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Tourists and the Carnavalesque: Partying in the Land of Cockaigne

Hazel Andrews

Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This article uses the idea of the carnivalesque to “think through” party tourism as practiced by British charter tourists in the resort of Magaluf on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca. In addition, it considers the related idea of the European medieval fantasy Land of Cockaigne. Both the carnivalesque and Land of Cockaigne invite reflection on symbolic inversions that productively illuminate party tourism practices that are often underlain by transgressive behavior. The article uses the symbolic inversions associated with the carnivalesque of the unruly woman, male-female inversion, and the discourse of the grotesque as a means to understand party tourism practices. The discussion is framed within the context of a deep-rooted discourse of social class-based understandings of tourism-related travel. The condemnation of party tourism in Magaluf, which often occurs in UK-based news media outlets, follows a lineage of a demonization of the working classes that began at the start of industrialization. With the changes brought by industrialization, a demarcation arose between the working classes and the bourgeoisie that was focused on how and where carnival was performed. Based on periods of participant observation in Magaluf, the article notes that contemporary party tourism appeals to an imagination of a life other than that experienced in the quotidian world and that this bears comparisons with medieval fantasies associated with the Land of Cockaigne.

Introduction

This article explores the idea of party tourism through the lens of the carnivalesque and the medieval fantasy world, the Land of Cockaigne. Both the carnivalesque and the Land of Cockaigne are associated with ideas of a world turned upside down in which norms of social behavior pertaining to manners, moral conduct, and hierarchical social structures are inverted or transgressed. I take this approach to think about party tourism because, although there is an evident connection between tourism and carnivals, studies of this relationship have largely focused on actual, officially sanctioned carnival events rather than on touristic practices pertaining to carnival and identified as carnivalesque.¹

A carnival is often a tourist attraction and studies about the relationship between tourism and carnival, as already noted, do exist. Less well rehearsed in the study of tourism is *thinking with* the idea of the carnivalesque (that is, behavior that is normally associated with carnival but takes place outside of officially sanctioned events) to illuminate or understand touristic practices involving certain forms of conduct that do not conform to general conceptions of what might be called “decent behavior” and that often go together with party tourism. In this respect, I am following Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s lead in his analysis of medieval carnival in which he too was less interested in formal, authorized carnivals and more in the world beyond officialdom where carnival is performed. As he commented, “carnival is not a spectacle seen by people; they live in it.”² Carnival is practice, a way of doing, and a way of being.

Carnival can also be used as a “*mode of understanding*, a positivity, a cultural analytic.”³ This approach derives from the publication in 1965 (first published in English in 1968) of Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*, which became both a popular and dominant work in cultural and literary studies.⁴ Bakhtin’s work is not without its critics. It is not my intention, however, to debate the merits or demerits of his work but rather to use the motifs of the carnivalesque to which he draws attention to capitalize on that “*mode of understanding*” in the context of what has been labeled “party tourism.”⁵

Carnavalesque Today

The idea of the carnivalesque in Bakhtin’s work is related to his interpretations of French Renaissance literature. His analysis relies on a binary opposition between ideas of high and low culture and speaks of a challenge to power. The sanctioning of transgressive behavior during carnival serves to mock, reject, and subjugate authority, which turns the social order upside down. At the same time, by drawing attention to “high” and “low” culture, carnivalesque behavior also acts as a reminder of the social order, thereby reinforcing it. This form of ritual inversion is characterized by a grotesque realism and associated degradations, which further serve to debase all that is high. Thus, there is emphasis on bodily functions and the sexualized body rather than the reasoning body of the head.

In his review of an exhibition on the carnivalesque in 2000 published in the *Guardian* newspaper,

1. For example, see Niels Sampath, “Mas’ Identity: Tourism and Global and Local Aspects of Trinidad Carnival,” in *Tourists and Tourism: Identifying with People and Places*, ed. Simone Abram, Jacqueline D. Waldren, and Donald V. L. Macleod (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 149–71; Garth L. Green, “[Marketing the Nation: Carnival and Tourism in Trinidad and Tobago](#),” *Critique of Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (2002): 283–304; Bassey Benjamin Esu and Vivian Mbaze-Ebock Arrey, “[Tourists’ Satisfaction with Cultural Tourism Festival: A Case Study of Calabar Carnival Festival, Nigeria](#),” *International Journal of Business and Management* 4, no. 3 (2009): 116–25; and Nicole Ferdinand and Nigel L. Williams, “[The Making of the London Notting Hill Carnival Festivalscape: Politics and Power and the Notting Hill Carnival](#),” *Tourism Management Perspectives* 27 (July 2018): 33–46.

2. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 7.

3. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 5. Emphasis in the original text.

4. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*.

5. Others have already debated Bakhtin’s work. For example, Aurélie Godet notes the lack of historical evidence grounding some of Bakhtin’s arguments in Aurélie Godet, [Review of Rituality and Social \(Dis\)Order: The](#)

[Historical Anthropology of Popular Carnival in Europe](#), by Alessandro Testa, *Journal of Festive Studies* 3 (2021): 275. See also Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 7.

6. Jonathan Jones, ["Scary Masks and Sausages: Jonathan Jones Explores the Cruder Side of Art at Carnavalesque"](#), *Guardian*, May 12, 2000.

7. Timothy Hyman, "A Carnival Sense of the World," in *Carnavalesque*, ed. Timothy Hyman and Roger Malberi (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2000), 8–73.

8. Frac Occitanie Montpellier, ["Paul McCarthy—Spaghetti Man \(1993\)"](#), streamed on March 31, 2020, YouTube video, 1:04.

9. Renbourn Chock, ["The Continued Relevance of the 'Carnavalesque' \('This Is America\)'"](#), *Anthropology Now* 10, no. 2 (2018): 116–19.

10. Anne Graefer, Allaina Kilby, and Inger-Lise Kalviknes Bore, ["Unruly Women and Carnavalesque Countercontrol: Offensive Humor in Mediated Social Protest"](#), *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 43, no. 2 (2019): 171–93.

11. Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), 73–116.

art critic Jonathan Jones argues that "carnival is an aesthetic phenomenon manifesting in our need to look at the ugly as well as the beautiful."⁶ For example, the discourse of the grotesque is found in woodcuts of carnival images by German Renaissance artist Hans Weiditz. His representations from 1521 of medieval carnival include a man so fat he must carry his stomach before him on a cart as vomit spews from his mouth and a woman whose breasts are so large and pendulous that they dangle below her knees. In another image, by artist Peter Flötner (circa 1530), titled *A Human Sundial*, a prone figure is shown with his anus exposed in front of which are dollops of excrement.⁷ Such images echo in more contemporary art, for example, in American artist Paul McCarthy's *Spaghetti Man* (1993), which depicts a human body with a large eyeless rabbit's head and a penis made of several meters of flesh-colored hosing furled in front of him on the floor.⁸ The work by Weiditz, Flötner, and McCarthy are a source of fascination and repugnance that draw the eye of the viewer.

The carnivalesque does not only inhabit the world of art. Anthropologist Renbourn Chock, for example, argues that as a conceptual framework it can also be useful for understanding contemporary hip-hop music in the United States. He notes that the video for the song "This Is America," by rapper Childish Gambino and director Hiro Murai, contains many elements associated with the carnivalesque, including inversion, challenges to social hierarchy, and use of the grotesque in dance moves that rebel against classical dance styles.⁹

In another example, media scholars Anne Graefer, Allaina Kilby, and Inger-Lise Kalviknes Bore look at the offensive humor used during the January 2018 Women's March, a global event that supported, among other issues, women's rights.¹⁰ The protest was mainly aimed at the then US president Donald Trump whose comments on a variety of matters have been widely interpreted as racist and sexist. Many of the images carried by the marchers, which also found their way into social media, mocked Trump's masculinity. Trump, for example, was shown as having tiny hands and a tiny penis. The significance of the tiny hands is that male hand size is often equated with penis size, and a large penis is, in turn, equated with "being a man." These images challenged Trump's image as a strong alpha male. In other images, Trump was presented as a pair of buttocks with a wide-open anus as his mouth. The link made between Trump and feces relates to his comments in January 2018 to members of the US Senate in which he referred to countries from which many immigrants to the United States originated as "shithole countries." Associating Trump with excrement served to challenge the power hierarchy by applying the "low" (here equal to migrants), as associated with feces, to the "high" (here equal to the office of the president of the United States).

One way the carnivalesque has already been linked to tourism is found in the work of sociologist and cultural theorist Rob Shields. Using Brighton Beach, UK, as an example, he describes the beach as a liminal zone, since it is a space that is neither land nor sea. For Shields, this "in-betweenness" links the beach to the carnivalesque and gives rise to transgression of propriety and societal norms.¹¹ My contention is that in the case of Magaluf, liminality is not just restricted to the beach, but the whole resort is a liminal space. I make this argument because the carnivalesque and its associated inversions and transgressions can be found in the built environment as much as on the beach.

12. Victor Turner, "Comments and Conclusions," in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 276–96; and Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (1909; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

13. John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990); and Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976).

14. Hazel Andrews, *The British on Holiday: Charter Tourism, Identity and Consumption* (Bristol: Channel View, 2011).

15. Roger D. Abrahams and Richard Bauman, "Ranges of Festival Behaviour," in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 195.

16. Barbara A. Babcock, introduction to *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 14.

17. Diane Christian, "Inversion and the Erotic: The Case of William Blake," in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 117.

18. Stallybrass and White, *Politics*

At this juncture, it is worth noting that simply referring to holiday experiences as liminal and therefore as different from the quotidian world is also problematic. Anthropologist Victor Turner, who significantly developed the idea of "liminality" from its early twentieth-century use by ethnologist Arnold van Gennep, has argued that in postindustrial societies the concept is metaphorical and the meaning ascribed to it is different from that found in preindustrial societies. Indeed, he recommends the use of the term "liminoid."¹² Although there is not space here to discuss Turner's reasoning in more depth, I draw attention to the difference he highlights, lest there is temptation to mistake what I discuss as simply a difference between ritual and the profane.

Similarly, what I draw attention to here is not a discussion of gazing at difference or authenticity in other people and places, as tourism has often been described.¹³ Elsewhere, I have argued that British tourists find Britishness, stick often to the routines of home, and actively seek the familiar. Many of the tourists I spoke to, however, saw their holiday as a reprieve from not having to worry about the bills, going to work, or dealing with domestic chores.¹⁴ At the same time, Magaluf is a different place from the one inhabited at home. For example, the weather is different, the time zone is different, and tourists feel their experience as different. It would be wrong, therefore, to dismiss entirely the notion of difference, but temper the use of the idea of difference with the caveat that it is not a simple dichotomy, and how that may or may not be understood, felt, and/or performed by individuals is worthy of attention. Indeed, folklorist Roger D. Abrahams and folklorist and anthropologist Richard Bauman argue that behavior during times of festival is not necessarily a strict antithesis of behavior at other times but rather that the inversion and license of festival should be understood in connection with "the general interrelationship between order and disorder in the moral and social universe of the communities" concerned and that at times of reversal "it is the antithesis of behavior called for by the *ideal* normative system."¹⁵ So, while the case of Magaluf may not simply be a world reversed, the symbolic inversion that does occur is no less meaningful.

Folklorist Barbara A. Babcock argues that "'symbolic inversion' may be broadly defined as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms."¹⁶ In literature, symbolic inversion includes reversals and partial inversions of the social order as well as transgressions.¹⁷ In Magaluf, symbolic inversion takes the form of the figure of the unruly woman, male-female inversion, and a discourse of the grotesque. It occurs in practice rather than in print.

Examples of the carnivalesque found in contemporary art, music, and protest show not only that the word "carnavalesque" is useful in terms of a mode of understanding but also that it is still a form of practice.¹⁸ Elements of the behavior of the so-called party tourist can be understood through the lens of the carnivalesque and related symbolic inversions, but first we must journey to Cockaigne.

The Land of Cockaigne

Connected with the carnivalesque is the medieval Land of Cockaigne, a fantasy world that also, like carnival, is characterized by inversion and transgression. If the carnivalesque has been underused in the study of tourism, the Land of Cockaigne (in Middle English spelled "Cockayne"

and *Poetics of Transgression*, 60.

19. Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life*, trans. Diane Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

20. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

21. *Ibid.*, 3.

22. *Ibid.*, 245, 83–84.

and in Dutch called “Luilekkerland”) has been even less used. What makes Cockaigne so fascinating is its relationship to travel. Not only was it a world characterized by inversions of norms in which numerous desires could be satisfied, unlike other ideas of paradise, Cockaigne was believed to physically exist on earth. It was a utopian world that many early European travelers set out in search of and, in some instances, claimed to have found. Reports of such places informed the burgeoning travel literature of the sixteenth century and infused the imagination about other places and other people.¹⁹

The search for a better life that exists away from the quotidian inhabitation of the world characterized by work and at times deprivation is found in the trope of travel across cultures and through time. Religious beliefs are often the basis of ideas that the problems and toil of the everyday can be overcome by reaching another place—heaven, paradise. In the Middle Ages, there were many fantasies about worlds where the hardship of life did not exist. One such fantasy was about the Land of Cockaigne. Although belief that Cockaigne was a real place had subsided by the Middle Ages in Europe, stories of its existence continued. Alongside the multiple versions of this fantasy is the problem of pinning down the origins of the tales, since they are mainly derived from an oral tradition extending over decades.²⁰

In his wide-ranging and detailed examination of medieval European literature, art, history, and folklore, Dutch literary historian Herman Pleij illuminates the characteristics and uses of the Land of Cockaigne in the Middle Ages in his book *Land of Cockaigne*. By drawing on his exegesis, it is possible to find resonance with fantasy worlds today, some of which inform not only how some places of tourism are imagined but also how they are practiced.

Pleij begins his book by describing Cockaigne as “a country, tucked away in some remote corner of the globe, where ideal living conditions prevailed.... Work was forbidden, for one thing, and food and drink appeared spontaneously.”²¹ In some depictions of Cockaigne from the Middle Ages, not only did this readily available food and drink spring automatically into one’s mouth, but it was also possible to eat one’s surroundings. Cockaigne had many attractive sounding features: it was always spring, life was peaceful, there was plenty of opportunity for sex without commitment, everyone had beautiful clothes, there was a fountain of youth, and money could be earned during one’s sleep.

One of the key differences between the Land of Cockaigne and the paradises promised to the deserving found at death was that one did not have to wait to die to visit. It was believed that this paradise could be found in the world beyond Europe and that some had visited. In several of the documents Pleij explores, “the Land of Cockaigne is presented as a concrete place situated somewhere on earth. Texts L and B begin with a first-person narrator who announces that he has just been to a country previously unknown to him.” The text B to which Pleij refers concludes with: “by urging all good-for-nothings to betake themselves to ‘that rich land.’” In other texts, “‘earning while you sleep’ is also one of the basic laws of Cockaigne... [and] these topsy-turvy precepts are extended to include the rules of decorum obtaining among the elite. Anyone who can break wind convincingly earns a half-crown, and by belching three times or letting a very loud fart one can even pocket a sovereign.”²² In addition, gambling is rewarded, debtors are absolved of their debts after one year of eating chicken and white bread, drinking alcohol commands pay,

23. Ibid., 254, 274, 276.

and inebriation attracts more money. The characteristics of inversion from the norm found in Cockaigne are numerous. What I draw on here are the ideas that Cockaigne shares similarities with the carnivalesque world turned upside down, that it fulfills the dreams of a better life elsewhere, and that because of its existence on earth it is possible to journey to reach it while still alive.

The idea of a paradise on earth has roots in travelers' tales from antiquity. For example, some stories of Alexander the Great recount his finding of paradise. The Middle Ages saw increased travel to places hitherto unknown or little known to Europeans. In the so-called Age of Discovery, both Florentine merchant, navigator, and explorer Amerigo Vespucci and his fellow Italian explorer and navigator Christopher Columbus were influenced by ideas of finding an earthly paradise. The thought that an ideal and idyllic world could be found on earth tainted the descriptions of observations by travelers certain they could find this paradise. Thus, places visited were described in terms of dreamworlds, a lost golden age, and so on, of which Cockaigne also featured. Indeed, many of the characteristics attributed to Cockaigne "are reported to be everyday occurrences in other parts of the world." In addition, as Pleij contends, "any European living in preindustrial times would have been moved to remember Cockaigne or Luilekkerland when, traveling abroad, he suddenly felt a balmy breeze, or saw trees sagging under the weight of their fruit, or heard exotic birds singing, or detected the fragrance of spices, or tasted strange and delightful food for the first time. In many travel accounts Cockaigne appears to be a reality, though sometimes a rather far-fetched one." It is the stories of the lives of other people and other places seen as different from the world inhabited by the traveler that informed ideas of this world free from want. Unlike other stories of paradise, these dreamworlds could be attached to a place that those with the means and ability to travel could also find. The burgeoning number of travel accounts became big business as more and more reports were printed. Original stories were "sexed up" to appeal to an ever-more lucrative market with an audience interested in reading descriptions of spectacular places and libidinous people. Part of the fantasy world recounted in often heavily edited versions of journeys were the stories of women as sexually available. For example, the early 1500s Dutch edition of a book based on the letters of Vespucci "dwells repeatedly on the unbridled lust of the natives" in which the locals never wear clothes and are openly promiscuous and "the women in particular were said to be overcome by uncontrollable sexual desires."²³ In addition, a close connection between Cockaigne and the writing of geography books, encyclopedias, and pilgrims' guides developed. The texts were colored with the dreams of a better life elsewhere rooted in ideas about Cockaigne, and these held sway over the recording of "facts" about the places that had been visited. As a result, ideas of the lands and people "discovered" on the other side of the Atlantic at the start of European-based explorations were influenced by the imaginative world of Cockaigne.

The places that formed the basis of the fantasy lands of Cockaigne were often located in "the West," even before the travels of Vespucci and Columbus. In Middle English literature, Cockaigne (discussed as Land of Cockayne) was the dreamworld located "farther away than the most western part of Europe, which was Spain." At the time, Spain was believed to reach much farther west than it does, but because of this, albeit incorrect, geography, it too "was also privy to those wonders of the West and therefore must have had mysterious charms of its own." In the northern European imagination of the fourteenth century, Spain had a fairy-tale image, and Pleij argues that there were "indications that an idyllic picture of Spain was etched in the collective

24. Ibid., 267.

25. Ibid., 5.

26. Hazel Andrews, "Mass Tourism in Mallorca: Examples from Calvià," in *Mass Tourism in a Small World*, ed. David Harrison and Richard Sharpley (Oxford: CABI, 2017), 181–90.

27. Ibid.

imagination." In this fantasy Spain, "the sky was always clear, and the earth was fertile and rich in gold, silver, precious stones, and metals."²⁴ In other accounts of travel, ideas of earthly paradises were drawn from "discoveries" in the East of lands of plenty, peace, and promiscuity. With these living conditions, the person fortunate enough to come across such a place could surely have partied hard.

In writing about Cockaigne, Pleij argues that "dreamworlds say a lot about those who devise them. Modern-day dreamworlds are the stock-in-trade of travel agencies: clever, custom-made products for typical holidaymakers in search of the ideal climate, unspoiled nature, cultural wonders, and forbidden sex." What is offered today, he states, cannot compare to the Cockaignes of the past, as the world that the contemporary holiday is designed to appeal to is not characterized by want in the same way as it was during the Middle Ages. Rather, "modern-day Europe represents in many respects the realization of Cockaigne: fast food is available at all hours, as are climatic control, free sex, unemployment benefits, and plastic surgery that seemingly prolongs youth."²⁵

There is much to unpack from Pleij's words, including the tinge of prejudice about the "typical holidaymaker" and the rather simplistic notion that being unemployed equates to "doing nothing" because the individual is not engaged in paid, productive employment. He is, of course, correct in that the world today is very different from the world that spawned medieval fantasies of Cockaigne. Yet people still travel in the hope of finding a world that offers a life better than the one they came from. By using the example of the party tourist to Magaluf, I argue that the dream of a Cockaigne-like world remains as much a feature of the European imagination as it was in the Middle Ages.

Magaluf

Magaluf is a tourist resort located on Mallorca, the largest of the Balearic Islands. It is southwest of the island's capital, Palma, in the local municipality of Calvià. In the 1950s, Mallorca and, by corollary, Magaluf were developed as tourist destinations by the Francisco Franco government to earn foreign exchange and create employment and greater respectability for Spain on the world stage.²⁶ Mallorca had been attracting international visitors for leisure purposes since at least the nineteenth century. Franco's regime developed Magaluf and similar resorts (e.g., Palmanova and S'Arenal) to appeal to a northern European population with increased disposable income, with more "spare time," and in search of relaxation in guaranteed sunshine.

Magaluf evolved in such a way that it attracted a particularly "British" clientele, as I have discussed in depth elsewhere.²⁷ Magaluf was increasingly populated by facilities offering British food and drink (bread, sausages, bacon, pints of beer, etc.) in establishments often named as if they were in the UK (The White Horse, The British Chippy, The Britannia, and so on). English was the dominant language, the majority of tourists were on charter tourism trips organized by a UK-based tourism company, and often whole hotels were exclusive to one tour operator working only in the UK market. As I have previously also recognized, "Britishness" is a complex term and its use is not to deny other forms of national descriptors but to note that there is an appeal to an idea of Britishness in the resort and that this is performed by these tourists in the form of what I have described as an "effervescent Britishness."²⁸

28. Andrews, *The British on Holiday*.

29. Judith Okely, "Thinking through Fieldwork," in *Analysing Qualitative Data*, ed. Alan Bryman and Robert G. Burgess (London: Routledge, 1994), 18–19.

30. Alessandro Testa, "Micro-Etnografia notturna Riflessioni di un antropologo in discoteca," *Antrocom Online Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (2011): 22. Translated from the original Italian: "Un'indagine etnografica circoscritta nello spazio/tempo della discoteca non può, infatti, avvalersi del più comune mezzo di interazione etnografica: la comunicazione verbale. Il volume della musica e la calca dei corpi rendono di fatto inutilizzabile il maggiore espediente di raccolta di dati, o almeno così.... L'osservazione relativamente passiva e solo a volte attivamente partecipante dei fatti è risultata di conseguenza la sola strada metodologicamente praticabile." I am grateful to Claudia Melis from Liverpool John Moores University for her help with the translation into English.

31. Andrews, *The British on Holiday*, 209–10.

I first went to Mallorca in the summer of 1997. This trip was for a project very different from the one I would conduct for my doctoral research. The main purpose of this first trip was to identify sustainable tourism policies. It allowed me to undertake a "recce" of where I was staying—Palmanova—and the adjoining resort of Magaluf and develop a set of foreshadowed problems that would inform my ethnographic inquiries in subsequent fieldwork visits. As anthropologist Judith Okely notes, "the anthropologist rarely commences research with an hypothesis to test. There are few pre-set, neatly honed questions, although there are multiple questions in the fieldworker's head. There are theories, themes, ideas and ethnographic details to discover, examine or dismiss."²⁹

I returned to Magaluf for much longer visits in 1998 and 1999 and, later, in 2009, 2015, and 2018. Since 1999, none of my trips afforded me much opportunity to do more than observe. Thus, most of my data was collected during the main stints of my fieldwork in the late 1990s. This consisted of participant observation in both Magaluf and Palmanova. The practice of participant observation in this context involved doing what tourists were doing, including sunbathing by pool or beach, going on island tours, attending various nighttime entertainment activities, joining pub crawls, and so on. At the same time, I spoke to local people, tourists, tour operator representatives, bar workers, and members of the expatriate community. Some people I spoke to once, others more than once.

Trying to study tourists is perhaps different from other fieldwork settings in terms of the "here today, gone tomorrow" nature of the package tour, which most tourists were part of. The conversations I had were not formal interviews around specific themes but rather developed organically. We spoke about holiday-making practices, life in the UK, and living and working with tourists. The obvious transient nature of tourism in this context worked against the idea of developing in-depth, long interviews. In addition, the nature of some of the field setting, specifically related to the aspect of party tourism, did not facilitate such conversations. As anthropologist Alessandro Testa explains about his work in the discos and clubs of Rome, "An ethnographic investigation limited to the space/time of the disco cannot, in fact, make use of the most common tool for ethnographic interaction: verbal communication. The volume of the music and the crowd make the most common data collection strategy unviable.... Relatively passive observation and only occasionally interacting, was consequently the only feasible and effective methodology."³⁰ Although my data collection was not solely based on nightclubs and discos, much of the material discussed in this article is drawn from my observations in this type of setting.

At the time of my fieldwork, I was not specifically seeking answers about the carnivalesque or the Land of Cockaigne. Although I did touch on these ideas in earlier published material, I did not fully develop them in my theorizing of tourists.³¹ One of the strengths of anthropological, ethnographic inquiry is that the analysis of the data cannot be divorced from its collection. Rather, they are in an ongoing relationship. As Okely contends:

Both during the fieldwork and after, themes gradually emerge.... The anthropologist-writer draws also on the totality of the experience, parts of which may not, cannot, be cerebrally written down at the time. It is recorded in memory, body and all the senses. Ideas and themes have worked through the whole being throughout fieldwork. They have gestated in dreams and the subconscious in both sleep and in waking hours, away from

32. Okely, "Thinking through Fieldwork," 20, 21.

33. Ibid., 22.

34. Andrews, *The British on Holiday*.

the field, at the anthropologist's desk, in libraries and in dialogue with the people on return visits. Photographs point to details hitherto unnoticed by the fieldworker in the midst of the action. They may also revive hidden memories.... Snatches of music may conjure up images and forgotten or half submerged insights.³²

The resorts in physical terms are bounded entities; symbolically their lives, however, exist outside of this physical location. Both Palmanova and Magaluf, but especially the latter, live in guidebooks, tourism promotional material, travel writing, news reports, and various forms of social media. All of these are part of the tourism experience; all of these are worthy of attention and provide insight into the practice of tourism. They shape expectations, encouraging some to visit and others to stay away. They fuel the imagination, and because tourism does not operate in a vacuum but is part of wider sociocultural attitudes and processes, narratives about the resorts are important areas of consideration in this article.

Since the late 1990s, the presence of Magaluf on social media has become more noticeable. This was particularly the case in 2014 when an event, which I describe below, at a resort bar caused a media outcry. It is probably this event, more than any of my other experiences, that has made me focus on the nature of party tourism and to seek ways to understand some of the behavior that occurs in its name. As Okely notes, "years after my intensive fieldwork on Gypsies, and after follow-up research, there are still reverberations, there are still things to write about or to reinterpret."³³ So, by reflecting on previous fieldwork and more recent activities, brought to my attention by various forms of media, I seek to develop my earlier dalliances with ideas of the carnivalesque and the Land of Cockaigne and explore them in more depth in relation to party tourism, especially in Magaluf.

Each of my trips to Magaluf confirmed that one of the main reasons to visit Magaluf was based on its provision of opportunities to party. Although party-style tourism is linked to those in early adulthood, this is not exclusively the case. I encountered people in older age groups looking to dance the night away, get drunk, and get laid. I met tourists in their eighteenth year visiting the island and others on their first visit. The tourists came from all over the UK but most notably from the North of England and Scotland.³⁴

In the late 1990s, most of the tourists I encountered were white and working class. The latter is defined as those engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled employment. The issue of class is one of importance to understanding tourism because tourism is a class-based activity. People of all classes go on holiday if they have the financial means, ability, and motivation. However, what type of holiday and what holiday behaviors and motivations for travel are acceptable are class bound. For example, I did meet a family who, based on their employment, would be described as middle class. Their attitude to Magaluf was markedly different from their fellow tourists. They were, for instance, disappointed by what they saw as a lack of Spanish ambience in the resort; they had been looking for an experience that was more akin to engaging with a cultural "other" than finding and expressing a sense of a home-based national identity with its trappings of flag waving, food from the UK, and the ubiquitous use of the English language.

The link between class and tourist motivations, expectations, and practices has been observed by social scientists Jean Maurice Thurot and Gaetane Thurot in their discussion of tourism advertising. They argue that ideas about leisure and tourism consumption are based "on the

35. Jean Maurice Thurot and Gaetane Thurot, "The Ideology of Class and Tourism Confronting the Discourse of Advertising," *Annals of Tourism Research* 10, no. 1 (1983): 179.
36. James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to "Culture" 1800–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 61.
37. *Ibid.*, 81.
38. Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961); and Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975).
39. Turner and Ash, *Golden Hordes*, 11.
40. Simon Reeve, [interview by Mishal Hussein](#), BBC Radio 4 Today, September 4, 2018.

classical aristocratic model," but are not reflective of the opening of travel for leisure and pleasure purposes to a much wider group of people post-Second World War. The result was those in the upper echelons of society found ways to distance themselves from consumption practices that once were their preserve, but now accessible to everyone else.³⁵ Over the years, Magaluf has acquired a reputation as a party tourism destination, which does not fit the model of aristocratic tourism. I will return to this below, but first I will probe the issue of the "right reasons" for travel in more depth.

Traveler Good, Tourist Bad

The observation that the development of tourism since the 1950s is in part structured by class is an interesting one because it echoes sentiments expressed much earlier in the development of mass tourism. For example, as English businessman Thomas Cook expanded his organized tours across Europe in the 1860s, complaints were made about the presence of an increased number of travelers in places once enjoyed more exclusively. For example, Charles Lever, the British vice consul for Italy, writing in 1865, opined that organized tours were akin to a circus and involved "an 'invasion' bearing the unmistakable taint of inferior social class."³⁶ Although Cook rebutted Lever's concerns, he did share with him that the purpose of travel was educational, albeit they disagreed about how and by whom that travel should be undertaken. As professor of British literature and culture James Buzard contends, this period saw the development of an "anti-tourism" sentiment based on "efforts—still discernible—to establish the purposes and behaviour that make for 'genuine' European travel, constructing the genuine on a foundation of denunciation, evasion, and putative transcendence of merely 'touristic' purposes and behaviour."³⁷ This division remains, and there are many examples, including in the academic study of tourism, where the tourist is demonized. Two early texts include, for example, historian Daniel Boorstin's *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* and writers Louis Turner and John Ash's *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery*.³⁸ For Boorstin, the traveler is "good" and the tourist "bad," and Turner and Ash argue that the advent of charter tourism "led to a whole new tribe—the Mass Tourists. The barbarians of our Age of Leisure."³⁹

The distinction between traveler and tourist is one that is yet to be resolved. Activities associated with being a tourist still attract criticism. Indeed, for example, consider broadcaster Mishal Hussein's interview on the BBC Radio 4 Today Program (September 4, 2018) with Simon Reeve, a broadcaster and writer who makes travel programs. Discussing with Hussein his then newest TV program, Reeve said that he thinks people should push themselves more, claiming "I think it's as much about how you travel and one of the big things I believe in is about travelling with your eyes open and trying to have a richer, more rewarding experience as a result." His top tips for a "more rewarding experience" include: "Don't just be lulled into lying by a swimming pool but get up, get out and take a few more chances because life is very short."⁴⁰

Viewed thus, lying by the pool just does not cut it as a rewarding experience and is undertaken without any agency on behalf of the protagonists concerned. Such destinations as Magaluf, in which there is much lying by the pool and lying by, around, in or on other places—bed, beach, beach wall, street bench—will not be seen, by some, as providing rewarding experiences and are often at the forefront of descriptions of all that is bad about tourism and tourists. For example, in his introduction to Mallorca, writer David Hewson describes tourists as invaders and several

41. David Hewson, *Mallorca* (London: Merehurst Press, 1990), 3.

42. Kerry Christiani, *Mallorca* (London: Lonely Planet Publications, 2014), 83.

43. The *Daily Mail* is a UK-based tabloid newspaper with right-wing political leanings. GCSEs refers to General Certificate of Education, qualifications attained by school children in the UK between the ages of fifteen and sixteen.

44. Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2020), 5.

45. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 106–7.

resorts—including Magaluf—as “dreadful ersatz tourist towns... [to] be avoided at all costs.” In relation to Magaluf, in particular, he states, “only a sound thrashing with a division of bulldozers would cure most of [the] modern horrors.”⁴¹ In the Lonely Planet guide to Mallorca, the comment is less harsh than Hewson’s but, nevertheless, carries a similar sentiment. Linking Magaluf with its next-door neighbor Palmanova, the guide’s author says that “Palmanova and Magaluf have merged to form what is the epitome of the sea, sand, sangria and shagging (not necessarily in that order) holiday that has lent all of Mallorca an undeserved notoriety. The good news? Change is afoot.”⁴² Although these commenters do not make direct references to class, it is reasonable to suggest that, even if unwittingly, the attitudes expressed may have a basis in class. They echo earlier complaints against Cook’s tours in which the lack of a serious purpose and genuine interest behind travel was made by Cook’s critics.

This apparent demonization of the masses can be read as a demonization of the working class, as in a hierarchical class-based society it is the working classes that are associated with the masses and from which other class sensibilities try to distance themselves. The class-bound nature of travel and related class-based attitudes toward the purpose for travel expressed over one hundred years ago have not been left in the nineteenth century. Indeed, journalist Owen Jones first wrote on this subject in 2011 with reference to a term that had come into popular parlance at the time, that of “chav.” Used as a derogatory term, “chav” referred to a person from society’s lowest social order. In addition, it was being used in products aimed at tourists. Jones cites the example of the holiday firm Activities Abroad, which at the time of the publication of the first edition of his book in 2011 was offering holidays with a starting price of £2,000. In January 2009, the company sent a promotional message to twenty-four thousand people. It quoted a piece from the *Daily Mail* written in 2005 that claimed that “children with ‘middle-class’ names were eight times more likely to pass their GCSEs than those with names like ‘Wayne and Dwayne.’”⁴³ According to the travel company, names like Wayne and Dwayne would not be found on their client list. They came up with two lists: the first list included “the names you were ‘likely to encounter’ on one of their holidays” and the second list was of names that would not be encountered. As a result, “Activities Abroad excursions were a Britney, Chantelle and Dazza-free zone. They concluded that they could legitimately promise ‘Chav-Free Activity Holidays.’” Jones contacted the company’s founder and managing director, who responded, “it is time the middle classes stood up for themselves” and “regardless of whether it’s class warfare or not, I make no apology for proclaiming myself to be middle class.”⁴⁴ Of eighteenth-century England, English professors Peter Stallybrass and Allon White note that “street culture ... is a source of fascination and fear on the part of a bourgeois culture which must risk contamination by the low-Other, dirt, and danger whenever it steps down into the street.”⁴⁵ The type of holiday on offer by Activities Abroad seems to be the very antithesis of the party tourism found in Magaluf, and with the company’s apparent vetting process of its clientele through nomenclature, the fear of contamination from the low “other” more likely to holiday in Magaluf is removed.

This attitude to working-class people follows in the footsteps of a way of thinking that has connections with carnival. As an arena for popular cultural expression, carnival, like any aspect of culture, has not remained static. Changes to carnival in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were underwritten by shifts in power and monetary concerns. In effect, with the rise of the bourgeoisie, there was a reordering of the spatial logic of behavior through a process of gentrification in which “new sites of assembly appeared regulated according to manners and

46. Ibid., 84.

47. Indeed, 2022 saw the second literature festival in Magaluf. "[Magalluf Literature Festival to Return in the Autumn](#)," *Majorca Daily Bulletin*, December 4, 2022.

48. See, for example, [Magaluf Events Company](#), accessed June 14, 2022.

49. Mamading is a party game in which women are encouraged to give oral sex to as many men as possible in a short period of time.

50. James Robertson, Francesca Cookney, and Jessica Boulton, "[Magaluf Exposed: Sleazy Party Capital Where Girls Are Bullied into Sex Acts with Strangers](#)," *Mirror*, updated July 6, 2014.

51. *The Daily Record* (@Daily_Record), "[New Magaluf nightclub](#)," Twitter, August 3, 2014, 3:45 a.m.

norms significantly different from those of the places they were displacing [and] traditional places ... were subjected once again to the onslaught of 'the civilizing process.'"⁴⁶

Magaluf as a party destination has received a certain amount of notoriety based on a party style of tourism that would not find its way onto the list of holidays offered by Activities Abroad. The behavior of tourists in Magaluf has often led to it being in the media spotlight. At the same time, however, there has been a desire by local authorities to reposition Magaluf, to move away from its party image, and to attract a different type of clientele.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Magaluf remains on the list of party tourism destinations and still carries the nickname Shagaluf.

Magaluf as Shagaluf

The resort of Magaluf has long held a reputation as a party destination with packages aimed at young adults looking for "a good time." In the late 1990s, although the young adults this type of holiday attracted were typically in the eighteen-to-thirty age range (hence the holiday company Club 18–30), many adult tourists outside this age bracket equally enjoyed the party elements of Magaluf. The partying for which Magaluf has been associated with relates to the drink-fueled exploits of young tourists often on their first holiday without their parents and often involved engaging in casual sexual activity. Such was Magaluf's notoriety that it earned the nickname Shagaluf (an amalgamation of the slang "shag"—a term for sex—and "luf," the last three letters of the resort's name). Although in more recent times (especially since 2015) measures to curb what was by many considered to be the more insalubrious behavior of tourists have been enacted by the local municipality of Calvià, Magaluf remains a destination of choice for many seeking a party holiday experience and packages that cater to this type of holiday still exist.⁴⁸

In 2014, Magaluf achieved an increased amount of attention due to media coverage of an occurrence of "mamading" in one of the resort's bars, which was organized by the events company Carnage Magaluff.⁴⁹ The reporting referred to the videoing and posting on Facebook of a young inebriated woman in her late teens, or early twenties, who was in effect coerced into fellatio with what was reported to be twenty-four different men in the belief that she would win a "free holiday." Sensationalist reporting, such as that by UK newspaper the *Mirror*, claimed that "the girl's underwear is around her ankles as one man appears to have sex with her from behind and she has oral sex with another reveller standing in front of her." The paper goes on to report that when the woman "appears to stop, the DJ—who has a Geordie accent—shouts, 'you little slag, stop f***** about. She's got stage fright, you need to **** his ****, I said' ... 'This is Carnage and this is what we do. We need to see someone get b*****d here don't we? Who wants to see someone get s*****d?'" (asterisks in original).⁵⁰ Following these revelations, other stories about lascivious behavior by British tourists in Magaluf were highlighted across the British press, including, for example, the *Daily Record's* assertion that "new Magaluf nightclub sex shame as girls are stripped on stage at 'paint parties.'"⁵¹

The videoing and sharing of the incident by one of the bar's workers was without the woman's consent. The accompanying attention and negative press about Magaluf helped to spur the introduction of bylaws to curb the drink-fueled activities—like that of the mamading case—for which Magaluf had become known.⁵² Nevertheless, Magaluf remained a popular place to visit

52. Andrews, "Mass Tourism in Mallorca," 181–90.
53. Andy Rudd and Gerard Couzens, "[Brits' Magaluf Booze-Fuelled Holidays 'Officially Over' after Coronavirus Crisis](#)," *The Mirror*, May 13, 2020.
54. *The Telegraph*, "[Magaluf Residents' Fury as Drunk British Holidaymakers 'Wear No Masks' and 'Jump on Cars'](#)," streamed on July 13, 2020, YouTube video, 0:57.
55. Ashifa Kassam, "[Mallorca Restaurants Bring in Dress Code to Curb Antisocial Tourism](#)," *Guardian*, June 20, 2022.
56. "[Parliament Approves of Excesses Decree](#)," *Majorca Daily Bulletin*, April 2, 2020. On reports in UK media, see, for example, Alike Kraterou and Rita Sobot, "[Fun Police: Holiday Warning as Magaluf Deploys Assault-Rifle Armed Elite Cops to Crack Down on Drunk Brits for Summer Season](#)," *Sun*, June 19, 2022.
57. Kassam, "Mallorca Restaurants Bring in Dress Code."
58. Hazel Andrews, "[Tits Out for the Boys and No Back Chat': Gendered Space on Holiday](#)," *Journal of Space and Culture* 12, no. 2 (2009): 166–82. Pirates Adventure is mainly a show based on acrobatic performances within the context of a story of about "British" pirates in battles with French pirates. For more detail, see Andrews, *The British on Holiday*, 49–63.
59. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Ark, 1966).

for party tourists and, in 2018 signs proclaiming that "stag" and "hen" groups were welcome were displayed in bar and nightclub windows.

In 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic brought most of the world's tourism activity to a halt. The measures introduced to try to keep people safe from the virus, including social distancing and the wearing of face coverings, prohibited the type of activity that relied on close personal contact required of fellatio. Indeed, of Magaluf, the British newspaper the *Daily Mirror* reported in May 2020 that the resort's main street, Punta Ballena, normally the focus of the party tourist, was deserted. The pandemic also gave an opportunity for efforts to change tourist activity in Magaluf. The Calvià director general of tourism claimed that "Magaluf is going to be a very different place this year.... It was always going to be more difficult for British holidaymakers to come here this summer and commit the sort of excesses we've seen all too often in the past because of by-law modifications and the new regional government drunken tourism decree. I truly believe COVID-19 could deal a mortal blow to the type of tourism we have seen in Magaluf and especially Punta Ballena."⁵³

However, a YouTube video showed rowdy drunk tourists jumping on cars and flouting local coronavirus regulations.⁵⁴ Two years later, the problem of antisocial behavior remains. Eleven restaurants on the island, mainly on Playa de Palma, have introduced a dress code in an attempt to curtail antisocial behavior, because, according to one hotelier, the measures introduced in 2020 were not working.⁵⁵ Reports carried in UK media outlets in June 2022 pointed to the introduction of a number of armed police deployed to counter what has been described in Mallorca as "tourism of excesses."⁵⁶ The overall point here is that attempts to manage tourist behavior have met with limited success. Furthermore, not all agree with recent regional government proposals to aim for higher-spending tourists and reduce the overall number of visitors to the Balearics with a view to improve quality. Ashifa Kassam, writing for the *Guardian* newspaper, quotes one hotel owner as saying, "we're up against a classist government that doesn't want a British tourist who works as a waitress to come to Mallorca on vacation." The hotel owner further claims that "they might not spend as much money but they don't consume as many resources either. They are not going to a five-star hotel with ten Jacuzzis, four golf courses and six buffets. They're not arriving in a private jet."⁵⁷

Magaluf as Shagaluf speaks to the idea of a topsy-turvy world, as the public displays of sexual activity do not conform to what could be described as normative moral codes and/or the, albeit stereotypical, notion that sexual intercourse and relations are conducted between people based on feelings of love and well-established relationships. In effect, the mamading incident is an example of an inversion or at least an attempt at an inversion of the social moral order.

Another aspect of the carnivalesque that needs consideration pertains directly to women. In the mamading incident and other similar activities, such as that found in the nighttime entertainment of Pirates Adventure, where women are cajoled into "getting [their] tits out for the boys" and other party "games," women as sexual beings are the central focus.⁵⁸ In addition, recalling anthropologist Mary Douglas's discussions of purity and danger associated with bodily orifices as marginal areas, there is a ritualized debasing of women as the audience is reminded of women's "leaky" and thus potentially polluting bodies.⁵⁹ The objectification and berating of women makes them the objects of what Stallybrass and White refer to as "displaced abjection,"

60. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 53.

61. Levent Soysal, "Intimate Engagements of the Public Kind," *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2010): 373–99.

62. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 19.

63. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 22; and Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 29.

64. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 27.

"the process whereby 'low' social groups turn their figurative and actual power, *not* against those in authority, but against those who are even 'lower' (women, Jews, animals)." As a result, carnivals were not "simply the antithetical sites to the Church and the State," in which one might expect the socially marginalized and persecuted Jewish person, for example, to rise in social ranking, but rather were opportunities to further disparage "the other."⁶⁰

In an inverted world, one would expect that the dominant social order would be overturned. In the UK, the dominant social order remains largely based in patriarchy with women on an unequal footing with men in many spheres of life. Thus, one would expect that in a world turned upside down women would be in the ascendant. However, the game playing objectifies women as sexual beings, turns them in effect into unpaid sex workers, and publicly berates them for not performing or underperforming. This is evident in the mamading game where the young woman is called a "little slag." It was also evident in one night's audience participation game during *Pirates Adventure I* witnessed in July 1998, when a woman who refused to go topless was admonished for not doing so and the men in the audience were told by the game's *compère*: "Don't worry lads, it wouldn't be worth it." The use and portrayal of women in Magaluf cannot then be described as antithetical to the home world. The inversion is more prominent in the overtly public displays of acts associated with the private sphere. Social theorist Levent Soysal makes the point that in the digital age and the rise of social media there is an increased willingness of people to publicly share that which was once only private, but it is, nevertheless, still the case that performances of sex acts, such as mamading, are not acceptable forms of public behavior.⁶¹

In Magaluf, it is as if the normally regulated body of the home world, held in check by social niceties and expected codes of dress and behavior, is unfettered. The tourist is encouraged to get out of control, to focus on the body's orifices, and to pay attention to both what goes in and what comes out. Overindulgence in both food and alcohol (but particularly the latter) is encouraged and rewarded; vomiting is a regular occurrence and often a source of amusement. It is not unusual, for example, to see inebriated people badgered by their amused companions to the point of emesis. Transgressing bodily boundaries and public displays of sexual activity speak to a letting go of the body that is also evident in how the unclothed body can be seen to reveal flesh and areas of the body more usually covered. In the resort, an emphasis on "fat" bodies has resonance with a discourse of grotesque realism discussed as a motif of the carnivalesque.

The Discourse of the Grotesque in Magaluf

In his discussion of the carnivalesque, Bakhtin argues that the depiction of the body in exaggerated form, as in the examples of Weiditz's fat man and grotesque woman described above, formed part of a grotesque realism of which an "essential principle" is "degradation, that is the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract."⁶² Emphasis is often on the body parts that are open to the world with an accent on sexualized aspects of the body. This openness to the world and stress placed on sexual activity contrasts with the classical Renaissance body with its closed orifices and hidden bodily functions related to conception, childbirth, pregnancy, and death.⁶³ The concept of the grotesque body is, according to Bakhtin, "the basis of abuses, oaths, and curses."⁶⁴ A discourse of grotesque bodies and attendant abuse are evident in Magaluf. An idealized body is not one that has layers of fat. In terms of the social body, fatness is a social

65. Stephen Mennell, "On the Civilizing of Appetite," in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth, and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), 126–56.

66. Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 1996), 3.

67. This is not based on a comprehensive analysis of all tourism advertising literature but on my observations of such material. Advertising slimming tablets, a controversial advertisement on the London Underground network shows a woman in a bikini under the caption "beach body ready." Concerns about sending the wrong message to women about body size led to the advertisement's removal. See Jasper Jackson, "[Sadiq Khan Moves to Ban Body-Shaming Ads from London Transport](#)," *Guardian*, June 13, 2016.

68. Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, 382.

69. Hazel Andrews, "[Porkin' Pig Goes to Magaluf](#)," *Journal of Material Culture* 16, no. 2 (2009): 151–70.

category, and attitudes toward and definitions of fat bodies have varied throughout history.⁶⁵ According to sociologist Bryan S. Turner, a slender body became associated with control and morality in Britain from the mid-1800s. Fat bodies came to be linked with being out of control in terms of, for example, not being able to curb excessive eating.⁶⁶ Even before the 1800s, interpretations of body appearance were linked to characteristics of the person. For example, in playwright William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Caesar draws a distinction between those he perceives as a threat and those he does not when he proclaims, "let me have men about me that are fat." By contrast, he does not trust Cassius who has a "lean and hungry look" and "thinks too much." Cassius is equated, unlike his fellow "fat men," with danger.

On holiday, the "beach body," a popular motif in tourism marketing materials, is healthy, toned, muscular, and young. Even images aimed at older audiences, while they may depict older faces, tend not to show older bodies with wrinkled, sun-spotted skin. In addition, bodies that might be described as fat are generally absent from promotional information.⁶⁷ However, fat bodies are evident in Magaluf in the images available to tourists in the form of postcards and in some of the performances aimed at entertaining tourists. One postcard depicts an excessively fat, smiling, naked woman lying stretched out along a tree trunk beneath the caption "Mallorca Happy Island." In another postcard, two tourists, one male, one female, with large stomachs are viewed as if through a pair of binoculars, standing in the sea with the caption "'You are a weight-watcher...' Isla de Mallorca."

The images of people who are excessively overweight invert the idea of the "beach body" as fit, slim, and well honed. At the same time, tourists are aware of their body size and the implications of overindulgence of both food and alcohol. The uncontrolled availability of food and alcohol is a mark of some activities in the resort. For example, tour operator representatives usually sold tickets to Pirates Adventure with the promise of limitless "free" sangria. The idea that drinking large amounts of alcohol was to be rewarded came to the fore in some games played with tourists on bar crawls. In one game, for example, the ability to down in quick succession three potent cocktails earned the drinker the title of "hero" and "legend." In the Land of Cockaigne, drinking was well paid and getting drunk paid even more.⁶⁸ Although there is no financial remuneration for being drunk, the reward for the drinkers comes in the admiration by others and the elevation of status to that of a hero. In Cockaigne, money could also be earned by sleeping and being lazy. Again, not rewarded directly with financial compensation, the opportunities provided to tourists to sleep more than usual and not undertake work is, for those in paid employment, indirectly remunerated because they are still being paid, even though they are not actively engaged with their employment. Cockaigne as "gastronomic paradise" also finds parallels with tourism in Magaluf. Tourists acknowledged that they had eaten more than usual and were putting on weight; as one man proclaimed following a trip out, "I made a bit of a pig of me-self really."

In the late 1990s, pigs occurred time and again in the symbolic landscape of Magaluf along with the fry-up—a breakfast meal consisting of fried bacon and sausages—which was available all day and every day.⁶⁹ The social meanings attached to pigs are accompanied by ambiguity and vary across time and cultural setting. The pig has, however, been long associated with negative connotations of greed, laziness, and dirt and is frequently used as a term of abuse. Stallybrass and White note, "pigs seem to have borne the brunt of our rage, fear, affection and desire for the

'low' and pigs were a "carnavalesque icon." Although in medieval carnival "the pleasures of food were represented in the sausage," the pig nevertheless occupied a similar position to women with respect to displaced abjection.⁷⁰ On the one hand, in Magaluf, pigs and piggy-type qualities are celebrated, and the connection with self-indulgence and overeating serves to lower the pigs' status. In Magaluf, one souvenir, the "Fun Badge," depicts a pig on hind legs wearing an apron under the title "FLUB," which stands for Fat Lazy Useless Bastard. The ubiquitous presence of the pig in Magaluf marks the resort as a site of the carnivalesque.

The carnivalesque draws attention to the grotesque body by exaggeration through the depiction of fat bodies. Being fat, useless, and lazy are things to be celebrated and rewarded in the Land of Cockaigne. In the context of Magaluf, being a bastard can be added to that list. Although being illegitimate no longer carries the social stigma it once did, "bastard" remains a term of abuse. Associated with inferior quality, it is used to debase people. In FLUB, the pig is not only fat, lazy, and useless but also a bastard.

In a different setting, being fat and a bastard becomes a motif of resistance. During a visit to a nightclub in Magaluf as part of an organized bar crawl, attendees listening to the British DJ's banter were told, "I'm a big fat bastard." He exhibited a "couldn't care less what you think about me" attitude as he acknowledged his humor as offensive when he told a "joke" describing how he was going to "shag my 82-year-old mother" and stated, "yes I'm offensive, I'm a big fat bastard." He encouraged the audience to respond to him by shouting "you fat bastard." They were also afforded the opportunity to buy souvenir T-shirts with the caption "You Fat Bastard" emblazoned on them. The DJ linked his self-acknowledged offensiveness with his body size providing a symbolic expression of being objectionable while at the same time embodying this element of his character by being fat. The reference to incest and the related ageism acts as a form of inversion, but, as in the mamading incident, it too becomes a form of displaced abjection as it makes those already low in the social order even lower. It is not just that a son could debase his mother in acts of incest that revolts; it is also the reference to her age.

The attempt at humor at the expense of women in both examples (mamading and sex with mother) fits with the vulgarities associated with carnival identified by Bakhtin. These vulgarities are linked to bodily functions, which in Magaluf find purchase in relation to women's bodies. The next example took place in a hotel located in Magaluf's adjoining resort of Palmanova, although it was doubtless repeated as part of the evening entertainment offered by hotels in Magaluf and elsewhere on Mallorca. In this event, a drag artist gave an impersonation of the opera singer Montserrat Caballé. A world acclaimed artist, Caballé came to popular attention with the song "Barcelona," a duet sung with Freddie Mercury, which became the anthem for the Olympic Games held in Barcelona in 1992. Pictures of Caballé show her as a lady with what might be described as a portly stature. In the drag performance, the opera diva, dressed in a blue glittery dress, was depicted as fat, with hugely exaggerated breasts. She came on stage mouthing the words of the song "Barcelona." As the song approached its climax, the performer reached beneath the dress and pulled out a large pair of bloomer-style knickers, which she revealed to the audience as being blood stained on one side. As the song continued to its rousing end, she once again reached beneath the dress to bring into view an enormous blood-stained tampon, much to the amusement of the audience.

71. David Kunzle, "World Upside Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type," in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 43.
72. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe," in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 168, 169.
73. Andrews, "Tits Out for the Boys and No Back Chat," 177.
74. Davis, "Women on Top," 171, 154.
75. See, for example, Emer Scully, "[Boozed-up British Revellers Take to Magaluf's Main Strip as They Party the Night Away on the Hottest Weekend of the Year](#)," *Daily Mail*, updated July 2, 2019; and Daily Mail U.K. (@DailyMailUK), "[Shameless British Couple Filmed Having Sex on Magaluf Beach in Front of Joggers](#)," Twitter, July 24, 2015, 1:45 p.m.

The ritual humiliation of women's bodies, particularly in relation to reproduction (the mamading incident as symbolic of copulation, the display of menstrual blood in the example of Caballé), finds further mocking in childbirth. As part of one hotel's evening entertainment, a magician hypnotized a man from the audience into believing he was in labor and giving birth. The participant's performance with legs akimbo, accompanying groaning and advice from the hypnotist to push was greeted with laughter. The image of a man giving birth fits well into the idea of the carnivalesque world turned upside down with a reversal of biological functions.

Unruly Women

In the incidents of mamading, menstrual blood, and childbirth, women and their bodily functions are the focus of attention. The aftermath that followed the mamading incident focused less on the fact that several men were willing to expose themselves in public and have their genitalia stimulated by a mouth that had just been around someone else's penis.

These portrayals of women in Magaluf correlate with art historian David Kunzle's observations of literature he studied that spanned three hundred years and seven European countries. The most common inversion he identified was that of male-female, which, he argues "testifies to the widespread sense that patriarchy is the bedrock of society." The literature, he attests, shows the "misogyny of the medieval and Renaissance periods."⁷¹ Treatment of women during these times was in part due to their "sexual temperament," which was based, in part, on the idea that women could not adequately keep their bodies and senses in check. In the carnivalesque, sexual inversions in the form of the "unruly woman" were widespread. These were mainly initiated by men, as women had limited opportunities to enact their own rites of inversion. The unruly woman, however, was an ambiguous figure: she "was shameful, outrageous; she was also vigorous and in command."⁷²

The way I have described the treatment of women in Magaluf is akin to the idea of the unruly woman as shameful and outrageous. In some circumstances, however, there was evidence of women having the "upper hand." A woman might, for example, control the room as the gaze of men followed her. The women I spoke to in the late 1990s neither condoned nor condemned how they were represented. Indeed, some found Magaluf liberating.⁷³

This attitude has parallels with the medieval and Renaissance unruly woman. As historian and anthropologist Natalie Zemon Davis states, "even the most searching feminist critics did not challenge the sovereign authority of the father." Rather, the carnivalesque symbolic inversions mainly strengthened the existing hierarchy. At the same time, however, they promoted resistance to the prevailing system. Indeed, according to Davis, the "image of the disorderly woman ... could operate to widen behavioral options of women."⁷⁴

In the context of Magaluf, there is evident enjoyment from the tourists of the various bodily performances. The inversions and exaggerations act as reminders of who we are and who we are not: men neither give birth nor menstruate. The resort has acquired a reputation for rowdy behavior that has drawn criticism not only in Mallorca but also in the UK, with frequent reports of tourists' more salacious behavior. Such reports find popular currency in British newspaper media and are often accompanied by sensationalist headlines and expressions of outrage and disgust.⁷⁵

76. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 106–7.

77. Alessandro Testa, "[Where Have the Gatherings Gone? Reweaving the Social Fabric in the Time of Pandemic and Interpersonal Distancing](#)," *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie sociale* 28, no. 2 (2020): 366.

78. Andrews, *The British on Holiday*.

This is a demonizing of the working class by a bourgeois establishment that cannot help but look, captivated and revolted in equal measure. According to Stallybrass and White, carnival with its feasting, spectacles, and grotesque bodies was everything the bourgeois middle class was not.⁷⁶ The working-class, mass party tourist is everything the middle-class traveler is not, yet the vulgarity of the former remains a source of fascination.

Conclusion

The party tourist in Magaluf faces an uncertain future with moves to attract a different type of clientele to the resort. The desire to change the tourist profile is understandable, since there are negative associations arising from the party excesses of the resort. These are related to the abjection and exploitation of young women; the risk to health from sexually transmitted infections; and, most tragic of all, the deaths resulting from the practice of balconing, whereby young people (invariably men) fall to their deaths as they attempt to cross, in a drunken state, between hotel or apartment balconies or balance on balcony rails. It is not my intention to condone practices that lead to any death or injury—physical, emotional, reputational. Rather my thinking with the carnivalesque is not only to understand its place in the contemporary world of tourism and therefore think of tourism, and in this case party tourism, as carnivalesque practice but also to bring insight to the practice of party tourism as part of a lineage of activities in the European world that has been pushed to the margins and been used to demonize a certain sector of society. The licensing of unlicensed behavior that becomes possible through the carnivalesque partying as exhibited in some behavior in Magaluf pertains to the lower echelons of society. It is a source of both abhorrence and delight.

In writing about the impacts of lockdown restrictions in Europe due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Testa argues, "Europeans find themselves craving to re-establish that 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim 1912) that thrills and fulfills the masses, shaping them into local communities, vicinities and groups."⁷⁷ Among my discussions about British tourists in Magaluf has always been that the practice of being there gives a sense of belonging and affirmation of life that feeds into an "effervescent Britishness."⁷⁸ Since my writing about effervescent Britishness in Magaluf and Palmanova, the sociopolitical landscape of the UK has changed, and Britishness, always an unstable ethnic descriptor, is now even more subject to question. What does remain, however, is the desire to escape, to reach a place other than the one already inhabited. The global pandemic showed this more than ever as people crowded onto beaches in the UK once lockdown restrictions were lifted. Once holidaying overseas again became possible, people were shown in images crowded together on the streets of Magaluf. The world has changed since the Middle Ages, but the fantasies associated with a life elsewhere remain. Although Pleij is doubtless correct in his assertion that the deprivation of the European world during the Middle Ages is far greater than that experienced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as the cost-of-living crisis deepens, the desire to seek reprieve from "everyday" worries will remain and the tourist will still, either in imagination or practice, be in search of a version of the Land of Cockaigne.

Postscript

In April 2023 I returned to Magaluf for one week and visited the infamous Punta Ballena. The season had only just started, and it was evident that the resort was still preparing for the high-

79. I am grateful to Macià Blázquez Salom, University of the Balearics, Mallorca, for these insights about the changes in the political economy of tourism in Magaluf and the new measures introduced to restrict what is seen as undesirable behavior.

season summer months. Many bars and nightclubs were closed. In those that were open, the drinking culture was still a feature, and there were numerous stag and hen groups making use of the offers of free shots of alcohol available in some bars. Change, however, is afoot. A process of gentrification is now underway in the resort leading to higher hotel prices. This along with restrictions on drinking (for example, no happy hours when alcohol can be bought more cheaply) and activities that sexually exploit women (as in the mamading incident) will probably, over time, change the character of Magaluf as it becomes unaffordable to its traditional target market.⁷⁹ The carnivalesque as it has been practiced in the resort will most likely have to move on.

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AUTHOR BIO

Hazel Andrews is professor of Culture, Tourism and Society at Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom, where she leads the Tourism, Travel, Culture and Heritage Research Group. As a social anthropologist, she is interested in issues of identity, self, and the body, principally in relation to tourism and travel. Her doctoral thesis was the first full-length ethnographic study of British charter tourists and involved periods of participant observation in the resorts of Palmanova and Magaluf on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca. She is the author of the monograph *The British on Holiday: Charter Tourism, Identity and Consumption* (2011) and, more recently, editor of the collection *Tourism and Brexit: Travel, Borders and Identity* (2021), both published by Channel View. She is chair of the Royal Anthropological Institute's Travel and Tourism Committee.

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