The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

READING THE THREAT, IMAGINING OTHERWISE: NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL, THE LONDON RIOTS AND A GLOBAL ISSUE OF BLACKNESS

submitted by Emmanuelle Andrews in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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in Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice

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Abstract

This thesis reads Notting Hill Carnival as a symbolic iteration of the way that blackness is managed by the state. Tracking carnival’s riotous history, including the dampening of Claudia Jones’ legacy, the management crisis of 1976, and carnival’s ever-blossoming relationship with state and private capital, I explore how the event became embroiled in what Roderick Ferguson names, the “[pivot] in the history of power’s relationship to difference.” I then trace how this shift comes to affect later Race Relations legislation when I explore how the ghostly markers through which blackness is made permittable by the British state allows for the legal finding of Mark Duggan’s murder – the event that was said to have ‘sparked’ the riots. By analysing the inquest that sought to rule on the legality of the officer’s actions, I show how the inquest’s conclusions sustain black death through ‘just’ ideals of the rule of law: objectivity and rationality. Nevertheless, I argue that the threat to cancel Notting Hill Carnival after the London Riots reveals that, despite the limits of these liaisons and the state’s attempts to manage blackness through these standards, something radical remains within Notting Hill Carnival, something radical that the rioters were able to mobilize. By listening to the calls of the London Riots as embodied in two statements, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” and “the most exciting two nights of my life,” I explore the ways that the rioters were able to confront the challenges that blackness faces, through responding to the postcolonial hauntings of Notting Hill Carnival and refuting the logics of modern knowledge that the management of blackness supports, through their own imagining otherwise: the (dis)orderly and (ir)rational logics of burning, looting and radical space claiming.
Lay Summary

Ignited by the state’s threat to cancel Notting Hill Carnival after the London Riots of 2011, in this thesis I explore the radicalism that lies within both events. By tracing the history of carnival, I argue that it is a symbolic iteration of the way that blackness became managed by the state. By analysing the inquest into the actions of the officer that killed Mark Duggan – the man whose murder was said to ‘spark’ the riots – and the legislation that permitted a legal finding of his death, I show how values of the rational were attempted to be upheld. Finally, by listening to the calls of the London Riots as embodied in two statements, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” and “the most exciting two nights of my life,” I argue that the rioters responded to the postcolonial hauntings of carnival by dispensing with the qualities that made it state legible but by upholding its radical roots.
Preface

This thesis is the original and independent work of the author, E. Andrews.
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Prologue

August fourth, two thousand and eleven. Mid-day.

Feathers, loads of feathers suddenly, on the ground, in the air, everywhere. An outdoor pillow fight? No, this looked more serious, and there had just been the sound of gunfire, two shots.¹

They were frighteningly loud.²

A duck shoot then, maybe? Wrong again, not toffs with double-barreled shotguns shooting fowl from a rural sky…³

That gun sounds scary [...] it sounded expensive.⁴

To me, it looked like these people had come out to hunt someone.⁵

Urban armed police with some serious weaponry, Operation Trident, in Tottenham, North London.⁶

The police did not inform the family that Mark Duggan had been killed, nor that he died.⁷
August sixth, two thousand and eleven. Morning to afternoon.

Family and friends march to Tottenham police station from their estate, Broadwater Farm, looking for answers. Surveillance cameras trace their route. Metal shutters keep them from entering the station. Three police officers stand affront.

*Can we help you?*

*We want answers.*

*Help us.*

A banner reads, “*Why?*”

Nobody was acknowledging the fact that all these people were standing outside the police station.

*It was just cold down there.*

*It was a hurt anger, do you know what I mean? It was a cry.*
A POLICE MAN’S LIFE WAS SAVED BY HIS RADIO LAST NIGHT AFTER A GUNMAN MARK DUGGAN OPENED FIRE ON HIM AND THE BULLET HIT THE DEVICE.\textsuperscript{11}

It was later confirmed by ballistic reports that the bullet found lodged in the police officer’s radio, was consistent with being fired from a police-issue Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine gun.\textsuperscript{12}

If they can’t get the truth they make it up.\textsuperscript{13}

He’s not a devil.\textsuperscript{14}

Infidelity an’ all this, what’s that got to do with anything? It’s called character assassination.\textsuperscript{15}

We don’t know who to trust.\textsuperscript{16}

This is something that they do to our community all the time. If you grow up in an estate like this, I’m sorry, you’re not gonna grow up to be an angel.\textsuperscript{17}

He was known as a peacemaker on Broadwater Farm.\textsuperscript{18}

Well known gangster.\textsuperscript{19}
August sixth to August eleventh, two thousand and eleven.

It wasn’t just about Mark [...] It was about all the other people that have died in police custody.

It was too raw, too soon, for another Broadwater Farm resident -Cynthia Jarrett
-Joy Gardner
-Roger Sylvester
-Jermaine Baker
to have died at the hands of the police.20

The beating of the young girl.21

That’s when it all got violent.22

IT’S A FUCKING GIRL.23

The longer that they failed to respond, the bolder the kids became.24

It was literally hot. There was so much body heat. Two fires.25

They let his dog bite me.26
The atmosphere changed. Everyone was just going crazy. No one was listening to the police. But at the same time, the police weren’t listening to us.

Feral youth frankly, who fancy a new pair of trainers. 27

At that time, I just saw a lot of anger vented towards the police, which I wasn’t surprised about. 28

They’re talking about youths and black youths and that bein’ on the streets, but I’m tellin’ you, nah, there was big people there, multicultural people, taking stuff from the building sites and setting up barricades from the police. 29

Last night, police officers again put themselves in harm’s way to protect Londoners and their property. 30

Everywhere had a funny feeling. 31

Rocks and bottles. 32

22 London boroughs affected. It spread North.

Nottingham, Coventry, Birmingham, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Huddersfield.
In Liverpool: *If he didn’t get shot dead, then I don’t think all them riots would have happened.* 33

*People lost their houses.* 34

Five dead.

*I absolutely condemned [...] the kind of mindless violence [...] that went on; but what sparked those riots was people being angry about very real issues [...] they had no voice, and no one was listening to them.* 35

*There’s no justice.*

*There’s just us.* 36

*They’re being told to shut up. Sit down. And go away.* 37

*There’s no hope.* 38

*Why bother?* 39
To construct a narrative of the riots as they were told by both the media and those involved and affected, is to bear witness to the fast-paced heat of the uprisings themselves, and paint a picture of the real, human, emotions that the killing of Mark Duggan and the resulting uprisings brought forth. I do this to pay respect to those summer days and to acknowledge the way that the media, as well as discourse on the ground, passes through and affects real lives and real action. Piecing such discourse together in this way might not produce a tale any more or less ‘truthful’ than that told by the mainstream media. But if one thing must be taken from the riots, it is that “no one was listening to them.”

They do not need a voice. They have one, and they scream.

I hope, therefore, that this piecing, and this thesis more widely, might act as a living archive to hear the subaltern, against the deafening noise of other discourse, writings that make those voices illegitimate.

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2 Nygh, Riot from Wrong.

3 Wollaston, "Lawful Killing.”

4 Anonymous, Riot from Wrong.

5 Statement of evidence about the police said by the minicab driver who was driving the car that Mark Duggan was in before he died, during the inquest into Mark Duggan’s death. Wollaston, “Lawful Killing.”

7 In this section, anything not written in italics are my own words.

8 Mark Duggan’s friend, Adrian, recalling the march, Riot from Wrong.

9 Inscribed on the banners of people marching to the police station from Broadwater Farm.

10 Name withheld, describing the atmosphere during the march, Riot from Wrong.


12 Narrator, Riot from Wrong.

13 Carol Duggan, Mark Duggan’s aunt, Riot from Wrong.

14 Mo, Mark’s friend, Riot from Wrong.

15 Adrian, Mark’s Duggan’s friend, Riot from Wrong.

16 Carol Duggan, Riot from Wrong.

17 Stafford Scott, activist, Riot from Wrong.

18 Shaun Hall, Mark Duggan’s brother, Riot from Wrong.

19 "Man Killed in Shooting Incident Involving Police Officer.”

20 Janelle Oswald, journalist, Riot from Wrong.

21 Wan-Cee, poet, referring to a police assault on a civilian, Riot from Wrong.

22 Anon interviewees, Riot from Wrong.

23 From video footage of police attack, Riot from Wrong.

24 Stafford Scott, Riot from Wrong.

25 Anon, Riot from Wrong.

26 Name withheld, speaking about his treatment by a police officer, Riot from Wrong.

Emeke Ebguono, youth worker and author, *Riot from Wrong.*

Anthony, filmmaker, *Riot from Wrong.*

Theresa May, then Home Secretary, quoted in “London Riots: Looting and Violence Continues.”

Shauna, youth worker and poet, *Riot from Wrong.*

“London Riots: Looting and Violence Continues.”

Anon, Liverpool resident, *Riot from Wrong.*

Janelle Oswald, *Riot from Wrong.*

Celia Greenwood, *Riot from Wrong.*

Stafford Scott, *Riot from Wrong.*

Michael Mansfield, barrister, *Riot from Wrong.*

Janette Collins, activist, *Riot from Wrong.*

See note 38 above.

Celia Greenwood, CEO, *Riot from Wrong.*
Chapter 1: Introduction

“The fear wouldn’t go away and she began to feel that these thoughts would die before her, die trying to be heard. She didn’t understand them, but she feared the savage state of death more than ignorance. So, she opened the doors and slowly the words came alive and began to speak to her saying, ‘these are for those to whom history has not been friendly. For those who have known the cruelties of political becoming. Those who demand in the shadows of dying technologies, those who live with the sorrows of defiance, those who live among the abandoned aspirations which were the metropolis. Let them bear witness to the ideals which in time will be born in hope. In time, let them bear witness to the process by which the living transforms the dead into partners in struggle.’”

Sometime in the midst of the 2011 Riots – the three days of protest that occurred after the shooting of yet another young black person in the world, this time in the United Kingdom – rumour went around that Notting Hill Carnival, an annual street festival taking place in one of London’s wealthiest boroughs, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, would be cancelled. I was 16 at the time and confused, unable to conceptualise the link between these two seemingly disparate events. This thesis is, in part, a long overdue opportunity to answer that 16-year-old’s questions, to speak to that, perhaps innocent, bewilderment. I think, deep down, I always knew the link, though perhaps I could not articulate it then. Blackness. At the same time, I remain dissatisfied with that ostensibly simple answer. If it were a matter of blackness, why was Notting Hill Carnival the punishment? After all, the riots were perhaps unusual in their

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1 Akomfrah, *Handsworth Songs*.

2 Throughout this thesis, I mostly refer to the events in 2011 as ‘the London Riots.’ Whilst much literature on the topic leans towards terms such as ‘revolt’ or ‘uprising’ due to the criminal referent that ‘riots’ – a term mostly used by the state and the right-wing media – beckons, I choose to use the term ‘riot,’ since, as will become clearer, I want to move away from the desire to humanise or rationalise the events, or bring the rioters into a respectable moral economy. Instead, I argue that the power in these uprisings comes from their very illegality, including their riotous violence.
mixing; a display of multiculturalism if ever there was one. But in line with scholars such as David Lloyd – who has considered the “unmarked position” of whiteness – or Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer – who describe whiteness as having “secured universal consent to its hegemony as the 'norm' by masking its coercive form with the invisibility that marks off the other” – we know that blackness is not afforded these nuances. 3 As the threat to cancel Notting Hill Carnival suggests, it does not matter what diverse racial makeup the rioters held, that blackness was involved at all is enough. Indeed white rioters were “blackened”4 through their very participation, as David Starkey’s overtly racialized comment about the problem of the riots being that “the whites have become black” attests, as well as then Prime Minister, David Cameron’s less overt but, nonetheless, still racialized nod to “children without fathers. Reward without effort. Crime without punishment. Rights without responsibilities. Communities without control,” further confirms. 5 Such discourse is only too familiar, and, as we shall see, it directly


4 For more on class rhetoric’s racialized roots see Robbie Shilliam, Race and the Undeserving Poor. Here Shilliam traces the poor from pre-abolition to the present day (and particularly, the summer of the EU Referendum) to counter the perception of the working class as a unified racial body (as ideas of the “forgotten white working class,” utilized to encourage historically working-class areas of Britain to vote leave, rested upon), but instead haunted by a distinction between those “deserving” of social security and welfare (the white poor) and “undeserving” (the black poor). Particularly interesting is his detailing of the ways in which the white poor can become “blackened,” but that it is always a verb, not a noun: though blackened, they are not destined to remain “black(ened)” but can be (and, according to the state, should be) redeemed.

echoes the threats yielded by the state on Notting Hill Carnival since its inception. As we shall also see, it was this same discourse that instigated the carnival committee’s 1976 split, after their failure to adequately deal with these ‘problems’: “children without fathers. Reward without effort. Crime without punishment. Rights without responsibilities. Communities without control.”

That carnival, yearly, sits on this uneasy terrain, (its geographical parameters debated, ticketed participation deliberated, police presence boosted, ‘pre-emptive’ drug seizes celebrated), urges me to take this perceived threat seriously. Beyond blackness, even beyond blackness’ gathering, what is at stake with(in) carnival? How can a financially successful, ‘multicultural’ celebration and altogether neoliberal, state-legible event cause such scepticism? Particularly, by linking the two (carnival and the riots), what, in this moment, did the state reveal itself to be so afraid of?

Beyond why Notting Hill Carnival was the punishment, I am interested in considering what mechanisms, structures, histories and politics – in short, what conditions – made possible the threat to Notting Hill Carnival, and to situate this local threat amidst a national dealing of blackness that allows blackness – black joy, black resistance and black lives – itself to be constantly threatenable. What do these threats tell us about the state of race in Britain today? And, perhaps more importantly, how does this state reflect, mirror, differ from or contribute to, a global dealing with blackness?

To situate these interrogations, this thesis will work through three further chapters in order to make the argument that Notting Hill Carnival is part of a localised, state discursive apparatus for the management of a global issue of blackness, and that the uprisings expressed an

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6 David Cameron, “PM’s speech on the fightback after the riots.” Aug 15, 2011.
imagining beyond it. In Chapter 2, *On Haunting: Notting Hill Carnival*, I situate Notting Hill Carnival as a symbolic iteration of the challenges imposed by blackness on the British state and explore the way that the crisis of blackness was to be managed from there onwards by working through the internal carnival debates and the continual pressure from within and outside to rationalize and control carnival’s festivities – whether through capital, space, or more directly in cutting its potential as a place for critique. I argue that, although these tactics are framed as being directed at the event, they become covert ways to make blackness itself permittable, through carnival’s markers of culture and respectability. However, I acknowledge that, despite Notting Hill Carnival being haunted by these logics, including contemporary iterations of racial capitalism in the pornotropic liaisons that allow the state and private organisations to profit off black resistance, the soundings of carnival and its spatial logistics enable the possibility of something radical to be inherent.

In Chapter 3, *The Uprising & Its Afterlives*, I explore the inquest into the actions of the officer (an agent by the codename, V53) that killed Mark Duggan – the man whose killing was said to ‘spark’ the riots – to show the deadly consequences of the state’s management of blackness, and the ways in which the logics utilised in Notting Hill Carnival in fact allowed for the legal finding of his death. Here I will track how the politics of inclusion, like the state’s management of carnival through the support of it as a cultural and respectable event, is embedded in the Macpherson Report and the Race Relations Act, two supposedly anti-racist texts. By emphasising the texts’ harnessing of so-called objective truths, I will be able to then later show how the rioters’ incoherent demands were very much intentional, as ways of imagining otherwise beyond the rationale of the law.
Finally, in Chapter 4, *Imagining Otherwise*, I closely read two statements expressed during the riots, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” and “the most exciting two nights of my life,” as two very specific attempts at undermining the state’s logics of black management (inclusion and death) through the rioters’ differing articulations of justice. What the (dis)orderly and (ir)rational nature of the London Riots as a whole express, I argue, is how the rioters engaged in counter-Imperialist modes of resistance and joy that simultaneously reveal the limits of responses to racial injustice as they construct an imagining of otherwise.

In this chapter I will begin by situating this thesis locally, by way of a journey through a historical landmark: the first widescale presence of blackness in Britain. I do this in order to contextualise the significance of Notting Hill Carnival’s conceptualisation – as a response to the climate of racism in the UK – but also to explore the ways in which black theorists and activists in this period in Britain have responded theoretically to the global issue of blackness that they faced. Whilst I will go on to critique these responses, I emphasise that their limitations arise as a result of the climate themselves and the types of responses thought necessary to deal with it.

Next, in *Methodological Frames*, I will show how I arrive at the first of my main two main arguments: the specific way in which blackness is managed in the UK. I will do this by explaining how I am dealing with the contradictions of Notting Hill Carnival. That is, how, despite it being an event rooted in the traditions of enslaved peoples it is also a limited tool for justice as a result of its intimacy with state and capital. However, I reveal how its role as a

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7 It should be reminded that black presence in Britain dates as far back as the third century AD. See Chitra Ramaswamy, “Black and British: A Forgotten History Review – This is What it Means to Share a Heritage,” *Guardian*, November 10, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2016/nov/10/black-and-british-a-forgotten-history-review-this-is-what-it-means-to-share-a-heritage.
limited tool is intentionally manufactured by the state and that, depending on what we listen to within carnival, and how, might reveal underpinnings of resistance. Finally, in *Theoretical Frames*, I explain how I come to the second of my two arguments: how the London Riots spoke to something potentially radical within carnival that might disrupt this management. I argue that it is possible – through the rioters – to read something radical within Notting Hill Carnival despite its inconsistencies. I do this by conducting a literature review of other scholars’ approaches to the London Riots and explain how the ways in which I differ from them will enable us to hear an imagining otherwise in the rioters’ calls.

1.1 Socio-Political Frames

“Sometimes I see myself floating at the centre of the earth, loving and loathing the city. In these moments I forgive myself for being alive.”

When the Empire Windrush arrived in London in 1948 it carried Caribbeans responding to Britain’s post-war reality of white British men killed during the war, and the consequent lack of bodies to fill the roles they left behind. Just as many Caribbeans before them (and no doubt, many on board the ship themselves) had fought for Britain (some 10,000), they were now here to re-build a nation they saw as their own. After all, as Commonwealth subjects of the British crown, they were – in both a cultural and juridical sense – ‘British.’ In their Caribbean homes, their everyday life was influenced greatly by British colonialism (education, sport, religion, literature, language), guided by the “logic of Empire [that] conveyed to black people in the colonies […] that

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8 Akomfrah, *Handsworth Songs*.

they were indeed British.”

Instilling a sense of patriotism for ‘King and Empire’ no doubt was a key colonial mechanism that facilitated Caribbean servicepersons’ enlistment in the British army; as Victor Brown, a former combatant for the merchant navy stated in an interview with the BBC, “we were British subjects and that was something to be proud of.”

Nonetheless, the welcome they received was not the one they could have anticipated from their perceived fellow countrypeoples. Though Enoch Powell’s *River of Blood* 1968 speech – the same year that it became no longer legal for black UK passport holders to enter Britain without parents or grandparents in residence there already – is remembered in Britain for being an outrageous blip in national political memory, racism in Britain was, unsurprisingly, commonplace. Tory MP, Peter Griffiths’ winning election slogan three years prior to Powell’s speech (1965), “If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour,” was expressed by Griffiths himself as merely “a manifestation of popular feeling,” despite, it should be said, 1962 legislation removing the right of Commonwealth citizens’ residency. Blackness – and attacks on it – was perceived as a problem brought with new settlement, rather than a problem of racist responses to settlement. Hence, in 1978, then-Tory party leader Margaret Thatcher, in direct response to Home Office figures of projected immigration based on current rates stated, “Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a

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11 Brennan, "Britain's Forgotten War Heroes."


13 It is this sort of logic that we see occurring against Britain’s Muslim communities. It is these ‘immigrants’ who are said to be ‘threatening’ the country’s national unity via their refusal to ‘assimilate’ or adopt ‘British culture.’ See Lentin and Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism*. 
different culture and, you know […] if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.” Racism was framed as an inevitable, hence natural, response to the social problem being imposed on Britain’s white population.

React “rather hostile,” they did, had been doing and continue to do. In John Akomfrah’s *Handsworth Songs*, we witness scenes of black men being chased by the police, in the midst of the Handsworth riots, directly after a clip of Margaret Thatcher’s television interview from which the statement above is originally taken. One is dragged to the floor, hit with batons and shields; it takes five officers or so to pin down his single self. Black women sit on a brick wall atop the ground where the man lies, hardly shocked, nor outraged, nor surprised. Their unflinching demeanour suggests that the scene is common enough. In a later scene, another young black man, likely a teenager, acknowledges the Scylla and Charybdis of black existence in Britain: “you get nowt […] and then when you’re fed up without finding a job and then you come out at night, the police are pressuring ya. Every little thing you do. You can’t even walk the street, they picking you up, beat you up or something like that…” As I will later illustrate, that the street became an essential site of resistance for youth during the uprisings of 2011 is an acknowledgement of this historical and ongoing context of the inability, otherwise, to be safe on British streets.

It is from such “contradictory dual logics,” colonial instillations of British identity coupled with actions and sentiment that persistently denied it, that black Britishness was consolidated, as a radical and critical reclamation of national belonging. In other words, to survive as a black or brown person in Britain, British identity, necessarily, had to be forcefully proclaimed. As Dick

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14 Akomfrah, *Handsworth Songs*.

15 Koff, *Blacks Britannica*.

Hebdige puts it, "for young blacks in Britain in the wake of the riots […] subject to aggressive and intensive policing, such a blatant assertion of the right to be a black Londoner, to be both black and British, has political bite - this is an identity traced out along a special jagged kind of 'British edge.'"\(^\text{17}\) In the film *Blacks Britannica*, banned both in the US and UK for its glaring documentation of community-waged and state-supported terror, a voiceover neatly summarizes the sentiment of many white Britons: “Already their coming has caused national controversy. But whatever our feelings we cannot deny their entry. As British citizens…”\(^\text{18}\) Since the ability to sway immigration policy was, for the most part, out of everyday civilians’ hands, modes of attack were waged in order to make ‘them’ ‘go back,’ to literally scare them, or in some cases, kill them out of existence in a Britain whose parameters of inclusion were clearly white.

Such racialized conditions, including violence, slum lord racketeering and employment discrimination, motivated an understanding of blackness devoid of racial ties. Blackness in 1970s Britain, then, became a political term that any minority could claim – from South Asians to the Irish. A great deal of the theoretical and cultural work to come out of the UK during this time was thus guided by the racism that black communities met, and the severance of black settlement from the country’s imperial-colonial history. Naming oneself was a key political strategy that made transparent counternarratives against histories “normalized and embedded in whiteness.”\(^\text{19}\) In turn, this framed social justice movements and became a central aim for the Black British Cultural

\(^{17}\) Hebdige, “Digging for Britain: An Excavation in Seven Parts,” 140.

\(^{18}\) Koff, *Blacks Britannica*.

Studies project. For example, against racist understandings of black and brown people as ‘immigrants,’ activists underlined the term’s inaccuracy, preferring instead ‘migrant’ to signify slavery and colonialism’s introduction of a black British identity. Theorists such as Paul Gilroy have further drawn attention to imperial nostalgia in order to dismantle “fantasies of imperial benevolence and triumph.” Although, as I will outline, these methods have their flaws, the legacies of which affected Notting Hill Carnival’s own management, and consequently haunt contemporary responses to racial injustice, such as the Race Relations Act, this pressure on British history was a key intervention in national memory, and securing, at least relatively, black safety.

1.2 Methodological Frames
To situate this thesis amidst a global issue of blackness, I want to simply remind us of the ease with which local ties are already enmeshed globally. When an enthusiastic carnival-goer follows the trajectory of Carnival’s processional route, they are taken, likely unknowingly, on a tour of colonialism, from the grandiose white structures of Kensington and Chelsea’s elite homes, through to cobbled streets that once were slums. As Adela Ruth Tompsett emphasises in her history of Notting Hill Carnival,

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20 Indeed, Baker, Best and Lindeborg claim that “analysis as counternarrative describes the most crucial way in which black British cultural studies has engaged with, and contributed to, the work of postcolonial studies in recent years.” Similarly, the authors identify that Stuart Hall, though he would go on to critique this politics, acknowledged this as being the “only possible politics of blackness.” “Representing Blackness/Representing Britain,” 11.

[the route] is a microcosm of that macrocosm that is a shared history between coloniser and colonised. From the industrial canal behind Kensal Road and old factory buildings and working man's club in the north of the area, down to the fine streets of Arundel Gardens, Kensington Park and Westbourne Grove, in the south, with their handsome white stucco fronted houses built with the wealth of empire, the route reflects every level of empire activity from the making of wealth in plantation and factory to the displacing of it in the grand houses.\footnote{22 Adela Ruth Tompsett, “‘London is the Place for Me,’” 49.}

This thesis traces that history etched into the very fabric of the neighbourhood it straddles. There are ghosts in those pavement cracks and they haunt the bodies of those who walk upon them: \textit{It is not just in my remememory, but out there, in the world, right in the place where it happened.}\footnote{23 Toni Morrison, \textit{Beloved}, quoted in Gordon, 166.} I choose to study Notting Hill Carnival and the London Riots, not only because of the haunting that travels between them and the threat to cancel the former after the disruption of the latter, but also because of my own situating as an inhabitant of Notting Hill. I walk those streets and I call them home, and as such, I carry the remnants of the hauntings on the soles of my own two feet. Further from home, but really just as close, I see the “afterlives of slavery,” one of the originary dealings of blackness, haunting the United Kingdom, London, Notting Hill, Notting Hill Carnival and the London Riots, and it is in response to the afterlife that I rest upon this topic.\footnote{24 Saidiya Hartman coined this term to acknowledge the transatlantic slave trade’s everlasting legacy on contemporary black life: “skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment...” See Hartman, \textit{Lose Your Mother}, 6.} The afterlives are called upon directly in the detail of the carnival player’s mask, in the shake of
the dancer’s hips, in the pounding of the steel pan’s drum. They haunt the social fabric and the calls to revolution and it will continue to do so until its calls are answered. As Avery Gordon states, “this sociality, the wavering present, forces a something that must be done that structures the domain of the present and the prerogatives of the future.”

In addition to the state’s threat to cancel Notting Hill Carnival after the London Riots of 2011 leading me to analyse carnival as an iteration of the way blackness is managed in the UK, the literature on Notting Hill Carnival itself is very revealing and as an archive enacts the management tactics that I name. Specifically, and as I will go on to explore in more detail in the next chapter, there are many inconsistencies with regard to who the event is attributed to, and, consequently, what date it is said to have first been held. Michel Foucault encourages us to take seriously the ways in which discourse, and analyses of it, can lead us to understandings of the ways in which power works. This means that my methodological and theoretical approach are closely intertwined, since it is, in part, through my methodology – of questioning Notting Hill Carnival’s historical representation – that I see my argument – that Notting Hill Carnival is an example of the way that blackness is managed in the UK – being actively played out. Then, when I analyse the ways that the rioters protested, through two statements, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” and “the most exciting two nights of my life,” I come to a further understanding of what within Notting Hill Carnival remains radical and what its threat might be. This means that whilst the London Riots as an event instigated the threat to cancel Notting Hill Carnival, there is also a threat within Notting Hill Carnival itself.

25 Gordon, 179.

26 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 
Gavin Carver’s work provides a helpful illustration of how theorists have conceptualised Notting Hill Carnival. On the one hand, Carver recognises the weight of its “critical context” in the history of the form (coming from a tradition of enslaved peoples’ mockery of power), the subversive elements in the form (such as the use of music like reggae, “originating in oppositional subcultures”), and the role of the actors who express the form (which, given their blackness in spaces of whiteness, is “a political act in itself”), and sees how this “critical context,” becomes subdued in the face of its requirement to have a “responsible image.” But on the other hand, Carver misunderstands the racialized underpinnings of the ‘need’ for a “responsible image,” and resultingly, cannot see his own analysis as playing into the same requirement that necessitates it. And so, whilst Carver discusses the inconsistencies within Notting Hill Carnival – the way in which carnival must become state legible and must do so by dampening its radical tendencies, which as a result, moves it further away from its original intentions – he misdirects the blame for this reality. To be sure, there is a necessary critique of state required in this story, which he understands. He states,

"carnival offers a glimpse of alternative life strategies, indexing values and behaviour that may be found threatening or at least distasteful by the dominant classes. Since true carnival offers a vision and reworking of the world as seen from below, the hegemonic order of any one era attempts to control carnivalesque expression, orienting it towards its harmonious and cathartic functions while eliminating its radical or revolutionary potential."


28 Carver, 34.
Carver also understands the place of capital in this story when he states that “commercial sponsorship is the latest event in this process of cultural exchange affecting the carnival.”

29 His two readings of state and capital allow me to arrive at my own understanding of the way that carnival is managed in the UK. 30 However, what really troubles Carver is the fact that the “spectacle” of carnival (through state and capital) comes to overshadow its radical “context,” initiating a binary relationship that can never be harmonised. In this way I differ from Carver, because whilst I critique the way that capital influences Notting Hill Carnival, and how the organizers continue to pay, what Carver calls, a “cultural price,” I see the way that state and capital initiate and sustain that influence in order to actively dampen, not only carnival’s radical tendencies, but blackness itself. 31 In other words, for me, the dampening of the radical context of Notting Hill Carnival is not an accidental by-product of carnival’s intimate relationship with state and capital, but state and capital’s intentional aim. Consequently, the very fact that Carver misunderstands this also aids state and capital, his own analysis itself becoming part of the management of blackness.

Thus, in the name of “something that must be done,” I closely read the activities of Notting Hill Carnival and return to its originary roots as it was conceptualised by Claudia Jones. 32 Roderick Ferguson, following Foucault, identifies how networks of power “work through and with minority difference and culture, trying to redirect originally insurgent formations and deliver them to the normative ideals and protocols of state, capital, and

29 Carver, 40.
30 See note 29 above.
31 Carver, 40.
32 Gordon, 179.
In the case of Notting Hill Carnival, I identify how the continual failure for theorists to identify Jones – a black feminist and Communist exiled to the UK from the US – as its founder, in the place of Rhaune Laslett is, in itself, an exercise of power. This historical inaccuracy illustrates to me how the state, from the very beginning of carnival’s foundations, needed to work intimately with minority difference because of the threat within carnival. And whilst the threat to cancel carnival after the riots became part of the management of blackness (i.e. a tactic used to punish the rioters), I argue that it shows how the rioters might have been enacting their own initiation of Gordon’s future happening: responding to Jones’ radicalism through a (different to carnival, and potentially [un]accomplished) praxis of refusal, as an attempt to imagine with carnival but otherwise from state and capital’s hold on it.

To illustrate the very real implications of Notting Hill Carnival’s management and the reverberations of the consequences outside of the event itself, I analyse the Duggan inquest and look to how the legal finding of his murder may be traced back to the Race Relations Act and Macpherson Report – the first, a response to Britain’s racial climate, the second a response to the killing of black teenager, Stephen Lawrence. Both texts follow in the traditions of Notting Hill Carnival’s own management and thus emphasise the intentional violence inherent within these management strategies. I also highlight the logics of the law by considering two legal theories grounded in it: objectivity and reasonableness. I analyse the inquest not only to show how acutely the law works in tandem with the modern subject to sustain black death, nor just in order to make us question the state’s notion of the rule of law – critical race and legal theorists have long before articulated these realities – but to prepare us for my emphasis in the next chapter.

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about how the rioters imagined beyond justice through their own messy and incoherent articulations of it.

To arrive at this reading – of the strength lying within the inarticulate calls of the rioters – I engage with (and attempt to combat) media representations that frame them as disorganized and apolitical. I do this in order to take seriously their desires, rather than simply dismiss them because of the way in which they waged their struggle. However, in my analysis of such rhetoric, I am cautious of falling into the trap that some scholars have done, of trying to expose the media’s racism by rationalising the riots and civilizing the rioters by justifying their actions as intelligible under the conditions of their social realities. I thus differ from many sociological analyses of the riots and scholars’ desires to explain them. For instance, literature on the riots has been saturated with detail on its “causes”: bad housing and gentrification, marginalization and alienation, or police animosity. Other more recent studies, thanks to the gift of hindsight, engage in the riots’ ‘life-cycle’ by paying close attention to the ways the riots “[unfolded] and what [followed] in their wake,” as much as on the “lead-up,” hence leading to studies that engage the London Riots in comparative studies of European ones. Whilst the data from these scholars is incredibly important, perhaps the most relevant instance for my purposes of this ‘life-cycle’ model is a study by Matteo Tiratelli who, in an effort to reveal the inaccuracy of the rioters’ supposed “criminal opportunism,” closely reads factors such as the type of stores attacked


35 For example see Akram, “Recognizing the 2011 United Kingdom Riots as Political Protest.”

36 For example see Kawalerowicz and Biggs, “Anarchy in the UK.”

(corporate chains more frequently than local shops) and more broadly the spatial and situational
dynamics of the riots (the emotional significance of specific places) to argue that the rioters were
“reclaiming the everyday.”

Tiratelli’s analysis remains one of the only works that hints that the radical nature of the riots comes from the desire to undo the rationale of capitalist logic and to expose the limits of the law.

I am hesitant of sociological explanations for a further reason, particularly because of the way that, as John Marquez explains, these schemes frame urban crisis as inevitable,
“[naturalizing] the idea that [urban violence] results from cultural traits that develop and proliferate under a situation of racial (socioeconomic) exclusion.”

It is important for me not to do this because of the assumptions that underlie them and that follow about the “good” and “bad” poor, the valuing of people based upon a morality principle of deserved social welfare.

Furthermore, these initiate particular responses from the state in the form of invigorated gentrification plans, as did happen in Tottenham with the hopes that redevelopment in the wake of the riots would encourage, and enable, access to middle class life. As Denise Ferreira da Silva explains, the “logic of obliteration,” involves not just the “elimination of social provisions, [and] poor quality of social services,” but also the “expropriation of land and resources,” something which the United Kingdom might not ever consider given the focus (for good reason) of this type of literature on settler-colonial states, but that nonetheless, “[characterizes] global capitalism,” and thus also the UK.

As the burning flames of Grenfell Tower in the summer of 2017

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38 Tiratelli, “Reclaiming the Everyday.”
40 See for example, Shilliam, Race and the Undeserving Poor.
horrifically became proof of, gentrification is but a mere redefinition of colonial space, whereby ‘well-deserved’ community ‘uplift’ pushes racialized communities ever closer to death, to further poverty, worse schools, more areas plagued by councils with smaller budgets, or into ‘more attractive’ council buildings without fire-resistant cladding: it is but a deadly colonial facelift. Again, such tools remind us of the necessary coupling of Ferreira da Silva’s “logic of exclusion” with the “logic of obliteration,” and that as Marquez states, these conditions are not “reversible via inclusion into the class structure, ethics or values of the colonial authority. [They are] reversible only through resistance, decolonization, and self-determination.”42 By questioning the requirement of legitimacy, I uphold the riots for their purposefully (ir)rational or counter-rational nature as can be seen in the numerous actions of clearing space to drink on the streets, or filling shopping trolleys and leaving them by shop entrances. What counter-capitalist, anti-racist and imaginative potential might be uncovered?

Although framed as a lost potential to be gained, I also want to emphasise the very substantial consequences of (problematic) academic practices, and the legacies that these institutional hauntings have on social justice futures. This thesis therefore treads the fine line of critiquing moments in history without which “neither the analysis of nor the political struggle against racism could have been articulated.”43 To draw an example from another field to illustrate, let us briefly consider the work of Laura Doan, a critical historian who is interested in queer histories, and specifically in arguing that ‘finding the lesbian in the archive’ is immensely problematic. Doan provides a useful methodology of feminist caretaking in her positively disruptive scholarship that allows for thoughtful but rigorous critique of the cultural histories of

42 Marquez, 627.

43 Lloyd, “Race under Representation,” 2.
marginalized peoples. Using Charles Taylor’s distinction between “historical wounds and historical truths,” Doan recognizes the “grievous wound,” that undercuts the history of homosexuality and same sex desires and encourages us to consider the “collective melancholic response to [the] trauma of historical elision” as legitimate.\(^{44}\) Doan’s approach enables a sensitive critique that is attentive and sympathetic to the desire to ‘find the lesbian in the archive’ that is ancestral genealogy’s mode d’etre. But though sensitive, Doan also warns against romanticizing ancestral genealogy as innocently melancholic, and emphasises the importance of sitting with melancholy transparently, highlighting that the mix of history and memory might be “[irresponsible], if not inflammatory.”\(^{45}\) Doan illustrates the implications of our academic work and activism. Speaking of LGBTQ+ rights claims, she quotes Wendy Brown who says that, “in its emergence as a protest against marginalization or subordination, politicised identity thus becomes attached to its own exclusion…[i]t installs its pain over its unredeemed history in the very foundation…”\(^{46}\) Caring – Doan rightfully acknowledges the strength of that original “political struggle” – yet rigorous – Doan does not do so uncritically – she centres her concerns with theoretical hauntings, desirous not to replicate the harms of Eurocentric scholarship that feminist, and I might add, anti-racist work so often can – though unintentionally – reproduce.

Scholars such as Robin Kelley and Cedric Robinson look to non-traditional sites of communal gathering (indeed, Notting Hill Carnival itself stems from a resistance to formal political organizing) to bear witness to a history of black radicalism that has existed for millennia and continues to thrive amidst an archive that attempts to deny it. \textit{It will happen again; it will be}

\[^{44}\text{Doan, } \textit{Disturbing Practices}, \text{71-77.}\]

\[^{45}\text{Doan, } 74.\]

\[^{46}\text{See note 45 above.}\]
there for you. It is waiting for you. Like Robinson and Kelley, rather than reading individual acts and testimonies solely, I look to their symbolic and collective iterations, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the messy affect of those who might, after all, have no intention of making such a political wager. The potential for apathy only brings to the fore the reality that much is at stake within our arena of contemporary violences and that, marked by a neoliberal state of precarity, many are too exhausted to be able to care, and that many more choose not to care whatsoever. Perhaps, in many ways, this thesis’ reading of a political imaginary in the riots is my own imagining otherwise, a way of believing in a radical hope that might signal a new way of living (dying) in the world.

1.3 Theoretical Frames

“‘Inglan is a bitch // dere's no escapin it // Inglan is a bitch // dere's no runnin' whey fram it”

As I hope to have thus far made clear, and though I have yet to explicitly define it, I believe that to imagine otherwise indicates an acknowledgement of the possibility that imagination can be (and has been) limited, that imagination can happen within the state. Accordingly, this thesis traces the journey of imagining otherwise through an analysis of imagining within; of the ghosts that haunt any imagining at all, under the watch of certain actors and under certain conditions, from the UK’s history of Windrush era citizenship claims wherein which blackness was purposefully intimately tied to Britishness, if not in racial terms but, as Stuart Hall famously described, in the “economic blood-stream” of the “sugar you stir […] in the sinews of the famous British sweet tooth […] in the tea leaves at the bottom of the ‘British cuppa,’” to the supposedly

47 Johnson, “Inglan is a Bitch.”
radical proclamation of ‘institutional racism,’ following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.\footnote{From a speech by Stuart Hall entitled “Race and Racism” given to the British Sociological Association in 1978. Quoted in Gilroy, “British Cultural Studies and the Pitfalls of Identity,” 225.} Whilst I critique the limits of these definitions, reforms and rhetoric, I also want to recognise them as a powerful strategy of counternarrative waged in order to “get the pigs off our back,” in other words, for survival, as well as necessary for successful wins.\footnote{Akomfrah, Blacks Britannica.} Indeed, the current Windrush scandal, whereby black people in Britain have been denied citizenship, healthcare and work, amongst other things (including death), would only have intensified if not for the legitimacy of claims to the Britishness of their citizenship.

Nevertheless, I also want to resist the logic that Race Relations provides that tempers black radicalism. Indeed, as I will go on to argue with my analysis of the historical legacy of Claudia Jones’ carnival and the consequent management shifts, this tempering of black radicalism is foundational to the global dealing of blackness. Linton Kwesi Johnson (LKJ)’s inflammatory statement, “Inglan is a bitch,” provides a helpful frame for us to situate blackness within and without the United Kingdom (UK). The curse suggests his willingness to undermine the power of the England he scorns, but he also proclaims its powerful clutch, its inescapability. Accordingly, that last line changes throughout the poem, to, “noh baddah try fi hide fram it,” then to, “y’u haffi know how fi suvveive in it,” and in the penultimate line, “y’u bettah face up to it.” LKJ mirrors many migrants’ words of advice, like ‘the talk’ given to black children everywhere: comply. But the Jamaican Patois of his lyrics provides a layer of unintelligibility that, to a certain degree, is able to escape a white gaze, even if momentarily. It is a coded language. To an unfamiliar ear, his words might be (eventually) knowable, but certainly not affectively felt and certainly if understood,
only with delayed lucidity. The answer that he provides throughout the poem but in different wording each time (barring the twice repeated “dere's no runnin' whey fram it”) is, surely, intentionally dissatisfying. This only makes the closing line of his last stanza all the more challenging: “is whey wi a goh dhu 'bout it?” This closing sentence’s double meaning, the question, “what are we going to do about it?” could indicate shrugging acceptance – mirroring the attitude of the chorus’ last line throughout the poem – or be a call to arms, a call to do something.

I value this doubling and its complication of a binary between inaction and action. It is a choice that promises no end and allows for the possibility of combat and placated moderation. LKJ is tired, or he might be fearful, or he might be hopeful, or he could be both, neither, and all three or none. I want to acknowledge these sanctions – “y'u haffi know how fi suvvive in it” – as pleadings for life, however flawed; as sanctions performed under duress. It is from a place of duress, then, that I might distinguish black demands to be made legible by the state – that is, to not be killed, harassed, surveyed or questioned – from liberal demands of inclusion. Those liberal demands, I argue, carry a different political weight. Those demands believe in the (neoliberal) state.

Beneath LKJ’s lament for an England that might accept him, in the reverberation of the closing line’s question throughout the poem, I hear what I call imagining otherwise, that is, as Ashon Crawley explains of the “otherwise” as a concept, a refusal of the state’s need “for us to think that an otherwise is impossible, that an otherwise than this is not desirable.”⁵⁰ An imagining otherwise, as we shall see with the riots, does not accept as satisfactory a “return to [the state’s] own logic and law as given and impenetrable, as axiomatic and unchangeable,” and

⁵⁰ Crawley, “Otherwise, Ferguson.”
thus acts contra to models of western civility.\textsuperscript{51} In fact, the very articulation of imagining otherwise confronts the (intentional) failure of the modern subject through its (de)construction. It makes no apologies for its messy “enunciation and concept of irreducible possibility […]”  
Otherwise Ferguson. Otherwise Gaza. Otherwise Detroit. [Otherwise Tottenham.] Otherwise Worlds. Otherwise expresses an unrest and discontent, a seeking to conceive dreams that allow us to wake laughing, tears of joy in our eyes, dreams that have us saying, \textit{I hope this comes true.”}\textsuperscript{52} “\textit{Inglan is a bitch}” (LKJ), \textit{burn this shit to the ground} (the rioters). 

Without my own primary research on these “racializing assemblages,” some readers may find my comprehension of the political dreams behind the London Riots – the reverberations of that haunting, of the afterlives, of minority management – presumptuous, that I am mining for “oppositional motive in the lives of the poor and oppressed where it does not exist.”\textsuperscript{53} Whilst I do draw upon other scholars’ first-hand accounts of the political aspirations of some rioters, I do not rely on those accounts of, or, as ‘proof’ alone in order to understand the Riots as imaginings otherwise. In this way I differ from scholars such as Cathy Cohen who makes a distinction between “deviance, defiant acts and acts of resistance,” based on the conscious mobilization of intent.\textsuperscript{54} With regard to the question of agency, I am more in line with scholars like Alexander Weheliye who aims to, “abandon volitional agency as the sine qua non of oppositionality,” dissatisfied with the use of agency “to qualify [the muselman’s] status.”\textsuperscript{55} Hence, to “take

\textsuperscript{51} See note 50 above. 
\textsuperscript{52} See note 50 above. 
\textsuperscript{53} Weheliye, \textit{Habeas Viscus}; Cohen, “Deviance as Resistance,” 42. 
\textsuperscript{54} Cohen, 40. 
\textsuperscript{55} Weheliye, 120-123. The term ‘muselmänner’ was a slang term to describe severely emaciated prisoners of concentration camps. It originates from a German slur used to describe Muslims. For Georgio Agamben, it is the
seriously the tradition of the oppressed,” this project seeks not to foreclose a consideration of the rioters’ demands by attempting to read them through validated state rhetoric: through agency, action, and rationale.\textsuperscript{56}

No doubt, my attention to clarifying what this project will \textit{not} do is revealing in its inability to provide a positive identification of a viable alternative. Perhaps we do not know the language yet, but I believe that the uncertainty is not a hindrance to my analysis, since in order not to repeat the violence of the modern subject, we need tools as of yet unnameable. Abolition activists, in responding to the critique often mounted against them that their goals are illusory, emphasize their inability to wait for certainty, that the time is just too urgent. It is in a similar vein that I value the unknowability of the future and witness the rioters enacting what Liat Ben-Moshe calls “abolition dis-epistemology”: a detachment of the workings of modern knowledge and its associated “affective economies that maintain carceral logics.”\textsuperscript{57} Abolition, like imagining otherwise, “cannot wait for a future constellation when appropriate alternatives” – that is, positive identifications of viable alternatives – “are already in place.”\textsuperscript{58} She continues, “this is inherently impossible because alternatives cannot come from living in the existing order, but

\textsuperscript{56} See note 55 above.

\textsuperscript{57} Ben-Moshe, “Dis-epistemologies of Abolition,” 347.

\textsuperscript{58} Wehliye, 118.
from a process of change that will come as a result of a transition from it.”

To hear the rioters as expressing calls of imagining otherwise, I acknowledge that the rioters know this dis-epistemology intimately. That they, as Alexander Weheliye so beautifully puts it,
mouth ‘I craves’ in a tongue as of yet nonexistent in the world of Man[.] How might we read the scripture of the flesh, which abides among us “in every single approach to things,” but too often lingers in the passing quicksands of indecipherability, otherwise? What does hunger outside the world of Man feel like? Is it a different hunger, or just the same as the famines created by racializing assemblages that render the human isomorphic with Man? How do we describe the sweetness that reclines in the hunger for survival? How is the craving for life sweetened by the sugary textures, smells, and tastes of freedom? What tastes does “the joy of being human” in and beyond “a land of freedom” proffer? Will every cook finally be able to govern once we leave Man by the wayside? Can we practice an ontological politics that starves Man’s fever but feeds the cold that will eventually spell his ruin?

Weheliye quotes Konrad Szweda who asks, “perhaps, in his mental crippling, bodily decay, and in his total impassiveness, [the Muselmann] was protesting against crime and injustice?”

I urge us to consider: how might we extend this crippling, bodily decay and impassiveness to the rioters’ protests? By turning closely to the ways in which space and property were claimed, amidst other, sometimes violent, nuisances, I read the rioters as directly responding to the postcolonial haunttings of Notting Hill Carnival – by responding to the ghostly calls of that which remains radical within Notting Hill Carnival, all the while dispensing with the logics of black

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59 See note 58 above.

60 Weheliye, 114.

61 In Weheliye, 175.
management buttressed by the state. This will allow us to see how the rioters’ tactics were a response to the legacies of blackness’ management by the state in the UK through their critique of the limits of subsumption that Notting Hill Carnival represents, whilst also affirming carnival’s possibilities by mimicking carnival’s routes/roots: reclaiming space for imagining otherwise and threatening power through this reclamation. The disorderly logics of the London Riots of 2011 may then be read as a radical response to the legacy of blackness’ management within the UK.
Chapter 2: On Haunting: Notting Hill Carnival

2.1 Engaging Insurgency

“WITNESS AN EXPLOSION OF CULTURE AND CREATIVITY AT NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL WITH MILLENIUM & COPTHORNE HOTELS: [...] the streets of west London are ignited with colour, culture, music and elaborate masquerade [...] this explosion of culture is not to be missed. Millennium and Copthorne have three London hotels [http://www.millenniumhotels.co.uk/destinations/abt_london.html] situated very close to Notting Hill that are in the perfect location for visitors to the carnival.”62

“This might frighten you (you are on your holiday; you are a tourist), this might excite you (you are on your holiday; you are a tourist).”63

In response to riots in 1958 and the subsequent murder by a white gang of young black man, Kelsoe Cochrane, Claudia Jones – recent Communist exile from the U.S (1955) – led plans to create a celebration in London, what would eventually become the Notting Hill Carnival. Following black feminists such as Audre Lorde, I see this event and the joyful, but critical, sentiment behind its establishment: “We’ve been wounded. It’s time we began to heal. Why shouldn’t we enjoy ourselves?”64 as radical, political breathing space as well as a necessary means of mourning. In carnival’s early days, and under the direction of Jones, Notting Hill Carnival was an intentionally black event that garnered unsurprising amounts of skepticism, the local papers at the time “[dis]pleased to see and hear hundreds of blacks doing the jump-up.”65

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63 Kincaid, A Small Place, 6.

64 From a speech written for the character, Claudia Jones in Winsome Pinnock’s play, Rock in Water. See Tompsett, ""London is the Place for Me,” 46.

Little has changed in recent years with respect to the treatment of the event in contrast to similar events in size such that fall over the same weekend. The hypocrisy of police treatment was publicly revealed in 2017, when in response to the Metropolitan Police tweeting that “In the run up to #NottingHillCarnival, officers have this morning seized what is believed to be a kilo of uncut heroin in #Catford,” black grime artist, Stormzy, tweeted back: “How many drugs did you lot seize in the run up to Glastonbury or we only doing tweets like this for black events?“  

In this chapter I argue that Notting Hill Carnival’s history tells a story of the way that blackness is managed in the UK, through the facilitation by the state of a relationship between black ‘culture’ and private capital and the consequent subsumption of blackness into the UK’s imaginary through these tools. This will aid the overall argument of this thesis that the threat to cancel Notting Hill Carnival after the riots of 2011 was utilised by the state as a well-rehearsed strategy to manage the riots (and the threat of blackness within it) but was also a response to the rioters’ potential to untap something radical within the event. What we see here then, through the symbolic of Notting Hill Carnival that I will outline, is the beginning of what would later be called neoliberalism: “an epistemological structure of disavowal, a means of claiming that racial and gendered violences are things of the past. It does so by affirming certain modes of racialized, gendered, and sexualised life, particularly through invitation into reproductive respectability, so as to disavow its exacerbated production of premature death.”  

Notting Hill Carnival, alongside other techniques of power that I will explore in the next chapter, including the codification of


67 Hong, 7. Emphasis in original.
anti-racist legislation, would come to stand – through the presence of their very existence – as
the signifier for racism’s pastness. Meanwhile, some, like Mark Duggan would, through,
amongst other things, their refusal of the logics of respectability, still find themselves subject to
what Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes as premature death: “the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal
production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death, in distinct
yet densely interconnected political geographies.”68 This chapter thus prepares us to see how the
rioters responded to these promises and revealed them as a farce. Since, like Notting Hill
Carnival, the London Riots occurred at a specific time: a time during which cuts to services
consolidated a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. Whilst Notting Hill
Carnival had meant to showcase a deserving constituent of well-meaning and tamed blackness,
the economic and legal reality (which I will explore in the next chapter) which predisposes some
to premature death testifies to the limits of these inclusion politics, and it is in the wake of these
legacies that the rioters mounted their struggle.

In the first section I will explain exactly how Notting Hill Carnival is a management
strategy, by explaining what that strategy actually consists of. I thus refer to pornotropic liaisons,
a term that originates from Saidiya Hartman but is also mobilized by Alexander Weheliye to
describe the interaction between violence and sexuality. By exploring Gavin Carver’s analysis of
carnival’s corporate sponsorships, alongside Roderick Ferguson’s argument about the ways that
insurgency is engaged in order to manage it, I argue that it is a culmination of the pornotrope
with capital that characterises the management of Notting Hill Carnival. This idea is neatly
encapsulated in the Millenium and Copthorne advert that introduces this chapter, which speaks

to colour, culture and a (porno)tropical blackness that is inviting: a culture to be indulged in but always potentially dangerous. As the dialogue that arises from my placing of the advert with Kincaid’s text, this indulgence is frightening and titillating in equal measure, for so long as you are close to, but protected from potential or real dangers: WITNESS AN EXPLOSION OF CULTURE AND CREATIVITY. This might frighten you (you are on your holiday; you are a tourist), this might excite you (you are on your holiday; you are a tourist).

Next, I analyse the internal politics of Notting Hill Carnival by reviewing how the state manages its discourse in the form of hiding the event’s riotous history and its conceptualization by Claudia Jones. I argue that this obscured history worked in the initiation of a split in the carnival committee’s management through the creation of a debate about the cultural and political focus of carnival, that culminated in the management crisis of 1976. I emphasize that the form of management that resulted after the crisis of 1976 was not a result of individual decisions about the particular form carnival was to take, since, after all, at stake was the continuation of carnival – indeed, if events had gone any other way, perhaps carnival would not have been able to have been threatened to be cancelled because, by 2011, it would not have existed. But I show that without the sway of Jones’ visions, the discursive narrative of carnival was able to be in keeping with Laslett’s multicultural intentions. As such, Notting Hill Carnival, like other social movements would ensure “protectable life became sutured to reproductive respectability,” thus “[replicating] the investments of modernity,” through the belief in the promise of its role as an act of inclusion into the state and the varying beliefs in the feasibility of this promise.69 Moreover, not only did the state help to orchestrate the crisis (which, I should add, lasted until at least 1978 with regard to management issues) with the “creation of a

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mythology of radicalism, and lack of ideological cohesion” but the state was also able to capitalize off these debates and use them for its own benefit with pornotropic capital’s engagement of insurgency.\textsuperscript{70} Finally, in *De Road Make to Walk*, I reveal how, despite these turbulent politics, carnival is “grounded in multiple histories of power, producing complex subjects of struggle,” by acknowledging how rebellious music and masking traditions maintain carnival as a place for critique. It is this inescapable potential that the state attempts to quash.\textsuperscript{71} Consequently, its threat of cancellation after the London Riots in 2011 urges us to consider what threats the riots mounted upon these legacies, these postcolonial hauntings, as well as what strategies within carnival it was able to mobilize.

2.1 Pornotropic Liaisons

Despite the threat to cancel carnival after the London Riots of 2011 – and despite annual police attempts to encourage its cancellation – the state decided to go ahead with the event. In a local council meeting after the London Riots, two reasons (with others possibly redacted) were given, that: “it is a community event supported by a large proportion of London,” and that “it is important that normal business is maintained as far as reasonably possible…”\textsuperscript{72} That the event was not cancelled points to the ways in which carnival has managed to become folded into the state, of which its financial impact on London, as suggested by the comment regarding “normal business,” wraps that folding tighter: London needs carnival. But London needs carnival insofar

\textsuperscript{70} Cecil Gutzmore quoted in Carver, 41.

\textsuperscript{71} Da Costa, “Subjects of Struggle: Theatre as Space of Political Economy,” 617.

as it is able to illustrate a particular kind of blackness, a state legible, tamed blackness, even as it simultaneously needs carnival to represent the opposite: a wild, carefree, overtly sexual blackness. Weheliye’s grammar of the pornotrope is precisely what makes carnival such a titillating risk, and hence, what made its threat possible: the fear that this potentiality might be fulfilled. Notting Hill Carnival’s current manifestation results from the shifts occurring in the historical moment of the 1960s. As such it is victim to local histories (of racism and resistance to it in Britain), as well as global influences (of neocolonialism, global capitalism and resistance to these both). In The Reorder of Things, Roderick Ferguson cites Stuart Hall’s essay, “The Local and the Global,” to explore how this gap converged through global capital’s working on local and vernacular cultures (of which Notting Hill Carnival is an apt example) to result in a specific mode of neoliberal hegemony: a power that works not against difference, but, with the tools of absorption (the documenting of struggle), affirmation and recognition, with and through difference.

The UK, and carnival, would have its own Coca-Cola moment, its own local provision of what Ferguson describes through his analysis of the 1971 “I’d like to buy the world a Coke” advert, of the consumer ability to buy – to drink – “ideals such as safety, hipness, and difference when they bought products,” and, resultingly, for consumers to “[participate] in revolutions that did not antagonize capital but presumed it.” Lilt – one of The Coca-Cola Company’s brands – would become Notting Hill Carnival’s first ever sponsorship, after which the event would, for

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Weheliye, 102. Interestingly, a particularly poignant image that one can expect to see after carnival weekend is the image of a police officer dancing with a carnival goer, state power meeting drunken merriment.

the remainder of the sponsorship, be officially named *Lilt* Notting hill Carnival proving that “the identity of the carnival itself” could become a commodity, too.\textsuperscript{75} But unlike Coca-Cola’s ad, which showcased cross-racial harmony, the Lilt adverts would tap into a specifically *black* subcultural demonstration to aid capital, promising the pornotrope with a tropical edge in each sip: the wild, exotic nature of blackness, care-free, and uninhibited, but all the meanwhile, tempered with the sobriety of its status as a nonalcoholic beverage, the decency of which “disseminated through respectable media.”\textsuperscript{76} The state would thus not only engage insurgency but finance it and manage it, presenting “its [black] participants as wild, dangerous, and irresponsible, hence vindicating the leadership of the dominant order,” and keeping the event within puritanical limits that would disallow the pornotrope from ever being fulfilled.\textsuperscript{77}

This was further achieved through the generalization of the context of Notting Hill Carnival. As *Lilt* Notting Hill Carnival, it becomes easier for carnival to be staged elsewhere – another threat regularly mounted upon the event. The branding would also emphasize the cultural element of the event and disentangle it from its radical, *anti*-capitalist roots, putting it in “direct


\textsuperscript{76} The state and Notting Hill Carnival organizers had also debated this issue, since the former wanted to ban the sale of alcohol on the streets during carnival, whilst carnival management argued that the consumption of alcohol during the event was a tradition. See Carver, 42.

\textsuperscript{77} Carver, 41; If I had more space I would discuss how the pornotrope becomes a matter of debate when black artists produce music videos that include dancing such as grinding, twerking etc. During the release of Rihanna’s music video ‘Work,’ people vilified her by suggesting that it was overly sexual. What is interesting is that these dances are not necessarily sexual at all. The desire to *find* them sexual is what makes them violent, however, due to fears of black sexuality and the violence (for example, to white women’s virtue and thus the nation as a whole) that supposedly accompanies this sensuality.
conflict with carnival’s emphasis on the bodily principle: for carnival liberates the bodily pleasure of ‘the other,’ [...] it demonstrates an autonomy of the individual and communal body which challenges both the sensibilities of puritanical culture and the subjugation of the body by legislation and capitalist production.”

In earnest, Gavin Carver ponders, is carnival “falling victim to the totalitarianism of western capitalist society?” It’s corporate sponsorship would certainly make us think so. But to rest our critique on the entanglement of the event with state and private capital, obscures exactly how Notting Hill Carnival got to this position. In *The Reorder of Things*, Roderick Ferguson takes us on a theoretical tracing of the way the academy supports the state’s quest of managing insurgency through tactics of absorption, recognition and affirmation policies. His scholarship allows us to make the following abstractions in Notting Hill Carnival: 1) an initial radical claim, 2) a crisis when that radical claim is revealed as such and 3) pacification of that radical claim following the crisis, disguised as, if not the original radical claim itself, a radical claim nonetheless. It is easy to see how the academy is able to take carnival’s place given the archiving tendencies inherent in the form – from the history of carnival, to the active storytelling of each mas group – to the affirmative and recognition-based struggle it wages as a result of it being a cultural performance. So even prior to overt neoliberal support, which Carver’s question points us towards, we can see how carnival, like Ferguson’s student movements is a “[pivot] in the history of power’s relationship to difference.”

I want to stress, however, that despite following a globally temporal route that enmeshed it in a new form of power, the route to Notting Hill

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78 Carver, 41.
79 Carver, 35.
80 Ferguson, 29.
Carnival as it presents itself in 2018, was not inevitable. In order for the initial radical claim (Claudia Jones’ carnival) to become pacified, the state relied upon the particular workings of a crisis (that it orchestrated) as well as the persuasion of inclusion politics that buttressed the threat of this crisis. And so, to the crisis.

2.1.1 Internal Politics of Notting Hill Carnival: the 1976 Crisis

If, following Ferguson, we see Notting Hill Carnival as an archive, we must also accept that the archive is filled with memories and tales, and the hopes and dreams that accompany them. This is to say that the archive is as much what we make (up) of it, as well as what might be there as ‘truth.’ In order to understand why Notting Hill Carnival faced a crisis in 1976, we must take seriously the ways in which the archive is constructed and the ways in which what is of the archive manifests it. In most academic studies of Notting Hill Carnival, the event’s creation is attributed to Rhaune Laslett, a Notting Hill local of Native American and Russian descent.81 Some authors distinguish an earlier ‘carnival’ from Laslett’s Notting Hill, but no one interrogates the archive that their own work, knowingly or not, supports.82 My attention to what might otherwise look like an innocent mistake is in following with Christina Sharpe and her work on anagrammatical blackness.83 I make these provocations on the archive – or the “orthographies of the wake” – not only to put pressure on the politics of archival work, and the scholar’s place in it,

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82 For example, see: Abner Cohen, Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements, 10.

83 Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.
but to take care in holding the “potentiality” that lies with the index “of violability.” That is, to talk back to the archive with “alternative sets of reading and writing practices” and as a result, “insist upon a different kind of holding, an alternative kind of care, and a violent and lifesaving kind of aspiration” that “[puts] breath back into the Black body.”84 To be clear, this is not to encourage a speculation of what Notting Hill Carnival, or, indeed, (the management of) blackness, might look like now if the communist, anti-inclusion spirit of Jones’ imagination had not been ruptured. To do so might be dishonest. However, we must read the split in 1976 as something that was made possible as a result of this archival ‘mistake,’ since a particular reading of Notting Hill Carnival – one that saw it as a merely cultural event – consolidated the enmeshing of blackness – through carnival – into the hold of the state.

At the time called ‘The London Carnival,’ Rhaune Laslett’s vision was “first held in 1966 in the form of a revived traditional English fair.”85 Driven by the desire of multiethnic harmony, Laslett imagined carnival as providing a space for celebration centered around one thing: a revised British identity, one that included black migrants, as much as it included white communities. Laslett was proudly an integrationist and gained support by the Conservative-dominated council due to carnival’s promise of improving Notting Hill’s image, notorious otherwise for sex work, gambling and drug trafficking, as well as the indiscreet activity of neo-Nazi groups. Although a “reformer, not a revolutionary,” support from the council was eventually withdrawn (along with the £100 promised by the mayor) because of Laslett’s


85 Cohen, Masquerade Politics, 1.
association’s work against the growing issue of poor housing.\(^{86}\) As an activist, Laslett would have had much of the same concerns as Jones, but their strategies for achieving them differed. As such, although Laslett’s integrationist desires were typical of the time – and as I have already illustrated, mirrored the desires of black migrants themselves, who proudly wore their black Britishness – this should not exempt one from critique. Furthermore, desires to integrate even within the black community were specific generationally; with the introduction of Jamaican reggae and the influence of Rastafarianism in London and on Notting Hill Carnival in 1976, integrationist motivations were undermined by black youth who, much like their peers in the London Riots 35 years later, wanted not to change for institutions of power, but to make institutions of power change for them.

Ultimately, it was this difference in the belief of Notting Hill Carnival’s purpose that paved the way to its current manifestation. Already having been through numerous leadership shakeups – from Jones’ indoor carnival, to Laslett’s ‘new’ outdoor carnival in 1966-1974, and then new leadership in 1969 – by the mid 1970s it was in the hands of another local leader (who would not be its last). Aggravating events further was the economic downturn of the post-60s paradise, which hit “West Indians […] particularly hard, in part because they were relative newcomers, in part because they were semi-skilled and in large part because they were the victims of racial discrimination.”\(^{87}\) The return of anti-immigrant rhetoric and, it should be said, Labour-supported hatred directed towards an ‘undeserving’ poor who were to blame for the

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\(^{86}\) Cohen, 11.

economic crises of the period and the detriment of a ‘white underclass’ helped to rupture “the relationships of amity that had existed between them and native working-class Londoners.”

As I have already suggested with the comparison of black youth in the 1970s (a group said to have had “the ability to transform the symbolic resistance power […] into actual political power in the British state”) to the rioters 35 years later, anti-oppression struggles were mounted through direct engagements with the previous generations’ desires to integrate. This “new generation of West Indian teenagers […] alienated, disillusioned [and] demoralized” were, in fact, living embodiments of the failure of those attempts. Tensions were already high, and Notting Hill Carnival became the stage upon which these tensions were mounted, particularly due to the influence of reggae and its critical reflections on the history of slavery and colonialism that reverberated across the Caribbean to Britain’s own islands, where the growing politicization of youth became a problem to state power and, at carnival specifically, the police. In line with

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88 Cohen, 69. For more on the growth of the white underclass and the deserving/undeserving distinction, see Shilliam, *Race and the Undeserving Poor.*

89 Pryce in Carver, “The Effervescent Carnival,” 44.


91 I want to be clear however, that I am not forwarding a ‘safety-valve’ argument about Notting Hill Carnival. Scholars such as Micheline A Crichlow and Piers Armstrong explore the use of carnival during Medieval times as “an organic cycle of discipline and liberation,” where, “for a day the fool […] in the town became ‘king.’” They argue that this was a “politically useful” strategy that provided “a harmless escape valve for oppressed people.” Whilst this might be true, in the sense that carnival involves a weekend of black ownership of the streets which, given its limited time, might be favourable to the state in preventing black takeover, the power dynamics of Notting Hill Carnival are slightly different given the particularities of its grassroots history. Whilst more recently it has become quarry to increasing state control, the safety-valve argument suggests a Hobbesian state of lawlessness that motivates a reading of blackness in need of such a release, something which I am unwilling to argue, not least
scholars like Julian Henriques who reads carnival “from a particular point of listening.” I pay close attention to the influence of reggae not only because of the significance in the shift from the Trinidadian tradition of steelpan music and calypso, to the Jamaican introduction of static sound systems that were a source of contention within the carnival committee(s) because of stylistic differences, but because of the way that sounding enables a particular “ownership of space” which has “an important affective dimension.”92 Since revelers during carnival are “surrounded by [sound] and immersed in it,” and consequently their “attention is directed towards their own dancing, each other and the sounding itself,” Notting Hill Carnival, on top of the already multi-sensory environment (the smell of food stalls, the kinetic energy of dancers, the sweat of other bodies) enables a “dimension of empowerment.”93 Importantly the empowerment that carnival presents is collective; a “power-with (la puissance),” rather than “power-over (la pouvoire)”.94 Black youths, in this era can be characterized – and in the eyes of the state, negatively so – by their immersion in a “collective power-with”; the rebellious, sometimes violent, music of reggae; as well as informed by a wider black movement plagued by police confrontations that involved the Sunderland Road bombings (1971), the murder of Nigerian David Oluwale (1971), the raid and trial on local black restaurant, the Mangrove (1972), the Carib Club police attack and the Cricklewood 12 trial (1974-1975). Consequently, what resulted

because of an imagination of savagery that it relies upon. (Michaeline A Crichlow and Piers Armstrong, “Carnival Praxis, Carnivalesque Strategies and Atlantic Interstices,” 400).


93 Henriques and Ferrara, 144.

94 See note 93 above.
was “the appearance of an overt and mutinous force of power which the state […] came to regard as a threat…”

Subsequently, the council and the police, armed with complaints from local residents about noise (thanks to the introduction of static sound systems), the lack of sanitary facilities and inadequate crowd control, and under local pressure to increase police presence, waged a petition to remove carnival from Notting Hill’s streets and have it, instead, “imprisoned in the White City Stadium.”

After this failed, a compromise was reached and the police deployed between 1200-1500 officers in the 1976 carnival, a sharp increase from the previous year’s 60. The ending of the carnival in a riot that year finally gave the state the evidence it needed to cancel carnival once and for all. That it did not is indication of the grave price that the carnival committee had to pay, a price in the particular way that blackness from then on was to be managed, a price that Notting Hill Carnival is still paying and the legacy of which informed the London Riots in 2011.

In 1976, and following the riots between police and black youth, the management of the time was tasked with a choice: do something with the youth or give up carnival. Attacks were made on the failure of black leaders to exercise, as the Labour MP for Teeside was quoted in an article by The Times, “authority and influence,” as well as their reluctance to take “full responsibility for the West Indian community.”

In a similar vein, The Economist stated, “Parental control within the West Indian Community is…breaking down.”

Remember again

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95 Pryce, 37.
96 Pryce, 36.
97 Ferdinand and Williams, 38. See also Pryce, 38.
98 The Economist, quoted in Pryce, 39.
99 See note 98 above.
David Cameron’s tirade: “children without fathers […] communities without control…”⁴⁰⁰

Moreover, these tactics were not specific to Conservative Party ideals, even if Margaret Thatcher, and the Tory party more broadly though “not a prodigy of [Enoch] Powell […] did inherit and utilize the populist nationalist that he had engineered.”⁴¹⁰¹ Indeed, the radical potential of Britain’s colonies after the Haitian Revolution informed even abolitionists’ concerns who attested to the need for “the paternalistic treatment by masters of their charges and the concomitant training in slaves of a civilized, patriarchal and proprietary sensibility.”⁴¹⁰²

This threat in itself was not the cause of the management strategies of blackness in Britain thereafter, but rather, the particular way in which an ideological war was ignited as to whether carnival would be a political or cultural affair; the conclusion of which would direct the way that blackness was thought permittable. Faced with the responsibility to ‘control’ black youth, members from the Carnival Arts Committee broke away into another group, the Carnival Development Committee (CDC). Importantly, the members that broke away initially were mostly artists from steel and calypso bands, desirous of separating themselves from the ‘trouble’ that “dem Jamaicans”⁴¹⁰³ and their static sound systems (which blasted revolutionary reggae music) had ‘brought.’⁴¹⁰⁴ Selwyn Baptiste, the chair of the CDC, articulated his organization’s

⁴⁰⁰ David Cameron, “PM’s speech on the fightback after the riots.” Aug 15, 2011.

⁴¹⁰¹ Shilliam, 106.

⁴¹⁰² Shilliam, 17.

⁴¹⁰³ Pryce, 41.

⁴¹⁰⁴ This is not to say that steelpan or calypso bands did not have revolutionary roots and messages themselves. Calypso songs, for instance, “usually contained social commentary” (Cohen, “Masquerade Politics,” 96) and the steelpan itself derived from colonial prohibition of drum beating. One steelband member expresses this history thus,
ideological position thus: “[Carnival] is all year round; it is a learning process for all of us. We learn *dignity* and we hope to *gain respect*. But we have no respect for those who hurt Carnival….As musicians we feel that to use Carnival as a political platform…is to hurt Carnival” (emphasis added). 105 This type of sentiment, of “dignity,” and “respect,” was further buttressed in the Thatcher era and after, where “Black British families who demonstrated identifiably deserving characteristics could be considered worthy of assimilation.” 106 But these ‘deserving characteristics’ necessitated a rejection of any political claims on the state, something which the rioters in 2011 – which I assess in Chapter 4 through their intentional rudeness – sought to undermine, since their own positions demonstrated that, “no matter how aspirational, their Black presence always prompted a suspicion of disorder that legitimated extraordinary treatment.” 107

The CDC were likely “no less politically or financially conscious than the CAC.” 108 For example, in response to the entering of a radical political party on a float during the 1977 carnival, whose members carried placards saying “the police are the muggers,” the secretary of the CDC, Larry Forde, responded by expressing that he, too, shared the same sentiment, but that “the same message could in fact have been conveyed indirectly in an artistic form, probably with greater affect.” 109 What we see here, then, is less a split per se, and certainly less a split between a (politically-minded) CAC and a (culturally-minded) CDC, or vice versa. Indeed, the CAC also

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“the steelband was born in violence and it expresses violence.” (Cohen, “Drama and Politics in the Development of a London Carnival,” 71.).

105 Pryce, 41.
106 Shilliam, 130.
107 See note 106 above.
109 See note 108 above.
had conservative tendencies itself, backed by “race-relations industry folks” who were “similarly concerned with the image of the black man as equal to the white” and thus “assumed the acquiescent posture of respectable decency as defined by whites.”

Thus, the issue boiled down to a diversion of opinion regarding the expression of political thoughts, at a time when the climate of black British race claims were centered around integrationist motivations.

As Abner Cohen argues in his analysis of these internal carnival politics, this issue was in part shaped by political theories prevalent at the time, namely the impact of Marxist analysis of dominant culture and the assumption that the “the ideas of the ruling classes are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” Linton Kwesi Johnson summarizes popular sentiment well: “If politics creeps into art unconsciously, without the writer trying, that is often the most powerful political expression; but when artists try to be political in their art, it usually ends up badly, whether in poetry or in a novel or other art forms. People do not like to be preached at.”

This might also explain the form of the closing line of his poem: a question (“is whey wi a goh dhu 'bout it?”) rather than a pointed statement. I would add to Cohen’s analysis an emphasis of these pressures: the threat of carnival’s cancellation and the regular threat of police and white violence. As a result of the state’s attribution of blame of youth resistance on its management, the CAC attempted to subsume these insurgent possibilities into its fold by quashing them. The state, therefore, does not need to do the work of subsumption itself, since it can instigate this response internally. Indeed, we might consider the threat to cancel carnival after the riots as a similar strategy, since it creates an internal binary within the black community between black elders and ‘good’ black carnivalists versus black youth and ‘bad’ black rioters, along with the pressure for

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110 Pryce, 45.

111 Johnson quoted in Cohen, 83.
carnival to remain “a vehicle for black credibility.””\textsuperscript{112} Hence, in stating financial capital as the reason that it would not cancel carnival, the state was merely relying on the legacy of previous carnival crises, and particularly the crisis of 1976, “recomposed back into state, capital and—” not the academy, as Ferguson argues, but for our purposes: culture.\textsuperscript{113} For “if carnival presents itself as a managerially competent body, creating a cultural image that may appear less radical but which diffuses accusations of marginality, it becomes a viable cultural alternative.”\textsuperscript{114}

Curtailment of the original 1976 crisis can thus be read as falling victim to “absorption,” but instead of relying on the academy, state and capital relied on the institution of carnival’s management, initiating its split in the later culture vs. politics debates which stemmed from the original archival dis-memory and the effort to stay true to Laslett’s integrationist carnival, who, after all “in between sleep and wakefulness […] had a vision suggesting that she gather people from different ethnic groups in the area in a joyful procession.”\textsuperscript{115} It should be noted that Cohen makes this remark after stating that, though “born in London to an American Indian mother […] and a Russian father,” Laslett had “decided to identify with her mother’s culture.” The attention paid to her mixed ethnicity and the ease with which her vision is linked to the spirituality of indigeneity I believe is another strategy – rooted in colonial fantasies of the noble savage – that upholds the perceived virtue of the cultural in the culture vs. political debate. By making carnival about culture, it was subsequently “put in the service of recognition and legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{116} This

\textsuperscript{112} Claire Holder (former Chief Executive of the Carnival Trust) in Carver, 40.

\textsuperscript{113} Ferguson, 6.


\textsuperscript{115} Cohen, “Drama and Politics,” 67.

\textsuperscript{116} Ferguson, 38.
legacy, of “minoritized subjects [beginning] to identify with and reinscribe themselves as rational subjects and thus invoke and endorse those properties archetypically associated with western man,” was directly confronted in the London Riots through their own (dis)order.¹¹⁷ Before I turn to the next chapter in which I look at another symbol of the properties of the modern subject, that is, the objectivity of the law, I want to end by affirming the potential radical nature of Notting Hill Carnival, so as to point to the ways in which the rioters untapped this potential, which led, as a result, to the state’s desire to cancel carnival in 2011, fearful of this radical potential being further emboldened.

2.2  *De Road Make to Walk*

“*Amidst death there is life, however fleeting and brief, and the many who dance of the road are the living embodiment of that life.*”¹¹⁸

As I have already explored, music is at the heart of Notting Hill Carnival, and particularly, the radical music of reggae that “articulates the tragedy and suffering, the ideals and aspirations of the ghetto.”¹¹⁹ It remains a central feature of carnival even to the present day, despite the state’s fear of black youth radicalism associated with the controversial static sound systems. Admittedly, reggae’s popularity has grown beyond an exclusive black audience, and, amongst other things, the association with marijuana and the popularization of Bob Marley has made it a particularly enticing attraction to white youth looking to revel in ‘black culture,’ whether at Notting Hill Carnival or otherwise. At the same time, this admiration (or appropriation) brings

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¹¹⁷ Ferguson, 38.


¹¹⁹ Pryce, 46.
white youth whose presence makes carnival something not only more profitable but permittable ("it is a community event supported by a large proportion of London"). Nonetheless, the very presence of the offensive sounds, indeed, the very presence of blackness at all on West London’s streets, suggest some sort of accomplishment, even if tempered. As Gavin Carver states, when primarily black music, formulated from disempowered and counter-cultural positions, is played within the increasingly gentrified streets of Notting Hill, its destabilizing status becomes clear. These sound systems foreground the body in almost erotic display through dancing. With rap and reggae, the language spoken or sung over the music utilizes subcultural argot (billingsgate) and the words and forms may be specifically oppositional, sometimes foregrounding the experience of poverty and of oppression.

In light of the continual demonization of black music genres such as grime for their supposed “reputation for violence,” and incitement to knife and gun violence, playing black music so proudly on white streets strikes a political cord. As such, I believe that carnival is “always political, intimately and dynamically related to the political order and to the struggle for power within it.”

There is something in the very contradiction of carnival, in its “ambiguous symbolic formation,” that allows the resistance within it to be utilized at any point in history – as the 1976 riot did become: "The form of their rebellion at the Carnival in 1976 — 1979 contained

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122 Cohen in Carver, 4.
the seeds of what was to follow by way of political revolts, in Bristol (1980), and Brixton, Toxteth, Liverpool 8, Moss Side, and Southall (1981); its aim was to achieve a sense of political potency. The specifics of these revolts by young black militants, regenerating the guerrilla politics of their slave ancestry, enhanced a thirst for political participation and representation.”

Indeed, the tradition of masking regenerates liberation in the form of mockery and ridicule, with origins in newly ‘freed’ slaves explicitly “[playing] the French at their own game, like the cross-dressed Dame Lorraine, a caricature of an upper class French lady, and other characterizations that echoed forms of masquerade from African pasts or represented experiences of slavery.”

As well as direct mimicry of colonial riches, carnival also involves the provocative mockery of institutional terror, as in the history of ‘sailor mas,’ a teasing of the British military forces docked in 19th century Trinidadian ports: “a black player in full sailor whites with his face painted white.” As Tompsett explains, this “carnival theatre” of teasing is pleasurable for its role reversal, but does not just rely on costume (which was “mercilessly observed”) or literal embodiments of their chosen victim, since different bands shared stories through symbolic representations. As the etymology of the word ‘mas’ might suggest but does not give away, these masquerades were not simply modes of disguise but active enactments of histories that pointed directly at power structures and undermined them.

Moreover, the disguise permits a camouflaging that is radical in its very refusal to guarantee knowability. This, perhaps unsurprisingly, invites Notting Hill Carnival’s critics, those

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123 Pryce, 48.

124 Tompsett, “’London is the Place for Me,’” 43.

125 Description of 1888 print of carnival in Port of Spain, Trinidad in Tompsett, 53.

126 Tompsett, "London is the Place for Me," 53.
who see mas as having “only a limited transparency […] dependent upon the reader having some knowledge of its references.”

Such a view relies upon a logocentric understanding of carnival, one that refuses to allow for ways of unkowning. The secrets within Notting Hill Carnival lie in – not the division between a political/cultural motivation – but in the very embrace of the aesthetic performance’s spirituality, in its ability to be unknown but nonetheless felt (and hence, (un)known differently). Just like the camouflage of Notting Hill Carnival’s mas, or the reggae whose “form resists definition” that blasts from speakers, the very frustration that the London Riots of 2011 caused was as much to do with the inability for many to understand them, in the very inability for the rioters’ incoherent demands to be articulated in a manner that might explain them.

But this is the key: rather than the known or the articulated, the rioters, like Notting Hill Carnival’s own traditions, exemplify the possibility of imagining otherwise, beyond the world of the modern subject, of traditions of legibility and rationality. The rioters therefore did not need to be co-ordinated under a political agenda; they didn’t need to know, they just had to imagine.

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127 Carver, 36-37.

128 Hebdige in Carver, 46.
Chapter 3: The Uprising & Its Afterlives

“Raciality immediately justifies the state’s decision to kill certain persons - mostly (but not only) young men and women of colour - in the name of self-preservation. Such killings do not unleash an ethical crisis because these persons' bodies and the territories they inhabit always-already signify violence.”

In the last chapter I used Notting Hill Carnival as a key historical signifier to explore the way in which a new form of power would enable blackness and the anti-racist, social justice principles fostered by black self-determination and black British presence, to be buttressed by the state in a way that secured protected sites of black being: respectable and cultural. This occurred at a time when radical movements globally were enabling the codification of civil rights legislation. It is notable that Laslett’s vision for a Notting Hill Carnival was proposed in 1966, a mere five months after royal assent of the first Race Relations Act (1965), which made “incitement to racial hatred,” a civil offense amongst other offenses taking place in public. (It should be remembered that the charge could be made against black people, too, and black power leader Michael Malik, as well as members of the Universal Coloured People’s Association felt its force). As ironic and limited (the Race Relations Board established in 1966 had no ability for legal processes and could only investigate complaints through the attorney general) as the Act was, it certainly was a start, seen as a radical, “huge coup.”

Data collected from the Race Relations Board was irrefutable and made for powerful suggestions to the widening of the Act’s remit (to housing and employment) as well as the Board’s own authority, which led later to the 1968 amendments. Alongside the Act’s reform, the Community Relations Commission was created to promote “harmonious community relations,” the type of sentiment that Laslett’s

129 Ferreira da Silva, “No-Bodies,” 213.

Notting Hill Carnival carried with it, too. In 1976, three months after the Notting Hill Carnival riots which led to the committee’s split, the Act was repealed once again and a Commission for Racial Equality was also established, with “integration,” as one of its main goals. Even in this brief reflection it is easy for us to see how Carnival’s trajectory either responded to, or perhaps initiated, national discussions on race. If I had the scope to, I might further interrogate how the motivation for ‘integration,’ as but one example of the Race Relations Act’s own trajectory, may have been a direct response to the ‘Jamaican-ness’ of the ‘troublesome youths’ that disrupted Carnival’s harmony and prompted the committee’s split.

In this section, however, what I am interested in exploring are the contemporary reverberations of the Race Relations Act (and the liberal ghosts that haunt its creation), for the impact of the presence of these laws and their affirmation by the state on the ability for an “even more brutally exacerbated [form] of death and destruction to poor, racialized, and sexually ‘deviant’ populations,” and specifically the ability for Mark Duggan’s murder to be legally mandated.131 This will contribute to the argument of this thesis that the uprisings demonstrated how the rioters were simultaneously critiquing the limits of Carnival, where the “principle of liberty […] justifies the racial (total and symbolic) violence capital needs to thrive,” whilst also undermining the “state’s exercise of violence-as-self-preservation,” by the waging of their own (Notting Hill) carnivalesque threat which expressed an imagining beyond state management through their engagement with counter-rational acts: “radical[ly] reimagining” the spatiality and, as a result, very possibility of such violence.132

131 Hong, 13.
To do so, in *Race Relations’ New Technologies*, I begin with a brief analysis of the Macpherson Report (also known as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry) (1999) and the Race Relations Act (2000) to establish how these tools of rationality and justice worked, not *against*, but *in tandem* with racist policies, contrary to their supposed anti-racist principals. I introduce the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) and their roots in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry to illustrate the shifting of the rhetorical plane that relies on, following Sara Ahmed’s work on the performative role of equality regimes, a particular public practice of anti-racism that in fact sustains the possibility of black death. I suggest that this performative practice is also linked to the ingrained notion of the role of the classic British bobby, in direct odds to figures like Mark Duggan due to their inability to work within a neoliberal moral economy of good (white) citizenship. Next, in *Structured Visual Fields: Planting Sub-/Ob-ject(ive)s*, having discussed the ways that anti-racism becomes performed by the state, I introduce how already within these performances is foreclosed the possibility that the rule of law and its accompanying values of objectivity be held up to these standards. In other words, I track how the Macpherson Report and the Race Relations Act paved the way for a legal finding of Duggan’s death because of the (rule of) law’s specifications of objectivity which allowed the officer(s) to protect themselves and civilians (albeit, the ideal citizen, encapsulated neatly in the image of the cleaners of the rioters’ mess, rather than the rioters themselves) from the violence of blackness. Specifically, I turn to another type of visual performance, this time the witnessing in the inquest of agent V53 (and his peers) of a gun in Duggan’s hand, the ‘fact’ of which prompted him to fire his gun. Following Judith Butler’s analysis of the Rodney King trial – one of the first globally-recognized, public accounts of police brutality for the accompaniment of a video tape of King’s beating – I argue that not only is V53’s subjective witnessing held to objective proof, but this is
despite his vision being already structured by a racial episteme. In my assessment of the inquest I want to make it explicit how plainly these structured visual fields are unable to be scrutinized by the law because of the law’s own complicity. I end the chapter with a final note on Due Process, to illustrate how the rioters’ messy and illegal actions express their deep understanding of these complicities and how the London Riots’ (dis)order, their illegibility, as well as the very illegality of their actions, waged a powerful attack on inclusion politics and its accompanying standard of justice.

3.1 Race Relations’ New Technologies

On the same evening of the killing of Mark Duggan, The Telegraph, a British daily broadsheet newspaper, wrote an article with the headline “Man killed in shooting incident involving police officer,” accompanied by the subheadline: “A policeman’s life was saved by his radio last night after gunman Mark Duggan opened fire on him and the bullet hit the device.” 133 The article then goes on to describe the events, “Armed police immediately returned fire and Mark Duggan, 29,” – who later in the article The Telegraph describe as a “well known gangster” – “who was under surveillance, was shot dead in the street in north London.” 134 Immediately, the possibility for Mark Duggan to be the victim is denied, as the classic British bobby, the unnamed victim signified only by his police role, takes centre stage as he narrowly – magically, even – escapes

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134 See note 133 above.
the supposed gunman’s bullet, saved by his radio. Mark Duggan, here, is framed as the maker of his own destiny, as the armed police “immediately” – suggesting natural impulse – “[return] fire.” Mark Duggan’s killers were never found guilty. In fact, his murder was deemed legal by the same body, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), that later admitted to having provided the misleading information about the “exchange” of gunfire that prompted journalists to write about these ‘facts.’ The IPCC itself is the result of the Police Reform Act 2002, whereby the Labour Government responded to the suggestions of the Macpherson Report (1999) for the need for “independent, non-police, involvement in the policing process.” The Macpherson Report made such suggestions as part of its investigation into police (mis)handling of the racially-motivated murder in 1993 of black teenager, Stephen Lawrence. “This sociality, the wavering present, forces a something that must be done that structures the domain of the present and the prerogatives of the future.” Chief amongst the Macpherson Report’s suggestions was the introduction of the term “institutional racism,” that is, “the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour

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135 Even in supposed left-wing newspapers like The Guardian, reports were made about an ‘exchange’ of gunfire, suggesting that Mark Duggan had, if not fired first, at least fired, and that, therefore, the policeman’s shooting was legitimate. See, Sandra Laville, "Man Shot Dead by Police in North London during Attempted Arrest," Guardian, August 5, 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/05/man-shot-police-london-arrest.


137 Nathan Hall, John Grieve and Stephen P. Savage, Policing and the Legacy of Lawrence, 12.

138 Gordon, 179.
which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people,” to characterise the police, as well as the initiation of the final reform – before it was replaced by the Equality Act (2010) – of the Race Relations Amendment Act in 2000.\footnote{This is the definition of ‘institutional racism,’ according to the Macpherson Report. Quoted in Ahmed, 44-45.} But neither the Macpherson Report nor the consequent reforms could stop the legal death of Mark Duggan. With this shifting of the rhetorical plane and yet failure to stop material death, it is clear that these reforms and bodies allow for a particular public practice of so-called anti-racism that conceals, and consequently facilitates, the possibility of black death.

In her exploration of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), Sara Ahmed warns us not to assume “that an equality regime is necessarily aimed at the overcoming of an inequality regime,” but rather, “that an equality regime can be an inequality regime given new form, a set of processes that maintain what is supposedly being redressed.”\footnote{Sara Ahmed, \textit{On Being Included}, 8. Emphasis in original.} Tracing the Race Relation Act’s roots in the Macpherson Report’s naming of institutional racism as part and parcel of British policing, Ahmed identifies the performative ways in which commitments to, and declarations of, anti-racism (in the very naming of ‘institutional racism’ as well as in the form of ‘commitments to’ equality and diversity), are able to be used “in or even as an institutional response to racism.”\footnote{Ahmed, 116. Emphasis in original.} For example, contra to the Report’s attempts to define institutional racism as something bred, supported and maintained “within the police force as such,” language that identifies an individual source of prejudice “creeps into the definition,” such that there are sick
individuals within an otherwise healthy structure.\textsuperscript{142} Consequently, it is for that healthy structure to expel the sick, with the hopes that the confession of ill health becomes the recovery.\textsuperscript{143} In this way, the institution itself can also – eventually – admit to being the sick body, with that colossal identification becoming the necessary therapy. In the 10th anniversary of the Macpherson Report, Ahmed recalls how the former head of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips’, celebrated the “shock to the system,” that the Report provided, for its proving that “the police have changed their behaviours quite dramatically.”\textsuperscript{144} As Ahmed explains, Phillips names the ‘shock’ as the affect which leads to the behaviour change. To understand the influence of this ‘shock,’ and the transparently low bar of behaviour change that it produces, it is necessary to consider the “sacred position,” British police officers hold in the “cultural construction of the nation.”\textsuperscript{145}

Since the establishment of the police by Robert Peel in the 1800s (where both the nicknames ‘bobby’ and the lesser known, ‘peelian’ originate), their role has been rooted in the ideal that “the police are the public and the public are the police.”\textsuperscript{146} Their humanisation has thus been central to their image, something that is routinely depicted in popular television shows, such as the 1950s BBC series, \textit{Dixon of Dock Green}, the lead character of which, Jack Warner, was even made an honorary member of the real Margate and Ramsgate Police Forces in the 1950s. The heroic image of the London bobby – famed or otherwise – is thus romantically

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{142} Ahmed, 45.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ahmed, 44-45.
\item \textsuperscript{144} See Ahmed, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Mark Brunger, "Exploring the Myth of the Bobby and the Intrusion of the State into Social Space," 129.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Brunger, 125.
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undercut by images of their normalcy, something which has particular salience during Notting Hill Carnival, as officers profess a multicultural, community-centred hipness, as they grind with carnival-goers and join in with the festivities. The British bobby is depicted as hapless and bumbling, “a reassuring, friendly chap in his uniform, in his traditional pointed helmet, unarmed with only his whistle,” the traditional equivalent of the radio, “and truncheon to aid him.”  

The rhetoric of the police officer “saved by his radio,” thus plays into a culturally significant narrative of heroic British bobby through the presentation of this almost-deadly act as a miracle. As has been argued widely, 19th and 20th century Britain gave rise to a “systematic effort to constitute a mythological Englishness,” the bobby (re)presenting this consolidation of national identity. Eugene McLaughlin recalls, the “‘Bobby on the beat’ can be found in virtually every tourist gift shop in London in a bewildering number of formats: postcards, key rings, puppets, dolls, teddy bears, coffee mugs, T-shirts all carry this instantly recognizable image of the English police.” One can even own a bobby’s hat for oneself, endearingly replicating this British cultural figure, and these tourist gifts themselves exist to portray a nostalgic, purchasable picture of England to share with loved ones from whichever foreign place one calls home. Indeed, to become a souvenir in the first place, “one must identify the bobby as English/British without question,” a figure of quaint, genteel Englishness, and the very “centre of popular cultural imagination.”  

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147 Brunger, 131.
149 McLaughlin, 1.
150 Brunger, 131.
151 McLaughlin, 10 and 2.
Hawkes’ structuralist understanding of myth as a system of societally constructed imagery and beliefs, done so “in order to sustain and authenticate its own sense of being.” Drawing also upon Roland Barthes’ analysis of modern mythmaking, Brunger analyses how the bobby is similarly constructed in such a way, “presented to the public as a fixed meaning.” Indeed, the ease with which a false presentation of the officer as the victim of gun violence can be made, and how this, and the killing of the real victim, Mark Duggan, does not result in ‘legitimate’ public outrage attests to this, the “rhetoric that surrounds the bobby” serving to reject “any negative characteristics being attributed to him” at all. As a culturally significant myth, this officer’s community is contrasted to the real victim’s made strange locality, his threat to the neighbourhood in his supposed gang associations, for example, a threat that sullies the cohesiveness of his locale. Furthermore, that the press latched (and continues to latch) onto these images only goes to emphasise their hold on the British imagination, since headlines, especially with breaking news, must be quick and condensed, relying on easily accessible, and culturally recognisable signs.

But even when revealed as myth – as The Telegraph article eventually was – the public, apart from those that rioted – saw little need to condemn the media, nor the officer that killed Mark Duggan, unable, it seems, to “decode the difference between reality and myth,” of both the officers involved in the shooting, the bobby as cultural symbol, and the media that reifies and extends these ideas. If anything, painted as victim at all – even despite being revealed to be

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152 Terrence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 131, quoted in Brunger, 130.

153 Brunger, 130.

154 Brunger, 131.

155 Brunger, 132.
false – did not delegitimise but instead strengthened the myth of the bobby, enabling the perpetrator to gain sympathy, since, given the nature of his work in a special gun crime unit, and thus his positioning as weeding out sin from British lands, the potential for him to in fact be a victim is made all the more salient. Instead of focusing on his violent act, we are to focus instead on his potential to have been the victim and be relieved that the real violator of British morals is the receiver of the deadly bullet, not the officer. The shot to Mark Duggan is thus read – quite literally through the gun that did not, but was originally said, to shoot the officer – as the shot that civilians (including the officers) would have suffered if the police were not there to protect society. Though speaking about the trial of Rodney King – the African-American man whose brutal beating by LAPD officers was recorded but whose assailants were initially found not guilty, resulting in rioting – the figure of Rodney King in Judith Butler’s statement regarding his perceived threat can be easily replaced with that of Mark Duggan: we are to “identify with [King/Duggan’s] vulnerability, but construe it as [our] own, the vulnerability of whiteness, thus refiguring him as the threat.”156 This, Butler argues, “completes the circuit of paranoia,” whereby the shot that Duggan (or King) did not shoot – but could have – represents the “projection of their own aggression, and the subsequent regarding of that projection as an external threat.”157

Of course, and as confirmed by David Cameron’s use of the word ‘thug’ to describe the rioters, neoliberal citizenship involves expelling those that have “failed” from the concept of citizen that would otherwise fall under an officer’s remit – the threat of Duggan or King, is a threat to citizens that they do not count as. Cameron’s prejudicial standard of political expression

156 Butler, 19.
157 See note 156 above. To be clear I draw the comparison here across temporality and geography in order to emphasise the symbol of the black body as part of a global issue of blackness.
to undermine anti-racist, anti-capitalist, black and working-class (dis)organizing is a tool used by the establishment against black and white working-class outrage the world over, but also in activist circles – the ‘good, peaceful,’ march (and consequently, the ‘good’ ‘peaceful’ activist – see the representation of Martin Luther King, particularly in his early years) vs. its ‘bad,’ ‘violent’ opposite. Kristi Carey frames these binary responses to activism as mechanisms of cleaning,\textsuperscript{158} a figurative exploration of the way that student activists are to do ‘clean’ work, but an apt metaphor when thinking about the London Riots due to the distinction between the rioters and the literal ‘cleaners’ of their mess, the civilians that took to the streets in the days after the riots armed with brooms, smiles and cups of tea, to “Sweep Scum Off Our Streets” – a clear attempt at articulating the re-territorialisation of the local area.\textsuperscript{159} What was emphasised by the media about the clean-up is the community-led activism of the cleaners and their representation of a citizenship that is earned and active.

P.K. Manning states that the police “represent the appearance of civil society or governance in everyday life,” a representation that, though framed as a consensual public service, is actually one that serves for surveillance and assessment of moral discipline, and thus are also interwoven within this moral economy.\textsuperscript{160} However, who is surveilled and who carries out the surveillance are distinct, despite terms such as ‘surveillance society,’ and theorising by

\textsuperscript{158} See Carey, “On Cleaning: Student Activism in the Corporate and Imperial University.”

\textsuperscript{159} Daily Express, 2011. See also Tracey Jensen, “Riots, Restraints and the New Cultural Politics of Wanting,” for a discussion of the ways in which the clean-up effort utilised war-time rhetoric like “keep calm and carry on” and “Blitz-Spirit.” The author argues that this goes hand in hand with current austerity era assessments of morality, wherein which the cleaners represented an idealized, post-war embrace of “prudence, frugality and thrift,” thereby enacting their moral citizenship against the rioters’ (anti-British) greed and mess.

\textsuperscript{160} Manning in Brunger, 127.
Michel Foucault of “the disciplinary gaze of the Panoptican” suggesting equal participation in, and universal objectification by, such acts. Surveillance might well be the “archetypical power of modernity,” but it does not affect all equally, with racialized communities bearing the brunt of such watchful eyes, even as such a reality of the watched is invisibilized by these same theories, such as Foucault’s theorisation of surveillance being based on the modern prison, even though the slave ship,\textsuperscript{161} with the existence of more violent acts of surveillance, far preceded it.\textsuperscript{162}

Interestingly, however, amidst increasing insecurities over crime, police officers themselves need to be seen – visibly, on the street – in order to be understood to be carrying out their role as responding to the perceived disorder of society, and so also become the object of surveillance themselves. Hence, there is a desire for the ‘bobby on the beat,’ the officer who roams the streets, keeping order with his mere presence, as this Daily Mail headline, “Where are all our Bobbies?” acknowledges and mourns.\textsuperscript{163} Officers simultaneously need to be seen to be carrying out their role of seeing others (though, of course, mere surveillance is not their only threat), and as such, they also become the object of surveillance themselves. The eyes that watch them, however, belong not to the bodies that they themselves surveill. As we know from the repeated (unnecessary and deadly) calling of police officers in the United States on African-

\textsuperscript{161} See Browne, Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness, 2015.

\textsuperscript{162} Lyon, Surveillance Studies: An Overview, 2007, 57.

\textsuperscript{163} Slack, James. "Where are all our Bobbies? One in Four Britons has NEVER seen a Police Officer on the Beat." Daily Mail Online, Nov 17, 2011. \url{http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2062963/Police-visibility-One-Britons-seen-police-officer-beat.html}. 
Americans, the police most frequently surveill racialised communities, encouraged to do so by the communities that require the visibility of this work.\textsuperscript{164}

In the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the requirement of anti-racist work was to shape the form of surveillance necessitated in new ways, but, as Anna Souhami explores in her empirical review of the intra-managerial intolerance to things such as overt racist language, the manner of surveillance was to remain \textit{visible}, that is, it needed only “purely cosmetic” change.\textsuperscript{165} Next I explore how this specific requirement of visibly, though not \textit{materially}, anti-racist work accompanied an underlying technology of surveillance that itself invisibilises the existence of pre-existing structured visual fields which, entangled with the new requirement to visibly be anti-racist, only goes to support black death.

\textsuperscript{164} A significant threat during the riots was the ability of rioters to undermine police organization and surveillance, as they overpowered their lines with blockades and taunts. Simultaneously, the rioters were surveilled via the technologies of Twitter and BBM. The rioters’ success in undermining the police paved the way for consequential heavy handedness and young teens – some with little material involvement in the riots – were faced with harsh sentences, out of public pressure and state anxiety to be seen to be serving justice. Hence, there is a clear disjuncture between \textit{who}, exactly, the bobby works for and who they protect. The racialized person falls under one category (the surveilled) and never, or at least, rarely, is the invoker of the surveillance. This reality disrupts the very possibility of an officer becoming “the public” – but of course we know that the public (the citizen) was never meant to signify racialised communities to begin with. The public, Brunger argues, is “weaned on a narrative that eulogizes the ‘bobby on the beat’ as a totem of legitimacy and consent,” and therefore does not need to see this role as anything but a universally mandated one. (Brunger, 129).

3.2 Structured Visual Fields: Planting Sub-/Ob-ject(ive)s

“[W]eapons need exist only in the mind of the policeman in [the] firing position.”\(^\text{166}\)

The framing by the media of Mark Duggan as a violent gangster is already racially motivated as much as it became necessary in the face of the dialectical positioning against the symbolically pure (white) police officer who needed to be absolved of his murderous crimes. What interests me here, however, is how this envisioning plays out even prior to any action. For example, how could the police officer who, despite being a trained gunman himself and surrounded by his gun-wielding peers, perceive himself as under threat, such that a jury two years later declared the killing lawful? And, most importantly, how could such a reading evade the Macpherson Report and the Race Relations Act? As I have just explored, both the Report and the Act provided institutions with new standards and guidelines that, surface level as they were, became new technologies to support black death. One such technology was a concept underlying the Report: objectivity. Consider again the definition of institutional racism provided: “the collective failure […] to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behavior which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.” As Ahmed argues, though the definition recognizes the “collective rather than individual nature of racism,” it nonetheless, “[forecloses] what is meant by ‘collective’ by finding evidence of that collectivity only in what institutions fail to do,” (in this case, the failure, as the definition states “to provide an appropriate service…”).\(^\text{167}\) That is, “the report defines institutional racism in such a way that racism is not seen as an ongoing series

\(^{166}\text{Les Payne, Journalist for Newsday. In Lee, Murder and the Reasonable Man, 180.}\)

\(^{167}\text{Ahmed, 45.}\)
of actions that shape institutions, in the sense of norms that get reproduced or posited over time…”168 The very legal standard of ‘objectivity,’ is thus unable to be conceptualized as a racist thing in and of itself, because of the definition’s inability to recognise “ongoing series of actions,” and thus the long-standing legal concept of objectivity as well as the rule of law itself as well as the law itself, as potentially racist.

Moreover, there has been much critique of the use of the word ‘unwitting’ by the Act, not least because it naively assumes that prejudice is always unintentional. But what concerns me here is the fact that the term unwitting suggests that one is “not aware of the full facts.”169 According to the legal standard of objectivity (as in the reasonable person test), one is to act the same regardless of the subjectivity of the person in question. In other words, a person acts objectively if they are aware of the full facts, but do not act prejudicially because of one or any of the facts. The idea of objectivity consequently can never amount to “unwitting prejudice…”, nor does it meet the requirement of being something that the institution fails to provide as a service. The law as a whole, but particularly through the concept of objectivity, is thus foreclosed from the Macpherson Report. And perhaps this would not matter, except for the fact that this was the very standard upon which the legality of Mark Duggan’s death rested upon.

The officers in the case claimed that they saw a gun in Duggan’s hand (a tale also reproduced by the media), though the gun was later found metres away (allegedly thrown by Duggan, despite numerous eye-witness reports claiming that the gun was in fact placed by officers at the scene) without Duggan’s DNA evidence on it, and a coroner’s report stating that

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168 See note 167 above.

169 For example, see the definition of ‘unwitting’ by the Oxford English Dictionary:
Duggan was shot when his hands were not in a position whereby he could pull a trigger, but instead was hunched over, having already been shot, with one hand in his pocket, and the other reaching to protect his recently-shot shoulder.\textsuperscript{170} I would argue that these realities of structured fields – the media’s depiction of Duggan as a thug, and the officer’s visualisation of Duggan reaching for a gun – are distinct. Of course, they inform each other; to see Duggan as a threat here, the officer relied on, the ‘sign’ of blackness that makes him the ”site and source of danger,” rather than the victim, (an image consolidated by imagery in the media).\textsuperscript{171} But how far was the officer also an agent of his own visioning, able to see what he needed to, a visioning that as a result, enabled him to kill with impunity?

In her analysis of the Rodney King verdict,\textsuperscript{172} Butler examines the ability for jury members to read the recording of King’s violent arrest as one in which King was “‘in total control’” of the situation, not victim but aggressor, even as he was the recipient of brutal blows.\textsuperscript{173} Complicating the perceived objectivity of ‘evidence,’ Butler argues that it is not a

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\textsuperscript{171} Butler, 18.

\textsuperscript{172} Note that the Rodney King riots occurred after the ruling, whereas the London Riots occurred after the killing.

\textsuperscript{173} Butler, 15.

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matter of the jury ignoring the video, but of “reproducing the video within a racially saturated field of visibility,” interpreting this ‘visual evidence’ in advance, through a racial episteme that does not simply read the visual and interpret it, but actively produces it.\textsuperscript{174} The significance of Butler’s theorising was critical at a time when the very existence of a recording was celebrated as a sign that police violence against black communities might be prevented, or at the very least, officers might be capable of being held to account.\textsuperscript{175} But against these celebrations of ‘proof,’ Butler points to the ability for subjective readings to be produced nonetheless, and for these contestable constructions to be produced as if they were “the same as seeing,” in other words, as objective truth.\textsuperscript{176}

Unlike the Rodney King beating, Mark Duggan’s death was remarkably, under-surveilled, with passing buses capturing only general footage of the area, the moments after his shooting captured on film by one eye-witness’s camera alone (from an apartment complex some metres away) and nothing at all captured by the data recorders fitted to the police vehicles. In the absence of such ‘objective’ data, however, what we see occurring is the structured field of vision (that is, eye witness reports) becoming not subject to more doubt or criticism, but in fact emphasised, with subjective witnessing – by the police, at least – promoted to the position of objective fact. In the inquiry into his death, these ‘facts’ would become ever more important,

\textsuperscript{174} Butler, 16.

\textsuperscript{175} Of course, the existence of the tape contributed to a double-edged sword in another respect in that “to the extent that the videotape was understood to ‘prove’ the racist brutality of the LAPD, such a conclusion implicitly rested on the idea that, but for the tape no ‘objective’ proof was available. […] The emphasis on the objective proof of the videotape, in short, marginalizes as merely subjective all those whose reality is devalued because there was no tape, only their word and the community’s long-standing experience of the LAPD.” Crenshaw and Peller, 65-66.

\textsuperscript{176} Butler, 16.
since the ability for the death to be deemed lawful relied on the establishment of so-called objective truths such as “reasonable force,” in the light of defending oneself or another “from injury, attack or threat of attack.”

Hence the inquest jury had to establish:

A) That the act was done in lawful self defence or defence of another or in order to prevent crime.

If it was established that the act satisfied the above, it then had to be established that the force was reasonable according to the following:

B) Any person is entitled to use reasonable force to defend himself or another from injury, attack or threat of attack.

If it was established that the act satisfied the above, the jury were then directed to consider the following:

1) Did V53 honestly believe or may he honestly have believed, even if that belief is mistaken, that at the time he fired the fatal shot, that he needed to use force to defend himself or another; if your answer is NO then he cannot have been acting in lawful self-defence and you can put that issue to one side; if your answer is YES then go on to consider:

2) Was the force used – the fatal shot – reasonable in all the circumstances? Obviously if someone is under attack from someone he genuinely believes is violent and armed – then that person cannot be expected to weigh up precisely the amount of force needed to prevent the attack. But if he goes over top and acts out of proportion to the threat then he would not be using reasonable force and his action would be unlawful.

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The Inquiry’s understanding of reasonable, though based on a supposed ‘objective’ understanding of reasonableness (as the reasonable person test in British criminal law is generally understood to be), is incompatible with the Macpherson Report’s definition of institutional racism in the sense that it is able to sidestep the definition/claim altogether. Instead, according to the Inquiry, “the question whether the degree of force used by V53 was reasonable in the circumstances is to be decided by reference to the circumstances as V53 believed them to be – but the degree of force is not to be regarded as reasonable in the circumstances as V53 believed them to be if it was disproportionate in those circumstances.”

178 A similar reasonable test was utilised in the Rodney King verdict, whereby the jury had to consider whether a police officer might have reasonably concluded that King was a threat that needed to be resisted. To arrive at a conclusion, expert witnesses were shown frame-by-frame stills of the video, and accordingly, each frame and more precisely, King’s body language, were assessed. Under such scrutiny, it was possible that King’s beaten body became the agent of violence, such that his body became “‘cocked’ and could appear ‘in a trigger position.’”

179 Such a process, Kimberle Crenshaw and Gary Peller argue, is the result of disaggregation, whereby the “reel time of the video” is isolated “from its meaning-giving context,” and, once accomplished, that is, “meaning divorced from context,” it becomes possible “to weave the disaggregated images together with new, alternative narratives.”


179 Crenshaw and Peller, 61.

180 See note 179 above.
Historically, these technologies have been unnecessary, as the following quotation by Homi Bhabha describing the Fanonian moment attests: “The white man’s eyes break up the black man’s body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed” (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{181} As such this technology is not an aberration of the norm but a confirmation of it, grounded in the manifestation of structured visual fields.

Though no video tape of Mark Duggan’s murder ever emerged, Duggan’s killer, an agent by the codename V53, referenced his own video-style shots: “the only way I can describe it, is like a freeze frame moment. You know? It’s like you’ve got Sky Plus or a video recorder, it’s where you start pausing things...”\textsuperscript{182} As I have already suggested, such freeze frame moments – even as part of real video footage – do not guarantee objective witnessing. But even as the subjective reality of the perpetrator’s memory, they are neither taken as myth, a forensic psychologist stating that “the common cognitive distortion that’s reported [after gun violence] is time slowing down, everything seems to be like in slow motion. But it’s likely to be a distortion, it doesn’t have to be that they’re lying, it means, when you look at memory, memory’s fragile, and it’s very easy to make mistakes.”\textsuperscript{183} Yet it is this “mistake” that the reasonable test in the Inquiry rested upon, “to be decided by reference to the circumstances as V53 believed them to be.”\textsuperscript{184} Thus V53 saw a weapon: “I can see the hand on the weapon, I can make out the trigger guard, I can make out the barrel, and it’s side on to his body and there’s a black sock covering that

\textsuperscript{181} Homi Bhabha quoted in Fleetwood, \textit{Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness}, 22.

\textsuperscript{182} In D’Cruz, \textit{Lawful Killing}.

\textsuperscript{183} See note 182 above.


weapon.” Another officer, W70, corroborated this: “As he’s drawn the gun, my threat assessment was that it was an imminent threat to life because he was drawing that weapon in order to fire it at us. If Mr. Duggan had left the gun like this [with his arm bent and the gun cocked towards his jacket], I would have hoped he would have dropped it, but because he’s moved it away from his body, I now have an honest held belief that he's going to shoot me." Another officer, W42, confirmed, "What I've then seen is his elbow, his right elbow, move out slightly. It was minimal, yes, a few inches would probably be correct, but it was enough to make me shout what I did next: 'He's reaching! He's reaching!'”

But Mark Duggan was not carrying a gun when he was shot. In fact, the gun was found metres away, over a 14ft fence, in a nearby field where the minicab was stopped, with none of Duggan’s finger prints on it, nor any gun residue on Duggan’s person. The Inquiry concluded that Duggan had somehow thrown the gun there before he got out of the cab, despite no officer witnessing him doing it. The IPCC themselves have declared the issue of the gun, “the big mystery of this investigation,” with Stafford Scott, a local activist stating bewilderingly, “No one can tell me that 11 police officers can face an armed man – that man gets shot – and that gun not be found in a nanosecond, when all 11 officers are trained to keep their eye and keep that focus on the gun.”

V53 states, "I'm sure it would clear up a hell of a lot of stuff if I was able to say, yes, I saw the gun fly through the air and it landed wherever, but I didn’t see it.” W70 states, "There was nothing obstructing my way,” then qualifies, “but I didn't clearly see what happened

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185 In D’Cruz, Lawful Killing.

186 See note 185 above.
to that gun." Finally, R31, a firearms officer admits, "No, I didn’t see anything go over the fence." 187

V53’s assessment of threat, however, relied upon his seeing of a gun. It was thus initially argued that Duggan threw the gun after he stepped out of the car, before or during his shooting. Nevertheless, the possibility of him throwing a weapon was also ruled out by medical evidence. Derrick Pounder stated that it would not have been possible for him to have thrown the gun since the first shot that he received tore through his right arm muscle. As such, Pounder puts forward two other possibilities: that Duggan threw the weapon before stepping out of the vehicle (but admits that “for me it's inconceivable that if he did achieve that, it was done without the two police officers seeing it”), or that the police planted it. 188 The fact – as lightly as I use that term – of Duggan’s throwing of the gun away before stepping outside the vehicle should, surely, supersede the perpetrators subjective (and false) vision of Duggan with a gun, even if the law does allow for the perpetrators own beliefs, such that the jury would rule the killing unlawful. 189

Whilst my purpose here is not to engage in the ‘conspiracy’ theory of who planted the gun, what does concern me is the legality of the jury’s decision, given that what V53 saw as Duggan holding a gun – a sighting that we are to judge the legality of the murder upon – was completely one of fiction, the result of a deadly, structured field of vision. Critical Race theorists

187 See note 185 above.

188 In D’Cruz, Lawful Killing.

189 Not a single jury member regarded the killing unlawful, though two did arrive at an ‘open conclusion.’ The other eight, however, concluded that the killing was lawful, in other words, “that it was more likely than not that the fatal shot which killed Mark Duggan was the use of lawful force,” requiring upon the relevant answers to questions 1) and 2) and A) and B) as I have outlined above.
have long attested that the law is not neutral and never has been. The problem with the idea of objectivity that the law rests upon, and the point I am trying to make here, is that it is in spite of race that the law considers itself neutral, this bastion being the ‘rule of law’ that an Inquiry such as the one into Mark Duggan’s death rests upon. Most importantly, the supposed rationale of the law as it was used here – based on ‘objective’ facts and witnessing – lies in complete contrast to the messy, illegibility of the rioters’ behaviours. In the final chapter I will explore how therein lies the riots’ radical potential.

3.3 Due Process

With the increasing withdrawal globally of commitments to equality, even as I critique these efforts, I am not suggesting that we depart from legal rhetorical phrases such as institutional racism altogether. What I am suggesting, however, is that we realise, genuinely, how black death is written into the very fabric of these ideals. It should be apparent by now, that “the use of law to justify the torture and killings that the state can perpetrate is predicated on the understanding that the state’s target subjects are, as the embodiment of ungovernable violence, at once anathema to and beyond law and thus outside of any ethical consideration.”\textsuperscript{190} As bodies already signifying violence through structured visual fields, their deaths are always and necessarily legal, since, as I have shown, the very definition of legal (resting upon a subjective reading of threat – though invisibilised via an objective standard of reasonableness) permits the use of violence. Although the Macpherson Report brought to light the possibility that such violence might unfairly target some, its effect was to enmesh these standards within the law deeper. Indeed, headed by a barrister, Sir William Macpherson, the law was used “in order to present an official

\textsuperscript{190} Pugliese, State Violence and the Execution of Law: Biopolitical Caesurae of Torture, Black Sites, Drones, 17-18.
front of due process and ordered governance, thereby legitimating its monopoly on violence.”

The Report and the Race Relations Amendment Act that followed knew that it only need to penetrate anti-racism at a visual level, that is in ways that showed its commitments on paper, enmeshed in a performative culture that prioritises the speech act (the naming of ‘institutional racism’), rather than the doing of it. It is important that we recognize that this is not a mistake, but the very purpose of these documents, the “very condition of the operation of the law.”

Indeed, the horror of the legality of Mark Duggan’s death is not because the officer was not found to have acted illegally, after all, but that this is simply due process, business as usual. As my analysis of the structured visual fields that shaped the officers’ reading of Mark Duggan attested, this “collapsing is already inscribed in raciality,” that is “a priori […] always-already [working] to render the target subject as disposable and killable in the face of the state’s violent acts of self-preservation.” Hence, by mounting their struggle against these liberal logics and by holding onto the one thing in carnival that also escapes them (the spatiality and logic of land and body re-appropriation), the rioters attempted to make impossible the possibility of violence in the very act of land and body appropriation that they mounted in the riots. The state’s response, threatening to cancel Notting Hill Carnival, reveal the strength of such a wager, representative of the potential reassertion of the originary radical roots of carnival’s own proclamations.

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191 See note 190 above.
192 Hunt quoted in Pugliese, 18.
193 Pugliese, 19.
Chapter 4: Imagining Otherwise

“‘This is not a protest. Repeat. This is not a protest. This is some kind of artistic expression. Over.’”¹⁹⁴

During, and in the immediate aftermath of, the London Riots, discourse by the media, the public and the establishment, focused on the denial of its legitimacy as a protest given the extent of “shopping with violence.”¹⁹⁵ Scholars, activists and community members then, understandably, responded to these critics, pointing out the ways in which this narrative serves an ideological agenda that ignores structural inequality (including class and race-centered analyses) in place of a prioritization of individualising moral attributes (with the accompanying rhetoric of 'undeserving' poor that no longer need social/welfare support). In this final chapter I want to explore the contradictions of protest by closely reading two particular sentiments encapsulated in the statements, “I ain’t never gonna wear none of this shit,” and “the most exciting two nights of my life.” I turn to these two narratives because I believe their emancipatory potential lies beyond rights-based language that would repeat the logic of the modern subject, in the first quotation’s counter-capitalist illegibility, read alongside the second quotation’s reclamation of space. Consequently, it is within them that I hear the possibility of imagining otherwise, as they utilise the radical possibilities of carnival whilst critiquing the global issue of blackness.

I start by tracing the conceptual ground illustrated by Spivak and Butler in their analysis of a protest about the United States government’s plans to pass a bill that would require the state

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to bring detained undocumented immigrants into custody. They show us how radical futures are made possible through performative contradictions, even whilst they acknowledge, and as I alluded to earlier in this thesis, how these contradictions may be read as desires to integrate. What I learn from them, however, is how the protesters’ cries make clear the ever-widening gap between, in Spivak and Butler’s case, the documented and undocumented, not necessarily in order to bridge that gap, as if the latter part of the couplet is the ideal, but, simply, to make that gap stark and then, to mobilize it. If we are to imagine otherwise, and if we are to hear it within the riots, I believe we must embrace the messy affect of those that sing – or riot – with uncertainty. After all, it is the imagination itself, not the intention behind it that is so powerful. As such, we must discharge with the need to confirm the vocalization of imagining otherwise in anything but the acts of imagining otherwise themselves; not least because of the intimacy with the modern subject that the former would require. As I stated in the introduction, we truly cannot know what otherwise might look like, since we already “cannot assume a static present from which to base our predilection.” In the spirit of dis-epistemology, nor should we want to.

Then, I explore the first expression: “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” and look to how the statement’s strength lies in its counter-capitalist articulation that makes stark consumer culture and critiques capitalism but achieves this without attempting to take part in its structures. I also introduce the possibility of reading the theft itself as radical under late capitalism, but consider, through Robert Nichols and his “Theft is Property!” how this still does not move us away from capitalism’s clutch. Next, I turn to the expression, “the most exciting two nights of my life,” to consider how integral space and the joyous reclamation of the streets was to the riots. I return us to two scenes: the image in John Akomfrah’s film of the black youth perched on the

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196 Kristi Carey, in conversation.
top of a brick wall during the Handsworth Riots and Toni Morrison’s scene in Beloved, when the characters Sethe, Denver and Beloved go skating. I mobilize these many ghosts, including former riots and police surveillance to illustrate the effects of rememory, and how the rioters engaged with and mobilized the past (that is not yet past). Finally, I deal with a major tension of the riots: its violence, ending with a provocation about what the riots’ menace might mean for life.

4.1 Performative Contradictions

In attentive deconstructive fashion, Judith Butler in Who Sings the Nation-State: Language, Politics and Belonging,\textsuperscript{197} finds in Hannah Arendt a mode of thinking that forms the basis of the analysis later utilised in her and Gayatri Spivak’s reading of the singing of the national anthem in Spanish. Noting Arendt’s “in some sense […] declaring” of the “end of the nation-state,” (the title of the essay Butler is referring to), Butler is able to capture the radical potentiality of the “discursive process of beginning something new; it is an inducement, an incitation, a solicitation.”\textsuperscript{198} It (almost) does not matter that Arendt’s speech might not be “efficacious,” since this, Butler argues, nonetheless constitutes a certain kind of wager: beyond mere political bite, this declaration has the power not only to disrupt, but to reimagine. Against a priori features of the modern subject as articulated by Enlightenment philosophers and now celebrated by neoliberalism as individual, Butler identifies the plurality of Arendt’s pronoun use. This ‘we’ must be the basis from which any acting together can begin, and in its speaking – in Arendt’s description and use of it – the transition from ‘I’ to ‘we,’ although not “[sufficient] as efficacious

\textsuperscript{197} Butler and Spivak, Who Sings the Nation-State?: Language, Politics, Belonging, 55.

\textsuperscript{198} See note 197 above.
action,” nonetheless is affected in her performance of a future ontology. The manoeuvre is necessarily doubled in its performance: by imagining the ‘we’ the possibility for that ‘we’ is manifested. It is this radical possibility that is important for Butler and Spivak, and important for us.199

Of course, many scholars have theorised the protest, the revolt, the riot. As part of this body of work, the authors do so without falling into the trap of uncritically buttressing human rights. This comes from Arendt’s “ontological claim” but also her own reading of the singing. Since, despite being “political aspiration” – or perhaps, as we shall see, due to being political aspiration – the claims made are not ones of inclusion “into an already existing idea of the nation;” for the singers cannot exist in the nation, by the very nature of their presence as ‘illegal’ non-subjects. Thus, in the national anthem’s translation, as well as their physical embodiment on the street, demanding the things they cannot behold, they queer citizenship: it is in the sounding of their political aspiration that they mock it.200 This queering, therefore, results both from the singers’ prideful walking on the streets illegally (and the consequent undermining of their lacking citizenship that their walking enables), and also in their appeal to become a citizen of a completely different kind, singing the national anthem in Spanish.

199 Perhaps I am doing Butler’s analysis a disservice by suggesting a reading of this as a ‘doubling.’ In truth, it is far more than mere doubles, as the ‘we,’ itself, is a plurality. Nonetheless, ‘doubling,’ (though perhaps limited, and not something I would suggest for all the performances at play here [the singing etc.])) does neatly capture an idea of dual things taking place simultaneously. I fear that if I were to read the manoeuvre as plural, it would suggest something vague and unintentional.

Part of the efficacy of the queering, at least in how Spivak and Butler are able to present it, is that the radical potentiality (the queering itself), does not rely on the singers’ confirmation of their own belief in the radical potentiality of their act. After all, they could be desirous of inclusion into the nation-state, singing a ‘we’ that might include them into the American fold – that is, a Spanish ‘nuestro,’ a mere translation. This reality might otherwise weaken the critique of the nation that Spivak and Butler are upholding, but the authors do not let it. They admit: “I don’t know how much of that singing is tactical. I don’t know about the people who are not singing but doing some other things and, of course, there is no way to know in advance whether it will be assimilated into what you are calling resurgent nationalism or turn out to be nothing but that or whether it will be mixed up.” 201 Nevertheless, the power, they argue, lies in the “fissure at work of some kind”:

We have to understand the public exercise as enacting the freedom it posits, and positing what is not yet there. There’s a gap between the exercise and the freedom or the equality that is demanded that is its object, that is its goal. It’s not that everything is accomplished through language. No, it is not as if “I can say I’m free and then my performative utterance makes me free.” No. But to make the demand on freedom is already to begin its exercise and then to ask for its legitimation is to also announce the gap between its exercise and its realization and to put both into public discourse in a way that that gap is seen, so that that gap can mobilize.202

The very power of the illegibility: the burning cars, burning stores, and, in full transparency, burning this shit to the ground, become the rioters’ own fissures, as they work through the

201 Butler and Spivak, 112.

202 Butler and Spivak, 69.
detachment from the workings of modern knowledge (that I have traced in postcolonial hauntings but, indeed, go much further back than that) that would require a repetition of a rational trajectory that “degrades and denigrates blackness as an unwieldy, destabilizing force.” Instead the (ir)rationality, described by the police officer over the radio about Toronto’s Reclaim the Streets as “some kind of artistic expression,” or styled by Ashon Crawley as a “choreographic encounter,” in other words that unnameable thing that refuses to be grounded by strategy or absolutism, reflects the imagination of something other than this, a way of imagining otherwise.

4.1.1  “I Ain’t Gonna Wear None of This Shit.”

Tracey Jensen examines how the riots were positioned as being connected to a “problematic kind of wanting” that disturbs the romanticization of frugal living under austerity, that is, a culture of ‘new thrift’ that has become a mantra for a ‘responsible’ lifestyle. Jensen argues that under ‘new thrift,’ “conspicuous non-consumption” becomes desirable as a marker of cultural value, in a spirit that harkens back to Blitz spirit abstinence. Whilst theft is often a universally understood sin, during the riots it became a particularly nuanced issue that hit cross-partisanly because of the rioters’ supposed illustration of excessive consumer desire. Critics expressed disdain at the


204 In Klein, No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, No Logo, 311.

205 Crawley, Otherwise Movements.


bookstores left untouched by rioting (signalling that such looting would have been morally acceptable), in comparison to leisurewear shops like JD Sports, for example. 207 Another visual reference to illegitimate wanting can be seen with the comparison made by commentators between those stealing TVs rather than bread or milk. At the heart of these comparisons is the belief in an acceptable way to be poor, based upon an explanation of how poverty is created in the first place, that is, through individual overconsumption and poor decisions, rather than “low pay, the stagnation of wages in real terms, poor education and health provision, structural unemployment or underemployment, the effects of global neo-liberalism, deregulation of social security, reforms to welfare which aggravate class fractures (and so on).” 208

By stealing (the wrong) things, the rioters became illustrative to the establishment, not only of their supposed deserving lower nature, but also of the need for fortified welfare reduction, given the belief that welfare emboldens moral bankruptcy through the rewarding of laziness and the consequent encouragement of work-shy behaviour. In this way, the rioters’ failure of moral citizenship was attained in their proximity to them almost reaching an acceptable poor identity. Their excessive theft in the luxury items that they stole, although became a signifier of the problems of consumer culture that the left could mobilize, strayed just that bit too far from the acceptable limits of an impoverished people’s behaviour. Consequently, rather than the riots illustrating (even for the left) the problems inherent within capitalism, the problem became an issue that one could fix within capitalism, by a moral shift of consumer values and the broadening of the possibility of inclusion into consumerist culture. Similarly, it has been noted 207 See Zoe Williams, “The UK Riots: the Psychology of Looting,” Guardian, August 9, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/aug/09/uk-riots-psychology-of-looting.

208 Jensen, 7.
how shops containing high-resale value content were specifically targeted by looting, thus emphasizing the fulfilment of the entrepreneurial ideal of neoliberalism. Again, the rioters were at the cusp of achieving acceptable neoliberal subject-hood, but fail through their method of acquisition, (which resulted in harsh punitive responses). Inequality, seen this way, becomes the “right to consume’ and the extent to which that ‘right’ is denied,” a mere extension of inclusion politics.209

Filling a shopping trolley full of goods from Clapham Junction’s Debenham’s store before abandoning it at the door, one rioter exclaimed “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit.” Where do we place this sentiment within the narratives of entrepreneurial (and thus acting according to capitalism) but-thieving rioter, and excessively-consumerist-thieving rioter? I believe the radical potential of this act is the fact that it accompanies exactly these diverse actions, and thus accompanies others who engaged in the riots in ostensibly illegible ways, undermining the ease with which the media and politicians drew to calling people like him criminal opportunists. It also calls into question the ability for neoliberal ‘remedies’ to be sought (from welfare cuts to prison sentences). To be sure, these acts should not be singled out for the moral results that they might convey. Under late capitalism, the act of theft might be considered radical, regardless of the content (luxury item or staple), and many rioters compared their own thieving to the theft that politicians daily embarked upon. These acts thus revealed the precarity of the poor, at the same time as revealing the hypocrisy that some were able to be poor (the richest 10% of households hold 45% of all wealth; the poorest 50% own 8.7%).

Furthermore, we might also consider Robert Nichols’ provocation in “Theft is Property!” to critique the use of theft-based language for its presumption that there is an initial thing to be

owned (the property that is able to be stolen) in the first place. He states, “to speak meaningfully of dispossession appears to presuppose a prior relation of possession.”

Likewise, if we are to uphold that the rioters were merely copying the theft that politicians were enacting, we must also uphold the very idea of property and their right to own it and consume items. Although there is satisfaction to be gained from this type of reading (with the sentiment, we’ll show them what it’s like behind it), it “seems limited […] as a tool of radical critique since its normative force derives from a generally conservative defense of previously existing property relations” which, consequently, “[reinforces] the very proprietary models of social relations that these critical traditions generally seek to undermine.”

In the riots then, it becomes possible to see most looting as “evidence of conformity to the brutal underlying values of a free market consumerist society, if momentarily, not its norms.” However, in the throwaway remark, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” and its accompanying throwaway action, I hear an engagement with a counter-capitalist wager.

Since, as I have illustrated, the narratives of overconsumption and failed entrepreneurship (the failure being the initial theft), though have the ability to find a problem with capitalism (capitalism makes one wanting and idealises wealth), only centers how capitalism acts upon the rioters, and not on how the rioters act upon capitalism by ridicule it themselves. As a result, these narratives suggest that there is something within capitalism that needs to be amended, or that capitalism acts incorrectly because of the failure of the people whom it acts upon (e.g. instead of greed we should teach everyone how to thrift responsibly or we should equalise the

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211 See note 210 above. Emphasis added.

212 Moxon, 4.
wealth). The rioter’s “I ain’t gonna” statement, on the other hand, suggests that there is something inherently wrong within capitalism altogether and that there is a possibility of imagining otherwise from it.

To unsettle the tension within concepts like property, theft and dispossession and in order to “[lead] us away from implying that that relationship to land must be in its original form a propertied one,” Robert Nichols proposes an alternative: desecration. The term implies that “the earth itself is the injured party,” and cites Mohawk legal scholar Patricia Monture-Agnus to further explain an Aboriginal relationship to land which is “not about control of the land,” but is about “a request to be responsible.”\(^\text{213}\) Within the utterance, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” is the suggestion of pleasure already fulfilled, such that the statement is a climactic disappointment of a perhaps otherwise pleasurable task. Referencing Sarah Ahmed’s exploration of the “fixation on ‘happiness’ in a time of economic crisis,” Jensen speaks to how new thrift is “a matter of transforming the relationship of the self to itself,” that is, in an individually motivated fashion that sees austerity as a source of “personal self-esteem” and consequently, personal happiness.\(^\text{214}\) In the “I ain’t gonna” statement, the climax of happiness has already surpassed since the joy is not to be found within personal acquisition alone, but, so the rioter suggests, in already-accomplished actions. As I will explain further later, many rioters exclaimed the euphoria from the communal actions they were involved particularly because gang-related hostility ceased and cross-racial harmony prospered. Resultingly, “I ain’t gonna wear none of this shit,” takes on a new meaning, whereby the I is refugured into a deeply personal refusal: I’ll leave the shopping trolley at the door, perhaps for someone else.

\(^{213}\) In Nichols, “Theft is Property! The Recursive Logic of Dispossession,” 13.

\(^{214}\) Jensen, 8.
What might Nicholls’ move to ‘desecration,’ and a responsibility over the land, signal about the British state’s irresponsible handling of its subjects (such that some are allowed to live in poverty, or that some are jobless, that there are cuts to services and so on)? And how might we consequently read the rioters’ actions as solving, or at the very least dealing with, the tension of so-called ‘reclamation,’ by posing a particular political challenge that lies beyond capitalist logic, in counter-capitalist acts; behaviour that refused, literally, to buy into capitalism’s entrapment of greed, want, indeed, even theft? Consider for example, that people “paraded their stolen goods in front of the crowds, sharing out packets of stolen cigarettes, even throwing bundles of clothes out of a shop for everyone else.”215 Such redistribution might signal a care and loving that, contra reclamation (that relies on the legitimacy of the initial property), invalidates the reality, and hopefully, the continuation of desecration. The language that Robin Kelley, in his discussion in Freedom Dreams of returning African-American civil war troops is noteworthy: “They were the liberators, their ex-masters the rebels. They believed that the rebels’ land should be divided up among the folks who toiled for so many generations without pay.” Perhaps we might hear “dispossession,” here in the debt owed to those toiling “without pay,” however I believe that this is merely a signifier for the desecration (since the lack of pay is not the only horror of the transatlantic slave trade). It is Kelley’s own performative contradiction, his own signalling of the tension. He continues, “And some of the ex-slaves did just that, parcelling out their former masters’ property, staking claims to abandoned plantation lands, preparing to inherit the earth they had just turned into wealth for idle white people.”216 In this way they are not claiming the land as their own property, but looking to the future wellbeing of the land, and themselves. As

215 Titarelli, 73.

216 Kelley, 115.
Crawley so eloquently states, “this movement is the enactment of an otherwise stragey, an otherwise plan. And this otherwise strategy and plan cannot be owned. It can only be shared.”

Admittedly, these issues within the riots – of theft, thrift, property and destruction – regardless of their justifiability (such as shared theft), have been a source of tension for commentators and for me especially because literature on the topic by the media has created a distinction between our critique of the consumerist desire ‘evident’ within the logics of looting and the political nature of the riots. How do we recognise the issue with consumerist responses within the riots and critique it? How do we limit our critique without presenting that constraint as an attempt to civilise or humanise the rioters, which perhaps the emphasis on the political, rather than consumerist, nature of the riots does? How do we recognise that the political and the consumerist also speak to each other and may not be so oppositional as they are presented? At stake is, as Kim Allen, Sumi Hollingworth, Ayo Mansaray and Yvette Taylor remind us, “what counts as political action, and […] who has the power to define the actions of others and the specific socio-historical conditions which make those judgements possible,” and consequently the need for us to “re-think the ways in which politics, under contemporary neoliberalist is recontextualised and reframed in relation to our consumerist practices and ethics and broader patterns of disadvantage.”

I think, as I have tried to illustrate with Butler and Spivak, we are, simply, to sit with and mobilise that tension. How else to recognise that our ‘issue’ is not, in fact, with the individual rioters’ actions ourselves, but the structures that make those actions viable? There is also a

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217 Crawley, “Otherwise Movements.”

reason why it is necessary to pose these issues as questions. There is so much at stake within any
answer – academically, theoretically, practically – for me, for us, and for the rioters themselves.
But imagining otherwise engages with those questions as questions, posing other ones and not
(necessarily) answers. Whilst the riots did not involve redistribution alone, even the capitalist
logic which inspired people to steal for themselves is noteworthy for the manner in which this
was seen to be done. For instance, in some footage someone can be heard asking: “What have
you got?” The caller, in turn, receives the response, “Don’t even know!” As well as material
gain, people revelled in the disaster and the illegibility of their own actions as understood by
even themselves. This is why these complex reverberations within the riots, the rioter who leaves
his booty by the door, as well as the rioter who sells his booty on, must be read together. For it is
these complex interrelations that made the riots so impenetrable. Of course, we might note this
impenetrability as a reason not to expect understanding from policy makers, but I also wonder
how far policy necessarily must be evaded, since, as I have illustrated it is not in spite of policy
but very much in line with, if not because of policy that Mark Duggan’s legal death and the riots
occurred in the first place.

The performative contradiction again lies in the possibility that they might not have
stolen anything of ‘value,’ and even that they might have destroyed that which would otherwise
be classed as such, as can be seen from the “joyous destruction of shops while high value
electronic goods lie smashed on the streets.”219 Notably, acts like this would have been
incredibly difficult to police. Whilst there was a disproportionate amount of arrests of people
captured on CCTV stealing or as a result of raids on properties and the discovery of stolen goods
(the sheer number of which demonstrating if not the limits, but the risk for some bodies – black

219 Tiratelli, 73-74.
and poor bodies – of a belief in theft as radical), the damage done in these innumerate ways is a nuisance to power. To return to Weheliye and his desire to abandon “volitional agency,” the challenge posed by the Muselmanner is in the repeated violation of “self-discipline. They stood in the way everywhere […] they repeatedly violated the rule of order and cleanliness…” Resultingly, the Muselmanner’s “apathy was provocative; it stirred the rage of their tormentors […] the passivity of the Muselmann was an insult to power.” The focus, therefore, of the reporting of figures such as the £300m worth of insurance claims should not surprise us. The media and politicians need the rioters to partake in mindless violence and criminal opportunism, to put a language of action to the counter-capitalist and inarticulate methods of nuisance. They needed to refuse to read the lips of those who mouthed Weheliye’s “I craves,” out of the normalcy of capitalism’s willingness to leave some starved. Since the real power lies in the rioters’ ability, not to mouth “I craves,” and satisfy those desires with material nourishment, but for those mouths to yell, *I craves something else entirely.*

### 4.1.2 “The Most Exciting Two Nights of My Life”

Amidst the disruptions of a tumultuous narrative, Toni Morrison, in her novel “Beloved,” writes a scene for her characters of joy, found in the solitude of their winter excursion skating. Sharing tired ice-skates between the three of them, what might otherwise be an episode filled with the pain of broken bones, fills them, instead, with laughter. Morrison repeats the source of

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220 Wolfgan Sofsky in Weheliye, 122.

221 See note 220 above.

222 This is the figure for London only. See *Reading the Riots*, 28.

their joy three times for good measure: “Nobody saw them falling.”

224 It is but a simple narration of fact, but the significance lies in Sethe and her two children’s experience of tumbling away from watchful eyes, in streets that otherwise would not be theirs to fall upon. As in Beloved, the London Riots enabled its own hidden fallings, but unlike Morrison’s scene, the power in the clandestine – in the media’s focus on the looting, as opposed to other activities – was a tool utilized to tarnish the legitimacy of the riots. In the following, and as I emphasized in the previous chapter, I do not desire to shed light on different realities of the riots in the hopes of civilizing the rioters or justifying their actions. Rather, I want to read the riots as responding to hauntings, as revealing the fleshiness of ghosts.

Just as Morrison’s text illustrates the vivid ways in which bodies act upon spaces, so too do Notting Hill Carnival and the London Riots share and enact this historical reality. As a response to ‘Stop Under Suspicion’ (SUS) laws – itself an inheritance of the policing of enslaved and ‘freed’ peoples’ movements that predestines present day ‘Stop and Search’ laws that characterized many of the rioters’ own daily wanderings – Jones’ carnival forcefully declared land to be safely enjoyed in a manner that might be thought of as institutional maroonage with the city, rather than the highlands, at its heart. As Julian Henriques put more recently, “Carnival is the two days in the year where the streets are owned by the people walking and partying on them,” which explicitly states that though some bodies’ acting upon spaces is permitted within temporal constraints, its significance is undeniable.225 The focus, then, is not escape in the way

224 Morrison, 205.

maroonage is traditionally considered, nor in the way that the cars set aflame during the uprisings surely demand us to think about escape – all of London escaping in death – but a focus on “transformation of the here and now,” that might in fact undermine the limitation of the temporal boundary due to its focus on the present and presumably the hope that this might carry forward with it to the future encapsulated with the historical spirit that it engages from the past, perhaps imagining different presents (and resultingly, different futures), through Morrison’s rememory.226

Although the motivation for his project differs from mine in that he is directly seeking to challenge the “dominant explanation of the riots as an outbreak of ‘criminal opportunism,’” Matteo Tiratelli’s analysis of the dynamics of 2011 is perhaps the first and only examination of the importance of space to the riot’s logics.227 His careful study reveals the emotional significance of the places targeted for rioting and importantly concludes that they “redefined those places,” in order to – as the title of his study attests – “[reclaim] the everyday […] reclaim these ordinary places.”228 Central to reclamation was the reversal of control, from originally “busy thoroughfares with police patrols (and associated stop-and-searches), chain stores and traffic,” something which marked the London Riots as different from previous ones, such as in the 1980s where the rioters were defending territory they felt they had ownership over, or even recent protests such as Occupy or Tahrir Square which were symbolic places. The London Riots’ places although symbolic for their histories of racism, police violence and urban gentrification

227 Tiratelli, Reclaiming the Everyday: The Situational Dynamics of the 2011 London Riots, 63.
228 Tiratelli, 66-74.
(which, after the riots saw a “neoliberal, property-led regeneration scheme for Tottenham”), were significantly everyday.\textsuperscript{229}

But there is a circular trajectory, or outcome, of bodies acting upon spaces that resists the spatial change ending there alone. That is, whilst bodies act upon spaces, the spaces act upon the bodies who are acting upon those spaces. This then enables us to consider physical maroonage together with psychological maroonage, and the affective possibilities that occur when spaces change. For instance, another significant finding from Tiratelli’s research is the reaction of rioters (including bystanders) and their response to the downtime of the riots: “we see rioters physically taking possession of the streets, sitting down in the middle of the usually busy road, drinking, smoking and hanging out.” People celebrated: “[I saw] so many people I recognized, laughing, having fun, literally joking.”\textsuperscript{230} There is communal euphoria: “It’s like everyone is on one, it’s just like a party today, you got to join in!” Cries of joy: “People were cheering like. It was like a party, sitting on the roofs of cars opening cans.”\textsuperscript{231} And then: “\textit{This is the most exciting two nights of my life.}”\textsuperscript{232}

I am reminded again of the image of the three women sitting atop the brick wall whilst a young man is dragged to the floor by police officers during the Handsworth riots in the 1980s. The image is etched into my mind for the mundane style of their poses and their unbothered glances. I wonder what they were doing there and what they were thinking. What brought them to that bricked wall? If the camera had caught them seconds before would they have been

\textsuperscript{229} Dillon and Fanning in Tiratelli, 76.

\textsuperscript{230} In Tiratelli, 76.

\textsuperscript{231} See note 230 above.

\textsuperscript{232} See note 230 above.
laughing? The imagery from the London Riots is saturated with footage of burning cars and looting, and as a result, there is little to be found officially of the downtime that Tiratelli and others describe. We must recreate it and I return to the three anonymous women sat atop the brick wall to do so. Since the spaces where people took to the streets lacked police officers, it is necessary to redact the officers from the initial scene with the women. The young man, now, is dragged to the floor by another force, not the arms of weapon-clad officers, but gravity. He is running to the women, eager to join them. Perhaps he is a sibling or a boyfriend or just a friend. He is running to the women to join in on their gossip. He slips and begins to fall. The three women are unfazed, he’s up to his usual antics. Perhaps he’s a joker, the funny guy trying to steal laughter from their lips. He doesn’t succeed, his fall is in vain. Nobody saw [him] falling.

I redact the officers not to deny their presence, but to stay true to those summer days and the joy that was found once those streets were reclaimed. Notting Hill Carnival once promised the sanctity of such quiet. The police there now watch the revelers and they join in the dances, but they are there with a purpose, to watch and keep order, to tame the threat that black bodies on white streets portray. In keeping with Notting Hill Carnival’s initial legacy of claiming space, the London Riots shed light upon Notting Hill Carnival’s limits. Whence this change from radical reclaiming to orderly control? After the ‘crisis’ of 1976 and the carnival committee’s split we witness more police and more management through capitalism.

The presence of the police on Notting Hill’s streets during carnival are, in many ways, a way to reassure locals and attendees of state power, that carnival does not “[claim] the street for its participants,” but in fact, “that state claims that the street is under its control.”233 As I discussed earlier of the multidirectional spectacle of surveillance, the officers’ presence is

needed, they must be visibly witnessed. But this means that, under watchful eyes, the state also needs to be seen to be treating its minority subjects correctly. After all, the decision not to cancel Notting Hill Carnival after the riots would have been motivated by the timing of the Olympics the following year and a fear of slowed rates of tourism. Moreover, the area (and London as a whole) would have lost the promise of capital that Notting Hill Carnival ensures. That it is the area that wins or loses as a result of Notting Hill Carnival highlights the importance of property (and its related wealth) to space, as well as the capital that blackness provides London – the pornotropic liaisons of culture and capital.

When people gathered in common on the streets of the riots, they were, in their appearance “vocalizing their opposition to the legitimacy of the state […] by virtue of occupying and persisting in that space without protection, posing their challenge in corporeal terms,” a bodily voicing outside of mere vocal or written language.234 A term used widely by the 270 people studied for the “Reading the Riots” study authored by the London School of Economics and The Guardian, was the term ‘justice,’ articulated not as opportunity or inclusion, but as being about “that boy who got killed […] the cuts, the government not doing the right thing. No job, no money...”235 Justice in the riots was redefined through the very ‘injustice’ of their riotous actions. The rioters responded to the ghosts – the ones living in the Macpherson Report and the Race Relations Amendment Act, brought to fruition following Windrush-era black presence, thriving in Notting Hill Carnival’s route, management and pornotropic liaisons – and in doing so, the ghosts changed, they worked on the “material history of those structures.”236 Those structures

234 Butler, Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly, 83.

235 A 30-year-old rioter, Reading the Riots, 24.

236 Da Costa, “Subjects of Struggle: Theatre as Space of Political Economy,” 620
also “[worked] on them, becoming part of their very action, remaking a history in the midst of its most concrete and sedimented artifices.”

In the reclaiming of space, the rioters revealed the significance of Notting Hill Carnival and its original promises, highlighting the importance of this event and reminding the state of the threat that it is capable of, even as the event is embroiled within the dynamics of capitalism. This only goes to show the complications of carnival, that rather than simply “servicing state domination and a market episteme,” it is, as Da Costa expresses, “subject to disciplinary power and [compromises] the hegemony of market and state rule.”

We might ask: why violence? Why looting? Why from there? Why fulfil the scenes of violence that black and poor people have longed to detach from white peoples’ viewings of us for millennia? And how is ‘justice’ not hypocritically undermined through it? These are valid concerns. And as tricky as it is for us to come to terms with this destruction, I encourage us to question why not violence? Why not violence when no violence begets, if not no-thing, than a limited thing? That limited thing, as I hope to have shown are the ghosts that haunt(ed) the Riots, Notting Hill Carnival, the Race Relations Act, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, ‘institutional racism,’ Mark Duggan’s death as much as these things are the ghosts themselves. These ghosts reveal, in part, the faith in Homi Bhabha’s mimicry, the potential for ‘menace.’

In the naming of institutional racism, we witness this menace (the naming itself and its consequent potential for disorder), but also its ‘resemblance’ – to Enlightenment morals and the primacy of law. To which we must question at what cost is mimicry? In the case of the rioters, to ask of them “why

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237 Butler, 85.


violence?” perhaps might initiate a similar ode to mimicry, and certainly to (white, middle-class-determined) respectability politics. On this, Numar Puwal states that, “the disruption that is caused by mimicry is not sufficient to challenge the power of whiteness to define itself […] It also does not problematize the placement of these very specific central norms, standards and procedures as universal and as racially unmarked. In fact, much of the power of these standards derives from the liberal construction of them as disembodied.”

Of course, at the other end of the spectrum, we do not want to be essentializing the menace of the riots, that is, the violence, as a particularly black or poor vocalization. In this way, we might extend Bhabha’s mimicry – or flip it completely – to suggest that, whilst the rioters were not mimicking metropolitan culture’s “civilization” (violent-less protest) i.e. the ‘good’ kind of mimicry that creates menace through the reflection of the Englishman “back to him via the body of the [poor white/black],” the rioters were instead menacing mimicry. Here, then, it is through the menace of the colonizer’s own violence, reflected “back to him via the body of the [poor white/black]” that strategizes mimicry, bringing to the forefront a taste of the daily violence that is enacted upon these communities globally. This, I believe, does not contradict my previous claim that there are limits to reproducing Enlightenment logics, since, importantly, it was only through violence that the joy in claiming space was able to be made, thus revealing the counter-imperialist potentiality within the rioters’ menacing of mimicry.

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241 Puwal, see note 240 above. I want to stress here that it is by no means the same violence – as if it could be reproduced by anyone but the original creators and beneficiaries of the original (and continued) violence, or alternatively amount to the same violence in impact – but a taste of it.
And so, what does the violence enable, after all? What does it tell us about the value in uncertainty that the otherwise in imagining otherwise provides? And what might it reflect about our willingness to be destructive, or our willingness to die? And whence from there?

Since I cannot answer these questions, I want to close with a quotation from Grace Hong. Her words make a passionate provocation on a topic that I am so far only able to utter with that almost blasphemous question, what if we were willing to die? In the introduction to her *Death Beyond Disavowal*, she asks,

What ‘politics’ can adequately account for and address our current condition, and how is this even possible when the very definition of modern ‘politics’ is based on the notion of self-preservation? This is to say that when we ask this question, we abut the question of what death means, what it means to be vulnerable. If we stop […] with what we are able to *track*, what we are able to *know*, we run the risk of relegating these vulnerable populations to being merely a problem to be fixed. We see them only as those we must bring into the realm of the living, rather than those who, in and through their very condition of vulnerability to death (their deathly existence) produce their own forms of meaning(lessness) and new definition of (non)existence that expand our own narrow sense. Insofar as our ability to live protected lives *depends upon* their inability to do so, a politics that registers vulnerability to death simply as something to be eradicated and sees these deathly subjects simply as those we have yet to bring into the protection of life merely advances the validation of life that legislates their deaths. In so doing, we replicate the conditions that created these deathworlds by making *life* the only site of meaning or political possibility.
I hope that this thesis beckons toward a beyond site of meaning, that puts imagining otherwise at the forefront of political possibility.
Chapter 5: Conclusion: Imagined but Not (Yet) Described

This thesis began with a series of events in 2011 that shook the United Kingdom; not, in fact, the death of Mark Duggan, for that shook too few, but the disruption that unfolded in the aftermath: the London Riots. I proceeded to interrogate these events with a very simple question: why was Notting Hill Carnival threatened to be cancelled as a result? By being both a “resource that accomplishes neoliberal governmentality,” but through its history and that history’s ongoing influence (such as reggae, the music of state critique, blasted from sound systems), resists being “[subsumed] […] entirely within the dynamics of capitalism,” Notting Hill Carnival thrusts at the border of uncertainty. In Chapter two I showed how the state requires Notting Hill Carnival to stay true to its roots of insurgency, even as those roots are passified, due to a specific form of management that requires Weheliye’s pornotrope – the cross-fertilization of violence and sexuality – that makes it attractive to audiences who want to revel, safely, in what becomes presented as the pornotrope of blackness. A lingering question that my analysis of the place of structured visual fields beckons, one that perhaps I did not find the time to discuss in this thesis because I fear its answer, is the role of Notting Hill Carnival with its clear contradictions in mind. How far does Notting Hill Carnival sustain a version of black life that we might have to dispense with after all? Since, what image of blackness does it portray for the UK? And whose eyes does it satisfy? Resultingly, how far should we attempt to move Carnival away from

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242 The title for the conclusion comes from a quotation by Alexander Weheliye. He states, “I am asking whether there exists freedom (not necessarily as a commonsensically ‘positive’ category, but as a way to think what it makes possible) in this pain that most definitely cannot be redressed by the liberal state, and if this freedom might lead to other forms of emancipation, which can be imagined but not (yet) described.” In “Pornotropes,” 66.

pharmakon’s border, the uncertainty of its radical history but increasingly tempered present, to a cure?

The London Riots and their accompanying disorder brought to light the contradictions within capitalism that put Notting Hill Carnival in this position of uncertain precarity, without giving up on the possibility that performances such as Notting Hill Carnival might represent. The spatiality of the uprisings, including the re-creation of space as a result of the rioters barricading the police out of parts of the city and sitting in the middle of the road and having parties, gives a new potency to Notting Hill Carnival when we consider that this is the only time in the year when the streets are owned by black people: the shops close, vendors set up stalls, there is drinking in the street, the smell of Jamaican patties fill the air. Goat curry is pleasurably licked from smiling lips. Ackee and salt fish might be found if you’re lucky.

As I also explored in Chapter 2, the state has always known the potential of Notting Hill Carnival, which is why, from its outset, its cultural importance was propelled – from the dampening of Claudia Jones’ rebellious legacy, to the 1976 management crisis – over and above its political nature. As I identified in Chapter 1, these strategies have always followed black presence in Britain and will continue to do so, because the price is always named and offered as an option that we would, it seems, be foolish to turn down: life. Grace Hong, however, encourages us to question the value of the realm of the living, particularly when, as I showed in Chapter 3, these ‘standards’ that come to define a universal life – objectivity, the rule of law – are hypocrisies built for the very purpose of being limited tools for social justice and radical critique. Whilst we must strive to subvert them from what otherwise are their destinies by working with and through them, those strategies will only do for now, which really means that they will not do whatsoever.
I believe the rioters took seriously Hong’s provocation and found, if only momentarily, political possibility through destruction. That the state threatened to cancel Notting Hill Carnival after the London Riots exposes how the political possibility the rioters found echoes Notting Hill Carnival because, following in the tradition of newly freed slaves celebrating their ability to be on streets together, they identified the violence of racial capitalism that cannot be solved by inclusion or defined by ‘institutional racism,’ or another Inquiry, or another finding of legal death.

Since the Grenfell Tower fire which took an estimated 72 lives on the 14th of June 2017, in the same wealthy neighbourhood that Notting Hill Carnival calls its home, carnival organizers have arranged a two-minute silence and have ensured that the many individual sound system DJs adhere to it. This would not be possible without community cohesion and radical love and, of course, the knowledge that these deaths are always unnecessary and thus, always intentional. Perhaps my faith in carnival as a radical event is romantic and at odds with the rioters’ own calls. Nevertheless, in line with Robin Kelley’s reading of back-to-Africa proposals usually dismissed by scholars as “escapist,” “any wholesale dismissal of the desire to leave this place and find a new home misses what these movements might tell us about how black people have imagined freedom.”

Though limited – temporally, spatially, and, in the ever-increasing neoliberal present, radically limited – carnival attempts to leave this place of global precarity, whilst keeping global precarity as its reason for fighting onward. Indeed, we dream of freedom both within and without and also beyond the state, and each dream forms an archive that an imagining otherwise cannot do without. Further, as Cedric Robinson brought to light in his groundbreaking *Black Marxism*, enslaved peoples’ dreams, contrary to Marx’s historical materialism, were

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244 Robin Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 16.
grounded in their indigenous practices, whilst also constantly shifting to engage with their new-found positions under capitalism. That grounding, of enslaved peoples’ celebration of the streets, will haunt carnival, whether those ghosts are remembered or not.

My weaving of the Black Radical Tradition throughout this thesis but in particular, here, is very much intentional. I want to entangle the UK, and specifically, the efforts of the London Riots into the literature of this global radical imaginary, concerned as it is with this global issue of blackness. The Black Radical Tradition teaches us to learn from and with the past, to listen to the ghosts that haunt our everyday and respond to them, something which I see happening within the London Riots but that I also hope occurs as a result of my writing on them. We can, and must, learn from the Black Radical Tradition and the London Riots as enactments of the Black Radical Tradition. Flawed as the riots were and imperfect as Notting Hill Carnival might be, they both signal a way of embracing uncertainty and imagining a future otherwise that we, in this contemporary moment of Brexit, Trump, Grenfell Tower, austerity and a reinvigorated far-right, desperately need. We take heed to remember Kelley’s careful reading of Cesaire’s Discourse, and consider the riots in the same theoretical vein:

In the end, Discourse [or, the Riots] [were] never intended to be a road map or a blueprint for revolution. It is poetry and therefore revolt. It is an act of insurrection, drawn from Césaire’s own miraculous weapons, molded and shaped by his work with Tropiques and its challenge to the Vichy regime, by his imbibing of European culture and his sense of alienation from both France and his native land. It is a rising, a blow to the master who appears as owner and ruler, teacher and comrade. It is revolutionary graffiti painted in bold strokes across the great texts of Western civilization; it is a hand grenade tossed with deadly accuracy, clearing the field so that we might write a new history with what’s left
standing. Discourse is hardly a dead document about a dead order. If anything, it is a call for us to plumb the depths of the imagination for a different way forward. Just as Césaire drew on Comte de Lautréamont’s Chants de Maldoror to illuminate the cannibalistic nature of capitalism and the power of poetic knowledge, Discourse offers new insights into the consequences of colonialism and a model for dreaming a way out of our postcolonial predicament. Although we still need to overthrow all vestiges of the old colonial order, destroying the old is just half the battle.

The riots are insurrection and a rising, and a blow, and a revolutionary graffiti and a hand grenade and, and, and, and, and, and more. It will forever “and” because the thought of imagination is only ever the start of something more. Something more that “[unleashes] our desire and [builds] a new future on the basis of love and creativity rather than rationality (which is like rationalization, the same word they use for improving capitalist production and limiting people’s needs).”245 Perhaps the difficulty with this project lies within my very attempt to put to words, to theorize, to translate into an academic and degree-granting text, that which demands inexplicability. And perhaps I do the riots a disservice as a result. But I think that they also demand that I – that we – take that very risk. To continue our discussions and to reimagine alternatives from the global issue of blackness that lead us to them. Since it is only through imagining that we can, not only dream otherwise into existence, not only scream it into existence, but to enact, in this very moment, the different futures that it promises.

245 Kelley, 192-193.
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