Carnevale di Venezia

Performance and Spectatorship at the Venice Carnival

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Just as for the acrobats who formed human pyramids at the bygone Venice carnival on the climactic carnival feast day of *giovedí grasso*, completing this thesis has sometimes felt for me like one of the *Forze d'Ercole* (Labours of Hercules). However, several people have helped me along the way, and I wish to express my gratitude to them here.

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Where direct quotations from Italian sources are present in this study and no specific translator is acknowledged, the translations are mine, completed with Alice's guidance.

I dedicate this thesis to Alice and to our lovely daughter Anna (born April 2015), and to the memory of my father Vincent O'Rourke (1930-2015).

Abstract

The modern day Venice carnival was officially revived in 1980, and is famed internationally for its beautifully costumed and masked *maschere* and its iconic location in the lagoon city of Venice. The carnival's twentieth-century revival responded to the organic resurfacing of the event, after a period of desuetude which began at the fall of the independent Republic of Venice in 1797. Considered herein as microcosm of the city itself, the carnival contributes to perceptions of Venice, conjuring the city's aesthetics of beauty, theatricality, stillness, opulence, mystery, decadence, and death.

To analyse the revived carnival, this thesis employs a qualitative, ethnographic methodology, as photographs, interviews, and experiences are utilised as part of the analysis, integrated with critical perspectives from contemporary theatre and performance studies, as well as from a range of other disciplines, including literature, art, photography, history, architecture, film, and tourism. While the modern day carnival is the focus herein, past iterations of the event will contribute critical frames, together with historical accounts, paintings, and engravings of the city and carnival. Instances of contemporary art, theatre, and performance practice, in and beyond Venice, add further insight.

The interactions between masked and unmasked participants at the Venice carnival, framed by the city, point to a troubling of the conventional binary of performance and spectatorship, positing the spectator as an active participant in the enactment of carnival. Further, the replicative nature of the event, as it picks up the traces of bygone carnivals, illustrates the way in which performances remain in myriad ways, making the carnival multidirectional and crosstemporal. Although the revived carnival is often perceived as commercialised and touristic, its emphasis on individual creativity, transgression, communality, and the renewal of social bonds ultimately affirms its subversive nature, allowing carnival participants to challenge socially divisive neoliberalist capitalism.

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Introduction

Motivations and Aims

Il Carnevale di Venezia, the Venice carnival, is an internationally renowned event famed for its stunning costumes and masks and its beautiful setting in the lagoon city of Venice. The carnival, which takes place annually before the beginning of Lent, has a rich heritage, and the city's archives indicate that it has been a feature of Venetian life for almost a millennium, and must extend back even further into the city's cultural life, linking to pre-Christian pagan festivals. This thesis investigates the modern day Venice carnival since its official revival in 1980, and is motivated by an interest in the interplay between performance and spectatorship at the event, as the carnival's participants blur any distinction that might be deemed to exist between these poles: the participatory and interrelational nature of the event positions participants at once as performers and spectators. The carnival is richly associated with theatre, not only because many participants transform their identities with costumes and masks, but also because of the way they use the city as a stage-set for their carnival interactions; furthermore, the carnival has always been a time for spectacle, on the streets and in the theatres of Venice. The event has inspired numerous artistic works, including plays, stories, films, and musical compositions, and the carnival is thus a significant cultural institution locally, nationally, and internationally.[1] In this, the carnival is microcosmic of the city of Venice itself, which has also been an enormous inspiration for the arts, ensuring the development of a Venetian aesthetics.[2] Crucial to this aesthetics is Venice's aura of historicity, evocative of an identity carved over centuries from the time of the city's strong, independent republic, when its political system, its navy, its empire, and its civic life were admired and respected. So influential was the republic that it gained mythological status, and became incredibly influential, not least because of the ways in which it represented itself to

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[1] Alessandro Falassi, 'The Mask, the Mist, and the Mirror: *Carnevale* in Venice, Italy', in *¡Carnival!*, ed. by Barbara Mauldin (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp.64-91 (p.70).

[2] The Fictional Cities website compiles a comprehensive list of films, television programmes, fiction, non-fiction, and comics set in and inspired by Venice, 'Venice', Fictional Cities <http://www.fictionalcities.co.uk/venice.htm> [accessed 26 October 2015].

the world. David Rosand argues that images contributed to making the myth of Venice a reality: the city was freqently represented as Justice, Wisdom, St Mark, the Virgin Mary, or the lion, figures which represented ideal views of the republic.[3] The 'myth' of Venice, explains Edward Muir, is applied by modern scholars to Venice's historical reputation for 'beauty, religiosity, liberty, peacefulness, and republicanism', and indeed these are associations which continue to be made with the city.[4] These aspects help to define the qualities of representations of the city in the arts, encapsulating the identity of the Most Serene Republic, as it is known: *La Serenissima*. This particular aesthetics has developed to include decadence, mystery, age, and often deathliness, as is seen in literary, filmic, and artistic engagements with Venice, and these aesthetic qualities are also evoked by the carnival. Alessandro Falassi asserts that the carnival was always an important aspect of the myth of the city, taking on mythological status itself.[5]

The carnival's revival in 1980 after a suspension of almost two centuries responded to growing momentum in the 1970s to see the event reinstalled in Venice's calendar and increased interest in the carnivalesque traditions of the bygone era of the old republic. Apart from 1991, when the carnival was cancelled due to the outbreak of the Gulf War, the event has been celebrated yearly and has firmly re-established itself as an essential feature of Venice's cultural life. More than a million people visit the carnival each year, and some days see in excess of 150,000 visitors coming into the city to experience the event.[6] These figures are astonishing when one considers that Venice is not a particularly large city: the population of the historical centre was just over 55,000 in 2014, with a total population of over 260,000 people living in the whole city area, which includes the islands in the lagoon and a section of

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[3] David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp.4-5.
[4] Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.21.
[5] Falassi, p.70.
[6] Carnevale di Venezia 2016, Ve.La. <http://www.velaspa.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2200&Itemid=319&lang=it> [accessed 8 September 2015].

the *terrafirma*.[7] The masked and costumed participants of the modern day carnival, the

maschere, promenade and congregate in and around Piazza San Marco, the iconic heart of

the city. The *maschere* typically dress in fine and opulent costumes, and their identities are

hidden behind all-encompassing masks, but the carnival is a polyphonic event, and

participants engage with the carnival in a multitude of ways: many sport fancy-dress or make

some small acknowledgement of the carnival in their appearance, but many others do not

change their appearance at all. There is thus a broad continuum of costuming evident in each

manifestation of the carnival. The 2016 carnival is scheduled to last for eighteen days,

between 23 January and 9 February, finishing as normal on Shrove Tuesday (*martedì

grasso*).[8] While the revived carnival has experienced diverse durations, with the 1989

carnival lasting a whole month, the length of the 2016 carnival is an accurate reflection of

average duration in recent years.[9] In Venice's past, contrastingly, citizens and visitors could

have the sensation that carnival lasted for six months of the year, a notion expressed in

diverse publications.[10] However, in truth it was not carnival that lasted for six months, but

the permission to mask was extended for that period, as the theatre season began in October,

and there were several other occasions throughout the year at which Venetians were

permitted to mask themselves, including for the feast day of St Mark, the feast of the

Ascension, and the *ingresso* (accession) of a new doge - the figurehead of the Venetian state.

The historical carnival was of considerable duration however, as it often started on St

Stephen's Day, 26 December, continuing through to Shrove Tuesday.[11] The modern

carnival's positioning just before the beginning of the period of Lent ensures the event

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[7] Servizio Statistica e Ricerca, Città di Venezia
<http://www.comune.venezia.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/84504> [accessed 7 September 2015].
[8] Carnevale di Venezia 2016 <http://www.carnevale.venezia.it/en/> [accessed 22 September 2015].
[9] Alessandro Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna: 30 anni di Carnevale a Venezia 1980-2010/ Carnival in the Modern Age: 30 Years of Carnival in Venice 1980-2010*, trans. by Olga Barmine (Venice: Studio LT2, 2010), p.270.
[10] Peter Ackroyd, *Venice: Pure City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), p.243; Falassi, pp.76-77; Patrick Barbier, 'Les grandes heures du carnaval de Venise', *Historia*, 674 (Feb 2003), 24-29 (p.25).
[11] Åsa Boholm, 'Masked Performances in the Carnival of Venice', in *Images and Enactments: Possible Worlds in Dramatic Performance*, ed. by Göran Aijmer and Åsa Boholm (Gothenburg: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, 1994), pp.64-88 (p.72); Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season: Science, Culture, and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.107.

retains its link to the Christian calendar.[12] Lent is a period for fasting and abstinence, and so the period beforehand saw people indulging in excess in carnivals across Europe.[13] The etymology of carnival (*carnevale* in Italian) is believed to be *carnem levare*, which means 'to put away meat', as it was customary to stop eating meat and rich foods during Lent.[14] D. K. Feil asserts that *carne vale* means 'flesh farewell', evidencing the additional connotation of abstaining from sexual pleasures; he adds that the Renaissance writer Giovanni Boccaccio frequently punned *carnelevare* to mean 'male erection', pointing to notions of the carnivalesque or satyresque male as a potent figure.[15] As it is linked to Christian teaching and the Christian calendar, the Venice carnival is thereby connected to pre-Christian agrarian and pagan societies, whose traditions were subsumed into the Christian calendar. The carnival therefore shares a link with the libertine celebrations of antiquity, such as the Bacchanalia, Lupercalia, and Saturnalia, which were marked by their wild libertinism, topsy-turvy nature, and communality.[16]

Those *maschere* who don an opulent outfit from head to toe and a *volto* mask which covers all of their face except their eyes have come to be seen as typical of the modern carnival: not a speck of their skin is visible, and even the skin around their eyes is painted black so that only their eyeballs are visible. These *maschere* have come to represent the main

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[12] For a detailed overview of the origins and developments of carnival in Europe and the Americas, see Barbara Mauldin, 'Introduction: Carnival in Europe and the Americas', in *¡Carnival!*, ed. by Barbara Mauldin (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp.3-19.

[13] Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), pp.134-35.

[14] Wickham, p.135.

[15] D. K. Feil, 'How Venetians Think About Carnival and History', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9, 2 (1998), 141-62 (p.142).

[16] Feil, p.142. Monica Rector states that carnival relates to the worshipping of Isis, goddess of maternity and fertility in Egyptian mythology as well as to the Roman festivals of Bacchanalia, Lupercalia, and Saturnalia. The Bacchanalia were indulgent, orgiastic festivities held in honour of the god Bacchus, or Dionysus. The worship of Dionysus began in Greece around 1000 BC as a god of fertility, and later as god of wine. The Bacchanalia were wild, libertine festivities in which inhibitions were loosened and creativity was encouraged. On 15 February, which coincides with the celebration of pre-Lenten carnival, Lupercalia celebrated the god Pan (Greek) or Faunus (Roman), the god of flocks and herds. The Roman Saturnalia paid worship to the god Saturn on 17 December. These ancient traditions share the same sense of libertinism, wild transgression, and escapism from normality. The Romans introduced carnival to Europe and gradually the Christian church fitted its celebrations and periods of religious observance around the already established pagan festivities. As European powers colonised the New World, they transported carnival traditions with them, which mingled with established traditions and were adapted and combined with customs of other cultures. See Monica Rector, 'The Code and Message of Carnival: "Escolas-de-Samba"', in *Carnival!*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), pp.37-165.

attraction of the carnival for many, and people participating in the event are eager to see and engage with these figures. So typical are the *maschere* of the revived carnival that they are symbolic not only of the event, but also of the city itself, affirming the status of the carnival as microcosm of the city. Indeed, carnival masks are on sale to tourists all year round, indicating the way in which the carnival intersects with the city. The *maschere* posing in Figure 1 illustrate optimum examples of these typical carnival figures as they commune with broadly held perceptions of the carnival and the city as opulent, sophisticated, and elegant. These *maschere* typically promenade about Piazza San Marco and the adjacent Piazzetta, sometimes alone, often in pairs, stopping and posing for photographs and interacting with their fellow carnival participants. In spite of the perception of these *maschere*, like those shown in Figure 1, as representative of the event, numerous other participants costume and mask themselves in a multitude of diverse ways, making the carnival a riot of colour, creativity, and a veritable *bricolage* of tastes and personalities. The *maschere* shown in Figures 2 and 3 are indicative of this variety in engagement with the carnival, showing that luminous wigs, improvised outfits, and fancy dress masks are all as much a part of the event as the typically composed *maschere*.

While the main focus of this study is the manifestation of the revived carnival from 1980 up to the present day, the thesis is significantly informed by the historical manifestation of the event, as the bygone carnival was a fundamental feature of the Venetian calendar. The event receives its first mention in the Venetian annals in 1094, and it thrived throughout the period of the Venetian independent republic, before coming to an end when the republic fell to Napoleon Bonaparte in 1797.[17] Napoleon's taking over of the city and the fall of the republic seemed almost inevitable, and by the end of the year, control of the city had been handed from Napoleon to the Austrians. In 1866 Venice became a part of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy. Beyond 1797, under the Austrians and then as part of Italy, there were traces and murmurings of the carnival which remained in diverse ways, but the event had

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[17] Gilles Bertrand, 'Venise au temps du carnaval', *L'Histoire*, 185 (Feb 1995) 64-69 (p.65); Pino Correnti, *Il Carnevale di Venezia* (Milan: Edizioni Ecotur, 1968), p.13.

Figure 1 *Maschere* **posing beside a lamppost in the Piazzetta, 7 February 2010**

Figure 2 *Maschere*, 6 March 2011

Figure 3 *Maschere*, **6 March 2011**

effectively entered a period of desuetude which lasted almost two centuries before the revival. In spite of this hiatus, the modern carnival retains numerous links to the bygone event, which are important to this thesis as they indicate that the carnivals of the past have left remains which are taken up at each new iteration of the carnival, and this further emphasises the link to performance, which is inherently tied up with repetition and citation, as Rebecca Schneider has argued in her seminal study *Performing Remains*. Schneider's work investigates the replicative aspect of performance and therefore provides important perspectives throughout: she asserts that in replicating performances, people can engage with other times and frames, both backward into the past and forward into the future. Her emphasis on such cross-temporality speaks to the way that people in Venice, during carnival and throughout the year, are able to touch other times and frames. Significantly, Schneider also points to the multiplicity of ways in which performances can be replicated: an act can be reenacted very precisely, or at a slight remove, by a photograph, drawing, or description,

which applies to the plurality of the enactment of carnival in Venice. She avers: 'all representational practice, and indeed all communicative behavior, is composed in reiteration, is engaged in citation, is *already* a practice of reenactment'.[18] This observation points to the idea that in replicating earlier carnivals, participants are not reenacting the past exactly as it was, but are participating in an unending cycle of repetitions, thereby undermining the notion of an original beginning. Carnival participants are not, therefore, replicating a specific moment or action from the past, but are rather engaged in a cycle of iterability in which the originary source of their actions is ambiguous or nonexistent. Schneider's work echoes the performance theory of Richard Schechner, particularly his terms 'restored behaviour' and 'twice-behaved behaviour' as ways of understanding performance: through emphasising the way in which performances are 'restored' or have been performed before, Schechner points to citationality and repetition as key to all performance.[19] Marvin Carlson explains: '"restored behavior" emphasizes the process of repetition and the continued awareness of some "original" behavior, however distant or corrupted by myth or memory, which serves as a kind of grounding for the restoration'.[20] Evidently, the carnival is inherently tied up with the restoration of performances, as each iteration of the event points to past occurrences and remains.

Venice is a supremely attractive city to write about and to study, and scholars actively interrogate diverse aspects of its history, culture, and society. A 2010 conference on Venice held at the University of Warwick was pertinently titled 'The Singularity of Venice', celebrating this uniqueness of the city, exploring the city's art and literature, history and society, and performance and participation: the variety of papers presented at this academic gathering illustrates the multidisciplinarity of approaches taken in the study of Venice.[21] This reflects the love of the city on the part of Venetophiles: those who are passionately

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[18] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.10.
[19] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp.34-36.
[20] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p.47.
[21] 'The Singularity of Venice Conference', University of Warwick, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/insite/events/events/venice_singularity/> [accessed 9 September 2015].

committed to the city and who are eager to experience it on more than a superficial level.

Judith Martin explains that these Venetophiles are generally tourists who go to extreme and

expensive lengths to satisfy their fantasies of the city, underlining the cultural reach of the

city beyond the confines of the lagoon waters.[22] Venice's unique foundations and its

astounding rise as a trading hub and maritime power, along with its incredible history as an

independent state, make it a very particular entity, thus ensuring the city retains a special

appeal. As macrocosm of the carnival, the city of Venice is also inherently tied up with the

repetition of past performances. This reiterative quality of the city reflects contemporary

approaches to performance and to engagement with cities. As Mike Pearson observes in

Theatre/Archaeology, coauthored with Michael Shanks, performances leave traces, and the

student of performance is thus akin to an archaeologist:

> The *traces* left behind by performance are perhaps more susceptible
> to the approaches of contemporary archaeology than methods taken
> from textual analysis: the documentation of unwritten happening,
> attested through material trace, is an archaeological project. For
> certain, performance is inevitably in the past and ultimately
> enigmatic.[23]

Pearson's linking of performance to archaeology is indicative of an approach which

embraces the traces of performance that are not only left in text but remain in myriad ways.

His own performance practice has explored these themes: in *Marking Time*, he focuses on

Cardiff, creating itineraries for the city and recalling and exploring performances that took

place in different parts of the city, emphasising that performance remains in the place that it

was. Through his study, the city and performance are seen as 'mutually reflexive aides-

memoire or mnemonics, with archaeology as the critical optic'.[24] This resonates with

Schneider's aforementioned affirmation that performance remains, suggesting the

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[22] Judith Martin, 'My own private palazzo', *Financial Times*, 23 June 2007
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fa71f83a-2125-11dc-8d50-000b5df10621.html#axzz3lFKugn5o>
[accessed 9 September 2015].
[23] Mike Pearson, in *Theatre/Archaeology* by Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge,
2001), p.9.
[24] Mike Pearson, *Marking Time: Performance, Archaeology and the City* (Exeter: University of Exeter
Press, 2013), p.11.

performances of carnival and city pick up and reiterate traces from the past. An archaeological approach to the performances of the city and carnival suggests palimpsests, intimating that the traces are layered over one another, building foundations for new iterations, and this is particularly pertinent to the performances of Venice as the city is so strongly inflected by history. Indeed, archaeological investigation inevitably reveals information about the history of places and people, and the way that they lived their lives, suggesting that such an approach to the performances of city and carnival can reveal conclusions about Venetian society.

Remains and traces of performances reflect broader approaches within performance studies, wherein anything can be considered 'as' performance: Schechner's theorising has been crucial to this approach. He states: 'There is nothing inherent in an action in itself that makes it a performance or disqualifies it from being a performance. [...] every action is a performance'.[25] The broad scope that this framework allows has led to performance being attached to all manner of phenomena, including cities. Theatre scholar Jen Harvie delineates that urban studies pioneered a vision of cities as performing, with analyses interrogating how, for example, 'state and crown use public performance to reinforce their authority', with other urban performances including opening parliaments, launching new shopping centres, stock exchange trading, and monumental architecture.[26] The awesome architecture of Piazza San Marco and the Grand Canal, along with ritualistic civic events, exemplify Venice's urban performances. Nicolas Whybrow has written widely on the performance of cities, and he suggests the shifting, flowing, and overlapping nature of cities means that cities should be acknowledged as '*multipli-cities* or *complex-cities*'.[27] A recent issue of *The Drama Review* was dedicated to the interconnections between city and performance, underlining the increased level of scrutiny on such interconnections. The editor Carol Martin asserts: 'Cities are live performances', adding, 'How people behave in the streets, in the parks, in the

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[25] Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p.38.
[26] Jen Harvie, *Theatre & the City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.47.
[27] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Writing Performing Cities: An Introduction', in *Performing Cities*, ed. by Nicolas Whybrow (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp.1-18 (p.1).

outdoor markets, in the stadiums, inside buildings […] and riding public and private

transportation gives cities their unique character, ambience, and tone'.[28] Martin's assertion

indicates that cities depend upon performing spectators who enact the city's existence.

Imanuel Schipper's article elaborates on Martin's editorial: 'I propose that we define the

term "city" in terms of process rather than simply as concrete, asphalt, and glass. The city is

a coproductive process undergoing constant transformation and development'.[29] Schipper's

article is strongly redolent of the theories of French theorist Henri Lefebvre, whose notion of

the production of urban space he explains thus: 'a space (including urban space) is a

coproduction of given circumstances and the experiences and actions of human beings'.[30]

This allows for an understanding of cities as fluid, dynamic spaces dependent on changing

circumstances and the interactions between people within them, therefore providing a

theoretical framework for this study's approach to Venice.

Indeed, Lefebvre's writings will be employed in the first chapter of this thesis to

illustrate the interrelationality between performance and spectatorship in the ongoing

enactment of Venice, and to point to individual and collective engagements with the city to

be seen as possible sites of subversion. This is a particularly relevant approach for Venice as

the city encourages very individual engagements with the built environment, partly because

of the absence of cars, which means citizens and visitors must walk, and walking has been

shown to be empowering. A vast field of thinking and scholarship sees individual acts and

encounters as possible sites for subversion, from the role of the wandering *flâneur*, to the

power of everyday acts of life, enabling new approaches to engagements with the city,

including the *dérive* as an act of embodied walking.[31] As Michel de Certeau relates in *The*

Practice of Everyday Life, walkers can be seen as practitioners who make unseen use of

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[28] Carol Martin, 'Performing the City', *Drama Review*, 58, 3 (2014), 10-17 (p.11).
[29] Imanuel Schipper, 'City as Performance', *Drama Review*, 58, 3 (2014), 18-26 (p.22).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006), p.12; Nicolas Whybrow, 'Situation Venice: towards a performative "ex-planation" of a city', *Research in Drama Education*, 16, 2 (2011) 279-98 (p.282); Wrights and Sites, 'A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: "dealing with the city"' <http://www.mis-guide.com/ws/documents/dealing.html> [accessed 30 September 2015].

spaces, and where and how they walk eludes legibility, suggesting that individual

engagements with urban space can resist the overarching, hegemonic structures of life.[32]

Whybrow describes the action of the walker as containing an 'important elusiveness',

implying that individual acts of walking cannot be entirely known, seen, understood, or

controlled.[33] Elsewhere he has elaborated on the interaction of cities and walkers:

> Bodies can be seen to both *produce* and *be produced* by the city.
> And while cities obviously contain bodies, bodies also contain
> cities. In fact, the city itself functions as an ecological body, one
> that *facilitates* the circulation of particular socio-economic and
> cultural discourses while also thereby *delimiting* them. In other
> words, the various component parts of the city – its built
> environment, cultures, peoples, networks of communication and so
> on – operate interdependently, producing – but importantly also
> restricting or suppressing – possibilities of expression,
> identification and, in a more acute sense, survival via any number
> of visible and invisible interactions and overlaps.[34]

Whybrow's observation on the production of cities emphasises the interplay between people

and cities and indicates that cities provide possibilities and restrictions in the production of

particular discourses. His invocation of the city as an 'ecological body' resonates with an

archaeological approach to the city, intimating that the palimpsests of Venice's cultural life,

including the carnival, reveal socio-economic discourses of the city. These discourses are

proactively performed by the city and the people within it, or alternatively challenged and

subverted through individual and creative engagement. The practice of walking has been

hugely important to performance studies in recent years, as walkers/performers pick up,

repeat, and reinterpret already trodden paths in unique and creative ways.

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[32] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (London: University of California Press, 1984), p.93.
[33] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Encountering the City: On "Not Taking Yourself with You"', *European Studies*, 23 (2006), 97-109 (p.97).
[34] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Introduction', in *Performance and the Contemporary City: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. by Nicolas Whybrow (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.1-13 (p.3).

Methodology

This thesis adopts a qualitative, ethnographic approach to the analysis of Venice's carnival, which is a suitable methodology as it incorporates personal observation and interpretation, and is flexible in its engagement with the research topic. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln recognise that a single definition of qualitative research is evasive, but pinpoint the interpretive nature of such a methodological approach, suggesting qualitative researchers need flexibility and variety in their methods.[35] Qualitative research is broadly regarded as an approach which allows interesting engagement with the social world and extends understanding of existence and human interactions.[36] Gregory Stanczak observes that: 'qualitative approaches were and are based on the assumption that close, often intimate connections to the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon [...] produce the clearest and most informed understanding of the topic'.[37] As part of this research project, personal experience of the Venice carnival, and of the city of Venice itself, formed a crucial, ethnographic component. I went on two field trips to the carnival in 2010 and 2011 to participate in the event and gather observances. At these two successive carnivals I took photographs which are used throughout the thesis and are considered as symbolic of the phenomenon of the contemporary Venice carnival, sometimes communing with stereotypical perceptions of the event, and other times revealing nuances of the modern carnival. These images are interlinked with other images of the city and the carnival which are important to the research focus, and are brought into dialogue with a broad range of theories crossing diverse disciplines, including the aforementioned approaches to performance in terms of remains and the city as a performing entity. In addition, at the 2010 carnival, I conducted

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[35] Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 'Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th edn, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 2011), pp.1-19 (p.3).

[36] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd edn (London: Sage, 2002), p.1; Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edn (London: Sage, 2008), pp.12-15; Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 5th edn (London: Sage, 2014), pp.11-13.

[37] Gregory C. Stanczak, 'Introduction: Images, Methodologies, and Generating Social Knowledge', in *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation*, ed. by Gregory C. Stanczak (London: Sage, 2007), pp.1-21 (p.5).

informal, conversational interviews with carnival participants in order to gather perspectives

on their engagement with the event and the city. Contemporary and historical artworks and

performances are frequently incorporated, described, and analysed in the thesis in order to

broaden the theoretical engagement with the research topic, supported by scholarship within

relevant, often varied, disciplines. This is indicative of the deployment of a diverse range of

'interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the

subject matter at hand', which Denzin and Lincoln aver is typical of qualitative research.[38]

Denzin and Lincoln helpfully identify qualitative research as *bricolage*, reflecting

the diverse modes of analysis and multidisciplinary approach herein. I approach the Venice

carnival as a researcher in drama/theatre/performance, a triumvirate of disciplinary terms

which Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson define as 'usefully dependent on each other' and

which are interconnected with another trilogy of prefixes: 'multi-/inter-/trans-(disciplinary)',

emphasising the inevitability of connections with diverse disciplines.[39] This study, while

beginning from a drama/theatre/performance perspective, engages with literature, art,

photography, history, architecture, film, tourism, and, inevitably, with sociology and culture.

Such a multidisciplinary approach allows for a multifaceted view of the carnival and

contributes to the overall argument: the thesis regards the carnival's interrelationality and

participatory nature, which depend upon the blurring of performance and spectatorship, as

indicative of the event's subversiveness in spite of its apparent globalised, touristic, and

commercialised identity. The carnival challenges increased individualism and the

disintegration of community by promoting bonds between participants and reinvigorating the

esprit de corps, thereby going some way to combat neoliberal capitalist ideologies in modern

society which, as Jen Harvie observes, 'aggressively promote individualism and

entrepreneurialism'.[40] Festive forms like the Venice carnival contribute to social cohesion

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[38] Denzin and Lincoln, p.4.

[39] Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson, 'Introduction: Doing Methods Creatively', in *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp.1-15 (pp.6-7).

[40] Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.2.

and the renewal of communal bonds, and are therefore essential to civic and cultural life. Crucial to the subversive nature of the Venice carnival are the strong links to the past, as the iterations of carnival annually reaffirm the *esprit de corps*, and celebrate creativity and individuality, rather than individualism, as part of the event. The ongoing replication of earlier carnivals affirms the essential human need for carnivalesque expression and the chance to share celebratory and joyful experiences as part of a large group.

Alongside my own photographs of the 2010 and 2011 carnivals, images of artworks, other photographs, and visual depictions of the carnival and the city are integrated throughout. Sandra Weber emphasises the fundamental value of visual images to research in the arts, providing ten interlinked reasons which justify their integration, beginning with the assertion that images can capture the ineffable.[41] An obvious problem with using photographs is that the images are inflected by my own engagement with the carnival and the way in which I chose to photograph it. In turn, I selected only a small proportion of the manifold images I took to include in the thesis, which indicates a level of researcher subjectivity. Barry M. Goldstein asserts that 'all photos lie', partly because a camera can never replicate human vision, partly due to temporal and spatial editing, and also because of choices made by the photographer.[42] However, as Stanczak avers, the fact that cameras can crop, zoom, and alter an image should not be a barrier to their incorporation in research. He discusses the 'cultural turn' that regards unbiased outcomes and researcher objectivity as no longer assumed: researchers who work with quantitative data are just as likely to be subjective as those who work with qualitative data, through their choice of particular interview fragments, for instance.[43] Stanczak affirms that the incorporation of visual images in research projects can be seen as a rigorous and enlightening process, a view supported by Sarah Pink: 'Images may not necessarily be *the* main research method or topic, but through their relation to other sensory, material and discursive elements of the research images and

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[41] Sandra Weber, 'Visual Images in Research', in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, ed. by J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole (London: Sage, 2008), pp.41-53 (pp.44-47).
[42] Barry M. Goldstein, 'All Photos Lie: Images as Data', in *Visual Research Methods*, ed. by Stanczak, pp.61-81 (p.64).
[43] Stanczak, p.8.

visual knowledge, will *become* of interest'.[44] By bringing images of carnival and city from different time frames and diverse contexts into dialogue, these images reveal the interconnections across times and places, while underlining the plurality of Venice's performance traces.

The incorporation of images, interviews, and experiences in this thesis underlines the importance of observation to the methodology. Observations are crucial to any ethnographic project, as Michael Angrosino and Judith Rosenberg assert.[45] For Pink, individual experience as a reflection of the research topic is crucial to ethnographic research, while Giampietro Gobo states that such research prioritises observation as a primary source of information, regarding other sources, such as visual images and interviews, as secondary and ancillary.[46] Observation as a component of research practice is now seen as a collaborative process, 'in which the researcher no longer operates at a distance from those being observed'.[47] This collaborative emphasis informed my engagement with the Venice carnival, and with the city, as an observer: I sought to be a participant in the carnival event and, as such, allowed the impromptu nature of carnival to guide my engagement. I did not attend the carnival driven with a specific agenda of things that had to be seen, done, or achieved, but attended the carnival as an experiencing participant, willing to be guided by the flow of the event. Indeed, the interviews I conducted with carnival participants are conversational and do not follow similar patterns, as each interaction followed an individual path, thus communing with ethnographic methodologies. The collaborative nature of my engagement with the carnival is naturally indicative of a level of subjectivity: my personal experience strongly influenced my attitude towards the research topic and aspects of the analysis herein. Nevertheless, as Angrosino and Rosenberg add, observation-based research 'cannot become so utterly subjective that it loses the rigor of carefully conducted, clearly recorded, and intelligently

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[44] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*, 2nd edn (London: SAGE, 2007), p.6.
[45] Michael Angrosino and Judith Rosenberg, 'Observations on Observation: Continuities and Challenges', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Denzin and Lincoln, pp.467-78.
[46] Pink, p.22; Giampietro Gobo, *Doing Ethnography* (London: SAGE, 2008), p.6.
[47] Angrosino and Rosenberg, p.467.

interpreted observations; ethnography is more than casually observed opinion'.[48] In spite of researcher subjectivity, then, observations are valuable research resources, a viewpoint agreed upon by Jon Wagner, who echoes Stanczak's assertion that quantitative data is equally subjective. In spite of this, he states, 'direct observations of natural settings are valued less than the kinds of text and numbers that are relatively easy to reduce, aggregate, compare, and manage'.[49] He argues that: 'some things learned through direct observation in natural settings are difficult or impossible to learn in any other way'.[50] Thus the observational approach, in tandem with the integration of visual images, is germanely suited to the analysis of the Venice carnival.

Ethnography as an anthropological methodology has established links with performance studies as a discipline, as Carlson elucidates, citing Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, Dwight Conquergood, and Erving Goffman as figures from different disciplines who were essential to the establishment of this link.[51] Significant to this theoretical development were the associations made between ritual and theatre in the early twentieth century by Émile Durkheim and Arnold van Gennep, whose writings pointed to the theatrical nature of ritual and the concept that the self is presented.[52] The notion of the presentation of self reflects the age-old *theatrum mundi* trope which views all the world as a stage, a key idea of the Early Modern period, and a notion rejuvenated by these theorists. Goffman extended the notion of role-playing in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), wherein he suggests people perform characters to one another, pointing to what Carlson states is a fundamental characteristic of performance: 'that it is based upon a relationship between a performer and an audience'.[53] In the second half of the twentieth century, Turner was instrumental in propounding the notion of social drama, using theatre as a fitting analogy of

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[48] Ibid., p.468.
[49] Jon Wagner, 'Observing Culture and Social Life: Documentary Photography, Fieldwork, and Social Research', in *Visual Research Methods*, ed. by Stanczak, pp.23-59 (p.27).
[50] Ibid., p.29.
[51] Carlson, *Performance*, p.11.
[52] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), pp.24-25; Carlson, *Performance*, pp.16-17; Schechner, *Performance Studies*, pp.57-59.
[53] Carlson, *Performance*, p.35.

rituals and other manifestations; he relates of his early experiences of fieldwork as an anthropologist in African villages that 'Something like "drama" was constantly emerging, even erupting, from the otherwise fairly even surfaces of social life'.[54] His pioneering writings, which affirmed the theatrical nature of ritual, influenced the fostering of ethnographic approaches to explore cultural performances, as scholars have examined and analysed all manner of rituals in terms of theatre and performance, and indeed various carnivals have been analysed anthropologically, as Feil relates.[55]

Turner stresses the way that theatre pervades human rituals, a fecund concept which pertinently applies to the annual ritual of the Venice carnival. Citing Roy A. Rappaport's work *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* (1979), Schechner underlines these connections:

> Rituals tend to be stylized, repetitive, stereotyped, often but not
> always decorous, and they also tend to occur at special places and
> at times fixed by the clock, calendar, or specified circumstances
> [...] Performance is the second *sine qua non* of ritual. [...]
> Performance is not merely a way to express something, but is itself
> an aspect of that which it is expressing.[56]

The annual Venice carnival is stylised, repeats motifs, and exists within a special time and place, and performance permeates the event. The carnival shares a sense of liminality with the rituals explored by Turner, whose work employed the notion of liminality to identify the sensation of being betwixt and between one position and another within ritual practices. The carnival is liminal as its participants are on the cusp of being themselves but also being something else; there is a carnival and non-carnival self in simultaneous juxtaposition. Schechner refers to the freedom which people feel while in such a state of liminality, and also refers to Turner's terms regarding the libertine feeling of ritual, stating that participants: 'feel at one with their comrades; personal and social differences are set aside. People are uplifted, swept away, taken over. Turner calls this liberation from the constraints of ordinary

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[54] Turner, p.9.
[55] Feil, p.145.
[56] Roy A. Rappaport, cited by Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p.53.

life "anti-structure" and the experience of ritual camaraderie "communitas'".[57] Recognising that rituals of modern, industrial societies are at a remove from ancient rituals associated with agrarian, pre-modern societies, Turner pioneered the use of the term liminoid to indicate the usually voluntary nature of modern rituals, and to underline the playful, often subversive nature of such rituals. As Carlson notes, this is a fecund notion which has been taken up with gusto by theorists and practitioners of performance keen to emphasise social and cultural performances as resistant to hegemony, and as examples of anti-structure and communitas.[58] The notion of the liminoid can be applied to the modern day Venice carnival as the event is akin to modern recreational and arts activities which people participate in voluntarily. The event celebrates communitas as it brings people together, and it can be viewed as an instance of anti-structure owing to its spontaneous aspects and the free interrelationality between its participants, in spite of its commercialised, globalised, and touristic state.

This thesis's focus on the interrelations of performance and spectatorship at the Venice carnival reflects recent developments in both scholarship and practice within theatre and performance studies which emphasise the role of the spectator as part of the performance. Jen Harvie asserts that the trend for active audience participation has grown exponentially in art and performance since the 1990s, and indeed it is this climate that encouraged her to explore this phenomenon in her study *Fair Play*.[59] This interflowing of performer and spectator roles reflects the nature of street carnivals, folk festivals, and organically developed social and cultural rituals, such as the Venice carnival.[60] The level of communitas achieved at such events is celebrated in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose writings on the *oeuvres* of François Rabelais and Fyodor Dostoevsky have influenced critical understandings of carnival and festive forms, and whose ideas shall be directly applied to iterations of the revived carnival in the final chapter of this thesis. Significantly, Bakhtin suggests carnival is a spectacle without a stage, as the performance of carnival takes place in

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[57] Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p.70.
[58] Carlson, *Performance*, pp.19-20.
[59] Harvie, *Fair Play*, p.1.
[60] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.98.

the street with no division between performer and spectator.[61] This interrelationality of the event's participants resonates with the communal nature of theatre's origins: as Bruce McConachie states, the prehistoric forebears of homo sapiens engaged in proto-performances which were crucial to group solidarity and the constructing of social relationships.[62] This indicates that performer and spectator roles began to be defined at the outset of human existence. Esteemed theatre practitioner Augusto Boal celebrates the communality of these origins of theatre, praising communal dithyrambic song and carnival, affirming a view of pagan carnivals as communal celebrations.[63] He argues that after those initial foundations were laid, theatre eventually came to be oppressed and divided, with separation between the actors and the mass, and further divisions within these divisions. Boal bemoans the conventional theatre within theatre buildings, with finished representations in front of passive audiences, as he views them. He states:

> The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize
> him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He
> too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those
> generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators.[64]

To address this, Boal founded his forum theatre, in which spectators become 'spect-actors', playing an essential role in the action, and thereby freeing themselves from repression.[65] His people's theatre opposes the notion of passive reception, and in this, his work resonates with Vsevolod Meyerhold's classification of the audience as co-creators rather than passive receptors.[66] Futurist theatre similarly sought to revolutionise conventional theatre practices, creating a continuous contract between performers and spectators.[67] Bertolt Brecht's epic

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[61] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. by R. W. Rotsel (USA: Ardis, 1973), pp.100-01.

[62] Bruce McConachie, *Theatre & Mind* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.13.

[63] Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, trans. by Charles A. Leal McBride, Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp.xi-xvi.

[64] Ibid., p.155.

[65] Ibid., p.xx.

[66] Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.5-7; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p.53.

[67] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Emilio Settimelli, and Bruno Corra, 'The Synthetic Futurist Theatre: A

theatre reflects this attitude, with his notion of *Verfremdungseffekt* emphasising the need for audiences to feel a level of distance from the performance and to avoid overly sympathetic responses.[68] Similarly, practitioner Jerzy Grotowski states that it is necessary: 'to abolish the distance between actor and audience by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers'.[69] Performance art 'happenings' of the 1960s and performance artists who promote active spectatorship, such as Marina Abramović, reflect these twentieth-century developments.

Performance and Spectatorship Framework

The developments in theatre and performance outlined above point to a challenge to the conventional setting of a theatre building which divides the actors from the spectators, separating the space of the stage from the viewing area. Helen Freshwater has shown that generalising about the spectator experience in the theatre is flawed, bemoaning the tendency to refer to the audience as 'it', which creates the idea of a single unit; she states: 'it is important to remember that each audience is made up of individuals who bring their own cultural reference points, political beliefs, sexual preferences, personal histories, and immediate preoccupations to their interpretation of a production'.[70] Just as generalisations cannot be made about the theatre audience, neither can they be applied to groups of spectators or participants, such as those who enact the Venice carnival, as each participant engages with the event as a unique individual. Dennis Kennedy avers: 'Individual spectators do not become a mob or a pack or a single psychological entity; they make the group but the group does not make them. They become an audience by virtue of their cooperative

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Manifesto', trans. by Suzanne Cowan, *Drama Review*, 15, 1 (1970), 142-46 (p146); Bishop, pp.41-49.

[68] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1978), pp.91-99.

[69] Jerzy Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', trans. by Jörgen Andersen and Judy Barba in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, University Paperback edn., ed. by Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen, 1975), pp.27-53 (p.41).

[70] Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.5-6.

attendance, nothing more'.[71] Thus a universal interpretation of an audience or a group of

spectators should be avoided as the multiplicity of voices, interpretations, and experiences

within the group are recognised: this ensures that each performance is always different as

people attend to performances in diverse ways. As Susan Bennett observes, a performance in

the theatre: 'is an interactive process, which relies on the presence of spectators to achieve its

effects. A performance is, of course, unlike a printed work, always open to immediate and

public acceptance, modification or rejection by those people it addresses'.[72] Research and

practice have thus underlined the essential role that spectators play in the theatrical contract,

and this applies to performances broadly, including the enactment of social and cultural

events, such as the carnival. The carnival participants whom I engaged with at the 2010 and

2011 events revealed an array of different approaches, opinions, and engagements *vis-à-vis*

the carnival, underlining the polyphonic nature of any gathering of spectator-participants.

The view of the spectator as active has seen increased emphasis on theatre and

performance outside of the confines of a theatre building, challenges to the conventional

settings within theatre buildings, and different approaches to the relationship between

performers and spectators. Harvie attests:

> Socially turned theatre and performance [...] actively engage their
> audiences. Here, audiences do not sit in darkness, in silence,
> contemplating moving performers on a stage set apart in the light.
> Audiences are invited effectively to become performers, roaming at
> will through fully designed environments in immersive theatre [...]
> and in one-to-one performances and audience-addressing live art.[73]

One to One theatre, or Intimate theatre, is enacted by one performer and one spectator and is

a form which 'actively constructs participant-spectators, engendering different participant-

spectator roles'.[74] So prevalent has this form become in recent years that scholars Deirdre

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[71] Dennis Kennedy, *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.14.
[72] Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, p.72.
[73] Harvie, *Fair Play*, p.6.
[74] Deirdre Heddon, Helen Iball, and Rachel Zerihan, 'Come Closer: Confessions of Intimate Spectators in One to One Performance', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22, 1 (2012), 120-33 (p.121).

Heddon, Helen Iball, and Rachel Zerihan have related their individual experiences of One to One performance under the term 'Spectator-Participation-as-Research', underlining the relational dynamic of the intimate theatre form.[75] By way of further challenge to the traditional theatre setting, much performance has taken to the streets, as Daniela Hahn observes in her discussion of the work of theatre company Rimini Protokoll: this means public spaces and sites that were not designed for the presentation of art are increasingly employed as sites of artistic engagement and performance:

> In moving away from institutionalized spaces for the arts, epitomized by the white cube as well as the proscenium stage and their conventionalized conceptions of display, representation, and enactment, the city's streets and buildings, rooftops, and walls have been turned into sites of artistic investigation.[76]

The increased employment of the spaces of the city reflect the origins of the Venice carnival in the streets, enabling a view of the city as a site of performance and spectatorship, resonating with notions of the performing city. An undergraduate performance project which I facilitated with students at the University of Hull channelled the energies of street performance by creating a version of the Venice carnival in and around the city of Hull's marina.[77] The students' efforts resulted in a site-specific piece of theatre which responded to the environment of the marina, while also engaging with the traditions of the Venice carnival and carnivalesque performance more generally. Audience members were given masks and costumes and were involved in the different entertainments of the event as they promenaded around the marina and engaged with clowning, Renaissance dance, *commedia dell'arte lazzi* (sketches), and grotesque comedy. In a similar way, the theatre company The Spectators' Guild produced an immersive performance in London, with promenade elements, of Thomas Otway's play *Venice Preserved* in 2014: masked and costumed spectators moved along the

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[75] Ibid., p.122.

[76] Daniela Hahn, 'Performing Public Spaces, Staging Collective Memory: *50 Kilometres of Files* by Rimini Protokoll', *Drama Review*, 58, 3 (2014), 27-38 (p.31).

[77] 'Venice Carnival...in Hull, Radio Ad', Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLUc3SXFu98> [accessed 27 October 2015]. This performance took place on 13 May 2011.

Thames before witnessing the performance of the play in a waterfront building.[78]

Critical and scholarly discussion has contributed to the repositioning of the conventional dyad of performer and spectator. Jacques Rancière's writings have been extremely influential in these debates, as he propounds the notion of the emancipated spectator. Critiquing the traditionally perceived passivity and ignorance of the spectator, he writes: 'What is required is a theatre without spectators, where those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs'.[79] He adds:

> Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting […] when we understand that viewing is also an action […]. The spectator also acts […], she observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place.[80]

Freshwater writes that Rancière: 'concentrates his efforts upon challenging what he sees as the misguided tendency to link seeing and passivity, as he asserts that the act of watching should not be equated with intellectual passivity'.[81] Indeed, Rancière's influence is palpable, as scholars have explored his affirmations at length, even though, as Freshwater states, many theatre makers had already focused on the active participant prior to his writings on emancipation.[82] Significantly, Rancière advocates transforming stage space, and transferring performance to the street, recognising that interactions in the public reflect a participatory, relational aesthetic.

Rancière's writings are concordant with scholarship and practice in modern art, including the theory of relational aesthetics propounded by Nicolas Bourriaud, who argues

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[78] 'The Spectators' Guild presents Venice Preserv'd', Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pStj3MiXdyk> [accessed 27 October 2015].
[79] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), p.4.
[80] Ibid., p.13.
[81] Freshwater, p.16.
[82] Ibid., p.17.

that art has always been relational: 'Art is the place that produces a specific sociability'.[83] As

he observes, 'present-day art shows that form only exists in the encounter and in the dynamic

relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise'.[84]

Bourriaud thereby underlines the conversations that art engages in, with those who encounter

the work and with other works. According to his analysis, since the 1990s, artists have

concentrated on the relations of their art with its public, and upon a level of sociability, and

this translates to all manner of events: 'Meetings, encounters, events, festivals, and places of

conviviality, in a word all manner of encounter and relational invention thus represent,

today, aesthetic objects likely to be looked at as such'.[85] In this, Bourriaud points to carnivals

as convivial and relational events which depend upon conversation and interaction. His

affirmations, along with Rancière's assertion of the active spectator, apply to the Venice

carnival in that both theorists emphasise a level of collaboration and interaction. The revived

Venice carnival can be viewed as an aesthetic object, in Bourriaud's words, because of its

relationality. As he explains, his idea of relational aesthetics is an 'aesthetic theory consisting

in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce

or prompt', and is thus a significant approach to artistic practices, including cultural and

social manifestations which promote interrelationality such as the carnival.[86]

New approaches to the role of the spectator in performance and in engagement with

art apply to the Venice carnival in that they underline the interplay between these roles and

therefore provide a framework which can inform the discussion of performance and

spectatorship in the following chapters. Fundamentally, recent scholarship and practice has

repositioned the spectator as active and crucial to the performance exchange. Anna

Fenemore pertinently asserts: 'As spectators, we are active at all times, things are not

happening to us or *in* us; we are *doing* something (much like the performer is *doing*

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[83] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with
Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Le Presses du Réel, 2002), p.16.
[84] Ibid., p.21.
[85] Ibid., p.28.
[86] Ibid., p.112.

something)'.[87] This understanding of the spectator is particularly appropriate to the carnival context; after Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva has written: 'A carnival participant is both actor and spectator; he loses his sense of individuality, passes through a zero point of carnivalesque activity and splits into a subject of the spectacle and an object of the game'.[88] In this, Kristeva points to the interrelational and participatory nature of carnival as crucial to the blurring of the roles of performer and spectator, and, as this thesis will show, the Venice carnival provides an optimum example of this interaction, promoting communality and interrelationality between people and indicating the social and communal value of carnivalesque and festival events.

Carnival Research Context

This study makes a significant contribution to research on the Venice carnival, particularly because of its focus on the post-revival modern day iteration of the event. A doctoral thesis submitted by Adrian Giurgea to the University of California in 1987 establishes the close intersections of the Venice carnival to theatre, but his study focuses on the archaic carnival, closely detailing the theatrical nature of specific historical aspects of the event. Importantly, he links Venetian theatre traditions to the carnival, identifying links to the *theatrum mundi* trope.[89] The carnival also receives attention in terms of theatre and performance in the doctoral thesis of Giorgia Kallara, submitted to the University of London in 2006; like Giurgea, Kallara focuses on historical aspects of the carnival in Venice and carnivals

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[87] Anna Fenemore, 'Every body: performance's other bodies', in *Performance Perspectives: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Jonathan Pitches and Sita Popat (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.38-51 (p.40).
[88] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.78.
[89] Adrian Giurgea, 'Theatre of the Flesh: the Carnival of Venice and the Theatre of the World' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987).

elsewhere in Italy, Greece, and England. However, her research takes a partly ethnographic approach, congruous with the present study, and includes fieldtrips to the modern day Venice carnival. As she relates, the impromptu nature of aspects of the event counters the lavishness of the offerings in Piazza San Marco; she references her experiences of unofficial carnival events in Venice which she happened upon by chance, and which were not part of the officially organised programme, including a counter-carnival in Via Garibaldi.[90] Kallara's work is significant in that it underlines the communality, interrelationality, and variety of the carnival and points to its subversive quality. Aside from these theses, the literature written in English on the Venice carnival, and particularly in relation to the modern day event, is limited. Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin partly redress this lacuna in a chapter in their study *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, in which they consult the archives of Venetian newspapers to follow the trajectory of the revived carnival.[91] There are also a number of photography books which gather individual photographers' representations of the event, often communing with the interpretation of the event as opulent, sophisticated, and mysterious, but these are of limited critical interest.[92] The recently published monograph by James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, is an engrossing exploration of the carnival, but with a focus on the eighteenth-century, in the twilight years of the republic.[93] A number of Italian scholars have explored the historical carnival, including Bianca Tamassia Mazzarotto, Pino Correnti, Danilo Reato, Margherita Obici, Lina Padoan Urban, Vittorio Gleijeses, Stefania Bertelli, Alessandro Falassi, and Paolo Alei.[94] Some of these authors have published in English or had their work

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[90] Giorgia Kallara, 'Carnival's Changing Histories: A Study of Carnival in England, Greece and Italy' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), p.64, p.119, pp.122-24.

[91] Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin, *Venice, the Tourist Maze: A Cultural Critique of the World's Most Touristed City* (London: University of California Press, 2004), pp.247-60.

[92] Three examples of such books are: J. C. Brown, *Carnival Masks of Venice: A Photographic Essay* (London: Artists' and Photographers' Press, 2008); Gerald Hoberman, essay by Gregory Dowling, *Carnival in Venice: Photographs Celebrating the Art of the Mask* (Cape Town: Gerald & Marc Hoberman Collection, 2005); Pericles Boutos, text by Giuliano Serafini, *Venice: Carnival Unmasked* (Milan: Charta, 1998).

[93] James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (London: University of California Press, 2011).

[94] Bianca Tamassia Mazzarotto, *Le Feste Veneziane: I giochi popolari, le ceremonie religiose e di governo*, 2nd edn (Florence: Sansoni, 1980); Correnti; Margherita Obici and Danilo Reato, *Maschere e travestimenti nella tradizione del carnevale di Venezia* (Venice: Arsenale Cooperativa Editrice, 1981); Lina Padoan Urban, *Il Carnevale veneziano nello maschere incise da Francesco Bertelli*

translated into English, but the range of works in English specifically focusing on the modern day iteration is limited.

Significant contributions to the study of carnival and Venetian festive forms have also been made by Edward Muir, Åsa Boholm, Robert C. Davis, and D. K. Feil, though these again tend to focus on the historical iteration of the event.[95] However, the 2010 publication *Il Carnevale in età moderna: 30 anni di Carnevale a Venezia 1980-2010/ Carnival in the Modern Age: 30 Years of Carnival in Venice 1980-2010*, edited by Alessandro Bressanello, provides a veritable mine of information, in both Italian and English, on the revived Venice carnival, gathering information over the thirty year period of the event's revival, including posters, photographs, newspaper cuttings, and recollections from an array of people who have been involved.[96] The collection contains writings on the carnival from an extremely broad range of perspectives, representing the organisational and administrative side of the carnival as well as the artistic and creative side. As such, it is a useful resource for the present study, particularly as it has separate sections on each year of the carnival from 1980 to 2009 and evokes the atmosphere of the festivities. The pictures and commentaries Bressanello has gathered together over the three decades demonstrate that ridiculous fancy-dress, impromptu disguises, *commedia dell'arte* figures, and historical and scatological costumes are as much a feature of the modern event as the elegantly dressed *maschere* of the kind featured in Figure 1. Paolo Alei's informative account of the modern day carnival in *Venice Carnival* is also useful for this study, but the photographs taken by Virginio Favale in this publication are staged and do not represent as accurate a picture of the carnival as is seen in the Bressanello collection.[97] As is evident from the broad range of material printed on the Venice carnival, it is a topic of special interest, and there are detailed historical accounts of

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(Milan: Edizioni Polifilo, 1986); Vittorio Gleijeses, *Piccola Storia del Carnevale* (Naples: Alberto Marotta, 1971); Vittorio Gleijeses, *Il Carnevale in Italia* (Naples: Marotta, 1990); Danilo Reato, *Storia del Carnevale di Venezia* (Venice: Filippi Editore, 1991); Stefania Bertelli, *Il Carnevale di Venezia nel Settecento* (Rome: Jouvence, 1992); Falassi; Virginio Favale (photography) and Paolo Alei (text), *Venice Carnival* (London: Artmedia Press, 2003).

[95] Muir; Boholm, 'Masked Performances in the Carnival of Venice'; Robert C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Feil.

[96] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*.

[97] Favale (photography) and Alei (text), pp.96-124.

its past iteration before the fall of the republic. Aspects of the historical carnival will be discussed and analysed during this study to provide a broad picture of the modern day event.

This thesis addresses lacunae in the broader scholarly framework of investigations into modern day carnivals, festivals, cultural manifestations, and public festivities as the modern day Venice carnival has not received the same level of social, cultural, and philosophical analysis as other international carnivals. Where scholars have examined the revived event, their writing tends more towards historical account, or treats the modern day carnival as a footnote to the bygone event. Contrastingly, a number of monographs and edited collections have investigated carnivals and festivals around the world, including the Brazilian carnival,[98] Spanish carnivals,[99] Caribbean carnivals,[100] the New Orleans Mardi Gras,[101] Notting Hill carnival in London,[102] the Maltese carnival,[103] and other festivals.[104] These publications have indicated that social and philosophical analysis of carnivals and festivals provide ample material for scholarly investigation and can be indicative of important conclusions about community, social relations, the use of public space, the role of masking and transforming identities, the place of civic events in society, and the ongoing

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[98] Rector; Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, trans. by John Drury (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); Alma Guillermoprieto, *Samba* (New York: Vintage Departures, 1991).

[99] David D. Gilmore, *Carnival and Culture: Sex, Symbol and Status in Spain* (London: Yale University Press, 1998); Jerome R. Mintz, *Carnival Song and Society: Gossip, Sexuality, and Creativity in Andalusia* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

[100] Peter Mason, *Bacchanal!: The Carnival Culture of Trinidad* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1998); Gerard Aching, *Masking and Power: Carnival and Popular Culture in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); L. Trevor Grant, *Carnivalitis: The Conflicting Discourse of Carnival* (New York: Yacos Publications, 2004); Milla Cozart Riggio, ed., *Carnival: Culture in Action, The Trinidad Experience* (London: Routledge, 2004); Garth L. Green and Philip W. Scher, eds., *Trinidad Carnival: The Cultural Politics of a Transnational Festival* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Michael Anthony, *The Carnivals of Trinidad and Tobago: From Inception to the Year 2000* (Port of Spain: Lonsdale Saatchi & Saatchi, 2011).

[101] Robert Tallant, *Mardi Gras* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1976), this was first published in 1948 by Doubleday; Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[102] Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

[103] Vicki Ann Cremona, 'Carnival as a Theatrical Event', in *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), ed. by Vicki Ann Cremona and others, pp.69-90.

[104] Ann-Kristin Ekman, *Community, Carnival and Campaign: Expressions of Belonging in a Swedish Region* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 1991); Barbara Mauldin, ed., *¡Carnival!* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004); David Picard and Mike Robinson, eds., *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006); Temple Hauptfleisch and others, eds., *Festivalising!: Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

influence of historical events in the modern day. For instance, in her discussion of the

Maltese carnival, Vicki Ann Cremona delineates that the event has changed over many years

as a result of increased government involvement in the organisation of the carnival, having a

negative impact on the event as it has made the carnival more structured and less

spontaneous, while also reducing the sense of community. She avers: 'over-organization

tends to stifle performativity and favours presentation rather than participation, where the

event becomes a show to be watched passively, rather than an occasion which calls for active

participation'.[105] In the Maltese case, Cremona asserts that the increased emphasis on the

costumes and floats means that spectators now primarily take on the role of 'watchers':

'They are not called upon to interact directly with the performers, but simply to appreciate,

evaluate and compare their aesthetic appearance and harmonized movement'.[106] The Maltese

carnival evidently contrasts with the Venice carnival as in Malta there is much more of a

distinction between the costumed and disguised performers of the event, and the spectators,

who, Cremona avers, rarely make any gesture of costuming or transformation themselves,

and who are effectively set outside the arena space.[107] Cremona bemoans this state of affairs,

stating the event was more dynamic in the past, with more spontaneous interaction. The

authorities re-routed the carnival and even moved it from the traditional pre-Lenten time of

February to May, in the hope of attracting more tourists, and in turn altering the event's

identity by giving it more of a commercial purpose and demarcating the carnival

performance space. Contrastingly, a trio of female *maschere* from England whom I spoke to

at the Venice carnival in 2010 were promenading in one of Venice's *campi* and they told me

that they felt 'great' and 'more elegant' in their carnival costumes, and regarded costuming

as 'really fun' and that 'it captures the spirit' of the event. Illuminatingly, one of the women

said they had also been to the Notting Hill carnival and the Rio de Janeiro carnival, and she

stated: 'There's a better kind of a street atmosphere here [in Venice] than in Rio. The

organised [Rio] carnival in the aerodrome's really amazing, there's nothing quite like that

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[105] Cremona, p.71.
[106] Ibid., p.73.
[107] Ibid., p.82.

here, but it's everywhere you go […]. Everywhere you go you can't miss it and there's lots of little street things as well', adding that in Venice she felt more of a participant in the event, as opposed to Notting Hill and Rio de Janeiro, where 'you're there to watch rather than be part of'.[108] This points to an understanding of the Venice carnival as a city-wide manifestation comprising vortices of carnivalesque behaviour and events, contrasting with carnivals which focus on the presentation of a spectacle or parade of floats.

Akin to Cremona, Schechner has shown that in modern times, festivals and carnivals have been altered and limited by authorities: 'Rectangular and linear parades replace the more vortexed and chaotic choreography of carnivals. The state fears unregulated traffic'.[109] He provides the example of the New York Halloween parade, which began in the 1960s, being regularised and rerouted over time, moved into wider spaces to ensure it became more of a parade than a vortex of activity, echoing the Maltese situation. Similarly, Abner Cohen has indicated that the Notting Hill carnival in West London, which began in 1966 and which was originated by the West Indian communities that had settled in the area, has also faced 'formidable opposition and pressures operating to subvert it all the time'.[110] His study explores diverse attempts to contain and contest the event, drawing out the tensions that arose between the authorities, especially the police, and the carnival organisers and participants. Illuminatingly, in relation to Mardi Gras, Joseph Roach points to legislation regulating behaviour at the New Orleans event from the mid-nineteenth century, forbidding carnival participants from causing a nuisance, and from throwing flour, 'or any other substance' in the streets, which has echoes of legislation banning the throwing of eggs in Venice in 1268, as well as an ordinance passed in advance of the 1979 carnival which banned people from throwing flour, eggs, and other projectiles.[111] Indeed, Roach underlines the significant role that legislation has played in the manifestation of Mardi Gras, which

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[108] Interview with three English female *maschere*, Venice, 7 February 2010. The aerodrome that this participant refers to is the *Sambodromo*, the venue of the carnival samba dancing parade.

[109] Richard Schechner, 'The Street is the Stage', in *Performance Studies*, ed. by Erin Striff (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.110-23 (p.113).

[110] Cohen, p.3.

[111] Roach, p.254; Obici and Reato, p.8 and pp.37-40; Rigo, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.260.

indicates that transgression was allowed, but 'carefully channeled into regulated conduits of time and space'.[112] Exploring the Caribbean carnivals, Gerard Aching regards governments as having a duplicitous role in that they are keen to promote national culture, and so encourage the free expression of carnival, but they also must also control the public places where such expressions are manifested.[113] He observes that the creation in 1991 of the National Carnival Commission, a Trinidad and Tobago government agency designed to promote and invest in the carnival, is ironic, given that the ruling classes and government had sought to suppress the carnival for almost a century, up to the 1930s.[114] Of import, David Gilmore has highlighted the way in which carnival practices remain even through periods of desuetude or prohibition, writing of the Andalusian carnival remaining in spite of the prohibition of carnival under General Francisco Franco's authoritarian rule, which has echoes of the persistent traces of the Venice carnival.[115] Scholarship on diverse carnivals and festive events indicate that the organic development of such manifestations and their libertine connotations cause tensions with authorities that seek to control and order the events, and in addition the role of the participants vary from event to event. The special focus herein on the Venice carnival seeks to redress the lacuna in analysis of the revived event, and by bringing the carnival into dialogue with theories of theatre and performance, the event's replicative quality and social impact will be highlighted.

1797 to Revival

Bressanello explains that the last 'historic' carnival took place in 1797 before Napoleon's *coup de grâce*, stating that once Venice became Austrian, the city's independence had come

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[112] Roach, p.252.
[113] Aching, p.4.
[114] Ibid., pp.74-76.
[115] Gilmore, pp.12-13.

to an end after more than a thousand years. He delineates:

> From that moment, Carnival was abolished along with other
> customs; for over two centuries nothing more than a distant
> memory of the Feast survived, decrees, laws and change of habit
> suffocated its spirit, all that remained was an occasional event for
> children and the memory of the masked characters from the
> Commedia dell'Arte in puppet shows.[116]

Despite this being the generally held perception, there is evidence that under the Austrians,

and also once Venice had been incorporated into the Italian Kingdom, the carnival had not

completely disappeared, even though it was undoubtedly changed from its golden era. Gilles

Bertrand relates details of some of these nineteenth-century iterations, including the

presentation of an elephant at the carnival of 1818.[117] A depiction of Piazza San Marco in

1819, 'with a representation of the Carnival' has no obvious signs of any carnivalesque

behaviour, indeed the drawing is barely populated by any figures at all, and the only

suggestion of carnival is a temporary stage in one corner of the square.[118] Writing of her

experience of carnival time in Venice in 1834, George Sand states the event was pale

compared to the descriptions of its past iterations, though she does describe masked

participants and music.[119] Correnti states that under the Austrians the carnival was no longer

felt in the same way, although the tradition of the *Cavalchina*, which was a masked ball held

at La Fenice theatre, and which had been a feature of carnival during the years of the

republic, continued.[120] In addition, Falassi reports that the balls of 1846 and 1856 were

particularly well attended, suggesting significant traces of the event did remain.[121]

 After the *Risorgimento*, which resulted in the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, and

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[116] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.258.

[117] Bertrand, p.69. Apparently the elephant refused to embark its vessel at the end of the carnival and ran off through Venice's *calle* before entering the church of St Antonin, whereupon it was cornered by the royal marines. According to another source, this occurred in 1817, and the elephant was actually killed in the church, see The Churches of Venice <http://www.churchesofvenice.co.uk/castello2.htm#santantonino> [accessed 14 September 2015].

[118] Henry Aston Barker and John Burford, *Description of the View of Venice; taken, and painted by Messrs. Barker and Burford, from the Piazza di S. Marco: with a representation of the Carnival* (London: J. and C. Adlard, 1819).

[119] Bertrand, p.69.

[120] Correnti, p.69 and p.76.

[121] Falassi, p.78.

Venice's integration into that Kingdom in 1866, the resuscitation of the carnival was proposed by a club of men wanting to return Venice to the sumptuous glories of its past, as reported by the British periodical *The Orchestra*.[122] As a result, a programme of events were put together for 1867, with masked balls in Piazza San Marco and La Fenice theatre and the awarding of prizes; a King Carnival processed through the city on *giovedì grasso* to Piazza San Marco, and left on *martedì grasso* to be burned at the stake, to mark the beginning of Lent. Vittorio Gleijeses reports that Giuseppe Garibaldi, who was instrumental in bringing about the unified Italy, was in attendance, along with Prince Amedeo, the son of King Vittorio Emmanuele II, the first monarch of the unified country.[123] The attendance of such dignitaries signified how important it was to have Venice integrated into Italy, while also echoing the glory of the bygone carnivals which were regularly attended by royalty, aristocracy, and esteemed dignitaries.[124] In 1883, the *Chambers's Journal* reports on crowds of masked and costumed participants of the carnival that year, describing improvised stages, an enormous masked ball in Piazza San Marco, the overturning of normal social behaviour, and even a bicycle race in Piazza San Marco.[125] Much less positively, Henry James wrote in an essay of 1892 that 'Carnival is dead, but these are the scraps of its inheritance'.[126] Correnti reports that an attempt was made to revive some aspects of the carnival in 1899, to limited effect.[127] After the First World War, mask wearing had been banned in the city, which impacted upon the manifestation of carnival, though private parties continued, including La Fenice's *Cavalchina*. Under Benito Mussolini's fascist leadership, leisure time was regulated and controlled by the state, with the establishment of the *Dopolavoro* (After-work) organisation to structure people's lives outside of work. Although masking had been prohibited in Venice under the fascists, 'because it was perceived as a potential cover for

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[122] 'Resuscitation of the Carnival at Venice', *The Orchestra*, 23 February 1867, p.348.
[123] Gleijeses, *Piccola Storia del Carnevale*, p.133.
[124] Bertelli, p.11.
[125] 'Venice in Carnival', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art*, 31 March 1883, pp.193-95.
[126] Henry James, *Italian Hours* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), p.41.
[127] Correnti, p.76.

subversive acts', the regime decided to restore the carnival.[128] Thus the carnival of 1933 saw

an organised programme of events, with masks allowed in Piazza San Marco, and in 1934

the medieval tradition of the *festa delle Marie* was reinstituted, after an absence of more than

half a millennium, which included the marriage of twelve couples.[129] This not only advanced

fascist ideals of the family unit, but also connected the carnival to its bygone past, as the

carnival period had traditionally been a time to marry.[130]

  These post-1797 and pre-revival examples indicate that the carnival had left its

remains in the city, and that it was enacted in diverse ways; contesting attitudes which see

1797 as the death knell of the carnival prior to its late-twentieth-century revival. The carnival

had not been forgotten by the Venetians. Although the revival is officially dated to 1980,

Bressanello indicates that the 1960s and 1970s saw a number of instances of carnival leading

up to its revival, intimating that the event resurfaced organically and that no one person or

organisation can take the responsibility for having revived the carnival, although the mayor

of Venice in 1980, Mario Rigo, suggests that he and his team were pivotal in its

reintroduction, a view corroborated by Feil.[131] Considerably earlier, in 1963, one of Rigo's

predecessors in the role of mayor had sought to revive the carnival as a children's festival,

while from the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s the island of Burano hosted carnival

with masquerades and processions of papier-mâché figures.[132] The gaiety spread to the island

of Murano before reaching the historical centre.[133] Bressanello's collection contains richly

evocative monochrome images of young people throwing flour at each other outside St

Mark's Basilica in Piazza San Marco in 1978, with a select few figures in the background

indicating that some participants were sporting fancy dress.[134] Another image from the 1979

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[128] Kate Ferris, *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice, 1929-40* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.89.
[129] Ibid., pp.90-99.
[130] Åsa Boholm, 'The Caccia di Tori: Regeneration in Venetian Carnival', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 3, 1 (1993), 46-61 (p.48).
[131] Mario Rigo, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, pp.260-61; Feil, p.151. Mario Rigo was mayor of Venice between 1975 and 1985.
[132] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.259.
[133] Favale (photography) and Alei (text), p.100.
[134] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, pp.12-15, photographs attributed to Graziano Arici. Bressanello states that it was groups of students from the Fine Arts

carnival depicts a crowd amassed outside the basilica wearing a veritable hotchpotch of fancy dress, with an arabesque *keffiyeh*, a Mexican sombrero, an American baseball helmet, a chef's hat, bowler hats, a crown, a bonnet, and tricorns being among the diverse headwear visible in the crowd, indicative of the impromptu and organic nature of the event.[135] Indeed, 1978 and 1979 witnessed vigorous interest in the carnival in the city, with 1979 seeing a programme established for the first time, with the aim of involving the Venetians in the event.[136] There was a rowing event, the flight of a dove, a *commedia dell'arte* performance, plays by Carlo Goldoni were presented, and on Shrove Tuesday a Grand Ball was held in Piazza San Marco itself, culminating in the burning of a statue of Pantalone, one of the key figures of the *commedia dell'arte* street theatre tradition who was representative of Venice and the Venetians.[137] This *pièce de résistance* at the end of the event communed with historical iterations as it became customary to burn a statue of Pantalone by way of bidding farewell to the carnival and welcoming the period of Lent.[138] Alei records that during the 1979 festivities, shopkeepers decorated their windows and sold seasonal *frittole* cakes, while artisanal mask makers revived traditional methods to recreate the bygone masks of the city.[139] Feil asserts that 'Venetians achieved some level of *communitas*, it seems; it was considered a great social success'.[140] Bressanello relates that in the hotels of Venice during the carnival of 1979 there were 21,700 guests, which was already a significant increase on

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Academy, along with a select group of masqueraders, who were responsible for the throwing of flour and eggs, p.259.

[135] Ibid., p.256, photograph attributed to Graziano Arici.

[136] Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin regard 1979 as the first year of the revived carnival, and the organic nature of the revival means there is some ambiguity about exactly when and how the carnival recommenced. Of import, they note, the revival coincided with the revival of two other bygone festivities in the city: the *Vogalonga* (Long Row) and the *Festa del Redentore* (Feast of the Redeemer), suggesting the carnival's revival could seem commercial and touristic, but, they add, 'the inspiration seems to have been more genuinely communitarian'. Davis and Marvin, p.247. See also pp.235-60.

[137] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.259. Barker and Burford elucidate the origins of the link between the Pantalone figure and Venice: 'The Venetians always planted the Lion of St. Mark [symbol of Venice] wherever they made a conquest; this practice was ridiculed by the other Italian States, who called them the *Pianta Leone*; and a noble Venetian was generally represented, in Italian pantomime, under that name, which in time, became corrupted into Pantaloon. This is the origin of the grotesque old man introduced in the pantomime of the present day'. See Barker and Burford, p.12.

[138] Selfridge-Field, p.137.

[139] Favale (photography) and Alei (text), p.100.

[140] Feil, p.151.

previous years.[141] Following this success, 1980 saw another programme of events organised in association with the Theatre Biennale under the artistic direction of Maurizio Scaparro, and thus the event's revival was unstoppable.

The twenty-first-century carnival is often viewed as commercial and touristic, suggesting a nostalgia for the organically revived carnival, especially the impromptu 'happenings' on the streets of Venice in the late 1970s and the emphasis on the involvement of the Venetians themselves in those early days. This reflects nostalgia for the bygone, historical carnival of the republic. However, it would be impossible to recreate the pre-1797 carnivals, and as the reiterative quality of performance shows, those bygone carnivals were themselves iterations of earlier iterations in an ongoing cycle. In this, Roach's use of the term 'surrogation' to describe the ways in which culture reproduces and recreates itself seems a particularly apt perspective. Roach posits the notion that when vacancies arise in a community, through death, loss, or other forms of departure, the community uses surrogation in order to find satisfactory replacements or alternates. He avers:

> Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds. The process requires many trials and at least as many errors. The fit cannot be exact. The intended substitute either cannot fulfil expectations, creating a deficit, or actually exceeds them, creating a surplus.[142]

As Roach intimates, the recreation and continued manifestation of culture is never exactly the same as before, involving either some lack or some surplus, and this notion applies to the revived modern Venice carnival, as Venetians and tourists look to past iterations and to the city's history to inspire their enactment, with the knowledge that each new iteration is different and original. Amelia Jones elucidates:

> Re-enactments remind us that all present experience is only ever available through subjective perception, itself based on memory; all 'events' […] can only ever be subjectively enacted (in the first

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[141] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.260.
[142] Roach, p.2.

> place) and subjectively retrieved later. There is no singular,
> authentic 'original' event we can refer to in order to confirm the
> true meaning of an event, an act, a performance, or a body -
> presented in the art realm or otherwise.[143]

Jones crucially emphasises that it is impossible to retrieve the past exactly as it was partly because there is no original, echoing diverse approaches to theatre and performance. This approach provides a response to critiques of the revived Venice carnival which see the event as lacking the qualities of its bygone past, allowing for a view which sees carnival participants as linking with earlier events as they enact new iterations. The carnival must not, therefore, be categorised as a purely commercial, touristic, and postmodern event: rather, its palimpsest nature means the event interflows with past places and people, making it multidirectional and crosstemporal. This understanding helps to support a view of the carnival as an essential cultural expression for Venetians and for people who come from all over the world to participate in it: the carnival participants interrelate with each other as they engage with multiple times and places. Therefore, cultural events akin to the Venice carnival, which are connected to people's pasts and the places in which they live, warrant protection and investment: it is important that such interrelational and historical events are sustained in order that future generations are enabled to pick up the performance traces of the event, and continue to vivify such events, in turn strengthening social and communal bonds.

Tourism and Carnival

The success of the 1980 carnival pointed forwards to the 1981 carnival and beyond: the event gradually increased in size, and over the decades it has been managed by a range of different organisations, with the event invariably maintaining its link to the city council, the

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[143] Amelia Jones, 'The Now and the Has Been: Paradoxes of Live Art in History', in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. by Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp.11-25 (p.18).

Comune di Venezia. The carnival swiftly began to appear on the radar of international

journalists and tourists. A barometer of this was the press conference of the 1987 carnival

which was:

> Attended by 120 journalists and the event was covered by 6 North
> American television companies, the BBC, national television
> companies from 8 other countries and 347 news publications. The
> Carnival was starting to be more attractive to foreigners than to the
> Venetians.[144]

Within a short space of time, the organic revival of the carnival had reached global renown

and its cultural and economic weight increased. As early as 1984 the carnival was being

sponsored by private enterprise, as a leading Italian food company, the Alivar consortium,

patronised the event.[145] The 1985 carnival was attended by 600,000 people, a significant

number and an assertion of the event's regained reputation.[146] Indeed, in 1985 and 1986 so

many people came into Venice for the carnival that trains were stopped on the *terrafirma*,

allowing no more people into the city; this was linked to the political refinement of the event

and coincided with a focus on organising large-scale entertainments and inviting the world to

participate.[147] However, many Venetians expressed voices of discord about the way in which

the carnival manifested itself and felt that the event should not receive public funds.[148] In

1992 and 1993, in the region of one million people were attending the event.[149] There are

some fluctuations in these figures, but since the early 1990s, many carnivals have seen

around a million attendees. Since 2013, the carnival has been organised by Ve.La., a

company which is connected to the provision of transport and other services within the city,

including cultural events such as the *Regata Storica* and the *Festa del Redentore* as well as

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[144] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.269.
[145] Ibid., p.265.
[146] Ibid., p.266.
[147] Feil, p.151, pp.155-56.
[148] The Venetian newspaper *Il Gazzettino* sponsored a special debate and a readers' referendum on the carnival in 1987; although only 1,733 responses were received, the overall majority of those were largely negative about the carnival, see Joseph Rubenstein, 'Carnival Unmasked: Transformations of Performance in Venice', *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, 15, 2/3 (1990), 53-60 (p.58). See also Feil, p.158 for an overview of the key findings of this mini referendum.
[149] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.112, p.120.

the carnival.[150] In its promotional literature in advance of the 2016 iteration of carnival, Ve.La. reports that a million people are anticipated to attend the event, showing that the carnival has remained extremely appealing.

Tourist participation in the Venice carnival as well as tourist engagement with the city in general are interesting to consider in light of the 'performance turn' in tourism studies and its corresponding investigation in performance studies. Venice is ripe for such analysis precisely because of its highly touristed nature; as Bernadette Quinn avers, Venice's place 'in the European tourism imagination is unrivalled. […] Venice was an attraction long before the term was ever invented'.[151] Quinn's article underlines the performances of residents and citizens in touristed areas, as they take on roles to present to tourists. She states: 'locals are not simply passive subjects acted upon in tourism contexts. Rather, populations who share their places with tourists are active in reconfiguring practices, relationships, and mobilities with and within places'.[152] This resonates with Theron Nuñez's assertion that tourists and their hosts are 'almost always *on stage* when they meet in face-to-face encounters'.[153] Within tourism studies, Judith Adler was key in promoting the notion of the tourist as a performer, and she significantly points to the possibility for a 'travel performance' to endure beyond the actual trip, remaining open to diverse interpretations, thereby linking to the idea of performance remaining, or leaving archaeological traces.[154] This performance turn is shown to have links with Goffmanian assertions of the presentation of self in everyday life, as John

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[150] The *Regata Storica*, or Historical Regatta, is an annual presentation of boats along the Grand Canal, reconstructing bygone regattas from the time of the independent republic, and comprising boat races in traditional Venetian watercraft, see Regata Storica Venezia <http://www.regatastoricavenezia.it/index.php?pg=1&lang=en> [accessed 29 September 2015]. The *Feste del Redentore* dates back to the celebration of the construction of Andrea Palladio's church *Il Redentore* (The Redeemer) which was built to commemorate the end of the plague that had ravaged the city during the sixteenth century; its modern day manifestation includes an enormous fireworks display, see 'Festa del Redentore', Venezia Unica <http://events.veneziaunica.it/content/festa-del-redentore-0> [accessed 29 September 2015].
[151] Bernadette Quinn, 'Performing Tourism: Venetian Residents in Focus', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34, 2 (2007) 458-76 (pp.461-62).
[152] Quinn, p.459.
[153] Theron Nuñez, 'Touristic Studies in Anthropological Perspective', in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. by Valene L. Smith, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp.265-74 (p.271).
[154] Judith Adler, 'Tourism as Performed Art', *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 6 (1989), 1366-91 (p.1369).

Urry and Jonas Larsen show.[155] Indeed, Urry and Larsen suggest the tourist gaze, a key tenet

of tourism research, is performative, inflected by culture, society, and understandings of

particular tourist locations.[156] Tim Edensor, Susan Bennett, and Dennis Kennedy have each

advanced the understanding of tourism as a form of performance.[157] Bennett observes:

'Places, cities, regions, and countries in the tourism context are all composed as

performances so that they might attract visitors' spectatorship', thereby emphasising the

essential role of the spectator in the tourist exchange, and affirming the interconnections of

city and performance.[158] Kennedy links the experience of the spectator and the tourist as he

considers both to be 'temporary visitors to another realm who expect to return to the

quotidian'.[159] In a special issue of *Performance Research* dedicated to investigating the

intersections of performance and tourism, Heike Roms and Richard Gough observe that the

performances of tourism are imperative to the construction of cultural identities, underlining

the significance of such manifestations to culture and society.[160] The performance turn of

tourism studies, which is connected to understandings of cities as performances, and to

notions of walking as a (subversive) performance practice, is thus relevant to the Venice

situation, and in particular to the manifestation of carnival.

While many tourists experience the carnival as photographing, uncostumed

spectators, many others participate as *maschere*, dressing up and hiding their normal identity

behind a costume and mask and throwing themselves into the topsy-turvy spirit of the event.

This illustrates the participatory nature of much modern tourism, as Carlson states:

> The modern tourist may be considered the direct descendent of the
> medieval pilgrim, and, for both, the desire to visit locations haunted
> by the cultural memory of past events has encouraged the

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[155] John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: SAGE, 2011), p.191.
[156] Ibid., p.17 and p.196.
[157] Tim Edensor, 'Performing tourism, staging tourism: (Re)producing tourist space and practice', *Tourist Studies*, 1, 1 (2001), 59-81; Susan Bennett, 'Universal experience: the city as tourist stage', in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. by Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.76-90; Kennedy, pp.94-113.
[158] Bennett, 'Universal experience', p.78.
[159] Kennedy, p.94.
[160] Heike Roms and Richard Gough, 'Editorial', *Performance Research*, 2, 2 (1997), vi-viii (p.vii).

development of dramatic or quasi-dramatic activities in these
locations.[161]

Though Carlson's comments relate to the modern tourist in general, his observations are

particularly pertinent to Venice, given the city's bygone identity as a site of pilgrimage:

Venice's religious relics and churches attracted pilgrims, and the city was also a departure

point for pilgrims travelling to the Levant from the 1380s onwards.[162] Carlson's invocation

of locations as 'haunted' reflects the reiterative quality of engagements with Venice and its

carnival. Indeed his study, *The Haunted Stage*, employs the term 'ghosting' to describe a

fundamental aspect of theatre: the memory of similar, and sometimes identical, previous

works which point to past iterations of a performance. Milton Grundy alludes to this

ghosting in Venice, stating that a significant aspect of the city for tourists is that 'other and

far more distinguished visitors have been before and pondered upon the very sight that is

before one's eyes'.[163] This implies that those who engage with and enact Venice and its

carnival are effectively channelling the spirits of the past in new iterations, consonant with

Schneider's notion of remains, Pearson's archaeological approach to the performances of

cities, and Roach's idea of surrogation. The tourist in Venice is a particularly ghosted figure

given Venice's extensive history as a tourist hotspot; Quinn relates that: 'The city is recorded

as having had official tour guides since 1204, and as early as the 15th century official guides

were to be found at key city sites, interpreting and changing money for foreign tourists'.[164]

Davis and Marvin assert that by the time of the republic's collapse in 1797, Venice had

already established tourism as core to its economy; adding: 'As such, we might say, it was

the first postmodern city, selling no product but itself and its multiple images to the tens or

even hundreds of thousands of free-spending foreigners who came there annually'.[165] The

Independent reports that 20 million tourists visit Venice each year, an astounding figure,

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[161] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p.137.
[162] Davis and Marvin, p.25.
[163] Milton Grundy, *Venice: An Anthology Guide*, 4th rev. edn (London: A & C Black, 1985), p.13.
[164] Quinn, p.462.
[165] Davis and Marvin, p.3.

which has inevitably transformed the identity of the city and the lives of its citizens.[166] Whybrow suggests the presence of such huge numbers of tourists '*constitutes* a populace', adding that the residents are effectively dependent on the tourist presence.[167] Feil states that Venetians speak of a 'monoculture' of tourism, reducing the city's diversity as local shops, grocers, bakers, butchers, barbers, and cinemas close to be replaced by businesses catering for tourists, a problem also identified by Jan van der Borg, Paolo Costa, and Giuseppe Gotti.[168] Gloomily, according to some predictions, there will be no more full-time residents living in the historical heart of the city by the year 2030.[169]

Modern tourism and globalisation mean that the revived carnival is starkly different to the bygone carnival in terms of the constitution of the event's participants. The modern day carnival is attended by a much broader spectrum of international society in the modern day than in the days of the republic: the bygone carnival was accustomed to heavy influxes of foreign revellers, who were fundamental participants of the event, but these were mostly educated and monied people whose lifestyles allowed them to engage in such frivolity. In contrast, the evolution of modern tourism, together with broader transformations in society, mean people from all sorts of economic positions can choose to visit the carnival. While the bygone event welcomed many outsiders, it remained a carnival for Venetians, something the citizens of the city actively took a part in and had a sense of ownership of. Though the revived carnival is still undeniably Venetian, its global quality is omnipresent, showing that the carnival is not only for Venetians, but also for tourists, while also indicating that the carnival's very identity is strongly inflected by outsiders. Davis and Marvin assert that already by the mid-1980s the event 'was no longer really about Venetians', adding that many

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[166] Winston Ross, 'The death of Venice: Corrupt officials, mass tourism and soaring property prices have stifled life in the city', *Independent*, 14 May 2015 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-death-of-venice-corrupt-officials-mass-tourism-and-soaring-property-prices-have-stifled-life-in-the-city-10251434.html#> [accessed 7 September 2015].
[167] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Losing Venice: Conversations in a Sinking City', in *Performance and the Global City*, ed. by D. J. Hopkins and Kim Solga (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.99-119 (p.102).
[168] Feil, p.152; Jan van der Borg, Paolo Costa, and Giuseppe Gotti, 'Tourism in European Heritage Cities', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23, 2 (1996), 306-21 (p.316).
[169] Ross.

citizens escape to the Dolomites or stay locked up indoors during carnival to avoid the crowds.[170] Road and rail links built in the lengthy hiatus between 1797 and the late 1970s also mean that a much larger cross-section of Italians from *terrafirma* contribute to the revived carnival's constitution, enriching the polyphony of the event, while further reiterating the contrast with the bygone carnival.

Some commentators regard tourism's influence on carnival as negative, suggesting the event has lost its way from its organic revival, with the noble intention of reaffirming Venice as a capital of theatre losing out to the interest of the tourism industry.[171] As an exercise in marketing, Ve.La. report in their brochure aimed at sponsors and advertisers of the 2016 event that the carnival is the foremost Italian event in terms of national interest and notoriety, with the potential for more than 79% of Italians expressing an interest in attending the carnival, based on a sample survey of the population of Italy.[172] According to these figures, the carnival comes ahead of the Venice Film Festival, the Palio of Siena, the carnival in Viareggio, and the Rome Film Festival as a cultural event which those surveyed would be interested in visiting. The Ve.La. brochure underlines the attractiveness of the carnival as an event to sponsor or advertise at because of the significant numbers of tourists who visit the city for the occasion, and assures sponsors that their brand will be visible in a number of ways should they choose to support the event or be involved in specific aspects of the event, such as the *Campo dei Bambini* (the Children's Square) as a special project for the upcoming 2016 carnival. This brochure, and the promotional language used therein, evidences the commercial nature of the carnival, and points to the carnival as an event of financial interest for the city, the region, and for the carnival's organisers and sponsors. Peter Ackroyd regards the chance of making money as the practicality which lays behind the institution of carnival in the city, along with the modern biennale of art, and festivals of film and theatre, and this

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[170] Davis and Marvin, p.253 and p.255.

[171] Danilo Reato, *Venice: Places and History*, trans. by Ann Hylands Ghiringhelli (Vercelli: White Star, 2001), p.105.

[172] Ve.La., *Carnevale di Venezia 2016: 23 gennaio - 9 febbraio* <http://www.velaspa.com/files/EVENT_CARNEVALE_2016_ITA_rev001.pdf> [accessed 8 September 2015].

viewpoint reflects an established perspective of the carnival as a purely commercial exercise in its current guise.[173] Indeed, the carnival is viewed as a national and international brand by Mauro Pizzigati, who was the President of Venezia Marketing e Eventi, which organised the event between 2008 and 2012. Under Venezia Marketing e Eventi, the carnival adopted the thematic format of 'Sensation', with the aim of consolidating the 'brand', 'in order to attract new audiences and new potential partners'.[174] However, he underlines the responsibility that the organisers have to continue the carnival's legacy and to address the expectations of the public, 'that wishes to be both spectator and active participant in this extraordinary magical celebration', suggesting that the impetus of carnival cannot solely be financial.[175]

Venetian costume-maker and fashion designer Stefano Nicolao, who founded his costume shop in Venice at the time of the event's revival, critiques the current state of affairs:

> As the years go by, the commercial propositions have changed to feature all-inclusive travel packages, limited stopovers and masked balls at the palazzo; this has meant using Venice exclusively as a hotel-palace, instead of experiencing the true dimension of the city in costume.[176]

Similar such sentiments are expressed in relation to the city by a range of commentators, bemoaning the unbalanced situation of excessive tourist numbers, the rising waters of the Adriatic, and the reduction in the resident population of Venice's historical centre, intimating that Venice will take on the mantle of Atlantis.[177] Kerry Whigham discusses the mock

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[173] Ackroyd, p.68.

[174] Mauro Pizzigati, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.294.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Stefano Nicolao, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.273. See also Nicolao Atelier Venezia <http://www.nicolao.com/en> [accessed 30 September 2015].

[177] John Julius Norwich, 'Preface', in *Venice: An Anthology Guide*, by Milton Grundy, 4th rev. edn (London: A & C Black, 1985), pp.9-12; Antonio Paolo Russo, 'Venice: Coping with Culture Vultures', *The UNESCO Courier* (July/August 1999), pp.42-43; Stephen Bayley, 'Venice is the only city on earth going backwards', *Spectator*, 6 February 2008 <http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/488691/venice-is-the-only-city-on-earth-going-backwards/> [accessed 16 September 2015]; Tom Kington, 'Who now can stop the slow death of Venice?', *Guardian*, 1 March 2009 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/01/venice-population-exodus-tourism> [accessed 16 September 2015]; Catherine Eade, 'Venice tourist warning: "Cap

'funeral' of Venice in 2009, organised by the website Venessia.com to highlight the death of the city in the face of excessive tourist numbers and a lack of investment in infrastructure for residents, indicating how controversial tourism is for Venetians.[178] The rising seawaters and increasing occurrence of *acqua alta* (high waters), the turning over of the historical centre to tourism, the reduction in the number of full-time residents living in the historical centre, the loss of traditional crafts and manufacture, and the corrosion and decay of the city's ancient buildings are all cited as factors contributing to such views. However, the tourist influx is showing no signs of abating, and the annual carnival remains enormously popular for tourists from across Italy and the rest of the world. Alongside Italians, significant numbers of people attend the carnival from France, Japan, the UK, the USA, Germany, Spain, and China, with a multitude of other nationalities represented at the event.[179]

Antonio Paolo Russo employs Venice as a case study to illustrate his idea of 'the vicious circle' of tourism in heritage cities, suggesting numerous policies to address the problems and to reach an equilibrium, including entrance tickets, taxation, and diversification of the tourism supply.[180] Elsewhere he complains that the centre is overcrowded, businesses offer low quality at high prices, and that the reduction in the population of residents in the historical centre was an inevitable result of the tourist drive; Venice, he states is 'a very good case of unsustainable tourism', adding that the city is the best illustration of beauty bearing its burdens.[181] In a sense, the city's perceived beauty, and the endogenous myth of the city, have contributed to creating this unsustainable impasse. Ironically, as Russo implies, the city's beauty is self-destructive, as the centuries of tourists in the city have had, and are continuing to have, a physical impact on Venice's existence.

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visitor numbers to avoid environmental catastrophe"', *Mail Online*, 5 July 2011 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-2011361/Venice-tourism-Cap-visitor-numbers-face-environmental-disaster.html> [accessed 16 September 2015].

[178] Kerry Whigham, 'Performing a future (in) performing a past: Identity, cultural performance, and the Utopian impulse', *Tourist Studies*, 14, 2 (2014), 203-24 (p.216).

[179] Ve.La., *Carnevale di Venezia 2016: 23 gennaio - 9 febbraio* <http://www.velaspa.com/files/EVENT_CARNEVALE_2016_ITA_rev001.pdf> [accessed 8 September 2015].

[180] Antonio Paolo Russo, 'The "Vicious Circle" of Tourism Development in Heritage Cities', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29, 1 (2002), 165-82.

[181] Russo, 'Venice: Coping with Culture Vultures', p.43.

This points to beauty's ambivalence as although beauty is generally considered a positive quality, it could be viewed as a curse, as the desire to see and experience beauty wears down on the object of people's desires. Whybrow, evoking the notion of the sinking city, observes: 'the weight of tourists can be said to be forcing the city down and its citizens to "jump ship"', reiterating the negative ecological impact of the city's excessive tourism.[182] In this context, the ongoing reenactments of performances of carnival leave their physical marks on the city, as the reiteration of carnival, and general touristic engagement with the city, contribute to the city's destruction, suggesting performance remains are not intangible, invisible, or entirely ephemeral.

Anna Somers Cocks, who was chair of Venice in Peril from 1999-2012, a British-based organisation which raises money for the restoration of Venetian buildings and artefacts and which also lobbies for the city, points to the city's gloomy outlook in her 2013 article 'The Coming Death of Venice?' published in *The New York Review of Books*.[183] The title of her article pertinently encapsulates views of the prospective doom of Venice, while also channelling the city's established association with death and decadence, established over centuries. In her polemic, Somers Cocks criticises the mayor of Venice at the time, Giorgio Orsoni, the city council's management of the city, and the management of the Venice Port Authority; her focus rests mainly on the increasing numbers of cruise ships sailing down the Giudecca canal, causing untold damage to the lagoon's delicate ecosystem. There is an urgent tone to her article, as she asserts that 'time is running out' to save Venice.[184] Mayor Giorgio Orsoni, who held office until June 2014, responds to Somers Cocks's article in a letter published in a later edition of the *New York Review of Books*,[185] indicating that he

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[182] Whybrow, 'Situation Venice', pp.283-84.

[183] Anna Somers Cocks, 'The Coming Death of Venice?', in *New York Review of Books*, 20 June 2013 <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/jun/20/coming-death-venice/> [accessed 16 September 2015]. See also the Venice in Peril website <http://www.veniceinperil.org/> [accessed 16 September 2015]. The American counterpart organisation with similar aims and activities is Save Venice Inc <http://www.savevenice.org/> [accessed 28 October 2015].

[184] Somers Cocks states that Venice has become the most important Mediterranean port for the cruising industry; in 1997, 207 cruise ships entered Venice, while in 2011 this number had increased significantly to 655, see Somers Cocks.

[185] Giorgio Orsoni, '"The Coming Death of Venice?": An Exchange', in *New York Review of Books*, 26 September 2013 <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2013/09/26/coming-death-venice-exchange/>

sympathises with her argument against the prevalence of cruise ships, but he crucially

defends the role of tourism in the city, sentiments he repeated in a lecture given at the Italian

Cultural Institute in New York.[186] In this lecture, he argued that a museum or theme park

identity for Venice's historical centre should be avoided at all costs; rather he celebrates the

city's dynamic identity, and envisions a future for the city which sees it becoming 'the

international center it once was', adding 'the city must remain modern without becoming

Disneyland'.[187] He concluded his lecture with a list of things Venice must do including

'revert to being a fully inhabited city, at the center of a vital region and with strong

international dimension'.[188] There is an implication herein that unchecked excessive tourism

will make the city an artificial wonderland, akin to a theme park. This further reiterates the

notion of the ecological impact of tourism on the city, as it changes Venice's identity and

leaves physical traces. Orsoni's love and passion for his native city are evident in his

pronouncements, though in June 2014 he was arrested as part of investigations into

corruption and bribery, and he subsequently resigned as mayor.[189] The debate about tourist

numbers and cruise ships has continued, however, with controversial exchanges taking place

between the new mayor, Luigi Brugnaro (in office since June 2015) and preservationists.[190]

Notions of Venice's impending doom become more urgent in the face of international

understanding of climate change and rising sea levels, but visions of Venice's demise are not

new: Lord Byron alluded to the city sinking in the fourth canto of his poem *Childe Harold's*

Pilgrimage (1818): 'Venice, lost and won, | Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done, |

[accessed 16 September 2015].

[186] Giorgio Orsoni, 'Venice in the 21st Century: The Challenge of Modernity'. Lecture by the Mayor of Venice, Italian Cultural Institute, 18 October 2013 <http://www.comune.venezia.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/EN/IDPagina/68591> [accessed 24 September 2015].

[187] Ibid.

[188] Ibid.

[189] 'Venice's mayor Giorgio Orsoni resigns during corruption scandal', *Guardian*, 13 June 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/13/venice-mayor-giorgio-orsoni-resigns-corruption-scandal> [accessed 24 September 2015].

[190] 'In Venice, to Dredge or not to Dredge?', *Architects and Artisans*, 25 August 2015 <http://architectsandartisans.com/index.php/2015/08/in-venice-to-dredge-or-not-to-dredge/> [accessed 24 September 2015]; Jess McHugh, 'Venice Tourism Debate 2015: Residents Fear Visitors Are Destroying Their City, Demand Authorities Crack Down On Cruise Ships', *International Business Times*, 23 August 2015 <http://www.ibtimes.com/venice-tourism-debate-2015-residents-fear-visitors-are-destroying-their-city-demand-2063682> [accessed 24 September 2015].

Sinks, like a sea-weed, into whence she rose! '[191]. He evokes a similar image in *Ode on Venice* (1819):

> O Venice! Venice! When thy marble walls
> Are level with the waters, there shall be
> A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
> A loud lament along the sweeping sea![192]

Byron's poetic notions of Venice's death, as well as more recent and urgent calls for the protection of the city from the threat of rising sea levels and excessive tourism, share concern for the city's future. Tourist engagement with and enactment of both the city and the carnival may therefore require a political approach in order to manage the situation and ensure the longevity of the city and carnival. Reenactment of the carnival, while viewed herein as a positive cultural and social manifestation which affirms links to the past and renews communal bonds, may need to be considered in ecological terms as causing collateral damage to the delicate lagoon city, so performer-spectators may need to consider the physical impact of their presence and enactments in Venice.

Chapter Outline

This thesis is made up of four chapters which are bookended by this introductory chapter and the concluding chapter. In relation to existing scholarship on the Venice carnival and to the broader field of carnival studies, the structure of this study presents a unique approach by focusing on abstract philosophical themes: the first chapter explores 'Beauty', the second 'Stillness', the third 'Photography', and the fourth 'Subversion'. The selection of this thematic approach for the structure indicates a keenness for this project to avoid

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[191] George Gordon Byron, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by John Julius Norwich (London: Constable, 1990), pp.64-65.
[192] Byron, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.408.

straightforward and prosaic chapter foci. By employing thematic frameworks for the chapters, dialogue and intersections between the varied foci appear throughout, allowing chapters to read not as closed and strictured but as interflowing and relational. For instance, the carnival's history, its masks, its costumes, its sites, its diverse manifestations, and the interaction between participants are all of interest to the thesis, and the thematic chapters allow these aspects to permeate the entire study. It is hoped that the authorial choices about chapter and thesis structure allow for a dynamic and original investigation of the interrelations of performance and spectatorship at the Venice carnival, resonating with the macrocosm of the city itself.

The first chapter investigates the interconnected themes of beauty and theatricality, and how these bear upon the manifestation of the carnival and the city of Venice itself. The city's unique appearance on water, its splendid architecture, and its handsome gondolas are all aspects which feed understandings of Venice's beauty. Recognising these established aspects of the Venetian aesthetics, the chapter highlights the ways in which the carnival reflects the city's perceived beauty. The masked and costumed participants of the event evoke notions of opulence, sophistication, and elegance, communing with the city's established aesthetics. The chapter views the beauty of the city and carnival as imbued with theatricality, owing to the fact that Venice's beauty is dependent on qualities of presentation and performance. Indeed, it is this theatrical nature of Venice's beauty that underlines the city's dependence on the performer-spectator to maintain its aesthetics. As the chapter shows, Venice's beauty is inherently entangled with repetition and citation, as the city itself is replicated in innumerable ways, ensuring that understandings of its beauty persist inter- and trans-culturally. Artworks, writings, films, architecture, and performances participate in an extensive dialogue with Venice's beauty, in turn replicating and ensuring the association is maintained, and the first chapter engages with a range of such manifestations so as to exemplify this relationship. People in the city, both citizens and tourists, along with anybody who engages with the cultural behemoth of Venice, are thus seen as performer-spectators: they both produce and observe the city by engaging with its performances and

simultaneously extending them. The chapter investigates approaches to theatricality, and eschews negative connotations historically associated with the term, instead promoting an understanding of theatricality which foregrounds the role of the self-aware spectator in engagement with the city and carnival. Such an approach underlines the importance of the interaction of performers and spectators in the expression of the city's identity and the manifestation of its carnival. Through analyses of images and writings on the city, supported by the views of carnival participants from the interviews I conducted, the chapter propounds the view that Venice's beauty and theatricality are interrelated and codependent. The blurring of the distinction between performer and spectator in the diverse expressions of the city's identity, and in particular at the annual carnival, will be shown to be indicative of interrelationality among people and suggestive of individual empowerment, allowing for a view of the carnival as subversive in the face of dominant discourses.

The second chapter explores stillness, which is a core component of the Venetian aesthetics that intersects closely with beauty. Through an exploration of stillness in the city and as an aspect of carnival, the chapter extends the argument that a simple binary cannot exist between performance and spectatorship. While recognising that the carnival is expressed in infinitesimal and vastly diverse ways, the chapter focuses specifically on the fully masked *maschere*, those figures who wear a *volto* mask which completely hides their identity and who have come to typify the modern day. The *maschere* generally pose still in Piazza San Marco and the adjacent Piazzetta, positioning themselves in order to be appreciated and invariably photographed by their fellow carnival participants, creating reciprocal moments of stillness on the part of these photographing co-participants. Their stillness evokes statuary, and in particular the classical tradition of statuary which emphasises ideal forms of the human body, thereby linking the carnival to notions of the city's beauty. The hidden identities of the *maschere*, along with the blankness of the expression on their *volto* masks, also commune with associations between Venice and mystery, evoking the enigmatic identity of the labyrinthine city, intensified by their immutability. So prolific are the *maschere* that they have become almost an 'attraction' of

carnival, as tourists expect to see and engage with these figures. Through an exploration of

photographs taken at the carnival, and informed by ethnographic experience, the chapter

shows that the stillness of the city and carnival suggests movement, indicating that a view of

stillness as motionlessness is unsustainable. This is supported by the integration of instances

of stillness in art and performance, and the application of different approaches to stillness.

The destabilising of the binary between stillness and motionlessness reflects the challenge to

the binary of performance and spectatorship. Fundamental to the chapter is a view of

stillness as resistance, suggesting that this quintessential aspect of the Venetian aesthetics

actually contributes to the possibilities for individual engagement with the cultural identity

of Venice and the built environment of the city, but also allowing for interesting interactions

between people as they engage with the stillness of the city and the *maschere*.

The third chapter intersects with the themes of beauty and stillness as it focuses on

photography. This is a pertinent theme not only because of the integration of visual images

as a research methodology, but also because Venice is one of the most photogenic and

photographed cities, as Predrag Matvejević attests in his travelogue on the city.[193] The city's

unique appearance has attracted artists, writers, architects, filmmakers, performers, and

photographers, all in the pursuit of capturing something of Venice and representing the city

in diverse media. Just as stillness does not equate to motionlessness, so photography is seen

as a method of touching multiple times and frames, not a document frozen in the past

moment of capture, raising a further critical paradox. This understanding of photography

recognises that images have multiple effects and affects. The chapter extends the thesis focus

on replication and citationality as it emphasises the way in which photographs of Venice and

its carnival are part of a rich tradition of capturing images in the city, thereby reiterating

earlier poses, interactions, and prints. Additionally, the photograph multiplies time and place

as it represents not only earlier images and the tradition of image capture to which it belongs,

but also suggests the actual moment and place of capture even as one engages with the image

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[193] Predrag Matvejević, *The Other Venice: Secrets of the City*, trans. by Russell Scott Valentino (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p.96.

in a different moment and place. Several of my own images of the 2010 and 2011 carnivals are analysed alongside examples from film, a television advertisement, artwork, performances, and other images of the carnival in order to provide a detailed study of the ramifications of photography on the identity of the carnival and the city. The chapter engages with key theorists who have written on photography, among them Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag, and its intersections with performance, seeking to show that the photograph is not merely a document of a past moment but is in dialogue with the past while simultaneously hailing the future. The person photographed performs for the camera, the image then performs that moment of capture, while referencing a multiplicity of earlier performances and pointing to manifold more in the future. Images do not only evoke past times and places, they actually touch them, meaning the modern day carnival does have a link to the bygone carnival and the city of old, ensuring a connection remains between carnival participants of the twenty-first century and those innumerable participants of past carnivals, challenging notions of loss and absence.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis addresses the revived carnival as a subversive event, identifying the transformative nature of the costume and mask, the interrelationality among participants, the freedom with which participants engage in the event, and the sense of community that the carnival evokes as key factors in ensuring the carnival's challenge to the *status quo*. Although the modern day carnival, as well as the city of Venice itself, are sometimes lamented for their globalised and commercialised identities, as well as their excessively touristic nature, the chapter will argue that the carnival retains a connection to the subversive carnivals of pre-modernity, thereby linking to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival and the carnivalesque nature of European carnivals, festivities, and manifestations in the Middle Ages. Drawing on accounts and representations of historical carnival and carnivalesque activities in Venice, the chapter highlights the topsy-turvy and subversive nature of these events in the past, while accepting that such events did not ever equate to a complete overhauling of the social order, given that they were framed temporally and spatially, and life returned to normal once such events were over. Engravings

depicting past carnivals and historical accounts of pre-1797 carnivals provide interesting parallels with modern day iterations from the revived, post-1980 carnival and, crucially, the revived carnival is shown to be continuing the traditions of subversion and challenge evident in the historical event. As the chapter maintains, the way in which vulgar costumes and informal and improvised fancy dress permeate the modern carnival is indicative of the remains of past carnivals which have been picked up and reiterated, in turn leaving more remains for future iterations of the carnival. Rather than being dominated by quasi-identical posing *maschere* in *volto* masks, the modern day carnival represents a celebration of the individual, allowing freedom of expression in one's engagement with the event. Thus, the final chapter makes a strong assertion of the carnival's subversive quality, and thereby stresses its cultural and social importance in the face of greater individualism, reduced emphasis on the bonds of community, and the march of globalisation and neoliberal capitalism.

As each chapter indicates, the repetitive, replicative, and reiterative nature of the carnival, and of the city of Venice itself, indicates a powerful link with earlier iterations of the carnival and the city, helping those who engage with the carnival and the city to feel part of a rich tradition, in which they play a key role. Each chapter is thus interlinked, contributing to the thesis's view of the revived, post-1980 carnival as subversive, and also addressing the interdependence of performance and spectatorship at the event, which positions the participants of the carnival and people who engage with the city as performer-spectators, at once enacting and observing their enactments in a dynamic interplay.

Chapter 1

Theatricality and Beauty

Introduction

Venice has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987 and this respected status

evidences the importance of the city to world history, culture and society. The first criterion

UNESCO used for the award of this status asserts:

> Venice is a unique artistic achievement. The city is built on 118
> small islands and seems to float on the waters of the lagoon,
> composing an unforgettable landscape whose imponderable beauty
> inspired Canaletto, Guardi, Turner and many other painters. The
> lagoon of Venice also has one of the highest concentrations of
> masterpieces in the world: from Torcello's Cathedral to the church
> of Santa Maria della Salute. The years of the Republic's
> extraordinary Golden Age are represented by monuments of
> incomparable beauty […].[1]

This criterion provides a pertinent point of departure for this chapter as it links Venice's

beauty to notions of its theatricality: the city 'seems to float', and this seeming links the

city's identity to theatre, the place of seeming *par excellence*. Through the subtle interlinking

of beauty and theatricality, the criterion points to the key focus of this chapter: theatricality is

core to the city's aesthetics, and it is particularly essential to perceptions of Venice's beauty.

Indeed, it will be argued that the beauty of the city is imbued with theatricality, underlining

the quintessential role that performance and spectatorship play in the expression of Venice's

identity. Because of the way in which the city and carnival feed each other's identity,

examples of *maschere* at the modern day carnival will be examined in this chapter alongside

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[1] UNESCO, Venice and its Lagoon <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/394> [accessed 15 October 2013].
The World Heritage Site status was emboldened in 2013 as UNESCO retrospectively adopted a
Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the site, as it, along with nearly 200 other sites around
the world, had no Statement approved at the time of their original inscriptions. See UNESCO, Venice
and its Lagoon <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/394/documents/> [accessed 19 October 2015].

writings on Venice and artworks depicting the city and the carnival in order to extrapolate the public, theatrical nature of Venice's beauty. Furthermore, the emphasis on theatricality in the chapter will illustrate the fundamental role of the spectator in engagements with the city and the carnival. Indeed, through an understanding of Venice's beauty as imbued with theatricality, the reliance of the city on the active spectator to produce and sustain the city's beauty will be made apparent.[2]

In the UNESCO criterion the city is described as an 'artistic achievement', which significantly positions Venice in terms of an artwork, and the criterion also emphasises the beautiful appearance of the city, foregrounding its 'imponderable' and 'incomparable' beauty, emphasising both the influence the city has had on painters and the unique appearance of the city's architecture. The apparent 'floating' of the city on the lagoon waters as well as examples of the city's architecture and monuments acknowledge Venice's physical, tangible aesthetics: the criterion points to the spectacle of Venice. Significantly, UNESCO also mentions the influence that Venice had on respected masters of art, pointing to the link between beauty and representation. The *maschera* pictured in Figure 1 communes with the Venetian aesthetics, taking full advantage of the picturesque views afforded by their positioning in the Piazzetta with the *bacino* as backdrop. The pose of this *maschera* is designed to be witnessed by others, it is overtly public in its nature, underlining its theatricality. The well-fitting costume suggests that time and money have been invested therein: the colouring and form of the outfit is charming, embellished by the flamboyant headdress, delicate swathes of voile, and the handheld mask acting as a prop. This *maschera* is in dialogue not only with concepts of the carnival but also with perceptions of Venice's beauty: the pose feeds into perceptions of Venice as opulent, enigmatic, and unique. The *maschera* is artfully posing, having made a decision about the background, so there is an

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[2] The discussion of beauty in this chapter tends towards the application of beauty to things that are pleasing because they are pretty and graceful, and which give people pleasure, though there are many diverse approaches to beauty, as Umberto Eco indicates in his work *On Beauty*, which provides a thoroughgoing history of beauty. For instance, Eco reflects on the beauty of monsters, ugliness, the aesthetics of evil, the beauty of machines, ready-mades, and everyday objects. Umberto Eco, *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea*, trans by. Alastair McEwen (London: MacLehose Press, 2010).

Figure 1 *Maschera* **posing along the** *bacino* **in the Piazzetta, 8 February 2010**

overt sense of performance on display, suggesting Venice's beauty is obtained not in a nonchalant, even natural way, but that through the combination of architecture, layout, costume, mask, and, crucially, the reiterative pose, a very Venetian understanding of beauty is achieved and replicated.

The *maschera's* positioning in the Piazzetta is important, as it is a part of the city which is iconic because of its collection of architectural gems, and because of its importance in the political, cultural, and social life of Venice. The Piazzetta's iconicity is strongly inflected by the power of replications which have transposed the image of the Piazzetta in multiple ways, further underlining UNESCO's emphasis on artworks as crucial to the city's identity. Canaletto (1697-1768), mentioned in the UNESCO criterion, was inspired by Venice's beauty and painted several *vedute* depicting the Piazzetta. The *vedute* tradition had had huge success in Holland with the Dutch masters in the seventeenth century; in the eighteenth century, Venice was a popular muse in these large, realistic paintings with often minuscule details, complementing Venice's stature on the Grand Tour.[3] Garry Wills asserts that these endless *vedute* of Venice 'reflect the way it had become a place to be *seen*, a quaint religious and social spectacle'.[4] Rosemary Sweet avers that there was 'a widespread visual familiarity with the city amongst the educated elite of Europe' owing to a tradition of topographical art going back to the sixteenth century, and that Canaletto's *vedute* defined popular perceptions of Venice during his lifetime and beyond.[5] *Vedute* depicted beautiful scenes of the Piazzetta, Piazza San Marco, and the Grand Canal, as well as other parts of Venice, feeding idealistic and romantic visions of the city. The theatrical nature of the city's beauty is alluded to by English traveller and writer Thomas Coryat as he describes the overall effect of travelling down the Grand Canal in the early seventeenth century: 'both

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[3] The Grand Tour of Europe was a sign of increased wealth in Germany, Holland, France, and England, as wealthy people, mostly men, travelled across the continent with the aim of gaining an intellectual, educational, and cultural experience. The tradition started as early as the late-sixteenth century, and carried on for centuries. Venice was a noted stopping point for the Grand Tourists. See Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy,* c. *1690-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.199-235; Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin, *Venice, the Tourist Maze: A Cultural Critique of the World's Most Touristed City* (London: University of California Press, 2004), pp.30-51.

[4] Garry Wills, *Venice: Lion City, The Religion of Empire* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), p.12.

[5] Sweet, p.204.

sides of this channel are adorned with many sumptuous and magnificent Palaces that stand very neare to the water, and make a very glorious and beautifull shew [*sic*]'.[6] As Coryat intimates, the sense of performance and presentation that imbues the city's aesthetic appearance was not lost on visitors. The theatricality evident in Figure 1 and in *vedute* of Venice, as will be indicated in this chapter, rely in part on repetition, inasmuch as the performances of beauty depicted pick up the remains of earlier iterations. This recalls Schneider's theory that performance remains, meaning people can engage with other times and frames, both in the past and into the future.

As a frame for this chapter, the UNESCO criterion helps to provide a definition of Venice's beauty, as it encapsulates the uniqueness of the city's appearance, marrying archaic, handsome, opulent architecture with the waters of the lagoon and the city's canals. There is something otherworldly about Venice's beauty because of its evolution on the lagoon's archipelago, making it seem like a floating city. The city does not actually float on the lagoon waters, but its seeming to implies a level of artifice, presentation, showpersonship - all things conventionally related to theatre. The 'seeming' of Venice is tied up with the innumerable replications of the city, whether paintings, photographs, writings, or replicas, as representations and reiterations of Venice feed perceptions of the city and create a rich interflow of city and image, creating a dialogue between what Venice is and what it seems to be. That UNESCO mentions Canaletto, Guardi, and Turner suggests that the paintings of these renowned artists deserve substantial recognition *vis-à-vis* perceptions of Venice, connecting Venice's beauty with image and idea. Such artists sought to capture the extraordinary, 'imponderable' nature of Venice, seeking to translate how Venice 'seems' into their replications. This 'imponderable' beauty has inspired not only esteemed painters of the like mentioned by UNESCO, but also motivates the continued fascination with and adoration of Venice today, as tourists continue to visit the city, seeking to witness it first-hand, and to capture images of the city in photographs. The picture postcard appearance of

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[6] Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 2 vols (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1905), I, p.306. This text was originally published in 1611.

the city is core to its beauty, and this is plentifully represented in literature, film, theatre, and

architecture. Evidently, Venice's beauty inspires replication, as the ubiquity of the city's

image indicates. The repeatability of beauty is identified by Elaine Scarry, who states:

'Beauty brings copies of itself into being'; beautiful things, for her, share an impulse towards

begetting.[7] As Scarry asserts, replications of beauty may be material, like a drawing or

photograph, or immaterial, like a shared memory or description, and she also astutely

pinpoints the vastness of possibilities which such replications can create: they may be quite

similar to the generative object or completely removed from it, but the connection exists

nonetheless. A painting by Canaletto can therefore be grouped with The Venetian Hotel in

Las Vegas, and with a nondescript photograph taken by a tourist: each replication is begotten

by the generative object of the city.[8] Venice's beauty is also defined by age: many of the

city's buildings are ancient, and much of the city's architecture and layout have changed

little in centuries; John Julius Norwich asserts that: 'No other city anywhere has changed

less'.[9] The archaic appearance of Venice, and its apparent eschewal of modernity in its

architecture, makes a significant contribution to perceptions of its beauty. In a letter sent

from Venice to his brother William, Henry James writes: 'I should like in some neat formula

to give you the *Italian feeling* - and tell you just how it is that one is conscious here of the

aesthetic presence of the past'.[10] Charming form and colour, age, and opulence are therefore

key aspects of the city's beauty, and because of its unique appearance, there is a *frisson* of

mystery too: there is a sense of something beneath the surface in the city's beauty. This is

inflected by the role that water plays in Venice's identity, hiding secrets beneath its surface,

but also by the city's flamboyant architecture with ornate frontages. This enigmatic quality is

reflected in Venice's symbiotic relationship with the mask; Alessandro Falassi writes: 'the

mask is the symbol of Carnival; Carnival is the symbol of Venice; ergo the mask is the

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[7] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (London: Duckworth, 2000), p.3.
[8] The Venetian Las Vegas <http://www.venetian.com/hotel/explore-the-venetian/photo-galleries/hotel.html> [accessed 31 May 2015].
[9] John Julius Norwich, 'Introduction', in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by John Julius Norwich (London: Constable, 1990), pp.33-57 (p.35).
[10] Henry James, *Letters from the Palazzo Barbaro* (London: Pushkin, 1998), p.68.

symbol of Venice', and he adds that people have described the city itself as a mask, encapsulating its mysterious identity.[11]

The beautiful ideal of Venice is encapsulated by Joseph Brodsky in *Watermark*, his lovingly crafted paean to the city:

> The surrounding beauty is such that one instantly conceives of an incoherent animal desire to match it, to be on a par. […] The city offers bipeds a notion of visual superiority absent in their natural lairs, in their habitual surroundings.[12]

Here he identifies the exceptional, otherworldly quality of Venice as core to its beauty, concordant with UNESCO's adjectival flourishes of 'imponderable' and 'incomparable'. Brodsky's suggestion that people seek to match the physical beauty evident in the city's surroundings is felt no more strongly than during the Venice carnival, when participants of the event transform themselves into beautiful *maschere*, hiding their everyday appearance beneath colourful and eye-catching costumes and masks, in order 'to match, or be on a par', in Brodsky's words, with the handsome, archaic, and delicate appearance of the city. Looking beautiful, striking beautiful poses, and complementing the city's visual beauty are essential aspects of the carnival event. Falassi states:

> Here, all that is needed is a minimal costume, some face paint, a luminescent bow tie, two dark circles drawn around the eyes, a cap with bells on it, in order to step into the illusion of the Carnival, to make believe that one is a participant in the festival or even a principal character in one of its events.[13]

By way of performance, participants enact images of beauty, channelling the past iterations of the modern event and the bygone carnivals of the republic.

UNESCO's view of Venice as an artwork resonates with the notion of the city as a performance, a notion propounded by Henri Lefebvre. Indeed, Lefebvre's pioneering views

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[11] Alessandro Falassi, 'The Mask, the Mist, and the Mirror: *Carnevale* in Venice, Italy', in *¡Carnival!*, ed. by Barbara Mauldin (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp.64-91 (p.65).
[12] Joseph Brodsky, *Watermark: An Essay on Venice* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp.25-26.
[13] Falassi, pp.84-85.

on the production of space are pertinent to this chapter, as Stuart Elden elucidates:

> For Lefebvre, the road should not simply be a means of passage and circulation, but is central to social and urban life. The road is a meeting place, and both links up the other meeting places such as cafés and halls and makes them possible. These meeting places animate the street, which is a spontaneous theatre, where we are both spectator and spectacle.[14]

Elden here underlines the theatre trope that runs through Lefebvre's theory, and crucially, he points to the interplay between performance and spectatorship as the roles of people in the city mingle between these poles. Lefebvre's notion of the road being a spontaneous theatre, which resonates strongly with Richard Schechner's view of the street as the stage, appears in his writing on rhythmanalysis as a new method of enquiry.[15] Rhythmanalysis essentially suggests that diverse rhythms work together to enact cities. Significantly, Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean cities, written together with his wife Catherine Régulier, specifically focuses on Venice as a theatre-city: 'Is this city not a theatrical city, not to say a theatre-city, where the audience [*le public*] and the actors are the same, but in the multiplicity of their roles and their relations?'[16] This rhetorical question is imperative to this chapter as it identifies the multiplicity of the roles that both citizens and tourists play in the city, in relation both to each other and in the context of their surroundings. The question also pinpoints the sameness of the performer and spectator in the production of Venice. For Lefebvre and Régulier, the people in Venice effectively perform the city, while also viewing and absorbing that performance as audience members. Through the interrelations among citizens and tourists, Venice is enacted, enabling perceptions of the city's unique aesthetics to be experienced and sustained. Lefebvre and Régulier embrace the theatricality of Venice because of the active participation on the part of people in the city, with the blurring of

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[14] Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2004), p.145.

[15] Richard Schechner, 'The Street is the Stage', in *Performance Studies*, ed. by Erin Striff (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.110-23.

[16] Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier, 'Attempt at the Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities', in *Performance and the Contemporary City: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. by Nicolas Whybrow (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.179-90 (p.186).

performance and spectatorship suggesting dynamism, civility, and liberty in the performance

of the city's identity. Their description points to a nuanced understanding of the city's

theatricality which foregrounds self-awareness on the part of people in Venice and stresses

the role of the spectator in the theatrical contract. This approach will inform this chapter's

use of the term theatricality, thereby challenging simplistic interpretations of theatricality as

mere show and artifice.

Rhythmanalysis finds consonance with performativity, especially as, according to

Jen Harvie: 'performative analysis concentrates overwhelmingly on the ways people can and

do act with freedom to self-author, exercising agency, control and power through everyday

acts of self-articulation and self-creation'.[17] Performativity recognises the force of doings,

enactments, or performances either to normalise behaviour or to mark it as other. Judith

Butler's writing on performativity indicates that gender, race, identity, culture, politics, and

economics are all part of a performative process of citation. Butler sees gender as socially

constructed and formed of sedimented, repeated acts; she states:

> Performativity is thus not a singular 'act', for it is always a
> reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it
> acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates
> the conventions of which it is a repetition.[18]

Her theory underlines the process of repetition that inflects the performance of identity. For

Butler, 'there is no prediscursive identity, as even our understanding of biological sex is

discursively produced'.[19] Identity is therefore seen as a process of acts, engaging with earlier

performances, established discourses, and ideal figures. Crucially, Butler points to the notion

that individual acts are inflected by discourse, but that they can also challenge discourse, as

Harvie indicates in her aforementioned summation of performative analysis. Indeed, Harvie

maintains that theories of performativity within urban studies have been: 'deployed to

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[17] Jen Harvie, *Theatre & the City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.45.
[18] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.12.
[19] Kira Hall, 'Performativity', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 9, 1-2 (2000), 184-87 (p.186).

explore its utopian potentials for challenging hegemonic oppression'.[20] Imanuel Schipper,

after Lefebvre, also hints at the potential for people to challenge overarching discourses in

their engagement with the city: 'As urban space depends on people, it always has the

potential to be reshaped, transformed, and used differently'.[21] This is significant to this

thesis, as it encapsulates a key idea about the identity of Venice and its carnival, and about

the way that people engage therewith: essentially, the city and the carnival are sites of

subversion, wherein people, through creative engagement and interactions, can challenge the

status quo. The multiplicity of rhythms at play enable this interpretation, and are richly

suggestive of repetitions and replications, recalling Scarry's assertion that beauty begets

copies, at once linked to and different from the generative object. The polyrhythmic nature

of cities bears a simpatico connection to Schechner's view of performance as 'restored

behaviour' or 'twice-behaved behaviour', to Butler's influential analyses of the performance

of gender, to Schneider's view that performance remains, and to Roach's label of

surrogation: all these theorists emphasise citationality as key to individual performances.

Butler proposes that gender constructs can be challenged through repetition bolstering the

possibility for individual performances to be seen as empowering, therefore suggesting

performances within the Venice context can be seen as capable of challenging given

structures.

Carnival is a particularly fitting microcosm of the city because of its theatrical

nature: it is a time of the year when the city puts on a special show, with costumed

participants employing the handsome backdrop provided by the city's architecture and

watery scenes for their performances. The masked figures of the annual carnival, the

enigmatic *maschere*, are optimum examples of the symbiosis of performance and

spectatorship: they pose and promenade in fine costumes and masks, adopting a carnival

identity, and in turn reflecting the aesthetics of the city. However, they are not just actors

who produce the carnival, rather they continuously exchange the role of performer and

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[20] Harvie, *Theatre & the City*, p.48.

[21] Imanuel Schipper, 'City as Performance', *Drama Review*, 58, 3 (2014), 18-26 (p.22).

spectator, interacting with fellow carnival participants and engaging with the built

environment of the city and with earlier iterations of the event. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the

posing *maschera* is essential to the enactment of the carnival, channelling Venetian

aesthetics, but the figure's posing depends upon fellow participants, underlining the

relationship of codependency between the performer and spectator. By way of interaction

with photographing and admiring co-participants, the *maschera* in Figure 1 takes on the role

of spectator. The acts of carnival participants are effectively composed in reiteration,

citation, and reenactment, linking with Schneider's notions of performance: participants pick

up past performances of beauty and theatricality, of city and carnival, and enable new

iterations into the future. These replications belong to an unending line of iterability in the

city whose origin is not specific, rather each reenactment is in dialogue with the ongoing

cycle of carnival remains. The possibility for individual engagement with the city and the

event, along with the interrelationality between participants, position the carnival as

dependent on the performance and spectatorship of its participants, while underlining the

city's theatrical nature. Schneider's theorising enables an understanding of individual choice

and creative dynamism in replicated performances, as she asserts: 'repetition is,

paradoxically, both the vehicle for sameness and the vehicle for difference or change'.[22] The

carnival transformation of the *maschera* in Figure 1, adopting a beautiful masked identity

typical of the event, reveals a level of interaction with past iterations of carnival, while also

hiding the *maschera's* non-carnival persona beneath the costume and mask, illustrating a

level of challenge to the quotidian performance of self. The Venice carnival, at once a site of

beauty and theatricality, can thus be seen as resistant and subversive on an individual level,

and this reflects wider engagement with the macrocosm of the city itself.

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[22] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.10.

Lefebvre and the Rhythms of Venice

Views of Venice in terms of theatricality are commonplace: Henry James's narrator in his novella *The Aspern Papers* (1888) evocatively describes Venice thus:

> And somehow the splendid common domicile, familiar, domestic and resonant, also resembles a theatre, with actors clicking over bridges and, in straggling processions, tripping along fondamentas. As you sit in your gondola the footways that in certain parts edge the canals assume to the eye the importance of a stage, meeting it at the same angle, and the Venetian figures, moving to and fro against the battered scenery of their little houses of comedy, strike you as members of an endless dramatic troupe.[23]

James's description here is indicative of this 'theatrical' Venice, though in this example there is a strong demarcation between the performers and the pensive, wealthy, privileged spectator who is looking upon the scene as an outsider seated in his gondola. It seems that for British visitors to Venice on the Grand Tour, a theatrical idea of Venice influenced their engagement, as Sweet avers: 'When visitors to Venice recalled events or sought out landmarks, it was *Venice Preserved* or the *Merchant of Venice* […] to which they referred'.[24] Therefore a theatrical view of Venice, especially from Thomas Otway's play *Venice Preserved*, which was enormously popular from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, or from Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, inflected visitors' engagement. As with the Jamesian narrator, Sweet claims that for many eighteenth-century Grand Tourists, 'The city was a spectacle to be viewed, rather than a place to be discovered',[25] implying a level of spectatorship on the part of visitors which did not see them getting involved in the life of the city but looking on from a distance. However, this interpretation of spectatorship, which implies a passive bystander, contrasts with the view of Venice as a theatre-city held by Lefebvre and Régulier, who regard the street as a stage in which people are both spectator and spectacle.

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[23] Henry James, *The Aspern Papers and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1976), pp.103-04.
[24] Sweet, p.203.
[25] Ibid., p.211.

The theatrical identity of Venice inflected the resurfacing of the carnival in the late 1970s and the first officially revived carnival in 1980 took the theme *Carnevale del Teatro* (Carnival of Theatre), asserting the carnival's traditional associations with theatre and performance. Margaret Plant asserts of this theme: 'The theatre of the old Republic was reinvoked and the city, the Bacino in particular, celebrated as a site for spectacle: spectacle on the water, above all'.[26] The revival was thus closely linked to the city's history and to the carnivals of the past, which had been connected to theatre, as Eleanor Selfridge-Field also attests, with the *settimana grassa*, the week running up to Ash Wednesday comprising Shrovetide, being a particularly active period for entertainments.[27] Correnti similarly asserts that although the theatre season began in October and continued through to Lent, with a suspension during Advent, it was during carnival that the best things were seen in the theatre.[28] Maurizio Scaparro, who oversaw the revived carnival of 1980, explains that during the event, all the theatres of Venice were opened and, in addition, a floating Theatre of the World was installed, executed by Aldo Rossi, harking back to Renaissance floating theatres.[29] This floating theatre was 'assembled at Punta della Dogana in the dramatic space where the Grand Canal meets the Basin of St Mark'.[30] Rossi's theatre resonated with the temporary theatres of the world which were constructed in Venice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: 'Visible from waterfronts, bridges, palaces and passing boats, the movement of the theatre facilitated interaction between citizens and actors, life and fiction'.[31] These archaic constructions used symbols to represent the world, mythology, the stars, history, and the city itself.[32] The theatre of the world was a phenomenon which blurred the role of the performer and spectator, and thus is pertinently symbolic of the interactions at play in Venice at carnival, and reflecting general engagement with the city. The mayor of

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[26] Margaret Plant, *Venice: Fragile City, 1797-1997* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), p.395.

[27] Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season: Science, Culture, and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp.132-43.

[28] Pino Correnti, *Il Carnevale di Venezia* (Milan: Edizioni ECOTUR, 1968), p.41.

[29] Maurizio Scaparro, in *Carnevale del Teatro* by Alberto Moravia and others (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1980), p.27. See also Plant, pp.395-97.

[30] Virginio Favale (photography) and Paolo Alei (text), *Venice Carnival* (London: Artmedia Press, 2003), p.104.

[31] Ibid., p.57.

[32] Ibid., p.60.

Venice at the time of the revival, Mario Rigo, has written of the 1980 carnival: 'It was a triumph. The entire city of Venice become one great, extraordinary theatre. Everyone was a star'.[33]

Pertinently, Lefebvre has written of the city in terms of theatre, stating that in Venice: 'everyday life and its functions are coextensive with, and utterly transformed by, a theatricality as sophisticated as it is unsought, a sort of involuntary *mise-en-scène*'.[34] The handsome *mise-en-scène* of the city means that even going to the supermarket, the hospital, or the bank, for instance, are beautified moments. Mundane, quotidian acts become beautiful because of the built environment of *La Serenissima* as the scenography of the city lends a theatricality to the minor and insignificant enactments of city life. James reflects on this in his essay *The Grand Canal* (1892), wherein he suggests a grand old Venetian *palazzo* can make any life graceful; 'As you live in it day after day its beauty and its interest sink more deeply into your spirit'.[35] In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre uses Venice to illustrate his theory that space is socially and historically constructed, and he asserts that both the conceived and the lived spaces of Venice 'are mutually reinforcing', so the Venice of design and the Venice of individual engagement are codependent.[36] Initially he suggests Venice can be seen as a work of art, apparently agreeing with UNESCO's criterion, but then he asserts that, in general, a city 'has none of the intentional character of an "art object"', and that Venice as it exists was not planned in advance.[37] The endogenous nature of the city's development means it is missing the intentionality of art objects. Venice provides Lefebvre with an example to illustrate his understanding of urban spaces as inflected by production and capitalist gain: even as the city began to establish itself in the lagoon, he asserts, it was part of a commercial system of exchange. From the city's very beginnings, every site had to

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[33] Mario Rigo, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna: 30 anni di Carnevale a Venezia 1980-2010/ Carnival in the Modern Age: 30 Years of Carnival in Venice 1980-2010*, ed. by Alessandro Bressanello, trans. by Olga Barmine (Venice: Studio LT2, 2010), p.261.

[34] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.74.

[35] Henry James, *Italian Hours* (Grove Press: New York, 1959), p.39.

[36] Lefebvre, p.74.

[37] Ibid.

be planned and realised by people making decisions and constructing the city. He asserts:

> Closely behind practical responses to the challenge of the sea (the port, navigable channels) came public gatherings, festivals, grandiose ceremonies (such as the marriage of the Doge to the sea) and architectural inventiveness. Here we can see the relationship between a place built by collective will and collective thought on the one hand, and the productive forces of the period on the other. For this is a place that has been *laboured on*. […] Behind Venice the work, then, there assuredly lay production.[38]

Here Lefebvre links every aspect of Venice, whether a building, a canal, or a cultural event or civic ritual to the forces of production, ensuring that certain strata of society gained capital, and maintained their position, while employing the labour of other strata of society in order to do so. This suggests that Venice's beauty is not a natural coincidence but a quality that was aimed towards by planners and the authorities as they pursued an ideal vision of the city. The beautiful buildings in Piazza San Marco and the Piazzetta assisted in reifying church and state, thereby maintaining the established social strata which ensured certain citizens gained capital and status, while others laboured. Lefebvre's philosophical project is influenced by Marxist principles as he proposes a level of resistance to the overarching forces of capitalism and production. His work positions carnival as part of this complex interrelation of collective will and the forces of production: the event can be seen both as something born of the society, but also inflected by production, meaning carnival cannot solely and optimistically be viewed as an event born of the people. Rather, it is tied up with the motivations of production and capital, and it is a mechanism that has been and continues to be employed as an arm of Venice's cultural output. The event's revival in 1980 and its enormous success since then have also been inflected by commerce, and most especially by the tourism industry. This reiterates that the carnival cannot be seen as an organic expression of the people's will, neither during the carnival's heyday nor in the different iterations of its revival.

  Nevertheless, Lefebvre and Régulier emphasise the extra-everyday quality of

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[38] Ibid., p.76.

carnival, seen as a rite, like a religious or political rite, which punctuates everyday time: 'each ritualization creates its own time and particular rhythm, that of gestures, solemn words, acts prescribed in a certain sequence'.[39] The Venice carnival belongs to this conception of rites as it 'enters into the everyday in order to impress upon it an extra-everyday rhythm without interrupting it in so doing'.[40] For them, everyday rhythms relate to movements of the self, like eating and sleeping, while extra-everyday rhythms suggest movements of the other, like dancing and singing, echoing the oft-applied division between performance and theatre. The event is part of the everyday and impacts upon the everyday life of the city. The carnival as an extra-everyday rhythm is entangled with the everyday rhythm of the city, and its expression is overtly public in its nature. According to Lefebvre and Régulier, in Venice, as well as in other Mediterranean towns, 'Rites, codes and relations make themselves visible here: they act themselves out here'.[41] The act of dressing up and promenading in fine costumes is extra-everyday in its nature, thereby providing a level of challenge to everyday rhythms. This can be illustrated by Figure 2, which depicts two handsomely costumed *maschere* promenading past the Ducal Palace in the Piazzetta, adjacent to Piazza San Marco. This photograph was taken shortly after the *volo dell'angelo*, the traditional flight of the angel which officially began the 2010 carnival, hence the large crowds of people. In the background the exquisite marble exterior of St Mark's Basilica can be seen, with the arches and colonnaded balcony of the Ducal Palace alongside. The carnival experience of these *maschere* is evidently extra-everyday as they have transformed their identity for the event: their costumes are redolent of seventeenth and eighteenth-century fashions. The woman's tall wig, handheld mask, purse, and delicate lace *domino* mask and gloves complete her outfit while the man's props comprise his feathered tricorn hat, his stem rose and cane. The opulence on display and finery of their costumes position these *maschere* as theatrical, performing beings: there is a strong sense that they are presenting themselves as other for the duration of a temporary 'show', for their own pleasure and for the pleasure of others. Their

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[39] Lefebvre and Régulier, p.185.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p.186.

Figure 2 *Maschere* **promenade past the Ducal Palace, 7 February 2010**

enactment of carnival resonates with the extra-everyday, even as it sits within the everyday life of the city. The extra-everyday nature of the experience is intensified because of the way that the *maschere* demand attention, people stop and look at them and, as evidenced by Figure 2, they photograph them. The fact of being photographed by fellow carnival participants is part of the extraordinary experience of the carnival.

In the background of Figure 2, many people are milling around but hardly any are dressed in keeping with the carnival, which is indicative of the contemporary carnival as it shows that many people come to the city to experience the event without themselves dressing up. This phenomenon is particularly evident at the modern day carnival, in contrast to the bygone carnivals of old, at which it seems the whole city was masked: in 1688 Francis Misson observed 'The whole City is disguis'd'; James Drummond asserts 'everybody is in a mask'; while Patrick Barbier observes that even babes in arms wore masks during the carnival's golden age of the eighteenth century.[42] Nowadays, as so many people are able to visit Venice as day-tripping tourists, many carnival participants wear their everyday clothes, partly a sign of the carnival being seen as a spectacle to be viewed by such visitors. In Figure 2, a division arises between the *maschere* and the others, akin to the conventional division in the theatre between actors and audience. This division also marks masked participants out for their beautiful appearance contrasting with the mundanity of the workaday clothes of the non-costumed people around them, who inevitably retain a sense of the everyday in spite of their presence at the carnival and the beautiful surroundings of the built environment. However, Figure 2 does not only illustrate the performance of the *maschere*, but it also evinces their status as spectators: they engage with their fellow carnival participants, stop, and look at the people photographing them. Further, through their engagement with the built environment and the way in which they interact with Venice's buildings and layout, they are positioned as spectators to the city's performance. As Lefebvre and Régulier have stated, Venice is a theatre-city in which actors and audience are the same, and the *maschere* in this

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[42] Francis Misson, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.396; James Drummond, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.399; Patrick Barbier, 'Les grandes heures du carnaval de Venise', *Historia*, 674 (Feb 2003), 24-29 (p.26).

image reflect this duality as they are performing but are also looking at and interacting with their photographers and co-participants. Furthermore, the *maschere* are flanked on the right by a smiling carnival participant, dressed in her normal clothes, who wishes to be photographed with them. This detail is striking for the way in which it positions this non-costumed participant as a performer herself: indeed, she is on a par with the *maschere* as they form a posing trio, even as the masked pair undoubtedly appear as strikingly beautiful because of their carnival transformation. Any sense of division between performers and spectators is challenged by the sharedness of the space: the *maschere* are not part of an organised parade, nor are they set apart, instead they are promenading with and beside their fellow carnival participants. These interactions are indicative of the extra-everyday rhythms of carnival and the image speaks to an understanding of the interrelationality between the participants, as the experience of the event is shared by people in the city, whether masked or unmasked. Schechner states of carnival that it proposes: 'a free space to satisfy desires, […] a new time to enact social relations more freely'.[43] Figure 2 illustrates this view, intimating something of the impromptu interactions, friendly engagements, and collective atmosphere of the carnival. This relationality recalls Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of the relationality and sociability of art, as people interact with each other through their engagements therewith. This idea is taken up by Nicolas Whybrow as he states: 'the encounter with both art and the city is one that is embodied and relational', a pertinent perspective for Venice, which is considered to be an artwork, as UNESCO implies, increasing the relationality at play.[44] Venice is both city and artwork, making this assertion doubly germane as it indicates the necessity for interactions between people through the enactment of the city. Whybrow adds that the experience of art and the city 'is dependent on participating entities who engage or interact with art, with the environing field of the city and with one another, and who are, therefore, as much *producers* as consumers or recipients'.[45] Elsewhere Whybrow has written of a particular art-architecture 'complex' in Venice, employing the term of critic Hal Foster,

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[43] Schechner, 'The Street is the Stage', p.111.
[44] Nicolas Whybrow, *Art and the City* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p.8.
[45] Ibid., p.15.

to illustrate the 'framing and positioning of spectator-participants and/or users of public space as key actors', thus affirming the theatrical nature of the city.[46] In terms of Venice, this art-architecture complex incorporates the beautiful identity of the city, which is tied up with religion, economics, state power, and social stratification.[47] These sentiments accord with Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, showing that diverse forces act upon the creation of public urban space, but also indicating that the city is enacted by people therewithin.

Theatricality and Antitheatricality

While Lefebvre and Régulier's conceptualisation of theatricality is nuanced because of its incorporation of the self-aware spectator, theatricality *per se* is often loaded with negativity, and this is evident in the application of theatricality, or more appropriately antitheatricality, to Venice. For instance, the French writer Régis Debray uses a theatre metaphor throughout his book *Against Venice*, in which he is as antitheatrical as he is anti-Venice. Debray repeatedly conflates Venice with the theatre in order to underline the 'showiness' of the city. Admitting his own antitheatrical bias, Debray states: 'Venice plays at being a town and we play at discovering it. Like urchins, like actors. With time for a time suspended, we abandon the seriousness of real life for the as-if of a charade of life'.[48] This notion that as visitors arrive in the city they throw themselves into this 'dancing unreality' is an interesting standpoint, as it asserts that the city is performing a show which people willingly, collectively participate in, absorbing the performance while simultaneously contributing to it. He elaborates:

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[46] Nicolas Whybrow, '"The City of the Eye": Urban Aesthetics and Surveillance in the City of Venice', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 31, 2 (2015), 164-78 (p.164).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Régis Debray, *Against Venice*, trans. by John Howe (London: Pushkin, 2002), p.17.

> This city with its theatres, its opera house, its masked balls, is a
> theatre itself. […] the week of Carnival is not parenthetical but
> allegorical in the universe of masquerades […]. Venice is not so
> much a town as a representation of a town.[49]

Here Debray's antitheatricality is exhibited, as he makes a distinction between the 'real'

town and the 'show' town, but his suggestion that Venice is merely a representation jars with

post-Schechner understandings of performance which view repetition as core to all identity

and enactment. Debray's understanding of Venice's theatricality bemoans its repetitive

nature, contrasting with Lefebvre and Régulier, who view repetition as core to the rhythms

of cities and therefore fundamental to Venice. Importantly, representation means different

things here: Debray sees representation as indicative of shallowness and superficiality, and

this concurs with widely held views of theatricality, as Jonas Barish has outlined in his study

The Antitheatrical Prejudice. Barish shows that an antitheatrical approach, sympathetic to

Plato's idea of theatre, posits theatrical representation as artificial in contrast to the reality of

nature.[50] In discussing this Platonic tack which was echoed by Saint Augustine, Rousseau,

and Nietzsche, Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis state: 'while the theatre reveals an

excessive quality that is showy, deceptive, exaggerated, artificial, or affected, it

simultaneously conceals or masks an inner emptiness, a deficiency or absence of that to

which it refers'.[51] Where this interpretation of theatricality has been applied to Venice, it is

invariably indicative of a dislike of the city on the part of the commentator lamenting

Venice's 'artificiality'.[52] Mary McCarthy mentions a number of writers who belong to an

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[49] Ibid., p.18.

[50] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (London: University of California Press, 1981).

[51] Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis, 'Theatricality: an introduction', in *Theatricality*, ed. by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.1-39 (p.5).

[52] Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner state that one interpretation of antitheatricality cannot be isolated, as it invariably depends upon the understanding of theatre which is the reference point, thus there are a 'multiplicity of anti-theatricalisms'. To illustrate this within the theatre itself, naturalism was a reaction to melodrama, then symbolism was a reaction to naturalism, so there are a number of gradations to understandings of antitheatricality. See Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner, 'Introduction: Modernism and Anti-theatricality', in *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage*, ed. by Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.1-17 (p.12).

anti-Venice cohort, among them Edward Gibbon, Herbert Spencer, Stendhal, and D. H. Lawrence, to which group Debray can surely be admitted. McCarthy comments on John Ruskin's engagement with Venice, which saw him unveiling the false front of Venetian architecture, and seeing Venice as: 'This grossly advertised wonder, this gold idol with clay feet, this *trompe-l'oeil*, this painted deception, this cliché'.[53] Ruskin found the city had a public face, represented for instance by a statue ornately carved only on the side facing the public, 'the other side, the side turned away from the public, being a vacancy, a featureless slab',[54] suggesting Ruskin's dislike for Venice was partly inflected by the qualities of theatre which Postlewait and Davis delineate: deceptive, artificial, empty. This particular example also relates to views of Venice as the first postmodern city, seeking to attract tourists: as was delineated in the thesis introduction, Venice has been likened to a theme park, underlining notions of the city in terms of presentation and façade.

In terms of the negative employment of the term theatricality, the art critic Michael Fried's influence is palpable; Fried's application of the term to literalist and minimalist art in his 1967 essay 'Art and Objecthood' is defined by the spectator's becoming aware of their own body in the relationship with the art, effectively implying the art depends upon the spectator to be fulfilled. Grant Kester explains Fried's position: 'Once the work interacts with the viewer through a shared language, familiar visual conventions, or even an implicit acknowledgment of the viewer's physical presence in the same space, it sets off down the slippery slope of violence and negation'.[55] Such works, for Fried, are in the realm of theatricality as opposed to authentic works which are independent and absorbing, and which eschew dialogue with other art forms or with the viewer of the art.[56] What Fried termed theatricality, though, was actually postmodernism, something which Fried himself recognised in the early 1980s, as Philip Auslander delineates.[57] Essentially, Fried critiqued

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[53] Mary McCarthy, *Venice Observed* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1963), p.3.
[54] Ibid., p.4.
[55] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (London: University of California Press, 2004) p.49.
[56] Ibid., p.48.
[57] Philip Auslander, *From Acting to Performance: Essays in modernism and postmodernism* (London:

art that depends on the spectator for completion, and which emphasises duration as important; according to him the modernist artwork transcends temporality, while a limited timeframe is crucial to the theatrical artwork, just as a piece of theatre has a timeframe.[58] The *maschere* at the carnival, like Fried's theatrical artwork, depend upon their fellow carnival-goers to be fulfilled: there is an inherent interdependency in their relations. Furthermore, an emphasis on duration is fundamental to any understanding of carnival, as it exists for a limited time. Therefore, his perspectives on what defines theatricality can be useful when broadened in scope. Fried lamented the way in which the theatrical artwork disrupts one's encounter with the piece by making one aware of one's own body as part of the encounter, implying that the theatrical exchange is an encounter not only with an other, but also with the self. This encounter is extrapolated by Nicholas Ridout who avers:

> The objects [of the spectator's gaze] turn themselves into you, and you into them, and instead of a plenitude in oneness experienced in the moment of absorption, comes a constant to and fro, an unbecoming becoming, in which the action takes place in a kind of in-between, neither onstage nor off, accompanied by the rattle and clatter of unseemly machinery in the wings.[59]

Indeed, through examining stage fright, animals on stage, corpsing, and other problems which occur in the theatre in his study, Ridout extrapolates this in-between nature, the emphasis on co-presence and the pleasure taken in the revelation of theatre's undoings. This blurring between self and other makes the theatre spectator both self-aware and conscious of the theatre production. The concept of the in-between applies to the Venice carnival as the event occurs city-wide, not in an enclosed theatre space, and so the workings of city life suggest the copresence of offstage with onstage: the nature of the event on the streets means there is a 'constant to and fro, an unbecoming becoming'. Figure 3 illustrates this in-between nature of carnival, as the image captures *maschere* in the everyday act of eating a

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Routledge, 1997), p.52.

[58] Ibid., pp.50-52.

[59] Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.9.

Figure 3 *Maschere* pause for a sandwich, 8 February 2010

sandwich: the *maschere* herein do not appear to be graceful or elegant, as they are sprawled

on the steps of a public bridge in their finery, satiating their hunger with a quick snack,

before returning to their promenade. Not only does it seem paradoxical that *maschere* who

are costumed opulently should sit on the floor in a public place to have their lunch, but the

image also reveals the ambivalent nature of the *maschere* as the person and the mask blur.

Significantly, the interplay of self and other in the theatrical exchange is concordant

with Lefebvre and Régulier's rhythmanalysis, and particularly their view of the interflow of

the everyday and the extra-everyday. As the authors state, 'The Self and the Other are not cut

off from one another', adding that everyday and extra-everyday rhythms cannot be

separated.[60] This assertion muddies the distinction between performance and theatre, blurring

lines that are already notoriously difficult to draw. Oftentimes, as Ridout delineates,

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[60] Lefebvre and Régulier, p.186.

performance is seen as redemptive and having the power to critique, particularly because of

its immediacy, hence the burgeoning of performance as a critical art form during the

twentieth century and into this century. This interpretation usually posits performance in

contrast to an understanding of theatre as bourgeois and formulaic, indeed Ridout cites

Barish's use of the term 'ontological queasiness' in relation to the theatre, encapsulating the

ambivalent, often negative interpretations of theatre. An aspect of this queasiness is the

perceived bourgeois mantle of the theatre, a view articulated by Lefebvre, who regards the

theatre as effectively 'annexed and institutionalised by a privileged, complacent constituency

of society when it ought to be both situated and sought (or encountered) on the street'.[61]

However, Ridout seeks to show in his study that theatre does have the possibility for

resistance or challenge to capitalist and bourgeois structures.[62] Fundamental to this notion of

resistance and challenge is an understanding of theatricality which foregrounds the co-

presence of the performer and spectator, which accords with Lefebvre and Régulier's

emphasis on the possibility for subversion, freedom of expression, individuality, and

challenge to the *status quo* through the interplay of diverse rhythms. This implies that rather

than falling into conventional, bourgeois structures, the theatre spectator can actually

challenge overarching discourses of economy, politics, society, and culture. By extension, as

Venice is seen in terms of theatricality, people who enact and engage with the city can

similarly be seen as self-aware figures who are alert to the city's performance, not just

bourgeois pleasure-seekers following conventional paths.

This theatricality which foregrounds the spectator chimes with the theatre scholar

Tracy C. Davis's definition of the term: 'A spectator's *dédoublement* resulting from a

sympathetic breach (active dissociation, alienation, self-reflexivity) effecting a critical stance

toward an episode in the public sphere, including but not limited to the theatre'.[63] Davis

adds: 'spectators are aware of their own *dédoublement* – their own acting – allowing a

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[61] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Introduction', in *Performance and the Contemporary City*, ed. by Whybrow, pp.1-13 (p.6).
[62] Ridout, p.4.
[63] Tracy C. Davis, 'Theatricality and Civic Society', in *Theatricality*, ed. by Davis and Postlewait, pp.127-55 (p.145).

reaction to a spectacle that may not be commensurate with their own sense of themselves'.[64] An understanding of theatricality as a 'sympathetic breach' is applicable to Venice and its carnival as in engaging with the city, visitors and citizens are made aware of their own part in the making of the city because of the way they are positioned in relation to the city's layout and architecture. Brodsky comments on this: 'Venice is the sort of city where both the stranger and the native know in advance that one will be on display'.[65] Carnival participants are particularly aware of their own acting because of the dominance of photography at the event, as participants capture images of the posing *maschere*. One German woman I interviewed at the carnival reflected on this sensation of being photographed, stating: 'We are proud that all the people want to take pictures of us'.[66] A Venetian *maschera* I interviewed in Piazza San Marco was dressed as a musketeer, and he told me that he felt good when he was dressed up for the carnival: 'You feel a bit different, fascinating in a way, with people stopping you, taking photos of you. These things don't happen every day so they make you feel even more in character'.[67] These comments by carnival participants, along with Brodsky's claim, are indicative of self-awareness of one's performance in the city, a veritable *dédoublement*. *Dédoublement* is entirely congruent with the theatricality of Ridout and of Lefebvre and Régulier: a theatricality, indeed, which signifies critique and challenge, not merely passive acceptance of the *status quo*. Fundamentally, this view of theatricality emphasises the role of the spectator, a viewpoint propounded by Josette Féral, as Janelle Reinelt explains: 'theatricality requires both the gaze of the spectator and the act of the other, but the initiative lies with the spectator'.[68] Willmar Sauter similarly emphasises the interplay between the performer and spectator as essential to the establishment of theatricality.[69] In Venice, self-awareness on the part of the spectator is intensified by the preconceptions or

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[64] Ibid., p.148.
[65] Brodsky, p.25.
[66] Interview with German couple, 6 February 2010.
[67] Interview with Venetian *maschera* dressed as a musketeer, 7 February 2010.
[68] Janelle Reinelt, 'The Politics of Discourse: Performativity Meets Theatricality', *SubStance*, 31, 2/3 (2002), 201-15 (p.207).
[69] Willmar Sauter, *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000), p.57.

knowledge people have of the city which invariably inflect their engagement; for visitors this usually means seeing specific landmarks or having certain experiences, often ritualised with a photograph to prove they have been there and done that. Further, the theatricality of the city and the carnival can make people do things that are out of their normal character, or they may stray from socially accepted norms, and this further emboldens the idea of carnival as a site of subversion as the theatricality at play provides a sense of liberation from the strictures of society. The huge numbers of tourists in the city mean that visitors frequently see themselves in relation to the tourist horde, effecting a further level of self-reflexivity. The grand, imposing sights of the city, for example in Piazza San Marco, mean there is an awareness of one's own spectatorship as the city's theatricality becomes plainly evident, effecting a sympathetic breach. This is accentuated at the carnival at which the participants interact with each other, presenting themselves as other, looking, being looked-at, posing and photographing.

The Piazzetta: Site of Theatricality

As Figure 1 illustrates, during the modern-day carnival, it is customary for the *maschere* to position themselves along the edge of the Piazzetta, the little square adjacent to the main Piazza San Marco which looks out on the waters of the *bacino*. Here they can take advantage of the watery, picturesque backdrop in order to be appreciated and, inevitably, photographed by fellow carnival participants. The *maschere* also tend to promenade and pose about the Piazzetta or in the main Piazza, the centripetal heart of the city. A short film entitled *Incognitus?*, made in 2010 by students at the University of Bedfordshire, depicts the phenomenon of the *maschere* posing for photographs in the Piazzetta, underlining the division between the costumed *maschere* as statuesque performers and the more mobile,

uncostumed, photographing crowd.[70] The film is indicative of the blurring between the lines of performer and spectator as the interactions that take place in the Piazzetta position the posing *maschere* sometimes as the accomplished performers, with the costume and mask to complete the effect, but at other points, the non-costumed carnival participants are much more active in the way they use the space and the social way they interact with their fellow carnival participants. This blurring further fuels understandings of Venice as a theatre-city with people positioned as performers and spectators. The positioning of Figure 1 in the Piazzetta is important as it is symbolic of the location's history of carnival and other civic rituals, reflecting the small square's iconicity. The Piazzetta is a rich archaeological site of performance, with palimpsests of multiple carnivals contained therein. Figure 4, Canaletto's *Giovedí grasso in the Piazzetta*, from *circa* 1741-60, depicts the same location as seen in Figure 1, and it is a typical example of his style: a large open space, imposing, handsome edifices, soft, gentle colouring, and a golden haze of sunlight washing the canvas. *Vedute* of this kind represented an ideal of Venice which people could appreciate and dream of, and

Figure 4 *Giovedí grasso in the Piazzetta*, by Canaletto, *c*. 1741-60, oil on canvas, held by the Wallace Collection, London

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[70] *Incognitus?*, dir. by Liliana Grzybowska, Kamil Chryscionka and Sarab Hadi (2010).

this ideal was a considerable attraction for tourists who wished to see the city for themselves. As Katherine Baetjer suggests: 'Canaletto's Venice was a city that was widely advertised: a gay, lively, and welcoming metropolitan environment in which the visitor could envision pleasurably inserting himself'.[71] As the *vedute* were on such a large scale, people could see themselves fitting into the image and experiencing Venice, becoming veritable performer-spectators. The artwork invites the viewer to effectively step into the painting and join the crowds. The canvas depicts events on the last Thursday of the carnival, *giovedí grasso*, traditionally the key day of the Venice carnival, when events were organised in the Piazzetta. In the centre a temporary stage has been constructed with an ornate tower atop; this stage was used for an impressive firework display.[72] With the doge presiding from the balcony of the Ducal Palace, the entertainments on *giovedí grasso* included competitions between acrobats forming human pyramids, the so called *Forze d'Ercole* (Labours of Hercules), visible in this image. There was also tightrope walking, evidenced in the painting by the high wires leading from the Campanile to the Ducal Palace. The *moresca*, a military dance with daggers or wooden sticks by the workers at the arsenal, was also a popular event of the day. In earlier iterations of the carnival, dating from the twelfth century in particular, the Piazzetta also witnessed bull chases and the ritualistic slaughtering of twelve pigs in a commemoration of one of Venice's military triumphs.[73]

Eugene Johnson has written about the Piazzetta as a perspectival stage set, whether viewed from the water's edge or from the main Piazza, emphasising that as well as appearing as a stage set with a proscenium formed by the two ancient pillars, the Piazzetta was a place to accommodate an audience.[74] His article is particularly relevant here because of the

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[71] Katharine Baetjer , '"Canaletti Painting": On Turner, Canaletto, and Venice', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 42 (2007), 163-72 (p.171).

[72] James Drummond writes in the late seventeenth century 'a firework is sett on fire in fair daylight [*sic*]', in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.399. Edward Muir also lists fireworks as part of the *giovedí grasso* entertainments, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.156.

[73] Lina Padoan Urban, *Il Carnevale veneziano nello maschere incise da Francesco Bertelli* (Milan: Edizioni Polifilo, 1986), pp.11-12; Stefania Bertelli, *Il Carnevale di Venezia nel Settecento* (Rome: Jouvence, 1992), pp.11-16; James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (London: University of California Press, 2011), pp.35-40.

[74] Eugene J. Johnson, 'Jacopo Sansovino, Giacomo Torelli, and the Theatricality of the Piazzetta in

emphasis he lays on theatricality, especially as he considers the interdependence of

performance and spectatorship in terms of Venice's architecture. The presence of the

audience is a striking feature of Canaletto's painting, as the mass of people squeezed into the

Piazzetta, filling the grandstands, and peering from every window and balcony evidences.

Indeed, the Piazzetta could even have a theatre-in-the-round configuration as spectators

could watch the events from vessels in the waters of the *bacino*. As Johnson shows, the

architecture of the Piazzetta and main Piazza had the role of spectators in mind from as early

as the twelfth century, and this is plentifully represented in Venetian art, as faces are seen

watching and being watched. The Ducal Palace, St Mark's Basilica, and the Library shown

in Canaletto's painting are beautifully constructed and aesthetically pleasing, thereby

conveying the idea of the serene and tranquil republic to Venetians and to visitors. The

architect Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) designed both the Loggetta and the Library, seen on

the right of Figure 4, and, as Johnson avers, the public performances which took place in the

Piazzetta, including the daily hawking of mountebanks, influenced his design: the balconies

of the Library building were effectively theatre boxes which: 'provided elevated, separated

spaces for patricians to watch performances and in turn to be watched', thus ensuring the

spectators were a part of the spectacle.[75] The crowds gathered in the Piazzetta in Figure 4 are

wearing masks and capes customary of carnival time, and in the foreground Canaletto

references the *commedia dell'arte* traditions of Venice as two costumed performers,

Arlecchino and Pulcinella, unobtrusively converse. Canaletto's painting therefore reveals the

nuances of Venice's theatricality: histrionic and spectacular, but also dependent upon the

participation of self-aware spectators. The Piazzetta had special significance as a place of

theatre not only because of these entertaining and spectacular carnival events, but as it was

also where justice was performed, with executions taking place between the two stone pillars

of St Mark and St Theodore. John Evelyn relates the vision of 'a wretch executed who had

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Venice', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59, 4 (2000), 436-53 (p.436).
[75] Ibid., p.447.

murther'd his master', by guillotine between the pillars in the mid-seventeenth century.[76]

Theatre historian David Wiles states: 'the dead or tormented bodies of criminals exposed in

the Piazza were a constant sign of [state] power'.[77] Barker and Burford relate that the two

pillars are of Egyptian granite and were brought from Greece about 1206, with a third which

fell into the waters of the *bacino* and which became buried in mud.[78] Symbolising strength

and power in Egypt, Greece, and then Venice, these pillars are symbolic parts of the

Piazzetta's stage furniture, and remind people of the might of the state, containing the traces

of the city's history and the history of ancient civilisations. Explicit performances of state

power, justice, and authority, ramified by the surrounding stately architecture, made the

Piazzetta a theatre for Venetians throughout the year.

Though Canaletto's painting in Figure 4 appears quite removed from the images of

modern day carnival in Figures 1 and 2, not least because of the more than 250 years

between them, the three images are connected by their performances of beauty taking place

in the same setting of the Piazzetta. All three images present understandings of the beauty of

the carnival and the city, as the people depicted present themselves surrounded by the

picturesque built environment. Canaletto's image is significant for its depiction of the mass

of carnival participants in the Piazzetta, also visible in the background of Figure 2, and who

are crucial to the event. Figure 2 was taken just after the *volo dell'angelo*, a popular feature

of the modern-day carnival, while in Figure 4, the tightropes are in place for the traditional

breath-taking display. The annual event at the modern day carnival replicates the bygone

volo del turco which saw a Turk walking a tightrope from the height of the Campanile into a

boat in the *bacino*, an event which became a staple of the *giovedí grasso* festivities. A 1550

print depicting the *volo del turco* is discussed in Johnson's article along with a 1610

engraving of the Piazzetta on *giovedí grasso* by Giacomo Franco; both depictions share

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[76] John Evelyn, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.156.
[77] David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.121.
[78] Henry Aston Barker and John Burford, *Description of the View of Venice; taken, and painted by Messrs. Barker and Burford, from the Piazza di S. Marco: with a representation of the Carnival* (London: J. and C. Adlard, 1819), p.7.

elements of Canaletto's painting, and in turn speak to much more recent images of carnival

in the Piazzetta. A line through history can therefore be seen to connect the different

iterations of carnival, whether in the acts which take place in the city, or in the depictions

thereof. The different images effectively touch each other, making diverse timeframes speak

to each other and even to cross. These images repeat, replicate, and reiterate each other, and

this underlines their identity as performances, while also linking to the notion of rhythms, as

Lefebvre and Régulier state:

> Every more or less animate body and *a fortiori* every gathering of
> bodies is consequently polyrhythmic, which is to say composed of
> diverse rhythms, with each part, each organ or function having its
> own in a perpetual interaction [...] rhythms imply repetitions and
> can be defined as movements and differences within repetition.[79]

The replicative quality of Venice's rhythms has been identified by diverse writers,

corroborating the rhythmanalytical approach. For instance, the Czech writer Petr Král states:

'To wander here is to keep retracing our steps', and 'Every gondola that appears from under

a bridge […] is merely imitating the motion of the one that came before'.[80] For Brodsky, it is

the omnipresence of water in Venice that contributes to its sense of repetition, with its

reflective mirror-quality, evoking the ebb and flow of time:

> It is the same water that carried the Crusaders, the merchants, St.
> Mark's relics, Turks, every kind of cargo, military, or pleasure
> vessel; above all, it reflected everybody who ever lived, not to
> mention stayed, in this city, everybody who ever strolled or waded
> its streets in the way you do now.[81]

Brodsky also pays tribute to his formative perceptions of the city: he describes receiving a

book when he was 26 which was set in the city and which was evocative of his own

birthplace St Petersburg; this was followed by encountering an image of Piazza San Marco

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[79] Lefebvre and Régulier, p.181.
[80] Petr Král, *Loving Venice*, trans. by Christopher Moncrieff (London: Pushkin, 2011), p.9 and pp.19-20.
[81] Brodsky, pp.96-97.

on a crumpled issue of *Life* magazine, and another trail of Venice-linked objects and experiences entered his life, including seeing the film *Death in Venice* and meeting a Venetian woman who he seems to have fallen in love with, to the point that he determined to go to the city should he ever escape the Russian empire.[82] Similarly, Paul Morand opens his autobiography saying: 'I have known St Mark's all my life thanks to a watercolour that used to hang in my bedroom as a child', and he also inherited a painting of his father's which depicts the church of Santa Maria della Salute.[83] Viewed as performances, these examples given by the writers can be seen to have left remains which reappear in their own engagement with the city and which are integral to their preconceptions. In turn, these writers invoke Lefebvre and Régulier's repeated rhythms, and the wider frame of replication which inflects broad understandings of theatre, performance, and performativity.

Johnson's discussion of the Piazzetta acknowledges the role that architecture plays in providing a sense of theatricality. This is evidenced in part in Figure 4 by the Piazzetta's buildings, which effectively form a proscenium for the viewer of the image, while also acting as viewing platforms for the myriad spectators. Prior to the construction of the railway bridge and road connecting the *terrafirma* to the fish-shaped group of islands which make up the historical centre of Venice, arriving on water was the only option, therefore the effect the city's appearance had on those arriving was carefully considered. The Venice architecture expert Deborah Howard has drawn out the theatrical nature of the city's architecture, and discusses the improvement works which enhanced the appearance of the Grand Canal:

> The banks were straightened and reinforced, and palaces were
> extended forwards to create a continuous urban frontage. The bends
> in the Canal displayed an ever-unfolding spectacle to the visitor,
> offering a backdrop of richly adorned, delicately traceried facades,
> rather than a recession into depth.[84]

Howard's discussion of how Renaissance architecture contributed to the civic rituals of

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[82] Ibid., p.40.
[83] Paul Morand, *Venices*, trans. by Euan Cameron (London: Pushkin, 2002), p.9.
[84] Deborah Howard, 'Ritual Space in Renaissance Venice', *SCROOPE*, 5 (1993/4) 4-11 (p.9).

Venice refers to the use of perspective, lighting, props and iconography, all aspects related to the theatre. She points to the fact that Francesco Sansovino, famed for his sixteenth-century opus describing Venice, and Sebastiano Serlio, the esteemed writer of a treatise on architecture, both used theatrical terminology. In addition, Wiles has shown that just as the Grand Canal received attention in the Renaissance, so too did the main square of the city, improved during the sixteenth century to reflect the glory and beauty of the state; he alludes to the 'complex of performances supported by the architecture which made the Piazza a magnet'.[85] The architecture performed power, wealth, history, grandeur, and a self-assuredness on the part of the republic: these performances reflect Lefebvre's concept of the production of space. A building such as the Ducal Palace instilled a sense of awe of the state in Venice's citizens and visitors, likewise St Mark's Basilica and the city's numerous churches sustained the dominant role of the church. These buildings with such public faces in the civic life thus inflected the uses of the urban space, while also influencing behaviours and interactions in general.

The buildings of Venice can therefore be seen as crucial to its beautiful and theatrical identity as Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska show:

> They rivalled and exceeded those of other major cities in terms of scale and grandeur and had to be constructed in ways which took into account the insubstantial land on which they were built. The façades can be likened to masquerades, concealing the fragility of the foundations, contributing to the perception of Venice as a theatrical set.[86]

The parallel drawn between masquerades and buildings here points to the carnival, at which masking is *de rigueur*. McCarthy evokes this sense that the buildings of Venice wear a frontal mask: 'Many European travellers are shocked by the Venetian indifference to how their buildings look from the back [...]. Venetian architecture, indeed, is stage architecture,

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[85] Wiles, p.108.
[86] Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska, 'Venice: masking the real', in *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and experiencing the modern metropolis*, ed. by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.152-63 (p.156).

caring little (up to Palladio) for principles and concerned mainly with "effects"'.[87] The Ducal

Palace provides a particularly good example of Venice's performance of its aesthetics:

unlike other European cities which required looming fortresses and castles, Venice had the

delicate, ornate Palace as the home of the doge and as the site of the government, the courts,

and the prison.[88] The beautiful façade is a front for the murky business of government and

hides beneath its pleasant appearance the unpleasant conditions of the jail. The Ducal Palace

effectively acts as a piece of stage architecture, seeking to impress citizens and visitors, and

to perform opulence, might, and beauty, echoing Ruskin's antitheatrical critique of Venice as

a *trompe l'oeil*.

Régis Debray's Antitheatricality

Régis Debray's text *Against Venice* is a performance and, as such, it links to earlier

performances which have themselves interrogated Venice. In dedicating an extended

philosophical focus on the city, he is repeating earlier performances of Venice and is

effectively contributing to the Venice behemoth, perhaps inadvertently. This is somewhat

ironic as he alludes to the extent to which the ghosts of famous writers, like Byron, Mann,

Rilke, and Hemingway, act as shadows or spectres in the city, enabling unknown individuals

to feel part of a distinguished brotherhood of Venice fetishists, but his own intense focus on

the city further emboldens the cult of loving Venice.[89] Indeed, the fact that *Against Venice* is

one of the few of his books which have been translated from the original French into English

tellingly points to the fact that writing on Venice has a captive audience of cultural

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[87] McCarthy, p.105.

[88] David Rosand explains that unlike the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, with its impenetrable walls and crenellations, the pronounced delicacy of the Ducal Palace in Venice was indicative of the city's strong defence system in the shape of the water of the Venetian lagoon, which protected the doge, the government, and the citizens from outside attack. David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: the Figuration of a State* (London: University of North Carolina Press: 2001), p.6.

[89] Debray, pp.41-42.

followers. It is no accident that the edition itself, from the publisher Pushkin, fits with a pleasant aesthetic: the book appears small and perfectly formed, smartly presented on quality paper with a handsome typeset and, most tellingly, it forms part of a collection published by Pushkin which all take Venice as their subject. When a reader has done with Debray they may pick up another text from the 'In Search of Venice' Pushkin collection, choosing from Henry James, Paul Morand, Arthur Schnitzler, Petr Král or another of the (notably all male) authors.[90] This provides an example of how the cultural capital of the city is extended through performances beyond the physical city itself. In describing and analysing Venice, these authors are replicating the city and fuelling the strength of its identity. Pushkin also extends the perception of beauty by its very selection of these works and the decisions it makes about design and layout: the appearance of these books smacks of elegance and sophistication in line with established discourses associated with Venice.

Debray begins his critique by drawing his reader's attention to the way in which veneration of Venice is culturally engendered, a viewpoint instilled in people from a young age, indeed an 'Obligation', as he puts it.[91] Echoing the notion of the city as a performance, he points to the superproduction of the city, alluding to the notion of a stage-managed Venice. He emphasises the change in tempo that occurs as soon as a visitor arrives in the city, which goes some way to renew 'the exorcism of the real world' for Venice acolytes (or idiots, as he sometimes refers to lovers of the city).[92] Just as audience members give themselves over to the world created on stage by performers, so too, he implies, visitors abandon the 'real' world to fall into the spectacle of Venice being presented before them. He states:

> The stroke of genius here, in making the city of the Doges a
> permanent Living Theatre (and undoubtedly the best candidate for
> the title), is not the nth placement of an nth confection for the eye,
> but the chance we are given to have a turn at *being in the show*,

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[90] Pushkin Press, 'In Search of Venice' <http://pushkinpress.com/book/in-search-of-venice/> [accessed 26 September 2014].
[91] Debray, p.10.
[92] Ibid., p.20.

> where we can depersonalise in person, duplicate ourselves at will. […] here the parts are already written, the moves chalked on the stage, and everyone can sidle into a libretto known by heart.[93]

Debray insists here that people are replicating performances or roles already established, indicating the extent to which the city relies upon replication to sustain itself: everybody knows the part they should play. Significantly, Debray's view of Venice's theatricality here suggests the active participation of people in the city, not just a conventional view of theatricality as duplicitous and showy. The emphasis he lays on the possibility the city gives to people of '*being in the show*' is strongly resonant of the participatory interpretation of the city's theatricality made by Lefebvre and Régulier.

Curiously, Debray goes on to say that it is during the carnival that people act the least because they are disguised and the 'pantomime' is most evident.[94] He thus implies that the obvious framing of the carnival, both temporally and behaviourally, gives carnival participants more licence to feel part of a 'show', intensified by the use of costumes and masks, while during the rest of the year visitors to the city have less of an excuse to perform in the opulent and frivolous way typically associated with carnival, but rather as tourists, gondoliers, or waiters. This view contrasts with understandings of carnival as a site of resistance or protest, indicated by both Schechner's notion of the street as stage and Lefebvre and Régulier's interpretation of extra-everyday rhythms and interrelationality. In addition, as the thesis introduction delineated, people within cities are always 'on show', so the roles of tourists, gondoliers, and waiters are inflected by replicated performances. The most commonly used mask of the modern-day carnival, the *volto*, covers the face completely, including the mouth, so to an extent it could be seen, in Debray's logic, as relieving people of the duty to perform as they are hidden and unrecognisable. However, as Figure 1 above shows, sporting the *volto* does not delimit the theatricality of the *maschere*: rather, as the image indicates, there is a marked pose for the camera, intensified by the *maschera's* choice of positioning and their interaction with fellow carnival participants. One pair of participants

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[93] Ibid., pp.20-21.
[94] Ibid., p.21.

I interviewed included an Australian man and a Belgian woman, the latter of whom related

how she felt in her costume:

> I was just saying [...] this is the first time that I feel like everyone is
> watching me and everybody wants to take pictures so I feel like I'm
> a sight. [...] I'm the type of person that never really steps out in the
> limelight so I feel looked at, but for me it's ok because I'm wearing
> a mask and I'm wearing a very pretty dress so I like it.[95]

This participant's experience would seem to concur with Debray's notion that people act the

least during carnival, but the woman's comments extend and deepen Debray's view, as it

actually appears this woman has found she can drop the inhibitions which she carries with

her in non-carnival time and lose her timidity. Through her engagement with the extra-

everyday rhythms of carnival, which include dressing up, posing, and being photographed by

fellow carnival participants, the performances of her everyday life, those everyday rhythms,

can be suspended. The costume and mask have provided her with an alternative carnival

identity, so she is performing in a different way, creating herself as other, and she is

assuredly a participant in a city-wide spectacle. Her beautiful mask and costume make her

feel beautiful and she is treated as beautiful by the strangers who stop to look at her and take

photographs of her.

 A strong contrast between Venice and Naples is drawn in Debray's book; he

juxtaposes the two cities with the stereotypes of Venice as wealthy, opulent, and elegant as

opposed to Naples as lively, brash, and dangerous. He states:

> Naples stripped of its visitors would still be itself, loud, fat and self-
> confident. But deprive Venice of its spectators, its extras, and it
> would decline and collapse in a week, its text dissolving, lost,
> haggard, like a great star forced to play nightly to an empty house.[96]

This strongly reiterates Debray's view of Venice as a performing entity, suggesting it has the

quality of a *prima donna* or *grand dame*, while also emphasising the dependence of Venice

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[95] Interview with two carnival participants, 6 February 2010.
[96] Debray, p.24.

on the active spectator. Though for Debray the city's theatricality implies mindless repetition of excessively citational acts, his insistence on the importance of the spectator to Venice is telling; indeed, it complements wider understandings of the city as performance. Debray's assertion belies the fact that Naples is also a performing entity, and his special focus on Venice fails to consider the performing essence of cities more widely and the general reliance on spectator-performers to enact urban space. Rather than seeing the repetitions of city and carnival in a negative light, Schneider emphasises the power of repetition to not only repeat past events but also to enact changes. Her approach to theatricality, and to performance more widely, challenges the notion of representation as shallow and superficial: in *Performing Remains*, she examines the reenactment of American Civil War battles and her observations in relation to such repeated performances of history parallel with Venice, particularly through her emphasis on the double negative of reenactment, the *not not*. She states that many of the reenactors 'find reenactment to be, if not the thing itself (the past), somehow also *not not* the thing (the past) as it passes across their bodies in again-time'.[97] The reenacted battles of the Civil War both are and are not those battles: 'through the cracks in the "not not", something cross-temporal, something affective, and something affirmative circulates. Something is touched'.[98] Schneider's observation challenges Debray's view of representation because she indicates that representation can actually touch the past and enable an experience which is genuine. Her research includes interviews with reenactors, as well as her own ethnographic experience of attending reenactment events, and her study transposes her theory more broadly to explore theatre performances, photography, the pose, and other reenactments. The participants of battle reenactments whom Schneider discusses resonate with the carnival participants of Venice: in masking themselves and promenading about the city, the *maschere* both are and are not the carnival *maschere* of yesteryear, the double negative of the *not not* applies. This *not not* intensifies the sense of Venice's theatricality as in the theatre, the performer both is and is not that which they play, as they

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[97] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.8.
[98] Ibid., p.43.

can never efface entirely the overt fact of their performance. Significantly, Schneider discusses how the interviews she conducted with reenactors showed that many of them felt that striking a pose and being the thing posed held for those participants an indeterminacy and fluidity, and this parallels with the interviews I conducted with carnival participants at the 2010 event.[99] A young couple of participants whom I interviewed had come from Tuscany to experience the Venice carnival; when I asked them what they thought was special about the carnival, the woman replied that the carnival's history was the most important aspect, stating that it was the same for centuries, while the man similarly invoked tradition. The woman said that on seeing the *maschere* she was struck by the sense that she had the fortune to somehow relive a past that is no longer, to see it again.[100] Indeed, the carnival's ability to touch the past, invariably intensified by the city's archaic appearance, was repeatedly invoked by the different carnival participants I spoke to.

As Debray is inherently antitheatrical, he does not allow for the potential for individual and collective engagement with Venice to be alternative to established convention. This is not only challenged by Schneider's view of theatricality as cross-temporal, multidirectional, and dynamic, but is also challenged by Lefebvre and Régulier's account of rhythms. In a setting as grand as Piazza San Marco, the urban space undoubtedly communicates political, religious, and economic power, but the way that people use the space, including during the carnival, can appropriate the space for non-political means. Lefebvre and Régulier state:

> Through a certain use of time the citizen resists the state. A struggle for appropriation is therefore unleashed, in which rhythms play a major role. Through them, civil, therefore social, time seeks to and succeeds in withdrawing itself from linear, unirhythmic, measuring/measured state time. Thus public space, the space of representation, becomes 'spontaneously' a place for walks and encounters, intrigues, diplomacy, deals and negotiations - it theatralises itself.[101]

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[99] Ibid., p.50.
[100] Interview with two young carnival participants from Tuscany, 7 February 2010.
[101] Lefebvre and Régulier, p.186.

The repetition of the rhythms of carnival are not merely staid, formulaic enactments of a festival which has attained bourgeois, touristic status in its twenty-first-century identity; rather, these rhythms can indicate a level of challenge to the *status quo*. It is the carnival's theatrical quality, and that of the city, which enables this plurality of rhythms as the performer-spectators engage with one another and with the built environment, bringing extra-everyday rhythms into the everyday. In Figure 2 above, the two *maschere* and the unmasked carnival participants around them speak to this 'theatralising' of the public space, as the way in which they share the space of the Piazzetta and engage with each other allows for individual experiences of the city and the carnival which are dependent upon the participants themselves. Likewise in Canaletto's painting of *giovedí grasso*, the densely crowded Piazzetta allows for 'encounters, intrigues, diplomacy, deals and negotiations', to invoke Lefebvre and Régulier's words, especially as the participants are masked and costumed. These depictions of carnival in its bygone and modern day iterations indicate the possibility for individual engagement with the event and with the city, suggesting a level of resistance in the way the urban space is used and the way the city and carnival are (re)enacted.

Beauty as Theatrical

Canaletto's romantic *veduta* of the Piazzetta on *giovedí grasso* is an example of the innumerable images which have inflected cultural perceptions of Venice and have contributed to collective understandings of the city as beautiful. Venice's history is tied up with the history of Europe and the history of the world: the city's influence culturally, economically, politically, militarily, and socially is enormous, and images of the city played a significant role in communicating the city's importance. David Rosand observes:

> More than any other political entity of the early modern period, the Republic of Venice shaped the visual imagination of political thought; just as she instructed Europe – and, ultimately, the independent colonies of America – in the idea of statehood, so she taught how to give that idea to eloquent pictorial form, especially through the figuration of the state.[102]

Rosand intimates here that the ways in which the city came to be represented in art played an essential role in the development of core perceptions of Venice. Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Emma Jones observe that: 'Venice's emergence as the Most Serene Republic and her enduring legacy are intrinsically bound up with her ability to control her identity through art and architecture'.[103] Images of the city, as well as the built environment, thus came to evoke Venice's beauty and uniqueness, which were linked with the city's very founding in the rather inhospitable islands of the Venetian lagoon, as the earliest settlers began to make their homes in the early centuries of the first millennium AD in the 'same flat, desolate expanse of water and reed and marsh' that can be seen today.[104] These early Venetians were escaping the terror of invasions on *terrafirma* from the Visigoths, the Huns, and the Lombards.[105] As the islands began to populate, they formed little communities, officially under the jurisdiction of the Byzantine Empire based in Constantinople. Tradition dictates that the city was officially brought into being on 25 March 421, at noon, which happens also to be the religious feast of the Annunciation, thereby linking Venice's founding to divine intervention.[106]

Perceptions of Venice's particularly unique and beautiful identity are evident in the very first written description of the city on record, which appears in a letter to the early Venetians from Cassiodorus, who was the Praetorian Prefect of King Theodoric the Ostrogoth. He writes:

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[102] Rosand, p.1.

[103] Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Emma Jones, 'Introduction', in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and its Territories, 1450-1750*, ed. by Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Emma Jones (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp.1-12 (p.4).

[104] John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p.3.

[105] Ibid., pp.3-6.

[106] Ibid., p.5.

> For you live like sea birds, with your homes dispersed, like the
> Cyclades, across the surface of the water. [...] Among you there is
> no difference between rich and poor; your food is the same, your
> houses are all alike. [...] Envy, which rules the rest of the world, is
> unknown to you.[107]

Cassiodorus's hyperbole begins a tradition of mythologizing Venice: as his letter dates from the sixth century AD, it is an early indication of how the community of islands was perceived by outsiders, and also tellingly points to the way the islanders presented themselves. In the eighth century AD the islanders were already unified under a doge (*dux* in Venetian dialect) who acted as the figurehead of the people. The city became an important trading port, a location for shipbuilding, and rose to be a military power, effectively making the republic independent from Constantinople. Bridges connected the islands and gradually the historical centre became a more unified entity. The republic's military and trading power ensured it gained foreign lands and increased its influence; so dominant was the republic that the Adriatic Sea was oft referred to as the 'Gulf of Venice'.[108] As Muir observes, though the myth is usually considered to be a creation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it existed much earlier, with the acceptance of the body of St Mark into the city, in 828 AD, as a significant moment in the figuration of Venice's identity.[109] St Mark became Venice's patron saint and ensured the republic had divine protection and gave the city an aura of religiosity, a component of its perceived beauty.

Mary McCarthy begins her homage to the city by quoting Michel de Montaigne's description of Venice as 'that famous beauty'.[110] More famously, when Napoleon brought an end to over one thousand years of the independent Venetian republic in 1797, he is renowned to have described Piazza San Marco as: '*le plus beau salon de l'Europe*', Europe's most beautiful drawing room.[111] Napoleon's famous metaphor is interesting because the drawing room was traditionally where guests were entertained in large houses, it was well furnished

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[107] Cassiodorus, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.68.
[108] Predrag Matvejević, *The Other Venice: Secrets of the City*, trans. by Russell Scott Valentino (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p.48.
[109] Muir, pp.22-25; Peter Ackroyd, *Venice: Pure City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), pp.37-41.
[110] McCarthy, p.1.
[111] Norwich, 'Introduction', p.40.

and looked after, indeed it could be seen as a room of presentation, where the household presented its best side. The analogy of beauty that Napoleon is said to have made therefore underlines the public nature of Venice's main square and links the city's iconic heart to notions of presentation and performance. A further illustration of the perception of Venice as beautiful appears in the autobiographical work of Morand, who cites Proust's label of Venice as 'the Mecca of the religion of Beauty'.[112] Through this metaphor of the holy city Mecca, Proust suggests Venice has a centripetal force, effectively a site of pilgrimage for people who wish to see and experience beauty. As with Napoleon's metaphor of the drawing room, there is an implication of the public place of beauty, as Mecca is an overtly public showing of the faith of world Muslims. Describing beauty as a religion *vis-à-vis* Venice points to the large international following of people who visit and appreciate the city; it is also suggestive of a following steeped in history, as the religions of the world have evolved over time. Proust's assertion is important as it tellingly hints at Venice's theatricality: Mecca, like Rome and Jerusalem, is theatrical in the sense that it strongly relies on the participation of people to enact it. As a religious centre, Mecca positions pilgrims as both actors and audience in its production, just as the space of Venice is enacted by people engaging with the city. The Mecca metaphor therefore parallels with understandings of Venice's beauty in terms of theatre as it implies that the city's beauty is sustained by the public performances of active participants. Napoleon and Proust not only pinpoint beauty as a fundamental feature of Venice's identity, but also illustrate the way in which beauty in the city is imbued with theatricality.

Venice historian John Julius Norwich writes that in the city's appeal 'the beauty of course came first'.[113] Manifold others have echoed such notions; the fifteenth-century pilgrim Canon Pietro Casola stated: 'I declare that it is impossible to tell or write fully of the beauty, the magnificence or the wealth of the city of Venice'.[114] Casola stayed in Venice *en*

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[112] Morand, p.33.
[113] Norwich, 'Introduction', p.53.
[114] M. Margaret Newett, trans., *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Year 1494* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1907), p.125.

route to the Levant, and his description would have been for an extremely limited readership, written three hundred years before the advent of the Grand Tour. Echoing Casola, Charles Dickens wrote in a letter in 1844:

> nothing in the world that ever you have heard of Venice, is equal to the magnificent and stupendous reality. [...] Venice is a bit of my brain from this time. [...] to tell what Venice is, I feel to be an impossibility.[115]

Dorothy Menpes continues this hyperbolic tradition in discussing painted representations of Piazza San Marco, gondolas, and *palazzi*: 'With all this one has been familiar through the pictures of the masters [...]; but the real Venice is still more beautiful, still more wonderful, still more fantastic'.[116] In this, Menpes draws a distinction between imagistic representations and the real, lived experience of the city, putting the latter on a pedestal. Her commentary on Venice is featured in a handsome book which collates her husband's watercolours of the city, portraying typical picturesque views. Published in 1904, the marital collaboration that is *Venice* was compiled before the age of mass media and mass tourism, and this is reflected in the book as it seeks to provide the essence of the city, textually and imagistically, for a readership that may not ever physically visit the city. Menpes claims that the view of the city held by people who have not been there must be 'a theatrical Venice, unreal and altogether false' because their view is based on representations; in this she sustains a negative view of theatricality and implies that representations are empty of substance.[117] She states that in spite of the fact that the city has been described and depicted more than any other city, the true perception of the city can only be gained by really being in Venice. Menpes is at pains to stress the city's beauty, describing St Mark's basilica as a building 'in which colour and design unite in forming perfection' and later as 'unequalled in its beauty'.[118] Her husband's watercolours evoke the picturesque ideal of the city, complementing her text. Art historian

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[115] Charles Dickens, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, pp.75-76.
[116] Mortimer Menpes (watercolours) and Dorothy Menpes (text), *Venice* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1904), p.9.
[117] Ibid., p.3.
[118] Ibid., p.79 and p.86.

Rosalind Krauss's statements on the picturesque apply here, as she links beautiful paintings to representation, suggesting that with the picturesque, the image is seen before the actual landscape is perceived. Krauss avers: 'through the action of the picturesque the very notion of landscape is conducted as a second term of which the first is a representation. Landscape becomes a reduplication of a picture which preceded it'.[119] Thus the idea of the image is part of the actual experience of seeing a beautiful or noteworthy landscape, and this notion undermines traditional understandings of originality, while emphasising the interplay of replications with the original. Krauss's assertion throws Menpes's distinction between the real Venice and representations thereof into doubt, as Krauss implies that the real experience of a picturesque view is inflected by the preconceived idea of the image. Indeed, as Curtis and Pajaczowska put it: 'As a result of Venice's uniqueness and celebrity it is hard to encounter it without preconceptions'.[120] Whybrow similarly asserts: 'Venice is always already a mythical idea of itself'.[121] Representations and the generative object therefore flow into one another, throwing the notion of the pure original into doubt, congruent with notions of performance as restored behaviour, positing all identity and enactment as part of a process of reiteration.

That Venice is invariably met with preconceptions is significant as it shows that one's knowledge and understanding of the city inflect one's perception of its beauty. This reflects the two key approaches to beauty: the first approach seeing beauty as a private, subjective experience, within the eye of the beholder, contrasting with the second approach, which arose out of modernity, arguing perceptions of beauty are always socially inscribed. As Dave Beech observes, modernity and postmodernity have led to a situation in which: 'the critique of beauty is never a critique of beautiful objects but always of ideas, ideologies, social practices and cultural hierarchies'.[122] This suggests that the beauty of Venice is a

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[119] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (London: The MIT Press, 1985), p.163

[120] Curtis and Pajaczkowska, p.153.

[121] Whybrow, '"The City of the Eye"', p.172.

[122] Dave Beech, 'Introduction: Art and the Politics of Beauty', in *Beauty*, ed. by Dave Beech (London: Whitechapel and the MIT Press, 2009), pp.12-19 (p.12).

social, cultural, and political construct and not necessarily an inherent quality of the city. This interpretation combats the understanding of the individual experience of beauty, different for each perceiver. Citing Paul Ricoeur's label 'hermeneutics of suspicion', Beech delineates the philosophical shift which foregrounds the impact that overarching ideologies of politics, society, and economy have on individual decisions, tastes, and behaviours. This hermeneutics of suspicion means everything is suspect according to one's social status, education, economic means, political bent, and cultural position. There is thus a simpatico link to the theories of Lefebvre, who has emphasised the power of social influences on the person. Interestingly, Mary Mothersill shows that there is a distinction to be made between opinions on beauty in art and in nature, as for her, opinions about beauty in nature may purely reflect taste, while beauty in art is more indicative of the individual's social status: 'My taste in movies or poetry or music [...] like my taste in clothes, reflects my income bracket, my educational background, my social status (or the status to which I aspire)'.[123] This approach suggests that people who adore and visit Venice, so called Venetophiles, belong to a particular social bracket, or aspire to a high social status; Debray bemoans this 'learned' adoration of the city in *Against Venice*. The carnival evidently attracts many wealthy people who pay to participate in organised masked balls, stay in fine accommodation, and dress in opulent carnival garb, indicating that Venice acolytes may belong to certain social strata, but the event cannot be seen as purely elitist as its core essence is the meeting of diverse people on the streets.

Beauty has been contested since antiquity, not just through modernity, and, like theatricality, it has been seen in terms of empty show, distracting from things that really matter. Roger Scruton avers: 'we call something beautiful when we gain pleasure from contemplating it as an individual object, for its own sake, and in its own *presented* form'.[124] For him, the pleasure that beauty brings is key to understanding its essence, but the italics he uses to emphasise the fact of presentation are significant because he implies either a level of

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[123] Mary Mothersill, 'Beauty and the Critic's Judgment: Remapping Aesthetics', in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. by Peter Kivy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.152-65 (p.163).
[124] Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.162.

consciousness in presentation or a level of surface. He also states: 'beauty is a matter of appearance, not of being; [...] in exploring beauty we are investigating the sentiments of people, rather than the deep structure of the world'.[125] Evidently, there are some parallels to positions held on theatricality and antitheatricality: the interpretation of beauty which Scruton hints at here and through his emphasis on presentation are akin to understandings of theatre as appearance and show, contrasting with the reality of being. Indeed, views of Venice's beauty as appearance and show have been directly interrogated: for Brodsky, the reason Venice and Venetian art remain so popular is that they are instances of beauty. He maintains that Venice is the city of the eye and the other senses become inferior in the city.[126] Brodsky asserts that the eye is always seeking safety in a hostile environment, hence the common appreciation of beauty, and the eye's constant checking for safety 'explains the eye's appetite for beauty, as well as beauty's own existence. For beauty is solace, since beauty is safe'.[127] This perspective is critiqued by Whybrow, who sees Brodsky's assertion as suggestive of a 'complacency that can be aligned with the hackneyed visual image of Venice', intimating that the beauty with which people engage in the city, especially tourists, is a theatrical beauty and one which hides alternative discourses of the city.[128] He avers:

> Venice is generally experienced by the tourist in a mode of 'mediated perception' - a staged city of facades or immersive show - that effectively engineers a safe removal from its darker realities and produces a form of unseeing, dulled *ennui* in all its dazzling splendour. In other words, the tourist is typically lulled into a semi-dream - indeed, *an*aesthetic - state in which *nothing very much happens*, but that can also be said to amount to a false sense of security.[129]

The tourist therefore experiences a performance of Venice which hides things backstage, including serious problems with immigration, excessive commercialisation, the dwindling

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[125] Scruton, p.4.
[126] Brodsky, p.27. Mary McCarthy similarly refers to Venice as the city for the eye; see McCarthy, p.11. Henry James affirms: 'The mere use of one's eyes in Venice is happiness enough, and generous observers find it hard to keep an account of their profits in this line'. See James, *Italian Hours*, p.54.
[127] Brodsky, p.107.
[128] Whybrow, '"The City of the Eye"', p.172.
[129] Ibid., pp.172-73.

population in the historical centre, the harm that tourism has on the city, the slow erosion of the city, and organised crime, all problems alluded to by Whybrow. As such, the tourist is complicit in completing this performance, anaesthetised from the issues which lie beneath the 'immersive show' of beauty and splendour. The 'complacency' to which Whybrow refers speaks to negative views of beauty as distracting and superficial.

During the twentieth century, dissonance was often favoured over beauty, reflecting modernist, avantgardist, and postmodernist positions, before a shift back towards beauty in the 1990s.[130] For Mothersill, part of the problem was the twentieth-century focus on 'aesthetic value' as a term, and she promotes the renewed use of 'beauty' as a critical term. Elaine Scarry similarly advocates a revival in the appreciation and consideration of beauty, insisting that beauty has a universality, that the person beholding beauty is not self-interested, and that beauty makes us more alert to the aliveness of the world. Scarry asserts that beauty is life-affirming: 'As the beautiful confers on the perceiver the gift of life, so the perceiver confers on the beautiful thing the gift of life', and this statement is important in terms of the performances of beauty at the Venice carnival.[131] As the carnival participants share the roles of performer and spectator, the interplay between them and their engagement with the built environment of the city mean they are sharing in reciprocal life-giving. Scarry states: 'one reason beautiful persons and things incite the desire to create is so that one can place something of reciprocally great beauty in the shared field of attention'.[132] This helps to explain why Venice has been so vastly written about, described, and depicted in diverse media over time. In debates about beauty, a tension thus arises between individuality and social inscription and this is important in understandings of Venice's beauty as there is an interplay between the individual and the social. As Beech elucidates:

> Beauty, then, need not be naturalized as purely subjective nor
> reduced to the social relations to which certain dominant cultural

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[130] Arthur C. Danto, ''The Aesthetic of Brillo Boxes, 2003', in *Beauty*, ed. by Dave Beech (London: Whitechapel and the MIT Press, 2009), pp.60-65.
[131] Scarry, p.90.
[132] Ibid., p.77.

> configurations are attached. If aesthetics is performed in the way
> that gender is, then beauty exists at the tense intersection of the
> individual and society, with the individual neither fully subsumed
> nor fully free from social norms and cultural hierarchies. There is
> pleasure and play in that gap as well as critique, suspicion and
> subversion.[133]

This approach is significant because of its fluid approach to understanding beauty: it does not fall definitively on the side of subjectivity nor on the side of social inscription, but recognises the interplay between those poles. Furthermore, Beech invokes here the performance of aesthetics, congruent with this chapter's view that notions of wealth, opulence, power, sophistication, theatricality, and beauty are all performed by Venice as part of its identity.

Scarry's assertion that beauty encourages replications resonates with understandings of Venice's beauty as theatrical. She observes:

> Beauty brings copies of itself into being. It makes us draw it, take
> photographs of it, or describe it to other people. Sometimes it gives
> rise to exact replication and other times to resemblances and still
> other times to things whose connection to the original site of
> inspiration is unrecognizable.[134]

She suggests that the overarching link between things which are beautiful is that they are reproduced, repeated, reiterated, or replicated; they share an impulse towards begetting. Venice is a supremely represented city, depicted profusely in art, writing, film, and photography, and it is a reference point for manifold other iterations. Through the application of Scarry's understanding of beauty and a wider performance perspective, it can be argued that the city's beauty is performed repeatedly in each iteration, even if it appears far removed from the original site of inspiration, or is poorly executed. Scarry provides the example of the esteemed Victorian art critic Walter Pater writing about the masterpieces of Leonardo da Vinci as an instance of a replication which enacts the subject being written about, while recognising that the original object is itself a replication:

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[133] Beech, p.18.
[134] Scarry, p.3.

> It may be startling to speak of the *Divine Comedy* or the *Mona Lisa*
> as a 'replication' since they are so unprecedented, but the word
> recalls the fact that something, or someone, gave rise to their
> creation and remains silently present in the newborn object.[135]

These observations echo the approaches of performance outlined in the thesis introduction by Schechner, Schneider, Pearson, Roach, and Jones, who point to the impossibility of ever capturing the original performance because all manifestations are part of a cycle of repetition. The modern day Venice carnival illustrates Scarry's point as, since its revival in 1980, it has persistently fallen back on the bygone carnival of the independent republic of Venice: Alessandro Bressanello's edited study of the modern day carnival effectively illustrates this. In particular, annual themes, posters, and attractions have reiterated elements of historical carnival, often replicating images of Venetian artworks: in 1981 the poster advertising carnival portrayed a Tiepolo image of masked dancers and several Pulcinellas; the 1984 carnival comprised interpretations of the bygone *moresca* dance and the beheading of a bull, both features of the historical *giovedí grasso* celebrations; in 1987 a version of the *Bucintoro*, the ceremonial boat of the doge, was constructed and displayed in Piazza San Marco; while in 1988 acrobats performed human pyramids in Piazza San Marco, channelling the bygone *Forze d'Ercole*. Indeed, each yearly iteration of carnival since the 1980 revival which is documented in Bressanello's book indicates strong levels of referentiality to Venice's past, whether that is to iterations of carnival, to paintings, or to figures like Goldoni, Casanova, and Arlecchino.[136]

The theatre scholar James Thompson, who has written widely on applied theatre, reflects on the sharedness of beauty in his work *Performance Affects*, observing that on seeing something beautiful, one does not always stop to think that the object perceived may not be beautiful to others, but rather one tends to make a universal claim about the object's

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[135] Ibid., pp.9-10.
[136] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*.

beauty; thus beauty leads to a 'desire to *share affect*'.[137] Thompson's study is pertinent to the

Venice carnival and the wider engagement with the city as it highlights the importance of

affective, sensory, and communal responses to performance. The sharing of affect is crucial

to the carnival as the event's very identity depends on the sharing of experiences and

interrelationality between the co-participants. The carnival illustrates such sharing of affect

because of the extent to which people interact with each other, photograph the *maschere*, and

share those images. Thompson has also written elsewhere that 'a performance of beauty […]

could be a performance act directly connected to one that instils and promotes community

and social justice'.[138] He makes this assertion in relation to war-ravaged communities and

refugees, but his statement nevertheless applies to the cultural expression of carnival in

Venice, as he points to the positive effects of performances of beauty. In Thompson's logic,

beauty is 'a stimulus to collaborative work – it is an invitation to participate'.[139] This

participatory understanding of beauty challenges negative approaches which see beauty as

distracting or pointless: the carnival and general engagement with Venice can be seen to

make a positive impact precisely because of the affects which touch people and which are

shared between them, and which linger beyond the moment of interaction. People in the city

are part of a community of performers and spectators, in an ever-changing interplay of these

roles, this speaks to the positive view of beauty propounded by Kant, who saw aesthetic

pleasure as indicative of communality and harmony in humanity; his term *sensus communis*

emphasises this sharedness of aesthetic pleasure.[140]

Contrasting with the *maschera* posing along the *bacino* shown in Figure 1 are the

two *maschere* shown in Figures 5 and 6. I encountered these away from the main square and

found them posing for several professional photographers; it became apparent that they were

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[137] James Thompson, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.144.

[138] James Thompson, 'Performance of pain, performance of beauty', *Research in Drama Education*,11, 1 (2006) 47-57 (p.49).

[139] Thompson, *Performance Affects*, p.145.

[140] Kester, p.28; Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, 3rd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp.17-19; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. by Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.19-20.

Figure 5 *Maschera* **posing for professional photographers in the entrance of a** *sottoportico***,**
8 February 2010

Figure 6 *Maschera* **posing for professional photographers along the Fondamenta de la Malvasia Vechia, 8 February 2010**

modelling professionally, as the photographers who surrounded them were instructing their movements and telling them where and how to stand. This serendipitous meeting was interesting to observe on many levels; the professional photographers clearly felt a sense of ownership of these models, while the models themselves were extremely focused on presenting themselves for the cameras and their poses and movements were assertive and ostentatious. The experience was markedly different to that of engaging with the *maschere* seen in Figures 1 and 2, who were posing calmly and stilly. In Figure 5 the *maschera* is playfully inviting the photographers into the opening of a *sottoportico*, which although dingy, is given new life by the vibrant colours and angular design of the *maschera's* costume. In spite of the stillness of the photograph, movement can be sensed as the *maschera* swishes a handbag in one arm and whooshes the skirts of their costume with the other. The costume and mask are particularly well-finished and the whole effect is one of accomplished workmanship; it is evident that time and money has been invested in creating the effect. The white *volto* mask's simplistic neutrality smacks of sophistication and elegance, and, following traditional carnival custom, not a speck of skin is on display. Though it is impossible to be sure, the *maschera* seems to be female, but this is an assumption based on their physiognomy, the feminine colouring and shape of the costume, the handbag, and the queen-like crownlet and headdress. Significantly in this image, there is a pronounced theatricality or *dédoublement*, to employ Davis's term, as a distinct element of show is strongly evident: even without knowing that this photograph was directed by a small group of professional photographers, it is apparent that the *maschera* is directing their performance at an audience and is self-aware. The theatricality on display is not merely showpersonship, but rather underlines the interdependence of the *maschera* and the audience. Similarly in Figure 6, the gender of the *maschera* cannot be identified definitively, though there is some masculinity in their physiognomy and even in the neutral white mask. The pose is much stiller here than in Figure 5, but nevertheless theatrical as the clasped hands and enigmatic stare are directed at an audience. Both of these images are indicative of the opportunity the carnival provides people to transform their appearance and to appear beautiful. The two

maschere are positioning themselves in ways that will ensure they are seen as beautiful, reiterating performances of carnival that have come before, and underlining the theatrical nature of Venice's beauty.

The Lebanese artist George Merheb is one of many contemporary artists who continue to be inspired by Venice and in his *Carnival Series 1998* he depicts huge, enticing carnival images in an expressionist, Cubist style, each image being individual yet overtly reiterative of similar motifs. Figures 7 and 8 are two examples from the series and within these images the carnival topos is evident in the masks and vibrant costumes, with Figure 7 containing touches which suggest streamers, fireworks, or confetti, as well as a drummer and a trumpeter. In both of these images the motifs of Venice also shine: the prow of a gondola, the wooden poles embedded in the canal waters, the lights of windows in buildings in the background, the pretty balustrade. Figures 7 and 8 are suggestive of the frivolity and fun of the carnival, and Figure 7 especially captures the hectic mêlée and lively atmosphere of the event. Merheb's paintings are interesting not only because of the way they reference each other, but also because of their replicative nature, particularly in the light of the images of the *maschere* and of Canaletto's painting explored above. As performances themselves, Merheb's paintings capture the theatricality of the carnival, and thus also of the city, by focusing on the masked figures of the event who are evidently looking out at the artist and at the viewers of the art: these paintings return the spectator's stare and are indeed reliant on that stare. The expressionist style of the paintings does not detract from their beauty as they combine pleasing forms and colour, and there is an underlying symmetry: in Figure 7 the four masks mirror the placing of the four wooden poles, while in Figure 8 the trio of *maschere* appear perfectly in line with the balustrade beneath them. Seen alongside the other paintings in the series, the same motifs complement each other. The *Daily Star Lebanon* relates that a *vernissage* showing of Merheb's Venice carnival paintings in 1999 in Beirut became an 'unexpected Venice carnival, where more than 800 people, many of them

Figure 7 *Carnival Series 1998*, by George Merheb, oil and acrylic on canvas, 1998

costumed and masked, danced to madrigal music under a rain of confetti until midnight'.[141]

Merheb is credited for having made the atmosphere of the showing fit the theme of his

paintings, which further extends the replicative nature of his works: in Beirut, in April, a

collection of people gathered to recreate the Venice carnival, inspired by their knowledge,

experience, and preconceptions, and this is a significant example of the carnival's impact

beyond the city of Venice itself. Furthermore, it recalls Schneider:

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[141] Helen Khal, 'Granite between earth and sky', *The Daily Star Lebanon*, 1 May 1999
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Art/1999/May-01/100127-granite-between-earth-and-sky.ashx>
[accessed 10 December 2014].

Figure 8 *Carnival Series 1998*, **by George Merheb, oil and acrylic on canvas, 1998**

> To find the past resident in remains – material evidence, haunting trace, reiterative gesture – is to engage one time resident *in* another time – a logic rooted in the word 'remain'. Time, engaged *in* time, is always a matter of crossing, or passing, or touching, and perhaps always (at least) double.[142]

The reiterative gestures of carnivals in the past do not disappear but find their way into new iterations of the carnival and into myriad other iterations, like the *Carnival Series 1998*.[143]

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[142] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.37.

[143] The Venetian artist Emilio Vedova has also created expressionist artworks inspired by carnival. His Carnival Cycle, which he realised between the 1970s and the 1990s, contrasts aesthetically with Merheb's series of carnival paintings, but in spite of the differences in style, both series repeat similar

Fundamentally, performance has a staying power in Schneider's logic, exhibited here by

Merheb's collection and the anecdote of his exhibition by the Lebanese journalist. This

crossing of time connects to Brodsky's observation that time is synonymous with water; he

concludes his panegyric on Venice by reflecting on the way that water provides a mirror to

the city's beauty and, in turn, leaves remains; 'beauty stays', he says, 'beauty is the eternal

present'.[144]

The images of the *maschere*, particularly the fully masked *maschere* in Figures 1, 5,

and 6, exhibit haunting and ghostly qualities: their stillness and silence, and the fact that only

their eyes are visible, gives them a spectral quality.[145] Their ghostly appearance recollects the

ghosts of earlier carnivals from bygone days: beauty stays and performance remains. Above

Schneider refers to a 'haunting trace', which suggests that performances of carnival provide

earlier iterations of the event with an 'afterlife', a term which Jonathan Miller applies to

theatrical performances.[146] His text *Subsequent Performances* points to the way that repeated

performances bring life to what could be viewed as dead iterations from the past. Though his

focus is on scripted plays, his notion of 'afterlife' is fecund, and in relation to the *maschere*,

it is suggestive of a thread connecting the multiple iterations of carnival. That the *maschere*

appear ghostly is intensified by the city's identity: death and decadence are richly associated

with Venice, and have been for centuries: Goffredo Parise describes it as 'the city of

death'.[147] The long decline of the independent Venetian republic began as early as the

fifteenth century, and by the time of the republic's fall, the city's decadence had become an

attractive part of its appeal. For modern-day Venice, this decadence is maintained and

intensified by the underlying threat to the city from rising sea-waters and the general effects

of decay over time, particularly evident in a city which has retained such an archaic

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motifs. 'Emilio Vedova...Cosiddetti Carnevali...', Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova
<http://www.fondazionevedova.org/en/node/345> [accessed 27 October 2015].
[144] Brodsky, p.134.
[145] Efrat Tseëlon explores the link between masks and death, see 'Reflections on Mask and Carnival',
in *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality*, ed. by Efrat Tseëlon
(London: Routledge, 2001), pp.18-37.
[146] Jonathan Miller, *Subsequent Performances* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).
[147] Goffredo Parise, in *Carnevale del Teatro*, by Moravia and others, pp.21-24 (p.22).

appearance. Decadent Venice is beloved of fiction writers and is evident in a number of important examples: Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), and Daphne du Maurier's novella *Don't Look Now* (1971). In James's novel, the heroine is a wealthy heiress who is terminally ill; Mann's protagonist visits Venice to die; while du Maurier focuses on a couple who have lost their daughter and who visit the city in mourning, with shocking psychological consequences culminating in another death. In recent decades the popular crime writing of American author and Venice resident Donna Leon is illustrative of this aesthetics, with more than twenty crime stories set in Venice, investigated by Commissario Guido Brunetti: the front covers of her novels evoke an enigmatic and mysterious Venice.[148] The aforementioned novels of James, Mann, and du Maurier have all been adapted on film, and indeed Venice provides a setting for numerous films, many of which reference the city's connection to decadence and death.[149] Film scholar Des O'Rawe draws attention to the atypical representation of Venice in *Othello* (1952), *Death in Venice* (1971), *Don't Look Now* (1973), and *The Comfort of Strangers* (1990), drawing contrasts with a number of other films which tend more towards the typical touristic view of the city, including *The Wings of the Dove* (1997). O'Rawe states *The Comfort of Strangers* dramatizes 'the sinister otherness of Venice', while *Don't Look Now* is a vision of the city as 'a threshold to the underworld, a city of death and the city as death'.[150] He also writes: 'Throughout *Death in Venice* the past inundates the present, a past that is literary (Mann), pictorial (Renaissance art), photographic (late nineteenth century), theatrical (*commedia dell'arte*), and musical (Mahler's *adagietto*)'.[151] Evidently, each film evokes a deathly Venice, and O'Rawe's observation on *Death in Venice* crucially underlines the referentiality of the film as it replicates and intertwines earlier iterations in filmic fragments: those items in parentheses in this citation are diverse aspects of the film which are replicative

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[148] 'Books', Donna Leon Official Website <http://www.donnaleon.net/> [accessed 1 October 2015].
[149] 'Venice Films & TV', Fictional Cities <http://www.fictionalcities.co.uk/venicefilms.htm> [accessed 26 October 2015].
[150] Des O'Rawe, 'Venice in Film: The Postcard and the Palimpsest', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 33, 3 (2005), 224-32, (p.227).
[151] Ibid., p.229.

and are effectively given an afterlife in the film.

As alluded to in the thesis introduction, the performance scholar Marvin Carlson has written along this theme in his work *The Haunted Stage*, in which he uses the term 'ghosting' to describe the replication of past iterations in performance, consonant with Miller's 'afterlife', Schneider's 'haunting trace', and Roach's 'surrogation'. Recollection of past performances inevitably influence the way in which an audience member responds to a performance. He states:

> If a work requires reception techniques outside those provided by an audience's memory, then it falls outside their horizon of expectations, but more commonly it will operate, or can be made to operate, within that horizon, thus adding a new experiential memory for future use.[152]

Though his emphasis is on theatre, Carlson recognises that the use of identical material and variations thereof form the building blocks of all of the arts. He gives the example of the role of Hamlet, arguing that in it: 'we have one of the major repositories of Western cultural memory'.[153] He avers:

> Our language is haunted by Shakespeare in general and *Hamlet* in particular, so much so that anyone reading the play for the first time is invariably struck by how many of the play's lines are already known to her. Even more experienced readers (or viewers) can hardly escape the impression that the play is really a tissue of quotations. Our iconic memories are haunted by *Hamlet*. Who does not immediately recognize, in whatever pictorial style he may appear, the dark habited young man gazing contemplatively into the sightless eyes of a skull he is holding.[154]

Venice parallels with the role of Hamlet in this context as it can equally be seen as dominant in Western cultural memory. The city's importance in world history and the profusion of multiple representations in film, literature, art, and other media means that people have a

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[152] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p.6.
[153] Ibid., p.78.
[154] Ibid.

knowledge of Venice which they can use and rely on in any instance in which they engage with the city, whether by being physically in Venice or engaging with a representation of the city (literary, filmic, imagistic). Our iconic memories are haunted by Venice as much as by Hamlet; the idea that Venice ghosts our memory is congruent with the earlier-cited examples of Morand and Brodsky and their descriptions of things which had formed preconceptions of Venice for them. Debray also pays significant attention to written, painted, and filmic depictions of the city in his book, just as many other writers indicate their engagement is inflected by, or ghosted by, others. Carlson refers to the characters of the *commedia dell'arte* as ghosted roles which hold a place in the memory of audiences, meaning that in performance the spectators have already formed an idea about the character on stage, and their interaction with the performance is therefore affected by their knowledge and experience; this is a doubly pertinent point given Venice's rich association with this particular street theatre form. The *maschere* of the carnival act as spectres, taking on roles of previous carnival participants. An Australian man I interviewed at the carnival told me he had been preparing for the carnival for ten years, and spoke about the sensation of being a *maschera*: 'You're supposed to lose your identity, not talk, walk with a lot of bravado, and gesture rather than speak', indicating that his engagement with carnival was significantly influenced by established customs and that his performance was ghosted.[155] Schneider, also addressing *Hamlet*, and in particular Jacques Derrida's interpretation thereof, states that the spectrality of Shakespeare's masterpiece is theatrical, a veritable *coup de théâtre*.[156] Although the *maschere* at the Venice carnival are not spectres like Hamlet's father, their spectrality, intensified by their enigmatic masks and the deathly connotations of the city, further emboldens their theatricality. As Schneider avers, echoing Carlson, audiences use their embodied knowledge in attending to appearances, which means in engaging with the *maschere*, the person behind the mask and underneath the costume is not seen by the spectators appreciating them, honouring preconceived notions of the carnival and reiterating

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[155] Interview with Australian man and Belgian woman, 6 February 2010.
[156] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.109.

carnival traditions, but there is nonetheless an awareness of the duality of the *maschere's* presence, pointing to the sympathetic breach which defines the carnival's theatricality.

Conclusion

The notion of Venice as theatre-city propounded by Lefebvre and Régulier has been a key frame for this chapter, and it is a notion which has been supported by the different perspectives that have been brought into dialogue throughout. Venice's theatricality has assuredly been established, by writings on the city by James, McCarthy, Debray, and Brodsky for instance, concordant with critical understandings of the city propounded by Lefebvre and Régulier, Eugene Johnson, and Nicolas Whybrow. Venice's theatricality involves histrionics and show, as a number of perspectives have indicated, but more broadly the chapter has emphasised a more nuanced understanding of the city's theatricality which posits the participation of the knowing spectator as fundamental to the city's identity. Crucially, the chapter has indicated that Venice's theatrical identity is core to understandings of its beauty, as different iterations of the city's beauty reiterate established perceptions; indeed repetition is a key link between beauty and theatricality in the expression of Venice's identity. The repeated rhythms of Lefebvre and Régulier are entirely consonant with perspectives on repetition provided by Schneider (remains), Scarry (begetting), Miller (afterlife), Carlson (ghosting), and wider perspectives in performance studies and disciplines beyond (Schechner, Butler, Pearson, Roach). By bringing these diverse concepts into dialogue here, this chapter has sought not only to emphasise the replicative nature of Venice's performances, but also to underline the interrelationality at play between people as they interact with each other and with the built environment of the city. Further, these concepts are indicative of a philosophical approach which emphasises the empowerment of the individual, allowing a level of resistance to domination: the theorists invoked herein

invariably refer to both individuality and to interrelationality between people. The dialogue that has arisen between these different perspectives also broadly indicates that through shared interactions, other times and frames are touched. As such, carnival participants, as they replicate past carnivals and engage with perceptions of beauty, are able to feel multiple times and spaces as they experience the event.

Tracy C. Davis's notion of theatricality as *dédoublement* suggests that spectators experience a 'sympathetic breach' that allows for a level of criticality and self-awareness.[157] Such an understanding of the theatricality at play in engagements with Venice and its carnival points to the active role of the spectator. Applying this 'sympathetic breach' outside of a theatre building, but instead to the interactions with the city and the carnival, underlines the essential role of the spectator in the exchange, ensuring the city and carnival are enacted and continue: thus the division between performer and spectator disintegrates as a collaborative and interflowing relationship emerges. The period of carnival deepens the theatricality on display owing to the presence of masked and costumed participants who promenade and pose in the iconic parts of the city, with the prevalence of photography contributing further layers to their performances, as will be explored in more detail in the third chapter. The theatricality on display in Canaletto's painting *Giovedí grasso in the Piazzetta* (Figure 4) effectively encapsulates the theatrical identity of the city during the golden era of the carnival, while also pointing to perceptions of Venice as beautiful: audiences are visible on all sides, while in the centre of the Piazzetta, all manner of entertainments are being enacted, have been enacted, or are about to be enacted, and the general aura of the image suggests idealistic views of form and colour. Transporting carnival participants from Canaletto's eighteenth-century carnival to the modern-day event might encourage complaints about the increase in tourism, which is regarded as the city's 'greatest menace' by some quarters.[158] However, Lefebvre and Régulier hold that: 'Tourism in Venice

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[157] Davis, 'Theatricality and Civic Society', p.145.
[158] Norwich, 'Introduction', p.56.

[…] does not suppress the theatricality of the city: one would say that it reinforces it'.[159] Indeed, the continuing popularity of the Venice carnival is indicative of this as tourists play a key role in enacting the event yearly; in doing so they are repeating rhythms of the carnival that have come before, engaging with others in the city and the built environment in a process of repetition, which sustains (interconnected) notions of Venice's theatricality and beauty.

The ubiquity of perceptions of Venice as beautiful has allowed for this chapter to engage with diverse materials from across different disciplines: art history, architecture, philosophy, film, and literature have been brought into dialogue with theatre and performance studies providing views which corroborate understandings of the city's beauty in terms of theatricality. Further insight has been provided by examining the key themes of the chapter in relation to photographs taken at the carnival and interviews with carnival participants, along with paintings which represent the carnival, and writings on the city. As these examples demonstrate, the beautiful identity of Venice depends upon the interaction of performer-spectators who enact the city and engage therewith, echoing past performances and extending them into the future. This has ramifications on understandings of beauty in general: seeing Venice's beauty as imbued with theatricality might seem to link the city's beauty to notions of show and histrionics. However, Venice's beauty is not only evident in the eye-catching and colourful costumes of the *maschere* or in the heavily decorated façade of St Mark's Basilica, but is also to be seen in the subtle tranquillity of an unremarkable square in the backstreets of the city, or in the understated yet sophisticated display of products in a shop window. Therefore, the beauty of Venice is not just tied up with a theatricality which suggests artifice, but is rather manifested on a number of levels, including in the hidden, less opulent aspects of the city. By employing the more nuanced understanding of theatricality which foregrounds the participation of the active and self-reflexive spectator in the performance of beauty, such performances can also be seen as possible sites for communality, interrelationality, and even of resistance to hegemony. This

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[159] Lefebvre and Régulier, p.187.

view is supported by Kathleen Marie Higgins's assertion that engagement with beauty makes

people more open, and is thus essential to political engagement.[160] The multiplicity of

interactions with the beauty of the city and carnival evidence creative, innovative, and

subversive responses. As Dave Beech asserts, beauty exists at the intersection of the

individual and society, with 'pleasure and play in that gap as well as critique, suspicion and

subversion', adding that beauty is 'not something given but is something that we do and

something that we change'.[161] This fluid understanding of beauty, and recognition of its

theatricality, provides participants of the carnival, as well as those who engage with the city

in non-carnival time, with a level of individual agency in how they enact and engage with the

city and with each other.

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[160] Kathleen Marie Higgins, 'Whatever happened to Beauty? A Response to Danto, 1996', in *Beauty*, ed. by Dave Beech (London: Whitechapel and the MIT Press, 2009), pp.31-35.
[161] Beech, p.18.

Chapter 2

Stillness, City, and Carnival

Introduction

Stillness is a key aspect of the twenty-first-century iteration of the Venice carnival: the fully costumed *maschere* in *volto* masks stand still to be seen, appreciated, and photographed by fellow carnival-goers, mainly in Piazza San Marco and in the adjacent Piazzetta. These figures represent an iconic, stereotypical view of the modern day carnival and their stillness intensifies both their beauty and their theatricality as they present themselves in handsome, eye-catching outfits in the public field of vision. Indeed, just as engagement with beauty at the carnival can be seen in theatrical terms, as the previous chapter exemplified, so too can still poses and moments in which people freeze be seen as theatrical. The *maschere* emulate the stillness of statuary and are thus positioned on an equal plane of aesthetic pleasure, illustrating the strong link between statuary and beauty as sculpture so frequently represents ideal images, whether as portable figurines, life-size statues, or monumental sculptures, which are designed to be beheld and adulated. In prehistoric societies, crudely made figurines were significant totems of fertility, as evidenced by the renowned Venus of Willendorf, carved in the thirtieth millennium BC. Antiquity saw the sculpting of idealised versions of human figures, which in turn inspired Renaissance artists and continue to inflect sculpture today.[1] The Egyptian Sphinx at Giza, the Greek Venus de Milo now held at the Louvre in Paris, Michelangelo's statue of David in Florence, and the Statue of Liberty in New York each illustrate this beholding of beauty in still sculpture. The posing *maschere* effectively take on this mantle of the inanimate artwork. As they are completely hidden underneath their carnival outfit, this association with statues is felt much more strongly than

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[1] Umberto Eco, *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea*, trans by. Alastair McEwen (London: MacLehose Press, 2010), pp.16-35 provide comparative tables which chart representations of the human form from prehistoric sculpture through to depictions in contemporary art and photography.

other carnival participants who may be costumed but who do not sport a full costume and mask. Just by seeing part of somebody's face, or their hair, or their ears, for example, makes the person's humanity clearly evident, while the fully-hidden bodies of the *maschere* verge on the inhuman. Nevertheless, their stillness is troubled by the fact that, under the costume, they are living beings, breathing, blinking, and holding themselves still. They are therefore simultaneously present as both the *maschera* represented by the costume, and as the person beneath the costume. As such, they appear on the border between the animate and inanimate

Because of their statuesque forms and the hidden nature of the fully costumed and masked *maschere*, these figures will be the focus of this chapter. Importantly, the *maschere* do not uniformly stand still, maintaining unending poses for the duration of carnival: they do move around and gesture. This is the paradox of the statuesque *maschere*: even in movement, they retain a still quality. Though posing in iconic parts of the city is a prominent feature of the *maschere* during carnival, many also relish the promenade. These *maschere* might walk around the Piazza or stand making graceful gestures against a suitable backdrop for the pleasure of the passersby and tourists that stop to appreciate them. This indicates that stillness at the carnival is not solely manifested in the motionless poses of *maschere* along the *bacino*, but also in the *maschere* who are in the process of promenading, gesturing, or interacting with their fellow carnival participants and photographers. The short documentary film *Incognitus?*, which explores the twenty-first-century iteration of the carnival, captures this aspect of the *maschere*: many are seen in the process of making graceful gestures, moving parts of their costumes, or walking about.[2] This paradox can be evidenced by Figure 1 in which three *maschere* can be seen in motion, walking past the Ducal Palace in the Piazzetta. The image captures each of them as they move, their legs and arms indicating their act of walking. The photograph has obviously frozen this moment in time, making their action still; nevertheless, these *maschere* indicate that in movement, they retain stillness: their carnival transformation enables them to appear like moving statues. It is the *volto* mask which feeds this paradox: its all-encompassing nature revealing only the masker's eyes

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[2] *Incognitus?*, dir. by Liliana Grzybowska, Kamil Chryscionka and Sarab Hadi (2010).

Figure 1 *Maschere* crossing the Piazzetta with the Ducal Palace in the background, 8 February 2010

means that a neutral stance is persistently maintained.

The paradoxical nature of the *maschere's* stillness indicates that a straightforward definition of the term appears to be elusive. The noun 'stillness' is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the condition or quality of being still […] absence of movement […] motionlessness'. While this definition illustrates that conventional understandings of stillness foreground motionlessness as a synonym, the *maschere* indicate that such a definition does not recognise the complicated plurality of stillness evident in movement, as exhibited in Figure 1 and in *Incognitus?*. Performer and sculptor Victoria Gray has written an illuminating essay on the employment of stillness in her own practice, and her approach applies to the paradoxical nature of the *maschere's* stillness. She avers:

In its apparent absence, movement becomes more present and we

acknowledge that binary oppositions between stillness and movement do not and cannot sensibly exist; stillness is within movement and movement is within stillness, each reciprocating the other.[3]

This observation accords with the stillness exhibited at the Venice carnival: rather than viewing the term as indicative of a lack of movement, a nuanced approach to stillness provides a frame for this chapter, recognising that a stark binary between movement and stillness is unhelpful. The *maschere* of the carnival demonstrate that stillness *is* within movement and movement *is* within stillness. As will be seen in this chapter, Gray's plural view of stillness is consonant with the approach of a number of scholars who have written on the intersections between stillness, art, and performance; among them Rebecca Schneider, Andy Lavender, and David Getsy, whose diverse approaches resonate with the nuanced view of stillness employed herein.

The microcosmic stillness of the carnival *maschere* reflects the macrocosmic stillness of the city. When one walks in the backstreets of Venice, one of the striking characteristics of the place is its stillness. Similarly, the monumentality of the city's grand buildings contributes to the still aesthetic. John Ruskin's nineteenth-century drawings and daguerreotypes of the city capture the connotations of stillness so readily applied to Venice, and which are closely related to notions of the city's beauty.[4] Such an aesthetic is continued in scenes of empty backstreets or vacant canals widely captured on postcards and in the photographs of tourists: images of Venice regularly reiterate understandings of the peaceful, quiet, empty cityscape which are strongly associated with the city's aesthetics, even as they reflect different gradations and interpretations of stillness. This indicates the varied intersections of photography, beauty, and stillness in understandings of Venice's identity. Closed shutters, deserted squares, and a tangible silence are all contributing factors to Venice's stillness, but emptiness and quiet are not equitable to stillness, as evidenced by the

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[3] Victoria Gray, 'Re-Thinking Stillness: Empathetic Experiences of Stillness in Performance and Sculpture', in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), pp.201-17 (p.201).
[4] Karen Burns, 'Topographies of Tourism: "Documentary" Photography and *The Stones of Venice*', *Assemblage*, 32 (1997), 22-44 (pp.25-26).

carnival *maschere* who evoke stillness in spite of their animate nature and their posing in vibrant, lively parts of the city, invariably accompanied by the buzz of the carnival cityscape in the background. Nevertheless, a silent canal or a deserted *campo* can be suggestive of the city's still aesthetics. Henry James writes of the 'haunted stillness' of being in an old Venetian building: 'the old ghosts seemed to pass on tip-toe on the marble floors'.[5] Here, James evokes Marvin Carlson's view of the ghosting of performances which leave haunting traces in the places they have been enacted. James has also written of the city's stillness as delicious and audible, suggesting Venice's stillness is both pleasurable and tangible.[6] This further demonstrates plurality in the interpretation of the city's stillness because it can sometimes be synonymous with emptiness or silence, but at other times it is motionlessness which is the defining feature. An unpeopled view of Venice, *à la* Ruskin, is understandably evocative of stillness, and appears to call to be filled, but other representations of the city have contributed to perceptions of the peopled cityscape, from the *vedute* of Canaletto to postcard depictions of the Grand Canal or Piazza San Marco. There is a sense therefore that the *maschere* effectively complete the view, complementing the stillness of the city and encapsulating essential aspects of the Venetian aesthetics: the backdrop of the city is fundamental to their appeal as they pose in iconic positions. The image of the posing *maschere* within the environment of the city effectively performs an idea of Venice, reiterating, or ghosting, performances and extending the carnival into the future. In turn, these performances depend upon fellow carnival participants/tourists who engage with the dual stillness of the city and the *maschere*, underlining the codependency of performance and spectatorship.

Theatre and performance are not normally seen as 'still' arts, theatres usually being places for movement or action on stage, which is viewed by an audience. However, as Schneider asserts in her study *Performing Remains*, the stillness of a pose can be deemed theatrical:

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[5] Henry James, *Italian Hours* (Grove Press: New York, 1959), p39.
[6] Ibid., p.55.

> The freeze or lag in time that is the moment of arrested stillness
> defines a pose as a pose and might grant the pose a kind of
> staginess, or theatricality, as if (paradoxically perhaps) theatricality
> were the very stuff of an inanimate stillness.[7]

Schneider's assertion underlines the possibility of seeing the still, the frozen, the posed as

theatrical. Furthermore, she adds that the importance of statues in ancient Greek and Roman

theatres underlines the interflow of performance and stillness:

> The niches for statuary [in classical theatres] and the statues
> themselves can remind us quite fulsomely that the 'live' occurred
> and occurs not as distinct from but in direct relation to the place of
> the frozen or stilled or suspended – yet arguably observant –
> statues. The live, so often composed in the striking of stills, takes
> place in the place of the still; and the still takes place live.[8]

This observation resonates with the view of Venice as a still stage-set, for the performances

of urban life, in and out of carnival, while the stillness of the carnival *maschere*, as an

iteration of stillness within the city, happens in the living moment of the city. Such a stance

pursues an understanding of stillness which complicates ideas of mere motionlessness,

proposing instead that stillness and action are interrelated and codependent, as Gray affirms

above. Schneider also refers here to the inanimate statues as 'observant', personifying them

and giving them a level of empowerment through their positioning as spectators. In this

context, although they initially appear to be the performer in the carnival exchange owing to

their transformation, the frozen, posing *maschere* take on the mantle of spectator as they

observe their fellow carnival participants in an interrelational exchange.

It is appropriate that stillness is brought into dialogue with the time-based art of

theatre as this illustrates its mutability, reflecting the motile stillness of the *maschere*. P. A.

Skantze asserts that 'the state of performance is motion', even if that be solely the

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[7] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.90.
[8] Ibid., p.145.

performer's respiration or the silent passing of time.[9] Indeed, her broad study of seventeenth-century theatre aims to show the collaboration between stillness and motion rather than viewing the terms as binary opposites.[10] The employment of stillness within theatre and performance has a rich and varied history, from the statues flanking the stage in the theatres of antiquity, alluded to by Schneider above, to the *tableaux vivants* of the medieval and Renaissance eras, which were still pictures presented by performers, typically as part of festivals and pageants. Such *tableaux* employed a live, stilled image in order to communicate a message to the often itinerant and illiterate audience. The Victorian era witnessed renewed interest in such *tableaux*, albeit for a new purpose, coinciding with the exciting invention of photography: the Victorian practice of presenting *tableaux vivants* in parlours was 'live performance for an era of pictorialism'.[11] From the mid-nineteenth century such *tableaux* inspired the *poses plastiques* tradition of posing beauties in music halls and circuses, exemplified by the nude female performers at the Windmill theatre in London's Soho, as Frank Mort delineates. He asserts:

> The presentation of the frozen semi-nude, or more usually pseudo-nude female body created with the aid of flesh-tinted tights and atmospheric lighting, frequently mimicked the elevated styles of visual and literary culture, such as Greek statuary or history painting, thereby suggesting a quasi-artistic aesthetic.[12]

Significantly, Mort highlights the affinity of the female nudes at the Windmill theatre with ancient Greek statuary and artistic representations of the human form, thereby emphasising the link between stillness and perceived beauty. This is important to engagement with the Venetian *maschere* as they equally emulate statuary through their poses, thus emboldening the link of the *maschere's* stillness to conceptions of beauty. As well as inanimate statuary,

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[9] P. A. Skantze, *Stillness in Motion in the Seventeenth-Century Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.3.

[10] Skantze, p.18.

[11] Andy Lavender, 'The living statue: Performer, poseur, posthuman', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 33, 2 (2013) 119-31 (p.123).

[12] Frank Mort, 'Striptease: the erotic female body and live sexual entertainment in mid-twentieth century London', *Social History*, 32, 1 (2007), 27-53 (p.31).

the *maschere* evoke the stillness of the *poses plastiques* performers and of statue performers more generally, in particular those street performers who pose still in highly touristed areas of modern metropolises with the hope of receiving donations from passersby, and who emulate monumental sculpture.[13]

Just as in the preceding chapter in which a simple binary between performer and spectator was destabilised by the intersections of beauty and theatricality, so too in this chapter stillness will trouble such a binary. This 'troubling' is resonant of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, especially her theory that gender constructs are strongly inflected by society, and that given constructs can be challenged by people in a multiplicity of ways. As well as Butler, figures within performance studies and beyond, including Erving Goffman and Richard Schechner, have established the view that the self is constructed performatively, with people engaging in acts of citationality, continuously repeating acts which have been learnt from or encouraged by society. These performances can include private acts, even the way one sits or stands, the way one drinks or eats, or more public acts, such as one's mode of speaking and one's bearing. Replication and citationality are seen as fundamental aspects of the stillness of the carnival *maschere*, as the statuesque figures pick up and repeat the poses which they perceive as typical of the carnival, pointing to the infinitesimal individual iterations of the event and suggesting their stillness is haunted. Crucially, Butler's view of the performativity of gender points to the possibility to challenge established social discourses. In relation to stillness, the art historian David Getsy has significantly identified the performativity of stillness in his discussion of the history of sculpture: he asserts 'sculpture's stillness is nothing short of a performative act'.[14] He thereby positions stillness as a site of resistance, and in this, he points to the notion that stillness does something and is part of a process of reiteration. While Getsy's focus is on inanimate sculpture, his assertions on stillness resonate with the stillness and sculptural forms of the Venetian *maschere*; he goes as far as to suggest that the statue is something of a

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[13] Lavender, 'The living statue', p.119.

[14] David J. Getsy, 'Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performativity, and Passive Resistance', *Criticism*, 56, 1 (2014), 1-20 (p.10).

'defiant agent', because of its act of stillness.[15] For him, it is the corporeality of the still statue, the sharedness of the space, and the relationality between the statue and its viewers that effects this level of resistance. Of import, he considers how the statue's stillness resists control or manipulation. His provocative assertion of resistance points to this chapter's view of the carnival *maschere* as defiant agents, building upon the previous chapter's assertions that the broad interrelations between performance and spectatorship in the city and at the carnival enable a level of resistance and subversion to hegemony, particularly through a fostering of shared participation and unmonitored interrelationality between people.

The conventional polarity between the performer and spectator positions the performer in the active role and the spectator in the passive, a view which has come under increased scrutiny in recent decades, as delineated in the thesis introduction. Jacques Rancière's work *The Emancipated Spectator* posits the need for a new theatre which inhibits the possibility for the spectator to be a passive recipient. However, the *maschere* of the carnival show that the binary of activity and passivity is not a helpful way to describe the interactions at play, something Gray recognises in her own engagement with stillness in her practice, and a notion touched on by other scholars considering stillness, who emphasise the reciprocity and fluidity of performance and spectatorship. Claire Bishop has reflected on the dissolving of this binary in her study *Artificial Hells*, engaging with the theories of Rancière and Nicolas Bourriaud. As she avers, the traditional relationship between the artist, the art object, and the audience has been overturned:

> The artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete
> objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*; the work
> of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as
> an ongoing or long-term *project* with an unclear beginning and end;
> while the audience, previously conceived as a 'viewer' or
> 'beholder', is now repositioned as a co-producer or *participant*.[16]

Importantly, however, Bishop discourages an unbalanced focus on a binary of 'active' and

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[15] Ibid., p. 11.
[16] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p.2.

'passive' spectatorship, stating: 'The binary of active/passive is reductive and unproductive, because it serves only as an allegory of inequality'.[17] From one perspective, the spectators at the carnival may be seen as active in their engagement with stillness, as they move about freely, taking photographs, positioning themselves for the best shot, and interacting with their fellow carnival-goers. Like the spectators who engage with Gray's stillness in performance, they become active, embodied subjects. The *maschera*, on the other hand, can be seen to take on a level of passivity as they pose still for the cameras, and are effectively reacting to what their fellow carnival-goers do and how they respond to them. The emphasis laid on their eyes, which are freer from the constraints of their masks and costumes, makes them take on the role of viewer (or 'observant statues'), watching their fellow carnival-goers' behaviours and interactions unfold before them. However, the rich variety of carnival experience indicates that applying binary labels of active and passive is too sweeping. Rather, activity and passivity can be viewed as reciprocal, in the same way as performance and spectatorship. Gray elucidates:

> Paradoxically, inaction becomes action, artistically and politically, physically and conceptually. Thus, stillness performs both a conceptual movement towards new modes of being in and watching performance; and a cultural movement towards new ways of being in and watching the world.[18]

Thus stillness challenges conventional understandings of performance, allowing new ways of seeing and participating in performance, and herein Gray echoes Bishop's view that participatory art practices can be subversive in that they elicit 'experiences that enlarge our capacity to imagine the world and our relations anew'.[19] Gray's open view of stillness informs this chapter, as it destabilises the dictionary understanding of stillness as motionlessness, in turn demonstrating that the stillness of the Venice carnival indicates that a dividing line between performer and spectator cannot be explicitly drawn.

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[17] Ibid., p.38.
[18] Gray, p.204.
[19] Bishop, p.284.

Manifestation of Stillness

The appearance of the city of Venice is crucial to the identity of the carnival: the city

provides a distinct backdrop which carnival participants pose in front of, take pictures of,

and engage with as part of their carnival experience. The city's antiquated appearance,

impressive architecture, and quaint backstreets are suggestive of stillness; this quality to the

city is evocatively described by Joseph Brodsky, as he relates an experience of a night-time

gondola ride:

> We moseyed and zigzagged like an eel through the silent town
> hanging over our heads, cavernous and empty, resembling at this
> late hour a vast, largely rectangular coral reef or a succession of
> uninhabited grottoes [...] The moon [...] was barely available to the
> sheet of water, and the gondola's gliding too was absolutely
> noiseless. In fact, there was something distinctly erotic in the
> noiseless and traceless passage of its lithe body upon the water [...]
> a perfect match of their equally lacquered surfaces.[20]

Brodsky's description is indicative of perceptions of the city's stillness, particularly as he

evokes silence and emptiness in his experience. The noiselessness and tracelessness of the

gliding gondola suggests stillness, while identifying the water as a sheet and as lacquered

points to the possibility for it to be seen as a still element. Figure 2 reflects this Venetian

stillness: a deserted backstreet with little sign of movement. Even the canal waters appear

still, with the merest ripple suggestive of the activity beneath the water's surface, a veritable

sheet of water. The closed shutters and covered boats intensify the sense of stillness in the

image. The absence of motion, lack of any visible human or animal activity, the deserted

nature of the scene, and the implicit silence accompanying the image are all contributing

factors to the city's stillness. However, even the water in this image, an element which

contributes to the city's uniqueness, provides a challenge to the notion of stillness as

motionlessness, and exhibits the city's consonance with performance: though water may

sometimes appear still, as it often does in the canals of Venice, this belies the continual

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[20] Joseph Brodsky, *Watermark: An Essay on Venice* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp.127-29.

Figure 2 View of Venice, 6 March 2011

movement and changes that are going on within. As water is a constantly changing

substance, it provides an interesting analogy for Venice, which can also appear still, while

under the surface movement and change are constant. The stillness of Figure 2 points to

movement in that it suggests calm after and before something else. The image is especially

evocative of a stereotypical ideal of Venice: a romantic, watery, deserted urban view which

contrasts with images of urbanity in cities the world over. A lone bag of refuse waiting for

collection is about the only sign of recent human activity within the image, though the scene

also implicitly contains the movement of the person photographing the scene, including their

entering the scene, dwelling on its aesthetic properties, and deciding to take a photograph,

before moving away again. The presence of the photographer further challenges the stillness

represented within the image as well as the stillness of the physical document of the image.

When one is strolling through a quiet part of Venice in the day or night and is

confronted by the city's special quality of stillness there is simultaneously a quality of

expectation as one waits for the stillness to change or be interrupted. This points to the

notion of presence and absence, as in engagement with the built environment there is the

immanent possibility of movement or alteration, which is sensed as a form of absence, or

expectation. Part of the absence felt when engaging with the city is the absence of people and

events from the city's past: the knowledge of Venice's place in history, as well as

preconceptions of the place, accentuate this feeling of absence. In addition there is the

immanent possibility of someone appearing or something happening. The concept that

presence contains absence in performance is asserted by theatre scholar Jon Erickson, and it

is a germane notion in relation to Venice as the representational and reiterative quality of

both the city and the *maschere* points back in time and towards the future. Erickson states:

> 'Presence' in the theater is physicality in the present that at the
> same time is grounded in a form of absence. It is something that has
> unfolded, is read against what has been seen, and presently
> observed in expectation as to what will be seen. It means that the
> performer is presenting herself to the audience, but at the same time
> holding something back, creating expectation […]. In other words,
> not only does the notion of presence in performance imply an
> absence, but that absence itself is the possibility of future
> movement; so paradoxically, presence is based not only in the
> present, but in our expectation of the future.[21]

This notion of absence about what has been and what is to come bears upon Figure 2 in that

there is a strong sense of absence and expectation as one looks upon the scene, just as an

audience member would feel on looking upon a stage-set at the start of a play. Erickson's

observations point to the multidirectionality and crosstemporality of presence. The

presence/absence paradox of performance can be linked to tension and release, a concept

also propounded by Erickson, foregrounding the inherent expectation in any presented act.

The walker's and carnival-goer's engagement with Venice's stillness is like that experienced

by the theatre spectator, in Erickson's logic, looking toward the future: 'Everything on stage

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[21] Jon Erickson, *The Fate of the Object: From Modern Object to Postmodern Sign in Performance, Art, Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p.62.

carries with it, to begin with, an aura of futurity'.[22] The stage-set quality of Venice has this aura of futurity, which is intensified by the presence of the posing *maschere*, who effectively complete the stage matter; the relationship between the setting and the *maschere* is interdependent.

The posing of the *maschere* resonates with civic sculpture, reflecting the flexible approach to sculpture that has arisen out of modernity and postmodernity. As Rosalind Krauss observes, the term sculpture has been 'kneaded and stretched and twisted in an extraordinary demonstration of elasticity, a display of the way a cultural term can be extended to include just about anything', indicating the malleability of sculpture.[23] The work of British artist Antony Gormley reflects this dynamic approach and his sculptures provide parallels with the *maschere*. *Another Place* (1997), now permanently installed at Crosby beach near Liverpool, consists of one hundred cast-iron statues made from casts of the artist's body placed across the beach and looking out to sea. In this work, Gormley seeks to investigate stillness and movement, and time and tide.[24] As the tides come in and go out, they bring constant change to the artwork. The still statues change according to where the water is, how much sand surrounds them, whether barnacles have attached themselves to the statues, and what the sea and the weather do to them. These statues are still, but they are in a constant process of movement and becoming. Visitors to Crosby beach can engage with the Gormley casts in multiple ways, touching them, moving around them, and photographing them. At points some of the statues are half-hidden or completely hidden by the sands or the sea. Like the statues in *Another Place*, the *maschere* of the carnival can be engaged with in this manner as carnival-goers move around them, touch them, and take photographs of and with them. The manifestation of the urban life of the city inflects what the *maschere* do and how they behave. The important role that water plays in Gormley's artwork increases its

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[22] Jon Erickson, 'Tension/release and the production of time in performance', in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, ed. by Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) pp.82-99 (p.96).

[23] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (London: The MIT Press, 1986), p.277.

[24] Antony Gormley, *Another Place*, 1997 <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/230> [accessed 12 June 2013].

affiliation to Venice, as the tides of the canal waters and the lagoon equally ebb and flow,

revealing algae and barnacles on the foundations of buildings and on the wooden poles

dotted across the lagoon. The famous *acqua alta* of the lagoon, a result of high tides, is prone

to fill Piazza San Marco and the Piazzetta and other parts of the city, so raised platforms are

linked together to form footways in order to allow the city to function as normal. Like the

sea waters that cover the statues of Gormley at Crosby beach, the *acqua alta* of the lagoon

leaves its mark on the city, and contributes to the erosion of Venice's buildings. The *acqua*

alta provides a stark message of the effects of time and tide, emphasising the change of the

city over its lifetime. The watery identity of Venice lends itself to a view of becoming and

motion made evident in the *maschere*. As water links the city with time, so the *maschere's*

reiterative quality evokes the past and implies futurity.

Nicolas Whybrow reflects on Gormley's later work *Event Horizon*, installed in

London in 2007; this work replicates the motifs of *Another Place*, this time consisting of

thirty statues of Gormley mainly positioned on rooftops around the South Bank Centre. As

Whybrow asserts, 'these figures exuded their extraordinary presence […] through *stillness*

and through their seeming ubiquity'.[25] In a strong sense, these thirty figures resonate with the

posing and promenading statues of the *maschere*: the statues of *Event Horizon* are connected

and form an ensemble, much like the carnival *maschere* who, although separate and

individual, inevitably share a sense of collaboration. Their looking outwards implicates the

viewer, as Whybrow observes of Gormley's casts, repositioning the viewer as the performer,

and this sensation is heightened when the *maschere* are still. Whybrow explains:

> The sculptures you might customarily find exhibited on the terraces
> have been displaced to the rooftops of the city and you, the
> spectator, have taken their place at the epicentre of this invisible
> web that has been spun. Thus, you are effectively being invited to
> position yourself in relation to the urban horizon demarcated for
> you. Your being there, looking out, *is* the event in question. And
> the city these figures accentuate is no mere backdrop - a dull, flat
> 'panorama' to be stared at blankly, to be consumed - but a dynamic

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[25] Nicolas Whybrow, *Art and the City* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p.131.

spatial configuration that implies an exchange of looks.[26]

The placing of the figures in *Event Horizon* in the urban environment increases their affinity to the *maschere*, and emphasises the interplay between the statues/*maschere* and the viewers. Significantly, the viewers are repositioned as performer-spectators, acting within the space of the city and engaging with the built environment. Essentially, the participation of the spectator is identified as crucial to the event, underlining the interrelation between the site of the city, the stillness of the *maschere*, and the participation of these performer-spectators.

The triangulation of *maschere*, city, and performer-spectator is evidenced by Figure 3, which depicts a typical view of two carnival *maschere* in Piazza San Marco posing still for a photograph and taking on statuesque forms through their lack of motion. This photograph demonstrates the claim that the all-encompassing nature of their costumes accentuates their stillness and statuesque quality, while also representing the interdependence of the *maschere* with the typical Venetian backdrop. The positioning of this pair in the city's main Piazza allows them to take advantage of the surroundings of the built environment, enabling the carnival and the city to commune with one another. The way in which their carnival costumes cover their whole bodies makes their relation to statues even stronger. Admittedly, their stillness is partly inflected by the fact of being photographed: this couple were traversing the Piazza for their carnival promenade and paused to be pictured. However, their stillness is replicated a thousandfold by carnival participants who pose to be appreciated, as indicated in the previous chapter by the images of the *maschere* in the Piazzetta and elsewhere in the city. On close inspection, the background of this image reveals contrasting movement as people move about the Piazza and look in different directions, with one fur-clad woman in the process of taking a photograph. This image suggests immanent mutability as it is a snapshot in time. In my engagement with these two *maschere*, the moment of stillness effectively captured by the photograph was immediately followed by my moving away and their moving away from the pose they held, with a gesture of thanks on my part

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[26] Ibid., p.132.

Figure 3 *Maschere* **in Piazza San Marco, 8 February 2010**

and a gesture of acknowledgement, a gentle nod without speaking, on theirs. Such an experience was repeated several times throughout my experience of carnival. During the carnival, I found the stillness of the *maschere* to be affective, making me stop and stare at the image of the masked figures in front of me, whether they were frozen in a pose, or were gesturing and interacting. Indeed, affective responses to statues are foregrounded as a common feature of texts on sculpture, as both Lavender and Getsy state. Both writers refer to Ovid's story of Pygmalion, who became so obsessed with the statue he created that the statue appears to come to life, indicating the power of still statues to induce affect, and the way in which perceived beauty induces obsession.[27] My experience of the *maschere* was particularly coloured by photography as I wielded my camera and took scores of photographs of the different *maschere* with whom I engaged. In my engagement with the *maschere* I found that my ability to move around them and decide on which angle would be best for the photograph emphasised their stillness. In a sense, I experienced a micro-level of obsession with the *maschere*, alert to their beauty, eager to capture as many images of them as I could, and keen to see more and more of them. As I engaged with one, I sought out another, particularly to see if a different *maschera* may have a better costume or appear more beautiful, and therefore worthy of being photographed. This level of obsession was inflected by the awareness of having a limited time, in that the carnival is temporary, and by the awareness of my own presence there also being limited.

Furthermore, my engagement with the *maschere* was inflected by the people around me, as fellow tourists/carnival participants were also seeking to take the best photograph they could, sometimes inserting themselves into the image so as to be seen with the *maschera*, and in these cases accentuating the stillness as they too froze for the camera lens. At points, the affect at play led to a level of competition with fellow carnival participants, a result of the obsession to see as many beautiful *maschere* as possible in the setting of the city and within a specific timeframe. At points, a flurry of activity surrounded a single *maschera* as several picture-taking tourists sought to take the opportunity to snap an ideal image of

[27] Lavender, 'The living statue', p.122; Getsy, 'Acts of Stillness', p.7.

carnival. This phenomenon is particularly well documented in the film *Incognitus?*, which depicts a scene of a number of *maschere* posing at short distances from one another along the *bacino* in the Piazzetta, while opposite them is a throng of tourist carnival-goers in a long line. In this group, people move forward and backward, kneel down, interact with each other, and take photographs of the still *maschere*. This scene of the documentary speaks to my own experience of interacting with the *maschere* in the Piazzetta: I was alerted to the fact that we, grouped together as spectators, were active through our engagement with each other, sometimes through very subtle acts like merely waiting for another participant to finish taking their photograph, and this activity contrasted significantly with the frozen *maschere*. Even for those *maschere* who were visibly more mobile by promenading or gesturing, there was usually a willingness to interact with me as an observer and photographer. While it is customary for tourists and holidaymakers to engage in similar such behaviour at famous landmarks in order to document and affirm their experience, the striking feature of the *maschere* is their liveness: unlike the statues of the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen or James Joyce in Dublin, both assuredly solid and still, the additional *frisson* of the *maschere* is that they are breathing, living beings, capable of responding to the photographers and able to break their pose and move away should they choose to. This liveness intensifies the sense of there being a limited time period to the stillness of the *maschere*, as there is an immanent possibility for motion.

Indeed, the knowledge of the *maschere* as animate beings indicates that they are in a state of becoming: their humanity implies a constant state of flux and change. This understanding of the human body is supported by the view of theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte:

> The human body is not a material like any other, to be shaped and controlled at will. It constitutes a living organism, constantly engaged in the process of becoming, of transformation. The human body knows no state of being, it exists only in a state of becoming. It recreates itself with every blink of the eye; every breath and every movement bring forth a new body. For that reason, the body

is ultimately elusive.[28]

Thus, an absence is sensed in engagement with the body: there is always a feeling that the body is elusive, undermining any concept of the body as an instance of pure being. Fischer-Lichte's observation indicates that in engaging with the body in performance, spectators are aware of an absence: the presented body can never be fully seen as it is constantly in a state of becoming. This is in spite of apparent stillness, thus contrasting with established views in philosophy and criticism of still things as pure beings, definitely existing as they are and not changing, which chimes with the conception of stillness as motionlessness. Plato, for instance, values the originality of being, which is why he laments mimesis, which, in his view, removes things even further from what they really are. However, the Platonic emphasis on being is challenged by views of becoming, expounded in classical philosophy by Heraclitus. The famous aphorism attributed to Heraclitus that 'no man can ever step in the same river twice' has widely been interpreted as a philosophical assertion of flux and change. In modern philosophy, Gilles Deleuze has been a strong proponent of becoming as a philosophical outlook, taking up Heraclitus' position. As Claire Colebrook has shown, Deleuze's notion of becoming is tied up with repetition and difference, challenging the stability of philosophy: in *Anti-Oedipus*, written with co-author Félix Guattari, Deleuze questions why established reason and thought should be accepted, proposing instead creative approaches and intersections. Significantly, and in concordance with concepts in performance studies, Deleuze propounds the notion that the only true repetition is the repetition of difference, asserting there is an element of simulation in the very original object, thereby underlining the interflow between diverse iterations.[29]

Becoming as a philosophical framework is thus a pertinent frame to apply to Venice's stillness as it points to the level of interplay between people at the carnival, thereby

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[28] Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Appearing as embodied mind - defining a weak, a strong and a radical concept of presence', in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, ed. by Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.103-18 (p.111).

[29] Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.97-99.

challenging notions of performers and spectators at different poles. In relation to Figure 3, the two *maschere* depicted appear as existing beings, seen in the field of vision and, in that moment of stillness, could be construed as unchanging. However, the fact that they are costumed carnival participants who are presenting an alternative identity by their transformation exhibits the instability of their being: who they are and what they represent can be questioned by others who perceive them. They are figures in a process of becoming: their pose is referential and reiterative, pointing to earlier carnivals and to future events. Their presence is complemented and completed by their fellow carnival-goers and by the background of the city. Though the image is evocative of stillness, the background of the picture suggests the hustle and bustle of Venice's cityscape: people talking and engaging with each other, people walking around, the clinking of cups and glasses at the Piazza's bars and the varied soundscape of the busy Piazza. Their pose is also evidently temporal, as they have interrupted their promenade for the photograph. In this context, becoming is a frame confluent with notions of stillness as codependent with movement. Part of the paradoxical appeal of the *maschere* is that they appear as statues, but their representational quality is strongly evident, suggesting the person hidden beneath: their presence as living beings is a constant reminder of their state of becoming. As John Mack observes: 'The term "mask" implicitly acknowledges human agency, that which is masked or concealed; but the resulting masquerade has a presence even if everyone is well aware that masking is, after all, someone dressing up'.[30] In Fischer-Lichte's terms, there is the presence of both the phenomenal body of the performer and the semiotic body of the figure they represent, in this case the character of the *maschera*.[31] Lavender comments on this quality in statue performers: 'herein lies the paradox, for the statue performer also conjures the originary presence of the actor'.[32] Human statues in city streets, like the *maschere* posing along the edge of the *bacino*, are dependent upon the interactions they expect with passersby. In both contexts, there is usually an all-

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[30] John Mack, 'Introduction: About Face', in *Masks: The Art of Expression*, ed. by John Mack (London: British Museum Press, 1994), pp.8-31 (p.12).
[31] Fischer-Lichte, 'Appearing as embodied mind', p.112.
[32] Lavender, 'The living statue', p.128.

encompassing costume, but with both human statues and the carnival *maschere* the presence of the person, or actor, underneath the costume can be seen, emphasising the presence/absence paradox of the human body. Lavender avers: 'we are presented with the inescapable corporeality of the actor along with the actor's effacement in appearing as figure rather than flesh'.[33] The *maschera*, like the statue performer, is simultaneously present and absent as both represented figure and as the performer beneath. Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye concur with such a view as they propose an understanding of presence which is 'produced and received in unstable and changing encounters'; indeed their study *Performing Presence* posits the view of presence as processual and in emergence.[34]

Statue performance is akin to the posing of the *maschere*, and, according to Lavender, it is a phenomenon that has burgeoned on city streets the world over, and particularly since the turn of the millennium; in Holland there has even been a World Statue Festival since 2005.[35] This reflects a climate in which outdoor performances are encouraged by local authorities because they create a lively and positive atmosphere.[36] Lavender asserts: 'By way of its visual representation, statue performance is pretending not to be performance at all, and claims to evoke another artwork entirely, the monumental representational sculpture disported around cities worldwide'.[37] His article is important here because of his emphasis on the interrelationality at play between statue performers and passersby, which reflects the plurality of interactions at the carnival. He views statue performers as ciphers for acting, as the statue performance is self-contained and the theatrical employment of costume, make-up, and pose applies. On one hand, the watchability of the statue and its physical presence makes it appear as an instance of being: 'The performer is manifest. Whilst this is a clarified instance of display, statue performance also presents a concentrated form of *dasein*. The performer simply *is*; in a moment of acted embodiment that is also an instance of

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye, *Performing Presence: Between the Live and the Simulated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p.25.

[35] Lavender, 'The living statue', p.123.

[36] Bim Mason, *Street Theatre and Outdoor Performance* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.9.

[37] Lavender, 'The living statue', p.119.

being'.[38] This view seems more applicable to the statue performers than to the *maschere* as extended stillness is *de rigueur* for the former, while the latter manifest themselves in multiple ways. The *maschere* are not always still in the way that statue performers are, but there is an implication nonetheless that even in momentary stillness the presence of the *maschere* definitively exists as pure being. However, Lavender highlights the contradiction in the statues' apparent being by immediately suggesting a quality of becoming. He considers both the fluid site of their stillness and the way in which statue performers are at liberty to move at will and present themselves elsewhere:

> Statue performance usually takes place within a public setting where pedestrians themselves are in drift. The location is typically available for performance as a place of posing and spectating encountered *en dérive*. The statue creates an urban *mise en scène* that juxtaposes bustle, promenade and perambulation with stillness and separation. It interrupts movement not only by virtue of its own fixity but in the pause it produces in those who pass by. The statue, then, remakes both space and time through an insistent in-action.[39]

The phenomenon of statue performance is seen as part of the interflowing urban *mise en scène*, forever drifting and changing. This is certainly the case for the Venetian *maschere* too, posing in busy, vibrant parts of the city, contrasting with the constantly changing *mise en scène*. The *maschere* contrast with statue performers, however, in that the backdrop before which they pose is distinctly Venice, while statue performers have a much freer choice of where to pose, provided there is plenty of tourist footfall. Statue performers also contrast with the carnival figures in that they have the custom of responding to donations in their upturned cap: for viewers who engage with the statue, there is an understanding that when a donation is made to the performer, there will be a movement or gesture which contrasts with the present stillness, effecting a strong level of expectation. At first invoking *dasein*, and then moving on to suggest the *dérive* quality of living statues, Lavender pointedly identifies the interrelations of being and becoming in the statue, which resonate

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[38] Ibid., p.121.
[39] Ibid.

with the complexities of the stillness of the carnival *maschere*.

The fact that the carnival *maschere* are at liberty to break their pose and move off as and when they choose marks them as distinct from performance artists who have chosen to employ extended stillness in their practice, challenging both their own endurance and that of their spectators. Fischer-Lichte relates a detailed account of the performance of *Lips of Thomas* in Austria in 1975 by the esteemed performance artist Marina Abramović, in which she stayed still for lengthy periods, emphasising and intensifying the shocking abuse which she inflicted on her own person as part of the performance, before the audience could take no more and interrupted the stillness themselves, coming to Abramović's aid.[40] Indeed, durational performance is an ongoing feature of Abramović's practice, exhibited in her work *The Artist is Present* in 2010 in which she sat in silence opposite her audience members. In 2014 Abramović performed *512 Hours* which maintained this theme, as she performed every day for more than sixty days between 10am and 6pm at London's Serpentine Gallery. During this period, Abramović also curated three evenings of film with the separate themes of 'Stillness', 'Nothing', and 'Movement', further exhibiting the importance of these interlinked aspects of her work.[41] The motif of stillness in Abramović's practice highlights the necessity to reassess conventional distinctions between notions of active performers and passive spectators. In such performance work, the interaction between performer and spectator is marked by a blurring of labels of activity and passivity. Helen Freshwater underlines Abramović's often radical approach in which the audience are positioned as co-creators.[42] Although the stillness of the *maschere* does not have the same association with endurance, there are some parallels with Abramović's *oeuvre* in that there is a similar repositioning of the spectator as active: spectators engaging with the frozen *maschere* can move around the figures, change their perspectives and even take on a level of dominance over the still figures. The action of sitting still as a performance has also been executed by

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[40] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. by Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.11-13.

[41] Serpentine Gallery <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/marina-abramovic-512-hours> [accessed 7th January 2015].

[42] Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.62.

Singaporean artist Amanda Heng, who brought the tram network of Dresden to a stop by setting up a table and chairs to drink tea with prospective audience members in the middle of the tram tracks, and posing for photographs as the consequences of her act unfolded.[43] The British-born performance artist John Court also uses stillness in his work and, similarly to Abramović's *512 Hours*, has used the trope of the eight-hour day, reflecting the length of the normal working day. In his piece entitled *Standing up for 8 Hours*, first performed in Finland in 2004, he stands still, pushing himself and the viewers of this work to consider stillness and movement, and how his stillness resonates with daily life. The *maschere* contrast with Court through their use of full costume, while in his work, the living, breathing body is never fully effaced: his face is uncovered and his costume is fairly nondescript. Similarly, in *512 Hours*, Marina Abramović is unquestionably present as a human entity. Contrastingly, the *maschere* are hidden behind their costumes and masks, momentarily effacing their quality of becoming by adopting statuesque forms. Court's other performance pieces retain the trope of stillness, including a piece executed as part of Infr'action Venezia, a curated festival of performance art which coincided with the press launch of the 2013 Venice Biennale. In this untitled piece he attached his left arm to a tree branch in the public gardens in Venice and stayed still for two and a half hours, standing atop a building brick. Images from this work evidence the strain that he must have been under in holding himself in this awkward position for such an amount of time.[44] Evidently, such durational acts are marked by a level of kinaesthetic empathy between the performer and the viewer.

Indeed, the role that stillness plays in performance art indicates that theatre-makers and performers find it to be an effective and affective tool, not least because of the empathetic relation that arises. Seeing somebody pose still for a lengthy period, whether in

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[43] Ray Langenbach, 'Moving Pictures: The persistence of locomotion', *Performance Research*, 12, 2 (2007), 114-24 (p.119).
[44] John Court <http://www.johncourtnow.com> [accessed 4 October 2015]; Infr'action Venezia 2013, Program <http://infractionvenice.org/gall.php?v=fs&galid=51&albid=862> [accessed 4 October 2015]. Court has also participated in the main Infr'action festival, which has been running for a decade in Sète, France, and which the Infr'action Venezia festival was born of. He also participated in the third edition of Infr'action Venezia in 2015, the publicity material for which included an image of another of Court's performance pieces engaging with stillness: Infr'action Venezia 2015 <http://infractionvenice.org/infraction-venezia-3.html> [accessed 4 October 2015].

an event marked 'performance' or elsewhere, inevitably creates a sense of empathy on the

part of a spectator. Victoria Gray has described moments of extended stillness in her own

and others' work using the term 'action sculpture': that is sculpture formed by a live body. In

such work, the physicality of the body is essential in making the sculpture come into

existence, akin to the traditions of the *tableaux vivants* or *poses plastiques*. Empathy is

something Gray desires her spectators to feel; for her, the close proximity of the spectators to

her 'action sculpture', coupled with the stillness itself, enables those spectators to empathise

with her as performer. As one views a street performer acting as a statue, one becomes more

alert to the performer's even slightest of tremors, and this translates, albeit to a lesser extent,

into the carnival environment in Venice in the sense that carnival-going spectators stop and

view posing *maschere* and pay close attention to their stillness. Contrasting with

performance artists who employ extended and sometimes painful periods of stillness, like

Gray, Abramović, and Court, the *maschere's* stillness is usually short-lived, and if they are

posing to be photographed by fellow carnival-goers, they can easily adjust their pose, their

stance, or the direction in which they look in response to the people around them.

Nevertheless, the knowledge that the *maschere* are living beings is evident in engagement

with these figures, effecting a level of reciprocity and sharedness of experience, as Gray

elucidates:

> As spectators perceive a performer, they too are performing
> neuromuscular movements by experiencing and perceiving the
> performance through their own bodies. This strongly supports the
> notion of kinesthetic empathy […] as a micro, intercorporeal
> exchange between performer and spectator.[45]

This illustrates the interrelation between the performer and spectator that, Gray maintains, is

intense in the presence of a performer's stillness. Indeed, Gray describes stillness as an

apparatus of her work and suggests that by seeing and hearing less, the spectator sees and

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[45] Gray, p.203.

hears more.[46] The *maschere* of the carnival are assuredly part of an intercorporeal exchange between other carnival participants who can move around them, photograph them, and even touch them. The attention paid to the *maschere* and the appreciation implied through the extensive photographing which takes place points to the reciprocal exchange between the performer and spectator. Gray avers: 'An active spectator is as active as a performer, particularly if through kinesthetic empathy they embody and partake in a shared experience with me'.[47] This implies a level of interrelational communication between the performer and spectator as they respond to each other in an affective exchange, evident at the carnival as the different participants interact with one another.

Stillness as Resistance

The notion that the *maschere* present a level of resistance is congruent with Gray's perspective on stillness which refers to movement: her own employment of stillness is itself an act of resistance to her conservatoire training as a dancer. Challenging received conventions that rely on movement, Gray states: 'In stillness I was able to reconsider the impact this [conservatoire] training and its implicit ideology had made on my body and my self, having been interpolated into a powerful ideological system'.[48] This personal observation strikes a chord with notions of performativity, particularly to Butler's theory of the way that people perform gender as part of a socially inflected process which positions men and women at different poles, with an overarching, totalizing discourse of heterosexuality. For Butler, even one's sex can be seen as performed in this context: 'There is not a biological "truth" at the heart of gender; sex and gender are both cultural

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[46] Ibid., p.206.
[47] Ibid., p.215.
[48] Ibid., p.203.

categories'.[49] Butler draws on the notion of interpellation associated with theorist Louis

Althusser, suggesting that from the moment a baby is born they are interpellated with

identity constructs inflected by society: 'It's a girl!' and 'It's a boy!' being examples of early

interpellation.[50] This is reflected by Gray above where she states that she felt interpellated

into an ideology: her dance training made her fit with a standard, established discourse which

emphasised movement in performance, something expected by the performer and the

spectator engaging with dance. She therefore embraced stillness as an aesthetic component

of her practice that 'challenges the politics of movement and economy of bodies'.[51] In this,

Gray shows that the employment of stillness challenges totalizing discourses and hegemonic

ideologies. Seen in this context, the *maschere* of the Venice carnival can be seen as resistant

figures, not only resistant to binary distinctions of performer and spectator, but also resistant

to the movement which, Gray asserts, classifies modernity. Like Gray's employment of

stillness in her practice to combat the interpellation which she feels she has been subjected

to, the *maschere's* employment of stillness also challenges the interpellation of ideological

discourses. In particular, the complete transformation of the *maschere* through all-

encompassing masks and costumes challenges the 'economy of bodies', as Gray puts it,

hiding sex and gender identities and arguably making standard acts of citationality redundant

as the continual performance of self can be sidestepped. It cannot be said that this is always

the case for all *maschere*, and indeed for those who promenade as a couple or as part of a

group, there is a shared knowledge of who is who beneath the masks, even if their identities

are hidden from other carnival participants. Nevertheless, the way that the costume and mask

completely cover the participants somewhat delimits citational, sedimented acts of self;

while for those *maschere* who engage in the carnival singularly, an escape from the

interpellation of social inflection can be arrived at to a certain degree. The mask and costume

are essential to this transformation but, as Gray shows, stillness plays a significant part in

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[49] John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p.141.

[50] Judith Butler, 'Burning Acts - Injurious Speech', in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. by Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.197-227 (p.203).

[51] Gray, p.203.

enabling this challenge to the interpellated self: in staying still, and in particular with a neutral stance, the body does not engage in citational acts which could be deemed as indicative of social moulding. Rather, as the body focuses on breathing and holding itself neutrally, citational acts fall away.

Applying this notion of resistance to Figure 3, shown above, which depicts two *maschere* in matching carnival outfits raises problems, however, as although the image resonates stillness, a number of things are implied in the pose of the pair: to begin with, there is a studied grace in their pose which references performances of elegance, beauty, wealth and good standing. There is an implication of chivalry in the close but affected contact of their hands, positing the man with an authoritative, open, confident stance, aided by the phallic cane he is holding and the large hat he is wearing indicating high status. The woman, on the other hand, suggests a submissive stance: her right hand does not hold her partner's hand but merely touches it, and her left hand holds a handbag and flower in front of herself, making her stance seem slightly closed, and less authoritative and confident. Furthermore, her already hidden identity is further cloaked by the addition of tassels hanging from her hat, a motif echoed in her costume, and an addition which assuredly positions her as meek and reliant on her more open male counterpart. Evidently, taking into account their poses and their appearance in their carnival garb implies that their act of stillness is not entirely resistant; rather, they reflect established socio-cultural notions of gender and sex through not only their costumes and masks, but also through their pose and, essentially, their act of stillness. The fact that the costumes and masks of the *maschere* at the carnival are generally suggestive of a gender identity, usually corroborated by the physiognomy of the masker, means that the performativity of identity is not effaced completely. However, as in Figure 3, there is no way of knowing that the *maschera* on the left is definitely a man and that the *maschera* on the right is a woman, which provides a *frisson* that does imply a level of resistance: the impossibility of fully knowing who they are because of their hidden identities. It is stillness that intensifies this *frisson*.

Getsy agrees with this notion of stillness as resistance, asserting: 'The performativity

of the act of stillness makes the statue – despite its monochromy, its immotility, its heaviness, its unresponsiveness – into something like a defiant agent'.[52] His pertinent article examines the history of sculpture and identifies a tradition of negativity towards the stillness of statues because their lack of motion suggests lifelessness: 'even though statues take on the shape and, often, size of humans, they are seen as false and inferior in the incompleteness of their approximation. Their stillness is taken as a lack of life'.[53] He provides the early example of Clement of Alexandria from the second century AD, who railed against the worship of statues. This trope in writing on sculpture throughout history is inevitably congruent with the Platonic approach to mimesis, viewing representation in a negative light because it provides a further level of falsity to life, echoing negative attitudes to theatricality explored in the previous chapter. Contrary to this, Getsy shows that stillness as a critical frame is not impotent or lifeless but rather suggests movement and a level of empowerment. However, in spite of his advocacy of resistance, he posits stillness as passive, stating: 'Beyond inverting the negative aspersions of stillness as subservience, it is productive to see that performance of motionlessness as a kind of critical passivity – that is, as an enactment of passive resistance'.[54] His insistence on passivity is partly inflected by his focus on inanimate sculpture, contrasting with the activity of the artist who has created the statue and the spectators who engage therewith, moving around the statue and being able to touch it, move up to it, and walk away from it. Analogous to inanimate statues, but fundamentally animate beings, the *maschere* cannot be seen in such terms of passivity. In the main, the *maschere* have costumed themselves willingly, and their carnival transformation, along with their stillness, are temporal. They may be objectified in their status as posing *maschere*, but they can ultimately return to their status as individual subjects, a status they never efface completely. Indeed, even viewing inanimate statues as passive, as Getsy does, may not be a helpful approach if stillness is to be seen as a possible site of resistance, a state which implies movement, and an aesthetic quality which challenges binary divisions between

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[52] Getsy, p.11.
[53] Ibid., p.3.
[54] Ibid., p.11.

performance and spectatorship; this is particularly the case if stillness is viewed as interrelated with movement, rather than being seen as synonymous with motionlessness.

Getsy's study of inanimate sculpture is driven by an understanding of the intercorporeal exchange as the body of the sculpture shares the space of the body of the viewer. In discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre's writings on sculpture, he delineates that with a three-dimensional sculpture, the physical presence of the sculpture is 'corporeal, spatial, and relational'.[55] This interpretation posits the physical contours of the sculpted object as contrasting with the flat two-dimensionality of the photograph, or any other image. Co-presence, relationality, and corporeality evidently impact upon this encounter. Getsy states: 'the situation the statue presents is more akin to an encounter with another person than any two-dimensional representation could offer'.[56] Significantly, he refers to the superiority of the active person, whether that be the viewer or the artist, over the passive, lifeless statue, invoking the negative approach to sculpture. However, he illuminatingly argues that the statue's refusal to move effects and affects the viewer or artist in their engagement therewith. For Getsy, this immutability is a performative act:

> The physical copresence of the statue initiates a cascade of effects on the viewer in which she or he attempts to manage the incursion into their space by a material object that is equivalent to the image that it depicts three-dimensionally.[57]

In sharing the same space and being confronted by stillness, viewers, he argues, seek to manage what they see in a multitude of ways, including by categorising it, touching it, or worshipping it, but, he sees all such responses as relying on the active/passive binary, positioning the viewer as superior. Refreshingly, and germanely for this chapter, Getsy asserts that statues resist such attempts at control through their stillness, albeit a resistance which he views as passive, hence still entrenched in the binary which displeases him.

The sculpture *Cloud Gate* by Anish Kapoor in Chicago provides a pertinent example

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[55] Ibid., p.2.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p.8.

of a corporeal, spatial, and interrelational interaction; the work is discussed by Lavender,

who describes the sculpture as 'a machine for spectating', due to its reflective surfaces which

allow spectators to see themselves and the city around them in a different way.[58] In spite of

its inanimate, beanlike shape, *Cloud Gate* parallels significantly with the *maschere* in its

fostering of motional spectating. People who engage with it move around and actively

interact with the sculpture, just as carnival-goers interact with the still *maschere*. Lavender

observes:

> You walk around *Cloud Gate* to view its (re)perspectives on the
> city. And you view yourself in the act of viewing. Visitors
> experiment with stepping closer to and further from the sculpture
> [...]. People photograph themselves in touristic delight at the
> sculpture's warping remediations.[59]

Evidently, *Cloud Gate* contrasts with the *maschere* by virtue of its reflective, tactile surface

and its architectural, monumental quality which allows viewers to walk around and through

it, but it also resonates with the *maschere* in that the still carnival figures encourage

spectators to move around and to take photographs; in addition, by virtue of the public

positioning and posing of the *maschere*, there is an awareness of one's own act of viewing.

Importantly, the positioning of the *maschere* in front of typical Venetian backdrops

encourages '(re)perspectives' of Venice, creating new and unique views of the city filled

with these beautiful posing figures. Lavender stresses the sense of participation and

interrelationality in the shared engagement with Kapoor's sculpture, suggesting that the

piece is 'an emblem for a pleasure-economy that commodifies presence, looking and self-

recognition, and does so *en masse*'.[60] Awareness of one's being present and a necessary part

of the artwork or event marks both the carnival experience and this example of Chicago civic

sculpture, pointing to contemporary approaches to spectatorship advocated by Rancière,

which position spectators not as mere witnesses but actively engaged spectators. While this

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[58] Andy Lavender, 'Viewing and Acting (and Points in Between): The Trouble with Spectating after Rancière', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22, 3 (2012) 307-26 (p.318).
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p.319.

suggests that spectatorship can challenge convention, Lavender calls Rancière into question, arguing that the spectatorship he advocates, illustrated by viewers' engagement with *Cloud Gate*, and in this context, with the *maschere*, actually retains the mode of watching, and is thus low-risk for the spectator. He avers:

> We cannot say that non-passivity liberates us, nor even that it will be dissensual. For whilst the spectator is implicated, the work itself [...] remains peculiarly unenterable. You don't change the event, here; you merely complete it. Nor do you change yourself. Rather, you consume culture and enjoy the visual affirmation of yourself as participating consumer.[61]

This view challenges the concept of the spectator as emancipated, and could be seen to suggest that the modern-day carnival is a purely consumerist event, albeit one that foregrounds participation. However, there is a level of possibility to 'enter' the carnival and to alter it, given its unrehearsed nature and the way in which it allows for individual, unique engagements.

Crucially, the *maschere* are assertively copresent with their fellow carnival-goers and their corporeal presence is parallel to the statues of Getsy's focus. However, rather than pursuing the active/passive binary, the *maschere* indicate that the movement that is within stillness, together with the possibility for individual engagement and interactions, suggest a level of resistance. Such an approach does not posit the *maschera* as superior or inferior to the viewer in terms of status but illustrates the interrelationality and interdependence at play. Interestingly, Getsy refers to Michael Fried's influential essay 'Art and Objecthood', which was also invoked in the previous chapter's discussion of theatricality. Though he does not mention theatricality, Getsy points to Fried's critique of minimalist art because of its theatrical nature, which in Fried's analysis means that the work requires the viewer in order to be completed, and makes the viewer aware of their presence in the exchange. Fried considers theatre to be 'the negation of art', and in minimalist art, or literalist art as he terms it condescendingly, there is an obtrusiveness, aggression, and an extortion of a level of

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[61] Ibid., pp.325-26.

complicity from the beholder.[62] Getsy finds Fried's observations useful in that they show

how interactions with art on a human scale, in this case with statues, 'usher in affects in the

viewer that are determined by experiences of previous social, bodily, interpersonal, and

intersubjective relations'.[63] This is significant as it points to the way in which acts refer

backwards and forwards in time, repeating and reiterating in a process of citationality. This,

for Getsy, points to the performativity of statues, and it echoes views of performance as

reiterative and ghosted. Furthermore, the invocation of affect underlines the personal,

experiential, felt nature of the experience of carnival, as suggested above. Such an

understanding applied to the performances of stillness by the *maschere* is also congruent

with the previous chapter's exploration of the replicative and reiterative nature of

performance, which leaves remains beyond the moment. This view also concretizes the

codependence of the relations between the *maschere* and their fellow carnival participants, as

they each bring their knowledge and experience to their engagement with carnival. Both

parties are at liberty to be still and to move around, and they interact with each other in ways

that position them alternately, indeed simultaneously, as the performer and the spectator,

blurring the distinction between these roles. Fundamentally, this repositioning reflects the

interrelational dynamic of the carnival, allowing carnival participants to challenge the *status

quo*; in particular this relationality provides a level of challenge to the individualism of

neoliberal capitalist society as connections and interactions foster a carnival sharing bond

between participants. In addition, the possibility that the mask and costume provide to hide

one's identity enables carnival participants to efface the reiterative performances of self

inflected by social norms. Thus, the still *maschere* can be seen as defiant agents,

reconfiguring relations between each other and challenging understandings of self.

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[62] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp.153-55.
[63] Getsy, p.9.

Conclusion

Stillness contributes to both the macrocosmic aesthetics of the city and the microcosmic aesthetics of the carnival: the posing *maschere* so typical of the revived carnival reflect the tranquil view of the city. Through their posing in iconic places within the built environment of Venice, aided by their costumes and masks, the *maschere* in *volto* channel conceptions of the city's beauty. Their poses are ghosted by the infinitesimal iterations of earlier carnivals, and by the still poses of statuary, indeed, their affinity with sculpture affirms their connection to beauty. Further, the public nature of their presentation of stillness, and especially the way they pose to be seen and photographed, points to a level of theatricality in the *maschere's* stillness, reflecting the stage-set quality of the city itself. As the chapter has indicated, stillness is not synonymous with motionlessness, but is instead interconnected with movement. In reflecting on her performance practice, Gray provides a nuanced perception of stillness which highlights the interplay between stillness and motion evident in her own performances. This reflects the interconnection of stillness and movement within theatre and performance as delineated by Schneider, Skantze, and Lavender, and encapsulated in new performance work by artists such as Abramović, Court, and Heng. A key trope which has arisen in this chapter is the way in which the spectator who engages with the *maschere* is positioned as an active spectator, fully participating in the carnival experience. These spectators are essential to the iteration of carnival through their engagement with the *maschere* and with the space of the city. The contrast that arises between the mobile spectators and the still *maschere* stresses the active nature of the former in contrast to the inactive stances taken by the latter. This repositions the conventional understanding of performance and spectatorship, showing that stillness in performance resists the idea of an active performer and a passive spectator. The *maschere* are complicated figures because they seem to resist performance via their arrested stillness, taking on statuesque qualities, appearing almost inanimate. In moments of stillness, their eyes are the only active parts of their body, repositioning the supposed performers in the carnival

exchange as spectators: they seek out their fellow carnival-goers, pose for cameras, and move according to the actions of the photographing tourists. In spite of their costumed and masked nature, with their inevitable theatrical quality because of the transformation in their appearance, the temporal nature of their transformation, and their positioning in the stage-set of the city, they nevertheless respond to their fellow carnival participants as spectators respond to performers. Actively using their eyes, they contrast with the more mobile participants who are using their bodies in all sorts of ways as they engage with the *maschere*. Yet, the *maschere* are nevertheless the attraction and the reason for the presence of these photographing tourists, and their theatrical costume and masking means they cannot efface their identity as performers entirely, even as they take on the role of spectators. This points to the interdependence of the two sets of participants of carnival: the *maschere* feed the spectators'/tourists' desire for the carnival experience, and this relation is reciprocal, as the photographing tourists validate and complete the presence of the *maschere*.

The next chapter builds upon understandings of stillness by exploring photography in detail. Indeed, the photographs of Venice and of the *maschere* in this chapter resonate a further level of stillness by the fact of their being photographs, or 'stills', as the physical document of the photograph is a still object – something to be held, beheld, and pored over. The picture evidences activity, yet the appearance of the costumed *maschere* in front of the backdrop of the city highlights the role that stillness plays in the annual carnival, redolent of other aspects of the city's aesthetics, including beauty, elegance, and sophistication. Significantly, in his analysis of photography, Jonathan Friday asserts: 'stillness is always a contrastive concept, one that presupposes a dynamic alternative against which the stillness is distinguished'.[64] Friday's observation suggests the need for a plural understanding of stillness, viewing the term as contrastive because of its inevitable referencing of movement, which suggests the photograph is in a state of becoming. The parallels that have arisen between notions of stillness and movement, being and becoming, and presence and absence

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[64] Jonathan Friday, 'Stillness Becoming: Reflections on Bazin, Barthes and Photographic Stillness', in *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*, ed. by David Green and Joanna Lowry (Brighton: Photoforum and Photoworks, 2006), pp.39-54 (p.40).

indicate that stillness has a complex role within art, performance, and theatre. Thus stillness is redolent of becoming, not unadulterated being: stillness in Venice is bound up with the past, repetition, expectation, futurity, and becoming. The carnival *maschere* can be seen as empowered, resisting the everyday movement of the city, the movement of tourism, and the movement of their fellow carnival-goers: they provide an opportunity for pausing and reflection, and the stillness of their spectacle effects and affects the way that people engage with them, thereby resonating with Getsy's view of the statue as a defiant agent of resistance. Spectators in Venice similarly achieve a level of empowerment through their active, motile responses and interactions with the *maschere*, the carnival event, and the city around them. Crucially, the transformation of the *maschere* for the carnival period, along with their stillness, implies a level of resistance to the self, that is, an opportunity to efface non-carnival identities, something transmitted onto the co-participating spectators who engage and empathise with the *maschere*, gaining a carnival identity themselves even without the need to mask, and underlining the carnival's subversive quality.

Chapter 3

Photography and Carnival

Introduction

Venice is supremely photogenic: as the touristic city *par excellence*, it is a city of pictures. Its beautiful, antiquated appearance, with pretty waterways and gondolas, complemented by handsome architecture, mean the city is eagerly captured on camera by visitors who are keen to possess their very own image of the city, one which they can engage with beyond that original moment of being there. By their very ubiquity, photographs play a fundamental role in capturing and extending notions of the Venetian aesthetics, particularly in terms of beauty and stillness. Susan Sontag affirms that photographs are richly associated with the representation of the beautiful: 'So successful has been the camera's role in beautifying the world that photographs, rather than the world, have become the standard of the beautiful'.[1] She writes that an early pioneer of photography, William Henry Fox Talbot, patented the technology under the term calotype, from the Greek *kalos* meaning 'beautiful'.[2] Crucially, Sontag identifies the intense mediatisation of experience, pointing to the way in which engagement with beautiful things is invariably inflected by cameras; her insightful comments predate the incredible advancements in technology which mean that photography plays an even more prominent role in daily lives, with the prevalence of cameraphones, photosharing, and social media. Illuminatingly, she asserts: 'To photograph is to confer importance. There is probably no subject that cannot be beautified; moreover, there is no way to suppress the tendency inherent in all photographs to accord value to their subjects'.[3] Perceptions of Venice as beautiful are thus strongly inflected by the fact that the city is so substantially represented in photographic form.

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[1] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), p.85.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., p.28.

As microcosm of the city, the annual carnival is a period when the prominence of photography is accentuated as carnival goers seek to photograph and to be photographed as part of their experience of the event. Sontag pertinently asserts that: 'Photographs really are experience captured', and this observation applies to engagements with the city and the carnival.[4] Photographs of the city and carnival allow people to extend the moment of engagement, as the photograph points forward to infinitesimal future engagements with the image: the image is not stuck in the moment of capture but belongs to multiple times and frames. In turn, the multitude of photographs taken in Venice at carnival and throughout the year resonate with an ongoing tradition of photographing the city, and as such, each photograph replicates and reiterates the multiplicity of images taken in the city, thereby communing with innumerable past experiences of Venice. This chapter will argue that photography intensifies the performance of both the city and the carnival, ramifying the multiple levels of performance and spectatorship at play. Importantly, photography not only extends perceptions of the beautiful Venetian aesthetics, but also of Venetian stillness, as the image is obstinately still, reiterating conceptions of the still cityscape and the posing *maschere*. In this chapter, the theories of Sontag, Roland Barthes, Peggy Phelan, and Rebecca Schneider will be drawn on as they each consider the interactions of performance and photography. Barthes is important as he emphasises the way in which people perform an idea of how they think they look for the camera. Phelan's study *Unmarked* extends Barthes's ruminations by underlining the ruptures between reality and representation exhibited by the image. Schneider promulgates her theory of performance remaining by opposing the notion of the photograph as merely a physical document which can be archived, proposing instead a view of the photograph as a performance which touches other times and frames through its reiterative and citational qualities.

By photographing someone or something, the photographer is making a statement about value, and this value is often accorded with beauty. Sontag shows that even things which are not considered beautiful outside of the context of a photograph can be beautified

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[4] Ibid., p.3.

by the attention paid to it by a camera, such is the strength of the association between photography and beauty. There are echoes here of the earlier discussed notions of Elaine Scarry, who posits the view that beauty begets replication, hence, in this context, the city begets an infinite number of images as people seek to beget the beauty they behold. Indeed, there is a special onus on the image in relation to Venice, particularly as images of the city have been key to understandings of the city for centuries, as the *veduta* tradition shows. *Vedute* by the likes of Canaletto and Turner persist in the modern day through photography; indeed the photograph has taken on the mantle of artworks which customarily depicted the city in days of yore. This has intensified the feeling of familiarity of the city, even for people who have never been there but who have nevertheless formed conceptions of the place because of Venice's strong cultural presence. The prevalence of photographs and images of Venice, together with its perceived beauty and stillness, provide visitors with the special sensation of walking through postcards. This postcard quality to the city underlines the sense of familiarity, echoing earlier chapters' invocation of the ghosting and afterlife of performance. The association of Venice with beauty and stillness was emboldened in the pioneering years of photography, with John Ruskin being one esteemed visitor to the city who employed the new technology, taking daguerreotypes of the city's architecture, reflecting the nascent interdependence of travel and photography in the nineteenth-century.[5] Karen Burns explains that early photography, and Ruskin's daguerreotypes in particular, contributed to perceptions of Venice's stillness: 'The photography of the 1850s did not reproduce color or anything moving, and the world it depicted was largely vacant. [...] This is the world of Ruskin's daguerreotypes; scenes without contemporary Venetians or the paraphernalia of commerce'.[6] Photography thus intersects closely with the themes of beauty and stillness explored in the preceding chapters.

The carnival adds a further layer to this extremely photographed and photogenic city, as the special dimension that the pre-Lenten festivities give to the city demand to be

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[5] Karen Burns, 'Topographies of Tourism: "Documentary" Photography and *The Stones of Venice'*, *Assemblage*, 32 (1997), 22-44 (pp.25-26).
[6] Ibid., p.32.

captured. Carnival participants actively use their cameras to capture images of the event: the ubiquity of cameraphones and the correlation between photography and tourism contribute to this strong presence of photography. The masked and costumed figures, the ornate and attractive cityscape, and the organised and impromptu events of the carnival, along with the general feeling of participating in something special with a large group of people, encourage participants to take manifold pictures. Danilo Reato observes that while the mask was previously used for anonymity, masks at the modern day carnival are worn to attract notice, underlining the importance of photography at the event: 'in the midst of an anonymous crowd, a masked figure flaunts himself and his finery, hoping perhaps to be immortalized by the lens of some big-name photographer'.[7] Sontag's assertion that photographs have a beautifying effect indicates that the costumed *maschere* are deemed beautiful, and indeed they are photogenic, fitting within the city's surroundings. The documentary film *Incognitus?* captures the extent to which photography is important to the carnival, as it follows a number of British Venetophiles who visit the city to dress up in carnival costume.[8] The people interviewed on camera frequently assert that the sensation of being photographed is a key part of the experience. On screen, the participants of the film are sometimes seen posing in constructed scenarios for the directors' cameras, but in other shots, they are seen within the live context of the carnival, engaging with fellow participants and posing for photographs. Some of the commentators in the film describe the sensation as feeling like being in a painting, or having entered a storybook. It is evident that for many carnival participants, as is the case for visitors to Venice throughout the year, being photographed and personally communing with the established Venetian aesthetics are key motivations.

The representational quality of photography makes it an excellent medium to capture the experience of carnival. Taking photographs enables people to fix a moment in time in a two-dimensional photograph which retains that specific moment within its image. The photograph re-presents the carnival to participants and to other people who engage with the

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[7] Danilo Reato, *Venice: Places and History*, trans. by Ann Hylands Ghiringhelli (Vercelli: White Star, 2001), p.105.

[8] *Incognitus?*, dir. by Liliana Grzybowska, Kamil Chryscionka and Sarab Hadi (2010).

image. Photographs enable ongoing engagement with the event beyond the live moment of carnival, providing concrete evidence of the person's being there, at that moment in time. However, viewing photographs as straightforward representations is too simplistic for this chapter, likewise any interpretation that conceives of the photograph as entirely objective. Though in the early days of photography, people marvelled at the accuracy of photographic images, a level of artifice has always been a part of photography, as Jae Emerling helpfully delineates:

> It never was a natural, straightforward, representation void of artifice. This myth is only an effect of discourse. [...] But a photograph abstracts. Even the most clear, well-focused, well-lit one is an abstraction. It is separate from concrete existence; it filches and removes as it becomes impersonal and other.[9]

Emerling's assertion of abstraction is significant, as it recognises that photographs are not merely documents of straightforward representation. The photographs under discussion throughout this thesis are indeed separate from concrete existence as they are at a remove from that which they represent. In this, photography's association with performance is enriched, as performance can also be seen to be separate from concrete existence in that it refers to a presentation or representation of other.

That an image's stillness can be suggestive of movement underlines the abstracted nature of photography, and this is extended in photographs of the carnival *maschere* as these figures are already presenting themselves as other by costuming and masking themselves, so the photograph adds a further layer of presentation as the *maschere* perform for the camera lens. Patrice Pavis, who describes theatre as 'photogenic', identifies the multiplicity of layers within the photograph of an actor as, he avers, such a photograph is an image of an image.[10] He asserts that such photographs:

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[9] Jae Emerling, *Photography: History and Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p.7.
[10] Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. by Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p.264.

> must capture a reality that is already a representation and an image of something: a character, situation or mood. Its referent (its subject) is already rendered into forms and signs, and it cannot ignore this first semiotization. It is necessarily a mise-en-scène (on paper) of a theatrical mise-en-scène.[11]

Theatre photography thus represents the dual presence of the actor and the character, layering different images within one image. The masked and costumed *maschere* of carnival are akin to the actor within the theatre, in that they are representing an other, and photographs of these carnival participants capture both the presented *maschera* and the person beneath the costume. The association of photography with theatre and performance is indicative of the view that people perform for the camera, and that images themselves perform. Images from the Venice carnival can therefore be seen to extend the theatrical nature of the event, as posing for photographs evidently involves performance. The intersections of performance and photography can be seen in Figure 1, which depicts a *maschera* posing in full mask and costume in the Piazzetta, with the *bacino* acting as a typically Venetian backdrop. This *maschera* is symbolic of the modern day carnival: the all-encompassing *volto* mask and the opulent costume encapsulate dominant perceptions of the event. This figure's handsome outfit suggests the personification of the sun: the headdress, gold mask, shining orb, and the yellows and golds of the costume complete the effect. In a stroke of good fortune for the *maschera* and the photographer, the bright sunlight appears to accentuate the chosen theme. This *maschera* is posing still for their fellow carnival participants, sharing the space with other *maschere* and with a horde of photographing tourist carnival-goers. Pavis's assertion that the photograph presents multiple *mises-en-scène* can be seen here as the image depicts both the person beneath the costume and the *maschera* they present.

Figure 1 also underlines the reiterative nature of the performance of the *maschere* as their poses are suggestive of past carnivals, while also sustaining the tradition of posing and advancing that tradition into the future. Emerling's assertion of photography as abstraction

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[11] Ibid., p.265.

Figure 1 *Maschera* **posing alongside the** *bacino***, 8 February 2010**

thus applies as the photograph is not merely a representation but brings numerous facets into dialogue. Schneider's study *Performing Remains*, which has provided core perspectives in the thesis thus far, is important to understandings of the relation between photographs and the carnival, as therein Schneider corroborates the view of photography as abstraction, with particular emphasis on the still pose. She asserts:

> A pose is a posture, a stance, struck in reiterative gesture often signifying precedent. In this way, a pose can be said to be reenactive, citational. Even if the precise original of a pose is unclear, or nonexistent, there is still a citational quality to posing due to the fact that a pose is arrested, even if momentarily, in what is otherwise experienced as a flow of time.[12]

The precise original of the poses of the *maschere* and other carnival participants is assuredly unclear, yet the arrested nature of the posing involved in carnival speaks of a process of citation and replication as these poses have evolved over centuries. The way the *maschere* hold themselves in the twenty-first century is not unlike the theatrical poses of costumed Venetians in the seventeenth-century engravings of Francesco Bertelli, or the dignified and enigmatic stances of masked carnival participants in the eighteenth-century paintings of Pietro Longhi, thereby affirming the view of the afterlife of performance, to reinvoke Jonathan Miller's term, and indicating that performances live beyond the moment of enactment.[13] The *maschera* in Figure 1 resonates with this view of reenactive, citational poses. The way in which the *maschera* positions their body and looks out towards the photographer signifies precedent as they reflect earlier iterations of carnival and engage with preconceptions of both the carnival and the city. In this, the *maschera* enters into dialogue with core aesthetics of the city, including in terms of beauty, theatricality, and stillness. Schneider's observation is illuminating here because her view of a pose as being arrested in time is ramified by the photograph, which infinitely captures that arrested moment on film,

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[12] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.90.

[13] Lina Padoan Urban, *Il Carnevale Veneziano: nelle maschere incise da Francesco Bertelli* (Milan: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1986); Bianca Tamassia Mazzarotto, *Le Feste Veneziane: I giochi popolari, le ceremonie religiose e di governo*, 2nd edn (Florence: Sansoni, 1980).

on paper, or digitally. Thus the *maschera* in Figure 1 engages with multiple times and frames not only through their carnival experience in the Piazzetta, but also through their pose within the frozen image of the photograph.

Sontag, Barthes, Phelan, and Schneider are accordant with Emerling's view of abstraction, denying an absolutist idea of straightforward representation in the photograph. What is seen in a photograph points in multiple directions and, importantly, reveals something about the spectator who engages therewith. Emerling avers:

> An image is not a picture or a snapshot. Only an image defines a territory and possesses the ability to cut across and remark it. An image becomes visible by more than an act of physiology or even of artistic innovation: an image constructs a complex network of socio-cultural discourse that defines – not once and for all, but contingently – the framework through which both the image and ourselves as spectators become visible.[14]

The photograph can therefore be seen as indicative of socio-cultural, political, and economic inflections that enable an understanding of the people or things photographed and the people who photograph within certain discourses. These intimations continue in the way that the photograph is engaged with beyond the moment of the snapshot itself. Crucially, Emerling suggests that in looking at the image, we can see ourselves as spectators, and this notion is potent as it speaks to the essence of human interaction with each other and with representation in general. Judith Butler touches on this interconnectedness between self and other, arguing for an understanding of these interconnections as chiasmic: 'the other [over there] is not radically other, and I am not radically over here as an I, but the link, the joint, is chiasmic'.[15] This suggests that the self and the other intercross and parallel. The abstracted nature of the photograph underlines the ruptures in human identity, and the struggle between understanding ourselves and seeing ourselves in relation to the other. Emerling states: 'An image only takes place in-between statements and visibilities; an image is a site of contest

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[14] Emerling, p.15.
[15] Judith Butler, 'Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation', *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26, 2 (2012) 134-51 (p.149).

and confrontation'.[16] The carnival therefore multiplies this contestation and confrontation as the masked and costumed participants engage with alternative identities that are separate from the self but cannot efface the self entirely. The infinitesimal photographs of these carnival figures reflect the contested nature of identity while also confirming photography's affiliation to performance - another site of contest and confrontation between presentation and representation, self and other.

Venice, Photography, and Replication

Pictures of Venice and of its carnival are invariably part of the moving life of the city, and this fact challenges the stillness of the image itself; such images, whether touristic images taken during a sightseeing trip, or pictures taken specifically during carnival of the *maschere*, reference movement. However, photographs of the carnival and of Venice remain obstinately still in their physical form, thereby ramifying and extending the stillness captured by the image. Intriguingly, the noun 'still' is most commonly applied to an image from a film, and is used less conventionally in relation to snapshot photographs taken by a camera, which is ironic given that a snapshot photograph is one moment stopped in time, frozen at the instant in which the photographer has clicked the button to capture the image before them, while contrastingly, a film is filmed by a camera which captures the passing of time, motion, and action. In the case of the former, the image is always motionless: it is frozen at the moment of capture and stays frozen in its developed, uploaded, or downloaded state; the photograph cannot move, even as it might suggest movement. The still of a film, on the other hand, is an image taken from motion, it is a moving film literally stopped: it is extracted from the winding reel (or digital alternative): a part apart, thereby always suggestive of its belonging to a motile whole. The common usage of the nominal 'still' to describe such film pictures

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[16] Emerling, p.15.

thus appears to reference the verb 'to still', as the motion of the moving film is actively 'stilled' in order to capture the image, making film stills inherently tied up with motion: they refer to the film from which they were taken and imply movement. A film 'still' is thus paradoxical. Curiously, images taken of theatre performances are referred to as theatre photographs; it would be unusual to think of a theatre 'still'.[17] Likewise, images of dance are not widely known as dance 'stills'.[18] Yet the motility of cinema is shared with dance and theatre; likewise their temporal, framed nature. In each context, images of film, theatre, and dance exhibit stilled motion. The noun 'still' should not be limited to cinema as it is congruent with the view of stillness employed and sustained in the previous chapter: a stillness which refers to movement and is within movement. Rather than being the preserve of documents of stilled cinema, all photographs should be seen as stills: however still they are in their physical documentary presence, they are themselves taken from movement, they pause the movement of life and extract a moment of action. Like a film still, any photograph is part of a motile whole, and the images discussed here may thus be seen as 'stills'. This view is particularly relevant to the pioneering 'stills' of Eadward Muybridge which were designed to be seen in quick succession to give the sensation of movement, and which thereby underline the '*impossibility* of stillness', as Ray Langenbach explores *vis-à-vis* contemporary performance.[19]

The interpretation of a still or a photograph as referencing movement fits conceptions of photography in terms of theatre and performance. Karel Vanhaesebrouck has written a detailed account of the intersections between photography, theatre, and performance, asserting that photography and theatre influence and contaminate each other.[20] This 'contamination' intimates the theatricality of photography, as people pose and perform

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[17] Andrew Haydon, 'The Sorry State of Stage Photography', 26 November 2009, *Guardian* <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2009/nov/26/stage-theatre-photography-celebrity> [accessed 22 January 2015].

[18] Matthew Reason, with photographs by Chris Nash, 'Photography and the Representation of Kinesthetic Empathy', in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp.239-56.

[19] Ray Langenbach, 'Moving Pictures: The persistence of locomotion', *Performance Research*, 12, 2 (2007), 114-24 (p.115).

[20] Karel Vanhaesebrouck, 'Theatre, Performance Studies and Photography: A History of Permanent Contamination', *Visual Studies*, 24, 2 (2009), 97-106.

for the camera lens, while also pointing to the way that theatre is often seen photographically or imagistically: theatre-makers think about how something will appear on stage, but also how scenes will appear in images for promotional material or for posterity. The close association of theatre and photography is curious given that theatre involves motion, but this consolidates the view of photography as abstraction: the stillness of the image belies its belonging to movement. The photographer Richard Avedon explores the tradition of portrait photography in art through the prism of his own family portraits from his childhood, providing an interesting parallel with the staged nature of the poses of the *maschere*. He states:

> We made compositions. We dressed up. We posed in front of
> expensive cars, homes that weren't ours. We borrowed dogs. […]
> All of the photographs in our family album were built on some kind
> of lie about who we were, and revealed a truth about who we
> wanted to be.[21]

Avedon's comments in relation to his family's photographs are suggestive of the carnival transformation of the participants of carnival, as they costume and mask themselves in opulent outfits. The *maschera* in Figure 1, shown above, is indicative of broad engagement with the carnival, demonstrating that the motivations of many carnival participants are connected to Avedon's notion of making compositions. These carnival participants evoke the Venetian aesthetics of beauty, opulence, and sophistication through their poses, and the all-encompassing nature of their costumes means they can temporarily put aside their normal, non-carnival identity. That photography is such a fundamental part of the experience of the carnival indicates that such *maschere* may desire beautification, especially in the light of Sontag's assertion of the beautifying quality of the photograph. In this, there is a level of lie about who they are, and a truth about who they want to be (albeit temporarily), reiterating Avedon's experience. His family's photographs provide Avedon with a route to understanding the performative nature of portraiture, specifically analysing the theatricality

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[21] Richard Avedon, 'Borrowed Dogs', *Grand Street*, 7, 1 (1987), 52-64 (p.53).

of Rembrandt and the subtleties of Egon Schiele. In his interpretation of portraiture as

performance, Avedon leans towards a negative view of performance which foregrounds

artifice and overt stylisation, akin to widely-held understandings of theatricality, as explored

in the preceding chapters.

Staged performance photography receives close critical attention in the collection

Acting the Part, edited by Lori Pauli, which was published to accompany an exhibition of

images. Pauli underlines the fact that theatre was evident in the early days of photography,

seen in the image of Hippolyte Bayard staging his suicide by drowning in a photograph from

1840, preluding the staged *tableaux* of Victoriana and the replicative performance

photography of Cindy Sherman, whose *oeuvre* has provided ample material in performance

and photography scholarship.[22] Vanhaesebrouck also refers to the late-nineteenth-century

custom of staged *tableaux vivants* in which actors sought to capture the essence of the play

they were performing in one frozen, photographed scene. Actor portraits from the same

period are other instances of photography as performance, as actors presented themselves in

a certain way, inflecting the burgeoning cult of celebrity. There are echoes here of Andy

Lavender's discussion of stilled *tableaux*, statue performers, and *poses plastiques* explored in

the previous chapter.[23] Contemporaneously with the first photographic actor portraits, the

popularity of *cartes de visite*, calling or visiting cards, was testament to the public embrace

of photography, and in the images on these small cards, people posed in a way that was

fitting for their social status, effecting a level of performance. Emerling states that the

pioneer of the *cartes de visite*, André Disdèri, 'set up conventions for this type of portraiture:

painted backdrops (stage setting for creation of a public image), props, full lighting, etc.

They were formulaic: individual shown as a class type'.[24] The images of the *maschere*

included in this thesis evidence a strong affiliation with the traditions of staged photography:

like the poses of the *cartes de visite*, the *maschere* follow formulaic structures for their poses

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[22] Lori Pauli, ed., *Acting the Part: Photography as Theatre* (London: Merrell, 2006).
[23] Andy Lavender, 'The living statue: Performer, poseur, posthuman', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 33, 2 (2013) 119-31.
[24] Emerling, p.199.

and employ a stage setting in the shape of the city itself. Although the backdrops are not painted, they give the impression of being so, thanks to the extensively represented nature of the city, particularly on the painted canvases of the renowned *vedute*. This view consolidates the notion of Venice as a veritable stage set; tourists and carnival-goers insert themselves into the scene, surrounded by the scenography of the city's architecture. Such a view reiterates understandings of Piazza San Marco and the Piazzetta in terms of theatricality.

Questions of reality and authenticity abound in relation to photography, and also, pertinently, in relation to Venice. As it is such a touristic location, and authenticity is a watchword for many tourists, the opportunity to have a 'real' experience of the city is desired. Indeed, the knowledge that people have of the city before visiting it inflects what they expect of their experience. The poet Rupert Brooke wrote of a disappointing visit to Venice which he found overwhelmed by tourists; of his visit he wrote 'I shall tell myself that I have never been to Venezia, only to Venice at Earl's Court'.[25] He was referencing a replica of the city at a London exhibition, which had been a roaring success. The exhibition was devised by Imre Kiralfy, and is evocatively described in an edition of *The Saturday Review* from 1892: along with reenactments of important historical events, excerpts from *The Merchant of Venice*, the ritual of the marriage to the sea enacted by the doge, and carefully constructed backdrops, people visiting could even take a gondola, 'at Olympia, if you please', with a real gondolier.[26] The columnist states:

> The narrow Calle and the little Piazzette are reproduced to the life,
> and are as full of Southern animation as if, instead of being in
> London, they really led by one way or another to that Square of St.
> Mark's.[27]

Italian police officers, stalls selling artisanal goods and photographs, along with a glass-blowing demonstration directly from the renowned lagoon island of Murano, make this event

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[25] Rupert Brooke, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by John Julius Norwich (London: Constable, 1990), p.77.
[26] 'Venice', in *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 2 January 1892, pp.14-15 (p.15).
[27] Ibid.

sound spectacular. Interestingly, there is an emphasis on gaining 'real' experiences of Venice in this short description, which indicates that an authentic experience of the city might not only be possible in the geographical location of the city itself. As Rupert Brooke seems to imply, being in Venice may mean being in London, while being in London could mean being in Venice, suggesting slippage in the here and there.

The multiplicity of time and place which destabilises the idea of the original is something of a tradition for Venice, as it has been so widely replicated throughout history. Images of the city often play on the theme of multiple places and times. The tradition of the *capriccio* in Renaissance art, the caprice or fancy, has suitably close connections to the city, as artists such as Marco Ricci (1676-1730) depicted fictional scenes which amalgamated multiple spaces on one canvas. The *capriccio* was a technique that the esteemed Venetian painters Tiepolo (1696-1770) and Canaletto (1697-1768) also used. English artist William Marlow (1740-1813) painted a *capriccio* which represents St Paul's Cathedral in London with a Venetian canal, seen in Figure 2, playfully merging London's iconic building with a typical scene of Venice.[28] In the painting, the monumentality of St Paul's contrasts with the delicacy of the terrace of Venetian façades, with water lapping at their foundations. The image seems to substitute the hustle and bustle of London life with a tranquillity redolent of Venice; it is the canal waters that principally create this effect. There are echoes of this canvas in evidence in a recent television advertising campaign in the UK for Canti Prosecco, a brand of the distinctive sparkling wine from the Veneto region, in which a *capriccio* of London and Venice is created. The advertisement shows a masked woman travelling by gondola past iconic London buildings, before arriving at a party where the other guests are all masked in carnival masks, sipping Prosecco of course.[29] The advertisement engages with stereotypical British ideas of Venice and its aesthetics: in particular, the partygoers are beautiful, well-dressed, and groomed young people, and there is an additional suggestion of

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[28] William Marlow, '*Capriccio: St Paul's and a Venetian Canal*, ?*c*.1795', Tate <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/marlow-capriccio-st-pauls-and-a-venetian-canal-n06213> [accessed 2 February 2015].
[29] Canti <http://www.cantiwinestyle.com/canti-world/advertising-campaigns/advertisingcampaigns/> [accessed 2 February 2015].

Figure 2 *Capriccio: St Paul's and a Venetian Canal*, **by William Marlow,** *c.***1795, oil on canvas, held by the Tate Collection**

wealth. Therefore, the Venetian aesthetics of beauty, opulence, and sophistication are foregrounded. The streets of London have become canals, and the Thames has taken on the mantle of the Grand Canal, with one shot showing the Houses of Parliament evocative of the Ducal Palace.[30] The waters are shrouded in fog, and the mask of the woman travelling by gondola, together with the masks of her fellow partygoers, commune with understandings of Venice in terms of mystery. Figure 3 depicts the enigmatic party guest in her gondola, encapsulating perceptions of the *maschere* and the city in terms of beauty and stillness, in spite of the fact that the mask is the only aspect of her appearance which is extraordinary, as she is not wearing a carnivalesque costume. Canti evidently sought to connect their campaign with established British perceptions of Venice and the Venice carnival, which was

Figure 3 *Maschera* in gondola, still from the Canti Prosecco UK television advertisement campaign

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[30] The promotional video for the 2014 performance of *Venice Preserved* by Thomas Otway echoes these elements, creating another *capriccio* of Venice and London, 'The Spectators' Guild presents Venice Preserv'd', Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pStj3MiXdyk> [accessed 27 October 2015].

undoubtedly a sensible move, as the advertisement connects their brand of Prosecco with

sophisticated society, high status, and a quality of life that people aspire to. There is a subtle

level of intertextuality between the advertisement and the film *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999),

directed by Stanley Kubrick, which includes scenes of people in various states of undress

wearing Venetian carnival masks and partaking in orgies.[31] Kubrick's film speaks to

perceptions of Venice as a hotbed of sexual mores, dating from the period of the Grand Tour

when the city was renowned for its libertinism, openness, and the prevalence of its

prostitution. Both the film and the advertisement employ the masks not only because of their

distinctive identity, but also because of the air of mystery which surrounds them.[32]

These examples of fanciful imagery in art and film are consonant with the fabricated

photography of James Casebere, whose 1991 work *Venice Ghetto*, shown in Figure 4,

depicts an architectural model he created inspired by the ghetto in Venice, which was

historically the Jewish area of Venice, cut off from the rest of the city.[33] Indeed, this area of

Venice provided the etymology for the word 'ghetto'.[34] The photograph depicts a black and

white scene of colourless tenements, with clothes-lines and boats completing the Venetian

effect, evocative of Ruskin's daguerreotypes. The fabricated nature of the photograph is

strongly evident, yet its referencing of Venetian aesthetics is tangible, as observed in

comments on the website of New York's Jewish Museum:

> The initial perception of the image's reality dissolves upon closer
> inspection of the monolithic surfaces of the buildings, boats, and
> clothes hung out to dry. Yet the constant play between fiction and
> truth produces something mysterious in the scene. Devoid of
> human occupants, the photographed tableau appears as a deserted
> stage set, film still, or a moment of stopped time, leaving the viewer
> to contemplate a possible narrative that the scene might suggest.[35]

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[31] *Eyes Wide Shut*, dir. by Stanley Kubrick (Warner Brothers, 1999).

[32] Efrat Tseëlon delineates the connections between masks and mystery, enigma, and intrigue; see 'Reflections on Mask and Carnival', in *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality*, ed. by Efrat Tseëlon (London: Routledge, 2001), pp.18-37 (pp.30-34).

[33] James Casebere, '*Venice Ghetto*, 1991' <http://www.jamescasebere.com/photographs/1983-1991/> [accessed 2 February 2015].

[34] Garry Wills, *Venice, Lion City: The Religion of Empire* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), pp.183-91.

[35] 'James Casebere, *Venice Ghetto*', Jewish Museum <http://thejewishmuseum.org/collection/3748-venice-ghetto> [accessed 1 August 2015].
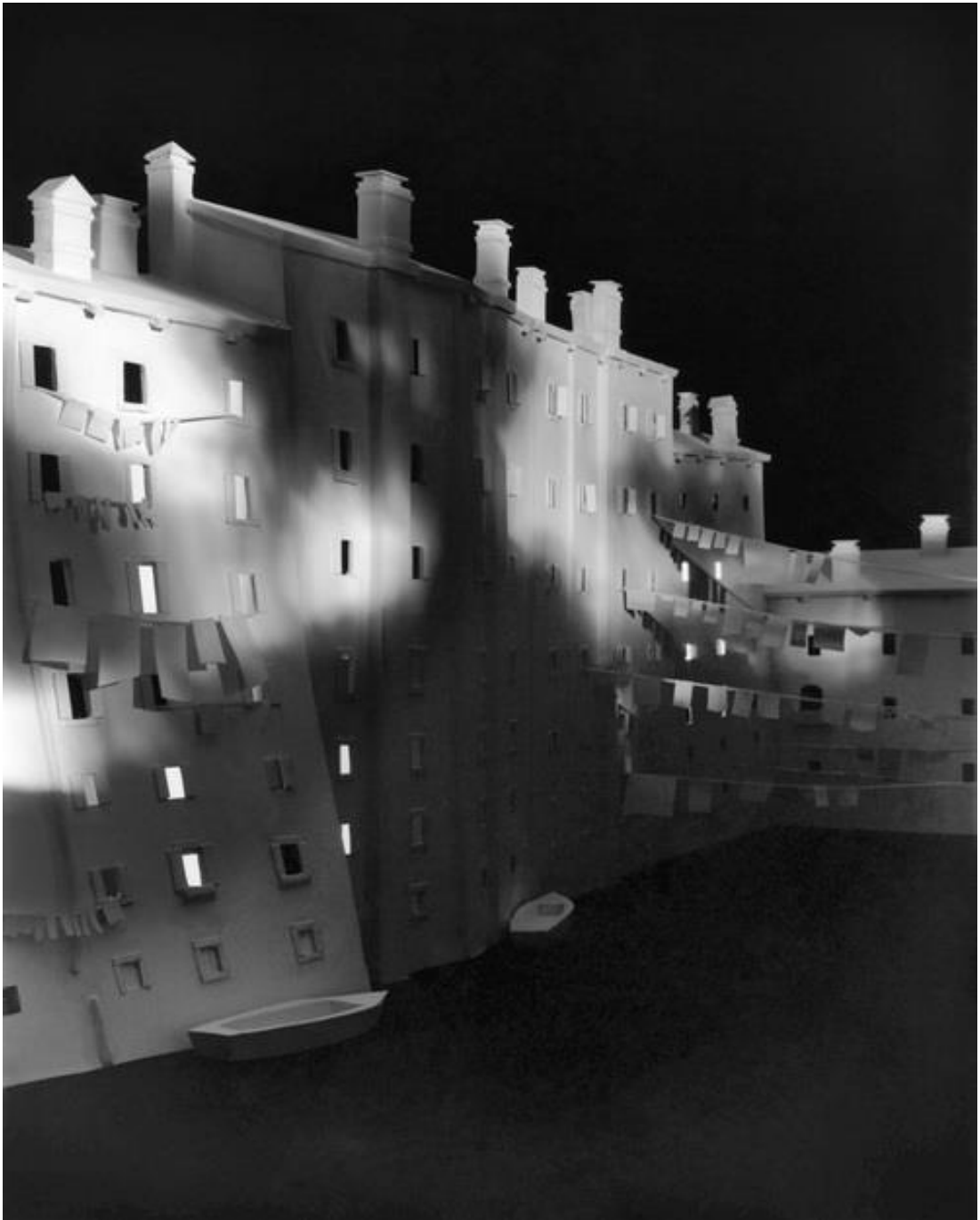
Figure 4 *Venice Ghetto*, **by James Casebere, 1991**

These observations on the photograph point to the theatrical, stage-set nature of Venice which is intensified by the image's status as a photograph and by the stillness present within the image. There is effectively an air of expectation. Casebere's photograph is assuredly a constructed artwork, yet its inspiration from Venice reiterates the city's aesthetics and performs an idea of Venice, replicating the city, and pointing to future replications. The tall buildings represent those in the ghetto which were built to address the problem of overcrowding, as Mary McCarthy observes, likening them to skyscrapers: 'a strange, picturesque sight, as if a modern slum were expressed in an ancient idiom, like a prophecy'.[36] A review of Casebere's work in the *New York Times* states that his pictures, including the ghetto image, indicate his understanding of 'photography as the intersection of history and fiction'.[37] This further illustrates the abstracted nature of photographs, suggesting that although the models which Casebere constructs and the photographs thereof are fabricated, the images touch history, and accepted truths, while undermining any absolutist idea of Venice.

Marlow's *capriccio* of Venice, the Canti Prosecco advertisement, and Casebere's *Venice Ghetto* resonate significantly with the image of the posing *maschera* shown in Figure 1 above because of their shared citationality and reiteration. Considered as distinct 'poses', the different images can be seen as reiterative gestures, as Schneider suggests. This reflects the role that the document of the photograph plays beyond the moment of capture: it provides an afterlife, as Miller suggests of replicated performances, as people engage with the image in the future. This implies not only the referentiality of the image, as it refers backwards and forwards in time, but also underlines its motility: it is a moment, from a flow of time, which is stilled. This means that the experience of carnival, by extension, is not happening solely in the present moment, but is cast forward to future iterations of performance as the photograph extends the life of that moment. Schneider emphasises the moment *beyond* the snapshot, as future engagement with the image is an important aspect of

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[36] Mary McCarthy, *Venice Observed* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1963), p.53.
[37] Charles Hagen, 'Art in Review', *New York Times*, 14 May 1993
<http://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/14/arts/art-in-review-163493.html> [accessed 2 February 2015].

the photograph's cross-temporality. The interactions of performers and spectators are

pluralised by this cross-temporality. Schneider adds that photography and live performance

share the gesture of the time-lag:

> The gesture of the time-lag is one that shows itself, by virtue of the
> still, *to be a gesture – to have posture*, *to enunciate*. That posture,
> that enunciation, does not solely happen in past time, nor singularly
> in present time, but steers a wobbly course through repetition and
> *reappearance* – a reappearance rife with all the tangled stuff of
> difference/sameness that anachronism, or syncopated time, or basic
> citationality affords. Given this, it is not surprising that theatre
> consistently reappears in/as photography, just as photography
> reappears in/as theatre.[38]

The time-lag provides a germane analogy for the carnival, as it suggests the

multidirectionality of time at the event as the gestures and postures of the carnival

participants travel forwards and backwards. The actress of the Prosecco commercial,

Casebere's ghetto tenements, and the *maschera* of Figure 1 each illustrate this

multidirectionality.

The reiterative, citational quality of poses in Venice is exemplified by Nicolas

Whybrow in his discussion of a research experiment he undertook in the city with 24

undergraduate students from the University of Warwick, partly inspired by a 1957

photographic montage of Venice by psychogeographer Ralph Rumney, a member of

Situationist International. As Whybrow explains, the situationists developed the notion of the

dérive: 'a form of embodied reconceptionalisation and remapping of the city based on a

performance practice of walking without *functional* aim, yet walking "productively" or

"creatively"'.[39] The ambitions of the situationists involved a level of subversion, as Merlin

Coverley observes:

> This act of walking is an urban affair and, in cities that are
> increasingly hostile to the pedestrian, it inevitably becomes an act

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[38] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.143.
[39] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Situation Venice: towards a performative "ex-planation" of a city', *Research in Drama Education*, 16, 2 (2011), 279-98 (p.282).

> of subversion. Walking is seen as contrary to the spirit of the modern city with its promotion of swift circulation and the street-level gaze that walking requires allows one to challenge the official representation of the city by cutting across established routes and exploring those marginal and forgotten areas often overlooked by the city's inhabitants.[40]

Coverley underlines the way in which psychogeography challenges authority, allowing new interactions with one's surroundings, though his above observations perhaps apply to more modernised urban settings than Venice, which has retained the necessity to walk its streets owing to its special topography. Inspired by the *dérive* quality of Rumney's photographs, Whybrow's students were divided into groups and given the brief to engage with the notion of the submersion of the city, exploring the idea that Venice is sinking.[41] One group, comprised of female students, sought to explore the performance of gender in Venice and spent one day dressed elegantly and femininely, driving their engagement with the city (their *dérive*) by their pronounced femininity. The next day they transformed their identity by cross-dressing as men, seeking to engage with the city from a masculine perspective. They record a number of observations which identify significant contrasts in the experience of the city depending on their gendered appearance. Although their costumes when dressed as men were nondescript, they nonetheless point to the transformations that take place during carnival, indicating that costuming oneself significantly alters one's engagement with the city. Fascinatingly, they unwittingly pose as their male personae in exactly the same *campo* of Venice, with a leaning tower in the background, that Rumney begins his photographic montage with: this chance snapshot closely links their project with Rumney's, and though they were oblivious to the parallel, the coincidence evidences the citational quality of posing which Schneider highlights.

A separate piece of performance by Whybrow himself illustrates the multiplicity of the here and there and the multidirectionality of the image. In 'Venice Typologies/Sent to

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[40] Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006), p.12.

[41] Whybrow has himself explored this theme, imagining a future situation in the winter of 2017 when the *acqua alta* finally submerge Venice completely, allowing him to write a playful intervention on the themes of Venice, the Biennale, art, and performance. Nicolas Whybrow, 'Watermarked', *Performance Research*, 20, 3 (2015), 50-57.

Coventry', he engages with a huge piece of participatory art at the Venice Biennale of 2009

by the Polish-born artist Aleksandra Mir which was entitled *VENEZIA (all places contain all*

others). The title of her piece itself is consonant with the different *capricci* discussed above.

Mir's artwork was composed of a million Venice postcards which were available for visitors

to the Biennale to pick up for free and send back home, linking with the city's perceived

picture-postcard appearance. Whybrow's own artistic response to Mir's piece was to send

ten of these postcards back to himself at his home address in Coventry; his ruminations on

the back of the postcards react to and reflect on a number of pieces at the Biennale, including

Mir's, and his performance piece is accompanied by a commentary in the online journal

Liminalities. Each of the postcards which Mir had printed depicted watery scenes and were

emblazoned with the word 'Venezia'. However, as Whybrow explains:

> The images turn out not to be of Venice at all, but of other 'watery
> places', sometimes even composites of several 'watery places' in
> quite distinct countries. Not only is it suggested that Venice
> 'contains all other places' but that all other places contain Venice.[42]

For Whybrow, the not-Venice-ness of Mir's postcards proposes a particular triangulation: 'a

"topological" tension between the *here* (the text 'Venezia'), the *there* (the 'not-Venezia' of

the image) and the *elsewhere* of the postcards' destinations'.[43] By their availability in the city

and the obvious label of Venezia, the photographs of not-Venice nevertheless evoke the city,

pointing to the *capriccio* style in art and challenging the authenticity of not only the image,

but of the city, echoing the aforementioned late-nineteenth-century replica exhibition at

London's Olympia. Replicas of and tributes to Venice the world over can equally be seen to

emphasise Whybrow's triangulation of here, there, and elsewhere: Little Venice in London,

Venice in Los Angeles, the Venetian resort in Las Vegas, and the recently constructed

architecture, or 'duplitecture' as it has been labelled, in Dalian, China, which pays homage to

Venice, are all examples of sites which replicate and extend perceptions of Venice as

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[42] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Venice Typologies/Sent to Coventry', *Liminalities* 6, 1 (2010)
<http://liminalities.net/6-1/venice.html> [accessed 2 April 2014].
[43] Ibid.

originary site.[44] Pertinently Whybrow has discussed situational and relational art practices

elsewhere in collaboration with Sally Mackey, and their comments apply to Mir's piece, as

her artwork recognises that identity informed by site is: 'not only subject to multiple

possibilities and complexities of construction but also in permanent transition'.[45] Such

creative approaches to the site of the city underline the notion that site is not a fixed physical

location, but can be seen as transient.

The photographs which feature on Mir's postcards destabilise the original idea of

Venice, which Whybrow responds to on the second of his ten postcards: 'have you ever been

[to Venice]? Actually, that seems like a silly question now: everybody's been even if they

haven't', emphasising the substantial cultural presence the city has across the world which

aids the formation of preconceptions of the place.[46] Whybrow's decision to write ten

postcards to himself parallels with the act of taking and posing for photographs, positing the

body in the moment of the photograph (whether as the person posing or the person

photographing) and then engaging with the image at some time beyond that moment. As he

states of the series of postcards:

> They are from a certain 'N' to 'another N', suggesting an
> indeterminate me-in-Venice to me-in-Coventry, the former being
> not-me or only-temporarily-me (since I am in a place that is for me
> 'elsewhere'), whilst the latter is not-me, too (since I am not, at the
> time of writing the cards, there but in Venice, which is for me
> elsewhere).[47]

The postcards thus evidence the multiplicity of here, there, and elsewhere at play, akin to

photography, while also speaking to notions of the performance of tourism. Furthermore, it

reflects on the ambiguity of and gradations within identity. 'Venice Typologies/Sent to

Coventry' raises notions of absence, loss, and death, all of which are associated to

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[44] Nick Mead, 'Welcome to Venice, China: Dalian copies canals, palaces ... and gondoliers', *Guardian*, 22 October 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2014/oct/22/venice-china-dalian-copy-canals-palaces-gondoliers> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[45] Sally Mackey and Nicolas Whybrow, 'Taking Place: some reflections on site, performance and community', *Research in Drama Education*, 12, 1, (2007), 1-14 (p.5).
[46] Whybrow, 'Venice Typologies/Sent to Coventry'.
[47] Ibid.

photography: the not-Venice images of the postcards contradictorily evoke Venice by presenting an absence in the shape of alternative watery scenes from around the world. As Whybrow asserts: 'Venice is always already the image or idea of Venice; there is only ever a narrative of Venice, which takes you *away* from Venice. It is an expression of absence or loss, masquerading, though, as presence'.[48] This is a further indication of how photographs of carnival, and of the city (or even images masquerading as the city) present an absence, just as any engagement with the city, whether inflected by the medium of photography or not, can be touched by the sensation of different heres, theres, and elsewheres.

Images of Carnival

The aforementioned film *Incognitus?* reflects my own experience of the carnivals of 2010 and 2011, at which I took scores of photographs of different carnival participants, thereby fitting with the stereotype of the photographing tourist myself. As I moved about the Piazzetta, I engaged with numerous *maschere* in a variety of outfits, posing still along the water's edge, with the iconic watery, gondola-filled views that the *bacino* affords, exhibited in Figure 1. For the posing *maschera*, being photographed is evidently an important part of their experience, just as for the tourist carnival-goers, capturing iconic images of Venice during carnival is *de rigueur*. The posing and photographing at play is indicative of codependence and interrelationality between the *maschere* and their fellow carnival participants. That my personal experience of carnival was strongly inflected by my picture-taking reflects my experience of Venice more broadly: when I have visited the city outside of carnival time I have been equally eager to photograph handsome vistas, marvelling at the postcard quality of the city. This recalls Sontag's germane assertion that photographs are experience captured; her observation, which was made years before photography was

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[48] Ibid.

transformed from something extraordinary to something ordinary, points to the prevalence of

photography in people's lives, and the way in which photographs mark experiences. Sontag

elaborates:

> Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by
> photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now
> addicted […] It would not be wrong to speak of people having a
> *compulsion* to photograph: to turn experience itself into a way of
> seeing. Ultimately, having an experience becomes identical with
> taking a photograph of it, and participating in a public event comes
> more and more to be equivalent to looking at it in photographed
> form.[49]

Sontag's comments carry yet more weight in the current age: formerly photographs marked

special experiences like births, marriages, and graduations, while now people photograph

their lunch and share such images on global networks. Undeniably, photographs still mark

the important events of life, but their recording of the ordinariness of life is a significant

development in photography's history. Katja Haustein asserts that the omnipresence of

photographs in life reflects 'the desire to observe, record, and archive our public and private

histories. Even in everyday situations, we find ourselves in the position of the "subject-as-

look": the photographer, or as the "subject-as-spectacle": the photographed object'.[50]

Photography has seeped into even the most basic interactions of life, serving as a medium of

communication and continually positioning people as photographers or spectators.

Sontag's assertions that photographs equate to experience can be applied to the

posing of the carnival *maschere*, evidenced in both *Incognitus?* and in images of the

maschere. Figure 1, for instance, encapsulates this notion, as the person beneath the mask

and costume is evidently posing for photographs as a crucial aspect of their experience of

carnival. This is curious as the *maschera* will not partake in engaging with the manifold

images beyond that moment, and the multiple interactions into the future therewith, as their

interaction with these photographing strangers is fleeting and limited to the moment of the

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[49] Sontag, p.24.
[50] Katja Haustein, *Regarding Lost Time: Photography, Identity, and Affect in Proust, Benjamin, and Barthes* (London: Legenda, 2012), pp.1-2.

snapshot. For the carnival participants taking the photographs, on the other hand, their experience of carnival is marked by photography which is extended beyond that moment as they then possess their own image of a *maschera* which they can print, frame, share, and interact with multiple times. In this way, participating in the carnival comes increasingly to be equivalent to looking at one's experience in photographed form, as Sontag suggests. Figure 5, depicting a masked carnival participant on the Rialto bridge, illustrates the fundamental role that photography plays for carnival participants as they seek to capture evidence of their being in the city, and of their transformed, carnivalesque appearance. The man in Figure 5 is wearing a cape, a neckerchief, a *commedia dell'arte* half-mask, a wig, and a top hat, so he has made a considerable effort to acknowledge carnival in his appearance. However, unlike the sunshine *maschera* in Figure 1, his Pantalone mask reveals the lower half of his face, his hands are also visible as they clutch his camera, and, importantly, his normal coat can be seen underneath the cape, limiting the level of transformation that his appearance suggests: he effaces his animate being much less than the *maschera* shown in Figure 1. Many carnival participants are similar to this gentleman in that they might wear a wig, a half-mask, or a cape over their normal clothes to effect a level of participation in costuming, but without having to don a complete costume typical of the conventional posing *maschere*. Questions of time, money, effort, and convenience influence the extent to which participants costume themselves. Across the carnival costume continuum, however, from the fully masked *maschere* to the tourists who make no change to their appearance for the event, posing and photographing is a common feature as the carnival experience is captured on camera. As Sontag tellingly intimates above, participating in an event is becoming equal to looking at a photograph of it, thus, the myriad photographs taken of the carnival and the city allow multiple engagements, echoing Schneider's observations.

Figure 6, on the other hand, depicts four *maschere* who have costumed themselves completely but who are not wearing masks. This image has a much more informal feel than Figure 1, as the *maschere* are posing in a relaxed fashion outside Florian's infamous coffee house within the southern colonnade of Piazza San Marco. These four *maschere* appear to be

Figure 5 *Maschera* **in Pantalone mask taking a photograph on the Rialto Bridge, 7 February 2010**

happily passing their carnival experience by positioning themselves in front of this renowned

Venetian institution, where they know they will receive ample attention. Their presence there

seems to be driven by their desire to be appreciated, ergo photographed, by fellow carnival-

goers, indicating that their experience of carnival is inflected by posing and being

photographed. The fact that their faces can be seen means they contrast significantly with the

fully masked *maschere*: indeed, it is their relaxed expressions which make the image more

informal. The visibility of their faces makes them more accessible because they can be seen

as animate beings: they are not statuesque in the style of the *maschera* in Figure 1. This

indicates that a key contributing factor to the stillness of the *maschere* is the full face mask,

as once the animate human features are hidden, the sense of mutability is decreased

considerably, as the previous chapter delineated. The large windows and bright lights of

Florian's, seen behind them, give the café a theatrical quality as passers-by peer in to look at

the activity of the coffee-drinking guests, accentuated at carnival as many of the people

Figure 6 Four *maschere* pose outside Florian's in Piazza San Marco, 5 March 2011

seated at tables are in costumes. The 2003 publication *Venice Carnival* embraces this

theatrical quality of Florian's with a number of staged photographs, taken by Virginio

Favale, within its ornately decorated walls.[51] Figure 7, taken through one of the café's

windows, reflects this quality, and echoes Favale's images, as it depicts four carnival

participants seated at table taking an evening drink: the large windows position those peering

in as voyeurs, while simultaneously positioning Florian's patrons as performers putting on a

spectacle. This image, however, contrasts with Favale's pictures by virtue of its natural

feeling: there is the sense that the people at table are oblivious of the photographer's peering

in, while Favale's series of photographs are overtly staged as his subjects directly interact

with the camera lens. Nevertheless, the quartet's costumes and masks, together with their

knowledge that they are on display, ensures there is a level of presentation. That the coffee

house has played a prominent role in the public life of the city for such an extended period –

it opened in 1720 – ensures that engagements therewith are loaded with past encounters,

gatherings, and conversations within its walls (and without).

Photographs of carnival *maschere*, wherever they appear on the costume continuum

from complete transformation to subtle acknowledgement of carnival, indicate that carnival

participants see posing as part of the carnival experience. This is evidenced in the images of

carnival discussed in this thesis, and reflects Sontag's assertion that: 'We learn to see

ourselves photographically', adding, 'People want the idealized image: a photograph of

themselves looking their best'.[52] Herein Sontag points to the understanding of performance

as inflecting all human interaction, again reflecting Erving Goffman's renowned theory that

people are always performing. Richard Schechner relates that Goffman's approach sees

'social life as theatre, an interplay of behaviors where players with different motives rehearse

their actions, maneuver to present themselves advantageously, and often perform at cross

purposes with one another'.[53] Goffman's theory states that performers can be convinced of

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[51] Virginio Favale (photography) and Paolo Alei (text), *Venice Carnival* (London: Artmedia Press, 2003).

[52] Sontag, p.85.

[53] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006),

Figure 7 *Maschere* **at table inside Florian's, seen through a window, 5 March 2011**

p.207.

their performance to the point that it appears to be real to them, or they can be cynical about their everyday performance, acknowledging that they are presenting an other to their audience.[54] The employment of performance and theatre as a frame to understand human interactions has impacted upon photography theory, as Sontag's intimations suggest. Her notion that we see ourselves photographically is evidenced in Figure 8, which depicts an unmasked *maschera* sporting a floral dress in an unassuming location in Venice, away from the main Piazza. Unlike the *maschere* posing outside Florian's in Figure 6, who are posing for any passersby who wish to photograph them, this *maschera* is posing specifically for my camera; in this sense, the encounter is in line with the traditions of portraiture. The woman performs for the camera lens, posing in a way that reflects her perspective of self, and how she believes she is seen, resonating with Goffmanian notions of the performance of self. Performance theorist Peggy Phelan has elaborated on this idea:

> Portrait photography tries to make an inner form, a (negative) shadow, expressive: a developed image which renders the corporeal, a body-real, as a real body. Uncertain about what this body looks like or how substantial it is, we perform an image of it by imitating what we think we look like. We imagine what people might see when they look at us, and then we try to perform (and conform to) those images.[55]

Phelan's assertions embolden the idea of a concerted performance on the part of the posing subject, made more evident in Figure 8 as the woman's face is uncovered. Phelan continues: 'Photographers develop the image as they touch the shutter; models perform what they believe that image looks like. And spectators see again what they do and do not look like'.[56] Thus there are numerous layers of identity contained within the act of photographing. In spite of her transformed carnival appearance, the woman in Figure 8 nevertheless presents herself for the camera in a manner which intimates her own understanding of self, especially as she is recognisable. The ambivalent nature of the spectator's engagement with the image

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[54] Erin Striff, 'Introduction: Locating Performance Studies', in *Performance Studies*, ed. by Erin Striff (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.1-13 (p.5).
[55] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.36.
[56] Ibid.

Figure 8 *Maschera*, 6 March 2011

muddies any understanding of photography as straightforward, accurate representation, instead implying abstraction. What is seen in the photograph both is and is not the presented subject of the image: the person photographed presents a version of themselves which is at a distance from actuality.

In accordance with Sontag and Phelan, Roland Barthes explicitly aligns photography to theatre in his text *Camera Lucida*, stating that photography is a sort of 'primitive theater'.[57] He labels viewers of photographs as 'spectators', making the analogy stronger still.[58] Crucially, he recognises and emphasises the life of the photograph *beyond* the moment of capture. Perspectives provided by Schneider, Sontag, and Phelan, together with Goffmanian assertions of the performance of everyday life, and broader understandings of performance and performativity, provide an interesting light in which to apply Barthes's considerations on photography to images of the Venice carnival: he propounds a view of active performance for the camera, therefore ramifying the iterations of performance at play. He states:

> Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing', I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. This transformation is an active one: I feel that the Photograph creates my body or mortifies it.[59]

His description of his engagement with a photographer emphasises the process of 'posing', as he transforms himself into an image. This posing, he avers, is something he is aware of and something he also desires the spectator of the photograph to be aware of. In stressing that he makes another body for himself, he evokes the role of an actor adopting a different character. Andy Warhol echoes these sentiments in considering the posing of models:

> Beauties in photographs are different from beauties in person; it

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[57] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), p.32.
[58] Ibid., p.9.
[59] Ibid., pp.10-11.

> must be hard to be a model, because you'd want to be like the photograph of you, and you can't ever look that way. And so you start to copy the photograph. Photographs usually bring in another half-dimension.[60]

This creating of another body is complicated at the carnival as the costumed and masked participants have invariably already made an alternative body for themselves through their carnival transformation, thus the photograph intensifies the otherness of the image.

The two *maschere* in Figure 9, below, demonstrate the presentation of an alternative identity in their choice of full mask and costume, but there is a further layer to their otherness as they present themselves for the camera. At dusk, I came across this pair walking into the main Piazza from the Piazzetta, and they willingly posed for me with the handsome background of the Ducal Palace behind them. Their white and gold matching costumes are all-encompassing, covering every part of them except their eyes, in the established tradition of the fully-masked *maschere*. Their physiognomy, costumes, masks, and props suggest they are male and female, and though this cannot be definitively ascertained, I will assume their actual gender identities match their costumes for the purpose of identification here. Barthes writes about the *punctum* of an image, that thing which pricks the viewer, perhaps an unintentional or incidental feature; it is an addition to the image, 'what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*'.[61] The *punctum* foregrounds the subjective nature of engagement with the image, as Nicola Foster delineates: 'The *punctum* is presented as an individual approach opposed to the *studium* which is an informed cultural approach of decoding and interpretation'.[62] For me, the *punctum* of Figure 9 is the visibility of the eyes of the female *maschera*. As I view this image, I am struck by her eyes peering out from beneath her mask. They seem to suggest a shocked expression by their wide openness. They draw me in to the person beneath the mask, making the engagement with the *maschera* also an engagement with the person beneath the mask and costume. Because of the visibility

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[60] Andy Warhol, 'On Beauty, 1975', in *Beauty*, ed. by Dave Beech (London: Whitechapel and the MIT Press, 2009), pp.172-74 (p.173).

[61] Barthes, p.55.

[62] Nicola Foster, 'Photography and the Gaze: The Ethics of Vision Inverted', *Parallax*, 14, 2 (2008), 78-92 (p.83).

Figure 9 *Maschere* **couple posing in the Piazzetta with the Ducal Palace in the background, 7 February 2010**

of her eyes, this *maschera's* performance for the camera appears animated and thus more evident, making her humanity obvious. The affect of this *punctum* is striking because of the invisibility of her companion's eyes: his mask shades his eyes and the black make-up around his eyes makes the mask almost appear hollow. In this, the male *maschera* has a spectral quality, a notion which is congruent with Barthes: as he states above, the photograph 'mortifies' the body. Contrastingly, through the visibility of her eyes, the female *maschera* becomes animated, in contrast to the apparently inanimate, and therefore more statuesque male. This highlights an important aspect of the special Venetian quality of the carnival *maschere's* stillness: it requires an effacement of human animation, but in this, it makes the city's aesthetic more richly associated with death and ghostliness.

The inanimate and statuesque forms which the *maschere* take effect this level of spectrality, intensified by their stillness, silence, and complete transformation. Their haunting quality has a simpatico link with the city, which has regularly been associated with death, as was outlined in the first chapter in relation to literary and filmic representations of the city seen in *The Wings of the Dove*, *Death in Venice*, *Don't Look Now*, and *The Comfort of Strangers* for instance. The famed gondolas of the city have also met with such associations; Richard Wagner writes that in spite of everything he had heard of them beforehand, seeing a gondola for the first time was a rude surprise, stating of his embarkation that: 'it decidedly seemed to me as if I were taking part in a funeral procession during an epidemic'.[63] Similarly, Mark Twain described the gondola as a hearse,[64] while the protagonist of Mann's *Death in Venice* sees it as 'black as nothing else on earth except a coffin'.[65] All such comments themselves form a reiterative cycle of citationality, suggesting that it is difficult to say anything original about Venice.[66] The notion that the city is sinking

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[63] Richard Wagner, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.263.
[64] Mark Twain, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, Norwich, p.265.
[65] Thomas Mann, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.268.
[66] See Ian Irvine, 'Venice the menace: Why Venetophiles just can't get enough of the object of their desire', 2 June 2007, *Financial Times* <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a22c908e-10a6-11dc-96d3-000b5df10621.html#axzz3nbm8x2dN> [accessed 9 September 2015]. In this review article, Irvine addresses Judith Martin's *No Vulgar Hotel: The Desire and Pursuit of Venice*, who, he asserts, states that even saying there is nothing else to say about Venice is a cliché. Indeed, as early as 1494 the

contributes to ideas of death as predictions are made that Venice will take on the mantle of

Atlantis, aided by the overwhelming nature of tourism in the city, as discussed in the thesis

introduction.[67] In 2009, an event was organised to mark the death of the city, as a mock

funeral barge transported a pink coffin, representing Venice, down the Grand Canal, in

protest at the dwindling population and the imbalance of tourism in the city.[68] This publicity

stunt, organised by Venessia.com, commuted with the established association of Venice and

death, reiterating the trope, while giving it a new and urgent meaning.[69] The haunting quality

of the *maschere*, then, is part of a tradition of deathliness, representing both human mortality

and Venice's mortality. Capturing the *maschere* in photographs extends this quality, as

Barthes speaks about the way in which posing for a photograph is a sort of death. He

elucidates:

> The Photograph (the one I *intend*) represents that very subtle
> moment when, to tell the truth, I am neither subject nor object but a
> subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a
> micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a
> specter.[70]

The micro-version of death comes about as the photographed figure is captured permanently

in a moment which is gone forever and remains obstinately absent. The spectrality that

Barthes refers to is doubled or multiplied, however, by the *maschere* as their hidden faces

and disguised bodies already suggest a level of spectrality. Evidently the presence of the

mask and costume complicate Barthes's view as they intensify the sensation of spectrality in

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pilgrim Canon Pietro Casola wrote: 'I determined to examine carefully the city of Venice, about which so much has been said and written […] that it appears to me there is nothing left to say', indicating that by the fifteenth century Venice had already been prolifically described. M. Margaret Newett, trans., *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem In the Year 1494* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1907), pp.124-25. See also McCarthy, *Venice Observed*, p.12 for further funereal analogies of gondolas.

[67] Anna Somers Cocks, 'The Coming Death of Venice?', *New York Review of Books* (2013) <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/jun/20/coming-death-venice/> [accessed 18 October 2013].

[68] Kerry Whigham, 'Performing a future (in) performing a past: Identity, cultural performance, and the Utopian impulse', *Tourist Studies*, 14, 2 (2014), 203-24 (pp.215-18).

[69] Venessia.com, 'Funerale di Venezia 14 novembre 2009' <http://www.venessia.com/funerale.htm> [accessed 14 August 2015].

[70] Barthes, p.14.

the image.

Barthes's description of the photograph as 'mortifying' the body underlines the trope of death throughout his ruminations on photography, and a viewpoint shared by numerous writers. Schneider refers to some of these perspectives: Jean Cocteau's 'death at work'; Walter Benjamin's 'posthumous shock'; André Bazin's 'embalming of time'; Thierry de Duve's 'petrification'; along with Barthes's view.[71] Along the same line, Sontag describes photographs as *memento mori*, stating: 'To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality'.[72] She even describes the act of photographing somebody as a 'murder'.[73] Certainly, the notion that photographs have a deathliness is attractive to photography theorists, echoing negative understandings of stillness as lifelessness invoked in the previous chapter. Barthes makes a particularly strong and eloquent argument for this view of photography, describing photography as 'a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead', pointing to the still pose of the subject and the figurative make-up of life.[74] His reflections on photography are driven by his engagement with an image of his deceased mother, the so called Winter Garden photograph, in which he has found his mother's essence. Emerling relates that this photograph, which Barthes chooses not to share with his reader, is the *punctum* of his work *Camera Lucida*: as it pricks Barthes, so its absence from the text pricks the reader.[75] Describing photographers as agents of death, Barthes states that the catastrophe of photography is that all people photographed are going to die.[76] On viewing a photograph, mortality pricks the viewer whether the subject is still alive or is already dead. Barthes's morose reading is inflected by his sadness at his mother's death, but his observations on photography pertinently draw out the medium's deathly quality. This focus on deathliness recalls the earlier cited view of Marvin Carlson of

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[71] Rebecca Schneider, 'A Small History (of) Still Passing', in *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image Between the Visible and the Invisible*, ed. by Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp.254-69.
[72] Sontag, p.15.
[73] Ibid., pp.14-15.
[74] Barthes, p.32.
[75] Emerling, p.186.
[76] Barthes, p.96.

ghosting in performance and Jonathan Miller's invocation of the afterlife of performances. Carlson foregrounds an understanding of performances as reiterative and ghosted, taking up earlier instances of performance in new versions. The way in which the photograph stalls a moment in time does have an embalming quality. Furthermore, the live engagement with the physical document of the photograph is also haunted by the originary presence of the posing subject, and perhaps by different engagements with that same image, as Barthes indicates in his relationship with the Winter Garden image. For Barthes, the photograph can never be distinguished from its referent, and because of the adherence of the referent to the photograph, it is not actually the photograph that we see: the physical document of the photograph adheres to something other that we see.[77] It is surely this quality that has made photography so popular as images are engaged with affectively and emotionally, often evoking a memory or feeling which illustrates that the medium is not merely representation.

In a strong sense, photographs are ghosted because of their reiterative nature: people pose in ways they recognise as the right way to pose for a camera, replicating earlier images, even doing so unknowingly as the students from the University of Warwick demonstrated in their engagement with the city, as discussed above. In a similar way, when looking at Figure 1, the *maschera* posing in the Piazzetta, the image adheres not only to that moment and experience of carnival, but also to the city and the carnivals of the past, and to artworks which have depicted the city and people going about the city in masks. In this way, all images of the carnival discussed here adhere to bygone iterations, picking up Schneider's assertion that the gesture of the photograph reappears and repeats, and Sontag's emphasis on the experience *beyond* the moment of the photograph. This quality of photography at carnival is strongly in evidence in Alessandro Bressanello's important documentary history of the revived carnival, spanning the period between 1980 and 2009. As outlined in the thesis introduction, this collection depicts the multiplicity of interpretations of the carnival, eschewing one, stereotypical view of the fully masked, posing *maschere*. Bresanello's book is significant because the images therein repeat the same motifs over the period of the

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[77] Ibid., pp.5-6.

modern carnival. The 1997 carnival includes a photograph of four opulently costumed

revellers at table at Florian's, illustrating the reiterative nature of the carnival experience

captured through photographs: Figure 7 inadvertently, but inevitably, resonates with this

image, as well as Favale's images of Florian's discussed above.[78] Similarly, there are several

images of the *volo dell'angelo*, the flight of the angel, introduced to the modern carnival in

2001, echoing the bygone flight of the Turk.[79] Multiple images of different iterations of

Pulcinella and Arlecchino feature across the three decades, while *maschere* in *bauta* abound

throughout. While poses and photographs across the ages of carnival resonate strongly with

one another, the iterations at play do not have an originary source as such, as diverse

approaches to performance indicate.

Photographs underline the way in which performances at the Venice carnival are

bound up with the past iterations which took place in the city and which extend into the

future. In 1980, considered the year of the official introduction of the modern carnival, a

group of people committed to the Venice carnival formed a fraternity, and called themselves

the *Compagnia de Calza 'I Antichi'*, taking inspiration from the *compagnie delle calze* which

played a crucial role in the organisation of the Venice carnival from the fifteenth century. As

Paolo Alei observes, these different *compagnie* were formed by young aristocratic noblemen,

and they were identified by the colour of their hose (*calze*). Within each of the groups,

specific rules prevailed in the spirit of confraternities in general. Alei explains:

> The *compagnie* were charged with controlling the Carnival's
> festivities, which might otherwise have fallen into chaos and
> disorder. [...] The duties assumed by the young members served as
> a valuable training for their future careers as officials of the
> Republic when similar skills were transferred from the realm of the

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[78] Alessandro Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna: 30 anni di Carnevale a Venezia 1980-2010/ Carnival in the Modern Age: 30 Years of Carnival in Venice 1980-2010*, trans. by Olga Barmine (Venice: Studio LT2, 2010), p.152 (photograph attributed to Graziano Arici). An image of five *maschere* at table in Florian's also appears in Alessandro Falassi's chapter on the carnival, see Alessandro Falassi, 'The Mask, the Mist, and the Mirror: *Carnevale* in Venice, Italy', in *¡Carnival!*, ed. by Barbara Mauldin (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp.64-91 (p.76).

[79] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, see pp.182, 193, 203, 206, 225, 232, and 238 for numerous such images, with the 2008 angel in the shape of American rapper Coolio, bucking the trend of female 'angels'.

> Carnival to that of the state administration. [...] There were many associations called '*della calza*' (*degli Immortali*, *dei Fedeli*, *degli Accesi*, *dei Potenti*, *dei Sempiterni*) each of which, by law, was composed exclusively of aristocratic youth.[80]

The reestablishment of *compagnie delle calze* in the early 1980s is indicative of the power of performance to remain, as the gestures and traces of the medieval *compagnie* were picked up by groups in the latter half of the twentieth century, and these groups studied the ancient spectacles of the bygone carnival, with *I Antichi* being, according to Alei, 'undoubtedly the most irreverent of the groups'.[81] Luco '*Colo de Fero*' Colferai, who has played a prominent role in the *I Antichi* group, has pertinently referenced the reiterative nature of their work: 'One might argue that we do nothing but reinvent the same things over and over. [...] We have already invented and done everything'.[82] The *I Antichi* group organise other events throughout the year, but the carnival is their main activity, and they have collaborated with the carnival organisers to produce spectacles, including in 1992 when they created a 'piazza of marvels' (*Piazza de le meravege*) in Piazza San Marco. This event, like the others which the group organise, illustrates the reiterative character of their performances.[83]

Significantly, *I Antichi* object to the commercialisation of the carnival and the extreme focus on tourism which pervades the event, as they seek to promote activities which are actively participated in; Colferai has written a provocative retrospective piece, playfully addressing some key aspects which inform the *I Antichi* group, underlining the fact that the group's participants are volunteers whose passion for Venice and its cultural traditions drive their involvement in the group's various activities. He writes cynically about the stereotypical image of the modern day carnival in the form of the fully-masked *maschera* in the *volto* mask:

> Since the very early years of [the revived modern] Carnival, a lucky

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[80] Favale (photography) and Alei (text), p.56.
[81] Ibid., p.116.
[82] Luco '*Colo de Fero*' Colferai, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.271.
[83] *I Antichi* <http://www.iantichi.org/> [accessed 10 August 2015].

> photographer got the brilliant idea to photograph the few sad-faced
> masks wandering around Venice. White impassive immobile
> funeral masks icily dull surrounded by unlikely brightly coloured
> clouds of synthetic fabric. These masks did nothing but let
> themselves be photographed. And since there are more
> photographers than human beings, despite themselves they became
> the symbol of the Carnival of Venice. While all the other masks
> have disappeared little by little over the years, they are still around.
> And now, neglected and more derelict they let their picture be taken
> for a few coins, wearing their costumes even in August.[84]

This stinging critique of the dominance of the *maschere* of the kind depicted in Figure 9

above takes umbrage at the fact that these figures have come to represent the carnival, as, for

Colferai, these figures do not reflect the dynamism and liveliness of the event. Bressanello's

collection would concur with this view as it represents myriad polyphonic interpretations of

carnival, and the *maschere* in *volto* do not appear as dominant figures in the photographic

record. Importantly, Colferai points to the way in which photography has skewed the modern

day carnival, contrasting with the pre-1797 (and thereby pre-photography) carnivals. There is

an implication that the stereotype of the carnival as a dignified, placid, and opulent affair,

which is strongly resonant in the posing of the fully-masked *maschere*, is a result of

photography: the image of these figures has come to represent the city's carnival globally,

ensuring they are replicated and multiplied as people come to expect them as a feature of the

event. A Venice Carnival Photographers' Guide, available to purchase and download

online in the iTunes media library, evidences this skewed interpretation of the event, as the

electronic application promises to provide its users with information as to the best times and

locations to photograph the *maschere*; all the images used to entice prospective purchasers

evoke the stereotypical idea of the fully masked, beautiful, opulent, and enigmatic

maschere.[85] Evidently, the creative, dynamic, and individual engagements that marked the

early years of the carnival's revival have come to be dominated by the image of the posing,

stilled *maschera*. Figure 10 is illustrative of this interpretation of carnival, as, although the

maschere pictured are not in full-face masks, photography is integral to their understanding

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[84] Colferai, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.271.
[85] Venice Carnival Photographers' Guide, iTunes Preview <https://itunes.apple.com/app/venice-carnival-photographers/id593295742?mt=8> [accessed 4 October 2015].

and experience of the carnival. These *maschere* were part of a group of English tourist carnival-goers who were fully and ornately costumed and who were wearing half-masks. With the group was a photographer taking pictures of the troupe in front of suitably Venetian backgrounds. The image depicts some of the troupe as they await their moment with the photographer: as Sontag asserts, the photograph was their experience captured. Their posing is symptomatic of broad engagements with the event, as the iTunes application evidences, and is indicative of an idea of carnival which *I Antichi* are opposed to, and which displeases Colferai.

Figure 10 *Maschere*, 6 March 2011

Absence in the Image

Photographs of the carnival are evidence of carnival participants being there in that moment. For Barthes, this quality of the photograph is what he terms the *noeme* of photography: the quality that tells the spectator *the thing has been there*.[86] Poses struck by carnival participants evoke, for the spectator of the photograph, 'that instant, however brief, in which a real thing happened to be motionless in front of the eye'.[87] The *noeme*, whether consciously considered or not by the spectator, is part of the learned, collective way in which people respond to photographs, as they represent a real moment *that has been*. The proliferation of photography at the carnival therefore multiplies the actual moment of the carnival, re-making the event in future engagements with the image. The photograph shows something that has been, and yet that moment is also assuredly present in the image at the moment of encounter. Because of photography's ability to capture reality in an image, it seems inevitable that it should be tied so closely to death and loss, as the absence of the moment is always implied in the image. Indeed, Barthes's focus on death links photography to notions of absence: the absence of the person because, as Barthes discusses, they are dead or because they are going to die. Ghosting equally suggests absence: the haunting of a time, person, or thing that is no longer. A defining feature of the photograph is its indication of other times; as Barthes has shown, the moment captured is absent to the spectator. Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf state that 'by their visibility pictures and images constitute the presence of an absence'.[88] In this, they echo the previous chapter's discussion of presence/absence in performance, with Jon Erickson's writings as a reference point, and the application of absence to the stillness of statue performers, sculpture, and the Venetian *maschere*.

The notion of the photograph as an abstraction is important to engagements with

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[86] Barthes, pp.76-79.
[87] Ibid., p.78.
[88] Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf, 'Introduction to Part II', in *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image Between the Visible and the Invisible*, ed. by Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp.79-80 (p.79).

images of Venice and its carnival, and it also points to this understanding of absence within the image. Emerling cites Joel Snyder in his discussion of the artificial nature of photography, stating that what we see in photographs is abstracted from what the human eye sees, partly because of the image's stillness, and partly because of the mechanised nature of capturing the image. As Emerling asserts, 'our eyes are *never* still, even if their movement is imperceptible to us. Human vision does not produce a fixed image'.[89] This is significant because it underlines the constant motion of life which contrasts with the stillness of the photograph, hence the image's abstraction. Art theorist Rosalind Krauss has written on the same lines about photography, stating that what is presented in the photograph is captured by camera-eyes: eyes which see faster and more sharply. She asserts: 'Camera-seeing is thus an extraordinary extension of normal vision, one that supplements the deficiencies of the naked eye. The camera covers and arms this nakedness, it acts as a kind of prosthesis, enlarging the capacity of the human body'.[90] The extra capacity that the camera gives to the body explains its proliferation, especially in tourist sites and extraordinary situations. Krauss elaborates to say that although the camera extends the possibilities of vision, it does so on its terms, supplanting the viewer: 'the camera is the aid who comes to usurp'.[91] Its terms include the stillness of the image itself, a snapshot of time, but this stillness belies the motion from which the image is taken. Haustein further pinpoints the absence within the image, explaining that although photographs can be perceived as an accurate record of the subject depicted, they can nevertheless feel fragmenting and not whole. She elucidates:

> Despite being permanently and unchangeably preserved in the
> picture, the unity of the portrayed person may be seen as dissolved
> in this momentary appearance which only exposes a static,
> contingent, fragmented facet of his or her being. In its confirmed
> authenticity the photograph seems inauthentic, because the
> represented detail does not appear as a special case of the general
> but as a fragment that can no longer be integrated into the whole.[92]

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[89] Emerling, p.11.
[90] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (London: The MIT Press, 1986), p.116.
[91] Ibid., p.117.
[92] Haustein, pp.38-39.

Haustein's observations underline the fragmentary quality of the photograph, as although it assuredly presents its subject, it also intimates its belonging to some prior place and time, and a complex narrative absent to the spectator of the image.

Phelan provides insight into this debate about presence and absence as it relates to the photograph and to performance. In her study *Unmarked*, she writes that representation is never the real it represents, a fecund notion that echoes Emerling's assertion of photography's abstraction and points to an age-old debate that has roots in Plato, who warned against the seductive power of the visual. As Foster avers, in Plato's *Republic*: 'the artist is banished from the ideal state on the grounds that art offers representations that hold fascination and a seductive lure but ultimately the visual is but mere illusion, not Truth as such'.[93] This viewpoint has inflected antitheatrical frames, extrapolated earlier in this thesis, and it applies to photography too; in his brief history of photography, Walter Benjamin cites Bertolt Brecht in the same vein: 'the situation is complicated by the fact that less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality'.[94] However, focusing on early photography, Benjamin draws out the affective nature of photographs as they differ from paintings in that they do closely represent a real life. In discussing the photographic portraits of David Octavius Hill, he describes his affective response to the image of Hill's Newhaven fishwife, stating he has: 'an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in *art*'.[95] This is indicative of the strong level of address within the photograph as the subject is wholly present in the moment of the snapshot, reminding the spectator of Barthes's *noeme* – the *that has been* quality of the image. For Phelan, though, any form of representation is marked by a rupture in the identity of the thing represented and its real being. She writes: 'All seeing is hooded with loss – the loss of self-seeing. In looking at the

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[93] Foster, p.79.
[94] Bertolt Brecht, cited by Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1997), p.255.
[95] Benjamin, pp.242-43.

other (animate or inanimate) the subject seeks to see itself. […] Looking, then, both obscures and reveals the looker'.[96] Looking at the other, in whatever form it takes, is invariably also a route into seeing and understanding the self, but this leads to absence as the self is a site of rupture. This relation was explored in the first chapter's discussion of theatricality, with Lefebvre and Régulier suggesting the self and other cannot be separated, and Nicholas Ridout asserting that the theatrical exchange is an exchange not solely with the other but also with the self, expanding upon Michael Fried's observations on the implied theatricality of minimalist art that foregrounds the codependence of the work and the viewer. This connection in engagement with the other is indicative of the way in which seeing the other reveals the identity of the self. Phelan states:

> Identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other - which is
> to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other,
> declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges
> with the other. In that declaration of identity and identification,
> there is always loss, the loss of not-being the other and yet
> remaining dependent on that other for self-seeing, self-being.[97]

Phelan's observations, which are inflected by the writings of Judith Butler, point to the reason why people engage not only with art and representation, but with each other in social interactions. The instability of identity means that people are in constant engagement with an other, whether that involves aligning to or digressing from that other. Crucially, in spite of the dependence on the other, it remains outside the self, creating a feeling of loss or absence. In this, Phelan's assertions concord with Barthes's claim that photography is a sort of death: the pose is a presentation of something other to the self. In posing, one presents an alternative version of the self, creating an other which one knows is distant and absent from the self. Then, as a spectator viewing an image, there is the knowledge that the subject of the image is other to the self, and, furthermore, that the subject is presenting an other.

Phelan's ruminations link back to Avedon's childhood memories of family portraits:

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[96] Phelan, p.16.
[97] Ibid., p.13.

he states that the borrowed dogs, cars, and homes that featured in their family snapshots revealed a lie about who they were and a truth about who they wanted to be. In seeking to represent a version of themselves, they aligned themselves with another identity. This can be broadly applied to the presentation of self for the camera, which is multiplied at the Venice carnival. The *maschere*, whether they are fully masked and costumed, or if they have made only a small acknowledgement of carnival in their appearance, are engaging with an other through their very engagement with the carnival. The extraordinary nature of carnival, with its frames of time and space, mean that carnival participants are given the opportunity to present alternative versions of self, hence the layering of diverse performances. Phelan discusses the photographer Cindy Sherman, renowned for her staged photographs which frequently replicate other images, and states that the adornments and disguises that Sherman uses show that the body itself is an unmarked canvas; 'The attempt to see and paint the body, to make it visible, requires that the artist "add" a prop – a false nose, the breastplate, the gloved hand – which marks the body *as* appearance'.[98] As Sherman uses props and embellishments to create her photographs, her work parallels with the practice of costuming oneself at the carnival in Venice. Indeed, the people who come to the city and who do not make any effort to transform their identity or even to make a small acknowledgement of carnival remain unmarked, unremarkable, and not the focus of the event. Their normality reduces their visibility. Costumed and masked carnival participants, however, make themselves visible through this transformation. In a sense, the costume and mask validates the carnival body, and warrants that it receive attention and be photographed. However, as Phelan avers, 'The visible body, then, like the word, conceals rather than reveals the real of its Being'.[99] The disguises adorning the body hide the being beneath the disguise. This can be interpreted figuratively to apply to the general performances of self in everyday life, but it can also be applied quite literally to the disguises adopted by carnival participants. The being of the *maschere* is hidden, providing an analogy to the disguises of everyday life and the

[98] Ibid., p.68.
[99] Ibid., p.69.

presentation of self in social interaction.

Akin to Cindy Sherman's overtly staged photographs are the fantastic costumes of Rossana Molinatti, which in turn encapsulate the key themes of reiteration and citationality which permeate this thesis and which are further ramified through photography.[100] For more than three decades since the carnival was revived in Venice, Molinatti has been committed to creating costumes for the carnival which pay homage to renowned artists, among them Picasso, Klimt, Veronese, Tiepolo, Magritte, and Schiele. Using diverse materials, Molinatti's costumes replicate the original artworks in creative and inventive ways, making her appear like a walking canvas. Figure 11 depicts her 2014 offering, an homage to Edvard Munch's infamous *The Scream*, while Figure 12 depicts her 1987 costume, a tribute to Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss*.[101] Both of these images cite the original artwork, and their citationality is extended by their positioning as Venice carnival costumes. As Molinatti has produced so many of these costumes, there is a level of self-citationality too, as her individual pieces resonate with one another; in particular she has created several Klimt-inspired costumes, and a number of Picasso costumes. Her website is a tribute to an individual vision of engagement with the carnival and reflects the plurality of ways in which the event is manifested. Molinatti's costumes are always all-encompassing, and this points to absence or loss in the figure of the *maschere*: they are decidedly present in one's field of vision, but they are also absent and unknown. That they are photographed so extensively deepens the paradox as the feeling of absence can be interpreted in multiple ways through engagement with the photograph, as has been suggested. For Phelan, influenced by Butler and the writings of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, the representational is never an accurate reflection of the real, and in relation to photography, this is indicative of the level of abstraction at play in the photographed image and the encounter therewith. This consonance points to the ruptures arising between understandings of self and other, as Phelan states: 'The

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[100] Rossana Molinatti
<http://rossanamolinatti.altervista.org/www.rossanamolinatti.altervista.org/Le_Maschere_1.html>
[accessed 10 August 2015].
[101] Bressanello's collection features Molinatti's homage to Klimt from 1987 and to Max Ernst from 1988, see *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, p.75 and p.86.

Figure 11 Rossana Molinatti's 2014 *maschera*
based on Edvard Munch's *The Scream*

Figure 12 Rossana Molinatti's 1987 *maschera*
based on Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss*

relationship between the real and the representational, between the looker and the given to be seen, is a version of the relation between self and other'.[102] The *maschere* and photographs thereof evidence the abstraction between these poles, but also point to the interdependence there-between. For Butler, the body's corporeality means that even if the body is photographed or filmed, it can never be fully transported to another place by media, because of corporeal locatedness. She states:

> No matter how fully transported through media we might be, we are also emphatically not. [...] some dimensions of the time and space of that bodily location cannot be transported, are left there, or persist there and have an obdurate thereness.[103]

This thereness is evident in the photographs of the carnival, as the figures in the images emphatically point to their corporeal location of the physical city during carnival, even as the image is looked upon in a different context, setting, and timeframe. Molinatti's creations are assuredly located in the Venice setting, and in spite of the documentation of her carnival output in images, online and elsewhere, the corporeality of the artist underneath the costume ensures her performance remains within that moment and in that site, linking with the stillness of statuary which has an aura of permanence.

A core assertion of Phelan's *Unmarked* is of performance as existing only in the present, advancing and elaborating on established views of performance as ephemeral.[104] Phelan writes: 'Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance'.[105] Any repetition of a performance is always different. Vanhaesebrouck explains Phelan's standpoint: 'Performance is exclusively devoted to the now, it disappears from the moment it is acted out and it can only continue its existence in

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[102] Phelan, p.3.
[103] Butler, 'Precarious Life', p.137.
[104] See Schneider, *Performing Remains*, for a short history of performance viewed in terms of ephemerality, pp.94-96.
[105] Phelan, p.146.

the memory of the spectator, its ontological integrity constituting its very essence'.[106] However, as Vanhaesebrouck shows, scholars like Philip Auslander have troubled Phelan's assertions of performance's ephemerality, by, in Auslander's case, arguing for the mutual dependence of mediation and live performance.[107] Schneider, though, indicates a level of consonance between these two theorists:

> For all their apparent disagreement, both Phelan and Auslander position the body performing live as not *already* a matter of record. Neither is it a means of recording. And in this, the two are in closely aligned agreement: the live does not record.[108]

Schneider, as earlier chapters have shown, questions the alignment of performance with ephemerality, asserting instead a view of performance as remaining in multiple ways, seen initially through the prism of American Civil War reenactments. For her, the body can be seen as a recording entity, a living archive which repeats and maintains earlier performances: 'remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh'.[109] Applied to the bodies who create and recreate the Venice carnival year on year, this is an energetic statement, identifying the bodies which engage in carnival as sites of contested and crossing times and frames. In this context, the carnival can be seen as occurring, or recurring, in multiple times, as Bressanello's collection over thirty years shows, picking up traces of bygone carnivals through history. Similarly, Molinatti's body is a palimpsest of her artistic carnival engagements. In discussing the reenactments of the Civil War which she studied, Schneider makes a number of relevant observations:

> At various and random moments, amidst the myriad strangeness of anachronism at play, it can occasionally feel 'as if' the halfway dead came halfway to meet the halfway living, halfway. That is, despite or perhaps because of the error-ridden mayhem of trying to touch the past, something other than the discrete 'now' of everyday

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[106] Vanhaesebrouck, p.97.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.92.
[109] Ibid., p.101.

life can be said to occasionally occur – or recur.[110]

This assertion of cross-temporality is evocative of the carnival: the 'anachronism at play' applies to the costuming and masking of the participants, as well as to the traditional events which form part of the carnival and which point back to earlier iterations. Such an interpretation challenges conventional linear interpretations of time, and this challenge to linearity is aligned to the multidirectionality of time in theatre and performance.

Conclusion

Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* hinges on the fictional premise of Marco Polo as a guest of Kublai Khan, describing cities to his host. The book is based on the real trip made by Polo in the late thirteenth century, during which he worked in the service of the Mongol emperor Khan.[111] Each short chapter of Calvino's book sees Polo describe a different city to Khan, and these descriptions are interspersed with sections of narrative and dialogue portraying the two characters' interactions. There is considerable consonance between Calvino's text and the themes and theories which have arisen in this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis, in particular the notions of repetition, cross-temporality, and identity. Demonstrating an affinity to Schneider's opposition to linearity in understandings of time, Calvino writes:

> Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a past of his that
> he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are
> or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed
> places.[112]

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[110] Ibid., p.14.

[111] Ronald Latham, 'Introduction', in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. by Ronald Latham (London: Penguin, 1958), pp.7-29.

[112] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. by William Weaver (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974), pp.28-29.

In this, he posits a view of the multidirectionality of time. Akin to Whybrow's performance piece 'Venice Typologies/Sent to Coventry' and the work of Mir which Whybrow employs therein, Calvino also suggests Venice is contained within all places and all places within Venice. There are traces of Venice in the numerous descriptions of the cities that Polo has seen, all of which have fictional names and fantastical identities, even as they hint at Venetian qualities. For instance, the city Zobeide was constructed in a labyrinthine way in order that its male residents could chase the woman of their dreams; Chloe contains only strangers with extrovert identities who move about in silence, evocative of Venice's carnival; Valdrada is built on a lake so that every single thing in the city is reflected in a mirror-image, suggestive of the canal and lagoon waters of Venice; Clarice has multiple versions of itself, different Clarices (Venices), seeking to maintain the originary Clarice; and finally there is Cecilia, a city which people try to leave but they find they are always in the same place, again echoing notions of Venice's labyrinthine quality. In the text, Khan demands to know why Polo has never described Venice, the city of his birth, to which Polo replies 'Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice'.[113] This further reiterates the title of Mir's Biennale artwork: *VENEZIA: all places contain all others*, while also speaking to the photographs of the *maschere* and participants of the carnival. These photographs, through their citational quality, contain and replicate earlier iterations of the carnival, pointing backwards, but they also hail towards the future as they address future spectators of the image, therefore ensuring that the subjects of the images present themselves for the camera lens, multiplying the iterations of performance and spectatorship at the carnival and in the city.

As the body is a living archive, a site of recording in Schneider's view, the photograph can be viewed as more than mere document, and she encourages a reassessment of the photograph to avoid such restrictive terms. Asserting the affinity between performance and photography, she avers: 'what photography and performance share is […] the rowdier processional or street theatre legacy of theatrical irruption – instability, repetition, the

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[113] Ibid., p.86.

ambulant freeze, the by-pass – that undoes archive-driven determinations of what disappears and what remains'.[114] The cross-temporal slippage of the photograph that Schneider emphasises recalls Barthes's description of how he poses for the camera for the future viewer of the image: in this way, the photograph calls forward, it hails the future. Indeed, Schneider stresses the liveness of the moment of engagement with the photograph in the scene of its reception, a moment which is hailed in the actual moment in which the picture is taken.[115] Thus, the photographs of the carnival multiply the iterations of performance and spectatorship of the carnival, not only because of the performance of self for the camera, but by the very iterability of the images' poses. In addition, every engagement with the image, as the spectator views it, repositions the moment of performance of the carnival and creates new iterations of performance and spectatorship. Photographs of the carnival demonstrate the multiplicity of the performance of the event, while creating infinitesimal new sites of performance and spectatorship as those selfsame images are engaged with beyond the moment of the photograph. Other iconic, touristic sites and cultural events are undoubtedly photographed and depicted in a similar way to Venice and its carnival, but there is a special photogenic quality to Venice owing to the ideal aesthetics of the city based on notions of beauty, elegance, and sophistication so widely depicted both before and since the invention of photography. The city's unique appearance on water, with its canals, gondolas, and handsome architecture encourages replication. Indeed, applying Schneider's view of cross-temporality to the performances of Venice seems pertinent in a city where times do cross; as John Julius Norwich observes:

> No other city anywhere has changed less. A few of the smaller
> canals have been filled in, a few more acres reclaimed from the sea;
> but a Venetian of the fifteenth century, miraculously translated into
> the twentieth, would experience no difficulty in finding his way
> through the *campi* and *calli*, most of which have survived virtually
> intact since he first saw them.[116]

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[114] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.144.
[115] Ibid., p.141.
[116] John Julius Norwich, 'Introduction' in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, pp.33-57 (pp.35-36).

One's engagement with Venice is invariably inflected by multiple times, then, and by taking photographs, these times are further extended as iterations point in different directions, challenging linear time in the same way as Norwich's imaginary fifteenth-century Venetian. Schneider's perspective can also be seen as a challenge to the view of photography (and performance) in terms of loss, absence, and death. Rather than seeing the original moment as forever out of reach, an understanding of photographs as reiterative and remaining enables a view which reduces the preciousness of the live moment, recognising that 'now' is also always 'then'. As Schneider states of performance: 'It challenges, via the performative trace, any neat antinomy between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence through the basic repetitions that mark performance as indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining'.[117] In this context, performance can be seen to challenge loss, rather than being merely tied up with loss. Photographs contribute to the success of this challenge, reiterating performances across multiple times and frames.

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[117] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p.102.

Chapter 4

Subversion at the Carnival

Introduction

As this thesis has shown, Venice and its carnival are sometimes regarded as commercialised, globalised, and overly touristed, and a nostalgia for a bygone past of the city and carnival is often encountered. Idealised visions of an antiquated Venice without excessive numbers of tourists, and of a carnival that was a fully participatory, libertine, and raucous affair mark such nostalgia. However, this chapter will demonstrate that such nostalgic notions may be misplaced as the modern day carnival can still be perceived as a site of subversion, thereby building upon the assertions and analyses of the preceding chapters. Considering ethnographic experience, photographs, costumes and masks, and subversive interactions, this chapter will highlight the post-1980 carnival's atmosphere of fun, communality, festival, and interrelationality between participants which mean the carnival is a subversive event that challenges the *status quo*. In this, the revived carnival of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries retains a strong connection to the infamous Venice carnival of old, although, as will be demonstrated, a blanket interpretation of the bygone carnival as entirely subversive is misguided, not least because of the level of state control and the prominent role of the nobility, further undermining nostalgia for the libertinism of the past. Throughout this chapter Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival will be employed to interrogate the extent to which the Venice carnival can be viewed in subversive terms, and aspects of the historical pre-1797 iteration of the carnival will therefore be contrasted with modern day examples from the revived event. Bakhtin's theory of carnival celebrates the carnivalesque mentality of the medieval period and he posits such manifestations in terms of community, equality, and subversion. He writes that participants of carnival 'are liberated from the authority of all

hierarchical positions [...] which define them totally in non-carnivalistic life'.[1] By applying Bakhtin's theory of carnival to a variety of examples from Venice, his view will sometimes be countered and sometimes be reinforced, in turn demonstrating that the Venice carnival has not always been a site of freedom and equality, and cannot be seen wholly in such terms today. However, the carnival has always maintained a topsy-turvy attitude in its varied iterations throughout the historical and the modern period, not least because of the carnivalesque tradition of dressing up and transforming one's identity, which has made masking synonymous with the city. Although Bakhtin's theory has been critiqued for its overt optimism, it provides a useful frame to apply both to the carnivals of the past and the modern day event. The chapter will argue that the continuation of the carnival into the twenty-first century, and the opportunity with which it provides people to participate in an event that emphasises their belonging to a community, the equality between them, and a level of interrelationality special to the carnival frame, enables an understanding of the Venice carnival as subversive.

The bygone carnival stretches into the annals of the city's history, receiving its first official mention in the late eleventh century. The Middle Ages saw the Republic of Venice at its height, but it began to decline as early as the fifteenth century. Although it remained an important trading hub, and was highly regarded because of its political organisation and military power, it began to lose foreign lands and it could not compete with new developments that challenged its dominance of trade; the discovery of the New World and new trading routes contributed to this. The republic's decline was lengthy, but Venice had established itself as a place to visit, becoming a stop-off on the Grand Tour, and heavily influencing art, architecture, literature, and culture; the city proudly wore its title of the Most Serene Republic – *La Serenissima*. During the eighteenth century, though the republic was reaching the nadir of its decline, Venice experienced a zenith in terms of carnival and festivities, as its citizens and visitors embraced the excesses of the city, masking and

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[1] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. by R. W. Rotsel (USA: Ardis, 1973), p.101.

costuming themselves, indulging in the pleasures Venice had to offer, and contributing to perceptions of the city as libertine, free, indulgent, mysterious, and licentious. James Morris evocatively captures the essence of the republic's last century:

> As she sank into her eighteenth-century degeneracy, she became another kind of prodigy. During her last century of independence she was the gayest and worldliest of all cities, a perpetual masque and revelry, where nothing was too daring, too shameful, or too licentious. Her carnivals were protracted and uninhibited. Her courtesans were honoured. [...] No other nation ever died in such feverish hedonism.[2]

Herein Morris evokes Lord Byron's description of Venice as 'the masque of Italy'.[3] The carnivals during the republic's last century reflected a rich heritage of carnivalesque activity in the city; Feil asserts that between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, 'the carnival of Venice was the most famous and spectacular in Europe, growing more sumptuous, decadent and extraordinary year by year'.[4]

This carnival heritage in Venice reflects the existence of a rich tapestry of carnivalesque manifestations throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. Such events, and their calendrical positioning, indicate a link to the pre-Christian festivals of Bacchanalia, Saturnalia, and Lupercalia, which were positioned at important points of the agricultural and cosmological year. During the Roman festival of Saturnalia, attests Timothy Hyman, 'Slaves were set free and given the right to ridicule their masters; a mock-king was elected; the lost Golden Age of the deposed god Saturn was temporarily reinstated', while Monica Rector states there was 'a satyresque character who acted as Emperor during the festival'.[5] These pagan festivals of antiquity amounted to topsy-turvy periods in which norms were overturned. This radical overturning is precisely the aspect of medieval European carnival

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[2] James Morris, *Venice*, 2nd rev. edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), p.26.
[3] George Gordon Byron, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by John Julius Norwich (London: Constable, 1990), p.63.
[4] D. K. Feil, 'How Venetians Think About Carnival and History', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9, 2 (1998), 141-62 (p.142).
[5] Timothy Hyman, *Carnivalesque* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2000), p.9; Monica Rector, 'The Code and Message of Carnival: "Escolas-de-Samba"', in *Carnival!*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), pp.37-165 (p.39).

traditions celebrated by Bakhtin, with the view that carnival provides people with a second

life, uniting them and renewing the common bonds of society; he asserts that the carnivals

and marketplace festivals of medieval Europe 'were the second life of the people, who for a

time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance'.[6] Crucial to

Bakhtin's theorising of carnival is the lack of divide between actor and spectator, thus

providing a germane frame for the city of Venice and its annual carnival, while pertaining to

the established foci of this thesis:

> Carnival is a pageant without a stage and without a division into
> performers and spectators. In the carnival everyone is an active
> participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not
> contemplated, it is, strictly speaking, not even played out; its
> participants *live* in it, they live according to its laws, as long as
> those laws are in force, i.e. they live a *carnivalistic life*. The
> carnivalistic life is life drawn out of its usual rut, it is to a degree
> 'life turned inside out', 'life the wrong way round'.[7]

These comments align with the Venice carnival as the event provides an opportunity for

anybody to be involved in whatever shape or form they select, whether as a fully masked

maschera or as a non-costumed, day-tripping visitor. As earlier chapters have maintained,

the division between the roles of performer and spectator is blurred at the carnival as the

masked and unmasked participants interchange these roles, depending upon one another and,

as Bakhtin states, making everybody an active participant in enacting the carnival. Therefore,

fully masked *maschere* cannot be seen as performers in contrast to day-tripping, camera-

wielding tourists as spectators; rather, the participants of carnival interchange the roles of

performer and spectator as they interact with each other and with the urban environment, as

the intersections of beauty, theatricality, stillness, and photography have already

demonstrated. Although the modern day carnival has numerous organised events, the

carnival's nucleus remains concentrated on the dressing-up and promenading of its

participants, concurring with Bakhtin's idea that people *live* in the carnival: it is not

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[6] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.9.
[7] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.100-1.

something played out with a short timeframe and a neat division between performers and spectators. The lengthy temporal frame of the carnival, along with its socio-cultural framing and the knowledge that people have of what carnival signifies, would suggest that the Venice carnival does indeed provide the opportunity to live a *carnivalistic life*: an extraordinary period of festivity distant from non-carnival existence.

The carnival challenges the *status quo* in a number of ways. Firstly, it provides participants with the opportunity to transform their identity by dressing up, thereby effacing their normal identities. Secondly, the carnival has an equalising effect as it provides participants with an opportunity to share in a sense of communality, whatever their social or economic status. Thirdly, the carnival is a site of interrelationality as the carnival participants engage with each other and with the city in ways that are special to the carnival's cultural and temporal frames. Fourthly, the carnival is a site of active participation, which retains a link to folkloric traditions and rituals, attaching the event to the past in ways that subvert modernity, capitalism, and consumerism. This list demands a caveat though, as a generalised view of carnival as being a complete social leveller would be an overstatement: for instance, hawkers and traders who rely on tourists to buy products from them evidently have a different relationship to the carnival to the holidaymaking tourists who indulge themselves as they participate in the event as a leisure activity. At the carnival in 2011 I bought a carnivalesque fool's mask from a Bangladeshi stallholder, haggling with him to get as reasonable a price as I could: my experience of the city and the carnival as a white, Western, European man was indubitably markedly different to this stallholder's experience as an immigrant whose living depended upon making such sales. Indeed, anybody whose living depends upon the carnival tourists, including hotel, restaurant, retail, and transport staff have a different engagement with the carnival. The example of the Bangladeshi stallholder working long hours on a low income to eke out a living contrasts with the excesses of some of the carnival participants; Ferruccio Gard of RAI television, the Italian public broadcaster, intimates the wealth of some of these: 'Some of them come from Japan, America or South Africa for this [carnival], anxious to display costumes that can cost as much as 5 to 10

thousand Euro'.[8] In spite of this imbalance, for the majority of people that choose to participate in the carnival, there is a sense of shared community, particularly at some of the organised 'set pieces' of the event, such as the *volo dell'angelo* in Piazza San Marco, where in excess of 100,000 people might be squeezed in to the piazza to see the flight of the angel along a pulley from the towering Campanile into the middle of the square.[9]

As has been established in this thesis, British understandings of the carnival, if not Western perceptions in general, tend to focus on the beautiful, iconic *maschere* as representative of the carnival: this is evidenced by the literature of travel agents, which uses images of the *maschere* to sell an ideal of the carnival to would-be tourists. For instance, the online travel agents Citalia, which specialises in selling Italian holidays to the British market, features the carnival as a key attraction of Venice, and its selection of images used to entice prospective holidaymakers present the stereotypical British perceptions of the carnival with handsome posing *maschere*.[10] Shearings Holidays, which markets coach tours across Europe, uses similar such images.[11] The British media also tends to focus on a classical ideal of the carnival, depicting beautiful *maschere* in typical Venetian settings; the *Guardian*, for instance, emphasises the elegant, posing *maschere* with the full-face *volto* mask as representative of the carnival, evident in different examples of reportage and journalistic photography in editions of the newspaper over a number of years.[12] In the 2015 feature on

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[8] Ferruccio Gard, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna: 30 anni di Carnevale a Venezia 1980-2010/ Carnival in the Modern Age: 30 Years of Carnival in Venice 1980-2010*, ed. by Alessandro Bressanello, trans. by Olga Barmine (Venice: Studio LT2, 2010), p.267.

[9] 'In 75 mila in piazza per l'Angelo Bianca Brandolini: "Lo rifarei"', *il Venezia*, 8 February 2010, p.19. This article reports that between 80,000 and 85,000 people arrived in Venice for the first Sunday of the 2010 carnival, while in 2009, 100,000 people squeezed into Piazza San Marco to see the *volo dell'angelo*.

[10] Venice Hotels and City Breaks, Citalia <http://www.citalia.com/destinations/Italy/Italian%20Cities/Venice> [accessed 10 March 2015].

[11] Lake Como and the Venice Carnival, Shearings Holidays <http://www.shearings.com/europe/italy/holidays/lake-como-and-the-venice-carnival> [accessed 10 March 2015].

[12] Venice Carnival 2015 – in pictures, *Guardian*, 9 February 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2015/feb/09/venice-carnival-2015-in-pictures>; Venice carnival opens – in pictures, *Guardian*, 24 February 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2014/feb/24/venice-carnival-opens-in-pictures>; Venice Carnival causes a Sensation, *Guardian*, 15 February 2009 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2009/feb/15/italy-venice-carnival>; Venice Carnival, *Guardian*, 28 January 2008 <http://www.theguardian.com/travel/gallery/2008/jan/28/venice.italy> [all

the carnival on the newspaper's website, every photograph communes with the beautiful

ideal of the elegant, handsomely dressed *maschere*; not one image in the collection is

suggestive of a more grotesque interpretation of the event, nor of the many participants who

sport improvised fancy dress. Evidently, the photographer or the newspaper has edited the

selection, perhaps unwittingly, to fit with and sustain established views for a largely British

readership. The *Telegraph* and the *Independent* also provide pertinent recent examples in

their photographic reportage.[13] The image of the fully masked, elegantly costumed *maschere*

tellingly points to a view of the Venetian aesthetics, as was also illustrated by the iTunes

Venice Carnival Photographers' Guide and the Canti Prosecco television advertisement

discussed in preceding chapters. As has been demonstrated in the thesis thus far, the

conventional carnival *maschere* are defined by their statuesque quality, neutral masks,

handsome costumes, and careful positioning in front of a watery view of the city, pointing to

classicist aesthetics of beauty, with statuary presenting the beautiful body, clean lines,

perfect complexions, and statuesque presence. It therefore seems that the presentation of the

Venice carnival for British sensibilities outlined in the above examples emphasises the

beautiful image of the mysterious, anonymous *maschere* precisely because these figures

appeal to a cultural sense of the aesthetic. The British carnival participants interviewed in the

documentary film *Incognitus?* evidence the British sensibility as they embrace these aspects,

indicating that the beautiful, fully-masked *maschere* are representative of the carnival's

aesthetics, congruent with broader cultural understandings of the city of Venice itself,

inflected by classicist aesthetics.[14]

Venice has had an undeniably significant cultural presence in the British landscape

for centuries, as John Eglin explores in his study *Venice Transfigured*. He states: 'In Britain

the myth and counter-myth of Venice were reference points in political culture as nowhere

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accessed 10 March 2015].

[13] The colourful sights from the 2015 Carnival, *Telegraph*
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/11400607/The-colourful-sights-from-the-2015-Venice-Carnival.html?frame=3192801>; The Carnival of Venice, *Independent*, 26 February 2014 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/pictures/the-carnival-of-venice-9155310.html> [accessed 6 October 2015].

[14] *Incognitus?*, dir. by Liliana Grzybowska, Kamil Chryscionka and Sarab Hadi (2010).

else in ultramontane Europe, with the possible exception of the Netherlands'.[15] He observes that there were many parallels between Venice and England, and later Britain, in terms of their being mercantile and sea-faring powers, combining monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Eighteenth-century political observers linked idealised versions of Venice with equally idealised versions of Britain; the persistence of the Grand Tour aided the prominence of the city in the British mentality. After the fall of the republic in 1797, the relationship with the city changed, becoming increasingly romanticised, but as Eglin observes: 'The city of the lagoons continued to capture the British imagination, as Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Turner and Ruskin demonstrate'.[16] My own understandings of the carnival prior to attending the event were strongly inflected by conceptions of the carnival as a dignified, sophisticated affair, concordant with my culturally-influenced perspective of Venice itself. Through cultural osmosis or otherwise, romantic ideals of the Venetian aesthetics foregrounding beauty, sumptuousness, and opulence, had impacted upon my own preconceptions of the city, and of its carnival as an expression of the city's identity. At the 2010 carnival, I acted upon my preconceptions by concentrating my attention on the elegantly costumed *maschere* in the Piazza and Piazzetta, viewing these figures as the main attraction of carnival. At the carnival that year, however, I also witnessed vast variations in people's engagement with the event, and I became more attuned to the array of costumes and masks that are employed. Two carnival participants I saw in Piazza San Marco one evening were dressed in crudely made costumes as penises; another group of young men were cavorting outside St Mark's Basilica in tight-fitting white costumes, with padding in the groin: these participants represented grotesque interpretations of carnival that were distant from my understanding of the carnival in terms of the beautiful ideal of the *maschere*. Though the 2010 carnival made me aware of a more subversive quality to the carnival, I nevertheless tended to focus my attention more on the elegant posing *maschere* than other participants. This is something I sought to redress in my engagement with the 2011 carnival, at which I was more acutely

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[15] John Eglin, *Venice Transfigured: The Myth of Venice in British Culture, 1660-1797* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.3.
[16] Ibid., p.8.

aware of carnival participants who were not sporting the full mask and costume typically associated with the event, but of people who were wearing more transgressive costumes or impromptu fancy dress. I had become more attuned to the different interpretations of carnival and its multifaceted identity. There is some consonance with Peggy Phelan's discussion of the 'unmarked' in my experience of carnival, as I initially focused on the renowned, handsome *maschere* and was less attuned to the unmarked, subversive carnival participants. As Phelan avers, being visible is not necessarily equal to power and invisibility to impotence: 'There is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal'.[17] Indeed, the way in which the carnival is generally represented to a British audience demonstrates the disparity between the representational and the real. The elegant *maschere* are represented in depictions of the carnival, while participants wearing alternative costumes remain unmarked, and yet, as Phelan intimates, there is a level of power in this. The more subversive carnival participants who interpret the carnival in their own way rather than following the tradition of the posing *maschere* may be invisible on travel agents' websites or in depictions in the British media, but this invisibility is indicative of the power they have to challenge the *status quo*. As the image of the beautiful, neutral *maschere* dominates, the participants who transgress social boundaries, who embrace the grotesque aspect, and who arguably politicise the carnival, can express themselves without being excessively monitored.

Bakhtin's work has been readily applied to varying phenomena of carnivals and communal festivities. Caryl Emerson shows that, of all of his ideas, Bakhtin's work on carnival 'has proved the broadest, most appealing, most accessible, and most readily translated into cultures and times distant from its original inspiration'.[18] Indeed, scholars have applied the critical frame of carnival to phenomena as diverse as car-boot sales and rock and roll.[19] Significantly, theatre scholar Dick McCaw has written that Bakhtin's

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[17] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.6.
[18] Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.162.
[19] Chris Humphrey, 'Bakhtin and the Study of Popular Culture: Re-thinking Carnival as a Historical

concepts 'have had a considerable impact on cultural studies and thus theatre studies',

adding that his writings make allusions to Atellan farce, medieval theatre, and *commedia*

dell'arte.[20] Bakhtin also considered the interplay between acting and authoring, addressing

questions of interpreting and presenting a character, as McCaw explores. As the citations

from Bakhtin's writings above show, his view of carnival stresses the participatory nature of

carnival and the lack of division between performers and spectators, and so the theatre

evidently aided his conceptualisations. The employment of a theatre metaphor makes his

writings doubly germane to this thesis, in terms of both the carnival and the city itself.

Through the application of Bakhtin's theory of carnival to iterations of the historical and

modern day carnival in this chapter, the interflow between the roles of performer and

spectator will be emphasised. The spectacular, organised events of *giovedì grasso*, the

violent wars or battles on bridges, and the city's bullfights will provide insight into the

debate on the subversive quality of the carnival, while also illustrating the fundamental role

of the active spectator who was participant and performer in the spectacle. As will be

observed, the prevalence of the nobility and the employment of festivities to advance the

image and status of the Republic of Venice will indicate that civic rituals, during carnival or

at other times of the year, were often more about instilling the power of the state and

maintaining social hegemony rather than being libertine and revolutionary in their nature.

The modern carnival will be brought into dialogue with these historical iterations, and will

be examined in the light of Bakhtin's notions of grotesque realism and the renewing,

renascent quality of carnival. Crude costumes, cathartic masked encounters, and an emphasis

on communal laughter will help to illustrate the modern day carnival's subversive nature.

The preceding chapters have sustained a view of the carnival and the city in terms of a

blurring between the poles of performer and spectator, and Bakhtin's theory of carnival

supports this position. In this, his work points to new approaches to the understanding and

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and Analytical Concept', in *Materializing Bakhtin: The Bakhtin Circle and Social Theory*, ed. by
Craig Brandist and Galin Tihanov (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp.164-72 (p.164).
[20] Dick McCaw, 'Paradoxes of Acting: Bakhtin and Stanislavsky', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 30, 1
(2014), 29-39 (p.29).

investigation of spectatorship in the theatrical exchange, in particular in the understanding of

the spectator as an active participant, and as a thinking, feeling subject.

Subversion or Safety-Valve

The bygone carnival is often seen romantically as a site of liberty and equality, as Göran

Aijmer and Åsa Boholm show:

> In this meeting [of carnival] outside history no attention is paid to
> social barriers or other constraints under normal conditions
> imposed on the Republic's citizens, by either state or Church. In
> pre-modern Venice the carnival was a street drama of controlled
> passion, where masked figures took part in an extravaganza of
> cultural modalities collapsing into one another; in the period of the
> carnival the web of events provided a complexity of messages
> communicating open-ended and timeless belonging. Ritual, theatre,
> audience, actors, the past, the present, and the future were
> categories which were dissolved in this total ceremonial
> experience.[21]

This interpretation of the carnival is attractive, and aligns well with Bakhtin's interpretation

of medieval carnival manifestations; indeed, like Bakhtin, Aijmer and Boholm refer to the

dissolving of the categories of actor and audience. Bakhtin develops his theory of carnival in

his writings on the *oeuvres* of François Rabelais and Fyodor Dostoevsky, in *Rabelais and his*

World and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* respectively.[22] Though Bakhtin's studies of

these novelists take the form of literary criticism, Bakhtin himself recognises the origin of

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[21] Göran Aijmer and Åsa Boholm, 'Introduction', in *Images and Enactments: Possible Worlds in Dramatic Performance*, ed. by Göran Aijmer and Åsa Boholm (Gothenburg: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, 1994), pp.1-8 (p.5).
[22] Ken Hirschkop discusses the level to which Bakhtin's work relies upon other sources, and his failure to acknowledge such sources even when they informed swathes of material. A 1998 study suggests that Bakhtin's key work on Rabelais 'not only borrows [...] but plagiarises, *word for word*' entire pages of Ernst Cassirer's Renaissance study *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*. Ken Hirschkop, 'Bakhtin in the sober light of day (an introduction to the second edition)', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, 2nd edn, ed. by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.1-25 (pp.3-4).

carnival distant from the written word: 'Carnival itself [...] is, of course, not a literary phenomenon. It is a *syncretic pageant* form of a ritual nature'.[23] This recognises the essential need of society to enact carnival traditions. Bakhtin's study of Rabelais was motivated by the lack of scrutiny given to 'laughter and its forms'; he observes that in analyses of popular culture there was no room 'for the peculiar culture of the marketplace and of folk laughter'.[24] He asserts that in the Middle Ages an array of folkloric, carnivalesque, and humorous manifestations opposed the serious tone of feudal and ecclesiastical culture. Countries, he states, 'built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of year'.[25] Therefore the life of medieval Europeans consisted of two worlds: the serious, official world of state and religion, and the comic, libertine world of carnival. He avers:

> The basic carnival nucleus of this [medieval folk] culture is by no means a purely artistic form nor a spectacle and does not, generally speaking, belong to the sphere of art. It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play. [...] 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 other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part.[26]

Bakhtin's theory enables an understanding of the Venice carnival and carnivals more broadly as sites of equality, freedom, and community, suggesting that the second life of carnival overturns the normal strictures of society.

The engravings of Giacomo Franco in his 1609 publication *Habiti d'huomeni et donne Venetiane* capture Venetian activities that commune with Bakhtin's views of medieval European carnivals and with perceptions of the Venice carnival in particular, as Aijmer and Boholm indicate above, particularly through the depiction of a total spectacle, absorbing and

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[23] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.100.
[24] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.4.
[25] Ibid., p.6.
[26] Ibid., p.7.

involving all the people.[27] One engraving, shown in Figure 1, depicts an array of

entertainments in one of the smaller *campi* of the city: in the foreground on the left men play

at trying to kill a cat which has been stuck to a door with their shaven or bald heads, with the

cat's paws free to scratch the contestants' scalps to make the entertainment bloodier; in the

middle on the right, a couple of live ducks are tied to the top of a pole which people attempt

to climb; there is a bull chase with dogs in the background and bear baiting with dogs in the

middle on the left; in the foreground on the right a goose is hanging from a window above

the canal as naked or semi-naked men jump up to try to pull the goose down by its neck,

inevitably falling into the water beneath whether or not they are successful; while in the

middle of the *campo* there is a performance, perhaps of dancing, on a raised stage. This

engraving is indicative of Venice's extreme levels of spectacle which involved its

participants; everywhere one looks in the picture there are people actively engaged in the

activities, the enactment of which relies on their presence. Interestingly, the engraving shows

different social strata mixing together, as can be seen by the crowds of people and the finely

dressed nobles sharing in the sense of communality, however, there is evidence of social

stratification as certain nobles, especially women, look down from windows and balconies.

The image is suggestive of a carnivalistic life, universally shared by the people. However, in

spite of the vast array of entertainments and significant numbers of participants, the

engraving suggests a level of order as spectators appear to be demarcated from the

spectacles. This may purely have been an artistic choice on Franco's part in the interests of

making the image clear, but that the engraving is not completely chaotic or suggestive of a

manic vortex of activity points to the paradoxical nature of carnivalesque activities.

Evidently, the experience of carnival was significant in feudal societies in which the

church was influential and the state was omnipotent, but, as many scholars have shown,

carnivalesque manifestations in medieval Europe were not as utopian as Bakhtin implies.

Indeed, a cautious approach is required in the application of Bakhtin's theory of carnival, as

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[27] Giacomo Franco, *Habiti d'huomeni et donne Venetiane con la processione della serenissima
Signoria et altri particolari, cioè trionfi, feste, ceremonie publiche della nobilissima città di Venetia*
(Venice: [n.pub.],1609).

Figure 1 Early seventeenth-century engraving by Giacomo Franco, depicting numerous festival activities in a Venetian *campo*

it has been critiqued on a number of levels: his sentiments are undeniably optimistic and, as

Clair Wills observes, he has been criticised for being 'too often populist and utopian'.[28]

Critics have debunked the notion of carnival as being subversive, liberating, and anti-

establishment, arguing that carnival serves to reaffirm the established rules and regulations

of society. Chris Humphrey contends that 'it is too simplistic to perceive the transgression

found in misrule to be a direct reaction to unequal social relations'.[29] He affirms elsewhere

that little changed in the life of normal medieval European people, suggesting that 'showing

off your bottom in public, while admittedly fun, doesn't tend to free people from the

shackles of whichever economic system binds them'.[30] Eli Rozik similarly asserts that:

'There could be no absolute freedom in [medieval] carnival'.[31] Michael Bristol discusses the

idea that 'the function of all festive forms is to reinforce social order and to promote

communal and corporate solidarity'.[32] This idea is reiterated by Umberto Eco:

> Carnival can exist only as an authorized transgression. [...] In this
> sense, comedy and carnival are not instances of real transgressions:
> on the contrary, they represent paramount examples of law
> reinforcement. They remind us of the existence of the rule.[33]

Such interpretations would suggest that carnival cannot be viewed as the liberating, unifying,

and renewing event that Bakhtin describes. Theatre scholar David Wiles observes that

Bakhtin's historiography is doubtful, asserting that 'he passes over the fact that medieval

markets were instruments of regulation'.[34] Bakhtin's description of a carnival in Rome

visited by Rabelais in 1549, and supposedly an influence on Rabelais's carnivalesque

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[28] Clair Wills, 'Upsetting the public: carnival, hysteria and women's texts', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Hirschkop and Shepherd, pp.85-108 (p.85).
[29] Humphrey, 'Bakhtin and the Study of Popular Culture' p.169.
[30] Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.33-34.
[31] Eli Rozik, *The Roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2002), p.209.
[32] Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (London: Methuen, 1985), p.27.
[33] Umberto Eco, 'The frames of comic "freedom"', in *Carnival!*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), pp.1-15 (p.6).
[34] David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.93.

imagery, is couched in terms of popular culture, but, as Wiles shows, the event was actually

organised by a wealthy cardinal to celebrate the birth of a French prince: 'The performers are

aristocrats, the nymphs are played by gentlewomen, and the audience includes not only the

populace but Dukes, Cardinals and persons of fashion'.[35] For Wiles, the marketplace of

Bakhtin's imagining 'is of scant historical authority'.[36]

Many critics of Bakhtin's libertine, utopian interpretation emphasise the 'safety-

valve' element of carnival traditions, with the notion that carnivalesque behaviour effectively

allowed the *hoi polloi* to 'let off steam': the short period of frivolity ensures society

functions according to the rule of law throughout the rest of the year. Baz Kershaw explains:

'at the end of the carnivalesque day the revellers return to a living whose rules are set by the

dominant ideologies, […] temporary transgression of a hierarchical normality is a strategy

for reinforcing it'.[37] This view of carnival is alluded to by Francis Misson, who wrote a

journal of his voyage in Italy in 1688, stating that the whole of Venice is disguised:

'Strangers and Courtesans come in Shoals from all parts of *Europe*: There is every where a

general Motion and Confusion, as if the World were turn'd Fools all in an Instant'.[38] He

recognises that one of the main reasons that the carnival is allowed by the authorities is to

amuse the people and let them engage in a temporary period of wanton abandon, as he

asserts: 'the Nobility, who otherwise are not much beloved, are glad to find some cunning

ways to please and amuse the People'.[39] This hints at the 'safety-valve' theory, suggesting

that carnival instils the non-carnival rule of law. Humphrey's assertions in his study of

English carnival reflect this mindset of the safety-valve:

> The idea is that if people are able to break the rules on one day of
> the year, they are thereby able to vent their anxieties and
> frustrations, and so will be more likely to behave themselves for the
> rest of the year. Festive occasions on which the boundaries of

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p.95.
[37] Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.73.
[38] Francis Misson, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.396.
[39] Ibid.

> everyday behaviour were overstepped can therefore be seen,
> ironically, as a means through which unequal relations of power
> and opportunity – patriarchy, lordship, oligarchy – were
> perpetuated in the cultures where misrule occurs.[40]

Indeed, Humphrey argues that the use of Bakhtinian theory to study the phenomenon of

carnival itself can lead to a weak approach and understanding. Gerard Aching also

underlines this issue in his study of carnival in the Caribbean, stating that Bakhtin's work on

carnival is of limited application to the Caribbean situation 'because it elucidates

homogeneous class formations that differ substantially from the mostly multiethnic,

transnational, and class-straddling populations that participate in carnivals and popular

culture in the Caribbean today'.[41] This is pertinent to the Venice carnival of today, which is

participated in by a cross-section of society from different nationalities and social strata:

there is not a simple, feudal binary of the common people of the marketplace and the

aristocracy, implied in Bakhtin's writings. Although he mentions the populist nature of

Bakhtin's theory, Aching nevertheless insists that Bakhtinian thought is useful in his analysis

of the Caribbean tradition of carnival, indicating that in spite of criticisms, and in spite of the

fact that Bakhtin was writing about literature, his theory of carnival can be successfully

applied to the cultural phenomena of carnivals. Contrary to the 'safety-valve' approach,

Michael Holquist asserts that Bakhtin's theory enables a vision of carnival as something that

is not prescribed by church or state, but deriving 'from a force that preexists priests and

kings and to whose superior power they are actually deferring when they appear to be

licensing carnival'.[42]

Nevertheless, using Bakhtin's theory for a blanket interpretation of the Venice

carnival as a site of subversion and overturning of the *status quo* would be misguided: the

'safety-valve' approach shows that his theory instead needs to be interrogated as the vast

array of iterations of the carnival, both in its historical form and its modern day

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[40] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, pp.11-12.

[41] Gerard Aching, *Masking and Power: Carnival and Popular Culture in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p.15.

[42] Michael Holquist, 'Prologue', in *Rabelais and His World*, by Mikhail Bakhtin, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp.xiii-xxiii (p.xviii).

manifestation, sometimes counters Bakhtin's theory and sometimes reinforces it. In his

article 'Venise au Temps du Carnaval', Gilles Bertrand depicts the carnival, from its origins,

as an opportunity to affirm the power of the Republic of Venice to the outside world.[43] He

states that the festivities were for all, but everybody had to stay within their own social

position, so that the existing social harmony was maintained, destabilising the notion that the

masking and costuming of the event encouraged equality.[44] This is demonstrated by the

custom of wearing the *bauta*, a costume which the nobility tended to sport, and which

comprised of a beaked mask covering the entire face, a lace shawl covering the neck and

shoulders, a tricorn hat, and the *tabarro* which was a long mantle, invariably black for male

participants. The *bauta* reached the height of its popularity in the eighteenth century, and is

widely seen in numerous paintings of events and life in Venice; such was its prevalence,

asserts James H. Johnson, that the *tabarro* and *bauta* were 'in many ways the opposite of a

costume', with one visitor apparently describing it as a 'uniform'.[45] The ubiquity of the

bauta resulted in the establishment of certain etiquette: Pino Correnti relates that when

costumed with the *tabarro* or *bauta*, people did not need to doff their cap, as was customary,

rather they greeted each other saying '*Maschera, te saludo!/ Maschera*, I salute you!'[46] The

costume featured in a number of plays by Carlo Goldoni.[47] The quality of the component

parts of the costume were indicative of wealth, and poorer carnival participants would not

have been able to afford such a disguise; Venetian painter Pietro Longhi (1701-1785), as

Bertrand observes, depicts scenes of nobles in disguise, sporting the *bauta*, while women,

merchants, and market traders look on, without disguises.[48] The linking of the *bauta* to the

nobility indicates that masking practices become prescribed over time and need to be seen

within the specific contexts of their use, as Cesare Poppi observes: 'The role-playing that a

masker takes on in choosing this or that masquerading costume is no simple celebration of

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[43] Gilles Bertrand, 'Venise au Temps du Carnaval', *L'Histoire*, 185 (Feb 1995), 64-69 (p.65).
[44] Ibid., p.68.
[45] James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (London: University of California Press, 2011), p.17.
[46] Pino Correnti, *Il Carnevale di Venezia* (Milan: Edizioni ECOTUR, 1968), p.24.
[47] Ibid., p.27.
[48] Bertrand, pp.67-68.

freedom and creativity, but formalises action: the behaviour of masks is expected, even prescribed'.[49]

The employment of the *bauta* by the privileged few is shown in Figure 2, a mid-eighteenth-century painting by Longhi of Venice's infamous *ridotto*, the city's casino frequented by the nobility, and which became so renowned for its licentiousness that it was formally closed in 1774. As the dress code of the *ridotto* stipulated the necessity for a mask, its patrons tended to be nobles. Longhi's painting shows two *maschere* in *bauta* in the foreground, interacting intriguingly, while other *maschere* in *bauta* appear in the rear, near the bankers' tables, alongside some female *maschere* sporting the *moretta* mask, a simple black, oval shaped mask worn by women who went hatless and which was held in place by a button held between one's teeth, enforcing silence.[50] The two unmasked gentlemen seated at the tables are patricians running the casino's banks, and are seen dealing with the evening's takings; they worked unmasked in the *ridotto* to help to limit the risk of fraud.[51] Longhi evokes the mystery of the *maschere* in *bauta*, who remain incognito, but his painting does indicate that the *bauta* was not a costume anybody in the city could permit themselves to own, and this is widely replicated elsewhere in his *oeuvre*. The painting strongly suggests a romantic image of the carnival, evoking notions of the *ridotto* as an exclusive place for the privileged few: the finery of the costumes on display suggest wealth and status. The *bauta* became such a symbol of carnival in Venice that there was an attempt to revive its use in 1899, as Correnti attests, when the carnival was in a period of desuetude.[52] At the modern day carnival, the *bauta* is commonly seen alongside the full-face, neutral *volto* typical of the posing *maschere*. The angular, beaked shape of the *bauta* mask has the advantage of leaving the mouth free to speak, albeit hidden, while the *volto* restricts speech. Contrasting Longhi's eighteenth-century *Il Ridotto* with an image of a *maschera* at the 2010 carnival dressed in the *bauta* in Figure 3 raises a number of points in the light of Bertrand's observations. Firstly,

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[49] Cesare Poppi, 'The Other Within: Masks and Masquerades in Europe', in *Masks: The Art of Expression*, ed. by John Mack (London: British Museum Press, 1994), pp.190-215 (p.194).
[50] Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, p.8.
[51] Bertrand, p.66.
[52] Correnti, p.76.

Figure 2 *Il Ridotto* **by Pietro Longhi,** *c*. **1740s, oil on canvas, held at the Accademia Carrara delle Belle Arti, Bergamo**

Figure 3 *Maschera* **in bauta in Piazza San Marco, 8 February 2010**

this photograph suggests that there is more equality among participants of the modern day carnival than those of the bygone event, as anybody at the twenty-first-century carnival with a small amount to spend on a costume can buy or hire a cheaply made version of the *bauta*. Indeed, the participant in Figure 3 has captured the look of the traditional *maschera* in *bauta*, and the participant has made the effort to transform their identity, sporting a full costume beneath his *tabarro* to complete the ensemble. However, it is evident that the costume is made from cheap, synthetic material, with probably a plastic, mass-produced mask, a tricorn hat that is likely made from synthetic material, and a shawl which poorly imitates artisanal handicraft. There is a marked difference between the *maschera* pictured here to the bespoke tailoring and high quality materials sported by the *maschere* in *bauta* in Longhi's *Il Ridotto*, as this *maschera* is wearing a costume made up of mass-produced components that any carnival participant could obtain.

A fundamental difference between the images is their location: the depiction of the *ridotto* shows an enclosed space, hidden from public view, and indicative of limited access, while the latter image represents carnival on the streets, shared by many, and open to all, akin to Franco's seventeenth-century engraving, shown in Figure 1. No longer is the *bauta* restricted to wealthy nobles and the aristocracy. However, although the modern day carnival participant can easily find a cheap mask or costume to involve themselves in the tradition of dressing up, this does not mean that the event is a site of unprecedented equality; Bertrand notes that by the end of the eighteenth century, the carnival had become bourgeois, as the nobility and aristocracy withdrew from the public nature of the event.[53] Evidently, at the twenty-first-century iteration of the carnival, visitors and participants in Venice need to have the time, money, and lifestyle to invest in indulging themselves by taking part. The city is notoriously expensive, and as the carnival period is a busy time of year, the cost of being in the city can be prohibitive for smaller budgets. In addition, many of the organised masked balls which take place during carnival are expensive to attend and are not accessible to the majority of the carnival's participants, making them a niche experience, and suggesting that

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[53] Bertrand, p.69.

masking may not be an option for all budgets.[54] One mature English couple I interviewed

explained that they had always dreamed of coming to the carnival; the woman explained:

'being a bit older we have enough money to do this now', while her companion added 'I

think we're just splurging'.[55] Their comments are indicative of perceptions of the city and

the carnival as costly, and the masked ball was a core part of their carnival experience, and

apparently how they had imagined their experience to be for years. This interpretation of

carnival is somewhat skewed, as it is the interactions on the streets of Venice which define

the event, and indeed it is this quality of the carnival which ensures it retains a sense of

liberty and equality.

Of import, masking is an aspect of the carnival which was regularly controlled by the

authorities in legislation, suggesting the use of the mask was not entirely free. Boholm

provides an overview of some of the laws that were passed: in 1339, it was forbidden to wear

masks in the city at night; in 1458, men were prohibited from dressing as women or as

buffoons; in 1539, it was forbidden to carry arms or wear false beards when masked; and in

1603 and 1606 masks were forbidden in the reception rooms of convents and in churches,

respectively.[56] It was a custom for masked carnival participants to sit in these reception

rooms, or *parlatori*, and talk with the nuns, but it seems that the legislation of 1606 did not

have a lasting impact as in 1754 one of Venice's most famous sons, Giacomo Casanova, was

conducting a rampant affair with a cloistered nun.[57] Nevertheless, the evidence of law-

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[54] UK travel agent Mulberry Travel advertises holiday packages to the 2016 Venice carnival which include return flights, three nights' accommodation, costume hire, and tickets to the Grand Masquerade Ball (one of many private balls organised during the carnival) for the price of £2,495 per person. The 2016 Grand Masquerade Ball, Venice, Mulberry Travel <http://www.mulberrytravel.com/grand-masquerade-ball-venice/> [accessed 7 October 2015]. On the official *Carnevale di Venezia* website, there are links to agents selling tickets for five different masked balls, with tickets for the full experience in the region of €600 to €900. 'Feste', Carnevale di Venezia 2016 <http://www.carnevale.venezia.it/feste/> [accessed 7 October 2015].

[55] Interview with English couple, 7 February 2010.

[56] Åsa Boholm, 'Masked Performances in the Carnival of Venice', in *Images and Enactments: Possible Worlds in Dramatic Performance*, ed. by Göran Aijmer and Åsa Boholm (Gothenburg: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, 1994), pp.64-88, (pp.72-73). For further details of laws passed to restrict the use of masking see Correnti, pp.25-27; Margherita Obici and Danilo Reato, *Maschere e travestimenti nella tradizione del carnevale di Venezia* (Venice: Arsenale Cooperativa Editrice, 1981), pp.8-11.

[57] In Casanova's memoirs the nun is referred to as M.M., and she was apparently his kindred spirit, receiving 'more attention than any of the roughly 120 other lovers […] in his memoirs'; James H.

making indicates that the government felt the need to control people's masking activities, suggesting that behaviours at the carnival had instigated this legislation. This speaks to the power of masking to destabilise the established order, as Efrat Tseëlon has shown: 'To place oneself as Other or as masked is already to position oneself in a resistive position, whereby difference is threatening to (the logical explanations, habitual practices and unquestioned assumptions of) the established order and its defined categories'.[58] The laws also show that the use of the mask was not something free and equal as Poppi intimates above; such rules and regulations demonstrate that masking was socially controlled, illustrated in part by the nobility's use of the *bauta* for instance.

The etiquette surrounding the use of masks is illustrated by Boholm, who describes the custom of the ducal banquets in Venice, which were grand affairs hosted by the doge with the nobility of the city and foreign visiting dignitaries four or five times a year. A sixteenth-century account which Boholm refers to relates that at these banquets, the doge and the other diners were unmasked, but that the people of the republic could come in to view the eating of the first course and the entertainment that was given for the diners. With the exception of women, these spectators all had to wear masks. These masked spectators would then be seen out before the second course was served, giving the doge and his guests privacy. The evening prior to such a banquet, people could also come to see the tables laid out, to witness all the finery of the republic, again wearing masks. Boholm delineates:

> This distinction between masked and unmasked actors at the
> banquet, where those without masks in a sense assume the role of
> hosts towards those who are in them, expresses an official
> welcome, it might be suggested, of the masked guests to the
> Republic. However, the enactment of this communion between the
> masks on the one hand, and the Doge and the Government on the
> other, is ambiguous, since those in masks are asked to leave before

Johnson relates that Casanova had also been having an affair with another nun, C.C., who was cloistered in the same convent. Casanova recalls that M.M. dressed up as a man in *tabarro* and *bauta* and on another occasion with the *moretta* mask in order to meet with him in secret, indicating that the mask and costume were used to disguise secret liaisons and to transform identities completely. James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, pp.4-10.

[58] Efrat Tseëlon, 'Introduction: Masquerade and Identities', in *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality*, ed. by Efrat Tseëlon (London: Routledge, 2001), pp.1-17 (p.6).

the second course and are not invited to sit at the tables or share the food, their participation being merely that of spectator. This indicates a fundamental difference between hosts and guests, between open faces and masks, which in fact stands in the way of entire commensality.[59]

The strict social uses of the mask at these events indicate that the mask in Venice did not equate to transgression and freedom. Indeed, as Boholm affirms, the use of masks at these ducal banquets is ambiguous, suggesting that the masked spectators need to maintain their distance and remain detached from the vision of the communal feast in front of them. Though this record does not relate how lively the audience of the feast was, or how much they could or did react to what they saw, it does appear that the spectator is positioned in a passive role, looking upon the action of the doge and his fellow diners. However, equating spectatorship with passivity is problematic, as other iterations of carnival show, and has been suggested throughout the present study.

Boholm's description points to the complexities of the labelling of performer and spectator to either the masked or the unmasked participants of the carnival, particularly as at the modern day event the relationships between masked and unmasked participants have altered. While at these banquets of yesteryear the doge and the distinguished guests were unmasked, at the modern day event it is often the day-tripping visitors to Venice who are unmasked, keen to see the costumed *maschere* posing and promenading about the city. The roles at the ducal banquets have been overturned, as the masked spectators are considered to be the attraction, or the performers, while the unmasked, photographing visitors are seen as the spectators. In one sense the power and status of the doge and his guests have been transferred to the unmasked guests, but in another sense, these guest-spectators have become the lesser important part of the exchange as the focus lies on the handsome *maschere*. The unmasked participants take on the mantle of being outside the performance, looking on, indicating the complex nature of the use of masks at the carnival, particularly as the positions of performer and spectator interflow. Interestingly, the British theatre company Punchdrunk

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[59] Boholm, 'Masked Performances in the Carnival of Venice', p.84.

has pioneered the use of masked spectators, anonymising their audiences and allowing them a sense of freedom in their engagement with the company's performances. Gareth White records that Punchdrunk's immersive work 'is predicated on the agency of the spectator', and that masking spectators is but one of the strategies they employ.[60] Sophie Nield observes that Punchdrunk mask the audience in order to allow them to make their own decisions about how they engage with their work.[61] However, she questions the possibility for freedom on the part of the masked spectator, as the device seems to maintain audience invisibility, making these masked spectators not unlike audiences that conventionally sit in the dark in a proscenium setting.[62] Curiously, this positions the masked spectator as inactive, passive, and hidden, providing a parallel to the guest-spectators of the bygone ducal banquets. At the modern day carnival, on the other hand, the interactions of masked and unmasked carnival participants point to an interrelational enactment which does not oppose participants in ranks of performers and spectators but brings them together, echoing the shared, participatory nature of some recent performance practice. For instance, theatre company Rotozaza, formed in 1998, provides a contrasting example of theatre where the spectator can alter the outcome of the performance: in the company's pioneering 'autoteatro', 'the audience members perform the piece themselves, usually for each other'.[63]

The conspicuous etiquette of the ducal banquets contrasts with the iteration of the modern day carnival since the revival in 1980, at which the sharedness of participation is vital. Because of the equality of experience, the modern carnival exhibits more pronounced levels of subversion than in the bygone days of carnival, when the nobility in particular held such reified positions in society which tended to be maintained throughout the festivities. At the modern day event, costumed participants are on a considerably more equal plane. At the carnival in 2010, I interviewed a man from Treviso, a city not far from Venice, who was

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[60] Gareth White, 'Odd Anonymized Needs: Punchdrunk's Masked Spectator', in *Modes of Spectating*, ed. by Alison Oddey and Christine White (Bristol: Intellect, 2009), pp.219-29 (p.219).
[61] Sophie Nield, 'The Rise of the Character named Spectator', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 18, 4 (2008), pp.531-35 (p.532).
[62] Ibid., p.534.
[63] 'Autoteatro', Rotozaza <http://www.rotozaza.co.uk/autoteatro.html> [accessed 21 September 2015].

participating in the event with a cohort of fellow *maschere*; he was dressed in an eighteenth-century costume, without a mask, and he told me that he and his companions had been coming to the carnival in Venice for about 15 years, 'not as spectators but as protagonists'.[64] His comments show that participants are aware of their involvement in enacting the event. He expressed the idea that if people do not have the desire, imagination, and courage to laugh at themselves during carnival, and to participate as protagonists of the event, then they will also live their lives outside carnival time as spectators and not as protagonists, implying that actively participating in the carnival renews one's sense of self and how one fits in to society. These comments are influenced by the problematic perception of a binary between participating, or performing, as active as opposed to spectating as passive. The participant's comments are illuminating as they reveal something about how this binary is sustained in widely held perceptions. The man's attitude towards carnival chimed with Bakhtinian thought: he described the event as synonymous with equality, as people of all social strata come together and share in the event, adopting different personae and eschewing their workaday identity, thereby breaking down social barriers.[65] Bakhtin states that the distance between people 'is suspended and a special carnival category goes into effect – *the free, familiar contact among people*. [...] People who are in life separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free, familiar contact on the carnival square'.[66] Although this view of the carnival as a levelling phenomenon which puts everybody on an equal plane may be seen as utopian, particularly in the light of the examples above of the ducal banquets and the use of the *bauta*, it is an idea which resonates strongly with experiences of carnival, as the man from Treviso indicates. This notion of equality amongst the participants is significant for the modern day carnival as it points to a level of challenge to the continued destabilising of social bonds and the increased individualism of current society. Furthermore, it speaks to notions of relationality as part of spectatorship, reflecting the above comments on the prevalence of the spectator in Venetian events. The man's comments are not

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[64] Interview with man from Treviso, 6 February 2010.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.101.

universal, however, and other carnival participants I interviewed expressed contrasting

views. For example, a couple of Venetians I interviewed, who were not masked or costumed,

portrayed a different picture of the event. The man stated that during carnival, the

equilibrium of the city changes in favour of tourism and the economic interests of people

who do not invest in the city and do not give anything back to the city. He saw the carnival

as a purely economic event, not a meeting of people, nor a cultural event, suggesting a level

of nostalgia for the carnival of bygone eras.[67] Negative approaches to the carnival are partly

inflected by the seriousness of varied issues pressing on the city, such as excessive tourism,

rising sea waters and flooding, the reduced population, and immigration, as discussed in the

thesis introduction. These problems affect Venice's infrastructure and the lives of the

citizens, as well as threatening the city's future.[68]

Carnivalesque Violence

The custom of overturning the norms in medieval carnival included, as Peter Burke

delineates, men dressing as women, and vice versa, and people dressing up as 'clerics,

devils, fools, wild men and wild animals, for example bears'.[69] Burke contends that the

carnival period in medieval European society was a site of violence, therefore allowing

people to behave in ways that would be unacceptable during the rest of the year. He states:

> Fools and wild men rushed about striking at the bystanders with
> pig's bladders and even with sticks. People threw flour at one
> another, or sugar-plums, or apples, or oranges, or stones, or eggs,
> which might be filled with rose-water but might not. [...] Animals
> were common victims of the Carnival madness; dogs might be

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[67] Interview with Venetian couple, 6 February 2010.

[68] For further discussion of some of these issues, see Nicolas Whybrow 'Losing Venice: Conversations in a Sinking City', in *Performance and the Global City*, ed. by D. J. Hopkins and Kim Solga (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.99-119 (pp.99-101).

[69] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), p.183.

> tossed in a blanket, and cocks pelted to death. Aggression was also verbal, and many insults were exchanged and satirical verses sung.[70]

It was customary for carnival to involve violent episodes. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's detailed study of the bloody events of the carnival of 1580 at Romans, near Grenoble, is a fascinating account of how carnival can escalate into violent exchanges, indeed he describes the month of February that year as 'a time of masks and massacres'.[71] David Gilmore reflects on the Naples carnival of 1647 when the populace rose up to assassinate enemies who had betrayed the people.[72] Emerson also reflects on violence in carnival, stating: 'In its function as society's safety valve, as a scheduled event that worked to domesticate conflict by temporarily sanctioning victimization, medieval carnival in practice could be more repressive than liberating'.[73] Such views of the iterations of European carnivals contemporaneous with the time of Rabelais indicate that Bakthin's interpretation of carnival can be construed as overly positive. In more recent times, the Notting Hill carnival in London is an example of a modern day phenomenon which has exhibited episodes of violence, resulting in acts of containment, as Abner Cohen explores.[74]

The bygone Venice carnival comprised traditions of victimisation and violence; Burke cites the recording of an English visitor to Venice stating that seventeen people were killed and many others injured on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, with a murder occurring almost every night of the carnival season.[75] Samuel Kinser attests that in Venice there was a tradition of catching the wild man, channelling collective energies into a frenetic hunt.[76] The carnival involved acts ranging from the fairly innocent throwing of perfumed

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[70] Ibid., pp.183-84.

[71] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival: A People's Uprising at Romans, 1579-1580*, trans. by Mary Feeney (London: Scholar Press, 1980), p.1.

[72] David D. Gilmore, *Carnival and Culture: Sex, Symbol and Status in Spain* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), p.12.

[73] Emerson, pp.164-65.

[74] Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp.33-61.

[75] Burke, p.187.

[76] Samuel Kinser, 'Why is carnival so wild?', in *Carnival and the Carnivalesque: the fool, the reformer, the wildman, and others in early modern theatre*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.43-87 (pp.49-51).

eggs to the more spectacular and ritualistic hunting of bulls, the beheading of pigs and bulls, and bear-baiting: Franco's above engraving of a Venetian *campo* in Figure 1 contains some quite innocuous entertainments, but several aspects of the engraving point to violence as a feature of carnivalesque events in Venice. These traditions form part of Venice's wild entertainments, some occurring outside of carnival time, indicating the level to which engaging in and watching violent or gruesome acts provided a safety-valve. Lina Padoan Urban elaborates on the popularity of bull (or ox) hunting which occurred in different parts of the city throughout the year. These hunts were often held in honour of noble dignitaries or important visitors, and the number of oxen involved depended on how important the person being honoured was.[77] Men taking part in the hunt wore particular outfits and the nobility wore masks so as not to be recognised, demonstrating that social strata were maintained in such civic spectacles. The bulls would be held on leashes by men called *tiratori*, and the hunts followed an aggressive ritual: the ox was agitated, sometimes by fireworks, and brought into the open square. Men continued to agitate the beast and then ferocious dogs were released to excite it even more, handled on leashes by the *cavacani* dressed in white shirts. The dogs tore at the ears of the ox in attacks known as *molae* and this continued until the ox could take no more. Often these hunts would end in the decapitation of the ox's head, but not before several oxen had gone through the ritual.[78] Boholm also writes about these entertainments as a key feature of carnival, relating that, curiously, unlike the renowned Spanish bullfights, the death of the bull was not the climax of the event: the main theme of the entertainment were the *molae* which produced copious bloodshed as fresh oxen and dogs entered the square.[79] As she avers, the spilling of blood was associated with fertility and had a generative force dating back to pagan rituals; indeed, often the bleeding oxen were not killed until they had first been presented to marriageable girls in the city, a custom which

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[77] Lina Padoan Urban, *Il Carnevale Veneziano: nelle maschere incise da Francesco Bertelli* (Milan: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1986), p.14
[78] Ibid., pp.14-16.
[79] Åsa Boholm, 'The Caccia di Tori: Regeneration in Venetian Carnival', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 3, 1 (1993), 46-61 (p.50).

reflects the fact that carnival was a common time to marry.[80] The death of the oxen, and the associations of fertility in their very bloodshed, was thus juxtaposed with the new beginnings of betrothed women, in turn intimating the new life of children born in wedlock. Significantly, the juxtaposition of birth and death within carnivalesque manifestations points to the immanent end of the carnival period, and to the beginning of Lent, which signifies the death of the carnival life. The frolics and laughter of carnival have this life-giving quality in Bakhtin's logic, he states that carnival laughter: 'asserts and denies, it buries and revives'.[81] Indeed, carnival is concordant with dialogism, another key theory which Bakhtin applied to literature, and which has been applied more broadly to diverse phenomena, including to art and performance, as will be discussed presently.[82] Dialogism refers to double-voicedness and, according to Bakhtin, relates to single instances of language and to the qualities that define language; Sue Vice explains: 'dialogism refers to the presence of two distinct voices in one utterance'.[83] Therefore, carnival manifestations can make opposites, like birth and death, co-present, as evidenced in the bloodshed of the bullfighting. Under the Austrians, bullfights were banned in Venice in 1802,[84] followed by the prohibition of the *Forze d'Ercole*, the Labours of Hercules, in 1816, for fear of possible disorder and accidents, by which time the identity of carnival and the city had changed forever.[85]

Other carnivalesque events marked by their violence were the organised fights on bridges between citizens, the so called *battagliole sui ponti* (battles on bridges), using wooden sticks as weapons, or just bare fists to punch the opponents; these fights reflected the city's factionalism, particularly its division between *Nicolotti*, in the northern and western parts of the city, and *Castellani* in the southern and eastern parts of the city. Robert C. Davis explores these phenomena in his study *The War of the Fists*, stating that the earliest record of

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[80] Ibid., p.48 and pp.50-51.
[81] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.12.
[82] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (London: University of California Press, 2004), p.10.
[83] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.45.
[84] Boholm, 'The Caccia di Tori', p.48.
[85] Bertrand, p.69.

such a *battagliola* on a bridge dates to 1421, though they probably existed earlier.[86] In 1574 a large scale battle was organised to commemorate the visit from France of King Henry III; the *battagliola* is described as a battle 'in which mobs of working men, decked out in helmets and shields, pummeled each other with wooden sticks for about two hours in a chaotic brawl'.[87] The wars of fists, *guerre dei pugni*, were sites of active participation and spectatorship, transforming the city's spaces for the duration of the event: 'Ordinary bridges become tournament fields, their central step an arena, or *arengo*; canals change from watery thoroughfares into grandstands for spectators, while balconies and even rooftops end up as crowded as city streets'.[88] The battles varied from small scale duels on bridges to all out organised 'wars', and their violence inevitably resulted in injuries and death for some participants. While the *battagliole sui ponti* were not carnival activities *per se*, they were undeniably carnivalesque in their motivations, quite apart from the organised civic rituals presented in the city to reflect the might of the republic; although some were mounted to honour dignitaries, the *battagliole* were generally a thing of the people. Davis maintains that the *battagliole* were closer to complete plebeian chaos 'than the reckless excesses of *giovedì grasso* that concluded the Carnival'.[89] Indeed, they were so popular that the government resorted to limiting their disorder, and it is believed their influence saw the battles evolve from being fought with sticks to being fought with bare fists, which was less bloody but still entertaining, showing that the state sought to carefully control such events.[90] That these *battagliole* and the bullfights were often put on as entertainments for distinguished guests of the republic intimates a level of inequality, as it seems the rituals of the *hoi polloi* were exploited as spectacles to entertain the nobility.

As the engraving in Figure 1 shows, together with depictions and descriptions of Venetian celebrations in general, the success of civic events depended on large numbers of

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[86] Robert C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.15.
[87] Ibid., p.3.
[88] Ibid., p.5.
[89] Ibid., p.45.
[90] Ibid., pp.49-50.

spectators who were involved and responded to the entertainments. Giustina Renier Michiel, who was the granddaughter of the penultimate doge and the niece of the last doge of the republic, recounts the activities of the *giovedì grasso*, providing an evocative description of the human pyramid in the Piazzetta, one of the *Forze d'Ercole*, stating that once the different levels of men had put themselves in place, a young boy would climb up to the very top, and stand still on top of the last man in the pyramid, and as though that was not enough entertainment for the spectators, another climbed up and, turning himself upside down so that his head was balancing on the head of the boy beneath him, he gave the sign of the pyramid's completion; with this *coup de théâtre*, the crowd responded by clapping, cheering, and shouting with joy.[91] She asserts that the carnival was 'the festival of everybody, and every citizen had impressed in their faces a part of the communal cheer; and whoever was not involved asked others with anxiety all the news about it, and they made them narrate everything'.[92] Renier Michiel writes about the carnival in positive terms that concur with Bakhtin's idealistic view of carnival, and crucially there is an emphasis in her description on the important role of the spectator. However, as a member of the nobility herself, her text on the festivities of the city must be seen as emerging from a privileged perspective. The fourteenth-century poet Petrarch was a guest of the republic between 1362 and 1367, and his commentary on the city's civic ceremonies likewise draws out the astounding numbers of spectators looking upon the entertainments laid on for all the citizens. He writes:

> Down below [in the Piazza] there was not a vacant inch; as the
> saying goes, a grain of millet could not have fallen to earth. The
> great square, the church itself, the towers, roofs, porches, windows
> were not so much filled as jammed with spectators.[93]

Artwork depicting the city throughout the centuries, including the engraving of Franco in Figure 1 and the depiction of the Piazzetta by Canaletto examined in the earlier

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[91] Giustina Renier Michiel, *Origine delle feste veneziane*, 6 vols (Milan: Editori degli Annali Universali delle Scienze e dell'Industria, 1829), II, pp.60-61.
[92] Ibid., p.64.
[93] Francesco Petrarch, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.141.

discussion of beauty, evidences the importance of the presence of the spectator as they

feature in windows, grandstands, and as a crucial component of the city's events, as Eugene

Johnson has shown.[94] Indeed, the presence of the spectator in windows and balconies is a

ubiquitous motif of Venetian art, underlining Venice's theatrical identity. Davis's

commentary on the *battagliole* or *guerre* emphasises the notable presence of the spectator,

looking from every angle and becoming involved in the action. Deborah Howard comments

on the important role of the spectator within the city's ritual spaces:

> The dualism between participant and spectator cannot be
> overstressed. Both protagonists and onlookers were intended
> audiences for the ideological content of the rituals. As well as those
> seated exclusively on barges or grandstands, there were bystanders
> in the Piazza, viewing the scene from within the processional
> space.[95]

Howard's notion of dualism between the poles of spectator and participant reflects Bakhtin's

assertion that in carnival there was no divide between these poles. The women Petrarch

describes in the grandstands, for instance, also played a part in the spectacle. Howard asserts

that spectators could view buildings and events from boats, bridges, and quays, and in turn

they were seen by people from windows, balconies, and rooftops: 'The audience, in other

words, was everybody, everywhere'.[96] Admittedly, the nobility may have been favoured,

indeed Petrarch describes a grandstand for noble women, while Davis explains that in

depictions of the *guerre dei pugni* or *battagliole*, noble women can be seen looking on from

windows draped with tapestries.[97] In spite of divisions in viewing arrangements, the large

number of spectators inevitably created a sense of participation in an important cultural event

which united everybody, and in this the ceremonial events of Venice, including those of the

carnival, concord with Bakhtin's theory that carnival does not know footlights nor

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[94] Eugene J. Johnson, 'Jacopo Sansovino, Giacomo Torelli, and the Theatricality of the Piazzetta in Venice', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59, 4 (2000), 436-53.
[95] Deborah Howard, 'Ritual Space in Renaissance Venice', *SCROOPE*, 5 (1993/4), 4-11 (p.5).
[96] Ibid., p.6.
[97] Petrarch, in *Venice: A Traveller's Companion*, ed. by Norwich, p.142; Davis, *The War of the Fists*, pp.140-41.

acknowledges the difference between actor and spectator.[98]

Franco's engraving of diverse entertainments in Figure 1, the bullfighting tradition, and the *guerre dei pugni* are each marked by violent aspects, but crucially they also share a highly participatory style of spectatorship. The active role of the spectator is further demonstrated by the events of the *giovedì grasso* celebrations, which took place on the last Thursday of carnival and were seen as the culmination of the carnival period. The day involved violent aspects, particularly the beheading of pigs and bulls. Padoan Urban relates that the sacrificing of pigs was practised in other European cities at carnival time in the Middle Ages, but the Venetian spectacle took on a very particular significance.[99] It dated from the twelfth century at the time of a power struggle between the Friulian towns of Aquileia and Grado, and in 1162 Patriarch Ulrich of Aquileia invaded Grado and brought it under his own jurisdiction. Venice saw this as a threat, particularly as the republic were alert to the looming presence of the infamous Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, who had made advances into Italian territories in the twelfth century. Doge Vitale Michiel II sent a fleet which retook Grado and brought Ulrich back to Venice with twelve of his canons and hundreds of captives. Johnson relates how this connects to the *giovedì grasso* events which continued, with some changes, for more than six hundred years:

> The priest and canons were marched through the streets to taunts and curses. The doge set a ransom with appropriately insulting terms. The patriarch and his twelve priests would be returned to Aquileia in exchange for a bull and twelve pigs. The animals were duly slaughtered, to the delight of the populace. […] Venice demanded that the city send a bull and twelve pigs yearly on the anniversary of Ulrich's defeat.[100]

Bertrand adds that twelve loaves of bread also formed part of the terms, while Edward Muir states it was 300 loaves.[101] Along with the slaughtering of the bull and the twelve pigs, which

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[98] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.7.
[99] Padoan Urban, pp.9-10. See also Stefania Bertelli, *Il Carnevale di Venezia nel Settecento* (Rome: Jouvence, 1992), pp.11-12; Correnti, p.14.
[100] Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, p.36.
[101] Bertrand, p.65; Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University

were ceremoniously tried in the ducal court and sentenced to death, the other entertainments

of *giovedì grasso* were played out for the populace in front of the doge and the Venetian

nobility. Johnson avers that the coinciding of Ulrich's defeat with the carnival was

supremely convenient for the government of Venice, which was able to use the ceremony of

giovedì grasso to put 'the stamp of collective victory on a season not ordinarily linked to the

civic good'.[102] It redirected carnivalesque energies away from church and state and towards a

foreign enemy which threatened the republic. Feil adds: 'Venetian festivals were a ready-

made vehicle for propaganda, pronouncements and parochial interests of all kinds',

emphasising the influence the state had on the narrative of the carnival entertainments.[103]

Another engraving by Giacomo Franco, shown in Figure 4, depicts the events of

giovedì grasso, representing the role of the spectator: grandstands have been set up around

the Piazzetta to involve as many people as possible, and this is strongly redolent of

Canaletto's much later painting *Giovedí grasso in the Piazzetta* discussed in the first chapter.

A bull chase is shown in the foreground on the right, with a dog biting at the bull's ears,

while on the left of the central stage a man is about to behead a bull and his sword can be

seen in mid-air preparing for the *coup de grâce*. In the engraving the Ducal Palace is seen on

the left opposite Sansovino's Library, and in the Piazzetta itself a number of the other

entertainments of the day are shown, alongside the slaughtering of the animals, with the

theatrical backdrop of the *bacino* and the two columns of St Mark and St Theodore

completing the Piazzetta's stage furniture, giving the little square the feeling of a proscenium

stage-set. Amongst the events of the *giovedì grasso* there was the *moresca*, a military dance

with swords or wooden sticks by workers from the arsenal; the *Forze d'Ercole*; fireworks;

and the destruction by the doge and the nobility of model castles in the Ducal Palace,

representing the defeat over Aquileia and the surrounding Friulian landowners. There was

also the *volo*, the flight, which appears to have manifested itself in a number of ways:

sometimes as the flight of a child in a basket down a pulley from the Campanile to the

Press, 1981), p.160.
[102] Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, p.39.
[103] Feil, p.144.

Figure 4 Early seventeenth-century engraving by Giacomo Franco of the events in the Piazzetta on *giovedì grasso*

doge's balcony to present the doge with some flowers and a piece of poetry; at other times this is recorded as being a tightrope walking Turk, hence the *volo del turco*; and at other times it was the arsenal workers who took on the mantle of the *volo*. Stefania Bertelli concurs with Johnson and Feil that the festivities were maintained annually not only to entertain but to instil the political hegemony of the governors, according with views of carnival as a safety-valve.[104]

Significantly, the *giovedì grasso* festivities were refined in the sixteenth century, acquiring a definitive character, along with the other main celebrations during the year, to fit with a sumptuous view of Venice, consonant with the new, dignified image of the state. Bertelli maintains that it was during the 1500s that *giovedì grasso* lost its features linked to the primitive Venetian society: in 1520 the Council of Ten, which comprised the most powerful governors who dealt with matters of state security, prohibited the 'judging' of the pigs and the destruction of the models of the Friulian castles, and the decapitation of the pigs' heads was reviewed again during the mid-1520s.[105] However, as Muir attests, the reforms did not put a complete stop to the decapitation of pigs and bulls, and they were slaughtered in the late-1520s and in 1530 in spite of the reforms, indicating a level of resistance on the part of the populace and younger nobles as the city ordinances were flouted. By the middle of the century, the twelve pigs had been replaced by one bull, reflecting the state's push for a more refined spectacle and the performance of the state's power and dignity.[106] The refining of the *giovedì grasso* celebrations coincided with the rebuilding of much of Piazza San Marco in the sixteenth century.[107] Bertrand links the changes made to the festivities and the architecture, asserting that under Doge Andrea Gritti (1523-1538), the reforms were made to reduce the danger of revolution, while reinforcing the prestige of the nobility, thereby pointing to the political nature of these reforms.[108] The esteemed architect Jacopo Sansovino was tasked with clearing away 'the shacks of butchers

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[104] Bertelli, p.12.
[105] Ibid., pp.12-13.
[106] Muir, p.162-64.
[107] Howard, pp.6-7.
[108] Bertrand, p.66.

and salami-sellers who had infested the Piazzetta and the Piazza', and he constructed the Marciana Library, the Procuratoria Nuova, the Mint, and the Loggetta at the base of the Campanile, all of which communed with the increasingly refined idea of the state.[109] Scholarship on the carnival's bygone festivities therefore suggests that Bakhtin's optimistic view of medieval carnival is imbalanced, as a number of scholars emphasise the role of the nobility in civic rituals, legislation which restricted the freedom of masking and festivities, and the general role of the state in promoting events which reflected state power and which maintained the *status quo*, rather than overthrowing it. However, the timing of the alterations to the carnival events in Venice, as well as to the architectural appearance of the city, coincides with a general narrowing down of ritual, spectacle, and carnival forms of folk culture across Europe, which Bakhtin attests began during the seventeenth century.[110] As Bertelli maintains, visual and verbal depictions of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century carnivals suggest an altogether more improvised entertainment, contrasting with the ordered and tranquil depictions of the seventeenth century, thus concurring with Bakhtin's view that the Renaissance was the 'zenith of carnivalistic life'.[111]

Bullfights, the *guerre sui ponti*, the ritual of *giovedì grasso*, and other carnivalesque manifestations are marked by violent aspects, while also representing dialogical images of death and rebirth. Rebirth and the repression of violent urges are carnivalesque aspects captured by the esteemed Italian novelist Alberto Moravia at the time of the carnival's renascence in the late-twentieth century: his untitled short story appears in *Carnevale del Teatro*, a 1980 publication which provides a photographic record of the theatrical events which took place during the first official revived modern carnival of that year. The book in which Moravia's text appears also contains images of performances by the acclaimed mime artist Marcel Marceau, who performed at Venice's renowned La Fenice theatre, the Italian theatre mavericks Dario Fo and Franca Rame at the Teatro Malibran, comedians from

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[109] Muir, p.163.
[110] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.33; *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.107.
[111] Bertelli, p.17; Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.107.

Barcelona, and circus performers from Prague, among others.[112] Donato Sartori commissioned a huge cobweb structure in Piazza San Marco, creating a ghostly, other-worldly image of the city, as though it had been abandoned and had been taken over by enormous spiders that had left their trails, a trope which was repeated with another cobweb structure in 2003; images of the Piazza covered in cobwebs are evocative of notions of the archaeological traces or ghostly remains of performances.[113] Several photographs in the book depict the figures of the angel and the devil, counteracting each other as they go about the city, which reiterates the dialogic nature of carnival imagery. Moravia's story provides an interesting perspective on the way that carnival employs images of death and rebirth to enable participants to be reborn, reflecting Bakhtin's theory of carnival. His protagonist relates a memory that persistently comes to him as he is in bed, trying to fall asleep: the memory is of a young girl he saw that morning dressed up as Arlecchino for the carnival. This girl he sees every morning on her way to school as he takes his daily stroll, but he is dumbfounded by the girl's carnival transformation:

> I keep thinking about that meeting, asking myself what had
> happened so that that sad and timid little girl had become so
> cheerful and confident; and I conclude that the carnival had 'acted'.
> Her usual face was actually a mask; the mask of Arlecchino was
> instead her real face.[114]

Moravia's narrator here intimates that people are constantly performing the mask of their identity, which is destabilised by carnival transformation and the adoption of a physical mask and costume. The presence of the mask therefore appears to underline the impossibility of knowing the other: the girl that Moravia's narrator thought he knew is actually not herself, but the cheery Arlecchino mask is her instead. Though the young girl's simple act of transformation is evidently framed within the temporal limits and culturally accepted rules of carnival, for Moravia's narrator, there is a level of resistance in her position, thereby

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[112] Alberto Moravia and others, *Carnevale del Teatro* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1980).

[113] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, pp.198-205.

[114] Alberto Moravia, in *Carnevale del Teatro* by Alberto Moravia and others (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1980), pp.11-13 (p.11).

commenting on the role that modern carnival plays. By extension, the carnival performance of this little girl points to the performances of everyday life, as has been explored in earlier chapters. Writing on Bakhtin, Holquist asserts that carnival highlights the fact that 'social roles determined by class relations are *made* not given, culturally produced rather than naturally mandated', importantly emphasising the roles which people perform, whether knowingly or not.[115]

This memory is a prelude to the crux of the story, which Moravia's narrator moves on to relate: his wife, who is masked and costumed, urges him to get out of bed and to join her in the Piazza; she has got him a mask: it is the devil. He gets out of bed and tries it on. There are immediate echoes of his comment on the young schoolgirl as the reader can infer that the mask he wears everyday is not himself, but rather he is the devil; the story takes a sinister turn as he describes the moment he leaves to join his wife in the Piazza:

> Later, I go out, pushing the mask onto my face with one hand and, with the other, pressing underneath my jacket the handle of the knife that, who knows why, on the point of leaving, perhaps suggested by my mask, I couldn't help but take from a kitchen drawer.[116]

This narrative flourish transforms the tone of the story, and indicates the power of the mask in taking over the character's person: he has effectively adopted another identity, but, paradoxically, his self is dialogic as in the narration his authorial voice does not change. Taking a *vaporetto* which is jammed with masked revellers along the Grand Canal, he ruminates on the buildings of the Canal, picking up the recurring theme of death and ghostliness that haunts Venice and images of Venice, as he describes some of the grand buildings as dead and empty. He relates seeing a building along the Canal which he does not recognise, which is full of life with illuminated windows and shadows of masked people moving about, but as the *vaporetto* sails off, the building appears to have been a hallucination. A woman on the *vaporetto* pushes against him, apparently intentionally; she is

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[115] Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.89.
[116] Moravia, p.11.

dressed as Death, with a cape that has a skeleton drawn upon it. They speak, and he

describes her as a young, beautiful girl, discussing her body in minute detail. On alighting he

starts following her, listening to the devil within him who is telling him to get her into a quiet

corner, away from the crowds, to hold the knife up against her, and ambiguously, to let the

rest come naturally. In the Piazza he finds Death and grabs her by the arm, but with all the

excitement of the carnival they get separated, and the devilish narrator tries to find her again,

only to see five different people dressed as Death, with amusingly diverse levels of success.

He gives up his search, and, finding himself outside Florian's, he meets the young schoolgirl

of his morning strolls dressed as Arlecchino with one of her friends. To his amazement, the

girl recognises him in spite of his devil mask, and this seems to bring him to his senses: he

throws a shower of confetti over the girl, and then he escapes the Piazza and enters a

building site, where he throws the devil mask and the knife into a barrel of lime before

leaving, and thus ends the story.[117] Moravia's short narration is a parable of catharsis as it

appears that his narrator is renewed by this experience of carnival transformation. The devil

mask made him mad and do things he would never have done outside of that carnival

moment: by adopting an alternative identity he found he had the capability of carrying a

weapon and stalking a stranger, with malicious intentions. His descriptions of the other

people who engage with carnival, his wife, the young schoolgirl and her friend, Death who

he met on the *vaporetto*, and the other five Deaths he sees in the Piazza, indicate a playful,

fun interaction with the carnival, contrasting with the narrator himself who experiences a

level of psychosis as the devil character. The story takes on the nature of a moral as it ends

with the playful showering of confetti over the innocent Arlecchino-girl, and the abandoning

of the devil mask and the knife. Furthermore, it establishes carnival transformation as

something which instils social order, as by the end of the story, social harmony has been

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[117] That both the narrator and the young girl recognise each other invokes the Italian expression 'Ti conosco, mascherina!' ('I know you, little mask!'), which reflects the culture of masking at Italian carnivalesque festivities, and has entered into the language as a phrase which communicates that the speaker has understood someone's real intentions in spite of the appearance they have adopted, suggesting the impossibility of effacing the self when masked. Dizionario dei Modi di Dire, Dizmodididire, *Corriere della Sera* <http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario-modi-di-dire/M/maschera.shtml?refresh_ce-cp> [accessed 25 October 2015].

restored as his mask and the knife sink in the barrel. The prominence of death as a theme, in

the masked Deaths, the description of the Grand Canal, and the implied threat of murder,

also points to rebirth in carnival. Moravia's narrative therefore parallels with the

manifestations of the bygone carnival outlined above in that the events allowed the

participants to 'let off steam', engaging in violence and other transgressive behaviour, before

returning to social equilibrium.

Grotesque Carnival

Bakhtin's celebration of medieval carnival traditions draws on the notion of grotesque

realism, and in particular, representations of the grotesque body and the common laughter of

the marketplace, linking the carnivalesque activities of medieval Europe to profane parodies

written in Latin or in the vernacular, which he states find their origins in antiquity.[118] Such

parodies focus on the material, grotesque body, and in doing so, they remind people of the

shared nature of existence; as Pam Morris states: 'The exaggerated bodily protuberances, the

emphasis on eating and excrement, the frequent physical abuse in the form of beatings and

comic debasements are all elements of a complex communal perception of human life'.[119]

This is Bakhtin's key carnival idea, according to Emerson, because the use of the lower

bodily stratum indicates a common language between people: 'Such communal baseness, the

vigour of "les bas corporel" is the foundation of Bakhtin's carnival logic'.[120] Bakhtin

observes that such images, which the *oeuvre* of Rabelais abounds in, differ sharply with the

aestheticism of the following ages.[121] His observations stress the origins of grotesque realism

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[118] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.13; see also Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.89-92, for a delineation of the carnivalesque attributes of Socratic dialogue and Menippean satire.
[119] Pam Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p.195.
[120] Emerson, p.164.
[121] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.18.

in pagan societies, recalling the theory of the etymology of the word 'grotesque' from
'*grotta*', the chambers in which ancient representations were found, with fanciful depictions
of plant, animal, and human forms. During the Renaissance, the body was seen in a new
light, isolated and set apart from other bodies. As alluded to above, Bakhtin maintains that
from the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was a gradual process of state
encroaching on carnival forms of public life: expressions of a ritualistic, folk culture were
reduced and made into processions, or were otherwise brought indoors and became part of
the private life.[122] In Venice, there is evidence of this much earlier, as indicated by the
sixteenth-century changes that were made to *giovedì grasso*, but continued state controls
throughout the seventeenth century and beyond concur with Bakhtin's assertion. Venetians
developed the carnival custom of having privately organised *festini* (parties) in their homes,
hanging a lantern above the front door which was an open invitation to anybody to enter.
According to Correnti, most of the women at these *festini* were courtesans, and the parties
invariably ended in licentious dancing.[123]

The grotesque body of Rabelais so lauded by Bakhtin speaks to the universality of
the human body, and such imagery points to the cycle of life and death that imbues human
existence. In referring to Bakhtin's discussion of images of food, excrement, and the lower
regions of the body, Morris states that such images signify: 'a world that dies to be born,
devouring and devoured, continually growing and multiplying; the body that is also the
earth, the grave and the womb'.[124] Bakhtin writes of the duality of grotesque realism:

> The essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory
> and double-faced fullness of life. Negation and destruction (death
> of the old) are included as an essential phase, inseparable from
> affirmation, from the birth of something new and better. The very
> material bodily lower stratum of the grotesque image (food, wine,
> the genital force, the organs of the body) bears a deeply positive
> character. This principle is victorious, for the final result is always
> abundance, increase.[125]

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[122] Ibid., pp.29-33.
[123] Correnti, p.35.
[124] Morris, *The Bakhtin Reader*, p.207.
[125] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.62.

Cosmically, the 'downward' image in the grotesque is earth, which is devouring but also life-giving, while the 'upward' is related to heaven. Physically, the upper part of the body houses the head and face, and therein lies the mind, the 'spirit'. The lower part of the body houses the genital organs, the belly, the buttocks, the feet, relating to acts of defecation, copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. There is evidence of this at the modern day carnival, as Figure 5 exemplifies: it shows a group of carnival participants mocking a religious procession by parading through Piazza San Marco dressed as a bishop, monks, and nuns. On the right, St Mark's Basilica can be seen, and behind them the Torre dell'Orologio, with its astronomical dial hidden by the banner the group are holding. The banner reads '*Casa della sorella bona!! E, del fratello miracolo*'/ 'House of the good sister!! And, the

Figure 5 *Maschere* parading as a bishop, monks, and nuns outside St Mark's Basilica in Piazza San Marco. The banner reads: '*Casa della sorella bona!! E, del fratello miracolo*'/ 'The house of the good sister!! And, of the miracle brother', 7 February 2010

miracle brother', punning on the group's costumes as religious figures. The good sister refers to both the nuns and to the picture of the topless model in the centre of the banner, while the miracle brother points to both the monks and the decorated plastic phallus adorning the top corner. This merry band were traversing the Piazza at a busy time in order to gain the attention of their fellow carnival participants; the group communed with the carnivalesque atmosphere by mocking the church in a public setting. The banner, with its pun, its topless model, and its plastic phallus, speaks to Bakhtin's interpretation of the use of grotesque realism, which stresses the parts of the body which are open to the world, orifices where the world goes in or things come out into the world.[126] The image also communes with Bakhtin's analysis of the medieval 'feast of fools' which were topsy-turvy rituals originally held in churches on special occasions before being banned and becoming events of the street and of taverns. The feast of fools was characterised by 'grotesque degradation of various church rituals and symbols and their transfer to the material bodily level: gluttony and drunken orgies on the altar table, indecent gestures, disrobing'.[127] Through their employment of symbols of the material body, the merry band in Figure 5 resonate with these ancient traditions. Such mockery hearkens back to the bygone years of the carnival when the church was a much stronger social and cultural influence in Venice; this band of revellers are critiquing the church in a light-hearted manner, suggesting their costuming is not excessively political. More serious issues affecting Venice, including the rising sea waters and the strain of tourism, may be clouded by carnival engagements such as these, which fail to address the current political issues facing the city.

In spite of degradation and debasement of the church and religious figures in Figure 5, Bakhtin's logic suggests that the church and religion are not being hurled into non-existence by the mocking figures with their banner, but are being reborn through the use of grotesque imagery, which is linked to the reproductive lower stratum of the body, where conception and birth takes place; he asserts: 'Grotesque realism knows no other lower level;

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[126] Ibid., p.26.
[127] Ibid., pp.74-75.

it is fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving'.[128] In this, the use of grotesque

realism enables renascence. This rebirth also highlights the communality shared by people,

challenging the hierarchical and high-status profile of the church and church figures, as they

are seen as human like all others. This is also evidenced by Figure 6 which represents a

carnival participant at the 2011 event dressed as a cardinal. His religious vestments, with rich

pinks and delicate lace, point to the opulence of the church, underlined by the overlarge ring

he is wearing on his right hand. Standing in the Piazzetta with a mischievous look, he is

brazenly smoking a cigarette, and in this he demonstrates his transgressive interpretation of

the religious figure of authority. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the overturning of social roles

particular to the carnival period, as Craig Brandist discusses:

> The place of each figure in society is relativized, serious
> hierarchical figures have their parodic doubles, the king is replaced
> by the fool, the priest by the rogue or the charlatan, indeed the
> whole structure of society is for a time inverted, turned inside out
> and subject to ridicule.[129]

In Figures 5 and 6, the respected figures of church ministers and religious figures are indeed

relativized, and replaced by 'rogues' or 'charlatans': transformed carnival participants. The

carnival participants in the images are performing alternative identities and challenging the

established social roles of people in religious life, indicating that the subversion Bakhtin

celebrates in medieval literature is sustained by the modern day carnival. However, the

notion of new birth and renewal which is inherent in any carnival image points to a valid

reason to allow such parodies and debasements to occur, somewhat limiting the possibility

for Figures 5 and 6 to be completely subversive: the framing of carnival time and space

allows anything to happen.

The transformation of these carnival participants into religious figures illustrates the

topsy-turvy nature of the revived carnival, demonstrating that the carnival is not just a

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[128] Ibid., p.21.
[129] Craig Brandist, 'Bakhtin, Marxism and Russian Populism', in *Materializing Bakhtin*, ed. by
Brandist and Tihanov, pp.70-93 (p.87).

Figure 6 *Maschera* **dressed as a cardinal in the Piazzetta, 6 March 2011**

celebration of the handsome *maschere*, and linking the carnival to crude iterations of

yesteryear. Burke explains that illustrations during the medieval period captured this theme:

> People standing on their heads, cities in the sky, the sun and moon
> on earth, fishes flying, or that favourite item of carnival procession,
> a horse going backwards with its rider facing the tail. [...] Also
> represented was the reversal of the relations between man and man
> [...] The son is shown beating his father, the pupil beating his
> teacher, servants giving orders to their masters, the poor giving
> alms to the rich, the laity saying Mass or preaching to the clergy,
> the king going on foot while the peasant rides, the husband holding
> the baby while his wife smokes and holds a gun.[130]

These role reversals represented the world-turned-inside-out essence of carnival and were

strongly present in historical Venice, as Johnson avers: 'plebs and patricians exchanged

roles, men dressed as women and women as men, and the powers that be were mocked'.[131] It

was also a carnival fashion to dress as one's social opposite, with nobles begging while

commoners dressed as lawyers.[132] Another key feature of European carnival was the battle

between 'Carnival' and 'Lent', with 'Carnival' usually represented as 'a fat man, pot-bellied,

ruddy, cheerful, often hung about with eatables' while 'Lent' took the form of 'a thin old

woman, dressed in black and hung about with fish'.[133] The personification of the seasons of

Carnival and Lent contrast the indulgent, gluttonous, libertine period with the severe and

austere period of religious abstinence. Masterpieces of the *oeuvre* of sixteenth-century

Flemish artist Pieter Brueghel evocatively represent this dichotomy as in *The Battle between

Carnival and Lent* (1559) and *The Strife of Lent with Shrove-Tide* (1540-69).[134]

Carnivalesque images are based in dualisms, as Bakhtin affirms:

> All of the images of carnival are two-in-one images, they unite
> within themselves both poles of change and crisis: birth and death
> [...], benediction and damnation [...], praise and condemnation,
> youth and age, top and bottom, face and backside, stupidity and

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[130] Burke, pp.188-89.
[131] Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, p.15.
[132] Ibid., p.18.
[133] Burke, p.185.
[134] Hyman, p.9.

wisdom.[135]

This further underlines the dialogical nature of carnival, suggesting there is more than one voice in any single carnival image, and making birth and death co-present.

The people laughing during carnival, like those pictured in their mocking religious outfits in Figures 5 and 6 are also laughing at themselves because they also 'die and are revived and renewed'.[136] The costume and mask of carnival therefore always contain their death, as the end of the carnival period looms. In this, there is some consonance with the figure of the actor, as the performance ends and the character that the actor plays ends. As the carnival participant gives an inanimate mask life by putting it on, so too the mask gives its wearer a new life: it is inherently dialogic. This theme of carnival is reflected in the tradition of the crowning of the carnival king, a mock-crowning derived from pagan festivals such as the Saturnalia. Bakhtin asserts:

> The idea of immanent discrowning is contained already in the crowning: it is ambivalent from the very beginning. [...] From the outset the discrowning shows through the coronation. All carnivalistic symbols are of this nature: they always include within themselves the perspective of negation (death), or its opposite. Birth is fraught with death, and death with new birth.[137]

The ritual of crowning somebody for the carnival period instils the sense of limitation in carnival as any duration of a fool's reign is inconceivable. In Figure 6, the cardinal's discrowning is contained within the image, as the *maschera's* wry smile points to the end of his period of transformation: it is perhaps the smoking cigarette which is the *punctum* of this image - that thing which strikes the viewer. The carnival identity is thus transient: in this new carnival life there is also death, and yet within that death is the rebirth of the person. The mask, says Bakhtin, 'is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to

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[135] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.103.
[136] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.12.
[137] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.102.

oneself'.[138] This reiterates the dialogic nature of the mask as it simultaneously contains

within it both the other and the self.

During the 1980s, as the modern carnival re-established itself as a feature of the

Venetian calendar, the artist Giorgio Spiller created carnival costumes which communed

with the carnivalesque rebirth and grotesque body of Bakhtin's imagining, linking the

carnival to the medieval carnivalesque attitude and to pagan use of grotesque imagery.

Figure 7 shows three of his costumes from 1981, 1982 and 1983 pictured together: from left

to right Tits and Ass (*Tette e Culo*, 1983), The Cock (*Il Cazzo*, 1982), and The Cunt (*La

Mona*, 1981). These crude costumes which featured in the early years of the carnival's

revival depict human genitalia, and they were met with varied reactions. Spiller's

commentary of his antics in the 1980s, itself carnivalesque in tone, relates that as The Cunt

in 1981 he was attacked four times by Venetians and organised groups, once by a group 'of

Figure 7 *Maschere* of Giorgio Spiller pictured together. Left to right: Tits and Ass (*Tette e Culo*), 1983; The Cock, (*Il Cazzo*) 1982; The Cunt, (*La Mona*) 1981. Photo by Mark E. Smith

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[138] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, pp.39-40.

unmasked lesbians who ambushed me in Campo San Fantin, and tore my costume to shreds', but he managed to gather the scattered pieces and returned to his promenade the next day.[139] In 1982, he found the more robust material of the Cock costume protected him better from attacks; however, he was stopped on the evening of *giovedì grasso* by the police and escorted to the police station at the Ducal Palace, historically the site of justice, imprisonment, and the meting out of sentences, including executions. Spiller recalls:

> A crowd of people followed us, chanting 'morons, morons!'. There were moments of awkwardness, as people outside continued to yell and bang on the door, then they let me out, keeping 'the hat'. An hour later I was back in front of the police station dressed as the Cunt and demanding the liberation of the Cock.[140]

This incident might have been foreseen by Spiller, as in 1980 he had masqueraded as a black angel 'with a red bit [a phallus] that whirled inappropriately in every direction'; that year also saw him being brought to a police station and he had had his phallus impounded.[141] In 1982, however, the Cock costume was more graphic in its representation, as the whole costume from head to foot represented a phallus, and the affair received more attention. In Britain, the *Guardian* reported on the court case that ensued: 'Mr Spiller was charged with "having carried out acts contrary to public decency by exhibiting himself disguised as a phallus"'.[142] At the end of the ten-minute hearing, the judge 'ruled that the charge was unfounded amid tumultuous applause from Mr Spiller's friends'.[143] Spiller's alternative approach to the carnival, which the authorities had sought to quash, became a larger scale story of carnivalesque expression, which ultimately mocked the police and the judicial system.

In 1983 Spiller's costume Tits and Ass was made up of:

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[139] Giorgio Spiller, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.264.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] 'Case fails to stand', *Guardian*, 8 November 1982.
[143] Ibid.

"thirty-seven tits and one ass-hole", a combination of Artemis of
Ephesus and a large ass on my head which I called "Dis-turban".
The costume came with special effects: a long dark brown chenille
that oozed out of the turban on demand and an instrument that
emitted sounds.

The scatological representations Spiller created are concordant with medieval carnivalesque illustrations and go some way to emphasising the universality of humanity in their basest form: there are implications of death and rebirth here as the multiple-breasted figure points to notions of fertility, while the depiction of the bottom and excrement points to the universality of orifices. Hyman provides several examples of the employment of genitalia in different media from badges found in Bruges, Belgium, to the phallic hat of a fool's head found in Lincolnshire, England, aligning with Bakhtin's writing on the use of the material body and the lower stratum as symbols of grotesque, carnivalesque imagery.[144] In 1985 Spiller took a break from the carnival, but rumours began to circulate that he was going to appear dressed 'as a turd', which the press speculated on; this episode inspired his 1986 carnival efforts: Hard Poo and Soft Poo (*Cacca Dura e Cacca Molla*), seen in Figure 8.[145] Spiller's costumes indicate that the modern carnival can be subversive if people choose to challenge the *status quo* by masquerading in ways that are contrary to the idea of the beautiful *maschere*, or adopt transgressive behaviours. However, Hyman's discussion of the grotesque representation of excrement in medieval illustrations and engravings suggests that such depictions 'can seem more aggressive than funny'.[146]

The grotesque quality of the revived carnival is also identified by Ferruccio Gard, who worked as special reporter in Venice for RAI television, covering the carnivals from 1980 to 2005. He discusses the problems facing people in full carnival mask and costume, thinking in particular about women dressed as queens or noblewomen with skirts with hoops and trains: one has to leave the hotel, get through the crowds, and compete for a visible

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[144] Hyman, p.25 and p.28. See also Malcolm Jones, 'The Late-Medieval Dutch Pilgrim Badges', in *Carnivalesque*, by Hyman, pp.98-101.
[145] Spiller, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, pp.264-65.
[146] Hyman, p.32.

Figure 8 *Maschere* **of Giorgio Spiller, Hard Poo and Soft Poo (*Cacca Dura e Cacca Molla*), 1986**

position in which one can be seen; one has to fast, or settle for a sandwich as it is difficult to enter a restaurant when wearing such grand and cumbersome outfits; and finally, one has the problem of where and how to urinate. He writes:

> Necessity, you know, is the mother of invention, so there is a solution. The splendid noblewomen leave the hotel without their panties, and in case of need, they go to the Royal Gardens or to a nearby street, spread their legs (the immense skirts conceal this maneuver) and… do it standing up! […] And that is why – and now I will reveal another secret – some of the 'great' photographers have been able to capture faces with expressions that are so…

entranced, displaying a photogenic sense of bliss and relief![147]

Gard's revelations undermine the very notion of the sophistication and beauty of the handsome posing *maschere* as he suggests they urinate beneath their costumes, and are even photographed in the process by unwitting photographers. His observations position the *maschere* in a grotesque light, challenging the ideal image of the *maschera* posing gracefully in front of evocative backgrounds.

Giorgio Spiller and Ferruccio Gard exhibit a carnival laughter of the kind Bakhtin celebrates: 'Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. […] it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants'.[148] The *compagnia de calze*, *I Antichi*, discussed in the previous chapter, exhibit this carnival attitude to the world, embracing grotesque and vulgar manifestations which run contrary to the elegant and refined discourse associated with the revived carnival, encapsulating the Italian saying '*A carnevale ogni scherzo vale*' (At carnival anything goes). On the last day of the 2015 carnival, Shrove Tuesday, *I Antichi* hosted the twenty-third International Festival of Erotic Poetry, a transgressive event at which uncensored poems written in the most gratuitous language are read in Campo San Maurizio. Licentious poems can be written in any language or dialect, provided they are read by their authors, disguised or not, from the dais.[149] This is surely a celebration of the grotesque carnival attitude, focusing on downward images of corporeality, entertaining the festival participants while also saluting the end of the carnival and the beginning of Lent. For Bakhtin, people laughing in carnival, like those in the examples delineated herein, are also laughing at themselves, contrasting with his view of modern satire in which the person laughing places himself above the object of his laughter. Just as he criticises the way that satirical laughter is directed towards an object detached from the person laughing, he also deplores the Romantic interpretation of the grotesque and the mask.

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[147] Ferruccio Gard, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by Bressanello, p.267.
[148] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, pp.11-12.
[149] 'Il Bando del XXIII Festival Internazionale di Poesia Erotica "Baffo-Zancopé"', *I Antichi* <http://www.iantichi.org/content/il-bando-del-xxiii-festival-internazionale-di-poesia-erotica-%C2%ABbaffo-zancop%C3%A8%C2%BB> [accessed 25 October 2015].

He argues that the mask of the Romantic period 'loses almost entirely its regenerating and renewing element and acquires a somber hue. A terrible vacuum, a nothingness lurks behind it'.[150] This view is particularly interesting in terms of the Venice carnival because of the advent of the beautiful, posing *maschere* with their neutral *volto* masks as representative of the event. These *maschere* can have a mysterious, ghostly quality, and the all-encompassing nature of their outfits can suggest a nothingness under the mask, ramified by photography as the preceding chapters have exemplified. These *maschere* speak to the aestheticisation of the carnival in line with Romantic ideals, in turn picking up classical tropes. Bakhtin discusses how the mask is tied up with change and reincarnation, and the rejection of conformity to oneself; the mask plays with reality and image, revealing the essence of the grotesque. He argues that in the Romantic period, the mask was torn away from these renewing and metamorphosic carnival ideas, and was instead viewed as hiding something, and thus deceitful. This aligns with the binary he suggests between the Romantic grotesque as dark in contrast to the folk grotesque as light, embracing spring, sunshine, and morning, suggestive of rebirth.[151] The Romantic view of the mask is connected to the representation and appreciation of the human form. The classical statue representing the body beautiful was placed high on a pedestal and signified a completed whole, admired from below, with no openings or orifices. In contrast, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White assert that: 'grotesque costume and masks emphasize the gaping mouth, the protuberant belly and buttocks, the feet and the genitals', the grotesque body was multiple and 'part of a throng'.[152] They add:

> The grotesque body is emphasized as a mobile, split, multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange; and it is never closed off from either its social or ecosystemic contract. The classical body on the other hand keeps its distance. In a sense it is disembodied, for it appears indifferent to a body which is 'beautiful', but which is taken for granted.[153]

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[150] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.40.
[151] Ibid., p.41.
[152] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp.21-22.
[153] Ibid., p.22.

The *maschere* with the *volto* hide every inch of their body, including orifices and protuberances, behind the mask and costume, in this they align themselves to a Romantic view of the mask as deceitful and enigmatic. Furthermore, their very posing is suggestive of classical statuary and the adulation of the beautiful, as earlier chapters explored in discussions of beauty, stillness, and photography. The handsome *maschere* are put on metaphorical pedestals by their fellow carnival participants, and by the carnival culture which has arisen at the modern day event. Meanwhile, the grotesque carnival participants, represented in Spiller's costumes in Figures 7 and 8, or those *maschere* mocking the religious orders in Figures 5 and 6, or those I saw dressed as penises at the 2010 carnival, represent an altogether different approach: they are not hiding or deceiving by their masking and costuming, but communing with others and renewing themselves and the social order.

Dialogic Carnival

Bakhtin's carnival, through its celebration of marketplace laughter, grotesque realism, and a topsy-turvy world, strongly emphasises dualisms or binaries. As suggested above, this links his notion of carnivalesque manifestations to another pillar of his theory: dialogism. Bakhtin suggests the dual nature of utterances, emphasising their place within the construct of language, as Sue Vice explains:

> The language we use in personal or textual discourse is itself composed of many languages, which have all been used before. At any moment, our discourse will be synchronically informed by the contemporary languages we live among, and diachronically informed by their historical roles and the future roles we anticipate for them.[154]

In terms of language, dialogism encapsulates the intentions between speaker and listener or

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[154] Vice, p.46.

writer and reader, as well as connecting to everything that has already been uttered and how such speech acts relate to new utterances. These sentiments echo earlier chapters' discussions of replication and reiteration, particularly Schechner's view of 'restored behaviour', Butler's 'sedimented acts', and Schneider's 'performance remains'; they also reflect Jacques Derrida's notion of iterability, extended in discussions of performativity by Butler, suggesting everything said and done is part of a process of repeated performances that construct identity and social relations.[155] The performances of life are thus seen in terms of double-voicedness and otherness. McCaw's explication of some of Bakhtin's earlier writings evoke Butler's writings on performativity, particularly here in the use of the word 'sedimented', cited from Bakhtin's *Art and Answerability*:

> In order to see the true and integral countenance of someone close
> to us, someone we apparently know very well – think how many
> masking layers must first be removed from his face, layers that
> were sedimented upon his face by our own fortuitous reactions and
> attitudes and by fortuitous life situations.[156]

Bakhtin evokes the palimpsest nature of the performance of self, in turn recalling Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks's approach to performances in terms of archaeology, suggesting that performances of self can also be seen archaeologically as they layer one upon the other. Bakhtin's comments indicate that understanding of the other is inherent to understanding of the self, reiterating the dialogic attitude. Holquist makes the connection between carnival and dialogism explicit: 'carnival, like the novel, is a *means for displaying otherness*: carnival makes familiar relations strange'.[157] As he explains, Bakhtin shifted his philosophical focus in the late 1920s and early 1930s from aesthetics, status and subject, and the philosophy of religion to the great issues affecting the Soviet Union. These new writings underlined the need to consider others and otherness, thereby stressing variety and plurality, constituting an intellectual standpoint against the ongoing homogenisation of politics and

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[155] James Loxley, *Performativity* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.77-79 and pp.112-22.
[156] Bakhtin, cited in McCaw, p.32.
[157] Holquist, *Dialogism*, p.89.

culture within the Soviet Union.[158]

In his discussion of Bakhtin's theorising of authorship, McCaw draws on this importance of the other: 'For Bakhtin the Other is the form in which I see the rest of humanity – as possible addressees and possible characters – and in which I can understand myself as a member of the human race'.[159] Engaging with and understanding the other begins at birth, Bakhtin asserts, as the baby interacts with its mother. This discussion of authorship emphasises reciprocal exchange, and there is an implication that the attention given to something or somebody makes it good: this is what Bakhtin terms 'aesthetic seeing'.[160]

> Bakhtin's creative process begins with the author's love of a real person, who is then transformed into a character. The exchange between I and Other already has an aesthetic dimension, since the relationship is predicated on the future activity of authorship that one will undertake to author the other as a hero.[161]

Bakhtin's aesthetic seeing can be applied to both the Venice carnival and the city itself in that neither the event nor the city are loved because they are good, but rather they are good because they are loved. The attention and adulation given to the carnival and the city make them good. This links to the ideas which arose in the earlier discussion of photography, in particular Sontag's affirmation that photographs confer importance on their subject and capture experience. With a camera in hand, people can engage with the city and the carnival through Bakhtin's aesthetic seeing, in turn authoring the carnival and city through the way that they engage with it, capture it, and share it. Aesthetic seeing can also be applied to notions of beauty, especially in the way that such an approach stresses the interplay between self and other. Bakhtin's comments on the actor extend this duality, while also stressing the blurring between the poles of performance and spectatorship, which, as has been shown above, is a pillar of his carnival theory. He writes: 'The actor is aesthetically creative only when he is an author – or to be exact: a co-author, a stage director, and an active spectator of

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[158] Ibid., p.8.
[159] McCaw, pp.30-31.
[160] Ibid., p.31.
[161] Ibid.

the portrayed hero and of the whole play'.[162] McCaw avers that 'Bakhtin finds it difficult to distinguish between the active spectator and the actor', making his approach germane to current developments within performance and theatre studies.[163]

Crucially, Bakhtin sees the self as dialogic. Holquist explains:

> Dialogism argues that all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying *simultaneous but different* space, where bodies may be thought of as ranging from the immediacy of our physical bodies to political bodies and to bodies of ideas in general (ideologies). […] the position of the observer is fundamental. […] Bakhtin's observer is also simultaneously an *active participant* in the relation of simultaneity. Conceiving being dialogically means that reality is always experienced, not just perceived, and further that it is experienced from a particular position. Bakhtin conceives that position in kinetic terms as a situation, an event, the event of being a self.[164]

This indicates how dialogism applies to the Venice carnival and to carnival more widely: as Holquist shows, the meaning of the carnival arises from bodies sharing *simultaneous but different space*, emphasising the individuality of experience and the multiplicity of approaches and identities that come together. In this simultaneous but different space, the observer is an active participant, and this is crucial to the experience of the Venice carnival, both historically and in the modern day. Significantly, dialogism is therefore to be considered as not just dualism but as referring to a multiplicity of interacting perspectives.[165] The grotesque costumes of Spiller, the artistic tributes of Rossana Molinatti discussed in the preceding chapter, and the multitude of other varied engagements with the revived carnival evidence this polyphony of voices, juxtaposed with the now 'classic' beautiful *maschera in volto*. An instance of the carnival's polyphony in the early years of its revival was an event organised as part of the 1983 carnival for gay participants, which was attended by 20,000 people. The posters for this event depict a well-endowed, muscular Superman figure holding

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[162] Bakhtin, cited in McCaw, pp.32-33.
[163] McCaw, p.33.
[164] Holquist, *Dialogism*, pp.20-21.
[165] Ibid., p.22.

a *bauta* mask facing a half naked American Indian chief, with in the rearground a couple of masked figures crossing a bridge that appear to be either lesbians or men in drag.[166] This illustrates the way that carnival fosters diverse expressions of individuality, demonstrating the multifaceted, dialogic nature of the modern event. In 1984, carnivalesque excess was demonstrated by the innovation of a carnival pub crawl, the *Ombralonga* (Long Drink: an *ombra*, or shadow, is a glass of wine in Venice), promoting individual and interrelational engagements with the city and the carnival.[167]

A polyphonic view of dialogism has had ramifications in the analysis of art practice, and, as Grant Kester has shown, Bakhtin's dialogism indicates that 'a work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation – a locus of differing meanings, interpretations, and points of view'.[168] Indeed, Kester's study of modern art propounds the concept of dialogical aesthetics, which he states are akin to the relational aesthetics of Nicolas Bourriaud, in that they emphasise the interactivity and intersubjectivity of the artwork. Kester elaborates on the nature of dialogical art projects which emphasise dialogue and collaboration:

> The emphasis is on the character of this interaction, not the physical or formal integrity of a given artifact or the artist's experience in producing it. The object-based artwork (with some exceptions) is produced entirely by the artist and only subsequently offered to the viewer. As a result, the viewer's response has no immediate reciprocal effect on the constitution of the work. Further, the physical object remains essentially static. Dialogical projects, in contrast, unfold through a process of performative interaction.[169]

The carnival can therefore be seen in terms of dialogical aesthetics because of its focus on collaboration and interactivity: the carnival is a reminder of the universality of human existence and thus makes its participants think of themselves in relation to others. Carnival also finds consonance with dialogical aesthetics in terms of time: Kester notes that in dialogical practice, 'the viewer is called upon to participate in, move around, interact with,

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[166] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, pp.46-49.
[167] Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin, *Venice, the Tourist Maze: A Cultural Critique of the World's Most Touristed City* (London: University of California Press, 2004), p.250.
[168] Kester, p.10.
[169] Ibid.

and literally complete the work of art in a myriad of ways', adding 'this interactive orientation implies, in turn, an art experience that extends over time'.[170] This focus on temporality in the experience of art aligns Kester's understanding of dialogism to the carnival, in that it is experienced over time and not in an instant.

Conclusion

This chapter has interrogated the historical and modern day manifestation of the Venice carnival through the prism of Bakhtinian thought in order to explore the level to which the carnival can be seen as subversive and a challenge to the *status quo*. Although Bakhtin's writings on carnival may be seen as overly positive and biased towards an optimistic view of medieval carnivals, it is important that *Rabelais and his World* be seen within the context in which it was written, which shows the book itself to be a carnivalesque manifestation. Indeed, Holquist states that *Rabelais and his World* is akin to the very writings of Rabelais: Bakhtin's book is '*about* the subversive openness of the Rabelaisian novel, but it is also a subversively open book itself'.[171] He adds that the book is 'a hymn to the common man',[172] particularly for the way it celebrates the commoner in all their crude glory: 'His folk are blasphemous rather than adoring, cunning rather than intelligent; they are coarse, dirty, and rampantly physical, reveling in oceans of strong drink, poods of sausage, and endless coupling of bodies'.[173] This interpretation of the populace contrasted with that of Stalin's dogmatic, censorial state, which celebrated the idealistic heroic worker. *Rabelais and his World* is the result of a collection of Bakhtin's writings from the 1930s which he submitted as a dissertation to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow in 1940. The defence

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[170] Ibid., p.53.
[171] Holquist, 'Prologue', p.xvi.
[172] Ibid., p.xviii.
[173] Ibid., p.xix.

of his thesis was delayed until 1946, mainly due to the outbreak of war, by which time, Bakhtin had already established a controversial name for himself with the publication of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which resulted in his arrest and political exile in Kazakhstan. The defence of the dissertation on Rabelais on 15 November 1946 'was effectively deciding Bakhtin's fate' and 'the circumstances were thoroughly hostile'.[174] Bakhtin ingeniously disguised the qualities Holquist describes at his dissertation defence by focusing on the distant Rabelais, and further demonstrated his astuteness by fitting the work into the socialist rhetoric of the Soviet state; the themes he addresses and much of his own rhetoric in the book celebrate the power of the people to overcome oppression. As an intellectual in the oppressive regime, Bakhtin was in a difficult position: he recognised that he had a responsibility to address the dogmatism of the state but, having already been exiled for his work on Dostoevsky, he knew that any reading of Rabelais as anti-establishment would put him in danger. He therefore had to emphasise the sense of communality and togetherness in the work. He defended the work with aplomb, stressing in particular the revolutionary nature of carnival laughter, which formed a core aspect of the thesis, and, as Emerson relates, he 'turned communist rhetoric to his own advantage and made a heroic showing against party-minded objections to his work'.[175] Aching celebrates the subtle retort to Soviet socialism that Bakhtin's seminal text on Rabelais makes, arguing that Bakhtin's optimistic populism actually enabled a political response: 'Bakhtin's grotesque realism is not simply an aesthetic category based on elusive and subversive exaggeration, but a politically inspired overdetermination that was meant to counter a hegemonic socialist realism'.[176] Bakhtin's theory of carnival constitutes a level of subtle, intellectual protest, celebrating above all communality and interrelationality among people and thus has provided a pertinent frame for this chapter's analysis of the Venice carnival.

    The Venice carnival can be seen as subversive because of the opportunity it gives

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[174] Nikolai Pan'kov, '"Everything else depends on how this business turns out…": Mikhail Bakhtin's dissertation defence as real event, as high drama and as academic comedy', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Hirschkop and Shepherd, pp.26-61 (p.36).
[175] Emerson, p.92.
[176] Aching, p.13.

participants to transform their identity, the way it effects a level of equality among its participants, and because of the interrelationality and the active nature of participation that it fosters. As Bakhtin writes:

> Carnival is an eminent attitude towards the world which belonged to the entire folk in bygone millennia. It is an attitude towards the world which liberates from fear, brings the world close to man and man close to his fellow man […] and, with its joy of change and its jolly relativity, counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change, and seeks to absolutize the given conditions of existence and the social order.[177]

The interrogation of different examples of the historical carnival up to its manifestation until the late eighteenth century, namely the events of *giovedì grasso*, the *guerre sui ponti*, and the bullfights, as well as the custom of wearing the *bauta* and *tabarro*, has shown that the Venetian nobility were ever prominent, legislation restricted masking and carnival activities, and there was a general drive on the part of the state to ensure the power and dignity of the republic was actively performed while maintaining the social order. *Hoi polloi* in medieval Venice may have had fun, but contemporaneous accounts and artwork suggest that they maintained their social rank, whatever they got up to during the festivities. Furthermore, the aesthetic ideal of Venice was reiterated through the visibility of the nobility, the government, and the continuation of rituals which reflected the republic's triumphs, instilling awe in both the citizens and outsiders who witnessed such civic rituals. Within the setting of the city's breathtaking and unique architecture, the might, wealth, and dignity of the state was yet further ramified.

Nevertheless, however much the dignity and power of the state were sustained, carnival must always have had a transgressive edge, as Bakhtin suggests. The republic's legislation of masking and carnival, and the role that the nobility played in ensuring traditions were maintained suggest that carnival was a time of subversion that needed containing. Records indicate that rules were flouted, and visitors marvelled at the way in

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[177] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.133.

which all the city was masked, indicating that just as a blanket view of carnival as subversion

is misguided, neither can a cynical view of carnival as safety-valve be universally applied.

The carnival's continuance in the present day, more than 900 years since the first official

mention of the event in the city's records, can be seen as a sign of the event's power to

express a universal spirit of community and interrelationality, emphasising the renewing and

renascent qualities of the event. It also speaks to the view of carnival as being an essential

expression of humankind, established before structures of state and religion. Although the

revival was undeniably partly motivated by economic interests for the city, it also grew out

of a will of the people, as the 1978 egg and flour throwing in Piazza San Marco indicated,

with the semi-official 1979 carnival being embraced by the citizens.[178] Maurizio Scaparro,

who was Artistic Director of the Theatre Biennale which collaborated with the first official

carnival of 1980, and who continued to be involved in the carnival for many years, relates

that the Venetians took the carnival back with affection in 1980:

> Venice was ready to give us a hand, as if it were just waiting for the
> opportunity; the city government itself had been stimulating
> Venetians for over two years to reclaim their lost but not forgotten
> popular tradition; so the theatrical interpretation of carnival met
> with the surprised but open acceptance of Venetians and
> 'foreigners', and the encounter with the 'comedians' was full,
> lively, often exciting and a mutual discovery.[179]

Alberto Moravia's short story capturing the *frisson* of masking, and the renewing, renascent

effect of carnivalesque transformation reflects Bakhtin's view of rebirth in carnival, not only

re-establishing social order and established hegemony, but fundamentally enabling the

individual to be reborn as part of the community.

The role of the active individual as part of the community in carnival makes the

event concordant with recent understandings of the spectator in the performance exchange.

Jacques Rancière, for instance, emphasises the active involvement of the spectator, asserting

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[178] Bressanello, ed., *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, pp.258-60.
[179] Maurizio Scaparro, in *Il Carnevale in età moderna/ Carnival in the Modern Age*, ed. by
Bressanello, pp.259-60.

the need for a theatre with active participants instead of passive voyeurs.[180] The carnival is surely a site of emancipated spectatorship, in which binary divisions between performing and spectating, between viewing and knowing, between appearance and reality, and between activity and passivity are broken down. As Baz Kershaw affirms: 'Carnival undermines the distinction between observer and participant; it takes place outside existing social and cultural institutions, occupying real space-time in streets and open spaces'.[181] Andy Lavender helpfully explains that Rancière's '"emancipation" is not so much liberation as the possibility of disagreement. The "emancipated spectator" is not a looker-on but someone who is involved – which raises all sorts of questions for spectatorship, agency and participation'.[182] This indicates that spectatorship can be politicised as it posits the spectator as an active, thinking, feeling body. Rancière's theory concords with Bakhtinian thought not only because of the blurring of the role of performer and spectator, but also because of its emphasis on equality, and the possibility for individuality as part of community: 'communities are not so much defined by their *togetherness* as by their facilitation of *difference*, the fact that they enable individual expression'.[183] The modern day carnival is a site of individuality and free expression, as the costumes of Giorgio Spiller prove, in spite of failed police attempts to contain their overt vulgarity. Although an imbalanced focus on the beautiful, posing *maschere* with the full face *volto* in front of a stereotypically Venetian scene is a seductive image, as indicated by the focus on such a carnival ideal by the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Independent* in its photographic reportage, in reality the participants of carnival attend to alternative narratives, including representations of grotesque realism, instances of common laughter, and manifestations that point to individual and communal rebirth.

Pertinently, in consideration of Bakhtin's writings, Holquist has written of the

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[180] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), p.4.
[181] Kerhsaw, p.72.
[182] Andy Lavender, 'Viewing and Acting (and Points in Between): The Trouble with Spectating after Rancière', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22, 3 (2012), 307-26 (p.308).
[183] Ibid., p.310.

dialogic coexistence of human experience:

> For although [existence] occurs in sites that are unique [individual beings], those sites are never complete in themselves. They are never in any sense of the word *alone*. They need others to provide the stability demanded by the structure of perception if what occurs is to have meaning.[184]

The codependency and interrelationality of the carnival participants is built on this collaboration, and indeed the carnival can only take on any meaning, between physical bodies, political bodies, and bodies of ideas, through this interaction with others. Holquist adds: '"Being" for Bakhtin then is not just an event, but an event that is shared. Being is a simultaneity, it is always *co*-being'.[185] On these terms, the Venice carnival can be seen as a relational, dialogic, participatory instance of art-making and group creativity. These qualities make carnival participants engage with each other in alternative and ludic ways: Nicolas Whybrow has shown that Henri Lefebvre celebrates 'the ludic city in the form of the "festival" (*fête*) or "collective game"' as a site of social revolution, affirming the resistance of individual and communal engagement with carnival.[186] In spite of organisation, scheduling, and structure on the part of carnival organisers, there is always an element of improvisation in the very gathering of people in the streets, many of them in disguise, and this fact underlines the possibility for carnival to be seen as resistant, even if that resistance is limited temporally and spatially. As Schechner avers, people who go out *en masse* in a festival or carnival 'protest, often by means of farce and parody, against what is oppressive, ridiculous, and outrageous. […] Such playing challenges official culture's claims to authority, stability, sobriety, immutability, and immortality'.[187] In my engagement with the 2010 and 2011 carnivals I witnessed this dialogic nature of the carnival and the possibility to

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[184] Holquist, *Dialogism*, p.24.
[185] Ibid., p.25.
[186] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Introduction', in *Performance and the Contemporary City: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. by Nicolas Whybrow (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.1-13 (p.6).
[187] Richard Schechner, 'The Street is the Stage', in *Performance Studies*, ed. by Erin Striff (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.110-23 (p.111).

express individuality as part of a communal, shared experience. The variety of engagements with the carnival exhibited by the *maschere* indicate that the carnival is a site of challenge to the *status quo* through its embrace of individual expression, interrelationality, transgression, transformation, and active participation. The human need for such a festival suggests the carnival will continue to remain and renew itself, as Bakhtin indicates: 'the carnival attitude knows no final period; it is hostile to any *final ending*: for it every ending is merely a new beginning – carnival images are reborn again and again'.[188] As each new iteration of carnival draws on previous carnivals, so it is given new life for future carnivals: the carnival remains.

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[188] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.138.

Conclusion

The Venice carnival, as microcosm of the city of Venice itself, has invoked numerous paradoxes in this study, indicating ambivalent understandings of both the city and carnival. For instance, fears for the looming death of Venice are balanced by the revivifying nature of performance, which gives new life to the city, the carnival, and also points to the rebirth of the people who are part of the various enactments of city and carnival. Similarly, nostalgia for an unattainable past is questioned by the interflow of the past and the present, as people pick up and reiterate the city and carnival in a multitude of ways, questioning the very existence of a pure, untainted, and authentic original. Along with these ruptures of life/death and present/past, the study has examined the intersections of presence/absence, self/other, stillness/movement, and, permeating the whole thesis, performance/spectatorship. Viewing these terms interrelatedly, rather than as opposing binaries, is pertinent because carnival itself is dialogic: carnival versus Lent, the extra-everyday versus the everyday, laughter versus seriousness, plenty versus scarcity. As Mikhail Bakhtin affirms, carnival images are always two-in-one images, but, as the final chapter indicated, his dialogism does not only suggest double-voicedness, but intimates a polyphony of voices, wherein diverse poles are not opposed against each other, but are seen beside one another. The preposition 'beside' is regarded by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as salient in critical analysis 'because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another [...]. *Beside* permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking'.[1] The paradoxes herein underline the polyphonic nature of the Venice carnival and carnivalesque manifestations more broadly, allowing the ambivalent dualisms which have arisen to be placed beside one another for a fuller understanding of the identity of both the carnival and the city.

This emphasis on the polyphonic identity of the Venice carnival is significant, as the

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[1] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.8.

event is often seen in terms of a visual aesthetics of opulence, beauty, mystery, and

decadence which excludes the event's equally important aesthetics of laughter, the

grotesque, transgression, and communality. Different examples of the promotion of the

visual aesthetics have appeared in this thesis, including reportage on the carnival in a number

of British newspapers, the Prosecco television advertisement, the iTunes guide to

photographing the *maschere*, and the artistic photographic books alluded to in the thesis

introduction. There is a danger in the pursuit of such an aesthetics that the Venice carnival is

construed as part of the 'culture industry': a pleasant, participatory event designed to attract

free-spending tourists to the city for economic and cultural motivations. Indeed, that the

carnival is often represented by the image of a handsome *maschera* posing elegantly along

the *bacino*, or by beautiful posing *maschere* in equally iconic locations, suggests a civilised

carnival interaction which arguably lulls participants into a state of tranquillity and passivity,

as they commune with notions of the city's aesthetics. In her exploration of participatory art

practices, Jen Harvie discusses Claire Bishop's critique of art and performance that is part of

the culture industry, as such work does not create political awareness on the part of

participants.[2] Bishop sees Nicolas Bourriaud's application of the term 'relational aesthetics'

as naive because he avoids discussion of the politicisation of the art participant; for her, art

practices need to exhibit a level of dissonance, thereby achieving a political aesthetic instead

of solely a visual aesthetic. A skewed understanding of the Venice carnival as only about the

beautiful posing *maschere* in their full-face *volto* masks is indicative of such a visual

aesthetic, making the carnival a pleasant but unpolitical affair. However, as has been shown,

the event does exhibit dissonance and polyphony, ensuring the carnival has a political

aesthetic. This aesthetics is linked to medieval carnival traditions and to the originary pagan

festivals which overturned social norms. The political aesthetics of the carnival is

encapsulated in part by Giorgio Spiller's grotesque costumes of the 1980s, discussed in the

final chapter, but also by more recent qualitative experiences of the event, as my own

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[2] Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.7-9.

ethnographic experience of the carnival indicates: impromptu and varied fancy dress,

scatological figures, individuality and creativity, interrelationality, the collective brio, and

the participants' *joie de vivre* channel the carnival's subversive energies.

D. K. Feil observes that: 'Venetians "know" that what they do and where they do it

carries a forceful, overdetermined inheritance of the past; the places they inhabit are those

that history has made significant; they remain a part of history in the present'.[3] This

interlinking and coexistence of the past and the present in Venice is indicative of the

remains, traces, and ghosting of performances. Rebecca Schneider's view that performance

remains, referred to throughout this thesis, is thus particularly germane to Venice because of

its historicity; as she has shown, repetition enables sameness but also enables change and

variety, as each new performance is itself new and unique: her examination of American

Civil War reenactments evidences the multidirectionality of repeated performance. She

states:

> Reenactors take the 'past' in multiple directions. As they line up for
> war every weekend of every summer of every year across the
> States, repetition trips into something entirely outside of linear,
> narrative time, and practices of live forgetting recur as the very
> charge to remember.[4]

Her comments show that through replication, performances become living documents: 'An

action repeated again and again and again, however fractured or partial or incomplete, has a

kind of staying power – persists through time – and even, in a sense, serves as a fleshy kind

of "document" of its own recurrence'.[5] The replication of events, spaces, and interactions in

engagement with Venice and its carnival thus ensures the city and the event live on, gaining

documentary status for the future. These observations resonate strongly with Joseph Roach's

use of the term 'surrogation' to identify the way that manifestations of culture are enacted by

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[3] D. K. Feil, 'How Venetians Think About Carnival and History', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9, 2 (1998), 141-62 (p.159).

[4] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.26.

[5] Ibid., p.37.

communities through incomplete performances of past iterations. He has also employed the

term 'genealogies of performance' to encapsulate the way that cultural performances

document and transmit practices across different periods and generations using 'mnemonic

reserves' which comprise physical document, memory, oral tradition, and immaterial traces.[6]

Mnemonics or *aides-mémoires* recall Mike Pearson's approach to performance as

archaeology:

> In the city, the archaeological record is generated continuously. At
> the most intimate of scales, we inscribe the urban surface with
> varying degrees of permanence. The physical surroundings of both
> private and public domain are marked - both consciously and
> inadvertently, repeatedly and accidentally - by our presence and by
> our passing.[7]

Individual and collective engagement with cities and with cultural events, such as carnival,

are thus intimately connected with the traces left by infinitesimal human interactions

therewith, creating an archaeological site of performances.

An archaeological approach to the performances of city and carnival is particularly

interesting in light of the intersections which arose in the thesis introduction regarding

opinions of Venice's impending doom. Concerns are vehemently voiced regarding excessive

tourism, intrusive *acqua alta*, the erosion of architecture, the steady abandoning of the city

by its residents, and the loss of traditional methods of production. These burdens weigh

heavily on the city's identity and infrastructure, and they threaten its very future. As Nicolas

Whybrow observes, tourists in Venice effectively weigh the city down, contributing to its

foreboding demise.[8] However, a future without Venice is paradoxical, given that the

palimpsests of the performances of the city ensure that it has attained immortality, even if the

physical city itself does take on the mantle of Atlantis. The carnival will similarly survive,

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[6] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.26.

[7] Mike Pearson, *Marking Time: Performance, Archaeology and the City* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2013), p.242.

[8] Nicolas Whybrow, 'Situation Venice: towards a performative "ex-planation" of a city', *Research in Drama Education*, 16, 2 (2011) 279-98 (pp.283-84).

whether through surrogation, ghosting, or other reiterative traces. Nevertheless, this should not mean that tourists and spectators of the city and the carnival relinquish responsibility for their actions and reenactments within the Venice context: it is important that carnival participants and tourists to the city consider the impact of their presence on the ecological environment of the lagoon and on the physical and social identity of the city. Although tourism is part of the carnival's identity, tourists should sensitively regard the impact of their presence on the carnival, particularly because it is an event that links Venetians to a rich history of carnivalesque tradition in their city, promoting the renewal of social and communal bonds. Although tourism is but one of the problems Venice faces, the significant impact that tourists have on the city's erosion means that tourists have an ethical responsibility in their engagement with the city, and while individuals may not be able to transform the current impasse, a collective, ethical approach may assist the city in preserving its identity for future generations. As the tourist is configured as a spectator, this intimates that spectators and participants more broadly have ethical responsibilities towards their social and environmental surroundings, and their engagement with performance and art practice should be informed by an awareness thereof: this gives rise to the notion of the eco-spectator and eco-spectatorship.

At the modern day Venice carnival, there are numerous organised events, such as the diverse *voli*, the *Festa delle Marie*, *commedia dell'arte* performances, the best costume competition, theatre and music events, and other entertainments which feature in the programme. This speaks to a tradition of organisational, artistic, political, and public decision-making which has inflected how the event has manifested itself both historically and in the modern day. However, such decision-making and organisation does not alter the essence of the event, partly because of the carnival's strong historical identity, but also because it still takes place in the same squares, *campi*, and *calli* that it always has done, at the same time of year. The way in which the carnival connects with its past iterations, and its identity as an event of the street, fully participatory and interrelational by nature, marks the Venice carnival as different to other carnivals and festivals that have been strictured and

'managed' in order to fit with new models and agendas. Although it is undeniably concentrated in the heart of Venice, in and around Piazza San Marco, the Venice carnival is an event of the whole city, and participants of the event can spread themselves over vastly diverse parts of Venice as they engage both with the event and with the built environment. Expensive private masked balls, costume competitions, and parades of medieval costumes ultimately represent the sidelines of the carnival, as the main attraction is the carnival of the street: those engagements and interactions between carnival participants, some of whom are masked and costumed and many of whom are not, as they pick up the performance traces of bygone iterations, from over the last four decades, and further back into the annals of the city. Through their active engagement with the carnival, the event is sustained, making the carnival dependent upon its participants to survive, indeed, there is a level of codependency, or co-being, between the event and the people who enact it. As macrocosm, Venice itself also shares this relationship of codependency with people who engage therewith, but in turn, both the city and the carnival are sustained, reinvigorated, and advanced into futurity for the next generations. Whatever becomes of Venice and whatever becomes of its carnival, both institutions remain.

Areas for Further Research

As carnival is considered to be an essential human expression, and has a rich and varied international history, there are innumerable other carnivals and festive cultural forms around the world which would provide substantial material to comparatively investigate in relation to the Venice carnival. Scholarship on carnivals and festive forms are well established, but are rarely explored comparatively. This is partly due to the fact that individual carnival and festival events have evolved in unique ways, meaning that direct comparisons may not be deemed to reveal robust conclusions. An exception to this is Roberto DaMatta's comparative

study in a chapter focusing on the Rio de Janeiro carnival and the New Orleans Mardi Gras; as he observes, the key question in such a methodological approach is: 'If we say that Carnival is a "rite of inversion", what happens when we have two Carnivals in societies that are clearly different in terms of institutions, history, and ideology?'[9] Evidently, drawing out the contrasts and contradictions between two related events in different societies can point to multiple observations, not least in terms of how the events are performed and what the relationship is between performer-participants and spectator-participants. In addition, analysis of the Venice carnival *vis-à-vis* the manifold carnivals across Italy would surely reveal the nuances of the regionalistic Italian culture. It is customary across the whole of Italy for children to dress up at carnival time and throw confetti at each other, and bakeries and patisseries sell fried carnival sweet treats in the shape of *frittelle* and *chiacchiere*, but different cities and regions have developed unique carnivalesque manifestations, many of which are connected to the Christian calendar and retain pagan and agrarian elements.[10] Although there is a multiplicity of diverse interpretations of carnival across Italy, the Venice carnival retains a special appeal, unique in the appearance of the *maschere* and unusual in that it does not have a climactic parade. Interrogating aspects of different international and national carnivals *vis-à-vis* the Venice carnival would thus be an area for more detailed research.

While the current study of the Venice carnival has focused on the interactions on the streets of the city and the manifestation of carnival in Piazza San Marco and the adjacent Piazzetta, future studies of the event could investigate the numerous organised events, arranged by the official organisers and private enterprises. Although the street interactions between participants are considered herein to be the essence of the carnival, as they link the event to the iterations of yesteryear and are freely available to any or all of the carnival

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[9] Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, trans. by John Drury (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p.117.

[10] Cesare Poppi, 'The Other Within: Masks and Masquerades in Europe', in *Masks: The Art of Expression*, ed. by John Mack (London: British Museum Press, 1994), pp.190-215; Iride Azara and David Crouch, 'La Cavalcata Sarda: Performing Identities in a Contemporary Sardinian Festival', in *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*, ed. by David Picard and Mike Robinson (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006), pp.32-45.

participants, organised events are an important aspect of the carnival. For instance, private masked balls, which are organised by enterprises that court the incomes of wealthy free-spending tourists, are undoubtedly of cultural interest as an aspect of carnival, as are the structured, organised events managed by the official carnival organisers and featured as part of the entertainment. Extensive debates and critical analyses could be applied to masked balls, competitions, performances, and presentations enacted during carnival, as well as to exploration of the separate organisers and their political motivations. As with the iterations of carnival on the streets as explored herein, the organised events would surely also resonate with past iterations of the carnival, emphasising the remains of performances within the city.

This study has contributed to the ongoing process of building an archive of the revived Venice carnival, and it would seem prudent for the purposes of cultural posterity, as well as for the critical understanding of social relations, to continue to expand the archive so that a fuller picture of the revived carnival can be painted, ensuring the polyphony of the event is captured and retained for future generations. Scholarly understanding of the bygone carnival is filled with lacunae, and in particular, the voices of everyday participants are missing from the records. To avoid such lacunae for future analysts of the revived carnival, researchers could ensure that different voices have the opportunity to relate their experiences of the carnival's revival and its ongoing iterations since 1980. While the revived event is still young, a valid research project could interview a range of people in Venice, across Italy, and internationally to collect individual narratives of perceptions and experiences of the twentieth and twenty-first century carnivals, using social media to assist in the collection of such material. Alessandro Bressanello's collection on the modern day carnival is commendable because of its gathering of different perspectives on the event, but a further research project could focus on the personal experiences of participants. This thesis's ethnographic methodology, with the taking of photographs and interviewing of participants, illustrates an approach to the establishment of such a project. Personal interviews with carnival participants from across the last four decades would undoubtedly enable researchers within theatre and performance studies, as well as in other disciplines, to expand their critical

understanding of the event, and to consider the complexities of people's interactions with the city of Venice itself. Further, narratives, anecdotes, and memories would reveal attitudes to masking and costuming, deepening understandings of the multiple connotations of carnival transformation and the social importance of carnival.

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