Working at the ambivalence of race: ethnomimesis and the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival

Lizzie Richardson

Department of Geography, Lower Mountjoy, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, UK

The ambivalence of race is taken as a starting point in exploring the cancellation of the 2012 St Paul's Carnival, an African-Caribbean arts event in Bristol, England. That race is unstable; that it can be done and undone; has long been a focus of scholarship in social and cultural geography and beyond. This article asks instead how such a fragile state is maintained and with what implications. This necessitates regarding racial ambivalence as an activity; a condition that has to be worked at to be sustained. Ethnomimesis is used to frame these operations of racial ambivalence. Ethnomimesis is the way in which we encounter, stereotype and recognise cultural practices for ourselves and manifest them to others. It demonstrates how different configurations of race are precariously held between the creative possibilities and contingencies of situated cultural practices. Three moments of cancellation are narrated to show how ethnomimetic processes work through multiple formulations of race. This racial ambivalence is central to Carnival's failure. The organisers attempted to produce a performance of African-Caribbean culture that simultaneously denied the histories of racism that motivated the event. Ethnomimesis exposes how the racial ambivalence emergent in these cultural practices both opens and closes possibilities to belong.

Keywords: race, ethnomimesis, belonging, carnival, community, multiculturalism

'The board of St Paul's Carnival have reluctantly made the difficult decision to cancel the planned procession based Carnival this year.' (St Paul's Carnival Committee Press Release, 25/04/2012)

Introduction

St Paul's Afrikan Caribbean Carnival is an annual event held in the city of Bristol in the south west of England. In 2012, it was cancelled. As a symbolic occasion for the expression of African-Caribbean culture and identity in Bristol, the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival sheds light on the role of racial ambivalence in the constitution of belonging. Geographers have long shown the instability of race, demonstrating the significance of spatial processes for its mutable constitution (Anderson 1991; Kobayashi 1990; Jackson 1998). Recent scholarship continues to explore this ambivalence of race through two strands. One is the production of race, the exposure of its ongoing construction through a variety of social and cultural practices (Slocum 2008; Veniga 2009; Nayak 2010). Such work is attuned to the unstable materiality of race, the volatility of its emergence through embodied and intimate spaces (Saldanha 2005; Pile 2011; Price 2012) that are always historically and geographically specific (Anderson 2008; Lester 2012; McKittrick 2011). The other is the erasure of race, tracing the way in which it is increasingly written out of social concerns through claims for a 'post-racial' era (Glassman 2010). This scholarship highlights how race has been undone, often through its conflation with culture that fails to adequately unpick the relationship between the two (Noble 2011; Lentin 2012). Therefore, whether through processes of construction or erasure, race is rendered ambivalent. Neither the position of nor the position concerning race is fixed.

This article takes the ambivalent condition of race as its starting point. Instead of showing race's instability, it will explore the implications of this permanent impermanence. If race is constantly unstable, the focus of investigation becomes the maintenance of such a fragile state. This necessitates regarding racial ambivalence as an activity. It becomes a condition that has to be practised and worked at in order to be sustained. Simultaneously, this understanding of racial ambivalence as an operation indicates that it might be deployed to particular ends. The fluid yet sticky configurations of bodies, things and dispositions at work in the uncertainty of race somehow become both accidental and deliberate forms of attachment. The practices which make race ambivalent both throw up and close down opportunities to belong. To elucidate these operations of racial ambivalence, the frame of ethnomimesis is put forward. Ethnomimesis is the way in which we encounter, stereotype and recognise cultural practices for ourselves and manifest them to others. Through this, representations of groups arise to mediate the social distance between self and other (Cantwell 1993). With St Paul's Carnival the processes of ethnomimesis are shown to sustain the ambivalence of race through a navigation of the differing pulls of (Black) British and African-Caribbean culture. The cancellation of Carnival lays these processes bare, exposing how the uncertainties of race work to both make and break attachments in place. To do this, three moments of cancellation will be narrated. Before this, further elucidation is provided of the relationship between racial belonging and both the concept of ethnomimesis and the practices of Carnival.

Ethnomimesis: practising race and culture

Race and culture continue to interact in and beyond social and cultural geography. One strand of work focuses on the production of race through cultural processes. This includes more-or-less everyday practices and performances of race (Mahtani 2002; Saldanha 2007; Slocum 2011) and how race is given through the distinctions of culture that construct the human as separate from nature (Whatmore 2006; Anderson 2007; Price 2010). Another thread shows how race is obfuscated or written out of policy prescriptions of living with difference (Kapoor 2011; Nayak 2012). Such work highlights this absence of race in (state) multiculturalism (Modood, 2007) by drawing attention to its complex emergence through and role in the material negotiations of encounter (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010; Wilson 2011). This points to the insufficiencies of state multiculturalism, which has tended to deploy 'culture' to subsume 'race' (Brown 2006; Mills 2007). Both these strands broadly aim to demonstrate the instability of race as given through its interaction with and specification by culture. Race is not a fixed presence but rather occurs through an ongoing dynamic of construction and erasure. This paradox of the definite ambivalence of race provides a direction for enquiry. Namely, the constant uncertainty of race must be worked at and put to work. In short, the ambivalence of race is a doing. It can be conceived as an activity, a variable configuration of practices that maintain the ongoing assembly and dispersal of race. Such manners of upholding uncertainty occur through (but are not exhausted by) cultural processes.

Ethnomimesis provides one frame for examining the role of culture in the operations of racial ambivalence. It emphasises the encounters, stereotypes and recognitions that produce group representations and enable them to be displayed to others. Three aspects of ethnomimesis are significant to the work of racial ambivalence and might collectively

enhance 'socially responsible and culturally theorised' scholarship on race (Nayak 2011: 560). As a first move, ethnomimesis conceptualises culture as a process. It focuses on how cultural representations are made to stand for a whole group. For Cantwell, this is fundamentally an imaginative act that invents social groups through cultural practices. Ethnomimesis values such acts of invention rather than overlooking them as contrived. Representations can thus be understood as deliberately creative acts; they are fostered and forged rather than organic products of pre-existing cultures. Such a connection between cultural production and racial belonging is not new. Both Hall (1990) and Gilroy (2002) have emphasised that culture and creative experimentation are important in grounding the experiences of Black people as distinctly British. In this vein, St Paul's Festival in Bristol, as St Paul's Carnival was initially known, began in 1968 as a community initiative to improve integration in mixed ethnicity inner city neighbourhoods. However, it was not until the 1980s that Carnival became more overtly tied to African-Caribbean culture. This was a period in which Black culture acted as a form of political assertion and self-determination (Gutzmore 2000; Gilroy 2002). Yet whilst such an interest in cultural production has done and continues to do valuable political work to demonstrate the instability of race, left open is the question of how this instability is sustained.

With ethnomimesis, cultural production becomes the ongoing creative work involved in the appearance of stability. In particular, the emphasis on culture as a process highlights the complexity of acts of representation. The focus on material and imaginative practice in ethnomimesis means that representation cannot be held as a primarily discursive act separated from embodied identity. The 'irresistibly creative' (Cantwell 1999: 224) nature of ethnomimesis provides an additional indication that revealing race to be a 'social

construction' (see Hankins *et al* 2012; Veninga 2009) may not destabilise race enough

(Saldanha in Slocum *et al*, 2009). Ethnomimesis emphasises the role of cultural production

and transformation in the unstable interaction between race and representation, rather

than the construction of the former by the latter. The focus on transformation also

challenges the assumptions underpinning state-sponsored multiculturalism that

representations are expressions of essential cultural categories. In such an understanding of

multiculturalism, cultural identity is taken as fixed and immobile with a 'tangible essence

that defines it and then explains politics as a consequence of that essence' (Mamdani in

Brown 2006: 20). Ethnomimesis shows how race continues to unstably emerge to upset

such notions of cultural essence. It considers how multiculturalism involves the workings of

and between race and culture that sustain racial ambivalence.

Secondly, ethnomimesis is a social process. It operates to connect the individual to

the collective: 'the body reflects, impersonates, and represents its relation to other bodies

in relation to the social world' (Cantwell 1999: 223 emphasis in original). This addresses a

key question raised in recent scholarship on the material and embodied emergence of race

(Saldanha 2005; Slocum 2008). Here, race is understood as what phenotypically

differentiated bodies do through movements, clusterings and encounters. A central concept

is that race is emergent – it occurs – beyond the singular individual. However, this produces

a difficulty in understanding how bodies aggregate into 'politically ambivalent

configurations of racial formation' (Saldanha 2010: 2422). This is the question of how the

emergence of race through individual embodied practices relates to race as a collective

category in society. A corollary of this is a concern over the degree to which processual

understandings of race can or should be able to provide an explanatory framework for social

inequalities. Ethnomimesis can help address these questions through its relation of individual acts with broader social conditions: it focuses on the practices through which singular representations come to be *representative* in society. Ethnomimesis exposes what such instances of racial ambivalence can do. It indicates how the instability of such representations develops as a condition of their circulation with both accidental and strategic social effects.

The third point is that ethnomimesis encourages attention to the taking place of both 'meaning' and 'matter'. The 1990s saw the mobilisation of an understanding of culture as hybrid, circulating and non-essentialised (Gilroy 1993). Such cultural hybridity subverted foundational fixings to territory to emphasise scattered belongings and ambivalent attachments (Bhabha 1994; Ifekwunigwe 1999). Culture was primarily framed discursively, explored through a politics of representation (Hall 1992). The role of the materiality of place in the construction of cultural difference was ambiguous. More recently the interaction of the discursive and the material has been highlighted in studies of everyday multiculture which outline various politics of being together through the 'vernacular' spaces of the school, the street and the nightclub (Back 1996; Amin 2002; Lim 2010; Swanton 2010; Wilson 2013). To undermine essentialised notions of culture these studies foreground the practices of race, emphasising the materiality of these encounters, with less focus on the role of meaning in how bodies might come to matter. Through a conversion of disordered practices and perceptible signs into (more-or-less) ordered representations, ethnomimesis presents a frame for attending to the nuances of this relationship between meanings and matterings. By providing a lens on specific sites of cultural production, it shows how encounters always take place through processes of mediation (Amin 2012). Ethnomimesis

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enables a consideration of how the ambivalent matter and meaning of race is negotiated through localised unfoldings of boundaries and movements. As such a 'local' act, St Paul's Carnival straddles the seemingly distinct notions of culture as representation and as practice. On the one hand, Carnival represents culture through its portrayal of particular appearances and sounds associated with 'essential' identities. On the other, Carnival is rooted in the 'self-organisation of the community' (Kershaw 1992: 73) that deals in the routine instabilities of everyday practices. These dynamics of Carnival will be further opened up in the next section.

Politics of Carnival

Carnivals are localised acts that play out broader contests over belonging (Keith & Pile 1993; Lewis & Pile 1996; Pile & Keith 1997; Marston 2002). However, the meaning of their performance is uncertain: carnivals can both support and question essential identity. By drawing both physical and imaginative demarcations of the local, carnivals can tie identity to territory. Taking to the streets stakes an (homogeneous Black) embodied presence as a form of ownership over contested urban space (Keith and Cross 1993). Such a 'specific geography of protest' (Jackson 1988: 244) occurred in the early manifestations of Notting Hill Carnival in London (Dawson 2007). The positive occupation of the streets of Notting Hill enabled by Carnival opposed both the physical violence towards and erroneous representation of residents from the West Indies. This connection to territory through its physical plotting in Carnival accompanies an imagination of that space. The place of Carnival is conceived as separate from its surroundings. In the case of the neighbourhood of St Paul's, Carnival plays out in an ambiguous relation to the stigmatisation of the area, both celebrating and rejecting this discursive territorialisation (Jaffe 2012). Slater and Anderson (2012: 543) argue

that St Paul's is viewed through a 'black ghetto filter' that gives rise to inappropriate policy responses to deprivation in the area. They suggest Carnival is an example of the collective pride of the neighbourhood in the face of this external defamation. This involves an elaborate act of organisation that contradicts the negative image of the area. Here carnivals can be understood to materially and discursively construct a territory that exists as separate from or in resistance to the nation. In such a challenge, Carnival appears to bind a particular territory to a (Black) community.

Yet carnivals also occur as a response to a lack of ownership. Here, the community of Carnival exists despite the absence of a legitimate claim to territory. Thus, rather than operating as a performance of territorial ownership, Carnival functions as either a social protest or a safety valve (Humphrey 2001). As safety valve, it acts as a mode of catharsis that is regulated by the state. The upset of routine and (tacit) licensing of illicit behaviours in Carnival assuages popular tensions. The organisers of (if not the participants in) St Paul's Carnival have always worked with rather than against local state authorities. The local police, Bristol City Council (BCC) and schools are all involved the coordination of the event. As social protest, Carnival is politics masquerading as cultural form, where conflict is part of the aesthetic of the celebration (Cohen 1993). This 'grotesque realism' places Carnival in a dialectic with officialdom to confront and subvert hegemonic modes of representation (Bakhtin 1984). In reference to Trinidadian Carnival, Nurse (1999) argues this aesthetic of protest is born out of the historical struggle of marginalised people to shape identity through resistance. Yet this historical struggle can be dulled through processes of appropriation. The corporate and state interventions in the running of carnivals attest to this. Whilst Notting Hill Carnival was altered by sponsorship from Lilt (Carver 2000), the

most marked interventions in St Paul's Carnival have been from state funders. These demand particular outcomes from the event that shape its occurrence. As a long-term funder, BCC's agenda has changed over time; the current interest being the financial benefits of festivals and events to the city. In 2003 Carnival became a regularly funded organisation by Arts Council England (ACE), and this was followed by their appointment of the current (white) Carnival manager in 2009. ACE is the national public funding body for the arts and prioritises 'artistic excellence'.

Whilst Carnival is always embedded in localised negotiations of space, it is not limited to local territorial appropriations. Carnival equally sits in an ambiguous relation to the essentialisms of national identity. It both maintains and challenges the purity of the nation. As forms of spectacle and ritual, carnivals can produce the 'imagined' community of the nation by instilling and enacting politics of belonging (Anderson 1983; Kong & Yeoh 1997; Derrit 2003; Phipps 2011). On the one hand, carnivals can contribute to a nationalist agenda that celebrates and in turn constructs the nation. Such performances may be acts of resistance, as with Carnival in Trinidad, which is the primary influence for the visual aesthetic of St Paul's Carnival. Trinidadian Carnival is partly rooted in anti-colonial protest, acting as an assertive marking of the distinct culture of an independent nation (Hill 1997). The ritualisation of past violences is incorporated into the aesthetic of Carnival's form (Riggio 2004). However, this mode of incorporation has altered through the translations of diasporic carnivals. Riggio (2004) argues that violence has tended to occur externally at these diasporic performances, primarily between 'revellers' and the law enforcement. On the other hand, carnivals expose and play upon the myths of racial purity often foundational to nationalisms. Here, carnivals are understood to project more heterogeneous ideas of

national citizenry. Alleyne-Dettmers (1997: 164) describes Notting Hill Carnival as a canvas for the display of 'multiple versions of what constitutes Black British identity'.

If the aim of the initial St Paul's Festival was not to broaden the definition of Britishness, it certainly questioned the position of racial purity in the national imaginary. The fortnight-long event that included sports competitions, comedy events and talent shows demonstrated that different ethnic groups could live and work together. Despite the relevancy of diaspora as a frame for St Paul's Carnival, the use of Masquerade (Mas) costumes and processional dance only began in the late 1980s, after a visit from a well known Trinidadian Carnival artist. Far from being an incorporation of protest, Mas was meant to assuage tensions between Black residents of St Paul's and elsewhere in the city. In the past, the Carnival procession had used 'floats' (trailers and lorries displaying peopled scenes) that are typical to carnivals elsewhere in the southwest of England. With its overt visual connection to the aesthetic of Caribbean Carnival, Mas was felt to be more appropriate to the 'cultural identity' of St Paul's. The introduction of Mas occurred alongside organisational changes in the 1980s that worked to strengthen African-Caribbean ownership of the event. The Carnival office was based at the premises of Inkworks (later renamed the Kuumba Centre), then the main Black arts organisation in Bristol. Through this, it contributed to the raised profile of Black arts in the city's cultural landscape. This act of making representations of Black Britishness is also formative of such belongings. Inherent to the aesthetic of Carnival is the 'seamless fusion of arts practice and community engagement' (Connor & Fourrar 2004: 266). In parallel with the array of activities held as part of St Paul's Festival, other community endeavours, such as costume-making, were and continue to be carried out in schools and neighbourhood spaces. Without these community

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contributions, the Carnival parade would not exist. Such intrinsic collaborative practice means that carnivals both represent and enact a more fluid, or even 'hybrid', idea of the nation that contributes to a progressive multicultural politics (Jackson 1992).

Thus, Carnival is framed by resistance to and perpetuation of fixed belongings at differing scales. But Carnival is also a framer. Belonging in the event involves the creation and destruction of connections. This works through the impulse for arrangement in ethnomimesis, where despite processes of selection over time, representations of a particular group (such as people of 'African-Caribbean heritage' in St Paul's) appear to be organic and original. Thus, St Paul's Carnival can simultaneously perform a diasporic and a British identity. Through its unruly occurrence disordered belongings to communities orientated around nations, bodies and territories appear to cohere in performance. To understand how St Paul's Carnival resists 'dominant notions of Englishness' (Spooner 1996: 200) necessitates close attention to the manner of its happening. This variety of local, national and global ties materialise in often conflicting ways. A collection of organisations, technologies and cultural forms interact with diverse individual interests, actions and memories. When Carnival occurs, an apparent order emerges to conceal the contested and contingent coming together of these entities. In 2012 this complex interaction was unsuccessful. Certain connections had been upset whilst others had been intensified. By cancelling the event, the St Paul's Carnival Committee deemed this particular configuration of interactions a failure. Disagreement with the Committee's position both contributed to and resulted from cancellation. The next section highlights the significance of cancellation for analysing ethnomimesis.

Moments of Cancellation

Cancellation will be explored through (but not exhausted by) three moments in which practices and meanings of Carnival resist organisation. This concerns a focus on its ethnomimetic process that both unpicks what takes place in Carnival, but also highlights the variety of entities that enable or disable its occurrence. St Paul's Carnival is billed as an African-Caribbean arts event majority funded by the public sector bodies of BCC and ACE. Its cancellation is suggestive of a Carnival tamed. This 'domestication' might take two forms. On the one hand, those of African-Caribbean heritage in Bristol no longer need the Carnival as a vehicle through which to protest or celebrate. In effect, Black British culture has been mainstreamed, and is no longer distinct from 'British culture'. On the other hand, Carnival has been appropriated, becoming a licensed performance of multiculturalism that is not supported by those in St Paul's. Here, African-Caribbean culture is given a space in British culture, but one that is separate, marked by marginality.

However, the argument here is that failure disrupts rather than recounts the story of a Carnival tamed. Cancellation demonstrates how the culture of Carnival is still contested. The event of Carnival itself became a non-functional performance of African-Caribbean identity. Ethnomimesis negotiates this fragility of the multiple imaginations of Black Britishness and African-Caribbean culture. Belongings are shown to be complexly played out beyond such categorical connections. The organisers insufficiently understood the process of Carnival, namely the participatory act of putting the event together. As the build up to failure shows, it is through these production processes that the contest, mobilisation and play of racial belonging unfold. Cancellation as disruption exposes Carnival's performance as far from self-evident. It opens up a politics of failure in which questions of representation

and responsibility can be explored (Bennett 2005; Graham 2009). The failure of a particular institutionalised performance of the multicultural creative city is traced, exposing the contested meaning and matter of race as an unstable community relation. Whilst questions over the differing purposes and values of such festive manifestations of creativity have been raised (Waterman 1998; Duffy 2005; Quinn 2005), attention to the unsuccessful event and its implications has been absent. Instead of taking its occurrence, Carnival's cancellation is shown to be of value in bringing to light disputes over the ownership and meaning of practices of cultural production.

Cancellation lays bare the ethnomimetic acts involved in the production and contestation of Carnival. These acts produce attachments to community that work to sustain the ambivalence of race. This is because the process of ethnomimesis does not privilege any one community. Instead it shows how a single community gives way to multiple and overlapping communities, each constructed through differing forms of racial attachment. The production of a singular performance of community requires the ordering of disordered practices, meanings and histories that involves a degree of consensus from all participants. Without such agreement, the disruptive circulation of stories is used here to play out the moments of cancellation through which disparate manifestations of community emerge. In these acts of narration, race uncertainly connects community through sensory registers, territorial demarcations and national affinities. Storytelling is particularly relevant for exploring Carnival, which is considered a site for the performance of collective memory (Roach 1996). Narrating, as both a connective and disjunctive act, is a vital modality for making memories present, whether through objects (Tolia-Kelly 2004), literary texts (Noxolo & Preziuso 2011) or performances (Johnston & Pratt 2010). In narrating Carnival's

cancellation, the aim is to adopt a processual approach to the story. This focuses on the manners of unfolding that make stories, and what this making might in turn produce. Thus in the moments below, stories operate across two different registers. The first concentrates on the empirical to identify the production and circulation of stories that contributed to the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival. Here the contested movements of stories are considered through the ways they produce or disrupt collective memory of the event. The second takes the story as a method that exposes instances of racial emergence in cancellation. This enlists the affective aesthetics of storytelling to make sensible a set of disruptive moments through which contests over Carnival are played out.

The narrations that follow consider some of the processes of ethnomimesis that complexly configure the ambivalence of race. They expose the difficulties encountered in constructing a Carnival that could coherently straddle the multiplicity of (Black) British and African-Caribbean attachments. Each moment recounted draws upon a combination of ethnography and interviews, together with analysis of contemporary and archival textual sources. The ethnography was undertaken over ten months in Bristol, where I both attended a number of the key events surrounding Carnival's cancellation and joined relevant online communities. The term 'moment' has been employed descriptively to give the impression of a specific temporality and agency. The narrations do not aim to provide the chronology of an event. Instead each moment is sketched without clear linearity, demonstrating the potential for both newness and repetition in each act of storytelling. Working with the production and circulation of stories shows their excessive nature where potential race 'events' always contain 'more than what is disclosed' (Amin 2010: 5). So these moments are loose markers of duration but also attunements to the fluidity of stories as

contested movers and movements. The first moment is a screening of two pieces of archive film footage of St Paul's Carnival that fed into the heightened interest in the event prior to its cancellation. It will explore the surfacing of historical narratives and spoken and written memories that contest what Carnival should be. The second moment is an organised walk in St Paul's to protest against the proposed changes to Carnival. It will use the walk to tell stories of the conflict over who Carnival is for. The third moment is the poll and subsequent press release that performed the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival. This action functions as an anchor for the challenges to the management of Carnival.

Mobilising Pasts

In mid-March 2012, an event was advertised in the Arts House, a cafe and small but vibrant performance venue in the Stokes Croft area of Bristol. Dubbed 'Celebrate What? St Paul's Carnival' the evening presented two short pieces of archival film. One was a nine minute interview with Roy Hachett, a founder of St Paul's Festival. The other was footage of the first ever event in 1968. With upwards of twenty people attending, the evening was a success given the size of the venue and the stimulation of discussion on the contemporary nature of Carnival. The screening occurred in the midst of heightened interest in Carnival after a series of rumours intermingled with official announcements from the organising committee. The 2012 Carnival was to be scaled back to a 'procession-only' event that would be limited to the Portland Square area of St Paul's in Bristol. This was because of concerns over safety resulting from rising year-on-year attendance figures, and a lack of funds to mitigate this. The proposed alterations to Carnival provoked the question the film screening posed. The essence of St Paul's Carnival was being challenged. The variety of 'sound systems' that

normally played across the streets of St Paul's were to be sidelined in favour of a contained event in the Portland Square area of the district consisting only of a parade of Mas costumes. 'Celebrate What?' was a specific example of the way the suggested changes to the event rendered visible ethnomimetic process. It set in train the public circulation of a variety of stories about what St Paul's Carnival is, and by extension, should be. These stories mixed personal and collective memories of the event and were told through a number of different registers.

The Save Our Carnival Association (SOCA, perhaps not coincidentally the term used for a form of Caribbean music with its etymology in a fusion of soul and calypso) collective neatly summed up one circulating notion of Carnival's essence through their statement of protest against the proposed alterations. SOCA, who chose to operate anonymously but with a presence on Facebook, were arguing 'No to Portland Square, no to no sound systems, no to no street traders, no to no main stage and yes to a full carnival in St Paul's.' Facebook became a central site for the circulation of official, non-official and purely speculative stories of what constitutes St Paul's Carnival. The specific significance of Facebook as a space for web-based stories lay in the breadth and depth of its use. Together with its high membership, Facebook has a particular degree of embeddedness in the experience and organisation of everyday social practices (Crang et al. 2007). It enabled stories of Carnival and meetings for its contestation to move across the 'virtual' and the 'real' by encouraging those who 'liked' the page to attend public discussions and protests. SOCA's statements on the site were underpinned by a view of Carnival shared by others: that the streets of St Paul's are not simply a venue, they are central to what constitutes the event. Here the story of Carnival was one of bringing community together 'to take over the streets to celebrate

and share our culture' (SOCA Facebook page). Associated with this was the privileging of particular forms of activity on the streets. As one comment on the official St Paul's Carnival Facebook page put it, the event 'really wouldn't be the same without the street parties and sound systems; the procession is only a small part of the amazing event for most people, I didn't pay much attention to it last year.' This story of Carnival summed up the event for many of the 100,000 attendees in 2011: music and partying on the streets.

Music as constitutor of Carnival also circulated in the stories of sound systems. The contention around the absence of sounds systems at the 2012 Carnival related both to their role in the cultural form of the event and to its ownership. Sound systems broadly refer to a DJ or collective and their equipment (generators, turntables and speakers) that together constitute a particular 'sound'. They have historically been central to Jamaican music and were subsequently transferred to the UK with Jamaican migration (Hebdige 1988; Cooper 2004; Henriques 2008). Rather than playing a single style, sound systems have typically been ways to incorporate a variety of, often annually changing, genres of music to St Paul's Carnival. Made not only in the Caribbean but also in the UK and USA, this movement of music is constitutive of the circulations and settlings that comprise a shifting rather than static Black culture (Gilroy 1993). Essential to this movement of music is the Do-It-Yourself nature of the sound systems at the Carnival, in which individual DJs bring and set up their systems to play particular genres of music throughout the day and night. The practice is now formalised through a licensing system by the Carnival committee. However, many of the sound system owners have residential or familial ties to St Paul's, so their absence from the 2012 event was felt to disenfranchise the community. Underpinning this outcry against the removal of sound systems was a more fundamental contention about the nature of Carnival.

The proposed parade-only event would be based upon the Mas costumes associated with the Trinidadian Carnival tradition. Whilst the making of these costumes and the procession itself served as a good way for organisers to engage children from schools in St Paul's and beyond, it did not involve the majority of attendees. In dispute was the nature of African-Caribbean arts represented at Carnival. Race and nation were conflated so that the nuances in national origin of the 'community' of St Paul's were subsumed by a homogeneous 'Black culture'. The majority of migrants from the West Indies to Bristol were Jamaican (Dresser & Flemming 2008). This rendered problematic the foregrounding of Trinidadian Carnival as representative of African-Caribbean culture in the city.

Equally, the contest over which practices of African-Caribbean identity should be privileged in Carnival also played on sensory registers. Images of Carnival as colourful costumed parade circulate both through official sources (such as the Carnival website and the 'St Paul's Carnival: Your Memories' book that was published in 2008 with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund) but also via media portrayals of the event. This emphasis on the appearance of Carnival was at odds with stories of the event that drew on sounds, tastes and smells. The importance attributed to the sound systems and street vendors (often residents of St Paul's selling hot food (such as jerk chicken) among other things) by SOCA provides an alternative sensory understanding of the experience of Carnival. Such affective dimensions are suggestive of the way race can emerge through 'processes that exceed what is conventionally called social or even human' (Saldanha, 2007: 190). Following this, the contest over what constitutes African-Caribbean identity in Carnival encompasses a tension in the process of ethnomimesis between two differing manifestations of race. The first, building on the image of Carnival, positions race as a visible marker of difference that

statically divides and displays through Carnival as an exhibition of multiculturalism. The second, using sounds and tastes, places race viscerally in the experience and interaction of bodies immersed in the multiplicity of sensory stimuli that constitute Carnival. This experiential emphasis affords a fluidity to Black Britishness as a shifting signifier that materialises through engagements in the changes of a variety of cultural forms. The absence of sound systems in the footage shown at "Celebrate what?" reinforces this point: the particular combinations of materials and sensory modes through which Black Britishness is practised are dynamic. These differing configurations of the matter and meaning of race sustained by Carnival's ethnomimesis are related to the problem of the differing purposes of the event for those involved. This points to the question of ownership of Carnival that will be explored through a moment of protest in the next section.

Parading in Protest

On the last Friday in March 2012 about forty people met at the Malcom X Community Centre (MXC) to begin a protest walk around St Paul's. Prior to the walk, brightly coloured banners and placards had been made that proclaimed the need to take 'St Paul's Carnival Back to its Roots' and to say 'No to Portland Square'. The group was not of a single racial background, and the walk was not orientated around a claim to African-Caribbean ownership of the event. Instead, it was one of a number that had been organised by the loose collective called Voices in the Community who operated predominantly through the Facebook page called 'St Paul's Carnival. Back to Its Roots'. The co-ordination of the event was a little ramshackle: it had been publicised with two different start times and did not end up following the planned route into the city centre. But these inadequacies of organisation

are indicators of the community orientation that made the event a success. The main leaders of the walk had multiple commitments: many were actively engaged in a number of paid and voluntary community-based activities in St Paul's and had been able to pass on information about the event through these channels. The leadership and majority presence of women on the walk also fed into this, with the pressures of family commitments a further time constraint to more 'professional' organisation. Positively though, these family commitments did mean the unifying and pacifying presence of children on the walk. Although marching in protest, the walkers did not all share the same reasons for contesting the proposed changes. In the face of these disparate challenges from 'cuts to funding' to the corporate appropriation of Carnival, the children on the walk set a particular tone of accord with community values. Yet the basis of the claims for the return of Carnival to its community roots was complicated through the process of the walk. Community emerged in uncertain relation with territory: the connection between the area of St Paul's and the people Carnival represents was unclear. The steps taken tell a story of the ambiguity of 'community' as unifier (Alleyne 2002; Closs Stephens & Squire 2012), in which no single understanding emerges of the ownership of St Paul's Carnival.

The walk set out from MXC onto Ashley Road. The narrow pavement forced the walkers into a long line, and a rhythm was immediately set up through a number of call and response imperatives. The calls, made by a woman with a megaphone, revolved around three main phrases which were then repeated back by the walkers: 'Save Our Carnival', 'Back to Our/The Roots' and 'No to Portland Square'. The walk continued onto Grovesnor Road and eventually down to Portland Square, before returning via City Road to MXC. This path through St Paul's plotted a number of key sites in the area that mark it as contested

territory. MXC itself was an indicator of past dispute. The centre was built by BCC following the 'race riots' in St Paul's in 1980, and was renamed after Malcom X by those in the area after many felt it had been imposed without adequate consultation (Dresser and Flemming, 2008). Indicative of reconciliation was the St Paul's Family and Learning Centre, whose construction was led by BCC in consultation with 'the community' in response to the past and present of serial under-investment in the area. Other sites were more directly associated with the protest against the changes to Carnival. The office of the Carnival committee was one of these. The walk stopped outside the office, continuing the call and response before eventually demanding that the organisers come out to provide a statement. The other was Portland Square, the proposed site for the scaled-back Carnival event. The square is situated on the fringe of St Paul's and is not seen by (some) residents to be strictly part of St Paul's itself. The walkers' course around the square demonstrated its peripheral location, as both audible and visible was the dual-carriageway separating St Paul's from the city centre. Walking through the streets also accentuated the role of the neighbourhood and domesticity in constituting ownership of Carnival. Whilst the square was an expansive public space, performing and partying on many of the narrow residential streets of St Paul's at Carnival time underpinned the sense of community ownership of the event.

Yet this physical narrative of the relationship between territory and community in St Paul's was challenged by the sensibilities engendered by the act of walking as a means of narration. There was an ambiguity to the walk, which in its parading movement mimicked the action of the Carnival procession. In some ways, the walk very locally placed Carnival, performatively demarcating the St Paul's from which the event derives its name. However, the passage of the walk demonstrated that this was a contested act of narration, rendering

sensible a gap between the residents and the protesters. The privileging of movement as the primary modality of protest immediately forced those who met the walk to either merge with it or abstain. As the walk wove its way through the streets of St Paul's, the walkers shouted for onlookers to join in. A couple of boys in their early teens, sheepishly took up a sign and stayed with the walk for the majority of its duration. Although there were cheers of encouragement and the beeping of car horns, this was one few instances where onlookers joined the walk. A number of people watching the procession actively refused to participate, either verbally or through a shake of the head. This gap between those in St Paul's and those on the walk was compounded by the paradoxical necessity to create or invite such separation. As the aim of the event was to make protest visible and audible, there was a requirement to create a spectacle. Such a display was constituted relationally: although the walk required walkers, it also needed people to witness the walk; to consume and in turn produce it as something out of the ordinary.

One such practice of consumption was the attempt to get passers-by to sign a petition about the proposed changes. In part, this broke down the division between the walkers and those in St Paul's, encouraging another form of support for the protest. Equally though, this discouraged passers-by to join the walk, instead situating the requirements for political engagement in the relatively minor act of signing. The other more overt act of consumption that separately produced the event was photography. The immediate reaction of many onlookers was to take photos of the walkers which helped construct it as a discrete event to be made visible. To some extent, the register of the visible again worked against the experiential, with the production of images standing in for participation. Onlookers were constituted as such by the barrier effect of the camera that served as a stationary defence

against joining the walk. However, photography was not only practised by those external to the walk, it was also an important part of active preservation of the event by the walkers. Photographs on Facebook were evidence of the walk's occurrence and enabled a sense of the event to linger after it had ended. These practices of consumption, production and re-production demonstrate the difficulty of representing the walk, both in terms of capturing the experience of the walkers but also articulating its broader meaning. As Murphy (2011: 240) argues, walks may be public and political, but there is no 'straight forward link between walking and progressive politics'.

The walk demonstrated an ambiguous politics of community in St Paul's, in which the ownership of Carnival was played out through the disputed demarcations and meanings of territory. As an ethnomimetic act, the walk portrays Carnival as organic to St Paul's, but sustains the ambivalence of race in this configuration of community. On the one hand, the mixture of racial backgrounds both on and encountered during the walk might suggest that race is not a primary force of attachment. On the other, the attempt to make community legible by passing through St Paul's seemed tied to the spatial construction of race (Anderson, 1991). The history of Black presence in St Paul's forms both constraining and affirmative attachments. Binding community to this particular territory recognises Carnival as an act of re-appropriation that has historically provided a legitimate space for non-white visibility and creativity in Bristol, specifically in the stigmatised area of St Paul's when this was (tacitly) unaccepted. So whilst African-Caribbean ownership was never explicitly articulated on the walk, the claim was implicit in the historical association of St Paul's with Jamaican migration. However, without overt articulation, this implied connection again risked homogenising African-Caribbean as a category by neglecting the nuances of the past

and present population of St Paul's. As a contested manner of relating, this territorial

typology of community fuelled a variety of eruptive forces that challenged the Carnival

organisers.

Managing Cancellation

An online poll was launched by the Carnival committee on 18 April 2012. Participants could

vote for a procession-based Carnival or for the cancellation of the event. The vote was to be

counted five days later and added to the results of a one-day paper poll held at St Paul's

Family and Learning Centre on 20 April. A press release from the organising committee

revealed the outcome: ninety-three for a procession-based event and ninety-two for

cancelling the year's Carnival (this is a 'turnout' from roughly 10,000 residents in St Paul's

and 100, 000 Carnival attendees in 2011). The same press release also announced Carnival's

cancellation. The negligibility of the poll results offered no conclusive direction, making it

vital for the Carnival organisers to carefully compose and disseminate a story to legitimate

their decision. The press release served as the main device for capturing cancellation. Here,

the organisers told a story of the growing scale of the event which meant uncertainties over

health and safety. The attempt to mainstream African-Caribbean culture through Carnival

had increased the event's popularity. The paradoxical implication being that Carnival was

cancelled because it was too successful. Attendance figures had been rising by 10,000 a year

up to the 2011 event. The original proposal to change the 2012 Carnival to a procession-only

event emerged because the organisers maintained their finances could not provide the

necessary infrastructure to cope with the rise in numbers. This was one of the major points

of contention for the protestors: many could not understand how an organisation funded

both nationally (by ACE) and locally (by BCC) did not have the financial and logistical means to stage the event. The question posed by SOCA and others was 'why have they left it so late to communicate with us?' In other words, there was a perception that the story about the reason for the changes to Carnival did not make sense.

The unruly movements of stories about the proposed changes to Carnival had been a constant problem for the organisers up to the point of cancellation. In particular, to counteract the protests gaining virtual momentum on Facebook, a physical meeting was held at MXC to inform the community and to discuss the proposed changes. However, the Carnival committee were unable to make their point in the meeting without being shouted down by other attendees. The Carnival manager suggested that before this gathering incorrect information had been leaked, resulting in the impossibility of real dialogue and discussion. In this leak, the organisers' plans had been sensationalised, providing the attendees of the meeting with inaccurate information about both the funding Carnival received and the costs of event management. The key implication of this messy meeting was the subsequent resignation of the Carnival's artistic director, because he felt the event no longer had community support. This further undermined the organisers' position. Their failure to tell a tale that would contain Carnival's problems eventually resulted in the cancellation of the procession-based event. In the press release, concerns over health and safety related not only to the full event, but also to the 'potentially unquantifiable elements' of purely staging a procession. The threat of protestors and fringe events was deemed too great a risk to school children who would form the core of any procession. Thus the committee, as controllers of Carnival, were telling the story of an event out of control. Given the disagreements over the cultural ownership of the Carnival, it was unsurprising that this

story of the failure of an already inadequate event increased the distance between the organisers and the community.

This storying of cancellation required two separate forms of justification from the organisers. In one, the Carnival committee had to make a case to their primary funders and other organisations, such as the police, who normally enable and allow the event to take place. The justification using safety concerns was one form of this upwards accountability. Equally important was highlighting the year-round programming of activities by St Paul's Carnival, but excluding the event itself. To demonstrate that funding was to be used productively, the committee included in the press release a number of their ongoing educational activities focused on African-Caribbean culture. For the other, the Carnival committee had to explain cancellation to the community and attendees more broadly. It was on this downwards accountability that the Carnival committee were challenged. In dispute was the committee's attempt to demonstrate engagement with, if not ownership by, the community. Opposition was levelled both at the content of their justifications, but also at the manner and position from which these reasons were given. In particular, it was felt that the education programme was neither year-round nor equivalent to community ownership. According to one community figure and former manger of Carnival interviewed, working with schools and establishing permanent masquerade costume making (Mas' Camps) had declined in recent years. In addition, poor communication of the reasons for the changes to Carnival detailed above was compounded by the perception that the organisers were external to the community. Although not explicitly articulated, the claim that Carnival was being taken away from 'the community' was hard to divorce from a racial politics when both the Carnival manager and schools liaison officer were white.

While adequately equipped to put together an event (the former coming from an events management background), neither the manager nor the schools liaison officer were easily able to tap into the fluidity of relations that constituted the African-Caribbean communities associated with St Paul's. Despite the organisers holding meetings and supporting fundraisers at key venues in St Paul's, there was still a sense of disconnect. In part this was because although the organisers aimed to produce an African-Caribbean arts event, they engaged little with the material histories of Carnival. This was a neglect of both the localised meanings of the event for Black presence in Bristol, but also of Carnival's broader aesthetic ties with African-Caribbean culture. The production of art as part of rather than separate from the everyday is central to these practices, and continues to shape overt and implicit challenges to racism (hooks 2008). The primary goal of achieving the safe occurrence of Carnival neglected these materialisations. The result was the attempted production of a performance of African-Caribbean culture that simultaneously denied the histories of racism that motivated the event. The reduction of Carnival to a parade producing 'colourful' images of multicultural Bristol was therefore unsurprisingly rejected by many residents. In this parade, race was to be an unarticulated presence in producing an end product that signified diversity. The importance of the practices of Carnival's production to the positioning and negotiation of race was ignored.

This oversight resulted in the emergence of a separate and 'unofficial' Carnival-based event. Organised by Voices in the Community and held at MXC on the original date for Carnival in July, the event was billed as a celebration of fifty years of Jamaican independence and forty-five years of St Paul's Carnival. As well as a number of local stall-holders providing food and drink, there was also a 'Carnival' procession mid-afternoon that

paraded around St Paul's with a mini sound system on a push-bike. In the late-afternoon the main sound system arrived at MXC and was assembled ready for the local musicians and DJs who continued into the night. The organisers of the event were mainly of African-Caribbean descent and had drawn upon local networks to provide particular services. These included stall-holders together with children's activities, such as dance instruction, that were part of the existing infrastructure of the weekly Jamafrique evening social club at MXC. For the organisation of the event, Voices in the Community said that they had approached the Carnival committee for their support and potential collaboration but had received no response. The occurrence of an unofficial event illustrates the Carnival committee's failure to compose and disseminate an adequate story that could completely legitimate and therefore capture cancellation. Performances of diversity can conceal and perpetuate the inequalities that they set out to challenge (Ahmed 2007). The organisers of Carnival inadequately understood the importance of the messy practices of putting together the event for the enactment rather than the representation of community. Instead community was shaped in the contested response to a perceived disenfranchisement. Inadvertently downplayed by the organisers was the creativity of ethnomimesis; the imaginative processes through which the materialisation of representations occurs.

Conclusion

Ethnomimesis shows how the ambivalence of race is sustained. In Carnival's cancellation, ethnomimesis exposes the activity of racial ambivalence; the multiple formulations of race that produce, fix and unsettle its position. Thus, cancellation highlighted firstly how race remains significant in the forging of connections in place (McKittrick, 2011). Race was made

to mean and matter in St Paul's through the specifically local unfolding of boundaries and movements. Secondly cancellation demonstrated that the role of race in such belongings cannot be predetermined; it is emergent (Slocum, 2008). Race was neither subsumed nor erased by culture; it rather unfolded through (without being exhausted by) cultural processes. In both cases, the condition of race is unstable; its meaning and matter are ambivalent. Through a focus on culture as a process, ethnomimesis makes sense of this impossibility of a singular and uncontested appearance of race. Ethnomimesis demonstrates how different configurations of race are precariously held between the creative possibilities and the contingencies of situated cultural practices (Amin, 2012). In the moments of Carnival's cancellation, several formulations of race were both played upon and downplayed. One occurred through the privileging of particular sensory engagements. Certain images, sounds and tastes of Carnival were contested in the run up to its cancellation. Racial attachments were also made through demarcations of territory. The role of the area of St Paul's in the shape and management of Carnival was a source of conflict that contributed to its failure. Equally, the nation framed the assembly of race as both a diasporic entity and as the contained culture of specific states. Folded into cancellation was dispute over the differing importance of Jamaican or Trinidadian forms to the performance of African-Caribbean culture in Carnival.

Ethnomimesis exposes what these different figurings of race can do. The multiple formulations of race that emerged through the moments of cancellation implicitly positioned non-white bodies as the community of Carnival. This implicit positioning fixes the failure of Carnival to the uncertain meaning and matter of race in the whole event. To understand these doings of racial ambivalence, ethnomimesis focuses on the interactions

between representations and encounters. In part, this involves foregrounding the production and circulation of representations. Here, the creative instability of representation is a starting point for examining how certain constructions and erasures of race come to be representative in society. Such makings and movements of representation necessarily involve the coming together of bodies. Thus, ethnomimesis also stresses the open potential of 'the encounter' in upholding the instability of race. However, ethnomimesis highlights how such encounters are not without constraints; they are subject to memory-work; stereotyping and other forms of individual or collective engineering. This possibility of 'engineering' might be one route for further investigation if ethnomimesis is to be used as a conceptual lens on the relationship between cultural practices and the ambivalence of race. Significant here are the processes of defining and circulating both accidental and deliberate productions of race that sustain its ambivalence. This would involve foregrounding the politics of this instability to consider how certain configurations of matter and meaning converge over others in the proliferation of race (Saldanha, 2007). In this politics of racial ambivalence, ethnomimesis provides one frame for exploring the role of situated cultural practices in both opening up and closing down possibilities to belong.

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