

# Darling Harbour - site of the carnavalesque?

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**Abstract :** This paper describes Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque prior to applying it to Sydney's Darling Harbour. Bakhtin argued that the medieval Fool's Day was an authorized and condoned period of constrained revolt and criticism through which the Church and Monarchical State channeled potential rebellion into ways wherein neither were at risk. From the perspective of tourism this thesis has two reasons for interest. First, such Fool's Days are one of the precursors of modern holidaying. Second, it can be argued that the commodification of tourism product that exists today is itself a condoned escape from the stresses of contemporary society wherein the nature of our society is not criticized for the stress it creates, but rather a situation is engendered by which holidays are rewards for compliance. However, today, as exemplified by Darling Harbour, the carnivalesque of the Medieval Fool's day is emasculated in the provision of consumerist acts for tourists.

**Key words :** Carnival, carnivalesque, Darling Harbour, Commodification.

## Introduction

This paper seeks firstly to describe the concept of carnival and the carnivalesque following the precepts of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975), second to indicate some of the applications of the concept within the tourism literature and third, to present a carnivalesque reading of Sydney's Darling Harbour. The application of Bakhtin's carnivalesque provides a unique theoretical lens for re-looking at Darling Harbour, a way which offers some valuable insights into the tourist spectacle.

On the surface, the term 'carnival' conjures up images of fun, festivities and celebration. But this rather superficial view of carnival does not do justice to the very powerful tradition of the carnival as popular, common, parodic and pleasurable space of great importance in early modern Europe (Ferguson, 1990). In this era, some towns devoted up to three months a year to festive public spectacles, that were collectively called carnivals. Mikhail Bakhtin's work illuminates the significance of carnival, and the carnivalesque.

Bakhtin was influenced by an European tradition derived from both Germany and France, and in Germany carnival traces its roots back to the

Germanic spring festivities, when the demons of winter were chased away by symbolic masks and noise to make way for the promises of spring's re-emergence of life, of creativity and joy. These traditions became institutionalized in the Christian calendar, with a strong foothold in the catholic dominated parts of Southern Germany and Austria. The political directions and social critique of carnival, found in humorous parodies of politicians and political life, evolved in the Middle Ages where this kind of satire was a significant means for the commoners to express a critique of the ruling class. Despite or because of ambivalence by those in power and the uneven enforcement of laws to counter an 'illicit' staging of carnival, the carnivalesque tradition grew and became modified at the beginning of the 18th century to include Venetian style masked balls that originally were available only to aristocrats and the rich, but with the participation of prostitutes. After various parts of Germany fell to the French during the French Revolution, including Cologne, the German hub of carnival, carnivalesque celebration became illegal. Yet, the carnival with its comical and also socio-cultural and political critique, was not dead. Instead, in the early 19th century, in Germany, during the strict Prussian occupation, this colourful 'unlawful' behaviour of carnival resurfaced as a romanticized version and with 'rule and order' under a festival committee. Thus, the present tradition of the German carnival clubs came into life, celebrating major annual events, officially starting on the 11th of the 11th month, with the parades and masked balls starting after the 6th of January ([www.karnevaldeutschland.de/index/html](http://www.karnevaldeutschland.de/index/html), accessed January, 2004). Carnival is thus very much of a temporal nature within specific time frames and places, set aside for parades and balls to take place, planned, organized, set up, and eventually brought to a close by committees and the media for carnivalists to participate in and for spectators to gaze upon, and for all to relive the experience in memories and stories told.

## **Bakhtin's Concept of the Carnavalesque**

Bakhtin's body of work can be contextualized within a reaction to the cultural degeneration of the Russian Revolution into the statism of Stalin. It, simplistically put, represents an evolutionary stage from the German traditions of Kant and Hegel to the post-modernism of Foucault, Derrida and Benjamin. A member of an intellectual group primarily located in Leningrad in the mid-to late 1920s, Bakhtin was arrested in 1928 but had a 10 year sentence commuted to six years exile in Kazakhstan, where in 1934-5 he wrote *Slovo v romane* (Discourse in the Novel) and continued the ideas of the then disbanded group. This was in spite of having one of legs amputated in 1938 due to inflammation of the bone marrow, osteomyelitis, and being in pain over

sustained periods. His doctoral thesis on Rabelais was presented in 1940, but it was not until 1965 that it was printed in book form. Since his death much of his work has been translated, although some controversy exists as to what is his own and what represents the work of friends and colleagues from the earlier period of his life. Additionally his work over time shows distinct shifts in paradigms, strongly influenced by various European discourses of language, semiotics and literature within constructs that include Marxist, Hegelian and Kantian thought. Thus commentators tend to discern sequential periods of thinking, but this is made complex by the fact that earlier works lay unheralded for some time, only to emerge at later periods as the Russian political regime became more benign. Thus while Bakhtin's work on Rabelais and his concept of carnival emerged in the late 1960s, as already noted the antecedents of that thinking lay in a thesis written a quarter of a century earlier. Thus, while influential in a stream of contemporary sociological thinking, different interpretations of Bakhtin's thinking and perceived meanings may be found.

Bakhtin's conceptualization of the nature and importance of the carnivalesque is preceded by observations made in *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics), originally written in 1929 but revised in 1963. Bakhtin comments:

It could be said (with certain reservations, of course) that a person of the Middle Ages lived, as it were, two lives: one that was the official life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety; the other was the life of the carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both of these lives were legitimate, but separated by strict temporal boundaries (1973:129-130).

That Bakhtin would be sensitive to the dichotic world is explicable by reference to Stalinist states, but in his work on Rabelais the social significance of the carnivalesque is explored more fully as a means of destabilizing an official worldview. The grotesque, produced out of the extremes of the carnival, he argues, 'discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads man (sic) out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable' (1965/1988: 48). Hence, carnival offers the possibility for transformation, for renewal and regeneration (Pendergast, 2001).

Carnival is, at one level, the Dionysian response to Apollonian rationality and order, the other side of human aspirational nature. At one level the relationship is dichotic, but there is a constant tension, action and re-action;

and thus the process is dialogic. For Bakhtin the carnival defuses unity by utilizing the confusion of capering glee -

The primary carnival performance is the mock crowning and subsequent discrowning of the king of carnival... The basis of the ritual performance of crowning and discrowning the king is at the very core of the carnivalistic attitude to the world - the pathos of vicissitudes and changes, of death and renewal (1973: 102).

Carnival is thus the site of both juxtaposition (of death and renewal, of lower and higher orders), of subversion (a mock crowning), it is a 'temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men ... and of the prohibitions of usual life' (Bakhtin, 1982:15). It is therefore egalitarian, anarchic and ritualistic, and in Bakhtin's reading of history, comic and bawdy, or Rabelaisian. In such ways the spirit of carnival 'makes it possible to extend the narrow sense of life' (Bakhtin, 1973:177), and in its creative destruction it sheds light on meanings and presents 'an alternate conceptualization of reality. Dialogism is a fundamental aspect of the carnival - a plurality of 'fully valid consciousnesses' (Bakhtin, 1973: 9).

## **The Medieval Carnavalesque - critique and evidence.**

This conceptualization of carnival has been both amplified and criticized in contemporary thinking. For example, as described in more detail below, football (soccer) crowds have been analysed as a process of carnival wherein lie processes of subversion of authority and reclaiming identities of difference. As briefly discussed below, tourism has also been analyzed in terms of the carnival following a Bakhtian interpretation of a subversive inversion where the usual is set aside in favour of socially sanctioned periods of hedonism.

One criticism of this concept of the carnival is based upon a Foucauldian imperative, that analysis must be predicated upon evidence, albeit

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (Foucault, p.89).

Accordingly Gardiner (1993), in his *Bakhtin's Carnival: Utopia as Critique* argues that Bakhtin offers a fracture from the then dominant ideological purview (and indeed to the mind of these authors it is possible for the Rabelaisian critique to be interpreted as an appraisal of Soviet Russia), and thus parallel interpretations can co-exist with that of Bakhtin. Morson and Emerson (1992) for their part have made at least two key observations. First, that Bakhtin's interpretation of the confusion of carnival is benign and ignores the dangers of carnivalistic violence, second, that it implies within processes of renewal a collectivism that might not exist, that dialogue is the process of asking questions,

but that as new responses emerge, they too exist to be questioned, but as Simons (1988) argues, what emerges may not be better than that it replaces. For Morson and Emerson, Bakhtin's view is potentially irresponsible, for Simons it is little more than a diversion.

However, opinions and interpretations differ. Langman (2003) points out that 'carnival was not simply a relaxation of sexual repressions and constraints, it was not a riot, it is not chaotic, it was a cultural performance with its own rules, structures and understandings.' Gardiner has argued that carnival was not subversive as contended by Bakhtin. Rather it was located within a social structure that specifically condoned a period of confined misrule as an act of deception that effectively emasculated potential opposition and thereby reconfirmed the status quo of the hierarchical order. Evidence that ribaldry was a part of medieval life is easily found. Orff's *Carmina Burana* is based upon German monks' vulgar songs and within them, for example, Venus substitutes for the Virgin Mary (see also Coxon, 2001). Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* contains the bawdy in its tale of kissing naked, farting arses and while possibly a typical medieval vulgar anecdote the story certainly led to its bowdlerization in late Victorian collections such as the 1890 Manly edition of *Chaucer's Tales*. Similarly in Boccaccio's *Decameron* Howard (accessed 2003) notes that the imagery includes that an abbess wearing her lover's trousers on her head as a wimple, and a lecherous monk being taken as a mad man into a public square, both being 'images of popular folk comedy, mocking and overblown (Howard, 2003:1).

Thus a case for carnival as a celebration of the vulgar incorporating images of life and death, of the incongruous and the mocking of the official is easily sustained, but whether carnival was, as argued by Bakhtin, a permitted subversion of authority is more uncertain. Howard notes that Chaucer's tales end with the sighting of Canterbury Cathedral and thus symbolically the authority of the Church is thus re-imposed upon the pilgrims. Humphrey (1997) argues that there is a need for a close examination of the evidence being obtained by medievalists. For his part Humphrey argues that medieval carnival was firmly rooted in local politics and social structures and thus generalization is not possible. Drawing on his research on carnivals in Bristol, Coventry, Norwich and York he demonstrates that specificities of local custom in each case determined the nature of the festivities. Kulbrandstad-Walker (2001) locates examples of the gluttonous tradition of Italian 16th century stories, arts and festivals within a concern of politics, death, regeneration and the enticement of paganism, thereby reflecting Humphrey in postulating a complex set of references for the medieval carnival.

## The Carnavalesque in Leisure and Tourism

If we view holidays and tourism as carnivalesque, it is important to bear in mind that this inversion of practice in the role of tourists, the escape from daily work-life, according to Eco (1984), can only be available within the liminality of space and time. As Eco highlights: "the moment of carnivalisation must be short and allowed only once a year; an everlasting carnival does not work: an entire year of ritual observance is needed in order to make the transgression enjoyable" (Eco 1984: 6). This interpretation links the liminality of holidays to pilgrimage in the Middle Ages and emphasizes the underpinnings of 'Erlaubnis', 'permission' to stay away, as in holy-days, the right to have a work-free day (Graburn, 1989; Opaschowski, 2001). Yet, Opaschowski further points out that, without tourists consciously recognizing it, holidays stand not in isolation from Alltag (every day/daily living) but are part of related worlds, Wunschwelt (dream world), Erlebniswelt (world of experiences) and Gegenwelt (world of opposites) and thus machen die Alltagswelt erträglich make the 'daily world of living bearable'.

It has thus been suggested by various commentators including Rojek (1993), Shields (1991) and Ryan (2002) that contemporary tourism represents, at least in part, an extension of the tradition of the carnival. Medieval carnivals, holy days and various festivities, both sacred and profane, were the origins from which contemporary holidays sprang, and thus it is not therefore contrary to these antecedents that some components of modern and post modern holidays retain the carnivalesque. An apparent example is Donald McGill's postcards or those of Bamforth, drawn in a Rabelaisian tradition of overeating and ribald, sexual innuendo and comment. But a number of analysts within the fields of tourism, recreation and leisure have professed to find a subversive character of carnival still persisting in a Bakhtinian sense of challenge and social safety valve. Amid the literature three themes can be found, which are - carnival as understood in a Latin American or Caribbean tradition, the carnivalesque as demonstrated by sports fans and finally, the hedonistic incongruity of holiday making itself.

In the carnivals of Rio, elsewhere in Latin America, the Caribbean and their European counterparts such as Notting Hill, or in the beer festivities of Munich, the restraints of 'normal' society are given over to hedonistic displays and participation in acts of sexual display, colour and eating and drinking. Yet, argues Sampeth (1997), Trinidadian carnival, for example, goes beyond the apparent into a construction and reconstruction of identity. 'Carnival offers a celebrity forum for a society to express its fears of global influence by displaying them' (Sampeth, 1997: 149). Trinidadian carnival, it is argued, ameliorates the negative elements of society, and thus too the same analysis can be extended to its derivative in Notting Hill, where over the years it has been both a tourist attraction and a

statement of Caribbean aspiration and identity in London, United Kingdom. The tension between wishes for local control, identity and commercial exploitation are also demonstrated by Brissonnet (1990) in an analysis of carnival in Salvador, Bahia, Brasil, in which it is argued that Afro-Bahians utilize the carnival to establish their own goals of social purpose even while frustrating the aims of an elite to generate economic gain.

The uneasy relationship between commercial gain and subversive attempts to establish new identities by marginalized groups through processes of social dis- and reverse-ordering is well demonstrated in the literature. Burton (1991:7) argues that West Indian cricket is an act of participation by spectators who bring to it music, dancing, drinking and sociability that represent a diametrically opposite pole to that conventionally represented by the English game, thereby incorporating 'counter-values of aggression, reputation and individualism that govern street culture' within the colonial sport. Cricket becomes, in the West Indies, a paradoxical and ironic statement of values that run counter to those of the English public school tradition. Similarly a number of authors note the role of fandom in soccer or football, whose adherents rejoice in a carnival of noise, frenzy and an acquisition of roles based within tribal passions that subvert and support the commercialization of the game (for example see Burgo, 1995 on Latin American football, Armstrong and Young, 2000, on the chants of Sheffield United fans, Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1997, on *communitas*, and Giulianotti, 1996, on Irish soccer fans establishing an identity as 'carnival fans').

Within the literature relating to tourism, Rojek (1993) notes the role of the medieval state as stereotyping forms of association as being vulgar, thereby devaluing and marginalizing certain forms of being human, and in that process creating hierarchic values whereby some forms of leisure behaviour are deemed less 'appropriate' than others. Thus, comments Rojek, Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides were approved ways for the young to spend leisure time, while as Ryan (2002) observes Coney Island and Blackpool were vulgar and less worthy. Shields (1991: 95) summarises the beach as carnival - as being 'an unclosed body of convexities and orifices, intruding onto and into others' body-space [which] threatens to escape, transgress, and transcend the circumscriptions of the body.' Holidays are thus periods of escape, but still, it might be argued, hierarchic distinctions are made between the pursuit of opera and the pursuit of hedonism. Cultural and eco-tourism might be said to be 'approved' activities, whereas the escapades of those on the 18-30 holidays to Ibiza where more bodily pleasures await are 'less respectable'.

## Darling Harbour - Site of Carnival?

'Carnavalesque' might thus be said to possess various properties. At one level, a descriptive one, it engages in incongruous juxtaposition, offers escape from the usual norms, presents the grotesque and is hedonistic. It possesses potential for latent subversion, latent because while espousing norms of opposition, the opposition remains channeled within social structures whereby the hierarchical elites sustain, for the most part, their privileges. It can also be argued that the carnivalesque engages in post-modernist parody. Such parody is not ahistorical or a mere pastiche, but is rooted in the past, which is 'knowingly' parodied to acknowledge the separation from the past. It is ironic, critical, aesthetic and a contesting of readings of the text of the past. It thus legitimizes what it parodies by bringing it to our attention. It is self-conscious. For Huchon (1989: 117) post-modern parody is a double-voiced irony, or a process of 'double encoding' as it engages in continuous dialogue between legitimization and ironic subversion.

So how might Sydney's Darling Harbour be viewed as Carnavalesque? Mainstream Australia might be described as a 'new society' in that it emerges from a colonial history that is little more than 2 centuries in duration. It has created its own iconic images and parodies them as in Russell Coight's sagas of the Outback where bush craft is seen to be vulnerable to human error. Yet a stroll along Darling Harbour reveals:

a) the European carousel complete with German traditional organ music.

The carousel is a direct reproduction of the traditions of the historical carnivals, offering a relatively safe experience, but one that is unlikely to be available every day to tourists, making it appealing and attractive. It offers beauty to the eye and the ear, and fascination and excitement for children. Horses painted and adorned in outrageous colours combine with classic German organ music to create a reassurance and certainty that while the experience will be fun, it will not be risky.

b) Gnomes teaching children how to fish in lakes without fish

c) Rides on cuddly replicas of threatened animal species

d) Apparent statues that suddenly move to surprise passers by

e) Bungy jumping made safe for children

f) Fair ground rides

g) food and merchandise stalls set in contrast to the smart shops and restaurants

h) transport modes that offer only the experience of the ride - such as paddle



boats and miniature 'trains'.

i) a sense of sensuous aimlessness

j) the transplanting of the Northern Territory and the sound of the didgeridoo

k) Balloon sellers - Often dressed as clowns, with exaggerated, happy faces, these balloon sellers promise to bring pleasure and happiness. Yet, the fun of the carnival is often lost quickly in the simple bang of the piece of rubber. The balloon, as carnival accessory, promises so much, yet often fails to provide more than a fleeting moment of pleasure. It is a risky purchase, appropriately located in the carnival.

l) Buskers - The buskers are the actively engaged, grotesque bodies of the carnival. They seek to push the boundaries, to juggle, to balance, to walk through walls of fire - they take on excesses, and risk failure but also applause. These are the real heroes of the Darling Harbour carnivalesque, and their social commentaries may offer opportunities for social reform and refusal of norms.

These scenes take on a text of juxtaposition and apparent incongruity when set against the wider backdrop of the Harbour, and in comparison to the high rise of the city and its formality, dignity, and predictability that lies just beyond its confines. Darling Harbour locates echoes of carnival within a perimeter of hotels and restaurants that are of a good international standard, as demonstrated in the next series of photographs. Hence the carnival of Darling Harbour lies confined with physical and psychological borders, a holiday place literally set apart, marginalized but like many margins a latent commentary on what lies beyond its boundaries, and thereby establishing contrast and critique.

Thus, in a sense it perpetuates Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. But, is there a distinction between Darling Harbour and its offer of a 'pleasant time' and the nature of the challenge implied in Bakhtin's analysis of Fool's Days? Does Darling Harbour pose challenge to an accepted order, or represent the rewards of that system? The pictures of the Harbour provide evidence of whimsy, spectacle, incongruity, but the text of the buskers provides a harder edge. First, many of the buskers are young and appear to busk to finance an alternative life style. In one sense then they are potentially at odds with the capitalistic structures that surround the harbour. In another sense their patter is often one of challenge at various levels. They challenge their audiences to acts of participation in their theatre, they play upon their sentiments to reach into their wallets to pay for the act, and in their speech at least some buskers make social and political comments. The buskers intentionally position themselves outside of the predictability and conformity of the city that looms around them, offering an alternative way of being, of doing, and of having. Knowing that to a large part they play to audiences

derived from around Australia and the world, disparaging comments are made through humorous asides about the Prime Minister, Sydneysiders, Tasmanians and George W. Bush. These buskers are like the grotesque bodies of the carnival goers in Bakhtin's carnivalesque. Their 'acts' are intended to create a spectacle, to incite excitement and fun, to exaggerate and embellish. These are the risky bodies of the carnival, and they have the potential to transform the carnival goers from the traditions. They refuse to be normalized.

As holidaymakers, the audiences might be said to be in a state of marginality. Ryan in a keynote speech at the 2002 CAUTHE Conference argued that tourism possesses a potential to be challenging. It shows a life without work, it possesses the paradox of rewarding work through offering periods away from both work and home; it might offer that cathartic experience, the life changing world of a Shirley Valentine. From this perspective, tourism incorporates the carnivalistic subversion of its medieval antecedent, and like the Fool's Days, it too is condoned and supported by the social hierarchies as a means of securing good social order. Thus, in Darling Harbour, fantasy, whimsy and activity come together in a form of the carnivalesque. Holidaymakers become part of the carnival, bodies engaged in the carnivalesque, enticed by its eccentricity and promise of renewal and escape. But if it is carnival it is muted and the grotesque is limited by 'good taste' and bodily pursuits are primarily confined to a search for good cuisine. It is safe fun.

While tourism suggests a 'liminality of time and place as per the historical construct of carnival, carnival in tourism has now entered the zone of 'continuation' and 'familiarity', combining the post-modern carnivalesque experience of fun fairs and theme parks in an idealised environment of permanent eclecticism as represented at Darling Harbour, where tourists can find what they want to experience at any time. Here commercialization has 'enlisted' the theme of carnival in a mix of past, present and future images and engineered experiences, 'sanctioned' by the management of the North Foreshore Harbour Authority. Ravenscroft and Matteuci (2003, 1) argue that carnival has been "deployed to maintain and reinforce social order .....creating 'liminal zones' in which people can engage in 'deviant' practices, safe in the knowledge that they are not transgressing the wider social structure they encounter in everyday life.....the attraction of visitors is crucial in providing a 'cover' for this activity, as well as a conduit for the gradual legitimization of new and revised social values". Although carnival suggests liberty and uncensored comments and behaviour, the brief historical overview from an European perspective and discussion above already indicates a spectrum of order and control.

If it is carnival, then it appears sanitized, for these strollers in a Sydney sun do not possess the same sense of community as Chaucer's pilgrims or those involved in a Fool's Day. The holidaymakers do not act or become involved in concert as if one - rather they tend to perform various roles separately, individually or in small groups of friends, showing little interaction with others. Their interaction with the agents of whimsy, funfair delight or buskers' theatre is individual, particularistic and there is little exploration of a common state or *communitas*. Indeed many of the interactions are commercial. Visitors pay for paddle boat rides, or for a ride on the train. Yet not all interactions are overtly commercial. The 'gnomes' offer free fishing lessons, while the Northern Territory Tourist Commission offer free performances funded by in part by merchandise and booking revenues. As in many such situations, the overall atmosphere of relaxation, of this being a special place in terms of it being an escape is provided by the tourists themselves. Each becomes part of a theatre where they become objects viewed and gazed upon by other tourists; each constructs each other into their own compositions of Darling Harbour. Tourists view tourists enjoying themselves, watching children play and, at times coming together as audiences for either the buskers or for special events such as concerts at the concert dome moored in the harbour.

Philips (1998) offers such an analysis of Disneyland as a constructed carnivalesque created for consumption and not participation. For a commentator like Philips, the key to understanding of the nature of the carnivalesque lies in the degree of control and participation that arises from the local community. Pedregal (1996) advances a similar perspective in an analysis of the increasing self consciousness of festivals in Zahara de los Atunes in Southern Spain. A staged festival promoted by the local hoteliers association and Neighbourhood Association to gain from tourist interest nonetheless generated a reaffirmation of a sense of 'us' and 'them' in terms of hosts being 'insiders' and tourists as 'outsiders'. Similarly Boje (accessed January 2004, p.3) stresses the point that true carnival means not just being a by-stander or spectator, simply gazing upon the spectacle, but that true carnival represents the mirror-stage of the spectacle as per Foucault, where the carnevalist becomes a 'spect-actor' in the theatre of the world, "actors in a form of carnival resistance" akin to that of the drama of the Middle Ages between peasants and the powers of the Crown and Clergy (p.4).

But in a location like Darling Harbour, the majority of participants are 'the other' viewing 'the other'. Indeed many of those who work in the area do not live there, and indeed it is suspected that many work on a casual basis dependent upon their own plans and careers. To a large degree the sense of 'us' is embodied in the formal body of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and its plans

and management functions. This body has overall responsibility for the Harbour, which duties extend beyond issues of moorings and the working nature of the port, but also to the planning of events and use of the facilities for special events such as the location of the Rugby World Cup centre in 2003.

It is thus easy to conclude that while initially a *prima facie* argument exists that Darling Harbour possesses aspects of carnival, upon closer inspection the argument dissolves into a familiar theme of commodification of the experience, an experience that is constructed and controlled with the objective of producing not subversive acts (however latent) but family oriented moments of leisurely pleasure. The buskers are licensed, the skate boarders are not, and thus do not appear. The numbers of food stalls are regimented so that the business of the main cafes and restaurants are complemented and not threatened. They are selected, along with the balloon sellers, the carousel and other activities for their ability to add to a whole desired by site management; which whole is not questioned by the holidaymakers. Does Darling Harbour therefore represent a trend toward the sanitization of carnival, a construction of a world of theme parks? Various answers might be posed. First, themed areas might be perceived as an evolution from a past of fun fairs, carnivals and street parades, sharing an ancestry with such events as still practiced in Notting Hill, Sydney's Mardi Gras or Rio's Carnival, but different. Indeed, arguably such sites as Disney or Darling Harbour of necessity have to be different, being permanent sites of touristic enjoyment instead of being community periods of temporary upheaval. A possible second answer is to question the analysis offered by Bakhtin, as posed by critics like Gardiner (1993a, 1993b) and Humphrey (1997). This requires the proposition that the carnivalesque and its perceived world of the grotesque and inversion of social order is false in the sense that carnival was always carefully constructed and contained within specific locales and power structures. It can be argued that while, at times carnival may have represented genuine dissent over time social hierarchies come to paradoxically pervert dissent into statements of permitted and approved political legitimation. Thus, for example, Sydney's Mardi Gras attracts corporate sponsorship by organizations seeking the pink dollar and London's Notting Hill Carnival attracts political approval for its touristic value and channeling of community energy into 'safe' means of identity formation.

A third alternative is to argue that within the concept of the carnivalesque there is implicit a continuum of carnival, from those that offer temporary respite from the everyday world through whimsy, fantasy based on reminiscence of childhood stories, of pleasurable relaxation in incongruity and the juxtaposition of the odd, to at the other extreme, the chaotic and confused, of an underlying anger and protest at social order. But the nature of

the carnival is that both extremes of the continuum possess a shared property, which is neither upsets the social order. Carnival is play, and not simply play in the sense of spontaneity, of freedom from rules, but a play with the structures of authority even within Bakhtin's conceptualization. As soon as the carnivalesque ceases to be play it, by definition, loses the nature of carnival to become some other entity, such as revolt or mainstream life. Carnival rests in an uneasy limbo between revolution and emasculation; it is a state of tension made paradoxical in modern tourism by offering relaxation and escape.

Darling Harbour represents the contemporary state of managed carnival. It echoes a past and is adopted to a commercial present. It commodifies, but commodities possess value because the product is valued by current clientele. Tourists are pampered by the power of their wallet, a product of a capitalistic system which rewards work through periods of non-work, and wherein the worker obtains a temporary power of escape to 'dominate' others who work in the tourism industry. Darling Harbour, as an example of current tourism, themes not only the nature of carnival but encapsulates a post modern irony and pastiche of de-differentiation between commerce and the non-commercial, of the hard business of making a sale and the giving of free experience, of the luxury of the hotels and the tattiness of hot dogs and cheap curries. The text of Darling Harbour is thus both simple and complex - simple in its air of leisure, complex in its commentary on the world of tourism and work. In that sense it is representative of much of contemporary tourism.

To conclude therefore, Darling Harbour, with its managed and engineered images and experiential offerings, facilitates no involvement as a 'spect-actor' in the carnivalizing of normal life. Rather it facilitates hedonistic consumption without any potential for commentary about and to the powers of postmodernity by the tourists or recreationists. Perhaps the medium of tourism in this context provides a mirror-stage for individuals to not so much explore the places visited and to take part in expression of and about distress and repression, but to "re-envisage the everyday spaces we live in".....and to explore "the deserted places of memory" (Evans, Spaul, and Unsworth, 2001), to consume created images from childhood years (Robinson and Long, 2001). Carnival in tourism appears to be not so much that as per Bakhtin's or Boje's interpretations, but rather one of adventure and discovery of the individual self amidst the fragmented and risk laden post modern life of globalisation, technology, economic disparity and distant powers (Beck, 1999; Rojek, 1995; Rojek and Urry, 1997; Urry, 1996). Carnival of tourism suggests more a celebration of life rather than the subversive nature of carnivalesque of the Middle Ages and that of Bakhtin, which were constructs and reflections of that time and place in history with their specific

contextual complexities of societal concerns. Thus, one could view the carnivalesque in tourism as the voice of the present, a voice with memories of the past, changing and evolving to serve the narrative of post-modern social order. It could be suggested that tourism, rather than simply able to evoke memories, also stimulates reflexivity, and thus facilitates similar underpinnings to that of carnival of the past, to temporarily leave behind the turmoils of daily life, to take on a role and to experience the 'other', that which seems out of reach in daily life, able to critique and re-create life, if not that of public life in a radical and ground-breaking way, but perhaps to oneself and significant others about oneself. Both at 'discursive' and 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984, 1991 cited in Kuentzel, 2000, p.88), tourists are immersed in their individual action and the social structures of their surrounds, that of the tourist culture and that of the home culture. Darling Harbour is representative of postmodern life in which the 'saturated self' (Gergen, 1991) is able to re-create the self narrative through the reflexive project that tourism provides for. Darling Harbour is a 'theme park' behind a curtain of the carnivalesque, with a kaleidoscope of experiential offerings in the commercial sphere of tourism and leisure. Holidays (holidays/Erlaubnis), after all, are a time and place for 'right of passage', not necessarily as a place and time for public critique or from childhood to adulthood, but simply a time to "keep a particular narrative going" (Giddens, 1991 cited Kuentzel 2000, p. 90) for 'selfhood'.

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