



**CARNAVAL AS A CULTURAL PROBLEM:
TOWARDS A THEORY OF FORMAL EVENTS
AND THEIR MAGIC**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a study of the Brazilian Carnival from the perspective of social anthropology. The author contends that Carnival, while clearly a major social phenomenon, is difficult to analyze because it does not express seriousness, a sense of religious mystery or a well-defined purpose but rather laughter, grotesquerie and sensuality, which seems to pose the question of whether it can be considered a real ritual. In the course of answering this question he examines a number of cultural oppositions--for example "above the waist"/"below the waist," acceptable/taboo, rational/emotional, static/relational, formal/spontaneous, social/individual--and points out that the theories of some social anthropologists tend to reinforce the belief that such oppositions amount to mutual exclusion. He argues on the contrary that it is necessary to recognize the paradox of social situations whose essence is to mix these categories in order to reach an understanding of "rituals of reversal," and also that social occasions should be studied both in terms of the behavior that they prescribe as appropriate and the behavior that they exclude. Against this background the paper presents a detailed analysis of Carnival, and in particular the Carnival Ball, and its function in relation to Brazilian life as a whole. The concluding section discusses the logic and human significance created by rituals and their magic.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo es un estudio del Carnaval Brasileño según la perspectiva de la antropología social. El autor sostiene que el Carnaval, aunque es claramente un fenómeno social importante, es difícil de analizar porque no expresa seriedad, ni un sentido de misterio religioso ni un propósito bien definido, sino más bien la risa, lo grotesco, y la sensualidad, lo cual parece poner en duda si debe considerarse un verdadero ritual. Al contestar esta pregunta el autor examina varias oposiciones culturales--por ejemplo "arriba de la cintura/debajo de la cintura," aceptable/tabú, racional/emocional, estático/correlativo, formal/espontáneo, social/individual--y señala que las teorías de algunos antropólogos sociales tienden a reforzar la creencia de que tales oposiciones implican exclusión mutua. El autor argumenta por el contrario que es necesario reconocer la paradoja de situaciones sociales cuya característica básica es la de mezclar estas categorías para alcanzar una mejor comprensión de "rituales de inversión," y también que las ocasiones sociales deben ser estudiadas en términos del comportamiento que ellas ordenan como apropiados y del comportamiento que ellas excluyen. En este contexto el ensayo presenta un análisis detallado del Carnaval, y en particular del Baile de Carnaval, y su función en relación a la vida brasileña en conjunto. La sección final discute la lógica y el significado humano creados por los rituales y su magia.

Introduction: Some Difficulties in Studying Carnaval

Carnaval is always discussed as a ceremony or secular festivity. Not included in the usual idea of Carnaval are those mystical or magical traits central to religious rites, those sacred occasions that gather together all the ingredients that have been the delight and fascination of studies of rituals and savages for generations of social anthropologists. I refer, obviously, to bodily mutilation; the sacrifice of animals in honor of some god; fasting; the seclusion of initiates who go to live temporarily far from their villages; the sacredness and formality of gestures, body painting and symbols. Other such ingredients are the teaching of songs, tales, moral principles, and those codes of behavior that are classified as "serious," "honorable," or definitely linked to the transcendental; the mystical sanctions implied in the behavior of those who conduct the rituals and that of the spectators and participants as well, sanctions that can bring blessings but also sickness, loss of social status, and even death.

At the same time as it is, like other secular ceremonies, of this world, however, Carnaval has its own magic and its own sacred allusions. Is it a real ritual? The question is not simply rhetorical, but refers to a considerable theoretical problem. (For example, Gluckman, 1962, separates ritual from ceremony.) The existence of this doubt leads us to begin with to a double reflection. We have to discuss Carnaval's reason for being and, together with this, to bear in mind the tendency of social anthropology to establish dichotomies without the least concern for the mediations, dynamism, or even the relativity implied by the meanings of the terms used by these dichotomies.

In truth, carnivals appear to be phenomena without the deep seriousness and mystery that characterize "real rites." If rituals do indeed say something about people, social categories, and social relations, as Sir Edmund Leach maintains, it is not easy to discover what type of discourse is produced by Carnaval. It seems much easier to under-

stand that a handshake means, "I am pleased to meet you and willing to converse" (as Leach notes), than to discover what a multitude of Brazilians mean by a Carnival dance in the streets of the city, in which they throw off their clothes, displaying buttocks, penises, and vaginas, and show their tongues in a most abusive, erotic, and grotesque fashion. By the same token, it is even harder to understand when the poorest of the poor or the lowest of the exploited Brazilian labor force dress as kings, queens, and mythological figures and parade with their peers. Of course, they want to have fun. But this is a highly complex form of fun. It requires time, money, energy, and above all, a profound sense of *Carnaval time*, that is, a firm conviction that in Carnival one is living through a different, liminal, inverted or subverted lapse of tempo.¹

I believe that part of the difficulty is that Carnival has to do with pleasure, eroticism, and laughter in a form of social congregation for which there is no well defined purpose. As a matter of fact, occasions that we call ritual always have purpose, target, aim, goal, and center. Even when they are secular, rituals are different from carnivals because they request, legitimate, reaffirm, exchange, install, inaugurate, help to change, cure, close, prohibit, exorcize, demand misfortunes or good crops. But Carnival, with its wide smile and its grand sensuality is a rite without a center or, as I point out elsewhere, an owner (Cf. DaMatta, 1979: Ch. 3). As Bakhtin emphasizes, Carnival does not command or demand anything. Besides, laughter and the comic are difficult to understand precisely because they are banned from every formal occasion. (Cf. Bakhtin, 1968: 67) We can even say that the formal (and/or the solemn) excludes by definition laughter and comedy. That is to say: one of our difficulties in taking Carnival *seriously* as a sociological fact full of political, magical, and moral implications lies precisely in our resistance to interpreting the comic and the grotesque that pervade most Carnival events and make it, of course, a

¹For a full treatment of Carnival in its ritual and political contexts, see DaMatta, 1979 (1982), 1981.

popular festivity. It is easier for us to discuss the bloody killing of sacred animals as a sacrifice to honor the gods than to appreciate the meaning of laughter.

Social anthropologists have had many elaborate, if not turgid and baroque, discussions about the so-called "right and left-hand" polarity as a central fact of systems of classification, but we keep systematically forgetting other polarities much more conspicuously present in our lives. I refer, with Bakhtin, to the disturbing complementarity between *front* and *back*, *inside/outside* and between what is *below* and *above the waist*. These too are fundamental distinctions that Anglo-Saxon anthropological reasoning tends to ignore, but they are of course present, and especially noticeable at Carnaval. As a matter of fact, what we usually do in Western culture is hide the left side, the rear part, and below the waist on every public occasion. To have a formal occasion is to exclude with minute precision and determination all reference--visual, tactile, or verbal--to these parts of the human body. Anything that has to do with hips, genitalia and bodily orifices is excluded from the so-called formal or solemn events. In fact, it is significant to point out that formal dresses and uniforms used on these occasions are robes and capes that cover and disguise sexual distinctions, especially in the case of males. Hence the strange formal dress for *men* on these occasions, with its ecclesiastical style doing precisely this sort of hiding. All that has to do with these parts of the body is considered vulgar, grotesque, or comic. In the modern, individualistic, and puritanical anglo civilization, it seems that the "below the waist" has lost its place and has been repressed and suppressed by means of the predominant distinction between "low" and "high" culture. It is significant that the terms have to be precisely these. It is as if everything located below the waist becomes part of a private, individual aspect of the human condition, being in a very profound way completely stripped of its major social and collective components. It seems, therefore, that all that is considered to be private or individualized is no longer an explicit part of society and is instead excluded from it. Our civilization seems to have an

interdiction (or taboo) on all that belongs to the private or individual sphere. And this domain makes an internal space that is not only sacred, but inviolable--taken to be, as it were, part of the fundamental rights of the individual as we conceive them. As Bakhtin puts it:

Laughter is not a universal, philosophical form. It can refer only to individual and individually typical phenomena of social life. That which is important and essential cannot be comical. Neither can history and persons representing it--kings, generals, heroes--be shown in a comic aspect. The sphere of the comical is narrow and specific (private and social vices); the essential truth about the world and about man cannot be told in the language of laughter (Idem., p.67).

It is therefore difficult and complex for us to talk openly about the bowels, excreta, flatus, urine, semen, and the set of gestures that imitate coitus, the "mysteries" of female physiology, or the act of giving birth. All that, as Bakhtin shows, has to do with the *grotesque* not only in as much as the word is capable of translating some sort of distaste, but also as a way of seeing (and of *reading*, as it were) the world. In opposition to static forms of social life and its neat references, the grotesque cries for a truly *relational* perspective where everything is in movement. Confusion, fusion and degradation by earthly elements is a fundamental "method" in relationship to the carnivalesque informality--or rather "inverted formality". There is an almost deliberate avoidance of neat, isolated, *individualized* forms and states as we are used to seeing them in our everyday and ritual lives. On the contrary, what is basic is the mixture, the linking of all elements of the social structure. This is the basis for its inversion and renovation, its rebirth *via* Carnival. It is also the basis of Carnival's fundamental way of making fun out of the rich, the superior and the powerful whose position is always *above, over or high*. They are "above the waist" and "clean" of elements capable of re-introducing earthly or, in my own terms, *relational elements* or a relational position. All these things are, however, a fundamental part of Carnival and many informal gatherings in Catholic (and other traditional) societies.

As I said before, and here I refer specifically to the individualistic, "anglo" social universe, everything that is located below the waist is relegated to a private or individual domain and is not capable of any explicit, collective mobilization. But we know that although the domain of things "below the waist" has a decidedly inhibited position in our system of classification, it has not in any sense been eliminated. On the contrary, repression may even have increased its power. Thus, everything that refers to the genitals, the feces, urine, copulation, etc., can still provoke prescriptive giggles (or rage or indignation), though we insist on classifying the laugh and everything that it involves as something spontaneous. They are classified as emotions, desires or sentiments in general. Or in the category of "taboo" words (or concepts) that, accordingly to Sir Edmund Leach, should not be mentioned because these are things *betwixt in between* (See Leach, 1964; see also Turner, 1967, who invented the expression; and Douglas, 1969). In this way, when we refer to sentiments and to laughter, we tend to speak as if these things were expressions of individual internal states, not external (and even positive) social forces or rules. In this context, therefore, it is significant to mention that the standard anthropological theory of *taboo* words and "dirtyness" in general postulates that the linkage or the area of overlapping is negative, ambiguous and hence the "taboo" area. This theory which came into being in the writings of British social anthropologists (Leach, Turner and Douglas being the seminal ones) cannot see the *positive* power of the ambiguous or the grotesque, not as something that has to be hidden, but as something that in some cultures is highlighted or even searched for with method and determination. Thus in Carnival, what people look for in Brazil (and in other areas of the world) is to enter in contact with the grotesque and the ambiguous. Here the paradox is that "taboo" is positive, essential and relevant for social life.

It is very difficult for Western thinkers to understand the arguments of Marcel Mauss when--in an essay written in 1921--he argued that one could speak of an

"obligatory expression of sentiments".² This idea, which has to do with the proposition that there is no such thing as an infra-social (or a-social) element in society, stresses precisely this: sentiments are as obligatory as moral rules, laws, contracts, attitudes and the norms that govern social actions, all of which are understood as external to the individual (or individual life). Thus, at a funeral we should always and prescriptively feel sad and cry (even when the deceased was our enemy). At a wedding, one should be jolly (even when the bride is one's ex-wife and the groom is one's ex-best friend). At a banquet in honor of the governor or the chancellor of the university, we should be discreetly solemn and quietly cheerful, even if the whole situation with its gowns or dress uniforms and medals seems ridiculous to us. And at a Carnaval dance, we should be boisterously happy and ready "to do anything", as we say in Brazil.

One of the difficulties in understanding Carnaval, then, is that it necessarily includes, collectively and obligatorily--as do almost all other secular situations paradoxically defined as informal--the laughter, the raillery, the sexuality (and sensuality) and everything that we have insistently situated in an exclusively individual and private area. The sociological study of Carnaval presents difficulties similar to those encountered in the study of everything that has to do with the "obligatory expression of sentiment," in that it includes all that we tend to classify as *irrational* or arbitrary or simply too "psychological" and internal to receive sociological and "empirical" attention. It is, for

²This same argument was suggested years ago by Radcliffe-Brown, in opposition to Malinowski, in the context of a discussion about ritual and fishing in the open sea. It is hardly necessary to mention that Malinowski's position--that ritual serves as an integrating mechanism for anxiety--rests implicitly on the postulate that anxiety is individual (an emotion or sentiment) and needs to be socially channeled through ritual (which is social). While Radcliffe-Brown postulates the opposite thesis, discovering that anxiety is as social as the ritual that makes it arise or disappear. The fact is that anxiety is an emotion that must be present in the ceremonies that precede, in the Trobriand Islands, fishing in the open sea. In the same way, for us it would be absurd not to become nervous before a Ph.D. exam, although it may be difficult to recognize that it is the exam and its grade that can cause the nervousness (the demonstration of an internal state: an emotion or sentiment). Further on, I will return to this. For now, it is worth mentioning the important discussion by Lévi-Strauss on the subject in his Totemism (Ch. III).

example, as complicated as "formalized friendship" (a form of relationship found in some tribal societies--e.g. the Timbira of Central Brazil--in which "friendship" is ascribed by virtue of given personal names). It is relevant to call attention to the fact that Robert Lowie who, I believe, coined the term, was obliged to use the word "formal" in his attempt to describe a modality of relationship in which the parties involved act as friends but the link has nothing to do with choice as is the case in our culture. Hence the use of the expression *formal* rather than "prescribed" which, while precise, would have been a contradiction in terms. Or a "marriage alliance," a union that in some societies involves the obligation to marry people situated in certain social categories of affinity and which presents the difficulty (for Western sociologists) of institutionalizing in an obligatory idiom a link that for us implies something translated by the notion of "love" and the whole constellation of spontaneous and internal feelings that comes with it. Here, in fact, we face the question of hereditary affinity, an idea that as Dumont shows, is very strange for our system of thought. We might also compare the difficulties of studying Carnival to the problem of understanding the so-called "joking relationships," links among persons implying prescribed joking, something that--for us--is located in the realm of the psychological, and the spontaneous; for how is it possible to have an *obligation* to joke with persons connected by kinship ties?

What we have in all of these cases is, without doubt, a difficulty in understanding the relationships among sentiments (or what we define as emotions), those things that are essential and inalienable attributes of the individual (as we conceive it), such as love, sexuality, joking, laughter, desire, etc., and the moral rules that in our conceptualization should be separate and independent from these. For us, there is a profound differentiation between sentiments (or internal states) and external actions that we always take to be much more formalized and easy to grasp and understand. For us without any doubt

the empirical is the external and the visible in the sense of being what can be perceived and individually measured.

Now, when these dimensions of social life are completely separate, we have no problems. But when we confront situations in which they are confused and mixed--as occurs in Carnivals, orgies, conversations among friends in bars, brothels or market places; and on "informal" occasions (parties, family social gatherings such as birthdays, family dinners, etc...)--we become confused and tend to reduce their ideological meanings by saying that they do not have a complete form of sociability or, better still, of "institutionalized sociability". The secular, according to some anthropological theories of ritual therefore, is less "ideological" than the religious or the political. The paradox lies in having to cope with the obligatory in forms of sociability that we normally classify as spontaneous and internal. All these things for us in a sense should be out of the "social" realm.

The Formal and the Informal

It is easy for us to observe that when we listen to a lecture by a professor, our emotional response hardly matters. We might hear everything, but end up thinking that the lecturer was a fool, and this would not change the situation in any way. It is much more complicated to behave in a similar fashion at an informal dinner with friends, at which the desire to eat and its formal (or socially prescribed demonstrations) are basic requisites of the social situation. Thus I can go to a church and not pray, but I cannot go to the home of a friend for supper and not eat. Especially if the dinner is defined as an "informal" one, which means that the whole situation will be perceived and lived as an embedded "occasion," an event in which every element had to be taken together and never in isolation.

All this, I think, brings us to consideration of the following point: everything indicates that what we call "formal situations" (occasions where one should restrain or simply suppress improper sentiments or emotions, or that require the restraint of individual sentiments and their manifestations) are occasions where internal states can be divorced from external states without causing a significant change of the event and its socially defined nature. In fact, formal situations can even require such a separation which can be a problem for the performance of some social roles. In Brazil, for example, there is no matrimonial legitimation stronger than a wedding in the Roman Catholic Church. For many couples, this is a kind of ideological violation since they do not believe in Catholicism or its doctrines and sacraments. But it is easy to pass through the ritual of marriage because it does not demand any form of correspondence (testing) between external and internal actions. In other words, the Catholic ritual of marriage does not check what is felt in relation to what is done. In the same way, I know of cases of persons who have had to perform social roles of great relevance, in which they had to recite magic formulas in Latin and wear formal garments they did not believe in and that they even thought ridiculous. Examples include members of the military at their solemnities, or political leaders at their inauguration rituals. While emotions may arise on these occasions, their manifestation could actually disturb the unfolding of the event, in that here the "recipe" of the event requires that one should not have any emotions at all. Thus one should not be too nervous during many formal events that, in our culture at least, demand an absolute control of the sentiments by the participant. Here, I repeat, the emotion is not to show any emotion at all...As if the abundance of emotions were a sign of the incapacity of the person in the ritual situation. One only has to think of the impotence of bridegrooms on the wedding night, shaking while signing a peace treaty, trembling too much while reciting an oath, running away on a battle-field, to realize that formal occasions almost require the whole situation to be encompassed by its external elements. A formality, therefore, is in

our world, an event in which the external aspects are dominant--or visibly dominant elements. Here emotions (or internal states) can destroy the event. They are, therefore, banished from its cultural recipe.

The opposite occurs in playful situations, orgiastic occasions like Carnival, and in "informal situations" in general. In fact, here what is established as a recipe or formula for creating the social event itself, is precisely the joining of internal and external states, something which functions as a symbol for the ideal mixture or conjugation of all with all in the situation that the group wishes to create. The Brazilian Carnival in general and the Carnival ball in particular are perfect cases with which to make this relationship clearer. In the Carnival, the actor is simply prohibited by the cultural recipe that engenders the event from divorcing his emotions from his actions. I am suggesting that what we call informality is a situation characterized by the merging of what we think, feel and want with what we do and are told by the society to do.

Here I want to study such situations, taking as a point of reference the Brazilian Carnival ball in Rio de Janeiro. By studying the Carnival ball as emblematic of the Brazilian Carnival, I intend to accomplish two purposes. The first is directly related to the recipe for the masquerade or for the Carnival; and the second is linked to a theory about social acts and their relationship to internal and external states that are in effect the basis for Carnival's cultural recipe.

³For many years I have been studying the Brazilian Carnival from a sociological perspective and in comparison with similar phenomena in other societies. I do not have sufficient space here to present all the dimensions of Carnival and its social and ideological implications. Briefly, an interpretation of Carnival has to take into account the complex set of relationships that are explicitly defined as "carnavalesco": that is to say, all

³ An earlier version of this section was published in the 1985 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society.

that Brazilians perceive as belonging to Carnival time and space, along with everything that one does not want to say and do and cannot say or do during Carnival. The formula is quite obvious, but its implications for the study of formal events are far reaching because in general anthropologists are satisfied to define the ritual under study, leaving aside everything that the ritual conceals, prohibits or inhibits. But every social event is always produced by the complex interaction of all that belongs to its recipe (or explicit side) and all that has to be concealed from its production. There are always two sides: on one hand the explicit dimension, where we find rules relative to the orientation and direction of the event as a unique social episode--a funeral, a marriage, a carnival, a graduation, or a healing ritual; and on the other, the *implicit* dimension, that includes everything that one should not do if the event one desires to construct is to have the structure (the form and the content) stipulated by the culture. I want to suggest that what we classify as "formal" in our Western individualized culture is a structure whose implicit sides are open; that is to say, the cultural recipe only demarcates its external or explicit orientations, leaving aside all that has to do with its "internal" or implicit side. Informal gatherings on the contrary make a deeper distinction by making explicit what should be excluded from the party (or the ritual).

The Case of Brazilian Carnival

It is important to note that both sides are fundamental to the study of an event. It is necessary then to examine the event in the relationships in which it is regularly obliged to, or inhibited from, manifesting itself. Thus, Carnival is an inversion of daily reality, banishing "work" and creating a utopia of pleasures and abundance. Most specifically in the Brazilian case, Carnival provides a time and space where people can disconnect themselves from the web of obligatory social relationships--from family responsibilities and

from other relationships of institutionalized loyalty, such as *compadrio*, patronage and kinship. Participants can then form "new", much more creative and free social unities that exist only for *carnavalesque* purposes or, as we say in Brazil, "para brincarve Carnaval" (to play Carnaval). Hence the "*blocos*", "*cordões*" and "*escolas de samba*" that appear in carnival time and whose main characteristic is to be voluntary and based on ties, friendship and sympathy. If Brazilians in everyday life are defined by their relationships with their houses (*casas*), their jobs, their skin color, their family names, their way of speaking, their academic degrees, political parties, type of friends, prestige of their *compadres* etc., what is important in the definition of a Carnaval recipe is a sort of negative social determination, since on this occasion they gain the freedom to choose the group with whom they wish to go to Carnaval. If a person's daily life is determined by "established" relationships--and we know that the Brazilian masses are determined by their work and working conditions--Carnaval opens up the possibility of individual determination, entirely based on a choice that comes from within the person's internal space. This possibility is common in Brazil with the groups that are in charge of the festive and the ludic. Thus, religious groups and *futebol* (soccer) fan groups are often free of family and kinship obligations. Though I cannot choose my family or even some of my friends, I can choose the saints to whom I pray, the soccer clubs that excite me and give me some experience of social justice (See DaMatta, 1982), and the Carnaval groups that allow me a much more individualized perspective on the social universe.

At the same time, Carnaval permits me to wear special clothes, a disguise that in Brazil is called a *fantasia*. In one sense, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Cf. DaMatta, 1973), a *fantasia* is a type of Carnaval uniform. But while a uniform leads to uniformity, making people similar and accentuating their relationships with, and their immersion in, a corporation or social group, a *fantasia* does the exact opposite. The *fantasia* permits the expression of individual interests and motivations that are impossible in everyday life.

Thus, in contrast to formal vestments and robes which as we saw hide and protect the person's sentiments (and inner space in general) from the role he (or she) is performing, as is the case with judges, ministers, priests, professors and soldiers, whose emotions are hidden underneath their uniforms, the *fantasia* relates both what the person really is in daily life (what in Brazil is called the real world or "a dura realidade da vida", the hard reality of life) and what he or she would like to be or could have been. In this perspective, the *fantasia of Carnaval* operates as a mediator between the social (and political) limitations of reality and the freedom and hope that the recipe of Carnaval promises to create. It permits man to relate to woman (as in the limiting and dramatic case of transvestites); it links the anonymous urban poor with the aristocracy and the regalia of mythological figures, as happens when the poor parade in the best known samba schools dressed as kings and princesses, noblemen and gods.

Moreover, the *fantasia* accentuates a specific social group (the samba school X), without ceasing to permit the full expression of individuality, since in the parade of the samba schools, people dressed in the same way alternate with people dressed in an individualistic way, who are called "*destaques*" (persons of distinction) because they are in effect distinguished from the group, like super-stars or super-individuals.

Carnaval, then, has a recipe or formula that orders and coordinates social life by means of certain relationships, values and emotions, while necessarily inhibiting other sentiments and relationships. It would be impossible to have Carnaval in Brazil if Brazilians insisted on continuing to think about the quotidian and problematic aspects of their lives, such as the formidable external debt, the high rates of infant mortality and illiteracy, the chronic absence of political liberties, and the shocking socioeconomic contrasts. But it is necessary to emphasize that these aspects are absent from the celebration only explicitly, formally or paradigmatically. Because, in fact, their presence is remembered, not only by social and political critics of Carnaval using precisely these facts to support their

arguments--Carnaval, they say, is the opium of the Brazilian people--but also through their presence as part of the structure of the celebration itself in its attempts to resolve and mediate all these contradictions by transforming oppositions into hierarchical complementarities. It is precisely this overwhelming presence of contrasts and contradictions that explains the energy that Brazilians expend on the creation of Carnaval, where they celebrate a utopian society based on abundance, on positive and open individualism, and on pleasure. If social misery did not exist, if there were not enormous familial repression, if society did not discriminate brutally against women in the public sphere, and if there were a fair distribution of income, the Brazilian Carnaval might still exist, but it would certainly have a different configuration and style. What explains the style of Brazilian Carnaval is the necessity of inventing a celebration where things that need to be forgotten can be forgotten if the celebration is to be experienced as a social utopia. Just as a wild dream makes reality even more vehement, Carnaval can only be understood when we take into account what it needs to hide in order to be a celebration of pleasure, sexuality, and laughter.

What I am saying, then, is very simple. All delimited social events involve a complex relationship between what they reveal and what they conceal, between what is said and what must be left unsaid, between what they make possible and what they prohibit. Both aspects are essential for a correct sociological interpretation. Without the search for links between the explicit and the implicit, one runs the risk of proposing a purely formal theory of social events.

We all know that Carnaval is a ritual of reversal. But it is necessary to go beyond this to observe the type of reversal that happens in the Brazilian Carnaval in contrast to other carnivals. It is necessary to establish which objects, scenarios, social relationships, and persons are systematically reversed. It is my thesis that one can only be clear about all this when one tries to discover the relationships between what the event reveals and

makes explicit and what it hides or simply makes irrelevant. To produce a social occasion means to show and, on the other hand, to hide.

The comparison of the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro with other carnivals is important, in this sense, and it serves us as a kind of test case for some of the main ideas here presented.

In the case of Brazil, the festival of liberty, the celebration of happiness and pleasure, the occasion on which everything is possible and which Brazilians call *loucura* (madness), is a moment when social categories which in daily life are clearly and dramatically separate, can be linked to each other. What categories are these?

The Other Side of Carnaval

Brazilian social life runs is bounded by three basic social domains: the home (*casa*), the street (*rua*) and the other world (*outra mundo*).⁴ The sphere of the home is a region where the physical being is created, maintained, and dispatched to the other world by people who are very close, people who share the same "nature" (the same "flesh" and "blood", the same tendencies and aversions). There the *person* has direct, on-going, and inalienable relationships, as well as a singular and exclusive position that is accentuated by the fundamental hierarchies of sex and age. The *world of the street*, however, is entirely different. There, universal values and an individualistic ideology, lived and conceived negatively, predominate. Thus, if in my home I am a super-citizen, in the street I will be defined by what I am not able to do. If at home there are no laws, in the

⁴ The Brazilian words *casa*, translated here as home, and *rua*, translated as street, have somewhat different connotations from their English counterparts. *Casa* refers to both the home, in the sense of home and hearth, and also to the dwelling or shelter itself. *Rua*, in contrast, has a less literal meaning in Portuguese than in English. It refers to the real world outside the home, to the place, in an urban setting, where life outside the family takes place.

street I am subordinated to all the laws. In the street I am subject to the impersonality of the laws of the market, running the risk of being equal to everyone before the law, a situation that--as I have shown elsewhere--is irksome for all Brazilians of whatever social strata and that seems to characterize semi-traditional societies that have double or multiple ethics. (Cf. DaMatta, 1979, 1985; and, on the question of double ethics, Weber, 1967). The supernatural sphere permits the reconciliation of all the contradictions between life in the home and on the street.

In a society thus constituted, life seems to take place in at least three social spaces and following at least two different ethics. On the one hand, there is a morality based on personal relationships and on the fact that membership in the family group is perpetuated and based on the substance that passes from one generation to another. On the other hand, there exists an ethic based on the individual as the moral center of the world and on universal laws that guarantee his liberty and public equality as a citizen. This, of course, is the legacy that comes to Brazil by means of the French and American Revolutions and that operates in the country simultaneously with the morality of personal relationships. In the street, therefore, all are equal before the law. For this reason, the street is seen as a dangerous space, precisely because there the authorities can dehumanize the person, transforming him into an "individual." And there is nothing worse than being an individual in Brazil and thus running the risk of having no relations, being undivided and alone. In a certain sense, the existence of the individual is very complicated. Although everyone is theoretically an individual before the laws of the state, those who have connections and prestige, can slip under or over legal rules, invoking a special relationship with those who control the legal resources of the state. Thus, the law tends to be applied in a rigorous way only to the masses who have neither powerful relatives nor important family names. From this perspective, it can be observed that in a society like Brazil, universal laws do not contribute to the liberation of society, as

happened in Europe as a result of the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution, but rather to the exploitation of labor. The relations between these two ethics are complex and fundamental for understanding societies like the Brazilian where both individualism and hierarchy exist.⁵

The point that I want to emphasize, however, is the following: in a system structured this way, the social universe is perceived as divided, segmented, cross-cut by social spaces and ethics that are distinct but complementary. Psychological space is similarly divided, like the God of Roman Catholicism, into three persons. Thus, in Brazil, I am one person at home, another on the street, and still another in the Church or in a cult. The result is a vision of the world based on alternation and complementarity. From the point of view of home and family, of friends and cronies, I see the world as a conservative, by means of relations that I desire to remain immutable and from within a space based on hierarchy and substance. Here I am the mediator and provider, having to defend my family from the world with its modernities and, obviously, aggressions. But if I look at the system from the point of view of the street, and if I am in the street, then everything changes. Now I am a relentless individualist who believes more strongly than the English that time is money and that business is business. Now I am revolutionary and advanced in business, ideas, morality. By the same logic, I can become noble and advocate the renunciation of the world when I am in church or when I face death and suffering. I am convinced that social life goes on in this way in the majority of societies that have to some extent adopted an individualistic code of ethics without, however, modifying the traditional system of personal and familial relationships.

For a Puritan observer, trained in a world where home, street, and the other world operate by the same ethic, systems like the Brazilian will appear to be systems where

⁵ With regard to this problematic, I must mention the work of Louis Dumont (1965, 1970a and 1970b).

cynicism, amorality, and the absence of "public spirit" are dominant. In the same way, the Brazilian Carnival might be suggested as the most developed instance of this socially irresponsible society that can tolerate without moral indignation the staggering contrasts between fine houses, inhabited by persons who have every privilege, and streets full of the poor and marginal subject to the hard and cold letter of the universal laws, and paradigmatically, the baroque churches full of gold and silver, with their virgins and saints that look like us.

From my perspective, however, Carnival should be interpreted as an extraordinary moment--an inversion--precisely because it permits the system to transcend its internal divisions. The Brazilian Carnival turns society into a coherent totality by means of a single ethic and a single pattern of behavior. It is not surprising that this ethic is based on a hedonism that abolishes all duties and distributes to all a type of super-citizenship. Thus, at Carnival the ideal is that everyone can do everything. Nor is it uncommon that in societies with hierarchical frameworks the symbolism of the body takes on exceptional salience during Carnival. It may be because it is believed that everyone has to have a body; it may be because it is through the body that it is possible to bring about the basic equality that joins all men as members of humanity. Also, it is not fortuitous that the Brazilian world of Carnival gives enormous emphasis to women and makes the world feminine during its celebration. Here also the reversal is perfect, since if men are responsible for mediating between the home and the street in the everyday world, at Carnival it is through the woman that all the contradictions can be reconciled within the framework of values of this society. Woman is not only the mother of God, but she is also the mother of Carnival, as if her body were the center toward which everything gravitates and from which, naturally, everything comes.

Nor is it fortuitous that Carnival permits all gestures and practices in the streets and clubs, opening enormous space for the expression of individual sentiments of all

types. It does not really create anything new, but it permits doing in the street or in public what is usually only done at home. One can, for example, eat, urinate, defecate or go naked in the street. One can make love in the street, which becomes a secure and inviting space, even in the great cities like Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, and Salvador. While the universe of the house is left uninhabited, the more individualistic impersonality of the street is also at an end. In this way Carnival permits a merging of these two poles of Brazilian social life, even making it possible to "forget" everyday morality that opposes sin and is concerned with the control of eroticism and sexuality. Putting morality aside in this precise way, the moment of Carnival opens up possibilities for pleasure as something positive, free, and, naturally, individualized. Pleasure is no longer controlled by parents, brothers, and spouses, nor by the institution of marriage and the family. Now pleasure is treated as magic; as something complete in itself; as pleasure for its own sake that permits the transformation to a highly democratic system. At Carnival, all are equal with regard to pleasure and the body. In this underlying sense, Carnival allows a profound link between equality and hierarchy, between the individual and the person, family and voluntary associations, relatives and unknown persons, compatriots and foreigners, home and street, morality and pleasure, citizenship and individual desires, wives and casual and inconsequential lovers.

The basic question in all this is the following: do other rituals of inversion and carnivals have the same characteristics? Brazilian Carnival is interesting because it seems to create a space in which connections between home, street, and the other world are possible. The presence of angels, devils, and death itself at the Brazilian Carnival results from the creation of such a space. But what would a carnival be like in a society without such marked internal divisions? An example would be the carnival of New Orleans, which is regional, partial and borderline. Mardi Gras happens in one city inserted into a social environment whose ideology is egalitarian and whose impersonal laws operate

everywhere. What is this carnival like, that also inverts and creates according to Victor Turner, a *communitas*, in a society where "house", "street", and the "other world" are merged and are much closer to each other than they are in Brazil?

Everything indicates that here the carnival movement is of separation instead of merging. While the Brazilian Carnival invents a moment when all are equal before the laws of Carnival and the laws of Carnival reconcile home, street, and the other world, in the universe of Mardi Gras in New Orleans the event seems to create a hierarchy. Thus, in New Orleans, carnival does not lead to individualization or even to the creation of an egalitarian ambience. In fact, to do this would be not to "*carnavalizar*" (*carnavilize*)⁶ in a society where individualism and equality are precisely the ideas that carnival wants to inhibit or keep in the background. In contrast with Brazil where inequality is a fact of life, in New Orleans equality is a basic tenet of the social and political creed and, as such, part of its social reality. Therefore, to produce a Carnival in Brazil involves leveling and creating relationships where none previously existed; in the United States, however, it involves inventing hierarchies and exclusions.

It is therefore in seeking to understand the relationship between the implicit and the explicit that we can really discover the way inversion operates in each case. We see in Brazil that inversion tends toward inclusions and connections. But in New Orleans, the inversion seems to go in the opposite direction, creating temporary differentiation and inequality. In both cases it is necessary to understand what precedes and follows the moment of ritual. Here again, I am repeating an argument made by Leach, but I hope also to be deepening the study of certain problems. To make this more clear, let me finish by speaking of the carnival ball in Brazil.

⁶ There is no English equivalent for carnavalizar which means "to carnival", that is to say, to have the possibility of changing places.

As a carnival event, the Carnaval Ball of Rio is everything of which I have spoken in capsule form. Really, this occasion marks not only a special time (which I mentioned earlier in relation to Leach's arguments [1961]), but also a space in which the world appears clothed in extraordinary elements which are completely absent in everyday life. The magic of Carnaval consists of the possibility of relating all these worlds to each other.

The Carnaval Ball

But what is a "carnival ball" in Brazil?

Primarily, it is the creation of a space where people can "cavort" and "play," which means use the whole body, ceasing to control it as one would in everyday life. It is interesting, in this context, to observe that the word *brincar* (to play) comes from the Latin *vinculu*, which means to relate by means of an earring, in Portuguese, a *brinco*. Thus, the basic idea of the carnival ball, of playing, means to be able to be open to relationships with all persons in that environment, independent of their position or social status. Together with the idea of playing, there is a special way of moving the body and gesticulating; or, as Marcel Mauss noted, the idea of playing at Carnaval implies a "body technique". What technique? Well, primarily it is necessary that the body follow--discreetly or outrageously--the rhythm of the "music of Carnaval"⁷ that is played by a band on the stage. To do this, it is necessary to learn to differentiate the body into parts, divorcing the hips, shoulders, arms, and face from the body as a whole so that it is possible to do the following: while the

⁷ In Portuguese, "música de carnaval", a musical genre specially produced for Carnaval that may include different rhythmic structure such as the samba or the "march". Here there is emphasis on the lyrics and they are written to provoke action and movement of carnivalesque type. They also induce laughter and what one can call, following Bakhtin, a "gay relativization" of the world in general. This genre is conspicuously absent from the New Orleans Mardi Gras and from the Nice carnival. 'See my "Aspectos Sociais da Música Popular Brasileira" for a deep treatment of this issue. I am at the moment engaged in researching pop music in Brazil and I would be grateful if the reader can offer me some suggestions concerning this important and difficult topic.

hips (and consequently the legs, thighs and feet) move rhythmically to the cadence of the music, the arms are open in a circle toward the multitude or toward the person with whom one is then "playing". Parallel to this, the face is resolutely expressive, with the eyes focused on the person or groups of persons with whom one is "playing", and the mouth is moving, singing the melody obligatorily sung by everyone. One can also throw kisses to persons (or person) or even, more erotically, show her (or them) the point of the tongue in a suggestion of a French kiss, or in gestures more daring.

At a Carnival ball, then, gestures always reveal what I have interpreted as being a symbolic embrace that all give to all. This is significant because in Brazil, as in other countries, social relations are manifested in personal gestures that vary in intensity. Thus, in Brazil, I shake hands with recent friends, stay distant from enemies, and embrace quickly or slowly people with whom I maintain a relationship of lesser or greater intensity. A long embrace indicates not only a prolonged, loving relationship, but also the level of intensity of certain emotional states. Together with the embrace, comes the touching of faces that can occur between men when the relationship is very intense. This shows that the embrace can be seen as a means of expressing social relations, and that an embrace only takes place between people who have a relationship of a certain level of *intimacy*.

Carnaval permits this kind of logic to be subverted because during Carnival, one can embrace anyone, both symbolically and in practice. At the beginning of the ball a man or a woman can face his or her partner with open arms, in the rhythmic movement already described, only suggesting an embrace, as if the person were being *encircled*. But after some minutes, if some sympathy exists, the embrace can be concretized and then the two people, paired together side by side, go through the ballroom, singing, hugging, in the same rhythm, and having necessarily to express happiness. Eventually, in going through the dance, they can embrace each other front to front and kiss on the mouth in a sexually open manner. The embrace of a man by a woman from the back can also

happen, suggesting an inverted and inhibited sexual act, sodomy. At Carnival balls, this kind of "playing", embracing a woman from the back, is common, leading me to suggest that on this occasion a form of sexuality usually concealed in Brazil becomes publicly legitimate in the orgy of Carnival.

I mentioned above that the ball permits people to be *encircled*. I want to explore this a little further because in sexual relationships in Brazil (whether hetero- or homo-sexual) the metaphor of the hunt is constant. Thus the sexual object is *encircled, hunted, "paquerado"* (as is done when one is going to hunt the animal called the *paca*) and finally *seduced and eaten*. Sexual excitement can be described in terms of heat, with people becoming *hot or catching fire*, and the sex act is always described as a meal, where the dominant person (in general the male or the one performing the masculine role) takes in [swallows] the female. At a Carnival ball what seems to happen is that everyone wants to "eat" everyone else. The possibility of having an erotic visual relationship with everyone is central, I believe, to the Carnival context. Above all, it suggests in equality what the situation of each person in everyday life obviously prevents. Thus, if in the world of the house and the street, Brazilians know that they will never be able to see *in the flesh*, as they say, a television or film actor, at a Carnival ball this becomes possible. And here, obviously, we have a critical difference between Carnival in Brazil and Mardi Gras in New Orleans. In Brazil, one can *buy an invitation* to all the Carnival balls in the large cities. Of course some are expensive, but the basic fact is that Carnival brings everyone together through money, making Brazilian society "democratic" in this sense. In other words, street and home, family and masses, are related by the logic of money, and the invitation confers the right to enter the balls of the most exclusive clubs of the city, such as the Yacht Club in Rio de Janeiro. But in New Orleans exactly the opposite occurs. There the ball is controlled by a semi-secret, exclusive group, a *krewe*, and only those with invitations can take part in the ball. The invitation, then, in an egalitarian society, has the

function of excluding, while in a hierarchical society it has the function of permitting inclusion.

The enormous social opening that the ball permits in a closed physical space, creates a situation of social and erotic intimacy that seems very important for understanding the direction and style of the Brazilian Carnival. At the ball three well marked social spaces exist. There is, first, an open space for dancing. There people circulate as described above. This area is the focus of all the watchers, and it is there that people dance. At the lower level, the dance floor by being an open and free space, with areas that need not be definitely occupied by anyone, it is a perfect symbol of the *street*. The dance floor permits movement and, as they say in Brazil, *animacão* (animation). Besides this open space, there is a more closed space, where "tables" are placed. In general, the tables are at the top of a little wooden stairway so that people there can see the whole dance floor, as the audience sees the stage in a theater. At the tables one can eat lightly (Carnaval is not a festival of eating), drink or relax. There could be no better metaphor for home than this group of tables where one can refresh the body that comes in tired from the dance floor (the street). Finally, the third space complements the other two. Private rooms like theater boxes are located above both the dance floor and the tables and appear to be the privileged locations of the ball. There, people are served in a more refined way and can also enjoy a more complete view of the whole scene. In the boxes, people can also do anything they desire because they can have privacy.

A Carnival ball does more than this, however. In New Orleans, as we know, the logic of the ball is much closer to that of a theater than is the case in Rio de Janeiro or in Brazil in general. Really, in New Orleans, the ball is ordered in circles. There is a group of central persons, made up of the king and queen of the *krewe* and their court, there is a controller or Captain of the ball, there are honored guests, and spectators in general who do not dance, but instead only watch the members of the *krewe* dance. The hierarchy is

patent, and, for me, the Mardi Gras ball in New Orleans is a perfect metaphor for social differentiation.

In Rio de Janeiro, however, the ball has no defined center. There, the stage where a band plays carnival music, is the least important. What counts more is the possibility of everyone's eyes meeting everyone else's in a highly individualized world only marked by spatial divisions. An atmosphere of almost concrete eroticism penetrates all the spaces and brings about a series of social situations fascinating from the point of view of a theory of ritual and magic.

At the Carnaval ball in Brazil, the rules of circumspection that divide and give meaning to social actions are definitely suspended. Hence it is possible to do in public at the ball what is only permitted in private during everyday life. One can look freely at everyone--which cannot be done in daily life without fear of the "evil eye" or bad luck. But at the ball no one is afraid, no one hides his wealth or beauty, his body or soul. Open and uninhibited observation corresponds in an exemplary and complementary way to the exhibitionism. Those on the dance floor put on a show for those at the tables and in the boxes. Later, those at the tables put on a show for those on the dance floor and in the boxes. The simultaneous occurrence of exhibitions and small events of a markedly erotic character, such as people making love, women taking off their clothes, men and women engaged in acts of complete grotesquerie, makes the situation highly explosive and magic.

Brazilians call this highly fragmented and exciting atmosphere, where something new happens every minute and at any moment anything can happen, *loucura*, madness. And in fact, the word *folião* (from the French) is used to describe those who love to play at Carnaval in Brazil. But why is all this perceived as madness?

Rituals and Their Magic

I believe that the answer to this question brings us to some important theoretical issues. I would like to end by approaching these issues from the perspective that the study of the Brazilian Carnival suggests.

The first point is on the very nature of Carnival as a cultural artifact or object. Here we have to be more aware that as ritual, Carnival creates a most powerful form of totality: a bounded totality. It is common knowledge that no society can exist without some idea of limits, hence the preoccupation of every social group with frontiers and dividing lines. But the totality that bounded events are able to create are not so inclusive. And precisely because they are not so continuous and ample, they are able to provide for a crucial experience of discontinuity. Here we no longer have a set of principles, said to be eternal and given by a god or a cultural hero, that we never have been able to experience in concrete terms. But on the contrary, what we have in every "ritual" (or by the dramatizations that are created as bounded events) is the possibility of entering into contact with sets of basic values, objects, and relationships of the society in almost concrete terms. Hence the suggestion that in "rituals" we are able to conjugate and harmonize our bodies (with their egoistic interests) and our souls (with their moral demands). Why? Mainly because bounded events are things that present us with a beginning, a middle and an end. Beyond its superficial obviousness, the formula is certainly profound in the sense that it has that capacity to make us experience totalities as fabricated on a human scale. Thus, if the world was invented by the inscrutable deed of a mysterious God; if the life of man on this earth is ever surrounded by all sorts of uncontrollable elements; ritual--by putting things into measurable entities of space and time, people and material objects--allows us to "see" and feel all this. Bounded events make the infinite compatible with the sometimes uncomfortable finitude of our lives. In producing rituals we can go over the

universe itself, encompassing some of its mystery and incommensurable discontinuities. Thus, it is in this specific mode that rituals (and cultural *artifacts* of similar nature) play with time and space. What they in fact provide us with is the possibility of transforming the infinite and the discontinuous into something finite and continuous. By doing so, therefore, they give the means of experimenting with "society" as an object that can be touched as such and not as an everlasting and abstract entity.

Thus while the individual existence is always perceived as transient and finite, social life is seen as permanent and eternal. Emile Durkheim taught us that those dualist ways of perceiving the basic facts of society and of human nature corresponded universally to the idea of the body, a symbol of the egoistic interests of the individual, and the soul, which was typically social (or moral) and collective and, as a result, everywhere conceived as immortal. But between body and soul daily life presents a series of disparities and contradictions. They generally do not match and are not in harmony with each other. In point of fact, in many societies the open contradiction and opposition that exists between individual interests of various kinds and the moral rules of the society is part of the experience of man. Except when it is perhaps harmonized and humanized by means of powerful operators such as rituals. Why? Because, I repeat, bounded events provide the possibility of experiencing totality as something visible, concrete and on a human (or historical) scale. Thus, after the festivity we all go home thinking about how we have been able to encompass that specific Carnival, or funeral, or healing ritual, or graduation ceremony. As if they had been made for us, as if they had been invented for our pleasure, as if they had been created on our scale. Ritual calibrates between an abstract recipe and the stuff of life with its contradictions and deceptions.

By doing so, bounded events create meaning and give direction to events otherwise indifferent to the human condition and order. One of the most basic elements of magic is this possibility of transforming the erratic (or even the statistical possibility) into

something necessary from our point of view. The ultra-determinism of magic is, as Lévi-Strauss mentions, a fundamental mechanism for attributing meaning and logic to events that otherwise have no meaning at all. In an accident or misfortune, then, the magical act allows us to escape from its shocking indifference, entering into a realm in which all makes sense in terms of social or human significance. Again, as Bergson and Evans-Pritchard demonstrated simultaneously a long time ago, magic thinking is not to be explained away by attributing to the "savage" a deep sense of ignorance of the "real causes" of disease or accidents. But it should be understood as a mechanism by which societies were able to set in course a refusal of indifference by attributing to the misfortune a *significant* cause. Thus, the magical act made possible the creation of discontinuities and meaning in the continuous and meaningless events generated by the dynamics of daily life. Like bounded events, magical acts provide cosmological accountability to society and to its rules the meaning they claim to have. They reassure us that following morals norms guarantees a life full of luck and good fortune; something that every man in every society knows from the heart to be an empty guarantee. It is this possibility of linking everything with everything else that ritual and magic allow us to perform.

Carnaval, then, like all "sacred," liminal, or extraordinary events, permits us to experience totality concretely. In Brazil, this is done, as we saw, through the institution of individualism and egalitarianism that daily life tends to deny or exclude. The world of Brazilian Carnaval, then, is coherent in the sense that it requires a conjugation of form and content, body and soul, house and street, the internal and the external. Thus, even when the ritual invents something opposed to the every day world, as carnaval does, this "chaos" is ordered according to rules about what it inhibits or does not allow to surface. At base, in social life we always have a gestalt of figure and background, such that the oscillation between dimensions seen as opposed or contrary is a fundamental experience of human society.

This experience of harmonization of things of the world in a bounded event (or at least more bounded than the world) has something to do with the idea of time. Here we come to a fundamental dimension of the human condition and to some important speculations. Leach was one of the first to note that ritual fabricated time and, beyond this, could make it concrete and even permit the manipulation of its rhythm. I could not agree more. I would only add that ritual, or better, the forms of delimited social events, create different kinds of time. I am convinced, and I have written about this (Cf. DaMatta, 1979), that in the Brazilian case many kinds of time exist simultaneously. I do not believe, however, that Brazil is an abnormal society in this regard. In fact, I think that all societies experience different temporalities and that diverse rituals create and recreate different kinds of time. All ritual forms tend to invent eternal and equal temporalities since the ritual, as has been said repeatedly, is a repetitive social act. But this adds very little to our understanding of the problem. It is necessary to discover, as Leach suggests, the configuration of the ritual as a whole: what comes before and what comes after it. Thus, I would like to suggest that in societies where history as a form of temporality tends to be dominant, the most important rituals may be rites that try to stop time and eternalize values. But in societies dominated by a cyclical conception of time, the ritual is more likely to be a moment when the introduction of change or the establishment of some rule or historical personage is desired or required. The repetition seems to be closely linked to a certain guarantee of perpetuity and finite alternation, as of day and night. The ideas of history and progress, on the contrary, suggest an open world. In a universe thus constituted, the experience of a spectacle with a finite and well-marked duration can be a constant point of reference.

Finally, it would also be necessary to investigate why a society always has well marked social spaces, all liable to specific forms of ritualization. In Brazil, for example, home, street, and the other world are "expressed" by means of specific rituals, and I

suspect that each of these rituals works with a different idea of time. Thus, birthdays, funerals, weddings, baptisms, engagements and individual rites of healing are rites of the home, and tend to occur within a repetitive temporal framework. Here the event and the experience are more important than the time in which they occur, their place on the calendar. But the rituals of the street--that is, the ceremonials supported by the State, civic rituals--are events always located in historical time. That means that what they want to mark explicitly is a singular, Brazilian time, although its implicit and occult side may be oriented toward the eternity of the values of the country.

The case of Carnival is interesting because in Carnival time we have a clear sensation of very rapid passage, as happens with weekends, vacations, and holidays in general. But the duration of Carnival is empty. By which I mean that it does not imply differentiations capable of separating the days or even some carnivals from others. It is only possible to know that a Carnival of the past is being dealt with when a considerable period of time has passed. All Carnivals are seen as equal. Is that because they permit an explosion of happenings simultaneously? We know that time can only pass when we have some way of "measuring" its duration. It is alternation that permits feeling and crystallizing time. Thus, a period very full of events would make impossible such an alternation, confounding everything.

Now it is precisely this that does not occur in formal rituals, where actions are delimited and the unfolding of the ritual demarcates all the positions. Rites of order permit a more precise focus on the events. Perhaps they also imply as I suggest here a lesser mobilization of feelings. Thus, I repeat, a lecture only requires that I remain quiet and listen. I can even close my eyes and not cause surprise or commit a gaffe. But I cannot do the same while eating at the home of a friend. At a dinner, I am obliged to be present, to listen, to speak...and also to drink and eat. A dinner is not possible if people do not like the food or are not hungry. The same seems to occur at Carnival in contrast to the

inauguration of the president. At a presidential inauguration only the president appears central. And only he speaks. All the other people are part of the ritual, but they are backstage, as Goffman would say. It is impossible, however, to be in the shade at Carnaval because the logic of the event involves eliminating precisely those zones. All are actors and spectators simultaneously. Thus, it appears that Bakhtin is correct when he says that *carnavalizar* is to be able to change positions--to be able to act and watch at the same time. I suggest that this is the most flagrant characteristic of informal occasions, and that the opposite occurs during formal ones. Thus, the more centralized the event and the better defined it is by its objective, the more possibilities will exist for a divorce between what we do and what we feel. By the same token, there will be a lesser mobilization of the feelings, in contrast to informal situations.

A last point should be made with regard to magic. At the Carnaval ball in Brazil, what is magic is precisely its power to reconcile a divided social universe, creating an opportunity of linking everyone with everyone else. But the magic of Carnaval is also related to the fact that at the ball we are singing what we do, so that words, actions, persons, and objects come to be a single thing. Stanley Tambiah has called attention to a very important aspect of magical acts: the power of words. It is clear that he is correct when he invokes the theories of Austin in order to suggest that the magical act has a "performative" aspect. (Cf. Tambiah, 1968, 1973; and Austin, 1962.) Thus, in the magical act, the word does not speak of the world, but is, in a certain sense, the world itself. The same occurs in poetry, or better, in the *intransitivity of poetry*. I remember, following Todorov, that Novalis uses Kant's classic distinction between practical and intransitive things. The language of poetry, the language of magic, and the language of Carnaval are languages of the "second order". That means that they are expressions for their own sake as much as they are expressions that intend to be entirely practical. Thus, as Todorov tells us:

The paradox of intransitive language is the fact that expressions that say nothing outside themselves can have, or better, are loaded with, the deepest meaning. It is precisely at the moment when we do not speak of anything that we say the most. When someone speaks only for the sake of speaking he enunciates the most magnificent and original truths. (Todorov, 1979. p.182)

Such occurs in magic formulas that enunciate hermetic and/or disconnected realities, or in the orgiastic or carnivalesque rituals, where the secular and utilitarian practical side of life is totally abandoned for a much more dense, rich, and complex vision of the world. That vision is, in reality, unsustainable since it promises a utopia of eternal pleasure and a subversion of the social universe that goes against itself as seems to be the case of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which imposes temporary hierarchy, exclusion, and inequality in a society whose creed is just the opposite.

Magic formulas, like oaths, declarations, and the music of Carnival, are acts that accomplish two processes simultaneously: they speak of the world and they are the world. The act of symbolizing is, according to Todorov, also an act that calls something into existence. Thus, the symbolizing is part of the symbolized in the same way that the act of magic has to do with a definition or clarification of the world. Its basic question is, without doubt, that of attributing meaning, making the world cease to be indifferent to the moral norms that should govern it. But it is also important, as the study of Carnival reveals, to understand those situations where words and things, persons and actions, form and meaning, emotions and social rules are confused and are merged in a closed and well defined totality. What seems to be magic in these situations is that finally the world can cease being based on a division between utility and intransitivity, means and ends. For at Carnival we are far from the practical and the utilitarian. It is perhaps this divorce between means and ends that creates the magic of Carnival and the symbolic forms. Thus, while the everyday world goes on necessarily having to search for a form of compromise between means and ends, form and meaning, command and obedience, the universe of rituals and symbols desires to establish a grammar of incoherence

between means and ends. Its goal is not to find the means adequate to certain ends rather it will use the cannon to kill the sparrow, or the magic formula to make the plants grow or prevent an earthquake. Thus, this separation can be magic. And to be magic is to discover that at times words are more important than the things that they refer to. And that gestures are more basic than the emotions that engender them. It is to discover, as have all Brazilians, that it was not Brazil that invented Carnaval, but on the contrary, it was Carnaval that invented Brazil.

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