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O Carnaval 2016

Denice Martone

Abstract

Nearly a million tourists travel to Rio de Janeiro each February to view the spectacular Escola da Sambas—the heart and soul of Carnival—parading in the Sambadrome. By examining modern day Carnival's cultural roots, this photo essay illustrates the passionate celebration and protest Brazilians exhibit during this raucous week-long event.

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eu nasci com o samba, no samba me criei
do donado do samba, eu nunca me separei

I was born and raised with samba—
…I can never let it go.

Dorival Caymmi, *Samba da Minha Terra*

Carnival marks a single moment in an entire year for celebration.
What is being celebrated?
In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, perhaps it is the beginning of summer.
A brief respite after the long wait for something that has yet to happen.
A moment to experience freedom from everyday life.
Life.
It's a time to dream.
A time to be thankful.
A time of community pride and joy.
A time to release a year's worth of anger and frustration for an entire nation, celebrating together.
For those who work in menial jobs, it is time to be totally free and unencumbered by any constraints, joining with the multitude of Cariocas who flock to the streets to express communal release and joy.
Carnival is a national catharsis, uniquely Brazilian.

Fig. 1. Panelaço se Manifesta, São Clemente. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo Credit: Denice Martone. This carnival float is an irreverent nod to political corruption. In a popular act of protest, citizens take to the streets and bang pots; the clown signifies the futility of protest under the current political climate. This photo provides a partial view of seating in the Sambadrome—in the center of this "sector" is an elevated luxury suite, complete with waiter service and open bar. The concrete bleacher grandstand seats to the left and right offer the best sweeping views of the runway. Located at the street level are reserved box seats.

For the rest of the world, Carnival is a weeklong festival celebrated worldwide, and Brazilian Carnival is like no other national festival. The entire

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country shuts down for a week—schools, banks, local commerce close and a spirit of joy and celebration fills the city as everyone takes to the streets. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, the grandest parade on earth takes place in the Sambadrome (Fig. 1). The scale of Carnival is mind-boggling. Nearly a million tourists travel to Rio each year, according to the Tourism Council (Rio Tour). During the 2015 celebration, over nearly $800 million was generated in revenue for the city. There are the spectacular Escola da Sambas—the heart and soul of Carnival, twenty-four groups comprised of 3,500 members in each group—competing in a four all-night at the Sambadrome, each person singing and dancing as they display the pride and dignity of their community. The elite schools will spend up to $3 million in production costs. The largest street fair, Bola Preta, drew one million attendees (RioTimes).

One can join the fun and merriment, but the tourist will never truly comprehend the deep emotional aspect of Carnival only Brazilians can feel. To say that Carnival is a series of street parties accompanied by song and dance is not to understand Carnival. A visitor to Rio during Carnival will find parties and processions, drunkenness and spectacle. There is creative protest. To begin to understand the emotional root of modern day Carnival in Rio, we should begin with a visit to the past.

History

Carnival is a tradition dating back to classical antiquity—the Greeks raucously feasted during the harvest period by invoking Dionysus. In Babylon, the Mesopotamians celebrated harvest with a reversal of social hierarchy—a slave exchanged status with the king for a day, eating at the royal table and enjoying conjugal rights (Dumas). Christianity brought religious overtones to the pagan celebration, associating it with the days before Lent. “Carnival” from the Latin “carnem lavare” means “without meat.” “Fat Tuesday” became the final opportunity for excess followed by a period of fasting and prayer beginning on “Ash Wednesday.” Role reversal remained an enduring element during early Christianity: revelers satirized the ruling class using masks and other disguises, or people dressed as the opposite gender. Carnival parades and masquerade balls that became famous during Medieval Venice spread to France, Spain, and Portugal. Carnival came to Rio in 1723, imported by immigrants from Portugal who introduced the medieval European concept of “Entrudo” (Shrovetide, or Carnival), on Fat Tuesday (BrasilEscola).

In 18th century Rio de Janeiro wealthy families celebrated by playing friendly games in court yards. Water and lemons were sprayed at one another to establish community relationships (Ferreira). Large puppets were made of wood and fabric that soon became associated with Carnival games. In the poorer areas, the celebration was distinctively aggressive—rival groups would toss eggs, urine, rotten fruit—these street affairs became sometimes violent. The Portuguese brought the tradition to their African slaves in an effort to provide a moment of escapism during a year filled with hard labor. On Fat Tuesday the Portuguese relaxed restrictions, allowing for supervised integration of racial and social relations. The attempt to mix cultures for a day did not

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always go well, igniting frustration. Celebrations became more and more unruly. In time, the ruling class established firmer guidelines, and African slaves were allowed to parade as long as processions patterned Christianity. Even still, rules were easily subverted by the African slaves, who were always seeking a way to physically escape the bonds of slavery and Christianity. During Carnival, African slaves created instruments and drums to accompany their celebration, practicing the days leading up to Carnival—in some cases evening drumming masked attempts at escape. African slaves from Bahia absorbed elements of Roman Catholicism to their religion, Candomblé, as a way to avoid conversion. They continued to worship their deities by disguising them as Catholic saints: the Yoruba people of Nigeria worshipped Yemanjá, the goddess of the sea, but created statues in the image of the Virgin Mary. Rio De Janeiro's slaves picked up the tradition: Ogun, Yoruban God of war, became St. Sabastian, the patron saint of Rio de Janeiro, and in Rio, Candomblé is known as Macumba. After slavery was finally abolished in 1888, the impoverished but freed slaves fled to the hills and mountains surrounding the city, taking up residence with displaced soldiers and other homeless and jobless poor. The eclectic mix of people gave rise to a variety of distinctive musical rhythms, songs, and dance, which gradually evolved into today's Samba (Fig. 2).

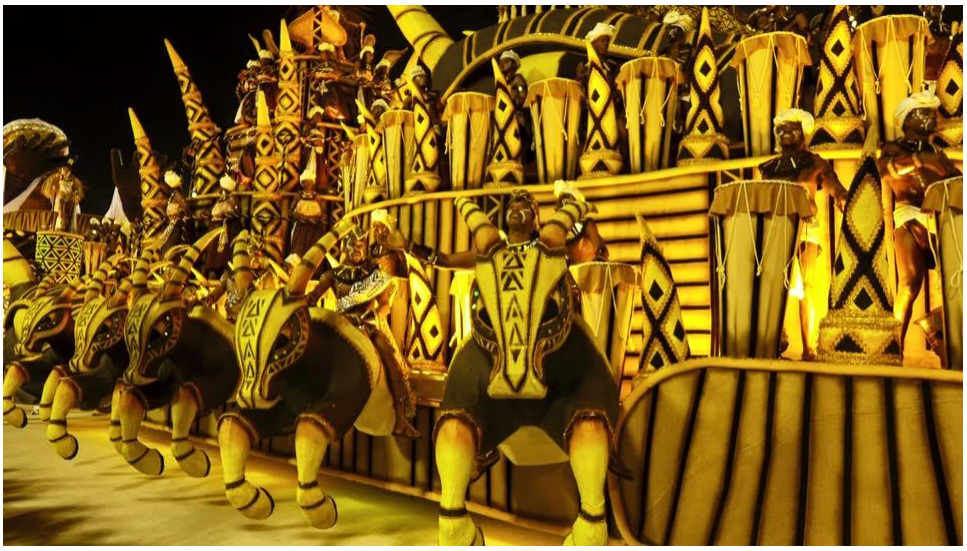

Fig. 2. Homage to African Drummers, detail of Carnival Float in Sambadrome parade, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo credit: D. Martone. Viradouro placed third out of the 14 "Group A" Samba Schools. In 1992 a Viradouro float caught fire resulting in the largest fire in the history of Sapucaí. The fire department arrived and put out the fire quickly—all the while the samba school continued its march toward the terminal point.

Class distinctions: Grandes Sociedades, Cordes, Ranchões

In Rio, Carnival continued to be celebrated according to class. Felipe Ferreira, professor and director of the Carnival reference Center at Rio de Janeiro State University traces the ascendancy of carnival from the European influences into modern day street celebrations in his book, *The Golden Book of the Brazilian Carnival*. Throughout the 19th century, the aristocrats celebrated by holding luxurious parades and balls, known as the Grandes Sociedades (Great Societies.) These carnival dances mimicked the 15th century French Ball (Bal masques), and invited were only the gentry—dukes, duchesses, princesses, princes, and all manner of aristocracy. The rich created allegorical floats set atop carriages drawn by horses. The entire procession was watched by the rich. This element—both the large floats and the idea of the spectator—remains a part of carnival celebration today. Also during this time explosive creativity was taking place among the lower-class in the hills. In her 1990 book, *Samba,* Alma Guillermoprieto provides a wonderful account of life inside the favela, tracing the relationship of Afro-Brazilian Samba to modern day celebration. She writes:

> The newly freed blacks were a constant source of irritation for the conservative elite defeated in the fight over slavery, and at no time more so than during Carnival… By the turn of the century … a flurry of police regulations sought to limit the black influence on Carnival. African drum sessions were prohibited. With an eye to keeping black revelers up on the hills, many regulations specified that only certain types of carnival associations could parade down Rio's principle streets. (24)

Those consigned to the hills celebrated by forming parades of their own, known as "cords" (cordões), or strings. In hes book *Historia do Carnaval Carioca*, Eneida de Moraes describes these groups:

> The strings were masked groups, old, clowns, devils, king, queen, sergeant, Bahia, Indians, bats, skulls, etc. that were conducted by a master whose command [was] the whistle, everyone obeyed. The instrumental ensemble was percussion: adufos, Cuicas, reco-recos, etc. (de Morães, quoted by Manzo (Manzo, Collector's Studios)).

The banners were the main feature for each cord, and each group sought to make theirs the most impressive. They were hand-embroidered with gold and displayed allegories, distinguishing one group from another. The banners were so intricate that newspapers began to take notice and awarded prizes to the best banner. Eneida de Morães says:

> Long before the carnival week, the cords began to rehearse. And they were so festive trials as the party itself. In the carnival Saturday afternoon, began drumming and only silenced on Wednesday with the sunrise…standards [banners] that were there on display on the afternoon of Monday paraded through the city streets—Rua do Ouvidor, first and then the Central Avenue (Av. Rio Branco). (de Moraes, quoted by Manzo (Manzo, Collector's Studios)).

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Fig 3. "Porta Bandeira and Mestre Sala (Flag Bearer and Master of Ceremonies), Mangueira. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo Credit: D. Martone. In sumptuous costume, a latex "bald" headdress, and original make-up, Squel Jorgea, grand-daughter of the school's legendary samba composer Xangô, represents a daughter of Oya (a holy figure from the Afro-Brazilian religion, Candomblé.) With her partner Raphael Rodrigues, the couple incorporated dance moves inspired by African rhythms. Mangueira was crowned champion in 2016.

During the early 20th century, the wealthy continued to maintain their own tradition, competing for the streets. A brief tradition known as the Corsican Carnival became popular. Since only the wealthy owned private cars, they could commandeer the major avenues and streets, and they did, leaving little room for a street procession. The wealthy adorned their cars with festive streamers or confetti, carousing openly along major avenues. These vehicles, known as "corsos" ("car" in Portuguese) left little room for the street processions. The Cords responded by commandeering entire trams and streetcars, transforming them with colorful props. The trams, however, led them away from the major avenues to other less centralized neighborhoods (Catete, Botafogo, Gloria). Cords eventually devolved into "blocos" or street parties, organized by neighborhoods or communities with diverse interests. Today the only remaining Cord from 1918 is the Cordão da Bola Preta, one of the largest blocos in Rio (Manzo). In 1917, the parade was taken up by the "Ranchos Carnavalescos." Working-class people organized processions of their own, accompanied by string instruments and woodwinds, resulting in a more leisurely marching rhythm than the percussion and drummers of the Cords. In these processions, there were appointed roles: a king and queen, a flag bearer and a swordsman; there were group organizers: a "master" of harmony, of singing, and of the overall choreography.

At this point in time, there were two musical traditions flourishing: marches and samba. However, with the advent of recorded music, Samba began to reach more and more middle class and wealthy Brazilians. In 1917 the first Samba was recorded (Through the Telephone). Samba follows a 2/4 tempo with a call and response chorus played repetitively and fast, stemming from the

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African slave batucada rhythms, unlike Rancho march music accompanied by a tuba, horns, or flutes (Examples of early marches can be found on Youtube: "Rancho Ameno Reseda, 1906; Bandeira Branca, 1922) Samba engages a wide variety of Afro-Brazilian percussion instruments such as the cuica, reco-reco, bells, and various drums including Surdo, repinique, and timbal. Samba soon began to take hold in popular culture (Sambassadors).

Escola de Samba

The brief period of the Corsican carnival tradition disappeared with the popularization of the automobile and the emergence of the Ranchos, and with the official organization of the Carnival by the city. In 1930, Rio's Mayor Pedro Ernesto created the first official procession pulling these various entities together at Praca Onze (Eleventh of July Plaza)—a large city plaza located a mile from Rio's downtown. To counter the advent of the middle-class Ranchos, communities in the poorest neighborhoods organized their unruly cords and created new community groups. They sought to display their music, samba, and their dignity and pride as they joined the established order of Carnival, giving birth to a new format, the Escola de Samba (Samba schools). The generic term "school" to denote these groups came into use when the first community held their meetings and practice at the local school. The oldest schools are Estacio, Salgueiro, Portela, Mangueira, Unidos da Tijuca, all named after the favela neighborhoods in which they lived. The Samba schools established the use of Afro-Brazilian popular cultural instruments as part of Samba music—percussion, tambourine, and drums. There would be no reliance on reading music or knowledge of more complex brass, and woodwind instruments.

Fig. 4. "'O tunel do tempo', Baianas", Portela. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo Credit: D. Martone. The Baianas "wing" is an obligatory element. Portela, an elite school known for its bold designs, introduced as its theme the many aspects of travel ("In the eagle's flight, an endless journey"; the eagle is the school's symbol). When seen live, the black and white twirling movement of the Baianas creates a trance-like effect, reminiscent of fictive time-travel tropes popularized by TV and Cinema.

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Politicians and celebrities became involved, as well. In an effort to export Brazilian identity abroad, President Getúlio Vargas supported the carnival parades and the advent of the Samba schools. Samba was now recognized as uniquely special. In the late and 1930s and 40s, Carmen Miranda popularized Samba. She was a well-established star when she was discovered in a Samba club in Rio by an American Broadway producer, who immediately wanted to feature her in his Broadway production. Carmen Miranda borrowed her musical style and look—the turban, colorful skirts, and heavily bangled jewelry—from the African Baiana women she encountered as a child, growing up poor in Rio, near the ports and favelas. As an adolescent, she co-mingled with African-Brazilian musicians and composers. Under their tutelage she recorded sambas and starred in film, incorporating carnival music and real footage of street carnival celebrations into her work (Bayman). In New York, her band of highly developed sambistas exposed the world to the explosively colorful mix of music and dance, and Samba grew to be recognized internationally as uniquely Brazilian.

In Rio de Janeiro during the 1950s and 60s, the formal Carnival parade held in the city plaza became heavily frequented by Brazilians from all urban areas. There needed to be more space, structure, and organization. Rules were established to impose order yet allow for the spontaneous creativity prized by everyone. The procession moved from Praca Onze to Rio Branco Avenue in the heart of the downtown district, and then to the even broader Getúlio Vargas Avenue nearby. To prepare for the Carnival parade each year, bleachers were constructed on both sides of the avenue and then taken down when Carnival was over. As the success of Carnival grew and attracted tourists from abroad, it became clear that a permanent venue was needed to accommodate the Carnival annually (Rio RJ Gov).

Designed especially for Carnival in 1984 by modernist Oscar Niemeyer, the colossal Sambadrome became the venue for the most extravagantly spectacular street procession on the planet. The Sambadrome occupies a former street, the "Marques de Sapucaí," which is surrounded by dilapidated housing and commerce on both sides. A favela overlooks the Sambadrome—in the dark night, the far away dots of lighted windows become intermingled with twinkling stars. The brightly lit Sapucaí stretches for ½ a mile, and is lined on both sides with concrete stadium-style bleachers. Spectators purchase tickets for the street or bleacher views, or the more expensive luxury boxes, sandwiched below the bleachers and above the street level (Figs. 1, 8, 9, 10). The Sambadrome comes to life only during Carnival with four consecutive nights of intense samba competition.

Carnival Today

How is Carnival celebrated today?

Since Carnival is always celebrated the week preceding Ash Wednesday, it occurs sometime in February or March. During the week before "Fat Tuesday," the city closes down: there is no school, no banking, no major

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commerce. During the five days before Ash Wednesday, Rio's underground metro system adjusts its usual six am to midnight hours and operates uninterrupted. In Rio there are many kinds of celebrations, ranging from modern day blocos to traditional balls to neighborhood street parties to the highly formal Escola de Samba parade in the Sambadrome.

Local street celebrations that harken back to earlier times are diverse and thriving. In 2016, the social media app Rio Tour listed over 500 "official" block parties, some beginning in December and others extending weeks after the traditional last day, "Ash Wednesday." During Carnival, designated urban blocks, streets, or plazas are closed to traffic so that various organized groups animated by bands or amplified trucks can parade and party. Depending on the group, members wear improvised costumes or masks. Depending on the block, revelers might sing music critical of the current political climate, or sambas from years ago. Ultimately, however, it's the events in the Sambadrome that signify Carnival in Rio. The competitive parade is the largest and most elaborate Carnival spectacle in the world.

Blocos

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Fig. 5. Children's Bloco, Laranjeiras. Rio. Brazil, 2016. Photo credit: D. Martone. Gigantes da Lira band march inside the cord; outside the cord families spray one another and toss confetti.

Having visited Rio many times during the past thirty years but never during Carnival, I was excited when the opportunity arose in 2016. One of the ways I celebrated during Carnival was by participating in several blocos and neighborhood street festivals. Block parties range from highly organized formal processions drawing large crowds to simpler events with no parade organization. Banda de Ipanema, a long established parade of drag queens, can draw close to a million people and tie up vehicular traffic for hours, rendering it impossible to traverse the city. Smaller neighborhood festivals such as Volta Alice, in the neighborhood of Laranjeiras, are loosely organized, consisting only of an amplified truck ("trio elétrico"), screaming samba beats. People dress in improvisational costumes—many in role reversal—men as women, women as men—dance and drink casually, enjoying life and the summer day.

Another kind of bloco involves a mobile, make-shift boundary. Since these events also draw thousands, there is a particular kind of preparation to separate those in the band from the crowd wishing to join the parade (Fig. 5). Twenty or more burly men hold a thick strap, creating a circular boundary

around the band members within the "cord." This corded boundary stretches the width of the street and the length of half a block. Two celebrations exist simultaneously, the "official" parade inside, and one the outside, where revelers sing and dance to beat of the amplified truck and band. The boundary is mobile. As the procession sambas through the neighborhood, the bouncers move with it. We participated in such a parade, "Bloco de Areia" on the Rua Dias Ferreira in Leblon. To become part of the procession and march with the band on the inside, we purchased the official t-shirt of Areia ($30). The band, an amplified truck, and all revelers wearing the purchased t-shirt assemble early on the designated street. Inside the protected space, there is room to dance and sing with friends without smashing up against the person next to you as the procession moves steadily along. Outside the boundary, thousands upon thousands of costumed revelers pile one behind the other becoming a sea of humanity, each individual flashing by in the blink of an instant. The strong bouncers maintain a human protective barrier for hours as the inside revelers snake slowly toward a destination many blocks away. These larger blocos are intense experiences, filled with tourists and visitors and not popular with those who actually live in the neighborhood.

A children's bloco combines the experience of a casual street festival with the organization of the cored boundary. I bought a t-shirt to Gigantes de Lira, a carnival parade for children in the neighborhood of Laranjeiras. This street fair brought together families from the neighborhood with a band and clown in a circus atmosphere. For an hour preceding the appearance of the band, children played with traditional elements of carnival: confetti, paper streamers, and water toys, everyone dancing and enjoying the atmosphere (Fig. 5). When the band arrived, the burly men appeared to create a barrier in which the band could march. In my official t-shirt, I marched with the large brass band, reveling in the joy and exuberance of the children.

Escola de Samba and the Sambadrome

By the 1960s, the samba schools became integrated with outsiders, many white or middle class professionals who brought sophisticated efforts to the production of costumes, choreography, themes. The elite schools have become increasingly dependent on these professionals to provide luxury and more and more extravagant displays of creativity to each school. While each school retains its community roots, it must face the reality of mounting expenses. Along with sales of tickets and fees to the samba night parties, other ways of raising money are by the sale of tickets or media sponsorship. Another way the elite schools defray costs is by inviting outsiders to participate. Costumes can be purchased by visiting tourist agencies advertising on-line. The costs range from $200 to upwards of $2,000, depending on the school and the costume. Purchasing a costume allows one to participate inside the Sambadrome with one of the schools. In the weeks leading up to the competition, the schools hold informal practice samba sessions in their halls, which anyone can attend for a fee (25 USD). In this way, fans and participants

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can practice the song and the steps, and the school can raise money for the community. The winning school and runners-up earn the chance to march once more in the Parade of Champions, held on the fifth and last day of Carnival.

A special group of friends invited me to dance with one of the elite samba schools, Unidos do Tijuca. I paid the fee for a costume and prepared months in advance, learning the samba lyrics and conditioning for the night of the competition. I felt an enormous pressure not to betray my gringo roots: I needed to hold up my part of the team. Upon arriving in Rio, I was immediately swept up into the joy of anticipation: meeting over beer to plan, arranging to pick up our costumes and planning strategies for getting to and from the Sambadrome. As the time drew nearer to Fat Tuesday, we prepared for the main event.

Fig. 6. "Member of wing, 'Beira Praia da Mariazinha (girl by the edge of the sea),'" Renascer de Jacarepaguá. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo Credit: D. Martone. Renascer was a bloco during the late 1950s, incorporating into school in 1992. The theme depicts folk-lore surrounding child-spirits. In Candomblé lore, "mariazinha", was once a child who loved bows, dolls, sweets, and collecting seashells in her bucket, her lifeless body found at the edge of the sea. Incorporated as a spirit, her presence conveys purity, innocence, and the gentleness of children. Candomblé followers celebrate the day of the "twin saints" each September 27 as children flock to the streets to receive sweets and toys.

I was part of the Sambadrome madness five times, from 10pm through 7am each time. In the weeks leading up to Carnival weekend, I first entered the Sambadrome with the entire school for our final rehearsal. On Friday, the first night of Carnival weekend, I watched the first of the four nights of competition from the street view seats in the Sambadrome. Eight samba schools paraded, beginning at 9pm and ending well after 7am. On Sunday, I marched in the procession as a participant with my school, in our themed costume. On Monday, the fourth and final night of competition, six elite samba schools from the bleacher seats. The following Saturday, I participated in the Parade of Champions. On Sunday, I boarded a plane for New York.

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Each experience brought me closer to understanding Carnival. By attending the one practice rehearsal, I learned that if you are truly a member of the samba school, you have been practicing for months: attending every practice session, sometimes every other weekend. You have been creating the costumes, writing the lyrics to the samba, dancing the music, practicing the intricate ballet moves designed for the elaborate choreography, raising money, practicing, practicing, practicing. You have been waiting the entire year for this moment of exhilaration, when you represent with pride your community. While the spirit of Carnival involves street play and revelry, when it is time for the elite samba groups to perform on Sapucaí—there are strict rules. The schools are tightly organized and extremely professionalized. During the practice session, we were made to hide our smartphones and stay in an organized line. Leaders shouted at those gringos who did not know the song, compelling them to sing and show emotion, something natural for true members. There was fun, but there was serious work and expectation, too.

How does the competition work? Based on performances from the previous Carnival, 28 schools are selected to dance in the Sambadrome. The lesser "A" groups dance on the first two nights; the final two nights showcase the elite groups. Each year, one school is eliminated from the elite group, one school from the "A" group moves up. The "A" group schools are generally smaller, the floats not so intricate, the fabric and accessories not as lavish. These schools have less funding, but strive to break into the elite group, dancing and performing with all the emotion that comes with the privilege of representing your community.

There are many elements to each school. An element is a special role, sometimes an individual, sometimes a group, sometimes a structural element, such as a float. The groups, also known as "wings," may number as many as 100 or 200 individuals. Taken together, these elements comprise the school's procession. Essentially, one entire school is comprised of thousands of performers who have specific roles, which must be carried out in a timely manner to ensure the success of the entire unit.

These traditional elements are varied. There is the carnival director, the creative force behind the school, often a professional stage or screen producer. There is the samba composer, again, often a famous song-writer. There is the lead singer, who is generally of the community. There is the queen of the drummers, who competes for this role during the year at key competitions. There is the drumming core, known as the "bateria"—this element must have at least 100 drummers. There is the flag bearer and the flag-bearer's guard: there are two pairs of this dancing couple, and their costumes are some of the most expensive (up to 20,000 USD) (Fig. 3). There are the baianas, a special group of older African American women who represent the early roots of slavery and samba. These women are easily spotted in the procession due to their large hooped costumes, and their spinning and whirling at particular timed moments (Fig. 4). There is the "old guard," the elder statesmen of each school, and there are the children, the future. As well, there are over 30 "wings" (Fig. 6, 9) of 100 performers in identical costumes, dancing and singing the school's theme song.

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And, of course, there are the amazingly fantastic huge allegorical floats—six per school. In total, there are 3,900 elements—most of them individual participants.

Since the procession is a competition, each element is judged and assessed a score, similar to scoring done for sporting events such as gymnastics or ice dancing. The scale is from 1 to 10, and final winners differ by a little as $1/10^{th}$ of a point. There are four judges for each element, and one judge can be from a participating school. Each judge views the movement of the parade from various locations in the Sambadrome. Specifically, the judges award points on these ten elements:

- the theme
- the samba-theme song
- the percussion and drumming section
- the "harmony," which includes each group's singing and rhythm
- the "evolution" or the progress of the parade, including unity, energy, time from start to finish
- "the overall impression"
- the costumes
- the "front commission" (the initial group of dancers who present the theme of the procession)
- the allegorical floats and props
- the pair of dancers who carry the school's flag.

For the elite samba schools, the quest for glory has become more and more intense—stakeholders include the media, high profile celebrities, politicians, financial sponsors. The competition is judged, but not without controversy. Each year one judge or another is eliminated due to bribery or too close ties to a member of one school or another (Extra Online).

The procession begins with a formal order. Each school introduces its theme with a small initial group of dancers, the "commissão de frente" (Fig. 7). This group creates a mini-choreography—a dance or skit—with ingenious props to introduce the overall theme of the school. The "bateria" or percussion band is the engine of each group. In samba and Carnival, the rhythmic drumming samba beat animates both spectators and participants. Regularity of rhythm and maintaining perfect consistency is critical to the success of the school's performance. Two hundred drummers participate in each school, and they each must carry their heavy drums, smile, and sing as they play. Halfway through the procession the drummers "retreat" into a recessed area (Fig. 8) between the bleachers, taking a very short break while allowing the rest of the procession to pass ahead to the beat of the trio elétrico (amplified truck). The bateria rejoin the procession as the final group, bringing up the end in a climactic conclusion. Harmony is another judged category, judges looking to see how the entire group performs as a unit musically and visually. Points can be lost for poor singing or execution. All 3,900 elements—music, dance, story, and song—should merge seamlessly as one distinctive unit.

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Fig. 7. Detail, "Commissão de frente," Portela. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo credit: D. Martone. Ulysses returns home, his sea voyage compromised by Poseidon's anger. With water streaming from their headdresses, dancers in blue simulate turbulent waves. Out of view is the rest of the front group, a spectacular float with Poseidon emerging from the sea on a fly-board (a vertical jet-ski) set in a pool filled with 30 tons of water. Portela is renowned for its innovative use of technology, and holds the most carnival titles—21.

The queen of the drummers is outfitted in a large cascading head-dress and wings made of feathers that give the illusion of a glorious swan. Her dancing is fast and energetic—these are some of the most athletic dancers in the ensemble. She sambas nearly in the nude at a fast tempo of over 100 steps per minute, constantly in movement. She enthusiastically throws back her head or extends her arms upward for dramatic effect as she dances and points to the band, eliciting from the spectators their love and applause. The role is highly desired and extremely competitive: over 32 women compete for 8 positions, with the winner earning the title of "Carnival Queen." This comes not only with a monetary prize of close to 15,000 USD (BrazilCarnival), but also the promise of future lucrative advertising endorsements. The queen must be charismatic and energetic, her role is to excite and engage participants inside and outside of Sapucaí. To attract attention to the school, her sculpted body is showcased in a scant costume, smaller than a bikini, or with body paint. Once selected, the elite schools work furiously to draw one of the queens to their school. For anyone outside of Brazil, this scantily clad woman in feathers is the clichéd face of Carnival. Although Carnival is so much more than a representation of sexy women, these Brazilian beauties continue to be used by the media as lures.

The samba-song carries the central theme of the school's allegory. Composed by famous Brazilian samba writers sought after for their contribution, the samba is analyzed for the quality of the lyrics and the melody. Also judged is the samba-theme—the idea and concept—or "evolution." This is where all elements must come together, interpreting the idea of the story though samba. Those making up the "wings" dance in either organized or semi-chaotic unison, maintaining a certain distance between the floats and the groups ahead.

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Points are lost if the "wings" are not spaced properly or become disorderly. These costumes are fantastic. Depending on the theme, people might be costumed as fish, donkeys, roosters, Egyptians—fantastic elements of nature—air, water, mud—anything and everything can be fashioned into an amazing costume, topped by elaborate headgear. The "fantasias"—the costumes—are judged for originality, the quality of fabrication, conception, creativity. All costumes are judged, including the "baianas" who whirl their large hooped skirts, the percussionists, the samba dancers, and the queen of the drummers.

Similar to the gaily decorated cars of the Corsican tradition from an earlier time, the elaborately constructed and designed floats are a major element of the procession (Fig. 1, 2, 8). To carry theme and story of each school, teams of sculptors and carpenters have spent an entire year working in secrecy. A car might contain several scantily dressed samba dancers, males or females dancing and singing to the rhythm of the samba, or it might be a staged event on wheels. Some of the most extravagant costumes and technological advances include the use of water fountains, ski-board jets, drones, and enormous mannequins whose parts move in unison with the rhythm of the choreography. There can be 60 people or more performing on each car as a unit. Costumed males have to physically push some of the smaller cars as they move up the avenue. Schools will lose points for technical defects, if something collapses or the vehicle stalls causing a minor crash or delay in the procession. There are many, many technicians hidden within each car, ensuring that nothing goes wrong. The entire school prepares throughout the year for this single hour of glory: pride, honor, and the championship crown is at stake.

Fig 8. "Caminhos do Ouro: El Dorado," Portela. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo Credit: D. Martone. Portela's highly creative director Paulo Barros featured a float representing a pre-Columbian golden temple, with each member combining to form a human sculpture. Atop the float two dancers -- a Spanish conquistador and a warrior—staged a "fight" culminating in the conquistador falling into a trampoline below. In the right corner of this photo, the group of drummers can be seen in recess mode, waiting to rejoin the parade.

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The elite schools have developed innovative use of dancers to mimic a sculpture or form or switch an abstract element of the story. Each float takes becomes a human sculpture, performing as an ensemble to enact an element of the story (Fig. 8). These performers do not samba, but instead combine two or more patterns or movements, employ arm styling or poses in relationship to the aspect of the theme they represent (sunflowers wind, mud-men, slaves, formers, ocean waves, to name a few). They move in sequence at precisely timed moments to present parts of the story. On other cars, stages have been erected for performers to enact the story of their school's theme. Each float in an elite school easily surpasses the most sophisticated New York Broadway stage on creativity and scale. Watching these floats pass is like watching several mini-musicals passing before your eyes—six floats per school, six schools per night, for four consecutive nights—from 9 o'clock in the evening until well after sunrise. The cars can be as high as two stories—sitting in the bleachers becomes an advantage—the more expensive "street" seats, which provide extreme physical proximity to the procession, don't allow a view to the top of each structure. The floats are absolutely spectacular.

Each school has an official flag representing its full name and colors, similar to the banners of the "cord" groups. The flag is a sacred element of the procession—to be the carrier of the flag is both a duty and an honor. The "porta bandeira," or flag carrier, is always a woman; it is her duty to present the flag to the spectators. Her dancing partner, the male "mestre sala," protects her. In the elite schools, these professional dancers must be graceful, elegant, and skillful.

They are judged on coordination, agility, and variety of their dance. The costumes of this pair are ornate and extravagant since they represent the prosperity of each school. A costume that uses inferior craftsmanship or materials will not be judged as highly as one with the best materials and creativity. These couples can bring prestige to their respective schools and many devote their careers to maintaining their roles. In each community, there are second and third pairs so that youth are encouraged to develop their skills over time so that they too might one day aspire to become a first or second couple.

In the space of four nights, thousands and thousands of people parade on Sapucaí—28 schools, each averaging 3,000 members, from the hundreds of scantily clad samba dancers in an elaborate plumes of feathers to the hundreds of costumed samba dancers with heavy headdresses, shoulder pads and wide hoops— all combining to tell the development of the overall samba theme of their school, everyone dancing to a samba beat. On the night our school performed, I participated as a scarecrow in one of the wings of Unidos do Tijuca: our theme celebrated the sacred ground, farmers, and agricultural history of Brazil. We assembled at 3 in the morning on Vargas Avenue having toted our costumes by subway, being extremely careful not to damage any of the moving parts—points are lost for torn or sloppy costumes. Our group met a bar at 1 in the morning to wait until it was time to go to the Sambadrome. We'd been in a bloco several hours beforehand, dancing. There was not much time for sleeping. Vargas avenue was teeming with urban adolescents when we arrived. There were vendors looking to make some money selling water or snacks to the thousands of participants who would be marching that evening. There were

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opportunists—thieves, beggars, trouble makers—the street at 3am is not the safest venue. However, the school's handlers organized us when we arrived—in the space of two hours we gradually set up, donned our costumes, found our spots and finally at 5:30 in the morning our school began its dance down the avenue—we finished in one hour and ten minutes with the sun rising. It was thrilling to participate, to feel the crowd adoring your school, to watch the fans cheering you on, to know the song and sing with so much love and passion that you instantly bond with those dancing near you.

As a mere scarecrow in the vast school that was Unidos da Tijuca, I had no idea what the rest of the school was performing. Even the mediated version I found on Youtube could not possibly contain all of the richness that is Sapucaí. And, because I am not Brazilian, I could not really understand the emotion felt by the participants. I learned that many dance for the individual spirit, the attention, the chance to perform. Many simply love samba, the energy and passion that never subsides, year after year. Many live for Carnival, and participate out of love and devotion to a community that is part of their history. I was hungry to feel that aspect, and so my favorite part of Carnival was observing the people from the communities as they celebrated carnival for themselves.

On the first night of the official Carnival parade, I was invited to watch in the Sambadrome from the street level seats. This was my first time confronting the spectacle face to face. These were not the elite schools, but the smaller schools who struggle year after year to break into the elite group. Here were the authentic members—the true community from the favelas. I clearly saw and felt the emotion and pride on the faces of people as they danced in front of me—it was impossible not to be swept up in their passionate expression. The floats were grand and those of us in the stands danced and cheered each group on. One by one each dancer shared his or her moment of pride and glory before thousands of spectators.

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Fig 9. Member of wing, "Monsters of Destruction," Santa Cruz. Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo Credit: D. Martone. In a photo taken from the street level seats, captured is the emotion and passion of this reveler as he performs. Santa Cruz's theme called attention to is the preservation of nature. This wing represents the eyes of industrial greed. Santa Cruz was a "dirty" bloco prior to their establishment as a samba school in the early 1960s.

On the final night of competition, the best of the best samba schools perform. I watched, this time from above in the Sambadrome bleachers. These groups were the best of the best: Portela, Salgueiro, Mangueira. Each topped the next with extravagant, technological wonders, one group after the other, each moment of each minute packed with one more and then yet another marvelous colorful creation. What a spectacle! From above the procession unfolded seamlessly—one hardly notices the incredible precision at work. Festooned and sophisticated floats—some as high as two stories—travel the avenue carrying a specific choreographed allegorical theme. Furious drumming, fantastic floats, and devoted fans. We were seated near fans of the eventual winner, Mangueira, a traditional school with deep devotees. Mangueira had not been crowned champion since 2002. These fans thoroughly enjoyed the other schools as they passed, waiting patiently until their school danced, the final school to dance at 5 am. When Mangueira arrived, the joy and happiness reigned on the faces of these fans. They sang, they cried, they hugged one another with joy and emotion.

Each person has a unique way of celebrating carnival. I danced in the Sambadrome three times—at the dress rehearsal, during the competition, and in the parade of champions, with a million people looking on. Much of what I, an American, felt while I danced in the Sambadrome, lingers in my spirit. For Cariocas, the locals of Rio, the emotions can be more intense. In a recent interview with a Carioca, it finally came together for me. She explained the difference between those who pay to participate, like I had done, and those for whom Carnival is a way of life. She said:

> I'm not talking about the millions of people that just pay for the costumes to go dance and have fun and feel the emotion of the people

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> screaming in the stands. It's the ones that live for that moment. In an oppressed life that they have, they keep dreaming for that 85 minutes when they are going to express the love and the freedom the realization of their lives. The respect for the heritage. Some save money all year round. They don't have money for rice and beans but they save money for this exclusive moment in their lives. It's the only moment when they feel complete. They forget that life is so hard. At least for 85 minutes of their lives in a year they achieve the richness, the epitome of happiness. (Magalhães, Interview).

I could see this pride in the faces of the participants I saw close up, from the street view on the first night. I could feel it in the Mangueira fans seated beside us in the bleachers on the final night. But I could not feel this emotion the night I participated in my group of scarecrows—my group danced, enjoyed and felt a release, certainly. But not the deep emotional release Ms. Magalhães refers to. She speaks of something else.

> Poverty. Struggle. Difficulties. They have a tremendously difficult life and they are never going to come out of that—that's the story of their lives. Even if they work, they work only to survive, the day by day. And they barely can make it. But inside of them, there is fantasy, the desire, the hope. This is all concentrated in the moment that they can forget about 364 days in the year that they suffer. It's one day, the day of glory. The day of being everything that they are not in the day by day of their lives. They are the queens, they are the kings, they are the ones to step in that avenue and represent everything that they wish that life would be about. Happiness, Dance. Music. Glamour. Shine! Feathers and color. Everything. They have the darkest moments of their lives during the year when they see their kids and they can't give their kids what they want. When they dream of traveling and they can't even go anywhere. At least for 85 minutes, they feel everything they could possibly dream about. (Magalhães, Interview)

I asked her whether she thinks that they feel hope and possibility throughout the year, given the structure of the community and the frequent occasions the school comes together to practice. She said yes, "it feeds them with the strength that they need to go on with their difficult lives…even though the schools are more fancy and more technologically exploited, they still have the essence. You saw the baianas. How poor they look in their faces, in their hands, in their wrinkles. Even though they were so old, they danced the whole time! There is a pride that is so good."

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Fig. 10. Street Sweepers of Sapucaí, Sambadrome, Rio, Brazil, 2016. Photo credit: D. Martone. These street sweepers are among the crew clearing debris after each school passes. In this photo, two cleaners mimic the dancing of the traditional master of ceremonies and flag bearer. The crew is highly organized and efficient, forming a "school" of their own as they march and sway rhythmically while cleaning. In 2016 their "banner" called for the elimination of the Zika virus (Xô, Zika!!) In the early morning hours after the crowds have dispersed, the crew collect hundreds of costumes discarded by carnival participants. Material is recycled and available for use in the future.

For those who suffer all year long in dull jobs with no hope for change or way to save money, travel, give something to their children, Carnival is that moment to emerge from the depths of suffering into joy and hope. It only lasts for a week, and then it's back to a life that can't be changed.

For the many Cariocas living in New York, when Carnival comes around, instead of happiness, they experience sorrow and a sense of emptiness. Being apart from the moment causes emotional suffering. They do not want to listen to music, to hear anything about what is going on in Rio during Carnival. Unless they find a way to go.

In Rio, they say the year starts after Carnival.

Note: A video of all the schools of the elite special group can be obtained in this link: http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/carnaval/2016/noticia/2016/02/reveja-todos-os-desfiles-das-escolas-do-grupo-especial-do-rio-de-2016.html

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About the author

Denice Martone is the Associate Director of the Expository Writing Program at New York University where she is Clinical Associate Professor, teaching first year writing to international students. Her love affair with Rio de Janeiro began in 1987; since then she has visited annually, immersing herself in the culture at every opportunity. She is a "Carioca de coração" (a lover of Rio, from the heart). Email: dm1@nyu.edu