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Carnivals against capital: radical clowning and the global justice movement

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This essay looks at an international performance phenomenon, which I refer to as *tactical carnival*, that has developed as a tactic in the toolbox of the burgeoning global justice movement. This movement has been more accurately described as a ‘movement of movements’ due to its great diversity in geography, identity, and ideology (‘One no, many yeses’ is one of its main slogans). As connections and coalitions are forged between Bolivian miners, American anti-corporate activists, Polish organic farmers, etc., organizers have begun to coordinate a celebratory form of protest that involves *unpermitted* street parties/processions that occupy public space, both to assert movement identity and importance and often to disrupt state or corporate events/daily business. Movement organizers and writers use the term ‘carnival’ to label these explicitly oppositional events, at which flamboyant costumes, dance, puppets, tricksterism, samba bands and other musical groupings can all be seen. They also seem to refer to ideas about ‘carnival’ that may, to some scholars, seem romantic or overly idealist: nevertheless, these activists are attempting to deploy the ideal of carnival in a practical, experimental way on the street, to create a new, twenty-first century kind of ‘carnival’ that is not calendrically nor spatially circumscribed or permitted by the state but declared and embodied by a movement that identifies itself as global, anti-corporate and anti-authoritarian.

Keywords: social movements; creative activism; tactical performance; hegemonologue; tactical carnival; street theatre; radical clowning

Run Away From the Circus – Join the CIRCA! (Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) recruiting slogan)

CIRCA is the only army in the world in which General Strike outranks Private Property. (Colonel Ofruth)

Edinburgh, Scotland, during the Carnival for Full Enjoyment, 4 July 2005

Police in black riot gear stand shoulder to shoulder. In the manner of a classical phalanx, their clear, body-length plastic shields form an impervious wall across the width of the city street. Those shields have just been used to shove people down the road and assert police control of the space. Their helmets, visors down, provide protection and make their faces harder to see. Their boots and fireproofed full-body armor are imposing. They are ready to preserve public order.

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The police are confronted by a disorderly gaggle of men and women in chaotic facepaint, dressed in a tensive mixture of second hand military gear and clownish, fuzzy, garish pink and green frills. These are the tricksters of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, or CIRCA. Far from seeming intimidated by the powerful policemen who have just shoved them and are now blocking the way, the CIRCA folk seem overjoyed to see them and hail them as friends to play games with. The clowns begin scrubbing the policemen's boots with their feather dusters, then breathing on their shields to fog them up and scrubbing the shields as well.

One of the main rules of improvisation theatre is the idea of 'yes, and'; one never negates a performing partner's idea or proposition, but rather agrees and adds a new creative thought to the mix. The rebel clowns jump about, following each other in an agreeable 'yes, and' ethos of improvisational frolicking in front of the police line. They simply refuse to acknowledge the very clear and stark NO of the disciplined, uniformed, and armed police line, asserting their own ridiculous and enthusiastic YES AND over and over with each moment. Finally one intrepid trickster, aptly named Trixie, kisses one of the police shields (see Figure 1). Her kiss is so enthusiastic and vigorous that she smears her clown makeup and lipstick all over the shield. She then goes from shield to shield, all the way up the phalanx-line, kissing and leaving her smeary mark on each one as she goes. The police stay in formation, some disturbed, some impassive, and some amused and surprised by this



Figure 1. CIRCA Clownbattants confront the riot police, Edinburgh, 4 July 2005. Photo by Matthew Dutton.

paradigm-shifting kiss. One says 'Step away, from the shield please', while another can clearly be seen to be smiling.

Trixie needs to re-apply her lipstick in order to continue her loving assault, and while doing this she is asked by Zoe, a CIRCA videographer, why she is doing what she's doing. In a high pitched voice she earnestly says, 'Because I love them! I love the police! They're our friends'. She then runs off to kiss more shields.

Trixie then begins drawing smiley-faces with her lipstick and saying 'Yey!!' Soon she is writing 'Yey!!' on some of the riot shields, while the other clowns cheer and clap. The images of her kisses and incongruous lipstick happy faces are broadcast and printed all over the world the next day. There is a marked gender element to this interaction – the male clowns aren't kissing any shields, but they are scrubbing away solicitously, saying things like 'Oh, it's a mess, it's very bad – don't worry! I'll clean it, you won't get in any trouble!'

Soon the rebel clowns form a line facing the police, and begin doing a motion/sound all together: bending at the hip, arms and hands extended, and going 'Shhhhh', then standing back up while making a 'Whooo' sound. Their relentless group improv had led them to an ambivalent, absurd gesture; the clowns were simultaneously kowtowing to the police and shooing them away. After five or six repetitions of this movement, the clowns began jumping up and down, yelling 'Yippie!' At that precise moment, the police line broke. First one, then two, then the entire squad pulled away, formed two files, and began jogging down the road at double time. The clowns ran along with them briefly, and a great cheer rose from the mass of non-clown protesters and bystanders, who followed the police for a few yards and then began to celebrate in the street.

It is probably prudent at this point to note that, in fact, the police line may not have been broken by clown magic. One can imagine the rear-rank conversation between the officers of the unit, or by walkie talkie to headquarters: '*Look, we've become sucked into some kind of performance art here, and we'd really like to go elsewhere so we can fight crime . . . well, look to be fair, our training doesn't include improv theatre . . . requesting permission to withdraw*'. However, the constant improvisation of the clowns made such a poetic moment, where it appeared that clowns could dispel the intimidating power of the state through fearless silliness and serious play, possible. As one clown said, 'They loved us so much, we asked them to go away, and they did'. This was not 'street theatre', per se, but a form of improvisatory and creative direct action. ('Direct action' is a term for activist methods that directly confront and, perhaps, disrupt or change sociopolitical processes, as opposed to indirect activism that seeks to lobby for change through influencing politicians or swaying public opinion.) The clowns immediately began to fill the authoritarian gap created by the policemen's withdrawal – power abhors a vacuum, after all – by directing traffic, including police wagons, with their feather dusters and giving passing vehicles the CIRCA Clown Salute (which, according to CIRCA regulations, is thumbing one's nose with a big smile on one's face). For the most part, however, they continued playing games as they had been before the police arrived to demarcate the space.

This absurd face-off between two groups of masked, uniformed performers occurred during the 'Carnival for Full Enjoyment' of 4 July 2005. This carnival was not a state-sanctioned cultural steam-valve, occurring within universally recognized temporal bounds based on the agrarian calendar. Rather, it was declared by members of the global justice movement as a festive and defiant

event. While it was in part a response to the G8 summit happening a few miles away at Gleneagles, it was not purely negative and reactive in character, but an attempt to open up a space for anti-authoritarian, egalitarian and participatory celebration without state permits or sanction. With slogans such as ‘No Wage Slavery’, ‘No Benefits Slavery’, ‘No Army Slavery’, and ‘No Debt Slavery’, the Carnival for Full Enjoyment called, in a press release, for workers to ‘Phone in Sick and Join the Carnival’:

Flex, temp, full-time, part-time, casual and contortionist workers, migrants, students, benefit claimers, New Dealers, work refusers, pensioners, dreamers, duckers & divers . . . Bring drums, music, banners, imagination for action against the G8 that expresses our resistance in work, out of work and wherever we live. Assert our desires for FULL ENJOYMENT with fun in the city – and begin to make capitalism & wage slavery history . . . *On 4 July we can take action and experience – if only temporarily – what life could be like if we got the bosses off our backs.*

The Carnival for Full Enjoyment involves both local people and people from round Britain – and beyond. We are making it a carnival because life should be more fun for those of us who labour in underpaid insecure jobs, in casual and agency work, or on ‘New Deal’ schemes. There should be more joy for the unemployed trying to survive on a few quid a week and for those of us juggling childcare and debt . . . *Get together with friends and set your sights. Bring what you’d want to find, and most of all bring imagination and passion. Diversity and creativity is our strength.*

We know many other groups locally are glad the Carnival is happening. For example Esther MacDonald of Edinburgh Claimants told us: ‘Every week we give advice and solidarity to people resisting benefits cuts and harassment and to people standing up to debt collectors. We welcome the Carnival for Full Enjoyment. From Niddrie to Nigeria, poor people need to organise ourselves to take the world’s resources into the hands of the world’s people’.

Our purpose is to oppose those who devastate our communities through economic exploitation. We will make clear our resistance to organisations which thrive on the poverty and debt in which many of us find ourselves. Because our society is mainly based on using people to make money for others, there are many such organisations to choose from.

We are in favour of direct action because marching around with placards can be safely ignored by those who control exploitation. We advocate direct action against the institutions which exploit the majority . . . We invite workers from Standard Life and all other corporations to join the Carnival. Take an extended lunch-break, phone in sick! Join us in opposing casualisation, the intensification of work, attacks on pensions and conditions. Edinburgh call centre worker David Gillies said ‘At my work they monitor our calls and threaten us with disciplinary action if we spend too long speaking to the caller. The company only cares about profit. I’m taking the day off on the 4th to join the Carnival’.

The carnival is a celebration of how good life can be, and at the same time a statement against those who spoil it for the majority. (Carnival for Full Enjoyment, my emphasis)

The organizers of the Carnival explicitly presented it as an anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian event with links between local workers and activists and a larger global movement. The Carnival was to be both a rejection of state authority (very significantly, no permit was requested for this event), an affirmation of the joy of solidarity and resistance (particularly resistance to the regulation of everyday

behavior in increasingly privatized and controlled public space), and an alternative to what was seen as the more staid tactic of ‘marching around with placards’.

It was also seen, both by some protesters and the authorities, as a possible opportunity for direct action to disrupt the proceedings of corporations and ‘business as usual’ in the city. A massive police force was concentrated in Edinburgh to protect banks and other corporate offices from vandalism or nonviolent disruption such as sit-ins, and to prevent the reveling, disorderly crowds from blocking commercial traffic on the streets. The government brought in 10,000 police from all over the UK to Edinburgh in order to respond to this threat to security and public order. Police from London, Manchester, and many other cities filled the streets, blocking intersections, surrounding, searching, arresting, chasing and breaking up large groups of protestors and keeping them separate. There was a great deal of game playing, samba bands, festive costumes, dancing, and revelry in the street, and even a huge anarchist black cat-puppet; however, there was also plenty of fleeing, regrouping, cat-and-mouse and, on one street, even violent confrontation between protestors and police.

This was not exactly a carnival in the Bakhtinian sense, where the laughter is ideologically ambivalent, where all participate, and where the event is demarcated and approved of by the authorities even though there is always the risk that the licensed fools may go too far. Nevertheless, the movements that organize such events are to some degree influenced by the ideas and writings of Bakhtin and Rabelais (especially in Western countries), and they have theorized such oppositional carnivals as an important tactic in the struggle against corporate globalization.

Bakhtin and the carnivalesque

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), a Russian literary scholar and philosopher who struggled in obscurity under the reign of Stalin, and whose major works were only published in the last fifteen years of his life, celebrated the carnivalesque, mass-participatory freedom and anti-authoritarian laughter that he found in the writings of Rabelais:

Carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 7)

The ‘carnivalesque’, and its liberating qualities for the ‘lower orders’ of society, includes abuse and laughter, which degrade at the same time that they renew. Grotesque realism exaggerates the material body and the ‘lower bodily stratum’, inverting the hierarchies of elite taste and decorum and the symbols of hierarchy. This is a frenetic, celebratory and ideologically ambivalent performance mode which breaks down the bodily boundaries of the idealized bourgeois individual, ‘polluting’ and collectivizing the human condition in a joyous, outrageously humorous demonstration that has some potential for rebellion (Bakhtin, 1968).

‘Carnivals against capital’

This essay looks at an international performance phenomenon, which I refer to as *tactical carnival*, that has developed as a tactic in the toolbox of the burgeoning global justice movement. This movement has been more accurately described as a ‘movement of movements’ due to its great diversity in geography, identity, and ideology (‘One no, many yeses’ is one of its main slogans). As connections and coalitions are forged between Bolivian miners, American anti-corporate activists, Polish organic farmers, etc., organizers have begun to coordinate a celebratory form of protest that involves *unpermitted* street parties/processions that occupy public space, both to assert movement identity and importance and often to disrupt state or corporate events/daily business. Movement organizers and writers use the term ‘carnival’ to label these explicitly oppositional events, at which flamboyant costumes, dance, puppets, tricksterism, samba bands and other musical groupings can all be seen. They also seem to refer to ideas about ‘carnival’ that may, to some scholars, seem romantic or overly idealist: nevertheless, what is fascinating is that they are attempting to deploy the ideal of carnival in a practical, experimental way on the street, to create a new, twenty-first century kind of ‘carnival’ that is neither calendrically nor spatially circumscribed or permitted by the state but declared and embodied by a movement that identifies itself as global, anti-corporate and anti-authoritarian.

I posit that the goals of tactical carnival are:

- to declare and occupy a joyous, participatory and semi-anonymous, relatively safe place for power inversions/subversions. ‘Celebrity’ has been explicitly denounced in some movement literature, in favor of the relative anonymity of the mass. These spaces are also meant to be non-dogmatic/sectarian, a more open place for wider participation. The hope is that more people will join the movement when a space for this kind of joyful participation is opened up.
- to put a friendly face on the movement as a way to interrupt what I refer to as the *hegemonologue* of the corporate media and state rhetoric, which often demonizes and others activists as crazed, nihilistic hooligans (as quoted in Shepard, 2005; Bogad, 2006). The idea is to insert images that at least partially disrupt or disharmonize the barrage of negative images (for example, a clown kissing a riot shield juxtaposed with the usual images of street melee and property damage), and to replace the usual ‘story of the battle’ (street fights, vandalism, etc), with the ‘battle of the story’ in which colorful and creative costumes, dance, music, performance and improvised interactions give a new look at the movement and its agenda (D. Solnit, personal communication, 2 July 2005).
- These events also attempt to interrupt another aspect of the *hegemonologue*, which is that of the rhetoric of the inevitability of corporate globalization, by demonstrating that better alternatives are possible.
- to key an experimental mode in which new ways to play with and around power can be tested. The idea is to develop less obvious and predictable ways to interact on the street with agents of the state, corporations and passersby. Much of the creativity is intended to have the effect of dispelling fear and tension during confrontations with massive police presence, for example.

- to create an celebratory culture of active defiance, as an alternative to the everyday life experience of many people – in response to a widespread frustration that many participants feel – regarding their official relegation to the role of consumers of culture and spectacle rather than creators/spect-actors (Boal, 1985).

I examine this global phenomenon through a local particular: the G8 protest in July of 2005, with a further focus on the Carnival for Full Enjoyment in Edinburgh on 4 July as participated in by the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA). I will draw on press clippings, videos, interviews with CIRCA members, movement literature and my own experience as a participant/observer to examine how CIRCA theorized and actualized its own participation in the tactical carnival around the G8 in July 2005.

‘Carnival’ is clearly a referent for this movement and many of its actions, even if Bakhtin would not recognize these events as Rabelasian. On 18 June 1999, the opening day of the G8 summit in Köln, Germany, a ‘Carnival Against Capital’ was declared by the global justice movement as an ‘international day of action, protest and carnival aimed at the heart of the global economy’ (Ainger, 2004, p. 33). This proposal identified ‘capitalism as the “root of our social and ecological problems”, and [was] taken up by the People’s Global Action network, translated into seven languages, and distributed by email and post to thousands of groups worldwide’ (Notes From Nowhere [NWN], 2003, p. 184). On that day, in the financial district of London, 10,000 people gathered in the street, playing ‘Volleyball with inflatable globes and danc[ing] to samba rhythms in the spray of a waterspout from a damaged fire hydrant’. In order to avoid being penned in by the police, to keep movement fluid, and to add a colorful flair to the event, organizers gave participants color coded masks (red, yellow, blue, etc) to wear; a note inside the masks suggested that the wearers follow the flags that matched their masks when the time came. Sure enough, at one moment, colorful flags went up and soon streams of masked revelers were running, following the flagbearers on zigzagging routes through the narrow streets of the City of London. Of course, this event had not been permitted by the state, and the anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian ideology of the gathering asserted itself through direct action as the day progressed:

... by the end of the day a group of the protesters had invaded and trashed the ground floor of the London International Financial Futures Exchange, three McDonalds had their windows broken, two people had been run over by police vans, and riot police were charging in. The sight of anarchy hitting the world’s largest financial center prompted newspaper headlines that denounced the protesters as ‘evil savages’, an ignorant ‘unwashed horde’ hell-bent on turning a ‘carnival into a riot’ ... the carnival goes in London – the majority of whom had been nonviolent in actions and intent – were members of a far larger, invisible but international constituency organizing around a common enemy: globalization. (Ainger, 2004, p. 33)

This Carnival Against Capital was hardly limited to London. Simultaneous protests of similar nature took place ‘against global capitalism, the international financial system, and corporate power ... in 43 countries around the world’ (Ainger, 2004, p. 33). For example, in Nigeria, a ‘Carnival of the Oppressed’ bought ‘nearly 10,000 Ogoni, Ijaw, and other tribes together in closing down the country’s oil

capital, Port Harcourt . . . meanwhile in Koln, the Intercontinental Caravan, made up of 400 Indian farmers and other activists from the global South, plan[ned] to conclude its tour with a Laugh Parade but police detain[ed] 250 of them before they [got] the chance to guffaw at the G8' (NFN, 2003, pp. 185–177). In fact, this global event was so disturbing that the FBI listed 'Carnival Against Capital' as a terrorist group to be watched in their memo of 11 May 2001, four months before the Al Qaeda attacks of 11 September of that year (FBI, 2001). This is ironic in that 'Carnival Against Capital' was not an organization but rather a concept, a call to action, an invocation of the idea of the subversive and celebratory '*carnavalesque*' that resonated around the world for the global justice movement.

There are many other examples of the movement's invocation of the idea of 'carnival' for its actions. The anti-World Trade Organization protests that shut down the city of Seattle in 1999 were also conceived, in part, as *carnavalesque*, with colorful costumes, giant puppets, dancers and marching bands, and people dressed as sea turtles and butterflies, playing and interacting with more conventional union members and other activists. The protest against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) conference in Quebec in 2001 was also dubbed a 'Carnival Against Capital'. There is a neckerchief, sewn by Argentinian women textile workers who took over their own factory during the financial/economic collapse in that country, that is worn by many movement activists, including members of CIRCA. The neckerchief, produced in red, yellow, pink, and orange colors, has a smiling face printed on one side: one can wear it so that the mass-produced smile covers the lower half of one's face. On the other side a pattern of a chain-link fence covers an unhappy face, so the wearer has the choice of looking free and happy or fenced-in and sad. One can imagine a mass of people, filling up a public space, dancing or playing games and making music, while wearing these masks. The effect might be ideologically unclear, yet eerie. On the edges of the neckerchief, in English, Spanish, German and French, is a passage that explicitly states what 'Carnival' means for the global justice movement:

We will remain faceless because we refuse the spectacle of celebrity, because we are everyone, because the carnival beckons, because the world is upside down, because we are everywhere. By wearing masks we show that who we are is not as important as what we want, and what we want is everything for everyone. ('We will. . .')

This passage shows some of the key ideas that the global justice movement embraces from their creative interpretation of the *carnavalesque*. The idea of anonymity is advantageous for concealing identity from the authorities, but also as a way to celebrate the undifferentiated mass and combat the worship of individual celebrity/cult of personality by the mass media and pop culture. This reflects the Bakhtinian distinction between the *carnavalesque* mass of undifferentiated bodies, versus the discrete, separate, and closed-off bourgeois individual body uplifted by mercantilism and capitalism. Anonymity also serves as a tool for tactical players; the protesters lack the strategic power of the state or the corporations, but anonymity enables them to negotiate the urban landscape, maneuver, play, and perhaps escape while in full view of the dominating authorities (de Certeau, 1984). The demand for 'everything for everyone' echoes the millenarian, utopian poetics of the Rabelasian carnival, also expressed in the 'hidden transcripts' of the oppressed of many peasant

cultures (Scott, 1985, 1990) and the rhetoric of the Diggers (Hill, 2002). ‘The carnival beckons’ this movement to action of a celebratory kind.

Many groups have formed with the goal of contributing art, festive costumes, and music to these carnivals of resistance. One group explains their savvy theorization of themselves right in their name: Tactical Frivolity. Musical bands are a crucial aspect of these gatherings; one such group playfully named itself Reclaim the Beats, after the seminal movement group, Reclaim the Streets. The choice of music varies, but there is a great deal of influence from the carnivals of Brazilian and the Caribbean communities, showing that tactical carnival is not only motivated by a reference to medieval European traditions. While the (now-defunct) Seattle-based Infernal Noise Brigade (www.infernalnoise.org) played a postmodern blend including ‘elements of drumline, taiko, Mughal and North African rhythms, elements of Balkan fanfares, breakbeats, and just about anything else’ (Infernal Noise Brigade) and dressed in an almost paramilitary uniform, the UK-based Rhythms of Resistance say about themselves:

Whilst people often refer to us as a ‘Samba Band’ we actually have more affinity with the Afro Bloc parading drum bands that emerged in the mid 70s in Salvadore, Bahia in Brazil. Bands such as Ile Aye and Olodum formed as a political expression of black awareness, resisting economic exclusion. Coming out of some of the poorest urban communities, Afro blocs became a mobilising focus on picket lines and marches.

As they put it, they played as ‘a force of resistance and source of self confidence’. The growth of Schools of Samba both in Brazil and all over the world since the 80s, is largely a result of the commercialisation of this culture of resistance.

Rhythms of Resistance formed as part of the UK Earth First action against the IMF/ World Bank in Prague in September 2000. A Pink and Silver carnival bloc, focused around a 55 piece band, detached itself from a march of 67,000 and outmanouvered police resources defending the IMF annual summit. With an international ‘black bloc’ and a large contingent from the Italian movement, ‘Ya Basta’, three diverse forms of direct action worked towards a common goal and resulted in the shut down of the IMF summit.

Building on the success of S26 [the Prague protest], more bands are forming, playing the same rhythms and with the same approach. The Electric Blue band formed in Amsterdam, for the Rising Tide Actions against the Cop6 Climate Conference in November 2000 and joined together with 10 drummers from Rhythms of Resistance to form a 65 piece band.

With bands forming in across Europe and beyond (at least 2 in the US), an international network of percussive resistance to the march of capitalism is now emerging.

Street carnival is the vital component of protest and life and fun – use your imaginations, connect and network, build instruments and costumes, learn our tunes and distribute them noisily through the world!! (Rhythms of Resistance, my emphasis)

Rhythms of Resistance exemplifies the anti-capitalist movement’s awareness of and perhaps problematic appropriation/exchange of oppositional culture and tactics across borders of nationality, race, class, and privilege. Just as power and commerce are circulating around the world at an accelerated rate in the era of globalization, so are traditions and innovations in cultures of resistance. The same internet technology that enabled the global movement to coordinate the Carnival Against Capital in 43 different countries around the world also enables such an exchange.

From the text on their website, it is clear that Rhythms of Resistance, which has inspired many such groups for protests in other countries, has embraced the idea of ‘carnival’ as a positive and uplifting mode of defiance and advocacy. They also perform their music at protests in order to foster group ‘confidence’ and defiant joy, and simply to help make the protest a good time for all who join in.

Why is ‘carnival’ such an important referent for this ‘movement of movements’? Carnival, as conceived by Bakhtin, does have an edge. It suggests a possibility of riot or rebellion, that the licensed foolery might get out of hand and turn into outright revolt; this may appeal to some movement groups. However, more importantly, some modern anarchists are particularly drawn to the idea of carnival because it appeals to their egalitarian ideology and participatory, do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos. Bakhtin’s all-too-familiar statement that ‘carnival knows no footlights’ is eagerly echoed in the text on the above-quoted neckerchief, and in the key movement text *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*. In that book, in the ‘Carnival’ section, under the subheading of ‘Participate, Don’t Spectate’, the famous Bakhtin passage about footlights is quoted in full, followed by:

Passivity disappears when carnival comes to town, with its unyielding demand for participation... It is a moment when we can break free from the alienation that capitalism enforces in so many ways... Carnival denies the existence of experts, or rather, insists that everyone is one... it demands interaction and flexibility, face-to-face contact and collective decision-making, so that a dynamic and direct democracy develops – a democracy which takes place on the stage of spontaneously unfolding life, not raised above the audience but at ground level, where everyone can be involved. There are no leaders, no spectators, no sidelines, only an entanglement of many players who do their own thing while feeling part of a greater whole. (NFN, 2003, pp. 177–178)

This perhaps idealistic desire that, in carnival, the mass is involved actively and that no one is relegated to the role of passive spectator/consumer, particularly appeals to a movement that views the mainstream news and entertainment media with great skepticism, that is influenced by Guy Debord’s concept of the deadening, pacifying, and self-perpetuating ‘society of the spectacle’ (Debord, 1995), and that advocates and practices a participatory, ‘do-it-yourself’ form of political direct action and communication (for example, though zines and Indymedia). Many members of the movement, while not explicitly anarchist, do embrace the term coined by the movement in Argentina: ‘horizontalist’. This egalitarian idea of ‘horizontality’ calls for a minimization of the concentration of power in any single person or group’s hands, and Bakhtin’s idea of the carnival, which has been critiqued by scholars, nevertheless appeals strongly to such ideological desires and agendas. To distinguish tactical carnivals from the carnivals that occur in Rio de Janeiro or Notting Hill, members of the anti-capitalist Notes From Nowhere collective wrote:

What carnivals remain in most parts of the world have themselves become spectacles – specialist performances watched by spectators – with police lines and barriers placed between the parade and audience. Thus the vortexed, whirling, uncontrollable state of creative chaos is shoe-horned into neat straight lines and rectangles. A visit to many contemporary carnivals sanctioned by the state (such as Carnaval in Rio de Janeiro, or the Notting Hill Carnival in London), where consumption and corporate sponsorship has taken over from the creativity and spontaneity is enough to illustrate how carnival under capitalism has lost its vitality. But carnival has been with us since time

immemorial and it has always refused to die. Reappearing in different guises across the ages it returns again and again. Freed from the clutches of entertainment, the anticapitalist movements have thrown it back into the streets, where it is liberated from commerce for everyone to enjoy once again. (NFN, 2003, p. 177)

This passage reveals how important the concept of carnival is to some social movement activists, and how it has motivated the way they organize and perform in public space in critical contrast with (the activists' perception of) events such as Rio's Carnival.

However, this form of carnival is also different from the form described and idealized by Bakhtin. It is not a yearly event that fits into an agrarian calendar and a Christian/feudal worldview and system of power; it happens when and where the movement calls for it, though often in reaction to the corporate/state events such as the meetings of the Group of 8 (G8) or the World Trade Organization (WTO). Far from being a day of licensed foolery and excess, it is often unpermitted by the state, triggering police repression. Tactical carnival comes from a complex, global coalition of social movements, and therefore defies ideological generalization. However, its laughter, while ambivalent and self-mocking at times, is not as ambivalent as that described by Bakhtin. It is joyful, but it is also satirical laughter, often coupled with a political worldview or critique, and therefore perhaps not quite as universal as Bakhtin's. It espouses not just the 'World-Turned-Upside Down' concept often described by scholars of medieval European carnival, but rather the very different slogan 'Another World Is Possible'. The difference between these two phrases is the difference between a temporary inversion of power relations and an assertion of the possibility of, and advocacy for the struggle towards, lasting and substantial progressive social change. This slogan, 'Another World Is Possible', has been used in several languages on movement proclamations and banners around the world.

This form of protest, invoking the carnivalesque, has not only been used to oppose capitalism. As Padraic Kenney discusses in his book *A Carnival of Revolution*, the grassroots, independent groups in Eastern Europe who undermined authoritarian Communist power using absurdist, carnivalesque mass protests were a key, undersung element in the collapse of Soviet power in several of the Warsaw Pact countries (Kenney, 2002).

Part of this tactical carnival model is a response to more conventional and institutionalized models of social movement protest. The goal here is to *open up* public space, with do-it-yourself group and individual creativity, rather than to merely *occupy* it with uniform marching and chanting while holding mass-produced signs. This opening of public space for a freer and more festive kind of protest and direct action is one of the main goals of CIRCA.

CIRCA: The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

CIRCA was formed in London in the fall of 2003. It declared itself to be an army of 'rebel clowns' who had mustered their forces to storm the Palace during President George W. Bush's state visit to the UK. CIRCA had been delighted that, after hundreds of years of having no fools or jesters in the court, that the Queen was finally opening her doors for a fool to come . . . but CIRCA was soon dismayed to hear that it was the wrong kind of fool whom Her Majesty had invited. CIRCA was seen all over the city, firing pink pretzels out of their clown cannon at the Esso building, marching

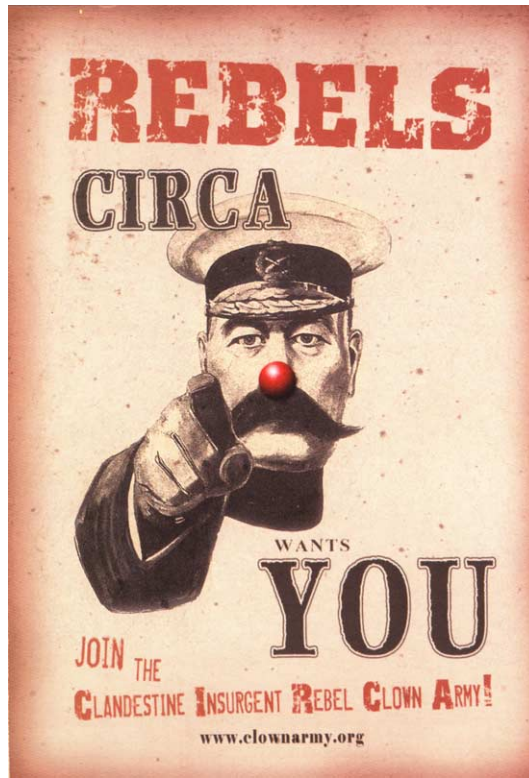


Figure 2. Recruiting card. Courtesy of the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination.

behind Beefeaters, ‘sneaking’ though the park in their bright pink and lime green fuzzy outfits while holding single leaves in front of them for camouflage (and holding the leaves above their heads in response to police helicopters flying over). Since that time, CIRCA has been seen occupying the city of Leeds, marching on the ‘Greet the Buyers’ meeting in London between corporations and the US-installed interim regime in Iraq, attempting to attend the ‘Republican National Clown Convention’ in New York as members of the Big Top Delegation, and elsewhere. CIRCA uses a horizontalist organizing model as it practises a form of nonviolent direct action that joins collective buffoonery with satiric performance.

CIRCA can often be seen in the street moving as a mass body – in tight-knit gaggles of ten or twelve, they may march in mock-disciplined but surprisingly tight pseudomilitary formation, then suddenly break off into total clownarchy – antics and improvisation with passersby. Suddenly, and with no cue, the rebel clowns begin moving like a tightly clustered school of fish, making the same sound and gesture, then changing direction simultaneously and making an entirely different sound and gesture (this is called *fishing*). The unpredictability of CIRCA’s behavior, and the constant collective shape-shifting, come from hours of group practice and training. In their huddled/cuddled group movements, CIRCA evokes the Bakhtinian idea of the carnivalesque mass body as opposed to the idealized, individualistic, and discrete/discreet bourgeois body. CIRCA seems to collectively embody the very-Bakhtinian concepts of Notes From Nowhere:

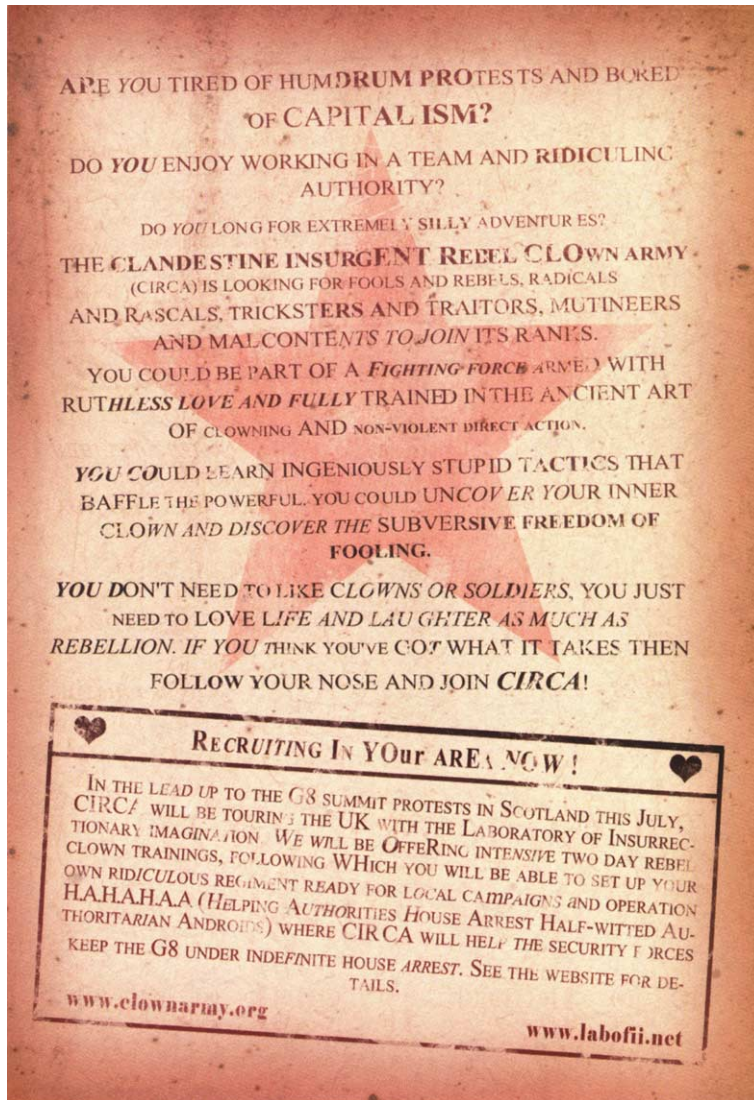


Figure 3. Recruiting card. Courtesy of the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination.

The pleasures of the body have been banished from the public sphere of politics and the excitement of the erotic pushed into the narrow private confines of the sexual realm. But carnival brings the body back to public space, not the perfect smooth bodies that promote consumption on billboards and magazines, not the manipulated plastic bodies of MTV and party political broadcasts, but the body of warm flesh, of blood and guts, organs and orifices.

During carnival the body sticks its tongue out as far as it can, it laughs uncontrollably, sweats and farts as it dances in the heat of other bodies. It's a body that refuses the static images of itself developed by capital, frozen in immortal youthfulness, aloof from natural cycles of eating and shitting, being born and decomposing. In carnival the body is always changing, constantly becoming, eternally unfinished. Inseparable from nature and fused to other bodies around it, the body remembers that it is not a detached, atomized being,

as it allows its erotic impulse to jump from body to body, sound to sound, mask to mask, to swirl across the streets, filling every nook and cranny, every fold of flesh. During carnival the body, with its pleasures and desires, can be found everywhere, luxuriating in its freedom and inverting the everyday. (NFN, 2003, pp. 175–176)

While CIRCA members rarely excrete on the street, they do move in groups (or ‘gaggles’ as the clowns prefer to call them) and in ways that celebrate the mass body over the individual, and earthiness and silliness over commercial standards of beauty and respectability.

We see innovative forms of action as key for building dynamic social movements, but realize that the psyche is as important a site for struggle as the street. CIRCA believes that a self-destructive tendency within many social movements is forgetting the inner work of personal liberation and transformation. This is an area our rebel clown trainings work on deeply, while also providing creative tools to confuse and befuddle authority. (CIRCA, 2005a)

As CIRCA members Isabelle Fremeaux and Hilary Ramsden describe in their essay ‘We Disobey to Love: Rebel Clowning for Social Change’, CIRCA training sessions aim to guide participants towards discovering and developing their own clown persona, learning to work together in groups without leaders, and joining freely and fearlessly in improvisation under pressure (Fremeaux & Ramsden, 2007). Finding one’s clown involves coming up with a name, a sensibility, a physicality and a costume and makeup style. But it is also a much longer and deeper process that involves a great deal of thoughtful/playful exploration. Putting on the makeup before an action is a crucial part of the transformation, the re-entry into one’s alternate clown persona. This celebration of individual creativity and identity through the development of one’s own clown can hopefully enable CIRCA members to express themselves in the moment and mode of carnival while still feeling part of a larger group identity.

CIRCA hopes to open up the spaces that they move in, to shift the paradigm or change the rules of behavior and engagement. They hope to bring the tactical carnival with them as they go, switching an event into what I refer to as the ‘key of clown’ though absurdist cues and gestures. The spirit of playfulness can often be infectious, and ‘civilians’ may be brought into the improvised games in the street – e.g. several dozen clowns coming across a speed bump and treating it as a nigh-unsurpassable obstacle that can only be climbed over through a great deal of team work and slapstick. Like police visors and shields, the face makeup and costumes of a mass of rebel clowns evokes a range of responses. However, it is the openness, willing vulnerability and fearlessness of the clowns that CIRCA hopes will prove infectious in the carnival spaces they create and bring with them as they navigate the city. As the clowns greet the police as ‘friends’ and fail to either melt away in fear or raise the tension in anger, a shift in the paradigm and pattern of confrontation ensues. The true challenge is to stay ‘in clown’ even when conventional power relationships assert themselves. In a different neighborhood during the Carnival for Full Enjoyment, a small gaggle of rebel clowns was dancing in the streets with a samba band when they were baton charged at the blow of a whistle and a cry of ‘CHARGE!’ by a rank of policemen. The clowns, in a tightly coordinated, nonverbal reference to the teachings of Sun Tzu and Von Clausewitz, scattered and fled at top speed. Colonel Oftruth experimented with staying ‘in clown’,

cheerfully confiding to confused bystanders while running away, ‘We must be very dangerous!’

CIRCA follows the egalitarian spirit of horizontalism and tactical carnival in its organizing model. While as many as 150 clowns were in Edinburgh at one time (and the sight of that many rebel clowns marching was a bizarre and mind-opening vision in itself), CIRCA is divided into ‘gaggles’ of roughly 10–15 clowns, analogous to the ‘affinity group’ model of the direct action movement. In groups of this size, members are working with people they can personally get to know and trust. They can develop models of group decision-making where every voice can be heard. When larger groups of clowns need to gather, they form a Clown Council where chosen spokescrowns (!) speak for and in constant consultation with their own gaggles. This basically follows the horizontalist model of organization, but with makeup and red noses added.

There was a varied attitude towards the concept of carnival amongst the CIRCA activists. Matthew Trevelyan, at some group meetings, read quotes directly from Rabelais’ *Gargantua* that he found particularly inspiring and relevant to our carnivalesque efforts. On the other hand, Jennifer Verson refused to accept the term carnival to describe CIRCA’s efforts, denouncing its connotation of an escape valve for societal dissent.

The moment we choose love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom. (bell hooks from *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representation*, as quoted on CIRCA’s heart-shaped ‘Radical Origami’ paper, CIRCA, 2005b)

During the G8 campaign, CIRCA traveled throughout the UK on a biodiesel-fueled van, towing a caravan with the words ‘LABORATORY OF INSURRECTIONARY IMAGINATION’ painted on it. The Laboratory was the umbrella organization for the tour, including the anti-consumerist ‘Church of the Immaculate Consumption’. When CIRCA pulled up into a new city, the group would set up its outdoor performance space between van and caravan, and perform a free show that included puppetry, performance art, and video presentations, all around the themes of civil disobedience, the G8, and rebel clowning. The clowns gave out ‘Radical Origami’ papers, in the shape of a heart and covered with movement-oriented quotes. In the course of the show, the audience was guided in folding the heart into a dunce cap, a megaphone, and a chip (French fry) container. During intermission, organic chips were distributed to all, and CIRCA explained to the audience that the fat from the chip fryer was recycled to power the biodiesel-fuelled van. Thus the possibility of a fossil-fuel-free world was exemplified in CIRCA’s practice, and playfully incorporated into the performance. In the two days after the performance, CIRCA would then lead a training for interested locals in rebel clowning and nonviolent civil disobedience. In this way, the CIRCA caravan group served as a seeder group, starting CIRCA ‘gaggles’ in each city that would then continue to train and practise on their own. By the time of the G8, when a Clown Council was called for Edinburgh, a total of about 150 clowns, in a dozen gaggles from all over the UK, Ireland, and Belgium, with individuals from Italy, France, and Spain, gathered together to debate and discuss a plan of action.

CIRCA’s main focus was on direct action in public space, but it also hoped to speak through the media by generating absurd quotes and images that nevertheless

articulated a radical critique of the G8's policies, and of capitalism, that was not being enunciated by the celebrities of the Live Aid concert (it may be for this reason that Bob Geldof himself was quoted as saying that he didn't want a 'bunch of guys dressed as clowns' showing up and ruining his show). In order to spread this critique, CIRCA called an absurdist 'press conference' for 1 July 2005. The press release, written with the earnest absurdity of clown-logic, hoped to highlight CIRCA's concerns about the social movement being co-opted by Labour Party leaders who were reportedly planning to join in the 'Make Poverty History' March in Edinburgh. As always, CIRCA also wanted to call attention to their biodiesel-powered van and the possibility it raised for a fossil-fuel-free future (of course, as has become clear in the last few years, biodiesel recycled from food grease is a fine marginal method for replacing gasoline, but is not viable as a central or long-term solution):

CLANDESTINE INSURGENT REBEL CLOWN ARMY (CIRCA)

CIRCA ANNOUNCES ITS FIRST G8 CAMPAIGN PRESS CONFERENCE
FREE CHIPS TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO THE MEDIA . . .

To the Media and Press:

Please meet us at *12:30 pm on Friday 1st July at our lovely caravan on the left hand side of Teviot Student Union, Bristo Square* for the announcement of our upcoming **Operation, BROWN-NOSE (to take place on July 2nd)** . . . [see our Communique below].

At this briefing, we will explain our immensely important role in support of the Make Poverty History march. We will then demonstrate the techniques of radical clowning with which we will protect the march – and we will receive an honorary salute from the cannons at Edinburgh Castle, showing the Queen's approval for our campaign.

Free chips will be served! The chip fat will power our biodiesel van to Gleneagles! If you eat the chips you will help our movement move forward!! Hee hee hee!!!

With all due respect,

CIRCA

The communiqué itself read as follows:

COMMUNIQUE #8.86

CLANDESTINE INSURGENT REBEL CLOWN ARMY (CIRCA)

Re: Operation BROWN-NOSE

To all our rebel friends in the global justice movement – our brave, beautiful, beatific, bracelet-wearing brethren bent on beating back and baffling the behemoth of Babel that is the Gathering of Eight . . .

We are so proud of you, so in love with you . . . we share your compassion and desire to TRULY make poverty history. We admire your realization that the only real way to end poverty, in the global South or in the suburbs of Edinburgh, is to stop the Great Eight's amusingly antisocial habits – their rather nasty slapstick routines – kicking the poorer nations with war, arms sales, and bullying trade policies, manipulating their markets and plundering their resources while dangling the crumbs of 'debt forgiveness'. We know the G8, far from being thanked for 'forgiving' these illegitimate debts,

should **beg forgiveness** from the Global South for their ongoing crimes and depredations...

Beyond all that, we of CIRCA thank YOU, our friends here at this march, for being part of a beautiful and loving nonviolent social movement to achieve true justice... for of course it is only through social movements that real social change can happen – not from begging the politicians or corporations to behave more **nicely**.

BUT...the CIRCA *Advanced Intelligence Team* has discovered a grave threat to our powerful movement, just as we are all gaining momentum and making our demands for profound change heard. It has come to our attention through deft infiltration, clever clandestinity, and watching the telly that SEVERAL CRIMINAL, ANTISOCIAL ELEMENTS are trying to **HIJACK** and **CO-OPT** our **MOVEMENT!** They are **HERE**, **AMONGST US**, these **DANGEROUS EXTREMISTS**, and they **MAY** even be marching in this very demonstration!!! They are **GORDON BROWN (MP)**, the financier of the invasion of Iraq, whose £5 billion War Reserve Fund could, instead, fully immunize EVERY CHILD in the developing world for two years, who has stated explicitly that aid will go down as much as debt is relieved for a net change of **ZERO**, and that recipient countries will have to restructure their societies to make them even more vulnerable to the market. **HILLARY BENN (MP)** may also be present, wearing his pretty ‘development’ mask over his true face of privatization and plunder. **BEWARE!** If you see Brown or any of his Errorist henchmen, please report them to the clown patrol nearest to you on the march, and keep your distance.

CIRCA has mobilized to **PATROL** and **PROTECT** our movement, so that it is not **HIJACKED** by these ghoulish buffoons. Our movement’s unique accomplishment is the creation of a grassroots politics **WITHOUT** professional politicians and parliaments (as they have said in Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, Chiapas, and beyond, ‘Que se vayan todos! (Out with them all!)’ We must not let these brown-nosing interlopers mislead us on our own march!

Operation BROWN-NOSE will involve giving hugs to the needy, playing games with all our friends, and other similarly militant activities. We request full cooperation from the public for this operation.

With love, laughter and red-nosed resistance,
Colonel Oftruth
General Confusion
Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

The actual press conference involved feeding organic chips to the media (when most of them balked, Colonel Oftruth was sure to hand-feed them until they all relented) and a demonstration of CIRCA’s parade skills as an entire battalion marched directly into (and behind, and on top of) a tiny phone booth. CIRCA then demonstrated its *fishing* movement, explained the premise of Operation HAHAA (Helping Authorities House Arrest Half Witted Authoritarian Androids), in which CIRCA planned to help the security forces with their ongoing house arrest of the G8’s leaders – the ultimate ‘dangerous, antisocial, criminal elements’ in the Gleneagles resort. CIRCA then read the Operation Brown-Nose communiqué and scattered in all directions. The next day, several papers, including the *Daily Record*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Daily Star*, quoted at varying length the second paragraph of the communiqué, which enunciated a critique of the G8’s actual policies and responsibility for the debt of the Global South, along with the disarming CIRCA claim that they would ‘amuse, bemuse, but never bruise’.

Press coverage of CIRCA thus served as a partial disruption of the hegemonologue that relentlessly depicted protesters as violent and dangerous. Even in right-wing newspapers that were hostile to the movement's agenda, quotes and photographs of CIRCA members provided a sort of cognitive dissonance to the reactionary storyline. On one such page of the *Daily Mirror*, under the huge headline 'RIOT POLICE . . . 1 ANARCHISTS . . . 0: G-Hate Aggro Kicks-off as Cops Crush Violent Protesters', and next to a photograph of a beaten protestor, is the image of Trixie kissing the shield of a smiling policeman, with the subtitle of 'KISS AND MAKE UP: Member of the Rebel Clowns plants smacker on cop riot shield'. The *Daily Mail* also showed a picture of Trixie's kiss next to a photograph of a female protestor being arrested by heavily armored police (Moore & McGregor, 2005; Madeley, Macaskill, Tait, & Grant, 2005). These images may at least have disrupted the constant barrage of dehumanizing rhetoric about the protestors, if only from the jarring juxtaposition of the visuals above the denunciatory text. A reader might have wondered, if only for a split second: if these protestors appeared to just be clowning around and kissing shields, why were they being beaten and arrested? In 'The Carnival Turns Into Anarchy' in the *Scotsman*, a reporter noted:

Earlier in the day, and on a lighter note, the Rebel Clown Army had been detained while putting on their make up and red noses. Police found an artillery of weapons including a feather duster, water pistols and soapy bubbles. About 30 of the clowns – who wore an unusual combination of army combats, neon pink wigs, colanders on their heads and other fluffy accessories – were surrounded by police in Teviot Place. Some clowns ran away giggling but others were forced to wait while they were searched by police. All the clowns insisted on speaking in high-pitched voices, dancing around and making jokes . . . (Brown, Gray, Howie & McGinty, 2005)

Despite the very real clashes between police and citizens that happened during the Carnival, this sort of press coverage undermined to some degree the rhetoric of the national security state about the threat of violent protestors.

By the end of the campaign, there were some small signs of fraternization between some of the rank-and-file police and some of the clowns, an exchange, a lessening of mutual fear through the visors and the makeup that covered either side's faces. While the clowns were 'directing traffic' at one intersection, a police wagon rolled by the CIRCA 'checkpoint', and some of the police grinningly gave CIRCA the Clown Salute in an appropriately ambivalent gesture of comradely contempt. Elsewhere, one police officer, hearing the clowns do the 'Yes, lets' exercise (in which one clown says 'Let's all do X!' and all other clowns in hearing range must say 'YES! Let's all do X!', and do whatever X is in as enthusiastic and ridiculous a manner as possible), said 'Let's go to the park, because that's where the clowns are going and we have to follow them!' At one point, CIRCA members were once again confronted with a line of stonefaced police, and one of the CIRCA members began ironically thanking the police for supporting global capitalism. The ironic speech went on a bit long, and another clown (Verson) told the police, 'If you smile, I'll tell him to be quiet'. Several of the police immediately put beaming smiles on their faces (Verson). Later, on the highway approaching Gleneagles, a group of rebel clowns came upon four patrolmen guarding a bridge. The clowns asked them if they wanted to play a game, and they agreed. After an explanation of the rules to 'Giants, Wizards and Goblins', the two sides huddled to choose a strategy, then grinningly lined up facing

each other. On the count of three, both lines simultaneously aimed their outstretched arms at each other and wiggled their fingers as if casting a spell. The bobbies and the clowns had both chosen the 'Wizard' option. They immediately obeyed the hallowed rule of the game: if both sides choose the same creature, they have to hug. Police-wizards and clown-wizards hugging after all the conflict of the days gone by was a hopeful if bizarre sight (Young, 2005). While this occasional softening of relations may have been denounced amongst some more 'hardcore' and hostile anarchists, others such as founding CIRCA member Jennifer Verson saw it as a historically-proven essential element in destabilizing power and making real social change – establishing a human connection with the rank-and-file police, eroding the mutual and habitual anger and stereotyping, and experimenting with new methods of interaction (Verson, personal communication, 3 July 2005). CIRCA confronts power by playing with it, by refusing the interpolation of conventional power relations as much as possible, at the immediate point of articulation of that power in public space. CIRCA attempts to create a temporary, evanescent, improvised carnival space where the rules are destabilized and new possible relations are suggested and experimented with (Bey, 1985).

These carnival-inspired power-plays can be problematic. While the experience of training and playing with CIRCA, or with carnivalesque protest in general, can be liberating for individual participants, these actions in and of themselves only hint at a better, possible world. Tactical carnival in and of itself does not change the fundamental relations of production or distribution in the greater society. The liberatory spaces it creates are quickly dispersed, either by the force of the state or by the inevitable need of its participants to eventually *get back to work*. Indeed, these spaces, while embracing a carnivalesque egalitarianism, are not equally open to all. The cost of participation is more easily faced by those with the resources to be able to face arrest, and the race or class privilege that lessens the risks and penalties for confrontation with the state (for an account of the community-sustaining clowning amongst working-class African-American youth in Los Angeles, see the movie *RIZE*, and Shepard, 2005). Different states have different policing policies, and this radically affects the tactics and range of motion of creative protesters. For example, while, in Britain rebel clowns were able, at times, to interact playfully with the police, in New York, where the policing is far rougher, it is necessary to make the fearsome context part of the shtick. CIRCA/NYC members are therefore much more likely to flee helter-skelter at the slightest hint of trouble and hide behind very small objects. While rebel clowning is a joyful way to find courage and to play with power, there is a necessary element of sorrow or even despair mixed into these performances. It is often probably not the best choice for a movement event. However, no single tactic can solve the problems that the global justice movement confronts, and clowning is only one tactic amongst many in the ongoing experiment of resistance. Indeed, the danger of becoming predictable is all the more incentive for tactical carnival's creation of a space for experimentation with new ideas and nonviolent tactics.

In conclusion, scholars of carnival may very well problematize the global justice movement's interpretation of the carnivalesque. They may dispute such an uncritical reading of the works of Bakhtin, and might argue that this uncritical interpretation undermines the movement's actual praxis around the world. However, although some may claim that this reading of carnival is not historicized rigorously enough, or

that it is too accepting of Bakhtin's ideas wholesale, it is unquestionable that this idea of carnival is an emergent frame that is inspiring and galvanizing the theory and action of a global, anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist movement. This global movement is determined to build and sustain its own cultures, in defiance of the homogenizing corporate monoculture that is spreading so rapidly. Part of the development of these oppositional cultures is the development of a new concept of carnival, influenced by older concepts but continually developing its definitions, parameters, and tactics through activist praxis. This movement's project is to reclaim the carnival for its own purposes and agendas, against the society of the spectacle and the hegemonologue, and for sustained, deeply oppositional, creative and egalitarian activism.

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