pursuit and while trying to reflect the temporalities’ concept, Brown processes
festival as an interruption of a community’s rhythm. This argument is widespread but sometimes factitious—depending on the case study—since festivals quite often reflect the community in which they are realized. It is too difficult and risky to nuance—without ethnographic work during the realization of a festival and based on the ephemerality of papers and archives—its impact for past audiences and take also into consideration totally dissimilar festivals, like Mardi Gras or Holi, as indicative to what happens during a festival. It is what the writer already notes in the beginning of the book: “All the exhibitions are ghostly and difficult to grasp through the photographs, reconstructions, archival records, and remembrances of curators and artists” (p. 18). One might argue that festivals persist today because they are themselves an appealing performance: of tradition, art, community, innovation, people, space, and time.

Since the discussion moves to festival as a total phenomenon, politics of participation and organization come to the foreground in chapter 4, “Enterpeneurial Exhibits.” While describing the articulation of the Golden Eye exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt in New York, Brown presents it as something different from nineteenth-century Orientalism and 1980s postmodernism. European and American designers gathered to work with selected craftspeople in India on new design projects and a few craftspeople came to New York to demonstrate their techniques and cooperate with the designers. They all contributed in creating the fantasy world of the Golden Eye. The addition of design as a form of art at that time marks the strong influence of curators as mediators of the work exhibited. The author emphasizes the interruption of the celebration of the past as a developing stage of the nature of exhibitions with the study of another triplet of exhibitions, adducing the overlap of the terms “contemporary,” “postmodern,” and “postcolonial.” By constantly questioning the ways materials and people are used and presented, the book shows what the organizers and participants perceived as “Indian culture” under different circumstances and why curators eventually made those specific choices.

The book closes with the tent, the big tent of the festival, which includes a large set of overlapping tents. Brown describes the tent that Frei Otto made, a tent that operated like an umbrella, for which he also designed furniture and objects to be placed under it. A metaphor again! The tent appears as a visual and spatial anchor with different conceptual faces: as a dialogue or as craft, related to the past and vernacular cultures and reworking old sources. All these temporalities sheltered under the tent remind me of Erving Goffman’s frames I used to interpret a festival in northeastern Greece. All the small-scale temporalities producing the multifaceted exhibition are like the many “photographs” Goffman takes, the many frames he uses to grasp a scene, but here they are defined through time. Brown reads the durations of these temporalities and deconstructs demonstration, exhibition, festival, and the making of them in order to follow the modernist art onto gallery walls.
EDITORIAL NOTE

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BOOK REVIEW


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Dorene Koehler’s *The Mouse and the Myth: Sacred Art and Secular Ritual of Disneyland* uses Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, CA, to challenge a common notion in myth studies: “the conventional attitude that contemporary popular culture is antithetical to the development of a psychologically fulfilling relationship with the imagination” (p. 1). For Koehler, the academic opposition between popular culture and authentic myth is odd precisely because scholars tend to highlight all myths as constantly in process; that is, all myths are constructed and mythmaking is always ongoing. With the constructedness of myth in mind, the Imagineers of Disneyland Resort have, in Koehler’s view, constantly worked toward “a conscious manufacturing of what should constitute story” (p. 7). According to Koehler, Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, the original Disney theme park and the Disney industry’s holiest of holies, “can, and does, provide a psychologically transformative experience” for the “devout patron, utilizing images, symbols, and the poetics of narrative to transcend the world outside the park” (pp. 2–3).

Koehler is well situated to analyze this sacred temple in Southern California. She has been a fixture of Disney studies in the study of American popular culture and identifies herself as an avid patron and “apologist” (pp. 4, 6, 84). Emphasizing that contemporary America is indeed disconnected from the transformative power of the human imagination, in part because it fails to grasp the “imaginative efficacy” (p. 2) offered by American popular culture, Koehler herself has experienced the psychologically transformative ritual of visiting Disneyland Resort. As a regular, she has observed Disneyland’s impact on other patrons, even if Disney’s myth and ritual do not “affect all patrons in the same manner” (p. 3). The book’s six chapters largely center one aspect of Disneyland’s play on traditional aspects of ritual, such as “the soul’s journey to the imagination” (chapter 2), “the pilgrimage to a temple or shrine” (chapter 3), “an enchantment with image and spectacle” (chapter 5), and “an ever-evolving renewal practice” (chapter 6) (p. 3).

Chapter 2 charts how Walt Disney constructed Disneyland and its central myths. Using the work of Carl Jung and James Campbell, mixed with brilliant insight into Walt’s personal life, Koehler claims that Walt fashioned Disneyland as a pilgrimage to the psyche, a place for “sacred play.” In light of the tumultuous 1960s, it was “a need he intuited because he lamented the neglect of childlike imagination in the world around him” (p. 21). (The Disney industry’s focus on play is still obvious today; one only need watch Disney’s latest Pooh film, *Christopher Robin* [2018].) Koehler is also very adept at arguing that Walt was very modern, focusing on progress and humanist values, and also avoiding religious confessionalism. But, he was quite conservative too, emphasizing the foundational social role of the family unit and a nostalgic view of the American
past. The consistent theme for Walt, his Imagineers, and the Disney industry has always been the transformative power of love, which unites his modern and conservative sentiments. This love is really about finding "one’s unique voice" in "the bonds of family and community" (p. 27). At the resort, both children and adults can play and rediscover their unique voice by participating in the rituals associated with Disneyland pilgrimage.

Chapter 3 is possibly the most significant chapter. This chapter elucidates how Disneyland’s defining myths of love and play are embedded in, and have become central to, myths surrounding California and Hollywood, a supposed golden land of change, opportunity, beauty, fame, and fortune (also addressed in chapter 1). I was born and raised just a stone’s throw from Disneyland and Koehler is quite right in claiming that locals are frequent patrons or even so-called cast members (i.e., employees). Disneyland’s almost infinite job opportunities means that everyone knows someone who is or was a cast member. In terms of its implications for scholars, by embedding Disneyland Resort in California’s mythos Koehler helps correct a lacuna in the study of the Disney industry and its global reach: key to Disney’s global success has been the many physical locations it inhabits, including the historic intersections of California’s traditional or founding myths in Disney’s overall mythmaking.

Juxtaposed with other theme parks, which were, as they say, quite seedy, Walt envisioned Disneyland as a wholesome and manicured place. Walt’s vision fits what Koehler, channeling Mircea Eliade, calls Disneyland as an axis mundi; that is, Walt constructed Disneyland as a kind of “navel of the world,” a temple that “conveys a responsibility for crafting an identity for the people to whom it belongs” (p. 54). For the “tuned in” patron, this constructed mythic center of the universe can provide psychological transformation and allows one to get lost in play. But, getting lost in play means that Disneyland is not simply a temple, it is also a theater. The Disney myth puts the patron at the center of the story, doing so through participation in ritual celebration. Much of the remainder of chapter 3 is devoted to reading the theme park’s internal geography, highlighting certain attractions and landmarks as more or less critical to the pilgrimage journey and ritual theater. In another brilliant move, Koehler uses Victor Turner’s notions of liminality and communitas to show that the entertainment value provided by ritual theater does not translate to simple escapism. (Many scholars assume that entertainment value renders mythmaking somehow inauthentic.) Rather, entertainment enables active ritual engagement and, therefore, creates a sense of patron togetherness.

Chapter 4, “Disneyland as the Work of Worship,” addresses the “mechanics and details of the park itself” (p. 87). An interesting chapter as a whole, with more analysis of particular attractions, it includes notable religio-mythic readings of Peter Pan attractions and the Enchanted Tiki Room. Koehler is most convincing when claiming that play and participation in Disney’s sacred myths involves a wide variety of ritual activities and celebrations. This play and participation includes wearing Disney-themed vestments, collecting pins, donning Mickey ears, eating iconic Disneyland foods, and purchasing collectables to mark the experience and celebrate its memory later. Again relying heavily on Turner’s idea of communitas, chapter 5, “Spectacular Spectacle” describes the daily and holiday-specific celebratory events at the theme park. She especially centers this chapter on what she calls meta-spectacles—“Disneyland’s most effective attempt at creating collective fellowship” (p. 120). Through parades, fireworks, and other shows, Disney
uses ceremonial meta-spectacle celebrations to connect patrons in larger shared rituals that further heighten their play-filled togetherness. When play-filled togetherness is on the line, ritual celebrations can be changed. Part of the Disneyland ethos is that all spectacles and celebrations are destroyable or morphable. Ritual celebrations are not static, but must accomplish their end goals to survive, including play, togetherness, and heightened experiences. Sure, the temple is sacred, but Disney's myths encourage a sense of progress and newness. Indeed, "Disneyland Resort finds itself in the midst of constant renewal of these traditions with an ever continuing effort to find newer ways to present the show" (p. 131). Disney's Imagineers draw up new rituals, attractions, and collective celebrations to constantly reaffirm the patron's connection to the temple. Change is largely effective, but not always.

Chapter 6 and the conclusion provide examples of how Disney succeeds and fails in (re)creating the magic of Disneyland. The failures of Disneyland Imagineers are an especially wise inclusion on Koehler's part. As suggested, Disney is constantly considering how it can update and keep pace with the changing world around it. For its myths to remain effective, it must be able to constantly captivate. Koehler suggests that Walt and his successors continued to shape the sacred landscape and the sacred temple, sometimes even destroying the seemingly iconic and holy. A key example is the 1980s changes to Fantasyland. The Imagineers of Fantasyland were willing to add much darker attractions (though always controlled), such as Toontown. This was a success. However, failure to properly imagineer the mythic landscape can be seen in Disneyland's California Adventure Park, a California-themed park next to the original Disneyland park in Anaheim. When it was originally built it lacked the characteristic magic of the original theme park, including coherent sacred rituals and myths. Eventually, California Adventure was revamped after Disney bought Pixar. Its Imagineers incorporated the characters and narratives from Pixar films into the park. The work of Imagineers is, thus, much more complicated than sprinkling a little bit of pixie dust on a new theme park and, poof!, success. It requires narrative construction and ritual fashioning. Renewal and change may get much more complicated in the future. For instance, there will be some massive changes in Disneyland Resort with new Star Wars franchise attractions on the horizon. With the Disney industry's acquisition of this franchise, which has its own myths and fanbase, how will Disneyland incorporate or change these narratives for its new Star Wars attractions? How will Star Wars continue to fit in with Disneyland's rituals and celebrations? Aside from Star Wars, Koehler notes other examples of potential future tensions. One thing is clear: Imagineers are at work; or, perhaps better said, they are at play, transforming the old and shaping the new, all in the name of love.

In light of her goal "to analyze Disneyland's place in mythic ritual," the idea that an excursion to Disneyland "can" and "does" work as a "psychologically transformative experience" posits two very different things. That is, while Disneyland offers mythic narratives and rituals for psychological transformation, which she analyzes quite well, whether it "does" this work in the lives of participants is a proposition that her methodology is not well positioned to address. Observing how the eyes of patrons light up during Disneyland's sacred rituals seems all too impressionistic for claiming that a visit "does" the work of psychological transformation. To her credit, Koehler states that she simply wants to "propose that the relationship between Disneyland and the patron is more profound that it may appear" (p. 3). However, discussing the impact of myth and ritual deserves data on and from patrons. Such data would have helped nuance her
argument as well. For example, her methodology cannot suggest the way that gender and age impact relationships between Disneyland and patrons.

Overall, Koehler’s book could have benefited from a more critical lens. Koehler claims that “Disney offers something of value that is deeply lacking in our current psychological milieu—an emphasis on the importance of play and on the transformative nature of love” (p. 6). Similarly, she later states that what Disneyland represents for the patron is “the American ideal that crafting one’s identity and the relationship to one’s own imagination does not need to be dictated by the demands of culture or social structure, and it offers, through the physicality of the park, an environment dedicated to interaction with these ideals” (p. 85). One can definitely be an avid patron, apologist, and scholar of Disney, but claims like these need more nuance by countervailing points. In fact, I would suggest that her approach to and advocacy of Disney’s psychological value leads her to gloss over cultural tensions that Disney exposes, tensions that would add important texture her reading of the theme park in Anaheim and its place in the wider Disney industry. To take a specific example, when referencing the Tiki Room and its popularity at Disneyland, Koehler says: “Many have spoken out about against these stereotyped, misappropriated mid-20th-century cersions [sic] of Polynesian gods, and rightly so.... It is a caricature of an island reality, and if it’s damagingly so that is for those of Hawaiian heritage to judge” (p. 96). Not necessarily seeking a debate about what is at stake and who has a right to judge, I would still suggest that the Disney industry and Disneyland is interesting for exactly the fact that attractions like the Tiki Room, or films like Pocahontas (1995), expose tensions in American culture over the potential ramifications of Disney’s visions of love and human progress.

To sit with Pocahontas for a moment, religious studies scholar David Chidester—strangely absent in Koehler’s work—identifies Disneyization as a kind of globalized religion, at least in the way many people see the ubiquity of the Disney industry, its products, and its myths. Without resorting to clichéd arguments himself, Chidester reads Pocahontas with an eye toward Disney’s myths about humanity. He states:

The film dissolves the differences between European invaders and indigenous Americans by having Ratcliff and Pohattan harmonize on the refrain, ‘They’re savages, savages, barely even human.’... In this harmony of mutual denial, the audience can only conclude that there was a basic equivalence.... This equivalence leaves simply a human identity, an identity that might be called the human neutral, which stands as a generalized, even universalized, basis for dealing with difference.¹

Likewise, more generally on the issue of Disney’s mythic truths, he claims:

Critics have argued that the ‘truths’ distilled from the American past and enshrined at Disney theme parks—the complete domination of nature, the unlimited faith in technology, and the uncritical acceptance of the free enterprise system—have not always been a source of hope for the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the Disney theme parks can respond to such criticism by performatively demonstrating that the company knows the world better than the world knows itself.²

Does psychological fulfillment in and through the Disney industry mean that one must abandon some myths for others? What might be lost or sacrificed in Disney’s vision of a psychologically fulfilling relationship with the imagination? In fact, whose imagination drives psychological

2. Ibid., 146.
fulfillment? I am not trying to take Chidester as gospel truth, but he highlights an important aspect of Disneyland in California and the Disney industry’s global reach: the fact that critics debate the Tiki Room shows the cultural significance of Disneyland all the more. The mythic narratives are contested because critics know they have such popular-level power. Yet, debates and critiques of this sort show more complex interactions with Disneyland and its imaginative vision of American and world history. One can only wonder how patrons track with these issues and debates, seeing as Koehler again does not have the firm data to suggest nuances and complexities in their seeming inculcation of Disneyland’s foundational myths.

Indeed, there is much to commend in Koehler’s study. The Mouse and the Myth does exhibit a very deep understanding of Disneyland history as well as the park’s myths and rituals. My views on Koehler’s method and critical lens should not distract from the book’s high points, especially Disneyland’s embeddedness in Southern California’s mythos, a critical context regularly missed in the study of the Disney industry. Surely, her work should encourage others to examine myth construction and sacred-secular rituals in popular culture.
EDITORIAL NOTE

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BOOK REVIEW


Patrick Gaul
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Between 1848 and 1914, festivals were crucial to the construction of a German American identity and ethnicity, Heike Bungert argues. With the revised edition of her Habilitationsschrift from 2004, Bungert has finally released the definite standard reference on the festive culture of German American singing societies, veterans and workers associations, Turnvereine (gymnastics societies), and shooting societies.

In her introduction, Bungert convincingly outlines the idea that the ethnic identity of German Americans depended on cultural memory. Cultural memory, in turn, is built on communication, language, images, and ritual repetition. Consequently, festivals, being concrete manifestations of these four elements, form the archetype of cultural memory. With this argument, Bungert mostly follows established findings of migration and ethnicity studies without redefining them. This observation is not meant to be a point of criticism. On the contrary, the book’s theoretical framework and the historical evidence in the following chapters form a complementary relationship.

In her chronologically arranged account, Bungert reveals phenomena that could be detected at almost every German American festival: invocations of symbols, rituals, concrete events and myths, a response from the Anglo-American public, and political and cultural exchanges with Germany. German American Sängerfeste, for example, initiated public singing and singing contests that also became embedded in Anglo-American festival culture. Curiously enough, these events have not yet aroused broader attention by other studies on cultural transfers between the United States and Germany. This neglect makes one even more grateful for Bungert’s contribution.

For the basis of her research, Bungert evaluated the archives of numerous German American organizations and analyzed more than seventy German American and Anglo-American newspapers, mostly from Milwaukee and New York City. Almost every chapter is accompanied by valuable data on the German population over the years or information on the professional composition of the festivals’ committees and participants. In some passages, however, descriptions of the festivals’ peculiarities (costs, number of attendees, decoration of floats) are a bit too fine-grained. Most readers would probably prefer more analysis and less description.

In view of the amount of archival material Bungert consulted, her focus on Milwaukee and New York, two cities with prominent German populations, is perfectly understandable. On the other hand, this emphasis might distort the reader’s understanding of German American life. Besides

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1. See Rubén Rumbaut’s definition, according to which “immigration engenders ethnicity” and is a “transformative force” that produces “social, cultural, economic and political changes in both sending and receiving societies.” Rubén Rumbaut, “On the Past and Future of American
a few excursions to San Francisco and San Antonio, Bungert leaves out other US cities that also witnessed a brisk German American festivity culture. It would have been rewarding to read more about the way German immigrants in southern cities like New Orleans or Charleston had to arrange their festivals given the distinctive dynamics of race and slavery and the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction, not least because current scholarship increasingly emphasizes the importance of friction and the limits of transnational phenomena.\(^3\) As many historians observe, interactions across borders were not always successful or harmonious.\(^4\)

Despite this limitation, *Festkultur und Gedächtnis* covers an impressive number of festivals that German Americans initiated or joined in the midwestern and northeastern United States for over sixty years. Festivities like Friedrich Schiller’s birthday, Karneval, Sängerfeste, Turnfeste, or Deutsche Tage (German days) shaped the immigrants’ ethnic identity. Over the decades, this identity shifted from one being largely reliant on references to Germany toward a distinct German American one.

Bungert depicts German-speaking singers, Schützen (marksmen), and Turners as members of collectives that were careful not to appear as isolated groups. As the reader learns from the selected speeches, press coverage, and the participation of Anglo-American officials and visitors, the immigrants interacted with the receiving society and vice versa. Since they also participated in Anglo-American festivities, like celebrations of the 4th of July or George Washington’s birthday, Anglo-Americans increasingly appreciated German American culture.

Far from being secluded events in smoky taverns or enclosed beer gardens, German American festivals were public events that registered political change and cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic. In chapter 3, Bungert plausibly describes how the Revolutions of 1848, the participation of Germans in the American Civil War, and the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 represented watersheds in the way German Americans celebrated and perceived themselves. Other significant phenomena that shaped German American ethnicity and festival culture were, according Bungert, the Anglo-American nativist and temperance movements, the rise and decline of German immigration in the 1880s and 1890s, and the transatlantic expansion of nationalism at the turn of the century.

To provide a multi-perspectival analysis, Bungert conducted research in Europe as well as in North America. German immigrants were eager to receive recognition for their efforts and contributions in the United States. Yet they maintained traditions and interacted with their ancestral homeland for a remarkably long time. In chapter 5, Bungert substantiates this thesis with further material from German archives. Allusions to the German homeland ran through the festivals like a common thread. From the 1860s onward, these ties were strengthened by participation of German Americans in festivities in Germany and through the active *Kulturpolitik* of the German Empire's foreign office and diplomats.

Bungert concludes that festivals formed important imagined spaces between Germany and the United States. Immigrants from Germany created *Deutschamerika* as a transnational social space and became cultural mediators between their receiving and home countries. Furthermore, the flexibility of German American festivals and their organizers meant that many German immigrants did not completely assimilate. This makes the case of nineteenth-century German

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2. Current examples for the neglect of German American festivities include the volumes by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Cora Lee Kluge. They mainly deal with literary and linguistic instances of cultural transfers between the United States and Germany. See Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, *Transatlantic Crossings and Transformations: German-American Cultural Transfer from the 18th to the End of the 19th Century* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2015); and Cora Lee Kluge, *Paths Crossing: Essays in German-American Studies* (Oxford: Lang, 2011).


Americans an exception from general models of assimilation.

Taken as a whole, Bungert’s comprehensive, though in places somewhat too fine-grained, study represents the most elaborate book on the topic that has been published so far. In a well-written and well-documented account of over 530 pages, Festkultur und Gedächtnis should interest all scholars of the cultural and transnational impacts of immigration.

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