

**RAVE AS CARNIVAL**

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF

GRAPHIC DESIGN

AND THE INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS

OF BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

By

Burcu Gündüz

August, 2003

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

---

Asst. Prof. Andreas Treske

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

---

Asst. Prof. Dr. Mahmut Mutman

Approved by the Institute of Fine-Arts

---

Prof. Dr. Bülent Özgüç

## **ABSTRACT**

### **RAVE AS CARNIVAL**

Burcu Gündüz

M.F.A. in Graphic Design

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. John Robert Groch

August 2003

In this work I consider contemporary techno-rave parties with regard to their philosophical and cultural origins. Proceeding from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival, I analyze contemporary rave scene through its precious scope as a carnival-like demonstration, where bodily suggestions in an unrestricted, non-official space taken into account from the point of communal grotesque body. Within rave, the dividing line between performer and audience is blurred, everyone participates. Rave constructs a utopian sphere, second life for change and renewal through 'laughter' created by music and Ecstasy. Rave serves as a temporary liberation from the official seriousness to 'bring down to earth' anything ineffable or authoritarian to the bodily material level that is ecstatic trance dancing in this context. I intend to claim that rave scene demonstrates a temporary space like carnival in Bakhtin's sense, where social

borders and individual differences such as class and gender are destroyed and reconstructed in the 'world upside down' logic ideally and symbolically. By using rave's popular images and language, one can step outside the patterns of thought and codes of behavior that dominant culture imposes.

**Keywords:** Rave, Bakhtin, carnival, grotesque.

## ÖZET

### KARNAVAL OLARAK 'RAVE'

Burcu Gündüz

Grafik Tasarım Bölümü

Yüksek Lisans

Tez Yöneticisi: Yar. Doç. Dr. John Robert Groch

Ağustos 2003

Bu çalışmada tekno-rave partilerini felsefi ve kültürel kökenleri ışığında inceliyorum. Bunu yaparken, Bakhtin'in karnaval kuramından yola çıkıyorum. 'Rave' ortamını karnavala benzeterek çözümlüyorum. Komünel grotesk beden bakışıyla bedene dair önerimleri olan ve kısıtlaması olmayan, resmiyet dışı bir hayatı ele alıyorum. 'Rave'de seyirci ve sanatçıyı birbirinden ayıran çizgi belirsizleşir. Herkes 'rave'in içindedir. 'Rave' müziğin ve Ecstasy'nin yarattığı 'gülme' aracılığıyla değişim ve yenilenmeye yönelmiş ikinci bir yaşam alanı, ütöpik bir ortam kurar. 'Rave', resmiyetin ciddiyetinden zamansal bir bağımsızlaşma olarak iş görür. Bu bağlamda 'rave'e katılanların kendinden geçerek yaptığı dans, otoriter olan ve normal hayatta anlatılamayan şeyleri dünyaya, bedensel ve maddesel olanın düzeyine indirir. Burada niyetim 'rave'in Bakhtin'in karnavalına benzeyen bir ortam yarattığını göstermek.

Öyle ki, bu ortamda sosyal sınırlar ve bireysel farklar ortadan kalkmış, bir tür 'başşağı' mantığıyla tekrar yapılandırılmıştır. Vurgulamak istediğim, 'rave'in popüler dilini ve imajlarını kullanarak, insanın düşüncenin yapılarının dışına adımını atabildiği ve baskın kültürün dayattığı davranış biçimlerinden kurtulabildiğidir; tıpkı karnavallarda olduğu gibi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Rave, Bakhtin, karnaval, grotesk.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank to my advisor John Robert Groch for his friendly guidance and support in this study.

I thank to my friends Çağlar, Nur and Güzden. I owe special thanks to Besim for his patience, Burçin and Deniz for their encouragement during the development of the thesis.

I thank to all my friends whom we feel the joyful spirit of raves together: Besim, Müge, Tugay, Sinem, Ersen, İdil, Çağdaş, Onur, Özgür, Nihat, Beray, Oğuz, Çağrı, Burçin, Kara Deniz, Emre, Kaan, Tati, Melih, Kız Deniz, Serkan, Meriç and others.  
Thanks to DJ Murat from İstanbul.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. WHAT IS RAVE?</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Rave.....	12
2.2 Rave Music.....	15
2.3 Disc Jockey's Role.....	18
2.4 About Ecstasy and Ecstatic State.....	20
2.5 Notes from Literature on Rave Culture.....	25
<b>3. BAKHTIN'S CARNIVAL</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1 The Sense of Carnival.....	32
3.2 Un-official Time.....	38
3.2 Grotesque Body.....	40
<b>4. RAVE AS CARNIVAL</b>	<b>46</b>
4.1 Second Life: Escape from Authority?.....	48
4.2 Communality vs. Individuality.....	57
4.2.1 Erosion of Sexual Differences.....	64
4.2.2 Participation vs. Spectatorship.....	67
4.3 Ecstatic Trance Dancing Body as Grotesque.....	73
<b>5. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>90</b>

“The popular festive ‘voice of the whole’ represents time as possibility and transformation. But it is not an end itself it serves a resource.”<sup>1</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In general, this thesis is an analysis of what, since 1987, has been described as ‘rave’ culture. By the 1990s, drug taking, dancing and party culture had formed what we call today the rave culture. Rave, as generally defined, is an all-night dance party held in big places for urban youth as a phenomenon of so-called Western culture, originating in Great Britain and US. “Rave is more than music plus drugs; it’s a matrix of lifestyle, ritualized behavior and beliefs. To the participant, it feels like a religion; to the mainstream observer, it looks more like a sinister cult.”<sup>2</sup>

Rave has a productive relationship to Bakhtin’s notion of carnival leading to closer connection between an alternative movement and cultural transformation. The concepts stressed by Bakhtin as typical of Carnival, such as subversion through the grotesque body, erosion of differences between people in a

---

<sup>1</sup> Hirschkop, Ken. *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic For Democracy*. Oxford UP: MA, 1999, 285.

feeling of unity and/or community, blurred boundaries between the observer and observed are present as constituent features of the rave scene.

Here I will draw an analogy between Bakhtinian carnival and today's popular dance parties (raves in particular) in terms of their capacity to disrupt and remake official public norms, arguing firstly that carnival and rave are linked in terms of that they offer people an entry into "symbolic sphere of utopian freedom".<sup>3</sup> Yet they are both non-official, and in Bakhtin's words people's second life. Chris Stanley's suggestion that "the rave party, in which music is the determining element, appropriates and inverts which is offered 'officially'".<sup>4</sup> But while both carnival and rave are excluded from the seriousness of official public norms, the question for Clair Willis should be "how to dialogise the public realm by bringing the excluded and 'non-official' into juxtaposition with the official."<sup>5</sup> It is a question beyond the scope of this thesis, but it would not be surprising that the style of rave may reveal a cultural rejection of dominant values of society. This style can be viewed as a conscious rejection of traditional cultural expressions through raving.

---

<sup>2</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 134.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley, Chris. 'Drowning but Waving Urban Narratives of Dissent in the Wild Zone.' *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings On popular Cultural Studies*. Blackwell: MA, 1998, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Willis, Clair. "Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women's Texts," *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Eds. Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd . Manchester UP: Manchester, 1989, 131-2.

In drawing an analogy between popular carnival and popular rave discourse, the use of the term 'rave scene' refers to a specific area of contemporary techno-dance parties and its cultural scope but My work is not limited to one regional expression of rave culture. I use the generic terms "the rave" and "the raver" in this piece, I'm referring to individuals and events, but not within a particular enclave of rave culture. However, rave is relatively a new subject in the academy; this thesis emerges from the texts about: (i) Bakhtin's carnival, carnivalization and (ii) Rave as a culture of today's urban youth. What I aim to do here is to look for similarities between the two. The statement of my thesis is that rave scene has some carnivalesque features.

Herein, I handle the Rave Scene with its carnivalesque features in five steps. First, a 'safe' audio-visual space is being set up for one purpose. This is raving, (or experiencing rave). Like the medieval carnival—which has its own space and time— everything happens within the physical space of the event:

Where other youth subcultures have focused on street appearances, or have chosen live rock performances for providing the emblematic opportunity for the display of style, in rave everything happens within the space of the party.<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary dance parties are the second lives of different kinds of people— black and white, gay and straight—meet like the carnival was for the medieval

people that there is no hierarchy between people in the time of festivity. Nevertheless, there are spatial and temporal boundaries between these two lives, namely official and non-official. The authority always restricted carnival time in the medieval times. Rave today has also temporal and spatial limitations according to the commercial entertainment licenses.

Second, rave as a “fictional psycho-acoustic space”<sup>7</sup> is filled with ravers having the same aim: to rave<sup>8</sup>. Dancing madly to sampladelic music together is described by being part of something ‘bigger’ by Maria Pini, which can be characterized as the communal carnival body in Bakhtin’s sense—within rave, everyone participates. This again is something common with Bakhtin’s carnival. As medieval carnival laughter described by Bakhtin as “not an individual reaction to some isolated ‘comic’ event... [but] the laughter of all the people... It is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants”<sup>9</sup>. Within rave, the carnival laughter which materializes is replaced by the bodily movements of all happy-face people dancing together. This is a very

---

<sup>6</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 169.

<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 47.

<sup>8</sup> **rave** *vb* **raved** ; **rav.ing** [ME] *vi* (14c) **1 a**: to talk irrationally in or as if in delirium **b**: to speak out wildly **c**: to talk with extreme enthusiasm <*raved* about its beauty> **2**: to move or advance violently: storm <the iced gusts still ~ and beat --John Keats> ~ *vt*: to utter in madness or frenzy -- **raver** *n* (1598) **1**: an act or instance of raving **2**: an extravagantly favorable criticism <the play received the critics' ~s> *The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, CD-ROM. 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 11.

strong connection between Bakhtin's carnival and today's rave parties, for the use of stimulating drugs like Ecstasy is very common at raves. Moreover, the immediate response of the body to these drugs is to express good mood and happiness (see 4. below).

Third, within rave, the music is lively produced by Disc Jockeys in a close interaction with the audience. DJs are known to be controlling the vibe of the happening. Within rave, the audience is addressed directly as part of the musical event. They are not observers, but rather participants. My question here is whether dance culture breaks down the boundaries between the observer and the observed. I will try to answer this question throughout the following chapters. In carnival there is no actors or spectacle to be seen because everyone participates, although, within rave, the audience participates by responding and giving road to the DJ's music by dancing, it is to be seen that there is an actor called 'the DJ'.

Fourth, rave participants are in an ecstatic state drugged by sampladelic music and Ecstasy. Ecstatic state within rave is generally defined as lost in music and time perception is defected. MDMA (3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine known as Ecstasy, E or X) produces a sensation of euphoria, physical stimulation and the feeling of increased emotional closeness to others.<sup>10</sup> "Chemically enhanced people moving to amplified beats can generate an intense response of

---

<sup>10</sup> McCall, Tara. *This is not a Rave: in the Shadow of a Subculture*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2001, 98.

ego-loss in a mass of dancing bodies, says Rietveld. According to Rietveld, depending on the context, losing one's self may provide a potential for change.<sup>11</sup> That state enables people act in a different manner that the reason is not the head but the sensations. Can it be suggested that ecstatic state eases to break the social borders between people like gender, ethnicity and social statuses? My intended answer to this question is "yes", which I will try to support later. As Douglas Rushkoff also puts:

Psychedelics can provide a shamanic experience for any adventurous consumer. This experience leads users to treat the accepted reality as an arbitrary one, and to envision the possibilities of a world unfettered by obsolete thought systems, institutions, and neuroses.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the rave mass involves different ethnic and social groups together and the interaction of people with each other that have completely different backgrounds and individual characteristics. Like carnival allows the merging of categories like the serious and the ridiculous, the sacred and profane, life and death, rulers and the ruled, rave introduces a space for black and white, gay and straight, beautiful and beast, rich (not poorer than 20\$ to 40\$ for each rave except transportation) and richer. Free parties rather than commercial ones can provide a real sense of community to those who feel politically dislocated and nationally

---

<sup>11</sup> Rietveld, Hillegonda. 'Repetitive beats: free parties and the politics of contemporary DiY dance culture in Britain.' *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. Ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 267.

<sup>12</sup>. Rushkoff, Douglas. *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace*. London: 1994, 16.

disowned and allow more space for new insights.<sup>13</sup> The interaction between people within rave enables the deformation and reconstruction of, in Bakhtinian terms, symbolic polarities of high and low, official and unofficial, grotesque and classical. As Becker also states:

Where people who engage in deviant activities have the opportunity to interact with one another they are likely to develop a culture built around the problems rising out of the differences between their definition of what they do and the definition held by other members of society.<sup>14</sup>

Carnival as a term denotes a mixture of rituals, games, symbols and various carnal excesses, which constitute an alternative “social space” for freedom, abundance and equality. The question rises as if rave scene enables such a social space for freedom, abundance and equality.

The contemporary dance floor, like the carnival, celebrates a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order", and marks "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions"<sup>15</sup> to a certain extent. This quotation from Bakhtin is a useful one; it highlights the temporality of the dance floor, whilst also acknowledging carnival's resistance to 'mainstream' values. Chas Critcher says that the rave presented:

---

<sup>13</sup> Rietveld, Hillegonda. 'Repetitive beats: free parties and the politics of contemporary DiY dance culture in Britain.' *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*.ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 267.

<sup>14</sup> Becker, H. S. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Macmillan, 1973, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968,10.

...the subversion of the ordered, restrained, chemically pure and self-contained body. Dancing all night to the insistent beat, popping pills and empathizing with all and sundry inverted all conventional discipline.<sup>16</sup>

What are the mainstream values rave resists—if we think of it as a carnival? Liberating forms of rave echo the special type of communication that Bakhtin suggests occurred during the medieval carnival. Like carnival speech and laughter, contemporary dance styles, and the other interactions that take place within the space of the dance floor, "liberate from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times", with contemporary dance demanding "ever changing, playful, undefined forms" <sup>17</sup>.

The second chapter is said to be almost written for giving the reader a general sense of the rave scene. It searches the very idea of rave with its almost all features written materially and theoretically. The general idea of rave scene is developed with the writings of Simon Reynolds, Hillegonda Rietveld, Mary Anna Wright, Maria Pini, Sarah Thornton, Angela McRobbie, Scott Hutson, Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton. The properties of rave's specific genres of music and its role within the scene are informed and discussed in the lights of Simon Reynolds's thoughts on "sampladelic" music. Ecstasy as a drug is told and

---

<sup>16</sup> Critcher, Chas. "Still raving: social reaction to Ecstasy." *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000): 156.

ecstatic state's relation with non-linguistic side of the music is emphasized. Ecstatic state and DJ's role are explained with the connections to the carnival square's interaction and participation subjects.

In the third chapter, the term of carnival in Bakhtinian sense is searched and developed under the lights of the writers such as Sue Vice, Robert Stam, Mary Russo, Arthur Lindley and Clair Willis. Carnival is described as a space where social boundaries are destroyed and reconstructed. It is a space for interaction with everyone and everything. After giving the sense of Bakhtin's carnival, carnival's other features used to build an analogy with rave are put. Materialization of the body is emphasized within the chapter 2 under the headings *grotesque realism* and *communal body*. Laughter materializes for Bakhtin to the bodily level. In this thesis laughter exchanges with dancing on ecstasy, again as a notion which materializes. As in carnival, in rave, everyone *laughs* 'filled with bodily images'<sup>18</sup> in a musical event. People do not even need a special reason to laugh or to be happy.

In the fourth chapter, rave from the point of carnival will be discussed in three main ways. Firstly as a sign of breaking the social boundaries within rave's carnivalesque feature, changing modes of subjectivity will be discussed in chapter 3. McRobbie describes the changes in subjectivity within rave and says that social

---

<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10-11.

roles are renewed and are partially changed through the use of Ecstasy and the pleasure of dance. She describes these changes within contemporary dance culture;

...the atmosphere is one of unity, of dissolving difference in the peace and harmony haze of the drug Ecstasy... The irony of this present social moment is that working-class boys lose their 'aggro' and become 'new men' not through the critique of masculinity which accompanies... changing modes of femininity..., but through the use of Ecstasy they undergo a conversion to the soft, the malleable, and the sociable rather than the antisocial, and through the most addictive pleasures of dance they also enter into a different relationship with their own bodies, more tactile, more sensuous, less focused around sexual gratification... Rave favours groups and friends rather than couples or those in search of a partner.<sup>19</sup>

The borders and differences like gender, ethnicity, and social statuses between people are blurred within rave like in carnival.

Second, rave blurs the borders between actors and spectators. As Mikhail Bakhtin puts for the medieval carnivals that there is no distinction between actors and spectators, "carnival is not a spectacle seen by people; they live in it, and everybody participates because its very idea embraces all the people."<sup>20</sup> Everyone is both actor and spectator within rave. No dancers in artistic terms but true nature of human bodily actions are experienced in terms of carnival. Everyone

---

<sup>18</sup> Bakhtin says that when a man laughs, he fills with bodily images.

<sup>19</sup> McRobbie, Angela. 'Shut Up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity.' *Cultural Studies* Vol.7 No.3 (1993): 419.

participates as social gaze was taken from the dance floor.<sup>21</sup> As one raver explains it well:

My first impression of rave was that how to dance. My sister came up to me and said no one cares what you look like you know. And I was like oh OK and I started dancing like mad.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, chapter four discusses the dancing body and grotesque body. Dancing within rave has an essential role, as it is the mainstay of rave community. The question is why these people dance madly to exhaustion. Dance as “a feeling expressed in motion” is arrangements of recognized movements and pre-determined steps in Western culture that assigns specific movements to body rather free movements but within the space of the party, all movements of the body to the music in are referred as dance.<sup>23</sup>

Then is it valid to say that movements are not artistic as it is finished, known, expected like it has a language but liberated within rave that everyone dances his/her own dance, his/her own expression? It is argued, in this particular part in chapter four, that dance within rave has a liberating role, which can be called as ‘ecstatic trance’, like a grotesque body (and laughter) in carnival.

---

<sup>20</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10.

<sup>21</sup> See section 4.3 for further discussion.

<sup>22</sup> Little Zero from Toronto, age 29, Male, experiencing rave for 7 years cited from McCall, Tara. *This is not a Rave: in the Shadow of a Subculture*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2001, 73.

<sup>23</sup> McCall, Tara. *This is not a Rave: in the Shadow of a Subculture*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2001, 72.

Grotesque body as well as the dancing body is described as a moving and becoming body.

Chapter four deals with the notion of resistance and opposition with regard to the study of contemporary dance culture. Whilst my work is, at some point, informed by Bakhtin's analysis of carnival. It also goes beyond it, looking at specific phenomena within dance culture and placing these phenomena within the context of both sociological theory, and socio-economic reality. In chapter four, I provide an analysis of context, whilst also describing the precise relationship of dance culture's 'oppositional relationship' to the state and to common-sense discourse.

Like Bakhtin's carnivalesque, the rave is wild, nomadic, outside the maps of Power. At its best, the rave opens onto a realm of free-form behavior and perception, one in which there is no hierarchy, no leaders or followers, at most the DJ and the light-show artists. It is like an awakening of the ordinary man. It is a call for the refutation of domesticated existence in urban life.

## 2. WHAT IS RAVE?

### 2.1 Rave

Rave is a subcultural youth phenomenon that combines music, dance, art, technology, and spirituality. As generally defined, it is a particular kind of urban all-night dance party held “in out-of-the-way places at times when the rest of the population sleeps”<sup>24</sup>. Being underground multi-media events, raves create space for ritualistic behavior at the turn of the 21st century.

Rave, as a phenomenon of urban youth today, developed rapidly in Britain with close relation to house and techno music in the 1990s. In the late 1980s, when raves or free techno dance parties first appeared in Britain, they were underground events, taking place in secretive venues such as warehouses and outdoor fields.<sup>25</sup> The first raves were offering a subcultural<sup>26</sup> scene where working-class kids came together to take drugs and dance to music that togetherness and belonging were all important features.<sup>27</sup> They were semi-illegal,

---

<sup>24</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 168.

<sup>25</sup> Hutson, Scott R. “The Rave: Spiritual Healing In Modern Western Subcultures.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (Jan 2000) Issue 1, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Subculture ( n. a culture derived from another culture, *The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, CD-ROM. 1996.) suggests ‘ secrecy, masnic oaths, an Underworld’ as Dick Hebdige uses the term in his book: *Subculture: Meaning of Style*, NY: Routledge, 1987, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Brewster, Bill & Frank Broughton. *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History Of The Disc Jockey*. New York: Grove Press, 2000, 77.

all night dance parties that the use of drugs such as Ecstasy was common. “As time passed, the dance scene grew, diversified and evolved.”<sup>28</sup> By the mid-1990s analysts commented that “the scale is huge and ever increasing”<sup>29</sup>. Today, raves in the traditional sense—semi-legal and located in factories and outdoors—are rare but still exist. The so-called “Rave Culture” was transformed from an underground subculture into a mainstream youth industry before the millennium. In 1993, combined attendance at dance events in Great Britain reached 50 million, which is said to be more than at “sporting events, cinemas, and all the ‘live’ arts combined”<sup>30</sup>. Commercially, the 1993 British rave market brought in approximately \$2.7 billion<sup>31</sup> “Fully licensed and often held in nightclubs, raves now penetrated to the center of British youth culture.”<sup>32</sup> Following this initial north European florescence, rave emerged around the world at Rimini (Italy), Ko Phangan (Thailand), the Balearic Islands (Spain), Goa (India), and coastal Mozambique. Though they have never been as popular in the United States as in Great Britain, raves have been a fixture also in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and

---

<sup>28</sup> Wright, Mary Anna. “The Great British Ecstasy Revolution”. *DiY Culture*. Ed. George McKay. Verso, NY, 1998, 236.

<sup>29</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 168.

<sup>30</sup> Thornton, Sarah. Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media And Subcultural Capital*. London: Wesleyan Uni. Press, 1996, 15.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* , 15.

<sup>32</sup> Hutson, Scott R. “The Rave: Spiritual Healing In Modern Western Subcultures.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (Jan 2000) : 35.

New York since the early 1990s. In addition, some of techno music's strongest roots are known to be in Detroit and Chicago.<sup>33</sup>

Raves can range in size from fifty to tens of thousands of participants but raves exhibit regional differences. Most people who attend raves—often called "ravers"—are between the ages of 15 and 25. This seems to suffice to call rave a "youth" subculture. Also because it creates alternative movement, Simon Reynolds defines rave culture a "youth subculture"<sup>34</sup>. The socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds of ravers are not nearly so predictable as their ages.

It is no coincidence that the wide variety of rave music is referred to collectively as 'techno' or 'electronica'<sup>35</sup>. Raves are characterized by the use of chemical enhancers or said to be sensation-stimulating drugs including ecstasy (E or X in common terms), known to give enormous energy for machine-like nonstop dancing and produce a feeling of profound empathy in its users. It is for certain that "Ecstasy's role in inaugurating the rave has [always] been of central importance."<sup>36</sup> Though such drugs enable altered states of consciousness, it can

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. , 40

<sup>34</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the worm of Techno and Rave culture*. Boston MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Harrison uses 'dance-techno-house-hop' for defining the music within rave whereas he says that Americans call it 'electronica.' Harrison, Andrew. 'The beat goes on.' *Rolling Stone* 07.10-24 (1997): 42.

<sup>36</sup> McCutcheon, Mark. *Trance-formations of Int\_rave\_nous Knowledge*. 24 Mar. 1997  
<<http://www.tao.ca/writing/archives/mms/0133.html> >

be argued that they are not necessary to get into an altered state in raving.<sup>37</sup> Dancing is an important physiological factor at a rave, because it is a motor activity that may alter consciousness. Extended rhythmic dancing and bodily movement brings on physical exhaustion, vertigo, hyperventilation, and other physiological conditions. Roughly speaking, sampladelic music, long duration, and the ecstatic experience through dancing with others are the main characteristics of raving.

## **2.2 Rave Music**

One of the main objectives of rave participants is to reach an altered, transformed, or ecstatic state, in which it may be fair to say that the perception of time is affected. This altered state is accomplished through a combination of means designed to effect sensory bombardment. This sensory bombardment is sampladelic music and psychedelic visuals.

Simon Reynolds defines ‘sampladelic’ as “disorienting, perception-warping music created using the sampler<sup>38</sup> and other forms of digital technology which deconstructs “the metaphysics of presence.”<sup>39</sup> He refers to the various musics (or “hallucinogenres” of rave) such as techno, hip-hop, house, jungle,

---

<sup>37</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the worm of Techno and Rave culture*. Boston MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, 9.

<sup>38</sup> The sampler can easily be defined with simple words such as a device that converts analog sound into digital information.

electronica and more as “sampladelia.” For Reynolds, “the music itself drugs the listener”.<sup>40</sup> The objectives expressed at hyperreal.org’s FAQ website regarding how music functions at these events can be summarized as follows:

In general, the purpose of the music played at raves is to make people dance. But it is more than that: the music has to take people to another place. Most music played at raves is intended to lose yourself in. Techno played at raves is a faceless, nameless organism, Time stops when the mind’s clock of frequent distractions is disconnected by the surreal, hypnotic Syncopated rhythms being woven around your head by the DJ. Time stops and the Vibe begins.<sup>41</sup>

Techno and house are like the corner stones of sampladelic music. In 1990, there were two words for the rave music: house and techno<sup>42</sup>. House is developed in the late 1980s in Chicago, which has deep roots in disco music. It is technologically reproduced dance music composed of synthesis of disco beats, electronic melodies, and sound-bite samples. 1989’s Summer of Love is known as a rising point for house music. The centrality of house to social groups such as the urban gay club scene leads to a broad range of political and formal discourses. With its messages of unity and spiritual positivity, house music has become the

---

<sup>39</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into The World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 41, 44.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* , 55.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, Angie. ‘Let’s All Have a Disco? Football, Popular Music and Demoncratization.’ *Subcultures to Clubcultures: An Introduction to Popular Cultural Studies*, Blackwell: Oxford, 1997, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the worm of techno and rave culture*. Boston MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, 119.

backbone for all subsequent rave music developments. Nevertheless, Ecstasy and house music:

...had produced the largest youth cultural phenomenon that Britain had ever seen, Ecstasy culture had become the primary leisure activity for British youth, seamlessly integrated into the fabric of the weekend ritual. From 1990 onwards . . . its sounds, signs, symbols and slang had become all pervasive, part of the everyday landscape.<sup>43</sup>

The gay club scene of Chicago developed the distinctive 4/4 beat of house music whereas in Detroit club scene, music artists developed harder electronic music known as "techno music" which has become synonymous with the whole culture of dance music. It has origins in house music and it was the development of 'MIDI', a way of connecting synthesisers, samplers and computers, that enabled the genre of techno to be developed. Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson are wellknown musicians in the development of the techno sound besides the bands such as Tangerine Dream, Parliament, Depeche Mode, Can, and in particular Kraftwerk, which are said to be central influences. Techno music avoids the melody and vocals of house music, even as it highlights the synthesized artificial sounds.

Then, can we say that dance music subverts dominant values by refusing to use the linguistic structures of capitalist society because it is lack of lyrics?

---

Dance music's endless cycles of repetition and difference affirm the importance of non-linguistic communication, highlighting what Robert Beeston refers to as the "dissolution of the word"<sup>44</sup>.

What is the state of the ravers within the sampladelic dance music "where there is only sensation", "where now lasts longer"? For Reynolds, sampladelia may be a *prophecy* and offer hints of future forms of human identity and social organizations.

---

<sup>43</sup> Collin, Matthew, and John Godfrey. *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*, Serpent's Tail: London, 1997, 267.

<sup>44</sup> Beeston, R. 'Colonising Inner Space - Iconographies and Cut Ups in Electronic Music', unpublished paper presented to Disco 2000 conference, Stockport, Manchester, 18 December 1996.

### 2.3 Disc Jockey's Role

The DJ or Disc Jockey, in common terms is the person who controls the music in musical happenings. S/he chooses what to play according to the moods of the community of the people. "At its most basic DJing is the act of a series of records for an audience enjoyment."<sup>45</sup> However radio DJ is a presenter of the records, club DJ not simply introduces the records but perform them. A club DJ does not just put the records into order or just play with a few tones rather make something new. DJing we will discuss here is the notion of club DJing that has a close relation with DJing in raves.

New technologies delivered a new form of electronic music with near infinite possibilities. DJ is the person who uses these possibilities actually in front of an active audience. Songs could be seamlessly cross-faded without breaks, so the listener could not tell when one song finished and another began, that makes the happening live without any break, a continuous acoustic flow. It is emphasizing the connections between songs, however they could be mixed, juxtaposed or overlaid together to form new songs. DJ creates a set of his/her own. A set is what s/he plays generally not less than an hour. A set starts, develops and ends for most DJs that a set is perceived to be like a *composition* in general sense. And because the instruments were electronic, the beats could be

---

<sup>45</sup> Brewster, Bill, and Frank Broughton. *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History Of The Disc Jockey*. New York: Grove Press, 2000, 8.

faster and more consistent than something live performers could never do. This rapidity in music pushes the audience to move faster, dance faster to the exhaustion.

For the rave scene, it is the DJ “who presides at our festival of transcendence.”<sup>46</sup> DJ’s purpose at raves is said to make all the people dance at the floor. It is to have the chance to play with the people’s mood and make them travel to the various *acoustic dreams*. DJ can play with the modes of the audience but: “A truly effective DJ is more like a caring mother someone who guides rather than leads the crowd in a type of dialogue.”<sup>47</sup> As Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton suggests:

Djing is not just about choosing a few tunes. It is about generating shared moods; it is about understanding the feelings of a group of people and directing them to a better place. In the hands of an amaster, records become the tools for rituals of spiritual communion that for many people are the most powerful events in their lives.<sup>48</sup>

Now, DJ phenomenon is important for the way I intend to consider the audience – artist interrelation. I aim to suggest in the following chapters, that the boundary between them is blurred. Audience is no more passive, sitting listeners

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>47</sup> McKay, George., ed. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. London: Verso, 1998, 123.

<sup>48</sup> Brewster, Bill, and Frank Broughton. *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey*. New York: Grove Press, 2000, 5.

rather participants in the form of the dance floor yet is perceived to be the ultimate test of quality of the recent DJ and his/her music.

## 2.4 About Ecstasy and Ecstatic State

The Greek word *ekstasis* means, "to stand outside of or transcend [oneself]" in mysticism, the experience of an inner vision of God or of one's relation to or union with the divine. Various methods have been used to achieve ecstasy, which is a primary goal in most forms of religious mysticism. Most mystics, both in the East and in the West, frown on the use of drugs because no permanent change in the personality (in the mystical sense) has been known to occur. In primitive religions, ecstasy was a technique highly developed by shamans, religious personages with healing and psychic-transformation powers, in their "soul," or "spirit," flights. In rave culture, Ecstasy as a street word is used for 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine, MDMA in short. It is closely related to the dance music and its surrounding culture.

Ecstasy (also known as E, X) and related recreational drugs have become popular among teenagers and young adults in raves because "they enhance energy, endurance, sociability and sexual arousal... it is taken to postpone fatigue and allow the user to dance energetically for hours on end."<sup>49</sup> For this purpose, the most common dosage has been 1-2 tablets during the course of the party. The use

---

<sup>49</sup> Kalant, Harold. "The pharmacology and toxicology of 'ecstasy' (MDMA) and related drugs." CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal 10.2 (2001): 917.

of "ecstasy" has increased greatly in recent years.<sup>50</sup>The accompanying psychological effects of ecstasy are described as “a sense of euphoria, well-being, sharpened sensory perception, greater sociability, extraversion, heightened sense of closeness to other people, and greater tolerance of their views and feelings.”<sup>51</sup> MDMA causes the release of serotonin and dopamine on the brain. “These chemicals are neurotransmitters which alter the messages passed between brain cells and so affect mood.”<sup>52</sup> Ecstasy produces a similar feeling to being in love, and can induce feelings of empathy.

MDMA invented in 1912 by a German chemical company, Merck. But an American, Alexander Shulgin, reinvented it in mid 60s. Its potential for use as a therapeutic agent was discovered and MDMA became popular as a recreational drug and gained its street name, Ecstasy. According to Marry Anna Wright, the American pattern of usage was like they use marijuana; by small groups of friends at home whereas in Britain ecstasy combined with music and used by large groups together, originally in rave-dance parties.

British law grouped the drugs MDMA, MDA, MDEA and other related drugs as found in the street as samples of Ecstasy was classified as a ‘

---

<sup>50</sup> Kirsch cites, for example, estimates of the number of doses produced by an illicit laboratory in the United States as growing from 10 000 a month in 1976, to 30 000 a month in 1984 and 500 000 a month in 1985.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Kalant, Harold. “*The pharmacology and toxicology of 'ecstasy' (MDMA) and related drugs.*” CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal 165 (2001): 929.

hallucinogenic amphetamine' in Class A and it was prohibited in 1977 under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. In America, ecstasy was legal until 1985 and by that time Drug Enforcement Agency banned MDMA. According to Nicholas Saunders, 'the effect of prohibition was to prevent research into the drug without altering the habits of recreational users'.<sup>53</sup>

According to Wright, Ecstasy arrived Britain in the mid-eighties. The Balearic island of Ibiza, having an established drug and hippie culture, became popular for 'party people' then DJing, Ecstasy was brought to London, and the acid house phenomenon was born. Wright says that there is big increase in the use of ecstasy within the last decade. As she states:

Year in, year out, customs seizures increase as more and more people want to take it, often discovering it through their involvement with dance music...For British youth Ecstasy has become a milestone on the road to adulthood like cutting your teeth, riding a bike and losing your virginity.<sup>54</sup>

Marry Anna Wright says that the increase in the dissatisfaction of the British political system lead primarily young people to 'a new drug and a new social experience'. The British values and rules are now under the influence of a

---

<sup>52</sup> Wright, Mary Anna. 'The Great British Ecstasy Revolution'. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. Ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 233.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted by Wright from Nicholas Saunders, *Ecstasy and the Dance Culture*, London: self-published 1995, 16.

Class A drug, Ecstasy. “Hundreds of thousands have experienced the Ecstasy revolution.”<sup>55</sup> In the beginning, a few people were using a few pills in a few parties whereas today it is said that a million tablets of Ecstasy are taken every week in Britain.

For Wright, it is ignorable that Ecstasy has a revolutionary potential while it is so widespread within youth culture. New way of behaving is established but it is hard to say Ecstasy caused that. It is not possible to say that it makes you change the world and, it is not easy to label the participants but the “Great British Ecstasy revolution caused a stir”. Black and white people faced with a total new youth culture together. Ecstasy seems to make people get on with each other. But it is highly significant for Wright that ecstasy brought a revolution “starting with the self”. One reason is the chemical action of the drug that is a physical response. The dance music scene improves this awakening for Wright. However, dance scene divided into genres, this division is not because of class struggle but musical taste. As she quotes from an interviewee:

It obviously works as a very powerful force in terms of people wanting to be together. It fights fascism, it fights racism, it’s seen as an all-embracing culture that lets you in no matter what religion or color you are, so I think it’s more than just a hedonistic thing...it’s an attitude of let people express

---

<sup>54</sup> Wright, Mary Anna. ‘The Great British Ecstasy Revolution’. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 231.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* , 228.

themselves and enjoy themselves no matter what social background or which part of the world they come from.<sup>56</sup>

Rietveld describes the dancing within rave as "the untying of the subject occurs in a state of complete jouissance, in a loss of its construction in language."<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere, she continues the theme and suggests that:

Language, that Apollonian creator of the symbolic order, was unable to catch the event; participants of any rave event do not seem to be able to describe their experiences as anything else than, "it was wild", "absolutely unbelievable, there wasn't anything like it", "great", "mental" or "this is not dancing, this is a religion"<sup>58</sup>

For McCall, raves establish dance as a meaningful, non-rational form of communication—an innate human activity. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi argues that dancing and other forms of play are intrinsically stimulating because they produce a holistic sensation of total involvement—a sensation that he calls "flow."<sup>59</sup> Dance as flow merges the act with the awareness of the act, producing self-forgetfulness, a loss of self-consciousness, transcendence of individuality, and fusion with the world.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Wright, Mary Anna. 'The Great British Ecstasy Revolution'. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 232

<sup>57</sup> Rietveld, Hillegonda. *This is our House: House Music, Cultural Spaces and Technologies*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 1998, 148.

<sup>58</sup> Rietveld, Hillegonda. 'Living The Dream' *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Hampshire: Avebury, 1993, 65.

<sup>59</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety. The Experience of Play in Work and Games*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, 1975, 43.

Young and energetic social dancers, ravers in this context, send messages of who they are, whom and what they desire. According to Hanna, people share their visions, express their feelings, assert and reflect generational gender, ethnic, socioeconomic class, and political identities. Hanna says that communication can get across through the repetitiveness of music and movement. She puts:

Dance, music and song often encode messages from such patterns of social relations as hierarchy, inclusion-exclusion, and exchanges across social boundaries.<sup>61</sup>

The question I aim to deal with here is whether it can be suggested that the whole atmosphere of rave involving sampladelic dance music, psychedelic visuals, drugs, the feeling of community enable an altered state of consciousness for the participants which will underestimate the social restrictions and give birth to a renewal in a carnival sense.

## **2.5 Notes from Literature on Rave Culture**

The aim of this literature review is to establish a relevant work in the field to demonstrate the ongoing debates on rave. Rave is relatively a new subject in the academy. Acknowledging this new subject's complexity, this section reviews what is written in the context of rave mainly from three aspects. One expresses

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. , 49

rave's cultural transformation whereas the other analyzes it in the context of 'subjectivity' and gender. Moreover, ecstasy consumption and its relation with rave culture are discussed partially by academicians.

Much of the academic discourse on raves focuses on the rave as a hedonistic, temporary escape from reality. Writers who support this position argue from a "neoconservative", postmodern perspective that emphasizes the prominence of nostalgia and meaninglessness in modern amusements.<sup>62</sup> The postmodern approach views the rave as a culture of abandonment, disengagement, and disappearance. Simon Reynolds summarizes the postmodern interpretation: rave culture is "geared towards fascination rather than meaning, sensation rather than sensibility; creating an appetite for impossible states of hypersimulation."<sup>63</sup>

Tracing the origins of contemporary dance culture back to the Balearic island of Ibiza in the mid 1980s, Antonio Melechi employs Baudrillardian theories of loss and disappearance to the study of the dance floor.<sup>64</sup> Melechi's analysis is more to do with the dissolution of the male gaze. Like Melechi, Hillegonda

---

<sup>61</sup> Hanna, Judith Lynne. 'Moving Messages: Identity and desire in Popular Music and Social Dance.' Ed. James Lull. *Popular Music and Communication*. Sage Publications: New Delhi, 1991, 179.

<sup>62</sup> Foster, Hal., ed. *Postmodern Culture*, Verso: London, 1985, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into The World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 90.

<sup>64</sup> Antonio Melechi, "The Ecstasy of Disappearance", *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Hampshire: Avebury, 1993, 37.

Rietveld also proposes a 'disappearance' thesis.<sup>65</sup> In particular she attacks the notion that contemporary dance culture might form part of a political critique, suggesting that rave merely signified as:

...a threat to the symbolic order... No meaning could be found other than pure escape, suggesting perhaps, a type of tourism. There was the excitement of spending money that had lost its exchange value and of driving into the darkness, the unknown. A disappearance from daily material realities by an undoing of the constructed 'self' in a Dionysian ritual is the ultimate effect.<sup>66</sup>

Simon Frith and Jon Savage analyze rave culture in the context of 'cultural populism' and the development of a discourse within cultural studies that sought to celebrate certain elements of contemporary popular culture in an uncritical manner. They validate contemporary dance music as a musical form of inherent worth, and eminently worthy of study, without lapsing into uncritical celebration.<sup>67</sup> Frith and Savage would appear to agree that such a process is possible; "dance acts like Orbital or Derrick May draw a more accurate map of the 1992 body, its formation in and by the contemporary experience of desire and space - than any 'fine' artist we can think of."<sup>68</sup> Beverly Best is also concerned

---

<sup>65</sup> Rietveld, Hillegonda. 'Living The Dream' Ed. Steve Redhead. *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Hampshire: Avebury, 1993. 41-90.

<sup>66</sup> Rietveld, Hillegonda. 'Living the Dream' Ed. Redhead, Steve. *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, Hampshire: Avebury, 1993, 43.

<sup>67</sup> Frith, Simon and Savage, Jon. 'Pearls and Swine: Intellectuals and the Mass Media' Ed. Redhead, Steve. *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings On popular Cultural Studies*. Blackwell: MA, 1998, 7-17.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15

with charting a course between the cultural pessimism of post-Frankfurt School cultural analyses, and the cultural populism of the likes of John Fiske.<sup>69</sup>

Sarah Thornton examines rave culture from another perspective with respect to postmodernist's 'disappearance' thesis. Her influential academic text, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Thornton, 1995) concerns dance culture, and a detailed exposition of its central theses. The central thesis of Thornton's work is that "club cultures are *taste cultures*... Club cultures are riddled with cultural hierarchies"<sup>70</sup> Having stated this, Thornton goes on to suggest that her intention is to expose "three principal, overarching distinctions which can be briefly designated as: the authentic versus the phoney, the 'hip' versus the 'mainstream', and the 'underground' versus 'the media.'"<sup>71</sup>

Sarah Thornton exposes contemporary dance culture's invocation of 'the mainstream', suggesting that when invoked 'the mainstream' invariably refers to:

...the masses - discursive distance from which is a measure of a clubber's cultural worth. Youthful clubber and raver ideologies are almost as *anti-mass culture* as the discourses of the artworld. Both criticize the mainstream/masses for being derivative, superficial and *femme*. Both consciously admire innovative artists, but show disdain for those who have too high a profile as being charlatans or overrated media-sluts.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Best, Beverly. 'Over-the-counter-culture: Retheorizing Resistance in Popular Culture.' *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings On popular Cultural Studies*. Blackwell: MA, 1998, 7-17.

<sup>70</sup> Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media And Subcultural Capital*. Wesleyan Uni. Press: London, 1996, 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

As a "subcultural discourse" what outlined by Thornton is dance culture's belief that it is a "renegade culture...opposed to, and continually in flight from, the colonizing co-opting media"<sup>73</sup>. In particular Thornton highlights the key roles played by "micro-media" and "niche-media", suggesting that exposure in these media forms is positively welcomed by dance culture. Her analysis is simplistic in its suggestion that contemporary dance culture is entirely apolitical and purely consumerist.

There are themes around subjectivity within rave such as gender relations, sexuality, and the performative nature of dance culture, which I expand upon at various points in my thesis. Lack of subjectivity at raves is said to be reflected in the style of dance<sup>74</sup>, the relative anonymity of the DJ (disc jockey), the nature of the music<sup>75</sup>, the ego-reducing effects of Ecstasy and the occurrence of raves in out-of-the-way places at times when the rest of the population sleeps.<sup>76</sup> Ravers fill the void of subjectivity with a collage of fragments, the archetypal form of

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>74</sup> McKay, G. *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*. Verso: London, 1996, 110.

<sup>75</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into The World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 254.

<sup>76</sup> Antonio Melechi, "The Ecstasy of Disappearance", *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Hampshire: Avebury, 1993, 33-34.

postmodernist expression for Jameson.<sup>77</sup> Fragmentation is seen in the DJ's sampling of various past and present styles of music.<sup>78</sup> . Such bricolage of older styles exemplifies Jameson's idea that, with the decline of the high modernist ideology of style, the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but the past.<sup>79</sup>

There is a central question about subjectivity of women within rave that is why rave provides new forms of subjectivity for women. McRobbie's 'Shut Up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity' contains a useful analysis of the change in gender relations inherent within dance culture in the mid 1990s. Here McRobbie talks of 'rave' as legitimating:

...pure physical abandon in the company of others without requiring the narrative of sex or romance. The culture is one of childhood, of a pre-sexual, pre-oedipal stage. Dancing provides the rationale for rave. Where other youth subcultures have focused on street appearances, or have chosen live rock performances for providing the emblematic opportunity for the display of style, in rave everything happens within the space of the party.<sup>80</sup>

Whereas previous subcultural scenes have denied the kinds of 'unsupervised adventures' for women, rave allows such adventures. This is partially because previous youth subcultures' 'styles of being' were being

---

<sup>77</sup> Jameson, Fredric. 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism' *New Left Review*, No.146, July-August., 1984, 64.

<sup>78</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into The World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 41-45.

<sup>79</sup> Jameson, Fredric. 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism' *New Left Review*, No.146, July-August., 1984, 65.

‘political’, ‘angry’, and ‘fashionable’, however, within the rave scene, being ‘ecstatic’ changed that ‘styles of being’ between open displays of ‘happiness’, autoerotic pleasure, friendliness and enjoyment of dance. These terms unavoidably puts the rave scene in the discourse of femininity and gay male culture. For Pini rave erodes the “traditional cultural associations between dancing, drugged, ‘dressed-up’ woman and sexual invitations.” Erosion of differences between participants in a feeling of unity breaks down the division of audience and performer within rave and the rave-dance floor provides to be both simultaneously.

Pini argues the early London rave scene on femininity and club culture in general. She attempts to the issues of subjectivity and experience. By taking women’s own personal accounts, her aim is, as she states, Pini states that rave is worth dealing with because masculinity’s traditional centrality challenged by rave that there are positive feminist terms within the rave scene. Thus rave scene opens a discussion for new forms of identity and pleasure. Pini thinks that rave can be seen in terms of a celebration of excitement and pleasure. Use of ecstasy and bodily rushes associated with rave are central to the production of excitement.

The women interviewees told that having experienced ‘E’ after a year, they could feel similarly ‘Ecstatic’ through simply being in the rave environment without taking ‘E’. Interviewees view rave as providing a new space for sexual

---

relations. Many interviewers mention a general lack of aggression that is generally lack of alcohol within the rave scene. The appeal of rave is the perceived absence of particular kinds of masculinity, and dance-floor relations associated with traditional dance clubs.

The use of Ecstasy is another subject in literature on rave. Ecstasy is discussed both from the views around moral panic and its revolutionary sides. Antonio Melechi analyzes the developing moral panic surrounding the seemingly irresistible rise in Ecstasy consumption in the late 1980s.<sup>81</sup> However there is little in Redhead's analysis that attempts to explain *why* Ecstasy consumption has expanded so massively in recent years (other than the suggestion that it is an almost entirely media-inspired moral panic that encourages, rather than discourages, deviancy), Marry Anna Wright in her essay "The Great British Ecstasy Revolution" first examines the history of ecstasy (MDMA), how it works and how it gained its present legal status. She explores its connections with dance culture and finally the challenges of ecstasy are outlined. The challenges are in a symbolic level shaking the fundamental structure of society. These pervasive acts have attained significance in terms of long-term radical change according to Wright. She concludes "Great British Ecstasy revolution started in the brains, thoughts and actions of the Great British Ecstasy user".

---

<sup>80</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. Routledge: London, 1994, 169.

<sup>81</sup> Antonio Melechi, "The Ecstasy of Disappearance", *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Hampshire: Avebury, 1993, 7-28.



...in carnival people were reborn...

Mikhail Bakhtin<sup>82</sup>

### 3. BAKHTIN' S CARNIVAL

#### 3.1 The Sense of Carnival

The various forms of folk rites and festivities are called “carnival” by Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin considers carnival as an actual socio-cultural phenomenon. Carnival as a term denotes a mixture of rituals, games, symbols and various carnal excesses which constitute an alternative “social space” for freedom, abundance and equality. The thesis tries to explore ideas through the question whether rave scene enables such a social space for freedom, abundance and equality against the official seriousness.

The idea of carnival is explored in *Rabelais and His World*. “Taking Rabelais as an example of the French Renaissance, Bakhtin investigates the more than thousand years old development of popular culture.”<sup>83</sup> For Russo, the work of Bakhtin accommodates a critique of modernity as an isolating culture similar to the official religious culture of Middle Ages and ‘a radical diminishment of the

---

<sup>82</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10.

possibilities of human freedom and cultural production.’<sup>84</sup> Bakhtin shows that the carnival was an officially sanctioned period in which all dogmas and doctrines, as well as the forms and ideologies of the dominant culture to say ‘organized society’ could temporarily be overtuned. Mary Russo also puts the resistance of the carnival square and, its power of destabilization of the organized society. As she states:

The masks and voices of carnival resist, exaggerate, and destabilize the distinctions and boundaries that mark and maintain high culture and organized society.<sup>85</sup>

In Bakhtin’s analysis of carnival, symbolic polarities of high and low, official and unofficial, grotesque and classical are deformed and reconstructed. According to Bakhtin, the advantage of carnival was that it reminded of the attributes of dominant culture, the characteristics of the people at large, the divisions in the culture, of class distinctions and of value judgments and differences. Fixed social roles are upside down in the time of festivity. Roles change and “topsy-turvy” state of the world is experienced during the carnival period.

---

<sup>83</sup> Kurtuluş, Gül. *The Carnavalesque in Ben Johnson’s Three City Comedies: Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartolomew Fair*. diss., Bilkent University, Ankara, 1997, 138.

<sup>84</sup> Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*. Routledge: NY, 1995, 61.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

Bakhtin's conception of the world as 'eternally unfinished' is a world "dying and being born at the same time, possessing as it were two bodies"<sup>86</sup> which contains the dual image of praise and abuse, the transfer from the old to the new, from death to life. Bakhtin argues that this kind of world conception can only be expressed in unofficial forms—that is to say, in the time of festivity—because the official life clearly divides the borders between 'higher' and 'lower' here in carnival as an unofficial culture attempt to merge. Bakhtin puts it clearly and says:

[I]n the development of the class society such a conception of the world can only be expressed in unofficial culture. There is no place for it in the culture of the ruling classes; here praise and abuse are clearly divided and static. [Because] official culture is founded on the principle of an immovable and unchanging hierarchy in which the higher and the lower never merge.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, the phenomenon of carnival allowed the merging of categories that are kept separate by ideologies of a certain culture: the serious and the ridiculous, the sacred and profane, life and death, rulers and the ruled, and so on. As Bakhtin clearly states:

Carnival strives to encompass and unite within itself both poles of evolution or both members of antithesis: birth-death, young-age, top-bottom, face-backside, praise-abuse, affirmation-negation, the tragical-the comical, aetc... It could be expressed thus opposites

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>87</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 166.

meet, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another.<sup>88</sup>

The idea of opposition between the “official culture,” meaning the culture of the establishment, those in power, which is serious, dogmatic and fixed, and the “popular culture” which is defined by its openness, instability, changeability, and egalitarian nature can be traced in contemporary rave scene. If the popular culture is taken as the main concern and its images and its world view are examined in opposition to the official culture, it will be seen that the folk culture offers another mode of perceiving and communicating human experience than does the official culture. By using its images and language, one can step outside the patterns of thought and codes of behavior that official culture imposes. One can escape from official dogmatism by entering the language of folk culture that is entering the world of carnival. What Bakhtin finds in *Rabelais* is an exposition of popular culture, its images and its worldview as opposed to official culture. “Bakhtin treats them [popular culture and official culture] as systems of multiform signs. The dominant characteristic for these systems is the liberation comes with “laughter.”<sup>89</sup>

The suspension of all hierarchal precedence...All were considered equal during carnival...such free familiar contacts were deeply felt and formed an essential element of the carnival spirit. People

---

<sup>88</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 148.

<sup>89</sup> Kurtuluş, Gül. *The Carnavalesque in Ben Jonson's Three City Comedies: Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartolomew Fair*. diss., Bilkent University, Ankara, 1997, 3.

were...reborn for new, purely human relations...The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience.<sup>90</sup>

Carnival laughter and its humor “degrades” the high and disembodied only to reconnect it with the sources of life: “to degrade an object [is] to hurl it down to reproductive stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place.”<sup>91</sup> “Carnival is the healthy assertion of the rights of the body, the material principle, at the expense of the spirit.”<sup>92</sup> Carnival embodied the temporary rebellion not only of the lower classes, but also of the lower faculties, of instinct against reason, of flesh against spirit.<sup>93</sup> The power of carnival to turn things upside down is facilitated by bringing about a reversal of the officially sanctioned precedent, the paradigmatic patterns of thought and codes of behavior of the people who are the representatives of the dominant ideology, expressed through official and popular culture.<sup>94</sup>

However, Bakhtin explains any engagement with folk culture (turning to the language and images of folk culture) not as a simple positioning of oneself outside official culture in order to observe and understand it better, but as something more dynamic and ultimately more combative. One escaped from the

---

<sup>90</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 21.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>93</sup> Lindley, Arthur. *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnavalesque Subversion*. London: Associated Uni. Press, 1996, 18.

control of the official culture, one can strive towards the undoing of the official culture's influence on people and the undermining and shattering of that very culture itself. <sup>95</sup>One can argue, rave is also an 'alternative' a social space like carnival which brings 'high culture and 'low culture' together. To what extent rave culture breaks the social borders and the individual differences (chap. 4.2.) whereas carnival breaks the boundaries between classes? For Lindley, the 'power of regeneration' in true carnival has been lost to us, the 'utopian character' of carnival looks back to "a lost original and forward to a future that has not happened."<sup>96</sup> And now we are seeking what has been lost to us, in the so-called rave culture. In the light of the above remarks about the carnival, I will be interested in five main features of it through the survey of rave and raving:

1. That carnival time (as a second life) is the opposite of terror and purges<sup>97</sup> as 'the true feast of time', the feast of becoming, change and renewal. This renewal does not occur "in the life time of an individual carnival subject, but within the body of the people as a whole: birth is implicit within death" and the idea of communal (rather than collective) is

---

<sup>94</sup> Kurtuluş, Gül. *The Carnivalesque in Ben Johnson's Three City Comedies: Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartolomew Fair*. diss., Bilkent University, Ankara, 1997, 138.

<sup>95</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10.

<sup>96</sup> Lindley, Arthur. *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnivalesque Subversion*. London: Associated Uni. Press, 1996, 19.

<sup>97</sup> Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press: NY, 1997, 153.

emphasized. “The death of an individual is only a moment in the celebrating life of the folk and humankind.”<sup>98</sup>

2. That carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators—as its participants do not watch but live in it—with its suspension of ‘hierarchal structure and all forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it.’<sup>99</sup>

3. That carnival allows ‘free and familiar contact between people’ who would usually be separated hierarchically, and allows for ‘mass action.’

4. That carnival allows for unusual combinations: ‘the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid’.

5. That carnival profanation consists of ‘a whole system of carnivalistic debasings and bringing down to earth’, to the level of the body, which is carnival laughter, particularly in the case of parodies of sacred texts.

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>99</sup> Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press: NY, 1997, 152.

### 3. 2 Un-official Time

Medieval people's lives had to become two-faced, leading two lives: one was the official life, subjugated to strict hierarchal order, dogmatism in the tone of seriousness characteristic of official culture, the other was the life of carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of laughter, familiar contact with everyone and everything. There were two worlds; both were legitimate, but separated by strict temporal boundaries.

Carnival played a prominent role in the Middle Ages for the ordinary man who 'inhabited a dual realm of existence.'<sup>100</sup> One is official existence, characterized by the authority of the church, the feudal system, work, and the other is unofficial, characterized by reversal, parody, song, and laughter. For Bakhtin the un-official:

carnival [...] is an attitude toward the world which liberates from fear, brings the world close down to man and man close to his fellow man (all is drawn into the zone of liberated familiar contact), and with its joy of change and its jolly relativity, counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change, and seeks to absolutize the given conditions of existence and the social order. The carnival attitude liberated man from precisely this sort of seriousness.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press: NY, 1997, 150.

<sup>101</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. Trans.R.W. Rotsel. Ann Arbor: Ardis,1973, 133.

Thus carnival represents people's 'second life', both as an escape from and critique of the static, oppressive hierarchy of class and economic relations embodied in what Bakhtin calls the 'official feast'<sup>102</sup>. Carnival is the festive embodiment of change and disorder: "it celebrated the temporary liberation from prevailing truth...Carnival was the true feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed"<sup>103</sup> The rituals of carnivals, which existed in all over in Europe, offered a form of life that was non-official, outside the feudal, political forms. The 'immovable and extratemporal stability of the medieval hierarchy' which had 'eliminated' laughter from 'official cult and ideology', was faced with its other, 'the popular, humorous part of the feast'<sup>104</sup>, and the second festive life of medieval people.<sup>105</sup>

Unlike the official feast in which the link with time has become formal, and change and moments of crisis are relegated to the past, popular festive forms harries the 'timeliness' of past events in order to project a utopian time. This *utopian* carnival time is opposite to the 'official' time that presents 'linear and hierarchical teleology of events' whereas carnival time is aware of 'timeliness'

---

<sup>102</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

and crisis in the version of history which it presents.’<sup>106</sup> While the official feast looks the past as a reconfirmation, its hierarchy, the return of the popular feast to the past presages a moment of renewal.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.3 The Grotesque Body

Bakhtin’s notion of carnival includes literary genre of ‘grotesque realism, which centers on the grotesque body.’<sup>108</sup> In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin develops his view of “grotesque body” and “the material bodily lower stratum.” For Sue Vice, grotesque realism as a literary genre includes parody and any other discourse ‘bring down to earth’ anything ineffable or authoritarian.<sup>109</sup> It is the degradation of all ‘high’ to ‘low’ that is the bodily lower stratum which includes drinking, copulation, swallowing up by another body and laughter. Bakhtin puts :

The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Willis, Clair. ‘Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women’s Texts.’ *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Manchester UP: Manchester, 1989, 133.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>108</sup> Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press: NY, 1997, 149.

<sup>109</sup> Hirschkop, Ken and David Shepherd. Ed. *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Manchester Uni. Press: NY, 1989, 166.

<sup>110</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 19, 20.

Bringing down to earth that is degradation is achieved through laughter. 'The people's laughter which characterized all the forms of grotesque realism from immemorial times was linked with the bodily lower stratum. Laughter degrades and materializes'<sup>111</sup>. This degradation and materialization can only be experienced at the level of the human body:

To degrade also means to concern oneself with lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth.<sup>112</sup>

Bakhtin then defines the grotesque body as a "body in the act of becoming", a body of parts, an hyperbolic body, a body whose orifices allow a constant flux between inside and outside, a body in which the blurring of the edges allow bodily stuff to come out, and world stuff to come in, a body made of its "lower" functions, defecation/reproduction. As he states that the grotesque body is:

---

<sup>111</sup>Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 20.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 24.

...a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body.<sup>113</sup>

Bakhtin stresses the free interplay between the body and the world. The separation of self from self and self from world is in the Rabelaisian bodily context for Robert Stam. Stam says that for Bakhtin, the body is a festival of becoming. A plurality, not a closed system. Bakhtin for him is fascinated by ‘the body that outgrows itself, that reaches beyond its own limits and conceives new bodies.’<sup>114</sup>

What connects the grotesque body to the other bodies and the outer world are for Rabelias, Bakhtin argues, the key elements of the body. These are points at which the body outgrows itself and transgress its own limits, those places where “the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome,” where “there is an interchange and an interorientation”:

Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body—all at these acts are performed on the confines of the body and outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup>Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 317.

<sup>114</sup> Stam, Robert. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. The John Hopkins University Press: London, 1989, 157.

<sup>115</sup> Stam, Robert. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. The John Hopkins University Press: London, 1989, 157.

Grotesque body is opposite to the classical body which is ‘monumental, static, closed, and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism’ whereas the grotesque body is ‘the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change’ and it is connected to the world.<sup>116</sup> The grotesque body flows. All manner of bodily fluids, blood, sweat, sperm, pus, urine and feces are its flowing vectors. A perpetually becoming, perpetually opened body. This is the difference between the classical body which is always represented devoid of visible orifices, and the grotesque body, in which the emphasis is instead on the messy multiplicity of orificial openings, each of them a point of contact between the body and the world, and by which the world penetrates the body and the body opens up and penetrates the world.

What are the similarities between the ‘raving’ body and the carnival body? Dancing body is not in the context of classical body yet it is not monumental, it outgrows itself because it moves. Then can it be suggested that raving body (as a dancing body) is closer to the notion of the grotesque body as a becoming body— if it is said to be dancing is a kind of becoming that body changes movements and gains new expressions yet ‘creates another body’ through the laughter of Ecstasy? Ecstatic trance dancing body seems to be in terms of grotesque that Ecstasy works

---

<sup>116</sup> Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*. Routledge: NY, 1995, 63.

as a laughter that degrades ‘high’ to ‘low’, reason to sensations, and abstract things like class distinctions, hierarchal orders to bodily material level as dancing.

Sue Vice suggests that for Bakhtin the ‘bodily element’ of carnival and grotesque realism concerns bodies in general not ‘bodies as distinguished by gender.’ Some critics see carnival as transcending the usual gender stereotypes. Within rave close to the notion of carnival, it is the erosion of gender that is discussed in section 3.2. Classic aesthetics are associated with “the ready-made...the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development”<sup>117</sup> material principle of class society. .24 Like the grotesque body, dancing body is a body in process, a body under reconstruction.

Mutable body, “passing of one form to another”, reflecting the “ever-incompleted character of being”<sup>118</sup> The body’s central principle for Stam is “growth and change; by exceeding its limits, the body expresses its essence.” As Stam puts:

As a shifting series of vortexes of energy, the site of unanchored polysemy and radical differentiability, the grotesque body is given to excess, and thus to the gigantism and hyperbole of its artistic forms—its outsized noses and swollen buttocks, and the masks that emphasize metamorphosis and “violation of natural boundaries.”<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 25.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 40 and Stam, Robert. ‘Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique.’ *Postmodernism And Its Discontentents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1988, 159.

Finally, grotesque body of carnival festivity was not distanced or objectified in relation to an audience. Audiences and performers were the interchangeable parts of an incomplete but imaginable wholeness. The grotesque body was exuberantly and democratically open and inclusive of all possibilities.<sup>120</sup> Within the confines of spectacle, the freak appears only as a particular image which may appear, reproduce, or simulate the earlier carnivalesque body described and idealized by Bakhtin, but also and more importantly as a bodily construct produced within different social relations for example in the context of rave.

---

<sup>120</sup> Meskimmon, Marsha. 'The Monstrous and the Grotesque: On the Politics of Excess in Women's Self Portraiture' *Make: the Magazine of Women's Art* (1996): 10.

#### 4. RAVE AS CARNIVAL

Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque will be a highly significant piece of conceptual apparatus in discussing the socio-cultural and political content of the rave scene. Whilst, rave culture involves subversive elements and resistance to dominant hierarchies and prohibitions, at least in the space of the party, it involves carnivalesque features. As Gül Kurtuluş states that when there is a social resistance in a period, this resistance involves carnivalesque features. She says that:

When there is a social satire or a protest against the political and economic malaises of a period, one can talk about the existence of the carnivalesque: at least the usage of one or two features of it.<sup>121</sup>

Is rave an instrument of political opposing, criticism of the state and religious authorities? Or is it “rituals of rebellion”<sup>122</sup> or “ a savage form of class struggle” which “enables the underprivileged class to make revolution without really performing it”<sup>123</sup>? Industrialized rave parties are to permit people to rave or to “revolt” so they can continue their consented place in social hierarchy the other day?

---

<sup>121</sup> Kurtuluş, Gül. *The Carnivalesque in Ben Johnson's Three City Comedies: Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartolomew Fair*. diss., Bilkent University, Ankara, 1997, 3.

<sup>122</sup> Gluckman, Max. *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*. Manchester University Press: 1954, 13.

Or can we suggest that raves are places where social constructions are destroyed and reconstructed as the carnival is a renewal and a symbol of upside down the social hierarchies?

In this chapter contemporary raves will be analyzed in terms of the Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival, its non-official forms and grotesque body. Rave is put as a second life of urban youth which social boundaries like individual and sexual differences are broke down to a certain extent. Here is discussed that rave has developed a new look, a new gaze that everyone as a participant is actor and performer simultaneously with regard to the stardom of the DJ. It will be argued here that the dancing body on ecstasy has grotesque features within the question of how ecstatic dancing body promotes a "psychic activity" in the subjects beyond the social roles which ease to erosion of individual differences.

In the light of the notion of the carnivalesque advanced by Bakhtin, what are the similarities between rave scene and the carnival square that Bakhtin conceptualizes as "defending the people's creativity in non-official forms"<sup>124</sup> ? Rave parties as un-official live scenes for people will be analyzed in mainly three aspects:

Firstly, two-life condition is official and non-official. That is discussing the rave as a second life of urban youth as carnival is to be for medieval people.

---

<sup>123</sup> Weidkuhn, Peter. 'Carnival in Basle: playing history in reverse.' *Cultures* 3 (1976): 29-53.

There is a link between rave and carnival that are both ‘space of sacred’ and ‘time in parenthesis’ like a symbolic sphere of utopian freedom to a certain extent.

Secondly, the aspect of communality vs. individuality is argued. Individual ego erodes and equality between bodies forms a communal body in Bakhtin’s carnival. Everyone participates that there is no hierarchal order between the participants besides no one is an actor or spectacle to be seen. In the context of rave, it is discussed that class hierarchy and sexual repression is eroded in the space of the party to certain extents. Finally, grotesque body with regard to ecstatic trance dancing is searched.

#### **4.1. Second Life: Escape from Authority?**

The popular festivity in the medieval time was “a brief entry into a symbolic sphere of utopian freedom”. It is like a place for ‘exaggeration within reality.’<sup>125</sup> Because ‘official culture is founded on the principle of an immovable and unchanging hierarchy in which the higher and the lower never merge,’ festive perception of the world as ‘eternally unfinished’ can only be expressed in unofficial culture.<sup>126</sup> To redefine rave as a festive perception of the world in terms

---

<sup>125</sup> Bakhtin, M. *Rabelais and His World*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984, 306.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

of a second life beyond the authorities is valid here from those points of Bakhtin's carnival.

Is rave scene an escape from authority, does it accommodate an utopian sphere like Bakhtinian carnival? Its relation with the authorities like the state and its political and apolitical features are generally outlined below.

Bakhtin attempts to present the carnival as autonomous, rather than as an event at least partially sanctioned by medieval church and state. The medieval carnival was restricted both temporally and spatially. The situation is the same for contemporary dance culture; the dance floor carnival is bound by licensing laws which attempt to prevent events occurring outside licensed premises or outside licensed hours. Rave Culture *is* partially sanctioned by the state, but, like the medieval people and their carnival, does it attempt to create "a completely different, nonofficial, extra ecclesiastical and extra political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations... a second world and a second life outside officialdom."<sup>127</sup> "The solution Bakhtin arrived at –make official seriousness and festive laughter not competing principles within social world, but two worlds, in which mediaeval humanity could dwell simultaneously<sup>128</sup>."

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>128</sup> Hirschkop, Ken. *Mikhail Bakhtin.: An Aesthetic For Democracy*. Oxford UP: MA, 1999, 275.

All of these ritual-spectacular forms, organized on the principle of *laughter*, were distinguished extraordinarily sharply—one could say, in principle—from *serious* official (ecclesiastical and feudal state) cultic forms and ceremonies. They provided a completely different, emphatically unofficial, extra-ecclesiastical and extra-state aspect of the world, of the person, and of human relations; it is as if they constructed a *second world* and a *second life* beyond everything official, in which all medieval people participated to greater or lesser degree, in which they *lived* for definite periods. This is a special kind of double-worldness, without taking account of which neither the cultural consciousness of the Middle Ages, nor the culture of the Renaissance can be correctly understood.<sup>129</sup>

In the case of rave, it is said to be an alternative and second life of people today in respect to rave expresses a consciously set up audio-visual space spatially and temporarily apart from officialdom also as a leisure time. As ‘unofficial popular culture in the Middle Ages had its own special territory, the public square, and its own special time, feast and fair days,’<sup>130</sup> rave parties have its own special time and public square like carnival.

Carnival is outside the official life of the hierarchy, official norms and prohibitions. So that carnival in Bakhtin terms was defined as a sphere at least on a symbolic plane, for Robert Stam, where social roles are redistributed according to the logic of ‘world upside down’<sup>131</sup> and it is for Arthur Lindley conceptualizes the carnival ‘an alternative afterlife’. He puts:

---

<sup>129</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 10/5-6.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 170, 154.

The great drive Bakhtin sees in carnival is [...]toward transcendence. [...] We are dead but in carnival we may be transformed and live...To call carnival the people's 'second life' is, of course, to offer it as an alternative afterlife.<sup>132</sup>

Raves occurs in time when “the rest of the population sleeps”. It lasts all night, from dusk till dawn, sometimes whole weekend. It happens beyond the official time, if official time is in common sense when the members of the society are at work in a hierarchical social construction. It can be said that carnival yet rave project a utopian time in that respect. Within rave this secondary, utopian time starts when the music begins and stops when it lasts. Everything happens within the territorial space of the music. Rave *constructs* an experience rather telling it as a narrative. The emphasis is not “what the music ‘means’ but how it works’. The listener is hurled into a state with chemical enhancers, time perception is warped, ‘now lasts longer’<sup>133</sup>. Then it is not a ‘official’ time, ‘lost in music, out of time’<sup>134</sup>. It is for Bakhtin that carnivalesque time looks both to the past and the future and carnivalesque time is aware of ‘timeliness’.

---

<sup>131</sup> Stam, Robert. ‘Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique.’ *Postmodernism And Its Discontentents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1988, 134.

<sup>132</sup> Lindley, Arthur. *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnavalesque Subversion*. London: Associated Uni. Press, 1996, 19.

<sup>133</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 46?

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

In opposition to ‘official’ time, which presents a linear and hierarchical teleology of events, carnivalesque time is aware of ‘timeliness’ and crisis in the version of history which it presents.<sup>135</sup>

The listener is hurled into a state with chemical enhancers, time perception is warped, ‘now lasts longer’<sup>136</sup>. Then it is not a ‘official’ time, ‘lost in music, out of time’<sup>137</sup> It is for Bakhtin that carnivalesque time looks both to the past and the future and carnivalesque time is aware of ‘timeliness’.

In opposition to ‘official’ time, which presents a linear and hierarchical teleology of events, carnivalesque time is aware of ‘timeliness’ and crisis in the version of history which it presents.<sup>138</sup>

DJ samples various past and present styles of music. As Reynolds suggests sampladelia layer various musical fragments which have different “auras”. That means a DJ can play musical fragments from very different eras and genres by a collage in general sense. Every musical fragment creates different acoustic spaces and getting in and out from an acoustic space to another is a kind of time travel for Reynolds, travel in the history. This time travel is what disorients the subject

---

<sup>135</sup> Willis, Clair. “Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women’s Texts,” *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Manchester UP: Manchester, 1989, 135.

<sup>136</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 46.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>138</sup> Willis, Clair. “Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women’s Texts,” *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Manchester UP: Manchester, 1989, 135.

in sampladelic music for Reynolds. Then this time travel give birth to a renewal in the subject as for Clair Willis, the return of the popular feast to the past presages a moment of renewal.<sup>139</sup> These renewals are described in terms of erosion of differences and hierarchy within rave discussed in the following parts.

Within this secondary space, participants are free from their responsibilities of everyday life. Here one can fantasize about true love and freedom from responsibility. They may separate themselves from the world economy, create a mythology and statement. Become 'temporarily euphoric'. In the social dance floor individuals also find partners for Hanna. 191. Rave involves a social dancing. 'escape into a world of heightened sensuality in which the quadian life is banished, complex life is simplified. In the context of the club, which Malbon portrays in extraordinary detail, 'the everyday is disrupted, the mundane is forgotten and the ecstatic becomes possible'<sup>140</sup>

For Stam, Bakhtin's carnival promotes "a critical relation to official discourses, whether political, literary or ecclesiastical."<sup>141</sup> How about rave? If it is said that resisting legal authorities is a critical relation to official discourses, rave culture is critical because of it illegality in that its dependence on contraband chemicals. The clauses in Britain's Criminal Justice Act that prohibit raves locate

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>140</sup> Malbon, Ben. *Clubbing-Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality*. Routledge, London, 1999, 164.

them in the context of public protests and demonstrations. As Collin notes, ‘never before, over years of moral panics . . . had a government considered young people’s music so subversive as to prohibit it’<sup>142</sup> Besides, are they a threat to the State, if they have become a visible member, counted at the club doors?

If there is something political about rave culture, it seems there are two sides about that politics issue. One view says that raves have no more political activism and subversion, they are popular events. The other side says that it is not apolitical because it is a threat to the state that the measures taken against rave by the states explain that rave culture is not apolitical in fact rather a socio-political force, for Stuart Borthwick. He says that:

The harsh measures taken against Rave culture are testament to the fact that Rave culture was, and continues to be a socio-political force and a threat to the State and its history, politics, norms of society. The Criminal Justice Act in the UK, the Crack House Law in the US, Vancouver’s Anti-Entertainment By-Law have had the effect of institutionalizing raves into the format of the club, where drugs, people, profits, and desires can easily be controlled.<sup>143</sup>

Although both rave and carnival present symbolic utopian spheres, they were temporarily and officially restricted. “Ways were sought to control raves,

---

<sup>141</sup> Stam, Robert. ‘Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique.’ *Postmodernism And Its Discontentents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1988, 134.

<sup>142</sup> Collin, M. with Godfrey, J. *Altered State: the Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*. Serpent’s Tail: London, 1998, 223.

<sup>143</sup> Borthwick, Stuart. *Dance, Culture, Television: An Analysis of the Politics of Contemporary Dance Culture and Its Televisual Representation*. diss. Liverpool John Moores University, 1998, discussing in chapter 1. Available <<http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/mccsbort/thesis.html>>

organized unofficially and outside the ambit of the law. [...] A new Licensing Act (1988) in UK increased police powers to withdraw licenses and the frequency of licensing sessions but did not affect illegal raves.”<sup>144</sup> Commercial or illegal raves are under the restriction of the state today. The measures proposed were wide-sweeping:

Section 47 of the Act made it an offence to make preparations to hold, wait for or attend a rave; Section 45 gave the police powers to arrest, without a warrant, trespassers failing to leave the site of a rave after being asked to do so by a police officer; Section 49 gave the police powers to control traffic within a five mile radius of a rave, including the authority to stop vehicles at a roadblock.<sup>145</sup>

Although, there is a partial authorization by the state, contemporary dance culture is antithetical to authority for Stuart Borthwick:

*There is a struggle between dance culture and agents of the state; if there were not, it would not be a criminal offence to organize, or attend, unlicensed dance events.*<sup>146</sup>

On the other hand, according to Hutson, there is almost no political activism in the rave scene. Ravers do little more than attend parties in out-of-the-way places<sup>147</sup>. Raves do have a doctrine, codified as "Peace, Love, Unity, Respect" (PLUR)

---

<sup>144</sup> Critcher, Chas. "Still raving: social reaction to Ecstasy." *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000): 149.

<sup>145</sup> Henderson, Sheila. *Ecstasy: Case Unsolved*. Pandora Books: NY, 1997, 10.

<sup>146</sup> Borthwick discusses in chapter 4. See footnote 143 above.

which is reinforced by exemplary behavior at raves and testimonial witnessing on the Internet. Hutson puts that visions of rave as future unity and global communities remain visions.

However, ‘everything happens within the space of the party’ as McRobbie puts:

Where other youth subcultures have focused on street appearances, or have chosen live rock performances for providing the emblematic opportunity for the display of style, in rave everything happens within the space of the party.<sup>148</sup>

Can it be suggested that rave does not effect the social transformations in everyday life so that it is apolitical? Reynolds asks if rave ‘transform ordinary life?’ Is rave simply about dissipation of utopian energies into the void, or does the idealism it catalyzes spill over into and transform ordinary life? Clubbing inverts but does not threaten everyday experience for Malbon.<sup>149</sup> When ravers say that “We can only improve the society if we improve ourselves first,”<sup>150</sup> or that “consciousness unfolds and expands itself slowly from the individual to a group

---

<sup>147</sup> Hutson, Scott R. *The Rave: Spiritual Healing In Modern Western Subcultures*. Anthropological Quarterly (2000): 35.

<sup>148</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 169.

<sup>149</sup> Malbon, Ben. *Clubbing-Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality*. Routledge, London, 1999, 164.

<sup>150</sup> Salami and Komotion International, *Why you are here*, 12 December 1995 <<http://www.cloudfactory.org>>

awareness."<sup>151</sup> Although rave seems a communal activity within the party, raver is not a raver anymore in his/her everyday life. But Internet serves as individual expressions can be made and shared.<sup>152</sup> As Greg Sullivan in his article called 'Raving on the Internet', he stresses the 'communality' within 'a large rave subculture' and says that the Internet's:

...most predominant rave sites have grown out of the tight-knit communities within cities possessing a large rave subculture. These sites, which provide an important voice for individual ravers, often include discussion groups, party reviews that allow members to decide which rave promoters to avoid, and a strong sense of community.

It may be said that Internet likely to be a political sphere for the ravers individually where they can develop and share their ideas and experiences about PLUR<sup>153</sup> and rave community, recreational drugs, dancing, musical taste, DJs and more.

Bakhtin's description of the carnival is of an event subject only to "the laws of its own freedom"<sup>154</sup>. It seems to be an overstatement if used in our

---

<sup>151</sup> *Goa trance*, 16 May 1993 <<http://www.hyperreal.org/raves/spirit/technoshamanism>>

<sup>152</sup> Sullivan gives some sites' addresses about rave and raving as follows: the dominant site in Ottawa, Techno XVI ([www.techno.com](http://www.techno.com)); Alberta's Ravesafe group ([www.freezingman.com/ravesafe/](http://www.freezingman.com/ravesafe/)); International harm-reduction sites, ([www.dancesafe.org](http://www.dancesafe.org)) and ([www.ravesafe.org/home.htm](http://www.ravesafe.org/home.htm)); An extensive and useful list of harm-reduction links ([www.ravesafe.org/linx-harmreduction.htm](http://www.ravesafe.org/linx-harmreduction.htm)).

<sup>153</sup> An acronym of rave culture; Peace, Love, Unity, Respect.

<sup>154</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968.

analysis of rave. Dance events are obliged to abide by licensing laws and public performance laws.

#### **4.2. Communalities vs. Individuality**

Sociality within rave culture, the sense of being with and part of others in a ‘crowd’, is expressed through performativity, according to Critcher,. As we are inhabiting the world by way of the body for Hwa Yol Jung, we have access to ‘the performative magic of the social’<sup>155</sup>This performativity within rave is the expressive use of the body to act out learned practices for Chas Critcher. This play or dance is not merely pleasure or recreation for him; it confirms identity through identifications with the crowd and expresses vitality:

The vitality expressed through dancing during clubbing is largely emotional in constitution, arises partly through the flux between the self and the dancing crowd and prioritizes atmosphere, the affectual, proximity and tactility, and the here and now.<sup>156</sup>

Critcher says that it is both ‘a celebration of the energy and euphoria that can be generated through being together playing together and experiencing “others” together’ and ‘an escape attempt, a temporary relief from other facets and

---

<sup>155</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1990, 57.

<sup>156</sup> Malbon, Ben. *Clubbing-Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality*. Routledge, London, 1999, 146.

identities of an individual clubber's own life.<sup>157</sup> Rave and carnival share certain characteristics as “the carnivalesque in brief a celebration of dialogue and community; it liberates people and brings them together and induces them to participate in communal living.”<sup>158</sup>

Rave like events do provide a sense of community, even it is for the duration of the party for Hillegonda Rietveld. The notion of collectivity that is “forming of a tight group that is obedient to its own internal logic, rather than to the state”<sup>159</sup> is relevant in the context of the rave scene. For those who feel dislocated in a political sense, intense dance parties can provide a strong sense of community, comparable to Caribbean sound systems, hip hop gatherings, gospel congregations or gay clubs according to Rietveld. In Bakhtin's analysis of the carnival, the individual's body is downgraded. The supra-individual nature of the communal body alleviates the necessity for communication between subjectivities; ‘individuals’, previously autonomous, are subsumed within the carnival body.

---

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>158</sup> Jung, Hwa Yol. ‘Bakhtin's Dialogical Body Politics.’ *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*. Ed. Michael Mayerfeld Bell and Michael Gardiner. Sage Publications: London, 1998, 105.

<sup>159</sup> Hillegonda Rietveld. Repetitive Beats: free parties and the politics of contemporary DiY dance culture in Britain, 258.

The carnival body or what Bakhtin calls the body of “grotesque realism” loses its individual definition and is collectivized at a transindividual level:

In grotesque realism... the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people...[T]his is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. The material body principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people who are constantly growing and renewed.<sup>160</sup>

Also, in contemporary dance culture participants "lose subjective belief in their self and merge into a collective body"<sup>161</sup>. Catherine Miriam describes this state of being as ‘ideal state’ where you are not centered on yourself. You define yourself not with only one self or identity rather ‘bigger’ that is whole crowd of people. An interviewee articulates this theme in terms of involved in a ‘team’.

On the one hand contemporary dance culture concentrates on the body, and the breaks down the barriers *between* bodies, mocks capitalist individualism and the reified individual. Ann Jefferson points out that:

the self (subject) experiences himself and the world quite differently from the way in which he is experienced and perceived

---

<sup>160</sup>Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 19.

<sup>161</sup> Jordan, Tim. 'Collective Bodies: Raving and the Politics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari' *Body and Society* (1995): 125.

by others, and this difference is centered on the body. The subject's position in the world is determined by his body, and it is from its vantage point that his gaze embraces a world which sees as if from a frontier.<sup>162</sup>

Philip Tagg has stated about the early raves and questioning rave as an end of individualism:

Rave is something you immerse yourself into together with other people...you just 'shake your bum off' from inside the music. You are just one of many individuals who constitute the music as a whole...Does this prefigure a new form of collective consciousness or does it mean the end of oppositionality and individualism?<sup>163</sup>

In the context of carnival , individual-ego within the limits of home is partially characterized in the opposite of the non-official popular culture, according to Ken Hirschkop. Whereas, 'an official culture renders the bodily functions private'<sup>164</sup> and 'determines the meaning of physical pains and pleasures, is not the expression of an individual *enjoyment* and 'the satiation of an individual-egoistic person', carnival is 'the *celebration* of the people as a whole.'<sup>165</sup> Within the context of rave, similar to carnival's, the self is no longer

---

<sup>162</sup> Jefferson, Ann. 'Body matters: Self and Other in Bakhtin, Sartre and Barthes' *Bakhtin and cultural theory*. Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1989, 154.

<sup>163</sup> Philip Tagg, 'From refrain to rave: the decline of figure and the rise of ground', *Popular Music* 13 (1994): 219.

<sup>164</sup> Hirschkop, Ken. *Mikhail Bakhtin.: An Aesthetic For Democracy*. Oxford UP: MA, 1999, 282.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

individual or bounded; rather involvement and pleasure are experienced in terms of connections between self and others, and between mind, body and machine according to Maria Pini.

How this communality or the feeling of unity emerges? It is generally performed by erosion of individual differences for Pini and Wright. But how this erosion emerges? The effects of ecstasy, its laughter and positivity may be an answer. Wright asks if ecstasy could allow us to forget individual differences and her answer is positive. She says it makes users feel ease of "self expression, more caring towards other people, greater happiness and increased spiritual awareness whereas there are people who lives negative experiences, to be paranoid or depressed. It seems to Wright that ecstasy enables a personal revolution that radically alters 'interpersonal relationship since the 1960s'.

Carnival celebrates a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order", and marks "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions."<sup>166</sup> However, this statement acknowledges the carnival's resistance to dominant and 'high' values; the dance floor carnival is therefore about defining itself in rejection to dominant and serious culture as a popular (folk) culture?

---

<sup>166</sup> Bakhtin, M. Rabelais and His World, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984, 10

The participants of rave/dance culture have created their own alternative social organization, and whilst on the dance floor have also created their own alternative subjectivities. McRobbie describes the changes in subjectivity within contemporary dance culture;

the atmosphere is one of unity, of dissolving difference in the peace and harmony haze of the drug Ecstasy... The irony of this present social moment is that working-class boys lose their 'aggro' and become 'new men' not through the critique of masculinity which accompanies... changing modes of femininity..., but through the use of Ecstasy they undergo a conversion to the soft, the malleable, and the sociable rather than the antisocial, and through the most addictive pleasures of dance they also enter into a different relationship with their own bodies, more tactile, more sensuous, less focused around sexual gratification... Rave favors groups and friends rather than couples or those in search of a partner.<sup>167</sup>

Then for her, the rave experience is bound up with self-techniques. This happens within "absorption of the self into the dancing crowd"<sup>168</sup>. Being in this 'text' that does not become naturally, you have to 'work for' it as many lyrics and DJs will tell the ravers. This is a kind of 'ethics of pleasure' for Pini that is to be have to work for your own pleasure and this is:

... a theme of 'positivity', which is simultaneously a 'policing' of negativity. This 'ethics of pleasure' is highlighted in a number of interviewee accounts which stress the importance of the right

---

<sup>167</sup> McRobbie, Angela. 'Shut Up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity.' *Cultural Studies* (1994): 419.

<sup>168</sup> Pini, Maria. "Women and the Early British Rave Scene". *Back to Reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester UP: New York, 1997, 162

attitude, which includes avoiding the power of ‘negative vibes’ to ‘bring you down’( and which seems, at times, to mean refusing to acknowledge ‘difference’ or tensions). In many ways Jazzie B’s lyric, ‘Enrich your positivity-no time for negativity’, sums up this aspect of early scene.<sup>169</sup>

Maria Pini says that this ‘positivity’ aspect has a close relation with breaking down the boundaries. With “the understanding of self within rave”, participants stresses the absentee of the separation of themselves and others. It is in other words, the external and interpersonal boundaries between selves are challenged.

As Pini suggests within rave individual identity is largely being eroded.

As one raver says that:

What I was attracted to raves for was that I could be whoever I wanted, there was no bullshit or false pretenses. I think that’s what raves really allow people to do, to get past the socialization and let them to be whoever they want. (Psychedelic PhD, Toronto, age 25, Male, raving for 6 years)<sup>170</sup>

Do raves really where different kinds of people meet each other like the wholeness of people in ‘carnival’; black and white, gay and straight, the serious and the ridiculous, rulers and the ruled? Social barriers were broke down in the dance scene for Marry Anna Wright. There is a unity of black or white, female or

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>170</sup> McCall, Tara. *This is not a Rave: in the Shadow of a Subculture*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2001, 126.

male, gay or straight, rich or poor.” The breaking down the boundaries is not only breaking down the social differences but also individual boundaries.

It is “rave’s non-oppositionality, its accessibility to everyone and its potential to break down social boundaries.”<sup>171</sup> She gives statements from some interviewees clearly illustrate this text for her:

Rave attracts all sorts of people: black and white, women and men-from all classes. (Ann) Rave tended to bring everyone together. (Helen)<sup>172</sup>

One raver tells how rave is a safe and real place for every kind of people:

Raves are a place where any human being can go and feel totally comfortable. They know they will be accepted no matter age, race, religion, sex or any other minor detail that so many get criticized for everyday. To all happy ravers out there, keep the scene safe and real. (Nahtanha Borland, Seneca, age 19, Female, raving for 2 years)<sup>173</sup>

Subsumed within the communal body, the invisible ‘individual’ has no gaze, gendered or otherwise. Bakhtin tells not the individual soul but the body of the people can form a new world view.

---

<sup>171</sup> Pini, Maria. “Women and the Early British Rave Scene”. *Back to Reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester UP: New York, 1997, 161.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>173</sup> McCall, Tara. *This is not a Rave: in the Shadow of a Subculture*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2001, 126.

The material-bodily principle, earth and real time become the relative center of new picture of the world. Not the ascent of the individual soul along an extra-temporal vertical into the higher spheres, but the forward movement of all humanity along the horizontal of historical time “becomes the fundamental criterion of all evaluations. The individual soul, having finished his business, grows old and dies together with the individual body, but the body of the people and of humanity, fertilized by those who have died, is eternally renewed and goes steadily forward along the path of historical perfection.”<sup>174</sup>

#### 4.2.1. Erosion of Sexual Differences

An example to erosion of sexual differences within rave is its symbolization of gender. Male domination and aggression is conspicuous by its absence. Young women, always keen adherents of dance, and in clubbing an environment where they can express their sexuality without putting themselves at risk from unwanted male attention.<sup>175</sup> This produces the spectacle of ‘rave girls in hot pants and bra tops, dancing with a “dummy” in their mouths and a whistle round their necks’, a considerable innovation in ‘the visual repertoire of stylish femininity’<sup>176</sup>

However, rave is “a male sites of experience’ that is men involved in cultural production of rave, Pini says that although women tend not to be located

---

<sup>174</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 447, 403-4.

<sup>175</sup> Critcher, Chas. “Still raving: social reaction to Ecstasy.” *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000) 145–162.

<sup>176</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 169.

at the levels of musical reproduction, event organization, drug distribution and profit making, she argues the positive side of rave within the feminist context. However, feminist discourse deals with pleasure, for Pini, physical and mental enjoyment is central within rave.

An example is its symbolization of gender. Male domination and aggression is conspicuous by its absence. Young women, always keen adherents of dance, and in clubbing an environment where they can express their sexuality without putting themselves at risk from unwanted male attention.<sup>177</sup>

Maria Pini stresses upon the perceived erosion of sexual differences. The 'unisex' clothes and 'dress-to-sweat' emphasis of the scene are important factors for her. "Although this perceived erosion of social differences is related to the empathetic effects of 'E', many enjoy 'raving' without this."

Within contemporary dance culture for Angela McRobbie, there is an attempt to ignore gender. For her, in the dance floor, styles of dance and physical interaction are, to a certain extent, beyond gender. It is a difference of rave culture than other youth cultures that in previous social relations of youth culture, dancing was "inextricably linked to femininity", and seen by men as "an unfortunate

---

<sup>177</sup> Critcher, Chas. "Still raving: social reaction to Ecstasy." *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000): 159.

prerequisite to courtship"<sup>178</sup>. Within the rave scene, dancing is participated, everyone is dancing to the music which is “the reason for being together.”<sup>179</sup>

Within rave scene intimate physical contact can take place without respect to gender, and signs of affection are not necessarily sexually oriented. Pini also suggests that within rave, the unity of people in an ecstatic state causes a sexual-pick up and this pick-up changes feminine roles and gender stereotypes.

Mary Anna Wright agrees, suggesting that an albeit brief liberation from traditional gender relations is *the* enduring legacy of contemporary dance culture;

At one of the first dance nights I went to I fumed to myself as I felt the man behind me blowing on my shoulders. I tried to ignore him but he started rubbing ice over me. As I turned he started giggling and moved to do the same to a man standing near, who appreciated the efforts to cool him off... Such gender-free utopias may only be short lived, but the memories of the experience are longer lasting.<sup>180</sup>

This is not to say that previous dance cultures were *entirely* based around courtship, or that courtship is *entirely* absent from contemporary dance culture, merely that, within the latter, emphasis is placed upon musical appreciation, self-expression and communality. As McRobbie suggests, contemporary dance culture offers "a suspension of categories, there is not such a rigid demarcation along age,

---

<sup>178</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Gender and Generation*, MacMillan, Basingstoke, 1984, 143.

<sup>179</sup> Wright, Marry Anna. “The Great British Ecstasy Revolution”. *DiY Culture*. Ed. George McKay. Verso, NY, 1998, 236.

class, ethnic terms. Gender is blurred and sexual preference less homogeneously heterosexual<sup>181</sup>.

Subsumed within the collective body, the 'individual' gendered modes of looking, he or she is no longer defined as an observer but becomes part of the dance floor. A Bakhtinian analysis does not suggest that contemporary dance culture has successfully altered gender relationships, merely that, within the spatial and temporal limitations of the contemporary dance floor, there is an overriding tendency to subvert traditional relationships.

### **4.3. Participation versus Spectatorship**

Rave challenges the borders between the observer and the observed, audience and the performer, in other words actor and the spectator like Bakhtin's carnival that there is no distinction between actors and spectators because everyone is participant, both actor and spectator.

A shift away from sexual pick-up within a positive (ecstasy fuelled) community maintains a new 'gaze'. Pini argues that rave develops a space for the erosion of the individual differences and the objectification of the 'other' for her. She argues that this develops the new 'gaze', new modes of looking which is not

---

<sup>180</sup>Ibid. , 240.

<sup>181</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Gender and Generation*, MacMillan: Basingstoke, 1984, 146.

based on objectification or separation rather a sense of unity. Thus blurs the division between performer and audience.. As she says:

In this sense, the rave dance-floor breaks down the divide between audience and performer and provides the possibility of being both simultaneously.<sup>182</sup>

Everyone both observes and is observed simultaneously. As stressed by the interviewees:

You could look at everyone...women and men-they just looked so engrossed in their bodies and so into the music and almost unaware of anyone else...(Catherine)

...It is a showy-off thing ...because 'E'-type clubs are so much more about dancing. You watch other people dance and they watch you. (Helen)

It seems within rave, there is not a stage or floor to be observed or observe but a huge plane area to move altogether. 'Everyone on Ecstasy is dancing everywhere' as Wright says:

They were dancing on top of bars, dancing on top of tables, chairs, not just on the dancefloor, and absolutely everyone was dancing.<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> Pini, Maria. "Women and the Early British Rave Scene". *Back to Reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester UP: New York, 1997, 165.

<sup>183</sup> Wright, Mary Anna. 'The Great British Ecstasy Revolution'. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain* Ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 236.

This is because for Wright, “the gaze was taken from the dance floor” even there is not a floor anymore. ‘People did not observe they participated’ like carnival people. As Bakhtin puts carnival “is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everybody participates because of its very idea embraces all the people”.<sup>184</sup> Actually, it seems that carnival does not acknowledge any distinction between the performer and audience. Like carnival, rave-dance floor breaks down the division between audience and performer and “provides the possibility of being both simultaneously”<sup>185</sup> as Pini put.

When everyone becomes participant not object of observing, rave also develops a new look to femininity and dancing female body. As Redhead says that dancing female body in rave other than constructed in pop history gains a new look. This is not exhibitionist and connected to sexuality. Contemporary dance culture rejects this notion, with Steve Redhead describing:

a fracturing of the conventions which have commonly structured the body in dance in pop history. Instead of, as usual, the female body being subjected to the ever-present ‘look’, the dancers... turned in on themselves, imploding the meanings previously associated with exhibitionist dance. In Acid House, and connected scenes, dancing no longer solely represented the erotic display of the body.<sup>186</sup>

---

<sup>184</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 198.

<sup>185</sup> Pini, Maria. “Women and the Early British Rave Scene”. *Back to Reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester UP: New York, 1997, 165.

<sup>186</sup> Redhead, Steve. *The end-of-the-century party: youth and pop toward 2000*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1990, 6.

These forms of looking cut across gender difficulties for Pini because they are not tied to sexual objectification. The issue of gender within rave is discussed in 4.2.1 to a certain extent.

How about the Disc Jockey, is s/he a participant or an actor let's to say a spectacle to be seen? Does s/he have a distinct individuality? Bakhtin says that "Carnival does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators."<sup>187</sup> Doesn't that imply that there is a difference between the DJ and the audience other than the concept of carnival puts? The source of the music, music maker, DJ at the scene, the subject who makes all people dance may be seen as an actor rather than a participant. Spradley defines an actor as "someone who becomes the object of observation in a natural setting"<sup>188</sup>. There are two sides, the music maker and the audience. It is possible to see the music maker as an actor and spectacle to be seen or watched by people whereas it can also be seen as a participant of the whole happening as it is a live performance and the audience effects his or her musical performance.

Bakhtin puts his view on the distinction between actors and spectators in the carnival world. That is:

In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators.

---

<sup>187</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 198.

<sup>188</sup> Spradley, J.P. *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979, 32.

Footlights will destroy the a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by people; they live in it.<sup>189</sup>

Even the rouge, clown, and the fool are the figures of carnival are not spectacle to be seen, they are also participants. Hirschkop clearly explains that double-sided condition that is to be participant and to be clown or a fool simultaneously:

Popular-festive culture therefore a world in which everyone is a clown and fool, where 'there are no footlights', where there is no distinction between art and life, and where, accordingly, one is absorbed not with the performance of one's role—as with our paradigmatic sportsperson—but with the spectacle of historical change itself.

Rouge, clown and fool seem to be 'actors' at the first sight but the idea here, there is no superiority of the subject as a clown and who participates the carnival. Everyone can be a clown, actually be anyone in the time of festivity. DJ is represented as an individual who is also a star, whereas in carnival, individual differences erodes. For example, DJ Sasha was represented as 'son of God' in UK when he was elected as the best DJ in the world by authorities. From that point of view, does DJ have a superiority than the other participants? Can anyone be a DJ in the time of rave?

Who the DJ is seems to have a dominant role at least in commercial raves. If the DJ is more popular, it means more money for the club owners or rave

---

<sup>189</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 7.

organizers. But in house parties or illegal raves, the vibe, the atmosphere is more important than who the DJ is and his or her individuality rather the pleasure and the good feeling have priority. Philip Tagg states on that “you just shake your burn off” and not identified with who makes the music.

Besides the DJ can be popular, s/he stands still being as a participant because there is an interaction between the audience and the music maker just like both were creating the music not only the DJ. The audience effect the DJ’s performance. Since, s/he is not playing exactly what he played before, his or her set is unique for that party time, it can be said that it is like a simultaneous creation process. This simultaneity enables the interaction between the DJ and the audience. As Reynolds suggests the flesh and blood There seems to be an attempt to involve the listener to the creation of the performance. As the musicologist Phillip Tagg has also stated that “techno- rave puts an end” to nearly four hundred great bourgeois individualism in music and there is no guitar heroes or star figures to be identified with. As he states:

...rave is something you immerse yourself into together with other people. There is no guitar hero or rock star or corresponding musical-structural figures to identify with, you just ‘shake your bum off’ from inside the music. You are just one of many other individuals who constitute the musical whole, the whole ground - musical and social - on which you stand... Polarizing the issue, you could say that perhaps techno-rave puts an end to nearly four hundred years of the great bourgeois individualism in music, starting with Peri and Monteverdi and culminating in Parker,

Hendrix and – Lord preserve us - Brian May, Whitney Houston and the TV spot for Body form sanitary towels.<sup>190</sup>

For McCutcheon, raves are different than the massive music festivals of the 1960s such as Woodstock. An important difference is the diffusion of the performing artist into the scene. “As an acoustic, carnival site, the rave signals a certain despectacularization of Western mass culture” for him. While the rave and the rock concert are similar in the use of amplified music and the attendance of a fanatic crowd, they are more strikingly different in that the rave, as Rushkoff points out, is ideally "a no-star system":

The house movement is determine to have no stars. It is in the face' of a recording industry that needs egos and idolatry in order to survive. It depends, instead, on a community in resonance.<sup>191</sup>

For Hughes, "the process of dissolving musical, linguistic and narrative structures" heralds "a similar unmaking of the artist,"<sup>192</sup> however, according to McCutcheon:

The Toronto rave scene still suffers from a kind of cultural hangover, wherein the cult of the DJ still exerts a strong influence in organizing the rave crowd as a frontally-facing concert crowd.

---

<sup>190</sup> Tagg, Philip. 'From Refrain to Rave: the decline of figure and the rise of ground' *Popular Music* 13 (1994): 212.

<sup>191</sup> Rushkoff, David. *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace*, London, 1994, 121.

<sup>192</sup> Hughes, E.C. *Students' Culture and Perspectives: Lectures on Medical and General Education*. University of Kansas Law School, Kansas, 1961, 149.

In Montreal and San Francisco, on the other hand, rave crowds don't face in any particular direction; the difference in crowd orientation can make all the difference in building the vibe. In the rave scene, everyone is a star.<sup>193</sup>

As Reynolds suggests that “flesh-and-blood humans physically shaped this sound together in a real acoustic space.”<sup>194</sup>

#### **4.3.1. Ecstatic Trance Dancing Body as Grotesque**

Two chapter above generally dealt with how rave experience, at least on a symbolic plane, shatters some oppressive hierarchies as class, ethnicity, gender and within rave a unity is formed between people dancing together to amplified beats on hallucinogenes, perception-warping recreational drugs. Within those points, the discussion was on if rave promotes a critical relation to all official discourses, mainly in section 4.1, whether rave is political and apolitical. Beatrice Aaronson asks a valid question for our discussion of body in the context of rave and its subversion: “How do rhythm, dance and trance succeed in breaking down the barriers of identity, thus facilitating the elimination of social, cultural and

---

<sup>193</sup> McCutcheon, Mark. *Trance-formations of Int\_rave\_nous Knowledge*. 24 Mar. 1997  
<<http://www.tao.ca/writing/archives/mms/0133.html>>

<sup>194</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into The World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 44.

gender boundaries?”<sup>195</sup> She discusses Funk, Techno and Rave music as an instrument of emancipating people across all social classes that is linked with our discussion that also carnival-like rave has resembling features. Carnival-like rave does not acknowledge individual differences between its participants because in the carnival world sense of the world, there are no individual bourgeoisie rather a dialogic community involves every kind of people, black and white, gay and straight, rule and ruled, good and evil with a sense of ‘gay relativity.’ And that ‘gay relativity’ succeeds in breaking down the individual differences. If we come back to our related discussion, how does this ‘gay relativity’ work within rave? It is said to be rhythm, dance and trance. “As the body is the site of an inevitable mutability, it can serve as an index for a culture’s interpretation of the fact of change”<sup>196</sup> What does rave acknowledge about the body and change?

Here, it is the discussion of the grotesque body and ‘ecstatic trance dancing’ body in other words the relation between the grotesque body and ‘raving body’. Bakhtin explore the condition of dancing/playing body without ever naming it and this is where the imaginative field of the grotesque. The symptom here is not the mere correspondence of biographical details rather the grotesque as excessive body and as an imaginative plane.

---

<sup>195</sup> Aaronson, Beatrice. ‘Dancing Our Way Out of Class through Funk, Techno or Rave.’ *Peace Review* 11 (1999): 231.

<sup>196</sup> Hirschkop, Ken. *Mikhail Bakhtin.: An Aesthetic For Democracy*. Oxford UP: MA, 1999, 282.

Grotesque is related with degradation through laughter, transferring images to the material bodily level of food, drink, sexual life and the bodily phenomena linked with them. It is generating lower stratum.<sup>197</sup> Here within rave, there is a body dancing to exhaustion (on ecstasy) can be linked to sexual life, drink and the bodily phenomena linked with them. Getting thirsty on using ecstasy, open mouth, and bodily movements sexual or non-sexual with mass of bodies are the material bodily elements within rave. Is it a becoming, unfinished body while dancing to repetitive amplified beats with *grotesque* costumes?

Can it be suggested that ecstatic trance dancing body is a becoming body as a grotesque body? The dancing body as it changes movement is said to be a body renewing itself and never has a finished, monumental image. What is the representation of the body within rave and how is it related to grotesque? The expression of the body is exaggerated by dancing of Ecstasy to exhaustion. Isn't it a grotesque/carnival feature yet grotesque style's general attributes, according to Bakhtin, are exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness?

Bakhtin argues, the key elements of the body are those points at which it outgrows itself and transgress its own limits, as explained in chapter 2.3. Can we think of the ecstatic trance dancing as a transgression of the body's own limits yet Sherly Garrat speaks about transcending physical limits in the space of the party:

---

<sup>197</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 309.

At times, the crowd seemed to transcend physical limits. They would literally climb up the walls. They would fall to the floor, legs trashing in the air.<sup>198</sup>

Can we suggest that ecstatic trance dancing body as a grotesque body in the sense that both are unfinished, becoming bodies? Within the rave scene in an ecstatic state, the conception of body is not individual. There is a unity between people and between bodies apart from strict hierarchy of authority that was discussed before. Conception of body within rave as it is not individualized that is a carnival body, however, the carnival body or what Bakhtin calls the body of “grotesque realism” loses its individual definition and is collectivized at a transindividual level within carnival:

In grotesque realism... the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people...[T]his is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. The material body principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people who are constantly growing and renewed.<sup>199</sup>

Ecstatic body is certainly opposed to the Bakhtin’s ‘Classical Body’ which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the bourgeois

---

<sup>198</sup> Garrat, Sheryl. *Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture*. London: Headline, 1998, 45.

<sup>199</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 19.

individualism. For Bakhtin, Carnival, and the grotesque bodies serve as figures for different social possibilities. Ecstatic trance dancing body would be an appropriate figure on which to attach such collective social aspirations. That body seems to be body of excess as the grotesque its capacity of effectivity of moving and feeling, being more sensuous that is in the limits of the body in a sense accumulated by a drug, ecstasy. And the grotesque body and ecstatic trance body, the body of the raver share certain characteristics. Like the grotesque body, it is a body in process, a body under reconstruction. Carnivals' death-rebirth fit well with the notion of losing a sense of self by breaking the boundaries of ego through exhaustion, repetitive beats and the use of certain drugs.

For Bakhtin, grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth and impenetrable surface of the body.<sup>200</sup> In a rave, people touch themselves; look eye to eye at each other's faces although they don't know each other. While Bakhtin discusses the grotesque through comics, he says that "of all the features of the human face, the nose and the mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body."<sup>201</sup> The eyes has not much importance since they express an individual, however, all the body parts are emphasized which prolongs the body and links it to the other bodies and to the world outside.<sup>202</sup> Ecstatic trance dancing with its

---

<sup>200</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 317.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 316-7.

violent movements of the legs and the arms through the air in a mass of bodies, in Bakhtin's terms involves the grotesque image in that moving legs and arms are the body parts which prolong the body, change its dimensions and shape and thus makes the body unfinished and separate moving body from the classical, still represented body. The moving body gives a 'a new birth implicit in death'<sup>203</sup> and giving birth to another body.

"The most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth"<sup>204</sup> says Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*. The smiling or anxiety on faces within raves on ecstasy, which mouths are open and breathing and drinking can be suggested within the grotesque body. Open mouth is said to be in the grotesque genre for Bakhtin because it a confine between the body and the world.

Pini says that rave is a 'body' culture. As Miriam Pini talks about the mind/body relations within rave, she stresses using the body (dancing) extends the outer boundaries of the mind/body. Participant is not separate from its environment. A body which is not separate from mind and spirit. There is no prioritisation, Pini argues, mind over body, or 'rational thought' over pleasure. She stresses that it is to be "in touch with all these at once".

Whereas previously dance was "an absorbing and pleasurable activity in its own right" for women, within contemporary dance culture men have shown

---

<sup>203</sup> Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press: NY, 1997, 155.

<sup>204</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 317.

that they are willing to experiment with dance's auto-erotic elements, using dance as communication and communion. Whereas in previous social relations of dance "the [male] youth at the dance was remarkably undemonstrative, except when drifting towards heavy drinking or actual drunkenness"<sup>205</sup>, on the contemporary dance floor expressiveness through the body is a major aim of dance, and alcohol consumption is unfashionable. McRobbie puts how dance produces 'active psychic position' for subjects beyond the limits and expectations of gender identity:

Dance operates as a metaphor for an external reality which is unconstrained by the limits and expectations of gender identity and which successfully and relatively painlessly transports its subjects from a passive to a more active psychic position.<sup>206</sup>

“Society inscribes itself on the body, the body incorporates social meaning, and the individual minds the body.”<sup>207</sup> Dance floor provided an alternative to a divided society, and Ecstasy fuelled the dancing<sup>208</sup> However,

---

<sup>205</sup> Mungham, George. 'Youth in Pursuit of Itself' *Working Class Youth Culture*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1976, 95-6.

<sup>206</sup> McRobbie, Angela. 'Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jacki to Just Seventeen' Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991, 201.

<sup>207</sup> Hanna, Judith Lynne. 'Moving Messages: Identity and desire in Popular Music and Social Dance.' Ed. James Lull. *Popular Music and Communication*. Sage Publications: New Delhi, 1991, 191.

<sup>208</sup> Wright, Mary Anna. 'The Great British Ecstasy Revolution'. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. Ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998, 235.

ecstasy experience is individual, it happens in a collective situation. People dancing together, taken Ecstasy communicate non-verbally but in ways as telepathic or intuitive, for Wright. The communication type is silent in a way. Hwa Yol Jung in 'Bakhtin's Dialogical Body Politics' says that Norman O. Brown talks about silence as the body's language. Ecstatic trance dancing in sampladelic music embodies a silent communication in the territorial space of the loud music. If there is no voice of human to communicate with, there is the body. "For silence is nothing but the word activated and become flesh. Isn't it Bakhtin's note that body materializes? He asserts:

To recover the world of silence is to recover the human body...The true meanings of words are bodily meanings, carnal knowledge; and bodily meanings are the unspoken meanings. What is always speaking silently is the body'<sup>209</sup>

It can be suggested that raving body (as a dancing body) is closer to the notion of the grotesque body as a becoming body—if it is said to be dancing is a kind of becoming that body changes movements and gains new expressions yet 'creates another body' through the laughter of Ecstasy? Ecstatic trance dancing body seems to be in terms of grotesque that Ecstasy works as a laughter that degrades 'high' to 'low' to bodily material level as dancing.

---

<sup>209</sup> Brown, Norman. *O.Love's Body*. New York: Alphred A. Knopf. 1966, 265.

## CONCLUSION

I connected (or more appropriately, reconnected) Bakhtin's notion of carnival with rave as a phenomenon of youth in western culture, in a way that inflects the determinate being of the 'alternate moment' challenging the attributes of dominant culture's values, destroying and reconstructing strict social values by creating a secondary time, an *utopian sphere* which 'people give themselves.' Festive time is outside the official hierarchies, restrictions and prohibitions. Rave culture is not 'serious culture' rather its opposite as 'folk', in other words non-official 'popular culture'.

As carnival promotes 'popular culture', other than official, which is defined by its openness, instability, changeability, and egalitarian nature can be traced in contemporary rave scene. Carnival space is also where all polarities embrace each other and (re)establish a harmony. Sheryl Garrat explains rave's (re)establishing harmony and it's openness and changeability well:

At their best, clubs are places where the marginalized can feel at home, where we can experiment with new identities, new ways of being. They are places where cultures collide, where people dance alongside each other and then, when they meet again in the world outside, understand each other a little better.<sup>210</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> Garrat, Sheryl. *Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture*. London: Headline, 1998, 321.

If carnival brings ‘high’ and ‘low’ together if it ‘breaks the boundaries between classes, as well as the oppositions within a unique group,’<sup>211</sup> rave is also said to be breaking the social boundaries and as well as the individual differences according to Marry Anna Wright and Maria Pini’s statements are discussed in chap. 3.2. Fixed social roles are changed during carnival time, within rave people are to change their social roles by changing their appearances such as wearing masks or costumes. One raver says that ‘you can be whoever you want’ in the space of the party. Rave accommodates an environment where ‘dream and reality are interchangeable and indistinguishable.’<sup>212</sup> So you can be ‘anyone’ easily by escaping from ‘present day reality’<sup>213</sup> that is, in a sense, from *official* reality and from *official* time.

The communality aspect within rave reevaluated from the points of social dancing together in a unity as the carnival body or what Bakhtin calls the body of “grotesque realism” that loses its individual definition and is collectivized at a transindividual level.

Everyone participates not observes, the gaze is taken from the dance floor that there is not a floor or stage anymore, mass of bodies move all together that

---

<sup>211</sup> Kurtuluş, Gül. *The Carnavalesque in Ben Johnson’s Three City Comedies: Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartolomew Fair*. diss., Bilkent University, Ankara, 1997, 6.

<sup>212</sup> Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media And Subcultural Capital*. London: Wesleyan Uni. Press, 1996, 57.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

there is no official order between the participants, they are equal in a sense, besides everyone is an actor or spectacle to be seen simultaneously whereas the borders between the audience and the performer is blurred. Also the spectacle of the performing musician is likely to be lost. DJ's participation and individuality as a 'star' is discussed in the light of Bakhtin's carnival view, that is "Carnival does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators."<sup>214</sup>

In the context of rave, it is discussed that class hierarchy and sexual repression is eroded in the space of the party to certain extents. Besides these discussions, it seems clear that raves are not 'free' as Rabelais's carnival. Firstly because as Robert Stam says that 'carnival is more than a party or festival.'

Carnival in our sense [Left Cultural Critique] is more than a party or festival; it is the oppositional culture of the oppressed, the official world as seen from below; not the mere disruption of etiquette but the symbolic, anticipatory overthrow of oppressive social structures. On the positive side, it is ecstatic collectivity, the joyful affirmation of change, a dress rehearsal for utopia. On the negative, critical side, it is a demystifying instrument for everything in the social formation that renders collectivity impossible: class hierarchy, sexual repression, patriarchy, dogmatism, and paranoia.<sup>215</sup>

One can say that rave, like carnival, is not a party or festival; it is beyond that. Rave has a strong music, drug and consumer culture linked to it and it is

---

<sup>214</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968, 198.

<sup>215</sup> Stam, Robert. 'Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique.' *Postmodernism And Its Discontentents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1988, 135.

more than a party and festival, as discussed in chapter 3.2. It has subversive elements similar to carnival world as breaking social borders to some extents. Even sexual differences erodes and raves are supposed to be 'sexless' affairs,-- that is clothing is unisex and participants are not there to get laid.

Rave still seemsto be such that it can not reach the high sense of carnival. Firstly because it is a youth culture that there is an age 'restriction' such that it does not involve people from every class. It is not that variety of people—let's say—it is not 'the celebration of whole people' as carnival to be. However, rave experience and ecstatic trance dancing is not experienced by whole kind of people in the society even people who have an excuse, it represents the mainstream according to some critics such as Sarah Thornton. That means rave became a popular phenomenon; i.e. "children do not want to join the bands, they want to be a DJ."

Rave is not carnival secondly because rave is not what people 'give themselves', but the state's 'permission', however, Goethe notes that the carnival is not an occasion of state, rather it is something that the people 'give themselves'.<sup>216</sup>,

In the carnival, everything is permissible: as if all existing differences between the social orders are temporarily obliterated.

---

<sup>216</sup> Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Italian Journey 1786-1788*. Penguin Books: London, 1970, 136.

Members of all social strata mix, they joke and cavort in a mood of carefree abandon and ‘universal good humour’ ...An abundance of elaborate costumes, satirical masks, clowns, and fools, musical instrument of everykind, giants and banners complete the scene.<sup>217</sup>

Early illegal raves are transformed into clubbing and under the measurements of rave and raving for controlling this unknown effect: raving. How does rave culture effect social hierarchy? As we said that it is a youth culture that will be living in tomorrow’s ‘society’: The future of this rave community can be a future work.

The importance of social dancing that dancing enables ‘active psychic position’ to the subject as McRobbie states is valid in the thesis and that activeness breaks the borders of subjectivity that leads to erosion of individual differences. Raving is not just listening experience or spectacle to be seen, but, rather a participation of the music and dance with other people. It is a social performativity by using the body which inhabiting in the world as a material side of human soul and mind.

It is festive perception of the world is open and free body to body and body to the world. Carnival time is closely connected to both future and history, open and free. Carnival is where familiar human relations are experienced and everyone participates. “The carnivalesque in brief a celebration of dialogue and

---

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 137.

community; it liberates people and brings them together and induces them to participate in communal living.”<sup>218</sup>

In this thesis, the main concern is that participation, being altogether dancing, which subverts human actions and create “a universally alternate moment”. Explanation of that alternative moment, is generally through theories about subjectivity, gender and body politics within rave whereas the relation of rave with the state as a non-official popular festive form is partially discussed in relation with the ‘timeliness’ of rave and carnival.

Rave is a social performativity in a consciously set up audio-visual safe space that creates a *second life* and *utopian sphere* for urban youth, where there is a unity between people which encourages the ‘world upside down’ yet rebellion is through bodily images that the communication within rave exists through silence; the body’s language and it is non-verbal in nature. The rave event is based on bodily reaction, dance on ecstasy in the altered states of consciousness, that is an ecstatic state within sampladelic music. The bodily element and the grotesque as an imaginative plane as excessive body, which materializes, are discussed in chapter 4.3 and 3.3.

Participants of rave are both observer and observed, spectator and performer simultaneously. ‘Spectator’ because dancing is a spectacle to be seen,

---

<sup>218</sup> Jung, Hwa Yol. ‘Bakhtin’s Dialogical Body Politics.’ *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*. Ed. Michael

and 'performer' because dancing is a performance. Although carnival is not a spectacle to be seen by people because everyone participates, within rave, there is still an "actor" called Disc Jockey (DJ). All participants form a communal rather collective body, feeling to be in something 'bigger' that individual differences melt and black embraces white, wrong embraces right. Raving is being part of something 'bigger'.

Collective and social dance enables people to run away from the domesticized individual-ego and come together with other bodies and the world in Bakhtinian sense of the carnival. This openness, away from social hierarchies as it is a utopian sphere with the chemical enhancers and also drugged with repetitive amplified beats, the self is reconstructed with a renewal of the body and mind. The use of body to exhaustion, to expand the limits of the body as a grotesque element, creates a carnival where social boundaries and prohibitions are destroyed and reconstructed to certain extents.

If as McRobbie suggests youth cultures are forms of statement<sup>219</sup>, then we may ask what kinds of statement are made by rave culture and its successor 'clubbing'. A broad kind of answer is available. They are a continuation of the time out of Saturday night when the values of the weekend take over from those of the weekday. They draw on what McRobbie calls the 'same old cultural cocktails of dress, music, drugs and dance' which create 'an atmosphere of

---

Mayerfeld Bell and Michael Gardiner. Sage Publications: London, 1998, 105.

surrender, abandon, euphoria and energy, a trancelike state and a relinquishing of control'<sup>220</sup>

Rave culture has its historical antecedents, distant in dance halls of the inter and post war years, immediate in the disco of the 1970s, but it adds a new dimension. In bringing together music, dance and drugs, it produces an experience which is greater than the sum of its parts, especially in its suffusive ambience: a sense of being and belonging. As a leisure form, it is offering, as well as incorporating, Ecstasy.<sup>221</sup> As McRobbie suggests, contemporary dance culture offers "a suspension of categories, there is not such a rigid demarcation along age, class, ethnic terms. Gender is blurred and sexual preference less homogeneously heterosexual"<sup>222</sup> Indeed, it is considered that whilst the culture acts as a coherent whole, it is pieced together by many different groups of people, beliefs and practices, many of which seem at first to be contradictory. From this perspective, popular culture becomes an area of exchange between dominant and subordinate forces in society, and as such, hegemony theory allows us to think popular culture as a 'negotiated' mix of intentions and counter intentions...a shifting balance of

---

<sup>219</sup> McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, Routledge: London, 1994, 156.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>221</sup> Critcher, Chas. 'Still raving': social reaction to Ecstasy.' *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000): 145–162.

<sup>222</sup> McRobbie, Angela. 'Dance and Social Fantasy' Eds. McRobbie and Nava. *Gender and Generation*, MacMillan: Basingstoke, 1984, 146.

forces between resistance and incorporation.<sup>223</sup> For example, it is true that the movement is a protest against an oppressor, of which the current roads programme is a symptom. At the same time it is a *celebration*, of freedom and the right to think and act differently. It is 'alternative' in its thought and social arrangement, yet at the same time it is 'confrontational' in its very existence. It is political, ideological and practical all at the same time. It is perceived as being 'other', separate from mainstream society, yet it influences many parts of our society - people write about it, sing about it, create art about it, the news media try to understand it, and more people become involved with it.

Rave culture mobilized three elements: music, dance and drugs. The status of each of these in leisure studies and social science generally is unclear. Consequently, encountering a cultural form that fuses all three is problematic. Rave culture is not openly posed and poses a problem for the apparatuses of social control; it also constitutes a challenge to leisure studies.<sup>224</sup>

In conclusion, the two phenomena are examined in relation to how they articulate, or fail to articulate, strategies of resistance that extend beyond dominant culture. Here an uncritical application of Bakhtin can lead to a problematic analysis. Just because the *principle* of carnival, or in our analysis

---

<sup>223</sup> Storey, John., ed. *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*. Arnold: London, 1993, 122.

<sup>224</sup> Critcher, Chas. 'Still raving: social reaction to Ecstasy.' *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000): 161.

contemporary dance culture, involves everyone, then the practice need not necessarily do so. It is essentialist, and consequently idealist, to equate practice with concept. *In principle*, contemporary dance culture is an inclusive culture, and many of the participants that I have interviewed talk of how open and friendly dance culture is, how class, sex, and race seem irrelevant on the dance floor. Perhaps it could be suggested that contemporary cultural studies' reluctance to study dance culture is because here is a culture that, at least in principle, fleetingly denies the existence of those social divisions that many academics are so adept at discovering. However this is not to suggest that there are not elements of dance culture that do discriminate. Equally, to state that a principle of contemporary dance culture is to eradicate divisions between actors and spectators is not necessarily suggesting that contemporary dance culture is completely successful in achieving this aim. To suggest that, for instance, there are no spectators at dance event ignores the often omnipresent plain-clothed police, bouncers and club owners who regularly prowl the outer reaches of the dance floor. What needs to be stated however is that contemporary dance culture disapproves of this; unlike previous dance forms, contemporary dance culture is, *in principle*, participatory.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aaronson, Beatrice. 'Dancing Our Way Out of Class through Funk, Techno or Rave.' *Peace Review* 11 (1999): 231-37.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helen Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968.
- Becker, Jürgen, Peter Neis, Jörg Röhrich, and Siegfried Zörntlein. "A fatal paramethoxymethamphetamine intoxication." *Legal Medicine* 5 (2003): 138.
- Brewster, Bill, and Frank Broughton. *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History Of The Disc Jockey*. New York: Grove Press, 2000.
- Borthwick, Stuart. *Dance, Culture, Television: An Analysis of the Politics of Contemporary Dance Culture and Its Televisual Representation*. Diss. Liverpool John Moores University, 1998.
- Critcher, Chas. 'Still raving': social reaction to Ecstasy.' *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000): 145-62.
- Danow, David K. *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque*. The Uni. Press of Kentucky. Kentucky, 1995.
- . *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin: From Word to Culture*. Macmillan: Hong Kong, 1991.
- Eisenbichler Konrad and Wim Hüsken. *Carnival and the Carnavalesque: The Fool, the Reformer, the Wildman, and Others in Early Modern Theatre*. Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1999.
- Garrat, Sheryl. *Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture*. London: Headline, 1998.

- Hanna, Judith Lynne. 'Moving Messages: Identity and desire in Popular Music and Social Dance.' Ed. James Lull. *Popular Music and Communication*. Sage Publications: New Delhi, 1991.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. NY: Routledge, 1987.
- Hirschkop, Ken. *Mikhail Bakhtin.: An Aesthetic For Democracy*. Oxford UP: MA, 1999.
- Hirschkop, Ken and David Shepherd. Ed. *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Manchester Uni. Press: NY, 1989.
- Huges, Water. 'In the Empire of the Beat: Discipline and Disco'. *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music, Youth Culture*. Ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. Routledge: New York, 1994.
- Hutson, Scott R. 'The Rave: Spiritual Healing In Modern Western Subcultures.' *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (2000): 35-40.
- Jordan, Tim. 'Collective Bodies: Raving and the Politics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.' *Body and Society* 1(1995):125-44.
- Jung, Hwa Yol. 'Bakhtin's Dialogical Body Politics.' *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*. Ed. Michael Mayerfeld Bell and Michael Gardiner. Sage Publications: London, 1998, 95-111.
- Kalant, Harold. "The Pharmacology and Toxicology of 'Ecstasy' (MDMA) And Related Drugs." *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal* 165 (2001): 917-29.
- Kurtuluş, Gül. *The Carnavalesque in Ben Johnson's Three City Comedies: Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartolomew Fair*. Diss. Bilkent University, 1997.
- Lindley, Arthur. *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnavalesque Subversion*. London: Associated Uni. Press, 1996.
- McCall, Tara. *This is not a Rave: in the Shadow of a Subculture*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2001.

- McKay, George. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*, Verso, London, 1998.
- McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . *Gender and Generation*, MacMillan: Basingstoke, 1984.
- . 'Shut Up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity.' *Cultural Studies* 7 (1993): 406-426.
- Philip Tagg, 'From refrain to rave: the decline of figure and the rise of ground'. *Popular Music* 13 (1994): 212-29.
- Pini, Maria. "Women and the Early British Rave Scene". *Back to Reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester UP: New York, 1997.
- Redhead, Steve. *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings On popular Cultural Studies*. Blackwell: MA, 1998.
- . *The end-of-the-century party: youth and pop toward 2000*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1990.
- Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Rietveld, Hillegonda. 'Living The Dream' (ed.) Redhead, S. *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, Hampshire: Avebury, 1993. 41-90.
- . *This is our House: House Music, Cultural Spaces and Technologies*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 1998.

- Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*. Routledge: NY, 1995.
- Sullivan, Greg. 'Raving on the Internet.' *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2000): 1864.
- Shephard, David. Ed. *Critical Studies: Bakhtin Carnival and Other Subjects*. Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1993.
- Stam, Robert. 'Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique.' *Postmodernism And Its Discontentents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1988. 116-45.
- . *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. The John Hopkins University Press: London, 1989.
- Stanley, Chris. 'Drowning but Waving: Urban Narratives of Dissent in the Wild Zone.' *Subcultures to Clubcultures: An Introduction to Popular Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steve Redhead. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. 36-54.
- Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media And Subcultural Capital*. London: Wesleyan Uni. Press, 1996.
- . 'Moral Panic, The Media and British Rave Culture.' *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music, Youth Culture*. Ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. Routledge: New York, 1994.
- Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press: NY, 1997.
- Willis, Clair. "Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women's Texts," *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Eds. Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd. Manchester UP: Manchester, 1989.
- Wright, Mary Anna. 'The Great British Ecstasy Revolution'. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. Ed. George McKay. Verso: London, 1998.