

## **ABOUT CARNIVAL IN GENERAL & TRINIDAD IN PARTICULAR!**

“Dionysic stirrings arise either through the influence of those narcotic potions of which all primitive races speak in their hymns, or through the powerful approach of spring, which penetrates with joy the whole frame of nature. So stirred the individual forgets himself completely....For a brief moment we become ourselves, the primal Being and we experience its insatiable hunger for existence. Now we see the struggle, the pain, the destruction of appearances, as necessary, because of the constant proliferation of forms pushing into life, because of the extravagant fecundity of the world will. We feel the furious prodding of this travail in the very moment in which we become one with the immense lust for life and are made aware of the eternity and the indestructibility of that lust” (Friedrich Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy. And Other Writings. Cambridge Press. Eds. Geuss, Raymond & Speirs, Ronald pp17-18)

### ***Violence And The Sacred... with the rites of Carnival in mind***

Rene Girard searches for an understanding of violence as it appears in myth, in Greek tragedy, in any sacrifice that restores order to society. Violence is at the heart of the sacred. Violence belongs to all and no person in particular. The function of the festival is no different from the function of other sacrificial rites, the assumption being that there is a direct link between the sacrificial crisis and its resolution. Religious thinking on the relationship between the crisis and its conclusion can result in two divergent viewpoints (1) it is either the *continuity* between the crisis and conclusion that strikes the imagination, (the crisis is inseparable from its happy ending and becomes itself a cause for jubilation/festival) or (2) it is the *rupture* between the crisis and conclusion that is stressed in which case we have an Antifestival. Here the rites of sacrificial expulsion are not preceded by a period of frenzied anarchy but an extreme austerity when all cultural prohibitions are strongly reinforced. Religious thinking tends to adopt one or the other of the two solutions and cling to it for dear life yet according to Girard each interpretation must be partially true and partially false.

### ***And where to go after such words but towards Carnival!***

First let us visit political theorist Andrew Robinson as he introduces, in a two-part essay, the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the most important theorists of discourse in the twentieth century. In part one, Robinson introduces Bakhtin's notions of Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia.

In the second and final part of his essay on Mikhail Bakhtin (and relevant to our interests) Robinson reviews, and critiques, one of the central concepts in the Russian thinker's work: the Carnivalesque.

### ***Bakhtin: Carnival against Capital, Carnival against Power***

In Rabelais and his World, Bakhtin discusses carnivalesque (or ‘folk-humour’) a speech-genre which occurs across a variety of cultural sites, most notably in carnival itself.

A carnival is a moment when everything (except arguably violence) is permitted. It occurs on the border between art and life and is a kind of life shaped according to a pattern of play. It is usually marked by displays of excess and grotesqueness. It is a type of performance, but this performance is communal, with no boundary between performers and audience. It creates a situation in which diverse voices are heard and interact, breaking down conventions and enabling genuine dialogue. It creates the chance for a new perspective and a new order of things, by showing the relative nature of all that exists.

The popular tradition of carnival was believed by Bakhtin to carry a particular wisdom which can be traced back to the ancient world. For Bakhtin, carnival and carnivalesque create an alternative social space, characterised by freedom, equality and abundance. During carnival, rank (otherwise pervasive in medieval society) is abolished and everyone is equal. People were reborn into truly human relations, which were not simply imagined but experienced. The body is here figured not as the individual or 'bourgeois ego' but as a growing, constantly renewed collective which is exaggerated and immeasurable. Life manifests itself not as isolated individuals but as a collective ancestral body. This is not, however, a collective order, since it is also continually in change and renewal. The self is also transgressed through practices such as masking.

Carnival is a kind of syncretic, ritualised pageantry which displays a particular perspective. It is a brief moment in which life escapes its official furrows and enacts utopian freedom. It is a form of life at once real and ideal, universal and without remainder. Its defining feature is festivity – life lived as festive. It is also sanctioned by the highest ideal aims of human existence, not by the world of practical conditions.

Carnival is also taken to provide a positive alternative vision. It is not simply a deconstruction of dominant culture, but an alternative way of living based on a pattern of play. It prefigured a humanity constructed otherwise, as a utopia of abundance and freedom. It eliminated barriers among people created by hierarchies, replacing it with a vision of mutual cooperation and equality. Individuals are also subsumed into a kind of lived collective body which is constantly renewed.

On an affective level, it creates a particular intense feeling of immanence and unity – of being part of a historically immortal and uninterrupted process of becoming. It is a lived, bodily utopianism distinct from utopianisms of inner experience or abstract thought, a 'bodily participation in the potentiality of another world'. The golden age is lived, not through inner thought or experience, but by the whole person, in thought and body.

An emphasis is placed on basic needs and the body, and on the sensual and the senses, counterposed perhaps to the commands of the will. It lowers the spiritual and abstract to the material level. It thus recognises embodiment, in contrast with dominant traditions which flee from it.

Prefiguring James Scott's analysis of 'hidden transcripts', Bakhtin portrays carnival as an expression of a 'second life' of the people, against their subsumption in the dominant ideology. It replaces the false unity of the dominant system with a lived unity in contingency. It creates a zone in which new birth or emergence becomes possible, against the sterility of dominant norms (which in their tautology, cannot create the new). It also encourages the return of repressed creative energies. It is joyous in affirming that the norms, necessities and/or systems of the present are temporary, historically variable and relative, and one day will come to an end.

Reading this in a contemporary way, we might say that carnival is expressive rather than instrumental. It involves the expression of latent aspects of humanity, direct contact among people (as opposed to alienation), and an eccentric refusal of social roles. It brings together groups and categories which are usually exclusive. Time and space are rearranged in ways which show their contingency and indissolubility. All of this is done in a mood of celebration and laughter.

In carnival, everything is rendered ever-changing, playful and undefined. Hierarchies are overturned through inversions, debasements and profanations, performed by normally silenced voices and energies.

For instance, a jester might be crowned in place of a king. The authoritative voice of the dominant discourse loses its privilege. Humour is counterposed to the seriousness of officialdom in such a way as to subvert it.

Carnival bridges the gap between holism (which necessarily absorbs its other) and the imperative to refuse authority (which necessarily restores exclusions): it absorbs its authoritarian other in a way which destroys the threat it poses. It is also simultaneously ecological and social, absorbing the self in a network of relations. Bakhtin insists that it opposes both ‘naturalism’, the idea of a fixed natural order, and ideas of fixed social hierarchies. It views ecology and social life as relational becoming. Perhaps a complete world cannot exist without carnival, for such a world would have no sense of its own contingency and relativity.

Although carnival succeeded in undermining the feudal worldview, it did not succeed in overthrowing it. Feudal repression was sufficient to prevent its full utopian potential from unfolding. But it is as if it created a space and bided its time. Bakhtin suggests that it took the social changed of the Renaissance era (the 15th-16th centuries) for carnival to expand into the whole of social life. The awareness of contingency and natural cycles expanded into a historical view of time. This occurred because social changes undermined established hierarchies and put contingency on display. Medieval folk culture prepared the way for this cultural revolution.

Bakhtin almost portrays this as a recuperation of carnivalesque: it was separated from folk culture, formalised, and made available for other uses. Yet Bakhtin portrays this as a positive, creative process which continues to carry the creative spirit. Bakhtin suggests that carnival and folk culture have been in decline since the eighteenth century.

Carnivals have turned into state-controlled parades or privatised holidays, humour and swearing have become merely negative, and the people’s ‘second life’ has almost ceased. However, Bakhtin believes that the carnival principle is indestructible. It continues to reappear as the inspiration for areas of life and culture. Carnival contains a utopian promise for human emancipation through the free expression of thought and creativity. Rabelais stands out here for a style which is irreducibly unofficial and unserious, and irrecuperable by authoritarianism.

## **Carnival and the Grotesque**

Carnivalesque images often use an approach Bakhtin terms ‘grotesque realism’, drawing on the idea of the grotesque. This style transgresses the boundaries between bodily life and the field of art, bringing bodily functions into the field of art. It also celebrates incompleteness, transgression and the disruption of expectations. It often performs a kind of symbolic degradation aimed at bringing elevated phenomena ‘down to earth’ – to the material, bodily or sensuous level.

This was not conceived as an absolute destruction but as a return to the field of reproduction, regeneration and rebirth. The spirit of carnival was personified as a fat, boisterous man who consumed vast quantities of food and alcohol – similar to Dickens’ Ghost of Christmas Present.

The carnival body is seen as transgressing and outgrowing its own limits. This effect is achieved by emphasising the orifices and practices which connect the body to the world: eating, drinking, fucking, shitting, birth, and so on.

This is viewed as a kind of “materialism”. The “material” in this excessive, consumptive, reproductive and bodily sense must be contrasted with the material conceived in terms of

privatisation and accumulation, as well as in contrast to its medieval adversary, the spiritual or 'higher' plane.

In capitalism, the body breaks away from the generating earth and people. Later uses of grotesque realism in literature tend to lose the universalist and holistic implications of the folk view of the body. Instead of finished forms, the different forms of life – animal, plant, human – are portrayed as incomplete and as passing into one another (think, for instance, of gargoyles with mixed human-animal features. This testifies to a view of being as incomplete).

Bakhtin believes that the grotesque is counterposed to the classical aesthetic of ready-made, completed being. The carnivalesque body in contrast expressed ideas of simultaneous death and rebirth. It is counterposed to the classicist idea of art as the pursuit of the sublime.

In medieval times, Bakhtin believes, carnival expressed an entire folk cosmology or perspective which was usually hidden. In this worldview, the earth itself is a kind of grotesque, fertile body. Laughter, counterposed to the monolithically serious official world, is also part of this phenomenon. There is also a vision of time involved, which treats the new and the future as sites of regeneration and abundance.

This contrasts with official ideas of a past ideal time or a timeless order.

The dominant worldview of medieval Europe was of a natural order which is hierarchical, stable, monolithic and immutable, but poised on the brink of disaster or 'cosmic terror', and hence in need of constant maintenance of order. This is similar to Aristotle's view. For Bakhtin, such a view is oppressive and intolerant. It closes language to change.

The fear of 'cosmic terror', the pending collapse of order if things got out of control (or the threat posed by the Real to the master-signifier), was used by elites to justify hierarchy and to subdue popular revolt and critical consciousness. Today, we might think of this vision of monolithic order in terms of fantasies of 'broken Britain', of civilisation under siege from extremists, and a discourse of risk-management (and the crisis-management of 'ungovernability') in which 'terrorism', disease, protest, deviance and natural disaster fuse into a secularised vision of cosmic collapse.

This vision of collapse has infiltrated legal and political discourse to such a degree that any excess of state power seems 'proportionate' against this greater evil.

The folk view expressed in carnival and carnivalesque, and related speech-genres such as swearing and popular humour, opposes and subverts this vision. For Bakhtin, cosmic terror and the awe induced by the system's violent power are the mainstays of its affective domination. Folk culture combats the fear created by cosmic terror.

The celebration of the immortal collective body in carnival bolsters fearlessness. The amorphous fears are brought 'down to earth' through parody and degradation, turned into something worldly which can be overcome, stripped of its metaphysical pretensions. It tends to produce a complete liberty conditioned on complete fearlessness.

Against the timeless force of becoming, the pretensions of serious officials and rulers, and even of one's own serious self and ego, seem irrelevant and comical. Laughter overcomes fear because it is uninhibited and limitless. Carnival is differentiated from other kinds of humour because the crowd also includes itself in the world which is mocked, and which is reborn.

According to Bakhtin, the grotesque is widespread in folk culture, from the giants and demons of myth to colloquial swearing and insults.

Curses, parody and debasing are used to subvert the stabilising tendencies of dominant speech-genres. Today's swearing retains only the remainders of this culture, since it keeps only the destructive and not the reproductive elements. Still, its continuing attraction shows that it carries the remnants of the energy of folk culture and carnival.

The culture of the 'marketplace' also figures in Bakhtin's account of carnival. In contrast to today's use of the 'market' to signify official discourse, the medieval market was a site of transgressive discourse. This may explain how the rising capitalists were able to use references to the market to hegemonize popular strata.

Today, a genre similar to carnivalesque appears in shows such as *South Park* and *Monty Python*. The grotesque also remains widespread in various fields of art, and many examples can be found.

It is, however, against Bakhtin's method to treat all instances of carnivalesque or grotesque as equivalent to their historical precedents. Everything must be re-examined as a product of its own context. Today's Bakhtinians often read such phenomena in directly Bakhtinian terms. It is likely, however, that Bakhtin would have seen in them a pale, individualised and spectacularised shadow of the original culture of carnival. He would nevertheless recognise that they contain some of the energy of the original.

### **Carnival and Contingency: Bakhtin's Place in Critical Theory**

Carnival in Bakhtin's account is a kind of de-transcendence of the world, the replacement of the fixed order of language – held in place by a master-signifier or 'trunk' – with a free slippage of signifiers in a space of immanence. The contingency of being/becoming can be embraced as an ecstatic potential, but it can also figure in literature as a horrifying monstrosity, as in the works of HP Lovecraft, and more broadly in the horror genre.

Does this express an unconscious longing for carnival which is at the same time disturbing to other layers of the psyche? We are here in the field of the dispute between affirmative theories of contingency (such as Bakhtin, Nietzsche, Negri, Deleuze, and Bey) against negative theories of contingency for which the openness of the 'Real' or the finitude and contingency of existence is always threatening (a repetition of the 'cosmic terror' Bakhtin critiques, ranging from Schmitt, Burke and Hobbes to Heidegger, Lacan and Laclau).

Why is contingency not universally celebrated, in a carnivalesque spirit? According to Reich, active force becomes threatening through being associated, as a result of authoritarian conditioning, with repressed desires and fear of authority. There are also questions of the effects of carnivalesque decomposition on one's own ego or sense of self, on identities, and on habitual social practices or familiar spaces.

Theories with an affirmative view of contingency tend to share with Bakhtinian carnival a belief in an eternal creative force which unfolds in difference – active force in Deleuze and Nietzsche, constitutive power in Negri, the instituting imaginary in Castoriadis and so on. Theories with a negative view, in contrast, believe in an eternal need for order which is constantly threatened by the contingent nature of existence. The establishment of order occurs with the decision, the master-signifier and so on.

Between these positions, a lot depends on whether the ‘evil’ of disorder is sufficient to outweigh the effects of repression. It seems to do so only from the standpoint of the privileged. From the standpoint of the excluded, it just makes things worse: the excluded are left with both disorder and repression.

Bakhtin’s challenge is deeper than this, however. Bakhtin believes ‘disorder’ can be affirmative. For Bakhtin, immanence is non-threatening because it is associated with the dialogical nature of language. Because networks and connections continue to be performed in a space of dialogical immanence, the loss of transcendence is not a loss of meaning, life, or social being.

This reverses the Hobbesian account: rather than social death ensuing from the chaos of the collapse of meaning, social death is an effect of the artificial separation, rigidity and silencing which result from transcendence. As Benjamin has argued, disaster is not waiting on the edge of existence; the present is the disaster.

Authors such as Michael Holquist reduce the radicalism of Bakhtin’s immanence by suggesting that monologue remains necessary to his thought, as the point against which transgression occurs. Bakhtin certainly takes aspects of language-use such as speech-genres and the self-other gap to be universal, but he affirms the possibility of a radically different type of genre which is open to its own deconstruction.

Each person necessarily has a perspective or frame, but these frames do not need to be unified, nor are they necessarily unchanging. A rhizomatic world such as carnival has its perspectives, frame, and patterns. It does not engender an existentialist ‘lightness of being’.

But, precisely because these patterns are dissensual, holistic, reflexive, consciously relative and situated, they create a kind of freedom. This is neither a repetition of monologue, nor its redemption through recognition of its own contingency. It is an entirely different perspective in which dialogue and immanence are actualised.

Bakhtin’s account of carnival is criticised by some authors, such as Max Gluckman, Victor Turner and Roger Sales, for ignoring carnival’s temporary character. For such critics, carnival is a kind of safety-valve through which people let off steam. It ultimately sustains and is functional for the dominant system. It might even reinforce dominant values by contrasting them with their opposites. James Scott responds that, if this were the case, the powerful would be more sympathetic to carnival than was actually the case. Also, carnivals did, in fact, sometimes pass over into rebellion. And rebellions often used symbolism borrowed from carnival.

It should be added, however, that not every carnivalesque act is emancipatory, because sometimes, it can disinhibit reactive desires arising from the system. Bakhtinian theory is sometimes used to defend texts which arguably reproduce dominant values, but do so in an ‘ironic’ or ‘humorous’ way. This happens because of the layers of prohibitions: the system often promotes something (such as sexism), then inhibits its unconstrained expression.

Hierarchies were perhaps simpler in medieval times. We get into complexities today around the distinction between ‘true’ transgressions and those which repeat dynamics of the system at a deeper level. The system can use such ‘false’ transgressions to channel the carnivalesque into its own reproduction. Consider, for instance, how the transgressiveness of football culture has been displaced into the fascism of the EDL.

The tendencially resistant space of fan culture, by being displaced through repression, is turned into the pseudo-transgression of performative racism. At one level, racial abuse is transgressive (of liberal norms), but on another, it reproduces dominant structures (of underlying racism).

Such displays are similar to true carnival in their excess and expressiveness, but they ultimately uphold the transcendentalism of the in-group through transgressions which reinforce their privilege at the expense of an out-group. This is especially clear from Theweleit's work: reactionaries and fascists are terrified of being overwhelmed by the 'floods' and 'bodies' of interpenetration with the other, though they must constantly return to the point of the threat of interpenetration so as to ward it off.

If carnival brings down to earth, its rightist transmutation plants heads firmly in clouds, making the self feel secure in its place by putting the other in her/his place. It belittles the other and not the self; or it belittles both, but in such a way as to keep the gap between them.

### **Carnivalesque Activism**

Carnival has become an underpinning for activist initiatives such as the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, the Laboratory of the Insurrectionary Imagination and Reclaim the Streets, particularly the Carnival against Capital. The free party movement can also be seen as a reclamation of the spirit of carnival.

The carnivalesque style of activism emphasises the deconstruction of relations, including those between activists and police, to create an uncontrollable space. Such tactics can be remarkably successful in disorienting and repelling the monologists of state power.

Abby Peterson's studies of the ethnography of militant social movements emphasise an affective structure similar to Bakhtin's carnival. The experience of lived immediacy and joy is constructed through a movement orientation to the enacted event with no separation between actor and audience. This serves as a means to integrate movements without reference to standard techniques of master-signification, though it does require 'action spaces' and in many cases adversaries. Peterson echoes Bakhtin's idea of the immediacy of activist 'rituals' as something distinct from theatre or spectacle. David Graeber makes similar reference to puppetry and creativity in protest movements.

Figures of carnivalesque immediacy can also be found in authors such as Hakim Bey and Feral Faun. One can also liken Bakhtin's view of creating new combinations with Situationist practices of derive and détournement.

Similar strategies can also be seen in social movements such as La Ruta Pacifica, who use techniques of 'social weaving' to recompose a sense of empowerment against the fear caused by civil war and state terror. Much of the state's power is based on anxiety. The Bakhtinian hypothesis is that anxiety can be neutralised through joyous experiences of collective festivity.

These occasions strip power of its performed mystification, breaking into its ideological reproduction. They show its contingency by exposing it to ridicule and distortion. And they create a sense of counter-power through the permanence of the creative force of becoming, counterposed to the fixed order of being. It doesn't so much confront state power as render it irrelevant and ineffectual.

Whether this is effective may depend on the tools the two sides have available to actualise their ideologies in spaces and practices. State tactics such as kettling are specifically designed to instil

terror, as an antidote to joy. The popular culture which provided the basis for carnival is, in the most harshly capitalist countries, being destroyed by the penetration of the state into everyday life.

It persists, of course, in many marginal settings. We should remember here that the Europe Bakhtin discusses was itself a periphery in a world-economy focused on the Mediterranean. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that its modes of resistance look like those of marginal sites today.

Reclaiming contingency and carnival in the dead heartlands of the core, where people are strongly invested in their official identities and the preservation of an order which they believe protects them, is a more difficult task.

Traditional carnivals continue to exist in places ranging from Germany and Notting Hill, London to the Caribbean and Brazil. Other related phenomena, such as holi in India, also persist. While state regulation is a problem, such events still provide platforms for alternative visions and for political critique.

One can also point to carnivalesque aspects in practices such as graffiti, which may bring 'down to earth' such contemporary sacred as police cars, banks, or corporate logos. And why do children so often add giant willies, sex-acts, or swear-words to street-signs?

The grotesque, exaggerated body and the bringing down-to-earth of systemic abstractions are present even in such small, apparently apolitical gestures. They signify what is missing in the official picture – much as those who perform such acts are often excluded from the official world. They create a full reality in which the world is restored to its fullness and creativity.

Overall, therefore, carnivalesque remains a potential counter-power in everyday life and activism but is 'cramped' in its potential by the repressive construction of spaces of monologue. Medieval carnival was possible because the spaces it inhabited could be carved-out and defended through the 'arts of resistance' and the power of the weak. There is a need to recompose such powers to resist, in order to recreate spaces where alternatives can proliferate.

### **J'ouvert Carnival Trinidad and Tobago**

In Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is the most evident expression of a joking popular culture. This culture of laughter resisted official, serious culture and by dramatizing the comic and relative side of absolute truths and supreme authorities highlights the ambivalence of reality, coming to represent the power of absolute liberty and farce. J'ouvert parody's the stratification of power providing a symbolic suspension of norms and privileges, harboring a seed of social reaction in satire. Carnivalization then is a process of inversion (death implies revitalization etc. and includes all the symbolic processes that bring about transformations in the representation of social reality).

***It is this view together with my experience of Trinidad's carnival that first prompted my fifty years search for a personal and group transformational process situated in local ritual/culture.***

***I will now continue with an academically uncontested exploration of "all things carnival" by presenting one author's outline of the festival's genesis and development.***

Alexander Orloff in his *Carnival Myth and Cult* (Publisher: Worgl, Austria. Perlinger 1980) situates the roots of carnival in ancestral memories, beyond history. The origin of the carnival "time" he traces to an Egyptian story found in Pyramid texts. The story tells of the earth god Keb's

seduction of the sky goddess Nut, wife of Ra, the great sun god. None too pleased Ra cursed his wife and decreed that she would never give birth in any month or year. The god Thoth recognized a flaw in the curse and used it to restore the sky goddess' fertility. He challenged the moon goddess to a game of draughts which he won and as his prize he demanded the seventieth part of every day in the year. In this way Thoth collected five new days out of the fractions and added them to the old lunar calendar of 360 days. As these days were not part of any month the sky goddess could now give birth, and so

- **Osiris** was born on the first day,
- **Horus** on the second,
- **Seth** on the third,
- **Isis** on the fourth, and
- **Nephthys** on the fifth.

These "birth" days (between the end of the old year and the beginning of the new) were, according to the Egyptians, days not fit for serious business.

He goes on to postulate that "These timeless myths have survived centuries upon centuries of historical interpretations, religious manipulation and distortion only to rise again from the debris of crumbled civilizations and the ashes of expired religions. They surface and resurface - as Jung put it - in our collective subconscious because they hold the secret answers to the profound mysteries of the universe" (p16). From earliest times groups/communities chose the wisest among them to perform, as ritual god-priests or god-kings, ritual magic to ensure continued well-being. They danced to bring rain and to drive out evil. They enacted roles of decaying and dying vegetation to portray life's waning powers in winter. In spring they mirrored the renewal and resurrection of these same powers. Masks were used to impersonate the deities and the powerful spirits of dead ancestors who had direct contact with the gods. "The advent of winter signaled that the divinity of the priest-king was faltering" (p17) and as this dangerous weakness was regarded as the reason for all the previous year's misfortunes he was made scapegoat for all the ills of the year. He was sacrificed to redeem the community. "His resurrection represented the birth of the new year and the regeneration of life in the seasonal cycle" (p17).

### **The Cult Of Osiris In Egypt**

Osiris was the son of the sky goddess and "was one of the great gods of antiquity who embodied the creative forces of life, fertility and vegetation. His death and resurrection were celebrated annually throughout ancient Egypt" (p18). He brought civilization to Egypt by teaching the people how to cultivate corn, cereals and fruit. He then left his sister Isis in charge of his kingdom while he went off on his hero's journey to spread civilization throughout the world. In his absence, and not to be outdone, Isis, the stay-at-home heroine discovered wheat and barley and introduced the alphabet.

When Osiris returned to reclaim his throne, he was tricked by his brother Set who sealed him in a coffin and threw him into the Nile. Isis, now also the wife of Osiris, set sail to discover the body but was thwarted by Set who recovered it and tore it to pieces, scattering the limbs over the land. Undaunted, Isis found and collected the body parts with the exception of the genitals which were eaten by the fish. She made waxen images of the remaining limbs and gave them to the priests to be buried in temple graves. She also instructed the priests to worship Osiris as a god. When the sun god Ra heard the lamentations of Isis and Nephthys he sent the jackal headed god Anubis to piece the body together. With the help of Anubis, Nephthys, Thoth, Horus and Isis performed the

sacred Egyptian rites for the dead (the corpse, wrapped in linen, was fanned by Isis's great wings). Osiris was revived and became lord of the underworld where he ruled over the dead.

This "divine passion of Osiris was enacted at a great spring festival around the time of the winter solstice during the five special days outside of time" (p19). Herodotus records that the people beat their breasts while a great wooden bull, Apis, with a golden sun held in its horns, was rolled on a barge on wheels. A ritual marriage of Isis and Osiris was performed. The "bride", a virgin, was thrown into the Nile to consecrate the union of river and land. The pageantry continued at night with torch processions of masked priests representing Horus, Thoth, Anubis and the spirits of the dead ancestors ruled by Osiris. Images of the dead god Osiris were modeled and since he represented creative energies the processions included images of genitals carried by women singing obscene songs to promote fertility. Osiris was often played by a priest whose hair was dyed red (to represent corn) and who, at the end of the festival was ritually sacrificed (dismembered or burned) and his ashes/limbs scattered in sacred ploughing and sowing ceremonies.

These cult rituals (theatrical presentations) were performed to ensure fertility but also to revitalize the community spirit "The dramatic death and resurrection of the benevolent god who sacrificed his life for the welfare of his people was the magic re-enactment of nature's eternal cycle of renewal" (p19).

African tribes, the northern latitudes of pagan Europe, the Mayan and Aztec civilizations of South and Central America, the Hindu and Chinese cultures of the East, all developed such life cult rituals. In parallel mythologies across the globe god kings descended from the heavens to live among humankind and to reveal nature's secret wonders. These god-kings "appear again and again in sacred texts, hieroglyphic writings and monolithic (monolithic?) sculptures as the giant architects of our ancient civilizations." (p20)

### **Orloff also looked to Parallel mythologies and cults i.e.**

The celebrations of the Near East where the cultures of Mesopotamia, the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Aegean and Western Asia overlapped and borrowed freely from each other.

**Zakmuk:** This was a wild New Year festival which celebrated the death and the resurrection of the Summerian god Tammuz and the consequences of these events for nature. According to legend when Tammuz died and was followed into the nether world by his lover Ishtar, life stopped. Ishtar sprinkled the water of life on Tammuz. He revived, and Ishtar and Tammuz left the nether world. On their return nature also revived. During this festival the king had to humiliate himself before the god Marduk in order to reinvigorate his powers and renew his claim to the throne.

**Sacaea:** This five-day New Year festival (the ride of the one-eyed beardless buffoon) was celebrated by the ancient Persians. A deformed man, a criminal, was chosen as a mock king to represent the old year. He substituted for the real king who abdicated for the five days. The mock king, the Zoganes, rode through the streets naked, holding a fan and complaining of the heat while being drenched by the crowd with water, ice and snow. This ritual was meant to drive out winter. The Zoganes was then dressed royally and enjoyed all the kingly privileges including the use of the royal harem. During this period slaves were freed and their masters made to serve them. The mock, usually deformed, king was attended by the real king during the processions. The real king was ordered about at will. Gifts were demanded of the rich and merchants' goods were confiscated. Anyone daring to refuse was pelted with foul liquid or mud. At the end of his reign

the mock king was married to Ishtar played by a priestess of the cult. He was then stripped, beaten and put to death.

**Hamaspathaidaya:** This more solemn ten days of celebration commemorated the spirits of the dead ancestors who arose from the nether world to avenge injustices committed during the year. Food and drink was offered by way of expiation.

**Purim:** The Jewish celebration was an adaptation of the Babylonian tradition. During this “drunken rant which defied all the laws of Moses” (p21) (noted in the book of Esther, 3rd/4th century, B.C.E) masks were worn and the Rabbis were ridiculed and mocked. Taboos were lifted and men and women exchanged dress. A contest was held between two rivals for the title of king and the loser, the Haman, was crucified. In later accounts of this custom effigies were burned as a substitute for the human sacrifice.

In **Syria and Cyprus** during the 7th century, B.C.E the death and resurrection theme was celebrated through the worship of central characters such as Adonis and Aphrodite, Attis and Cybele. Their worship was “wild with blood sacrifices, frenzied dancing to the music of clashing cymbals drums and flutes.” (p22) Priests would slash each other and the climax came with the castration of one of the priests.

#### *Festivals of the Greek world (pp. 23-25)*

One of the earliest cults celebrated the earth/corn goddess Demeter and the rescue of her daughter Persephone. Persephone was kidnapped by Pluto and had to spend one third of the year with him. Demeter enraged, and grieving cursed the land until Zeus demanded her return. Her return signaled nature’s revival. The blooming of nature was the signal for a great festival honoring Demeter. Climaxing the festival was a re-enactment of Persephone’s abduction.

#### **Versions of the myth and the cult of Dionysus**

Because the myth of Dionysus was told by Plato, Herodotus, Plutarch and Homer we know quite a lot about this cult.

- This quick and clever son of Zeus and Persephone who seized Zeus’s lightning was the god of the vine who first yoked oxen to the plough. While still an infant he was attacked by the Titans but he changed into a man, lion, serpent, horse and bull. In his bull transformation the Titans caught him and hacked him to pieces. In one version of the myth Zeus raised his son, ate his heart and conceived him again by the mortal Semele who danced during the pregnancy. After the birth she perished in the fire of Zeus’s lightning and went to Hades. Dionysus then went in search of his mother and became known as the god of the underworld. His return from beneath the sea brought spring.
- In another version Dionysus was born to Semele purely as a source of joy to humankind. The coming of his black ship across the sea was an ecstatic event in Trace (8th century, B.C.E). Here this cult was most popular with the oppressed in society, the women and the slaves. This was especially so after the Thracians were absorbed in a dominant Hellenistic culture.
- In his *Bacchae* Euripedes tells how Dionysus arrival was heralded by miracles - the earth flowed with milk, wine and honey. His orgiastic cult festival was celebrated between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox. During this period Dionysus’ ship, on wheels, was pulled through the streets followed by wild processions in which the music drove people to heights of

joy. A priest on the ship played the god. He was bearded, held a scepter and wore a two-faced mask crowned with grape clusters.

- In Homer's *Iliad* Dionysus rose from the underwater grotto of the sea-nymph Thetis who fed him the food of the gods and rendered him immortal. His sea-cart was accompanied by Nymphs, Satyrs and nude dancers all singing. Dionysus consorted with the Menaides who paraded with huge phalluses. At night, in a re-enactment of Dionysus and the Titans, a bull would be captured and torn to pieces.

During the festival of **Anthesteria** (held in February) pine trees sacred to Dionysus were burned and a ship arrived carrying food for the crowd. Casks of wine were opened and wine drinking competitions were held. Wine was also poured into the ground as an offering to Dionysus.

The marriage of **Dionysus and Ariadne** was celebrated with wild feasting as the ritual marriage was believed to promote fertility of animal and plant life. The orgiastic festivities closed with a **Feast of Pots** when food was offered to dead souls (Keres) who rose to right injustices committed in the community during the year.

#### *Festivals of the Roman world (pp. 25-28)*

**Kalends:** In ancient Rome beginning January 1st the two-faced god Janus was venerated when masquerading satyrs, pans and wood nymphs danced in drunken abandon. People disguised themselves as animals and men and women exchanged dress. The festive season actually culminated in February (Februum, meaning instrument of purification). In this last month of the Roman calendar, the injustices and the ill-fortunes of the old year were purged. These festivities were celebrated throughout the Roman empire well into the Christian era.

**Lupercalia:** The Wolf Festival, celebrated in February, was the one (Plutarch tells us) in which youths engaged in ritual competition. Goats and dogs were sacrificed, and their blood smeared on the youths' foreheads and then wiped off with wool dipped in milk. Ovid theorized that the dramatization represented death and that originally human sacrifice was included. The "wiping off" symbolizes the renewal of life. The naked youths then wrapped themselves in the skins of the sacrificed animals and let out a laugh as a sign of revival. A banquet was held after which two groups led by a youth engaged in a foot race. Young women crowded near the runners to receive lashes from the "Februa" (strips of hide from the sacrificial animals' skins). This was an act of ritual fertilization and supposed to help women conceive and then safely deliver their children. The race symbolized the catching of Spring. These celebrations continued in Rome right to the end of the 5th century, AD

**Parentalia:** These celebrations greatly resembled the celebrations of the Greek **Anthisteria** and the festival survived well into the Christian era. In the 5th century AD Pope Gelasius 1 replaced it with the feast of the **Purification of the Virgin Mary**.

**Saturnalia:** This Roman celebration probably began in February and brought to an end the old year of the Roman calendar. In Rome, it eventually became fixed to the winter solstice in mid-December. Virgil glorified Saturn/Saturnus as the lawgiver, the civilizer of humankind who gathered the mountain people of Italy and taught them to plough and to sow. Temples to Saturn date to the 5th century, B.C.E. Seneca described the celebration as a mad pursuit of pleasure. It was during this time that slaves were set free and there was an inversion of rank with a right to criticize and ridicule masters. "A mock king was elected by lots and he ruled the insane, upside down world which symbolizes the idyllic Golden Age of Saturn when humans were equal and

nature so bountiful that nobody needed to work.” (p27) During the time of the **Saturnalia** people drank excessively, danced wildly, played tricks and bawdy games and they also exchanged gifts. At the end of the festival the burlesque king was put to death. On the establishment of the Roman republic the execution of the Saturnalian king was abolished and effigies were used for the ritual sacrifice. Accounts from Christian monks show that it lasted in remote regions as late as the 4th century, AD. In some of these remote outposts of the empire, Roman legions held their **Saturnalia** or a version that corresponded to the Jewish **Purim**, in the spring. According to Orloff (citing P. Wendland’s essay *Jesus als Saturnalienkönig*) “Christ’s procession in the red robe and crown of thorns through the jeering crowds of Jerusalem bears the characteristics of both the Roman and the Jewish celebration. His crucifixion as King of the Jews bears resemblance to the sacrifice of the Haman in Jewish tradition as well as to the execution of the burlesque king of the Roman **Saturnalia**....Pontius Pilate when choosing the mock king from among condemned criminals may have been compelled to choose the rebel Christ to play the tragic king of this ancient carnival. Christ’s dramatic death and resurrection as son and saviour is clearly a Christian adoption of the passion plays in classical Greek, Roman, Babylonian and Egyptian mythology.” (p 27-28)

### **New Year celebrations of pagan Europe** pp. 28-30

Caesar and Pliny described the “heathen races” of the British Isles and mainland Gaul and their cult rites (Mother goddess, descent to nether world during winter solstice, return with mate). Their deities were like the gods of the Roman pantheon. The celebrations included a hunt for the stag who was brought back to camp and burned after which the people masqueraded in deer skins and held a week’s orgy.

**The Celts:** Accounts of the rituals of the powerful Druid priests (Divine truth was their province) come from Pliny, Caesar and Posidonius. As a pastoral people the annual cycle of the Celts began in November when the herds returned from pasture. **Samhain** (their Lord of the Dead who represented the dark forces of the underworld prevailing in the winter months) was celebrated in a great New Year feast. On the **Eve of Samhain**, the souls of all those who had died during the year surfaced, released from the bodies of the animals where they were confined. “Processions of grotesque masked spirits led by a horse-headed sun god in white robes went from house to house. To appease the masked spirits, a treat was offered. Those who failed or refused to make the necessary offering risked their vengeance.” (p 29) Great fires were burned at night to bless the new year and to drive out evil forces. Towards this end huge wicker cages in the shape of giant beings were built and filled with animals, condemned criminals and suspected witches. The Druid priests then placed piles of wood around them and set them alight as an offering for a bountiful new year. The Romans banned these ritual sacrifices in 61 AD but they continued well into the Christian era. In the 6th century AD, Pope Gregory the Great allowed animal sacrifices to continue under the condition that they honored Christian saints instead of pagan idols. Pope Gregory IV (two centuries later) incorporated the **Eve of Samhain** into the Church’s calendar as **Halloween/All Saints Day**.

**The Teutonic races:** Tacitus and Snorri (a Scandinavian poet historian) described the myths of Germanic Europe as being like those of the Eastern Mediterranean. The legend of Baldar the Beautiful, son of the great Odin whose death and dismemberment compares with that of Osiris and Dionysus is one of these myths. The Yule, Jul or Noel festival celebrated the Teutonic new year. At this time a Yule log was burned to commemorate the birth of the sun and goats, cocks, pigs, horses and boars were sacrificed to the god Frey. Banquets were prepared and a “joyous procession pulled a ship on wheels with an image of Frey through the crowds of masqueraders

disguised as bears, deer, stags and boars. Men and women inverted sex roles, sang lusty songs, made effeminate and lewd gestures, danced and drank in orgiastic revelry. Frey was ritually married to one of the priestesses attending his ship on wheels.... The Yule Fest celebrated that decisive cosmic moment when the dead and the living joined in exalting the birth of the new year and the prosperity, fertility and regenerative power it promised...Some aspects of the Yule Fest were absorbed into the Christian Christmas tradition and survive to this day.” (p 30)

### **Expansion and Curtailment of Carnival: Church and State**

As the Roman Empire expanded it exported its ancient gods and cult rituals. “The beginning of the Christian era turned Europe into a whirlpool of converging myths, legends, cults and religions which streamed over the continent with the conquering Roman legions. Osiris and Isis, Saturnus, Attis and Cybele, Demeter, Luperus and the Faunus- all blended with the cult traditions of the Celts, Saxons, the Teutonic, Germanic and Scandinavian peoples. The great similarities of all their mythic cosmologies made them naturally compatible, and the various local and imported cults flourished” (Orloff p31)

The Roman Empire also exported its new and official religion, Christianity. “The Holy Roman Church spread its rather transparent liturgical veneer over the ancient pagan traditions, and this liturgy that had already borrowed extensively from the mythological heritage of the Mediterranean races began to assimilate European paganism. Ancient spirits, gods, cults, sacred groves and temples were rediscovered and reintegrated bearing new names and new Christian values” (p31 – See also H. Rahner’s Greek Myths and Christian Deities)

The transition was difficult. The Saturnalia, Bacchanalia, Lupercalia, Parentalia, the cults of Osiris, Cybele and Attis, the Samhain and the Yule fests continued to celebrate the wild year-end cycle as calendars were adjusted, ancient rites banned or replaced by new festivals with new names. “Saints’ days, complete with corresponding folklore to legitimize their presence, were superimposed on celebrations honoring ancient deities.” (Orloff p31)

The Church began its campaign against the new year festivals in the 2nd century deplored the January Kalends as particularly scandalous. “The Roman carnivals were the most orgiastic and excessively violent. Executions of criminals were held in public as part of the festive entertainment. The cadavers of the executed would be included in macabre street processions. All social and legal restraints evaporated. Fighting, crimes of vengeance, even murder and rape were common. Vendettas against political figures were settled by assassination. The riotous street celebrations often deteriorated into brawls and pitched battles between rival groups who would throw dangerous missiles instead of the sweets, clay pellets, kernels of corn and egg shells that were eventually to become confetti. Containers of water and sewage were dumped on the heads of masquerading crowds from windows and balconies. Behind these windows, the wealthy Romans and aristocratic patricians held drunken orgies of gluttony and fornication...By the 16th century, the Church, with the help of the civil governors, had managed to reduce the violent excess of Rome’s year-end celebrations.” (Orloff p34)

Alongside the myriad condemnations were arguments from supporters of carnival suggesting that the festivals were healthy and that they were celebrated by the ancients to “vent the foolishness that was pent up in man.” (Orloff p35 - See also Harvey Cox *The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy*, which emphasizes the need for mirth, play and satire without going into the reasons for the disappearance of the Feast of Fools). These arguments were slow in

gaining acceptance. The preoccupation of the Church fathers for centuries was the completion of the liturgical calendar. The task was the creation of Christian equivalents to pagan rites.

### **Pagan To Christian Celebration** (Orloff, *Carnival, Myth and Cult*, PP 34-37)

As the Church fathers tried to curb or suppress the Medieval European carnivals with written warnings, threats, condemnations and orders their efforts also helped preserve an historical image of the celebrations.

- At the end of the 7th century St. Boniface wrote the Pope complaining that the Kalends were being celebrated near St. Peter's in Rome. He also headed a reforming synod that forbade the custom of driving out winter.
- Records show that the cults of Isis and Nerthus were celebrated in sacred groves in Germanic Europe right up to the 12th century.
- The Council of Ulm (at the beginning of the 16th century) forbade the use of a ship on wheels during Fasnacht.
- The worship of the god Janus was condemned and congregations (male section) were exhorted, through sermons, not to pervert their masculinity by dressing and acting like women.
- Church councils “ruled against decorating homes with greenery, against drinking, preparing special foods or making offerings to the dead. Dancing, singing, making sacrifices to the false pagan gods, wearing any kind of mask - whether comic, tragic or satirical, playing the old woman or invoking the cursed name of Bacchus was sinful and hostile to the Christian way...To atone for these transgressions, years of penance were required.” (p34)

### **Finally, the transitional winter to spring cycle of festivities was Christianized.**

- The cycle began with Samhain now called Halloween or All Saints Day.
- Pope Julius 1 (mid-4th century) shifted the birth of Christ from January 6th to December 25th and fixed Easter at the vernal equinox. The Nativity replaced the Saturnalia, the Teutonic Yule Fest and the Celtic rites to the stag deity Cernunnus.
- The 2nd of February (February was the month of purification when the souls of the dead, released by the emergence of the bear from winter hibernation, circulated before ascending the Milky Way) was established as the Purification of the Virgin Mary, thus combining the Greek **Anthisteria** and the Roman **Lupercalia** and **Parentalia**. This day was also called Chandlers because of the candles used in the church processions. “These candle-lit processions originated in Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquity, where they were used to guide the souls of the dead to their old homes. Torch-light also figured in the cult rites of Demeter and Persephone.” (p36)
- The next forty-day cycle (many ancient peoples, like the Celts, divided their year into forty-day units based on the lunar method of reckoning time) started with Ash Wednesday heralding the Lenten period.
- The days within the carnival season were dedicated to saints seeming to assume the powers of old gods; St. Vincent took over from Dionysus as the patron of vintners, St. Brigette (the cow was her animal) was associated with fertility, childbirth and lactation, St. Blaise (associated with the bear -who released the souls of the dead when he passed wind- and Odin the Teutonic god of the winds), became master of the winds controlling the travel of souls, in Spain, St. Agatha (associated with the old woman who captured winter in her sack) became the protector of women and nursing mothers.

So, according to Orloff, the only aspect of carnival that can be claimed as truly Christian is perhaps the name itself. In spite of the fact that some etymologists believe that the word comes from

“carrus navalis”, the ship on wheels central to so many of the ancient rites “Most of the linguistic evidence suggests that the word ‘carnival’ is after all a Christian invention, stemming from the Latin base, ‘carne-vale; or ‘carnelevare’; ‘carne’ meaning ‘of the flesh’, and ‘vale’ meaning ‘farewell’, or ‘levare’ meaning ‘to take away’. Carnival referred to the period of license that preceded the forty days of fasting and abstinence culminating in the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday.

Further adjustments of the liturgical calendar in the early 9th century fixed the start of Lent forty days before Easter, which fell after the first full moon of spring. Mardi Gras, Shrove Tuesday and Fasnacht climaxed the three final days of carnality before Ash Wednesday.” (p37)

### **Cult To Custom** (Orloff, *Carnival, Myth and Cult*, PP 38-45)

Each European Carnival was unique with a cast of characters based on local traditions surrounding giants, witches, supernatural beings, sacred animals and magic places. In each one a king was the star who enacted the passion, death and resurrection of life’s creative forces. This character was hero and villain, wise man and fool.

- In Spain his title was King of the Roosters,
- In England he was the Lord of Misrule or King of the Bean,
- In Italy and France, he still appears in processions as a straw effigy (Paggiaccio and Pallaise)
- In northern France and in Flemish Belgium he is the gigantic Gargantua of the Druidic cults and
- In the Tyrolean Alps he is the Naz, a prankish newborn baby who squirts water at the crowds.
- “In parts of Italy where the honored role was played by a living man, Carnival read his last will and testament leaving everything he possessed to the new year. He was then laid in a coffin while great crowds of tearful mourners lamented his passing. Throughout Europe his straw effigy was executed by firing squads, hung, drowned, buried or ceremoniously burned on funeral pyres.” (p38)

Certain animals deemed sacred by association with old gods met with the same fate.

- France’s chosen animal was a cock or bull.
- Spain also favored the cock while
- Cologne used a pig in a game practiced up until the 15th century.
- Cats figured in the festivities of Louis XIV who burned a sack of live ones in his carnival fires at Versailles. In the late 19th century “cat and rabbit fur was used to make elaborate bat costumes for one of the allegorical floats in Nice’s Mardi Gras parade.” (p40)

Many rural celebrations featured a man acting as a bear or The Wild Man of the Woods both ritually hunted as representatives of winter.

The carnival season was also witching time as evidenced by the **Old Woman or Befana** (a corruption of the word Epiphany) a character disapproved by Church councils of the 6th century and incorporated into the calendar as St. Agatha. “According to the Christianized legend the ‘Befana’ had two sons, one Carnival, the other Lent.” (p40)

In Austria the **Perchta and the Holda** (ugly witches) led a procession called Tanz der Shemen. The beautifully dressed and masked representatives of spring contrasted the hideous evil portrayals of winter. In the Bavarian Alps **witches** jumped over Fasnacht fires while the Italians and Germans burned straw effigies in their carnival fires. The Swiss drove their **Posterli** from villages and in many other parts of Europe clanging pots and pans and loud shouting drove out spirits and witches

reminiscent of the manner in which the Greeks of antiquity drove out their **Keres** at the end of their **Anthisteria**.

Some processions were led by the **Hariloking** of Anglo-Norman legends. This **Harlequin** (as he was later called), this king with his army of dead souls eventually became a universal figure of carnival; the Italian Comedia dell'Arte was inspired by the devilish **Arlecchino**. Harlequin fathered an army of carnivalesque characters such as the French **Pierrot** and humped-backed **Pulchinelle**, the Russian **Petrushka**, the German **Hans Wurst**, and the Spanish **Don Christobal**. These “fools” were both quick-witted and slow and supposedly born under the same horoscope as the king who was his equal. The fool’s magic number was 11 that symbolized that equality. The fool “could be crude, and derisive, ridiculing the king’s court, revealing their intrigues, making them laugh and blush, exposing their weaknesses, their lust, their hypocrisy. His buffoonery both amused and annoyed.” (p41)

Carnival time, as “time out of time”, was regarded as a magical time when the fool or the priest magician could transform both natural and social elements. **Smoke** from carnival fires revealed omens about the coming agricultural year. **Bones** from traditional meals and **feathers** from roosters were mixed with the **ashes** from the fires and dispersed over fields to protect crops from pests and disease. Special stylized dances, cries and gestures were performed in circles to the rhythm of drums and the ringing of bells.

Today’s carnival “battles are vestiges of ritual competitions re-enacting the cosmic struggle of winter and spring.” (p42)

The flesh of pigs, cocks, goats and bulls (associated with the gods) were eaten during the carnival season because of the possibility of a transfer of mythic powers. The baking of pancakes and cakes in the shape of the animals and the throwing of flour (in the Trinidad carnival it is the masqueraders portraying Sailors who shake powder/baby powder onto white gloves and clap their hands to spray unsuspecting onlookers and participants alike) are surviving customs.

### **Carnivalesque In Late Medieval European Society**

**The Feast of Fools.** “This bizarre ecclesiastical celebration lasted the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany. On the 26th of December, the lower clergy, sub deacons and monks, gathered in special council to elect their pope. The mock ‘Fools Pope’ or ‘Abbot of Unreason’ was dressed in pontifical robes and like the Saturnalian king reigned over the inverted hierarchical order.” (Orloff p32) This Fool’s Pope triumphantly entered the church on January 1st. to be met by members of the clergy disguised as women and animals, and members of the laity impersonating nuns and monks. The singing, dancing, eating, drinking and gambling that followed was “blessed” by the “Fool’s Pope” while a cloud of stinking incense from smoldering leather permeated the festivities. A climax was reached on January 6th (Epiphany) the Festival of the Ass. The glory of the animal was sung while the choir brayed a chorus of halleluhias and amens. “The ass was to Jesus what the boar and the bull were to Osiris and Dionysus- a symbolic representation of the god.” (Orloff p32) A parody of the mass was read as a girl, carrying a child, rode the donkey. The service ended with the congregation prancing about and braying like donkeys. Afterwards the clergy sailed through crowded streets on a rolling ship of fools exchanging smutty jokes, insulting people, stopping at the houses of the rich and demanding money. They then returned to the church outside of which a stage was erected for the presentation of obscene farces.

Although Pope Innocent III proclaimed the celebration an abomination at the end of the 12th century, the Theological Faculty of Paris was still condemning the Festival of Fools three hundred years later.

### **Carnivalesque: 17th, 18th And 19th Centuries**

The Carnival celebrations of 17th and 18th century Europe began to change as the sensual festivals described by Rabelais began to fade. These changes eventually became modern day carnival and they took place in an era of opulent post Renaissance decadence. Louis XIV held court for incredibly costumed mythological gods and goddesses who participated in the “Boeuf Gras” processions through the streets of Paris. Lavish masked balls were held at Versailles, Fontainebleau and the Opera. Goethe was in Rome for the Carnivals of 1787 and 1788 and he presented the Roman Carnival as the modern derivation of the pre-Christian pagan Saturnalia. He described the mammoth proportions of Rome’s Carnival and judged it not simply as a pleasant spectacle or even as an aesthetic experience leading to an exhilaration of the spirit “he saw it as unmistakably authentic, not given to the people but by the people to themselves, and because of that a mirror of culture and a metaphor of life itself.” (Falassi, (Ed.) *Time out of Time*. in an introduction to Goethe’s The Roman Carnival (*Goethe’s Travels in Italy*. London, 1883). The new Carnivals gave free reign to man’s instincts for liberty and fantasy. In Venice carnival provided the vehicle for the expression of artistic genius that was celebrated six months out of the year. By the 18th century Carnival was celebrated from India to Imperial Russia to the colonial Americas enjoying its golden age of universal popularity.

However, the age of revolutions which radically inverted old social orders brought inevitable changes. Carnival died out in many cities and even rural areas “suffocated by the endless industrial revolution” (Orloff p45) relinquished their long-treasured cult rites. “In an age of social turmoil, revolution and war, the urban centers could no longer tolerate even ritual anarchy. The 19th century saw a reformation of carnival, crystallizing the content and the structure of the celebration, too often at the expense of its tradition and spontaneity. The old agrarian cult magic had lost its power for the urban man, but the need for ritual was still in his soul.” (p46) The carnival committees which sprang up to preserve the old rituals in new formats saw the celebrations chiefly as a means of distraction and entertainment. Just as in the Middle Ages, under Church reforms, the efforts to organize and tame varied. The surviving urban celebrations such as those in Germany’s Cologne, Mainz and Munich, in Italy’s Viareggio and France’s carnival in Nice became, largely, spectator events with little of the old cult rituals remaining. In contrast the carnivals of Dunkirk and Limoux in France, Rottweil in Germany, Basel and Lucerne in Switzerland and Binche and Malmedy in Belgium endured with ancient cult elements intact though intertwined with recent adaptations. East European villages as well as Europe’s mountain regions (French Alps, Swiss, Bavarian, Italian and Tyrolean Alps) held on to traditions handed down from generation to generation and their carnivals remained largely unchanged throughout the centuries.

For a description of the move from **Custom to Commerce: Carnival in the Squares of the Old World** displayed in the carnival of Cologne, the Fasnacht of Basel, the Schleicherlaufen of Telfs, the Mardi Gras in Binche, La Bataille des Fleurs in Nice and Il Corso di Viareggio in Italy, see Orloff, *Carnival, Myth and Cult*, (pp46-66).

Orloff goes on to describe the **Slums and Salons: Carnival in the Streets of the New World**. He shows how the colonizing Christians (imaging the Roman legions’ export of their pantheon to pagan Europe) introduced ancient gods masquerading as Christian saints as well as the new

Christian god. Through a description of the Carnestolado Fiesta in Mexico, Mas in Trinidad, Mardi Gras and Rara in Haiti, Fat Tuesday in New Orleans and Carnival in Rio he shows how the year-end celebrations for the pre-Columbian gods (the five superfluous days between their old and new year were called **Nemon-temi**) and the pre-Christian gods blended. (pp67-88).

At the end of the nineteenth century Carnival, viewed as an irrational, primitive, and inexplicable rite, inspired suspicion and contempt in the scientific dogmatists. In Europe then it was a weakened Carnival that greeted the contemporary age and it was this Carnival of masked balls and entertainment appropriated by the European plantocracy that entered colonized Trinidad.

### **Trinidad Carnival, Carnivalesque, Types of Mas**

**The Trinidad Carnival** takes place on the Monday and Tuesday before Lent. Lengthy preparations at last break out in a heady burst of blazing colour, with dancing in the streets to the rhythms of steelband and calypso.

To Trinidadians, Carnival embodies the essence of a joyful and tolerant temperament. It is a time when publicly, theatrically “all ah we is one”. It is a time when full rein is given to the nation’s exuberance and wit so evident in the national love of music (particularly the music of the steelband, a Trinidad grass-roots invention), language (especially as expressed through the irony, satire and humour of the calypso) and dance.

During the months leading up to the festival ‘mas bandleaders conceive their intended portrayal and design and construct the costumes to be worn by thousands of followers. A King and Queen and Individuals (section leaders) will be designed and constructed for each band/mas camp in great secrecy.

Calypsonians compose new tunes each year. The lyrics of at least one calypso is usually satirical and gives the composer’s view of an incident/situation domestic, national, regional or worldwide. It may also provide the vehicle for the presently held social, cultural or political message the writer wishes to present to the country. Another calypso will be of the “jump up and wine” variety and aims to keep the people on their feet and dancing through a more up-tempo beat. The lyrics, whose chorus may instruct the crowds to “Get something and wave”, “Doh back back”, “Move to the right, move to the left” etc. are generally of the “mindless” variety.

The leaders and the arrangers of the many steel orchestras “pick” a calypso for performance at the national Panorama competition. Judgement is made on the arrangement, the virtuosity of the players, their appearance, the tuning of the pans, the musicality and the spirit of the (usually a hundred or more per orchestra) players. The hundreds of entrants will eventually be weeded out through performances in regional preliminary, and semi-finals. The final eight contenders vie on the Saturday leading into carnival Sunday (Demarche Gras) and one emerges as that year’s champion steel orchestra.

Finally, after pre-carnival fetes, competitions, and parades comes the grand climax of Carnival itself. It begins at dawn on Monday morning “J’ouvert” when Trinidad takes to the streets. The masqueraders continue to “play mas” (depending on individual stamina) right up to Las’ Lap on Tuesday night (by which time (having emerged from the “mud” mess of J’ouvert and the individualistic “Look me, Look me” aim to take centre stage during the Monday and Tuesday “Pretty Mas” portrayals) the sensibility is more “all ah we is one.”

## **The Traditional Masques of Carnival (Daniel J. Crowley)**

In the 1956 edition of the Caribbean Quarterly (Vol. 4 no. 3 & 4 pp 194-223) the anthropologist Daniel J. Crowley describes some of the major traditions of the Trinidad Carnival. Whether they originated in medieval Europe, in West Africa or “in last year’s Carnival” Trinidad Carnival’s basic structural unit is he says a “masque band made up of any number of masquers, from two to eight hundred. The word ‘masque’ indicates that the band wears costumes based on a theme from history, current events, films, Carnival tradition, from the imagination, or from a combination of these. It is thus differentiated from ‘mask’, the covering of the face and/or head sometimes worn by the masquers. In local pronunciation both are ‘mas’ but are clearly differentiated concepts in the minds of the masquers.” He goes on to suggest (with M. J. & F. S. Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, New York, Knopf, 147, pp 6, 303) that since the kinds of masques played in the last hundred years of Carnival are extremely varied, the “Carnival is a major focus of culture for the urban Trinidadian. He spends more time and thought, has a more extensive vocabulary, and is more praised for innovation in the creation of Carnival masques than in any other aspect of his culture”

Today’s carnival “battles are vestiges of ritual competitions re-enacting the cosmic struggle of winter and spring.” The flesh of pigs, cocks, goats and bulls (associated with the gods) were eaten during the carnival season because of the possibility of a transfer of mythic powers. The baking of pancakes and cakes in the shape of the animals and the throwing of flour (in the Trinidad carnival it is the masqueraders portraying Sailors who shake powder/baby powder onto white gloves and clap their hands to spray unsuspecting onlookers and participants alike) are surviving customs.

## **The Jamette Carnival**

This was a term which was used by the French and English to describe the Carnival celebrations of the African population during the period 1860 to 1896. The term comes from the French “diamètre” meaning beneath the diameter of respectability, or the underworld. It was a term used at that time to describe a certain class in the community.

The view of the whites was that the Carnival activities were immoral, obscene and violent. The kalenda, the drumming, the dances and the sexually explicit masquerades were thought to be totally objectionable.

They were fully supported in this view by the contemporary press. Throughout the period there was a sustained attack on Carnival in most newspaper editorials. This ranged from outright condemnation to calls for a total ban. This was also the era of repressive legislation. The British Colonial Government passed several laws against all forms of African cultural traditions. As was seen in 1881, it took more than legislation and police batons to stop the Carnival. For the more repressive the legislation, the more aggressive the responses. Carnival was more than just music, masquerade and dance. It was about their very existence.

## **Who Were These Jamettes?**

The Jamettes occupied the barrack yards of East Port of Spain. They lived in appalling conditions. These were the stickfighters, prostitutes, chantuelles, matadors, dustmen. There existed all the conditions for social instability: crime, vagrancy, disease, prostitution, unemployment, sexual permissiveness and dysfunctional families. It is no wonder, therefore, that Carnival was embraced

with such fervour. For the Jamettes, it was a necessary release from the struggle that was their daily lives.

### **Types of Masquerade**

Africans used current topics to highlight the plight of the ordinary people and to poke fun at officialdom. In the 1840s, one band portrayed the Tour Council Elections of 1841. Another portrayed the victim of the Creole epidemic of 1854. Masqueraders dressed as doctors, nurses and afflicted persons.

**Police and Thief** was another masquerade enacted to highlight the problem of petty theft and the (often bad) relationship between the police and the urban working class. This was enacted by two persons, one of whom would be the thief who would be chased by the police.

The **Negre Jardin** (Garden Negroes) also called Negue Jadin in French patois - masquerade first seen in pre-emancipation times, was also portrayed. This was popular among the stick fighters.

**Congo and Shango bands** - These bands comprised mainly newly arrived native Africans, depicting religious beliefs of West Africa. They were dressed like ancestral spirits of the Yoruba people. They sometimes depicted animals. The Shango warriors wore masks on their face to represent Gods.

**Ancestral Spirits** - Newly arrived Africans also depicted ancestral spirits such as Lagahu, Papa Bois, C-ann, the Soucouyant and Douenne. They adorned their bodies with decorated cloth and raffia costumes to which were attached beads and glass decorations – jewelry, amulets, anklets, etc.

**Moko Jumbie** - This is an authentic African masquerade mounted on sticks. It was believed that the height of the stilts was associated with the ability to foresee evil faster than ordinary men. A jumbie among Africans is a spirit. Moko is a “diviner” in the Congo language. Moko is a derivation of the god “Moko”, coming straight out of West African tradition. Moko is a “diviner” in the Congo language. The term “jumbie” or ghost was added by the freed slaves. It was believed that the height of the stilts was associated with the ability to foresee evil faster than ordinary men. The Moko Jumbie was felt to be a protector of the village. This mas is well-known throughout the Caribbean. It is an authentic African masquerade mounted on sticks. The stilt walker plays on stilts 10 to 12 feet high. His costume consists of a brightly coloured skirt or pants, jacket and elaborate hat. He would dance through the streets all day, and collect money from people on the upper floors and balconies. His dance was similar to a jig, and he was often accompanied by a drum, flute and triangle. The Moko Jumbie was felt to be a protector of the village. This masquerade is still in existence today and is seen at occasions other than carnival.

### **Minstrels**

Black and white minstrels are based on the American minstrel shows popular around the turn of the century. The faces are painted white, while the costume consists of a scissors tail coat, striped trousers, tall straw hat and gloves. One or two minstrel bands still remain, entertaining audiences with popular old American songs such as Swanee River and Who's Sorry Now. They accompany themselves on the guitar and the rattling bones played between the hands. They may sometimes have a dance routine.

### **Dame Lorraine**

The Dame Lorraine or Dame Lorine was imitative of the mas played by the 18th and early 19th century French planters, who would dress up in elegant costumes of the French aristocracy and parade in groups at private homes, particularly on Carnival Sunday night. They also performed the sophisticated dances of the period. The liberated slaves recreated these costumes - complete with elaborate fans and hats - in their own fashion, using materials that were readily available, such as assorted rags and imitative jewelry-type items, but emphasizing and exaggerating the physical characteristics, and dancing to small bandol and cuatro bands.

The major Dame Lorraine performers through the years however, were descendants of the French planters and persons of some respectability, who hid behind masks, mainly of the fine wire mesh variety, and found their way into the downtown Old Yards, where they paraded and danced for all and sundry. The tune which became associated with the Dame Lorraines still exists, and is played whenever they appear in groups at cultural events.

### **Jab Jab**

The name of this mas is derived from the French patois for 'Diable Diable". It is pretty devil mas. The costume consists of a Kandal or satin knickers, and satin shirt with points of cloth at the waist, from which bells hang. On the chest, there is a shaped cloth panel which is decorated with swans down, rhinestones and mirrors. Stockings and alpagatas are worn on the feet, while the headdress consists of a hood with stuffed cloth horns. The costume can come in alternating colours and be divided into front and back panels. The Jab Jab has a thick whip of plaited hemp which he swings and cracks threateningly. These whips can reduce the costumes of other Jab Jabs to threads.

### **Fancy Indians**

This mas is based on the indigenous people of North America. The wearer decides how expensive or expansive he wants this costume to be. The headpiece, in its simplest form, is worn with feathers sticking up, and more feathers making tails down the back. More elaborate headpieces are built over bamboo or wire frames. The headpiece then becomes so heavy, it needs to be supported by a structure that covers the masquerader's entire body. This, the masquerader's wigwam, is richly worked with ostrich plumes, mirrors, beads, feather work, papier-mâché masks, totem poles, canoes and ribbons. Bands of Indians can comprise a warrior chief and his family, a group of chiefs, or a group of warriors.

The Fancy Indian is the most popular variety of Indian mas. A feature of this mas is the language or languages they speak, in a call and response pattern, possibly adapted from the Black Indians of the New Orleans Mardi Gras and their characteristic movements. Other kinds of Indians that are disappearing are generally known as Wild Indians. These comprise Red Indians (Warahoons) and Blue Indians, which have links with the indigenous peoples of Venezuela. There are also Black Indians or African Indians.

### **Jab Molassie**

Jab is the French patois for 'Diable' (Devil), and Molassi is the French patois for Mélasse (Molasses). The Jab Molassi is one of several varieties of devil mas played in Trinidad and Tobago carnival. The costume consists of short pants or pants cut off at the knee, and a mask and horns. The jab malassie would carry chains, and wear locks and keys around his waist, and carry a pitch fork. He may smear his body with grease, tar, mud or coloured dyes (red, green or blue). The jab molassie "wines" or gyrates to a rhythmic beat that is played on tins or pans by his imps. While some of his imps supply the music, others hold his chain, seemingly restraining him as he pulls

against them in his wild dance. The differences among the various forms of devil mas were once distinct, but have become blurred over time.

### **Pierrot Grenade**

The Pierrot Grenade is a descendant of the Pierrot - a finely dressed masquerader and deeply learned scholar, who displayed his erudition by spelling polysyllabic words and quoting passages from Shakespeare. He was also a feared fighter with a whip or bull pistle, and was followed by a band of female supporters who fought on his behalf against other Pierrot groups. His descendant, the Pierrot Grenade, is a satire on the richer and more respectable Pierrot. The Pierrot Grenade is egotistical and retains the scholarly mien, but instead of the elegant costume, he wears rags. His gown consists of crocus bag (burlap), on which strips of coloured cloth, small tins containing pebbles, and small boxes that rattle, are attached. He may wear a hat or a coloured head tie on his head, and his face is covered with a grotesque mask. The mask provides anonymity for someone who delights in making barbed comments on "respectable" members of the community.

### **Bats**

This mas is almost extinct. The bat costume is normally black or brown and fitted tightly over the masquerader's body. The headpiece covers the head entirely, with the player being able to see through the mouth, or being able to lift it up to his forehead. It is made of swans down with papier-mâché face, teeth, nose and round eyes. Leather shoes with metal claws for toes are normally used. Ordinary shoes can also be adapted by the use of long socks, metal claws and a second sole. The bat wings are made from wire and bamboo or cane, and are covered with the same cloth as the skin-fitted costume. These wings can extend to 12 or 15 feet, and the masquerader's arms are fastened to them. Matching gloves complete the costume. There is a bat dance to go with the costume. In performance, the masquerader crawls, flaps, dances on his toes, and folds his wings in a series of choreographed movements, imitating the bat.

### **Midnight Robber**

The Midnight Robber is one of the most beloved characters in traditional carnival. Both his costume and his speech are distinctive. His "Robber Talk" is extravagant and egocentric, and boastful. He brags about his great ancestry, exploits, strength, fearlessness and invincibility. This "Robber Talk" is derived from the tradition of the African Griot or storyteller, and the speech patterns and vocabulary are imitative of his former master. He wears a black satin shirt, pantaloons, influenced by the American cowboy tradition, and a black, flowing cape on which the skull and cross bones are painted. Also painted on the cape is the name by which the robber goes. He also wears a huge black, broad-brimmed, fringed hat on which a coffin is often superimposed. In his hand he carries a weapon - either a dagger, sword or gun - and a wooden money box in the shape of a coffin. He carries a whistle which he blows to punctuate his tales of valour.

### **Burroquite**

Burroquite, derived from the Spanish word **burroquito** (little donkey), is constructed from bamboo so as to give the illusion of a dancer riding a small **burro** or donkey. This masquerade was derived from both the East Indian culture and the Venezuelan Spaniards.

The costume is comprised of a well-decorated donkey's head made from coloured paper. This head is attached to a bamboo framework. The masquerader enters through a hole at the back of the donkey's neck and carries the reins in his hands, thereby creating the illusion that he is its rider. The body of the donkey is covered in a long skirt satin skirt with a sisal tail, sometimes decorated

with flowers. The bit and bridle are made of coloured cord. The rider wears a satin skirt and a large matador straw hat and dances in a way that mimics the antics of a donkey. He also performs a dance called Burroquite, from Venezuela.

### **Bookman**

The Bookman, also referred to as the Gownman or Ruler, is a feature of devil mas portrayals. The other two groups of characters in the devil band are the imps and beasts.

The bookman's costume consists of Tudor-style pants, or a richly embroidered gown made of velvet and satin, with a pleated or fluted bodice, and a flowing cape festooned with biblical scenes. On his head is an oversized head mask which contains small horns and carries a demonic expression. The face of this mask is supposed to mirror the face of the devil himself. The bookman carries a pen and a large book in which he write the names of prospective souls for the devil. The bookman is the principal character in the devil band, and, in keeping with his status, his movement is waltz-like, with constant bowing. Musical accompaniment is provided by an orchestra of trumpet, saxophones, bass and drums playing conventional tunes.

### **Sailor Mas**

This character was introduced in the 1880s when British, French and American naval ships came to Trinidad. It is one of the more popular costumes, being lightweight and inexpensive. There are several variations on the sailor mas including Free French Sailor, King Sailor, and Fancy Sailor to name a few. The costume of the Free French sailor consists of a black beret with the name of the ship on the rim of the beret, a tight-fitting short sleeve bow neck jersey with horizontal blue and white stripes, long, bell-bottomed black melton pants, and black shoes. The King Sailor's costume consists of a white drill or corduroy pants and shirt with a sailor collar. There are epaulettes on each shoulder, a red sash across the chest, a crown on the masquerader's head, cords, medals and war ribbons on the left side of the chest and a walking stick in his hand.

The Fancy Sailor was an off-shoot of the King Sailor. The fancy sailor costume consists of papier-mâché headpieces, decorated and painted to look like bird, animals or plants. The sailor outfit is decorated with ribbons, medals, braiding, swans down and other embellishments to match the headpieces. There are several dances to go along with the sailor mas portrayal, such as the Bote, Crab, Marrico, Pachanga, Rock de Boat, Skip Jack and the Camel Walk.

### **Baby Doll**

The baby doll character, which is now extinct, was played up to the 1930s. The masquerader portrays a gaily dressed doll, decked out in a frilled dress and bonnet. In her arms she carries a doll which symbolizes an illegitimate baby. The masquerader portraying the baby doll, stops male passers-by and accuses them of being the baby's father.

### **Cow Band**

The Cow Band, which dates back to the days of the Canboulay, consisted of a small group of men dressed in gowns of sacking made from rice bags. These gowns were completely covered with dried plantain leaves. Each masquerader wore a homemade papier-mâché mask representing the head of a cow surmounted by a pair of horns. Members of the band would frolic and move through the crowds behaving like real cows. This masquerade became dormant for a few years, and was later revived by the employees of the abattoir, and became part of the J'ouvert celebrations.

In later years, on Carnival Tuesday, the Cow Band came out in brightly coloured costumes, with picadors and a matador who would challenge the cows. The cow character's costume consisted of tight-fitting breeches of yellow velvet or satin, with gold braid and spangles along the sides and around the bottom at the knees, a tight-fitting maroon satin long-sleeved blouse completely covered with a sutach decoration of gold braid, gloves, cream stockings and alpagatas. A well-secured cap-like contraption on the head supported a pair of highly polished cow horns. A short section of the hairy part of the cow's tail was attached to the seat of the breeches. An imported wire gauze mask replaced the cow mask of the previous day. Male singers and the musicians wore yellow breeches, maroon shirts with billowing sleeves tight at the wrist, a sash around the waist and red beret. The women wore yellow skirts, red or maroon bodices, and headties. All wore masks of the wire gauze type, those of the women being decorated with gold braid along the forehead and at the sides, with gaudy earrings dangling from them. Music was provided by such string instruments as the mandolin, teeplay, bandol, banjo, cuatro, guitar, violin and chac-chacs (maracas). The Cow Band became extinct just before World War

***Sample speech from the Theatre of Carnival production J'ouvert by Camps and Edinborough***

“I am the dreaded Midnight Robber and I have come to instil horror, plague and devastation into the mind of every mortal animal be he man, woman, child or beast. I come from the direction of the rising sun heralding nothing but darkness, death and destruction. I fear no one but all fear me. I am more venomous than the Cobra, more vicious than the Panther, fiercer than the Tiger and faster than the Toyota!!! I have laid waste cities from Bombassa to Constantinople, from Timbuktu to Chimborazo Cotopaxi. My purpose here in this abysmal desert is to meet in conspiracy.....to plot the ruin and demise of my arch enemy Pierrot Grenade”

**Pierrot Grenade** (description see Caribbean Quarterly notes)

***Sample speech from the Theatre of Carnival production J'ouvert by Camps and Edinborough***

**Pierrot:** “I am Pierrot Grenade the peaceful one who has come from the land of the setting sun. I believe in freedom and justice and abhor slavery and malice. If long ago I indulged in slavery, please forgive me. I have repented sincerely. If my weapons are on the increase, its because I have to fight for peace. I believe in free enterprise though it may cause many a demise. For men will kill in search of money but at least they'll die free and happy. So its my duty as the people's leader to ensure that no alien power is greater. ....to plot the ruin and demise of my arch enemy the Midnight Robber”

***Sample of an exchange between the two characters from the Theatre of Carnival production J'ouvert by Camps and Edinborough***

**Robber:** “Empty senseless words, just elongated preposterous language. I'll show you big words. I come from the lands of the biggest words - Antanarine, Kualalumper, Constantinople, Ree-Kee-awick and Mesopotamia”

**Pierrot:** “Yuh know, ah man shouldn't be allowed to use a word so freely unless he can spell it correctly. Take that word Mesopotamia, for instance. Yuh tink this Robberman could spell it by chance?”

**Robber:** “Oh, the Pierrot the Pierrot at his ancient guile and trickery once more. I'll reduce you to shame and ignominy. I'll spell Mesopotamia. M-E-S-A-O....(gives up in fury) I'll not spell it. I'm just wasting my time with this senseless array of tatters”

**Pierrot:** "Well I'll spell it for you Mr. Robberman. Now I want everyone to listen and hear, do I make myself clear?

I'll go up to my bedroom and take out a po"

**Robber:** "Oh! Ho!"

**Pierrot:** "You know, a chamber pot, a posie what everyone know and since I want to ensure my success, I'm going to fill it up with all kind ah mess. I'll load in mess from bottom to top until my po is all mess up.

Then I'll take this po, Mr. Dread and scatter it on top yuh head. And regardless of how wild yuh wild, that mess up po bound to make yuh docile. And since you now have a calmer demeanour, I'll say my mess-up-po-tame-yuh. You get it? You put mess in a po and the po tame yuh - That's the way to spell Mesopotamia!!!"

**Robber:** "Trickery! trickery! a low dodge....."

**Pierrot:** "You have asked for it Mr. Robberman! I'll destroy you and your entire land. On the dawning of a new day, that henceforth shall be called J'ouvert"

**Robber:** Your empty threats do not scare me Pierrot. I'll meet you man to man and weapon to weapon and J'ouvert morning shall see the holocaust. My victory, your loss!"

## **Glossary of Carnival Terms**

**Arranger:** Musician who prepares music for performance by steelbands, other music bands and calypsonians

**Band:** A costumed band of people taking part in the Parade of the Bands or J'ouvert competition. A steelband or other band.

**Bacchanal:** The excitement, confusion and intensity of Carnival.

**Calypso:** The essential music of Carnival, dating back to the early 19th century with roots in Africa.

**Calypso Monarch:** The winner of the Dimanche Gras national calypso contest.

**Chantuelle:** 19th century forerunner of the Calypsonian.

**Chip:** To shuffle along behind a steelband or other moving music source without lifting your feet off the ground.

**Dimanche Gras:** The show determining the Calypso Monarch and the King/Queen of the Bands, held on the Savannah (Big Yard) on Carnival Sunday night.

**Dingolay:** To wine down to the ground.

**Dirty Mas:** Old Mas/ shadow side, achieved by covering the body with mud, oil or grease on J'ouvert morning.

**Fete:** To party.

**Grind:** To grind your body against someone else's while wining or dingolaying.

**Jab Jab/Jab Molassie:** A traditional Carnival J'ouvert devil mas featuring tail, fork, horns, diapers and grease.

**Jam:** Similar to wining and grinding but more forward so to speak.

**J'ouvert:** "The day opens": the beginning of Carnival, officially at 2.00 am on Carnival Monday morning.

**Jump Up:** To dance; literally to jump up and dance, the basic carnival movement.

**Kaiso:** Calypso.

**King/Queen of the Bands:** The most outstanding King/Queen costume and presentation of the Carnival according to the judges.

**Las' Lap:** The last hours of Carnival, from dusk to midnight on Carnival Tuesday.

**Leggo:** To let go, to jump up, wine, grind and get on bad; a traditional up-tempo calypso.

**Mas:** Contraction of masquerade: a particular costume, the Parade of the Bands, or somebody's distinctive masquerade.

**Mas' Camp:** Headquarters of masquerade bands where costumes are made.

**Midnight Robber:** Traditional carnival character, featuring a big hat and an even bigger vocabulary and attitude.

**Old Mas:** J'ouvert style of masquerade as distinct from pretty mas. Strong on wildness, satire and mud.

**Pan:** The steel pan; can refer to the instrument or the music.

**Panyard:** A steelband's headquarters where pans are kept and rehearsals held.

**Pierrot Grenade:** Traditional Carnival character rather like a shabby harlequin in appearance; traditional foe of the Midnight Robber.

**Play Mas:** Join a costumed band; throw yourself into the jump-up.

**Pretty Mas:** Daytime Carnival Monday and Tuesday masquerade.

**Road March:** The calypso played the most at competition points on Carnival Monday and Tuesday; a very democratic competition decided by the response of the masqueraders themselves to the calypsonians' efforts.

**Soca:** The modern sound of calypso incorporating an element of soul into traditional Kaiso.

**Tamboo-bamboo:** Bamboo tubes of different lengths held in the hands and thumped on the ground to create a percussive rhythm; a major source of Carnival music in the early years of the century.

**Tent:** Calypso concert venue with its own team of singers.

**Tuner:** Musician who tunes steel pans.

**Vex Money:** Extra cash carried (usually by a woman) in case she falls out with her man and has to pay to get home.

**Wine:** To dance by winding the waist back and forth and round and round, especially round and round.

## **Camps Notion of Carnival as Process and Product**

**As Camps uses it Carnival Theatre** is an umbrella term for an empowerment and transformative process that includes the techniques of ritual, carnival, and theatre as well as the insights of Humanistic & Transpersonal Psychology, Restorative Justice/Mediation. It is culturally-based, drawing on Trinidad's J'ouvert Carnival traditions as possible role models for agency and self-determination. Through engagement with traditional moves and speeches which both acknowledge and mock the social order and the status quo of the day, performers/workshop participants explore and evaluate notions of justice, identity, empowerment and transformation. The transpersonal psychology, restorative justice/mediation strands facilitate functional intra- and interpersonal relationships. Together the strands become part of a journey towards authenticity and individuation.

The process is about assertion, competition, enjoyment, humour and celebration as well as inclusion, discipline and integrity in an attempt to remove all half-heartedness, mediocrity and mechanical patterns of mind and body.

Camps **Carnival Theatre Process** evolved from a Carnival ethos of liminality and communitas; from a deployment of the insights of Humanistic Psychology; from the techniques of theatre and

the rituals of Trinidad's J'ouvert Carnival. The intertwining of these processes she believes touch the core life/creative energy of a person allowing freedom, release and artistic expression in the body, voice, imagination and emotions, rooting everything always in the physical; In Carnival a person is allowed to show off, to take centre and to proclaim, "I am here, look at me!" She believes that the process work employed while engaging, rehearsing and performing "ole mas" (J'ouvert traditional characters) is a culturally appropriate and practical training for individual and group empowerment and transformation. The process engages the ironic and satirical stance of these local archetypes or "projections" to deal with local and global concerns. Her **Theatre of Carnival** Productions are the by-product of the **Carnival Theatre Process**.