

RITUAL PLEASURES OF A SEASIDE RESORT

*Liminality, carnivalesque, and dirty
weekends*

Places on the Map
Rob Shields 1991

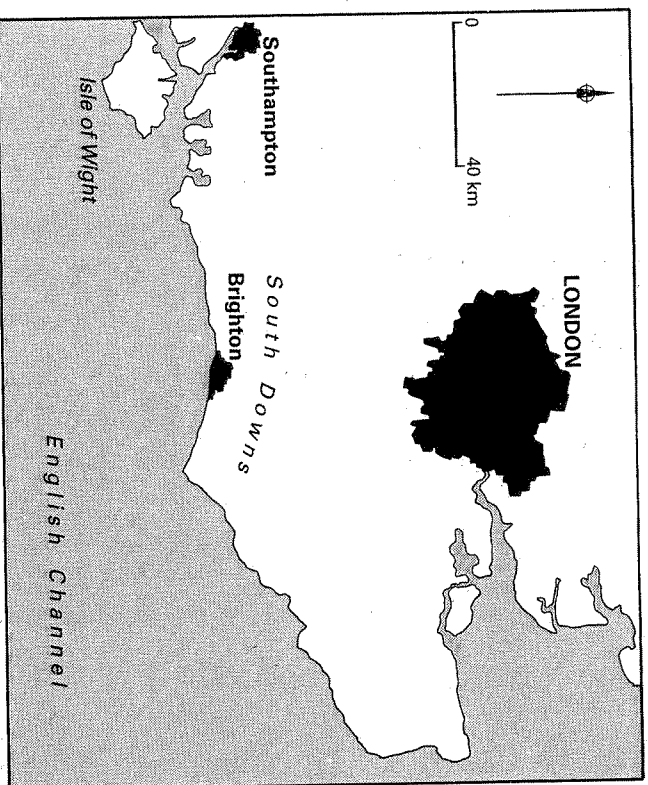
It seems that every review of Brighton, Regency England's south coast 'Capital by the Sea', begins with an obituary to George IV, who as Prince Regent was at least partly responsible for introducing the socialites of his day to the seashore and Brighton to them. Freedom from the constraints of social position (both high and low) developed in the permissive atmosphere of a resort town where people went for their health, for a rest, for entertainment, or merely for a change of scenery. It has been said that from George's first visit 'the amenities of Brighton, including the women he found there and the women he brought, captured his affection and a considerable part of his fortune' (Hern 1967:45 sic). Since his time, Brighton has enjoyed a 'raffish reputation' attracting both those who, with money and time to spare, were in search of glamour, adventure, and excitement; and those who, in a quest for profit by one means or another, were in search of these 'idle rich'. If 'raffish' appears in every description, it captures the contradictions of the place – tawdry and vulgar, yet flashy and rakish. But like the word 'raffish', both the place and the legends are all somehow dated. For most Westerners in the late twentieth century, it is no longer necessary to create marginal zones, such as the seaside was, for reckless enjoyment.

In this chapter an analysis of the cultural positioning of Brighton as a seaside resort is developed to show how its position was constructed within the broader framework of the spatialisation of British culture. As a place Brighton came to be associated with pleasure, with the liminal, and with the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984; Stallybrass and White 1986). These concepts are central to developing a coherent vision of Brighton's changing image: from

Regency pleasure and healing centre to the gay Victorian resort to 'dirty weekend' destination and Bank Holiday riots on the beach.

We open with a historical review of Brighton which will focus on attitudes to, and literary images of, Brighton as a seaside resort. In particular, the theme of indolence present in both the positive and the critical appraisals of the town will be related to the specific image of Brighton as a 'dirty weekend' destination which developed in the 1920s through the 1930s. This establishes a context for a discussion of the liminal status of the seaside *vis-à-vis* the more closely governed realms of the nation – the productive industrial areas, the 'serious' world of London and the Parliament, or the 'innocent' arcadian spaces of the agricultural counties (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Context map of Brighton



For Western industrial cultures, a beach is more than just a 'thing' or site, and Brighton's beach acquired a particularly well-defined image. It became the locus of an assemblage of practices and of customary norms which, attached to the notion of 'Beach', transformed its nature into a socially defined zone appropriate for specific behaviours and patterns of interaction outside of the norms of everyday behaviour, dress, and activity. 'Beach' became the topos of a set of connected discourses on pleasure and pleasurable activities – discourses and activities without which our entire conception and sense of a beach would be without meaning. It was territorialised as a site fit for leisure, and the story of its transformation over time to support a derivative form of Rabelaisian carnival amounts to a social history of the Beach.

CLINIC BRIGHTON 1730–1820

Then all with ails in heart or lungs,
In liver or in spine,
Rush'd coastwise to be cured like tongues,
By dipping into brine.

(Anon. late 1790s)

In 1783, Brighthelmstone, or 'Brighton' as it was pronounced by the locals (Mawer and Stenton 1930:291), was an impoverished fishing community prone to frequent flooding by the sea.¹ To this fishing village, the Prince Regent, later George IV, was brought for the sea air and for the reputedly restorative powers of sea-bathing, a practice dating from the early 1730s.² Spurred on by this royal patronage, by the closing decades of the eighteenth century, sea-water was considered to be as beneficial as the mineral waters that had made Bath and Tunbridge Wells popular Georgian spas. Prescribed by doctors, these dips in the sea were as structured and ritualised as a visit to a doctor's clinic might be today: to bathe or not to bathe, when to bathe and how, were important questions, and sea-bathing was to be undertaken only 'after due preparation and advice' (Gibbon 1923:1,210). For, according to the populariser of sea-water treatments, Dr Russell, although 'Sea-water is imbued with many and great Virtues, the Unskilful may make a very bad Use [sic]'. Bathing was an unpleasant medicine taken when the water was coolest – before dawn and preferably in the

winter. As a system of ablutions it was preceded by purging with up to twenty-five glasses of sea-water. It was 'taken by doctor's orders and hedged round with a veritable armoury of rules and regulations' (Manning-Sanders 1951:24). Fanny Burney, wishing a swim at Sidmouth in August of 1792, 'having no advice at hand... ran no risk' lest the day be too mild and her pores too open.

Nearness to London and its circle of aristocratic patrons was an essential factor in Brighton's rise to fame. Brighton benefited early on from its proximity, acquiring the status of a weekend dormitory town for professionals such as stock-brokers by the 1820s. Through his London practice, Russell proved an influential champion of Brighton as a sea-bathing site. Brighton in the Season, said Thackeray, was 'London *plus* prawns for breakfast and the sea air'. 'A portion of the West End of London *maritized*' (Granville 1971:565). A second factor in Brighton's expanding reputation was its proximity to the continent. For, bolstered by refugee aristocrats from the French revolution,³ and from the later wars and revolts which marked the first half of the nineteenth century, the circle of the Prince's friends and hangers-on was to transform the Brightonstone summers into a round of social events which rivalled the 'Seasons' at Bath, not to mention those earlier in the century at Versailles. Over thirty years, the Prince Regent was to expand a nondescript local farmhouse into the Royal Pavilion: an Oriental fantasy overlaid with Indian whimsies and imagined-Arabic details dubbed 'the Kremlin' by its critics (Cobbett 1912:1,73). But for observers, Brighton remained 'a place of no trade; of no commerce at all'; with no harbour, 'no place of deposit or of transit for corn or for goods or for cattle' (Cobbett 1912:1,74). The recognised hierarchy of spaces and places descended from London (in particular the aristocratic and parliamentary areas of the city) through the seats of the various duchies and down to the market towns. In this spatialisation, the growth of the seaside resort town figured only as anomalies. Brighton was dismissed in the *Report on the Census of 1851*, along with the seaports and manufacturing centres, as 'of an inferior order', having acquired an 'adventitious but extraordinary importance and magnitude' (cited in Gilbert 1954:10). Nonetheless the town became the fastest growing urban agglomeration in Europe. Brightonstone had six streets in 1760, but in 1800 the population was 7,000, double that of 1780, and triple that of 1770 (Gilbert 1939).⁴ Brighton displaced

both Bath and the other inland British spas, but if Brighton's growth seems inexplicably meteoric, it is because British historians have neglected to figure in the contribution of foreign visitors and migrants who made Brighton a capital of *European* culture, one of the first centres of cultural interchange and cross-fertilisation that was to become a commonplace of modernity.

Encouraged by Dr Russell's medical system of sea-bathing, fashionable invalids in ever-increasing numbers flocked to Brighton. But most – the friends, chaperones, and families of these invalids – were there for the social life, to 'see and be seen'. In the words of Fanny Burney, who visited for the first time in 1779, 'Notwithstanding this is not the season, here are folks enough to fill up time from morning till night' (cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:19). Brightonstone acquired an enduring reputation for an unconventional social life complete with a predatory local petit bourgeoisie of landlords and caterers.

Together with the practice of sea-bathing, the social life of 'Brighton' became more elaborate. By the time the Prince Regent arrived it already had its subscription libraries, meeting-rooms, and other diversions. The social activities of the inland spas, of which the seaside resorts were at first off-shoots, were copied. Along with social customs such as a Master of Ceremonies who organized the Season's balls and events; the idea of planned terraces and crescents of town houses built with a continuous palatial façade and promenades were copied from the model of the spas, adding the prefix 'Marine' whenever possible. New Baths built to ease winter bathing reflected Brighton's European flavour in both their names – for example, the German Baths – and their styles (Turkish as well as Roman Baths). The older spas had depended on their mineral springs which were unable to meet the growing numbers as the popularity of medical bathing expanded and the social importance of the Seasons for the fashionable and the marriageable young grew. On the coast, however, capacity was almost unbounded: 'While social life at the spas was necessarily focused on the pumproom and the baths, and there was no satisfactory alternative to living in public, the sea coast was large enough to absorb all comers and social homogeneity mattered less' (Pimlott 1975:55) if only because there was more space for distanciation between groups.

Brighton, free of the 'noxious steams of perspiring trees', with

'bitter sea and glowing light, bright, clear air, dry as fry' (Relhan 1829:3, cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:47), was particularly advertised as a place whose waters were an aid to fecundity. Even the prolific local sheep were tendered as a testimonial to this.⁵ Later, a pseudo-scientific theory of ions and ozone in the sea air would be advanced to explain the character of the waters, which, 'to a sweet balsamick, spiritous and sanguinous temperament... naturally incites men and women to amorous emotions and titillations' (cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:47). Brighton presented a rare opportunity for the eligible young bourgeoisie and bourgeois to meet in a permissive atmosphere and away from home-town gossip. The flirtatious atmosphere of the seafont parade which resulted confirmed Brighton's reputation for loose morals for many commentators (Figure 2.2). The new 'Brighton' included both the best and worst of Disraeli's 'Two Nations' as landless poor were drawn by the possibility of earning wages as servants or beach entertainers (for a detailed history see Stokes 1947). It was the new industrial bourgeoisie, many of whom had bought themselves aristocratic titles, who were to form the enduring market for Brighthelmstone's metamorphosis into a town organised around the servicing of 'pleasure and distraction'.

THE SYSTEM OF PLEASURE

With the arrival of royalty, Brighthelmstone, or rather that event that everyone now called 'Brighton', became 'the centre *luminary* of the system of pleasure: ... all other places within the *sphere* of its *attraction*, lose their gayest visitants, who fly to that resort: ... the pretty women, all hasten to see the *Paris* of the day' (*Brighthelmstone Intelligence* 1784:2). The Prince was the central figure at first: he was the 'Paris of the day', not Brighton, and by all accounts there were many women who sought to be his Helen by night. When he withdrew to London, the same paper reported: 'Brighthelmstone ... [is] a desert.' A Cinderella town. Without the Season's animating crowd of aristocratic 'patients', 'Brighton' ceased to be and reverted to the antediluvian 'Brighthelmstone'. The *Intelligence* complained 'scarce a person of fashion remains: the whole company now consists of antiquated *virgins*, emaciated *beaux*, and wealthy citizens with their wives and daughters.' Even if, later, this class was to transform Brighton into their own 'centre-luminary',

their prevalence in the 'off-Season' marked the perennial eclipse of the sense of indolence and dissipation which formed the core of the entire identity of 'Brighton' which had been fabricated on the substratum of the fishing village 'Brighthelmstone'. Many of these community-oriented residents disapproved of the whole goings-on and of the prying local gossip papers:

The *Brighthelmstone Intelligence* has no novelty to recommend it; merely a repetition of the old story; *morning rides*, *champagne*, *dissipation*, *noise* and *nonsense*: jumble these phrases together, and you have a complete account of all that's passing at *Brighthelmstone*.

(cited in Manning-Sanders 1955:57)

Brighton was popularly know 'for freedom of manners beyond Bath in the old days, and for total dissipation beyond London in new times.' The Prince and his 'glittering' half-court, complete with wealthy, decadent exiles, hangers on and an 'indispensable' *coqs d'amour* 'with all the insolence of youth and the haughty indifference of British eighteenth-century upper-class tradition, let loose in a perpetual holiday against a background of bare downs and glittering sea' (Manning-Sanders 1951:55). To this group of visitors, at least, Brighton was 'all beauty, whether as to the streets, the buildings, the carriages, the horses, or the dresses of the people... It is all a scene of evident wealth, of pleasure and of luxury' (Cobbett 1912: I, 73).

Through the early 1800s, pleasure moved onto the beach under the guise of 'Doing One Good' (Hern 1967:10). The justification for pleasure was hidden in its medicalisation and was controlled through a complex set of regulating social rituals which governed the social round almost as tightly as the medical beach. Both the social and the medical rituals were presided over by powerful *amateurs* who conducted the ceremonies and acted as intermediary and assistant. In the case of the social functions, this was the 'Master of Ceremonies', who besides planning and presiding arranged all important introductions: while in the case of the bathing rituals it was local 'Dippers' who were responsible for lifting their patients from bathing machines and 'dipping' or plunging them in the water.

Figure 2.2 'Papa sees us bathe', 1856



Source: East Sussex County Library

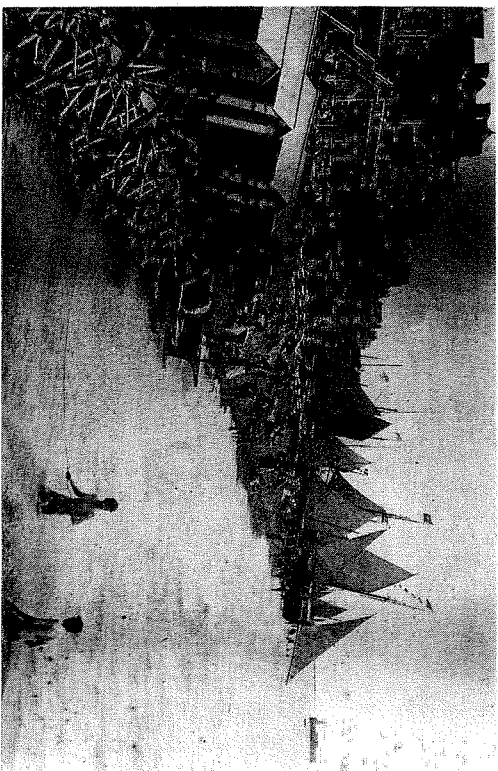
The mutation of the beach itself into a pleasure zone was accomplished partly through the growing social importance of Brighton as a centre of fashion. Only with the conjunction of a predisposition to actually go to the beach for pleasure – to sit, for

a day, in the sun or the wind and turning one's back to the urban comforts beyond the promenade – and the institution of mass holidays could the beach take on its contemporary character as a leisure zone. This 'pleasure beach' simply overtook the naked patients on the 'medical beach' who were mercilessly spied upon from the promenade by the onlookers who gathered to gossip and stare. If it was once a tightly ritualised liminal zone we might hypothesise that it was a combination of the growing sense of spectacle and the growing numbers of people which resulted in its transformation (see Figure 2.3). The seafront parades, crowded with spectators, give a circus atmosphere to the scenes captured in engravings. There was a growing focus on the 'sights' of the naked bathers, who are portrayed as either comic invalids or 'bathing beauties' (see Figure 2.4). The increasing crowds of day-trippers who came not only to Brighton, but also to the purpose-built working-class resorts all around Britain from the 1840s onwards, brought children to the beaches. The encounter of serious-minded invalid-bathers and children splashing along the foreshore must have been dramatic (see Figure 2.3). The medical order imposed by the Dippers was disrupted with the result that many beaches were partitioned. There was considerable struggle over the parliamentary ban on the Salvation Army's Sabbath music and celebrations on the beach as a 'nuisance' (Walton 1983: 210ff.). This process of invasion and displacement was speeded up only by the decline of the 'working beach': that beach which had seen the launching of generations of fishing boats and the landing of catches from the inshore fishery.

The chief importance of the seaside resorts had always been social – they were 'more fam'd for Pleasure than Cures' with the majority no more than spectators (cited in Pimlott 1975:57; see Figure 2.4). Hence the use of bathing machines, which were really changing-rooms on wheels complete with canopied 'exits' to the water. They were developed to protect bathers' modesty between their state of formal dress and entry into the water (see Figure 2.3). At first bathing was done in the nude; later, woollen swimsuits were adopted. But no matter what the garb, it was by popular convention and moral decree a state of undress and exposure. If there was a dichotomy between the Seasonal 'Brighton' and the locals' Brighthelmstone, there on the seafront was marshalled the elements of the internal dichotomy of 'Brighton': those who came

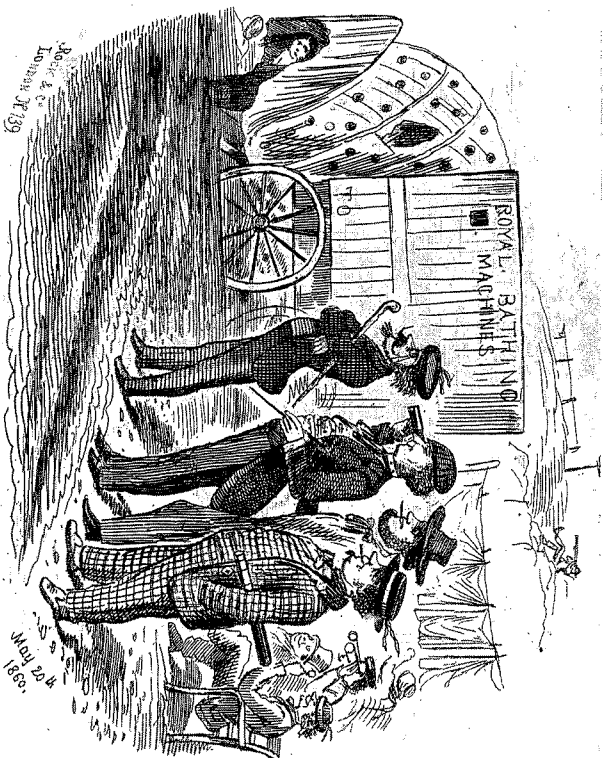
for the Cure and those who came for the Pleasure. Brighton reached its zenith at the Season of 1848–9, when many of the royal and political exiles from European revolutions and wars spent the winter on the south coast (Weiner 1960). These exiles continued to bathe, but they were in no way invalids on a pilgrimage to a Cure. Rather, Brighton had become a full-fledge social centre, a site of repose, retreat from everyday life and leisure. The local historian, Dale, argues that 'it was at this period that Brighton really succeeded Bath as the centre of fashion and the provincial capital of social life' (1947:17).⁶ But beyond practical reasons of convenience, location, and political economy, how was it that such a medicalised curative centre could blossom into a social centre? What made a place of cripples and Cures an appropriate basis on which to develop a centre of pleasure? The connection between Cures and the pleasure beach will be argued to be found at the level of the spatialisation of the beach as a liminal zone.

Figure 2.3 Brighton seafront, c. 1890



Source: East Sussex County Library

Figure 2.4 'Gentlemen! Who pass the morning near the ladies' bathing machines'



Gentlemen! who pass the morning near the Ladies Bathing Machines.

Source: East Sussex County Library

LEISURE SPACES: LIMINALITY AND CARNIVAL

In the work of Victor Turner, 'liminality' is adopted from Van Gennep's pioneering study of *Rites de passage* (1960) to designate moments of discontinuity in the social fabric, in social space, and in history. These moments of 'in between-ness', of a loss of social coordinates, are generally associated with religious experience (cf. Durkheim and Mauss 1963). Classically, liminality occurs when people are in transition from one station of life to another, or from one culturally-defined stage in the life-cycle to another. This also informs pilgrimages where a goal – a sacred site, or indeed a

seaside Cure – is ritually presented as a life-changing experience. Liminality represents a liberation from the regimes of normative practices and performance codes of mundane life because of its interstitial nature. As a result, Turner argues,

action can never be the logical consequence of any grand design . . . because of the processual structure of social action itself . . . in all ritualized [or systematised] movement there was at least a moment when those being moved in accordance with a cultural script were liberated from normative demands, when they were, indeed, betwixt and between successive lodgements in jural political systems. In this gap between ordered worlds almost anything may happen. . . . That this danger is recognized in all tolerably orderly societies is made evident by the proliferation of taboos that hedge in and constrain those on whom the normative structure loses its grip . . . and by legislation against those who in industrial societies utilize such 'liminoid' genres as literature.

(Turner 1974:13–14)

The liminal status of the eighteenth-century seashore as an ill-defined margin between land and sea fitted well with the medical notion of the 'Cure'. Its shifting nature between high and low tide, and as a consequence the absence of private property, contribute to the unterritorialised status of the beach, unincorporated into the system of controlled, civilised spaces. As a physical threshold, a limen, the beach has been difficult to dominate, providing the basis for its 'outsider' position with regard to areas harnessed for rational production and the possibility of its being appropriated and territorialised as socially marginal. Like other liminal zones, then, Brighton beach provided the setting for a life-changing transition, practically miraculous in nature, which bathers hoped to secure by undertaking the pilgrimage to the seaside and following a prescribed course of 'dippings'.

Beyond the fondness for the beach throughout the early 1800s and onwards, there are many mentions of the Dippers who assisted (or pushed) their charges from the bathing machines. They became famous local figures who, like priests, were mediaries between two worlds, civilised land and the undisciplined waves. They were also technicians of the ritual process: on-site masters of the requirements of the sea-bathing treatment. They judged the

waves, the state of their clients, and their daily requirements: bathing at such and such a time or for so long. Many of the bathers could not swim: Dippers, often women, were essential figures of dependable strength and assurance. This might explain the inordinate affection for them. The ritual purging and bathing, the ministrations of the Dipper, and the natural influence of the seashore itself with its salt water, sea air, and 'ozone' were vital ingredients in both the reality and *perception* of a Cure.

The take-over of the aristocratic Brighton Season with the increasing presence of the middle class of 'wealthy citizens' was followed by a boom in popular seaside patronage with the steady growth of the labouring man's family holiday between 1841 and 1930. These day-trippers took advantage of newly opened train lines to enjoy a day at the seaside, often in groups as entire factories shut for a yearly excursion. Seaside resorts such as Brighton gained a real cultural significance for the nation as a whole as old religious feast days were augmented by factory and town holidays and finally by statutory vacations and the Bank Holidays Act of 1871. The railway and pleasure steamer reduced the cost of travel to resorts just as the demand for holidays began to increase due to concern over the health and productivity of the workforce; an increased efficiency in urban factories with a consequent demand for a quality workforce and the increased urbanisation of the country added to the pressures for formalised breaks in more rural areas. Thomas Cook's railway excursions ran from the early 1840s onwards. A railway to Brighton was opened in 1841 and this set the destiny of the Brighton as a day-tripper's resort. It was in response to the demands of these working-class families that the seaside land-ladies multiplied and popular cafés and tea rooms, pier-end shows and souvenir shops, rather than pubs or ballrooms, proliferated (Hern 1967:77ff.). Bank Holiday crowds attracted entertainers from the inland fairs which were increasingly restricted (Stallybrass and White 1986). London stall-holders introduced what came to be seen as 'typical' seaside food, the Punch and Judy shows and other attractions.⁷

Like the rites of simpler societies, the new holidays marked a collective release from the rationalised regimes of industrial labour. Holidays were thus special and 'extra-ordinary'. This liminal 'time-out' was partly accomplished by a movement out of the neighbourhoods of 'everyday life' to specific resort towns

along the English coast and later to specialised holiday camps which were designed to provide a liminal programme more efficiently (Ward and Hardy 1986). The spatial movement concretised the transition from the routinised schedules of workdays to the less routinised, cyclical temporality of annual holidays which accompanied the change of seasons. In this sense, the spatial movement is central to the accomplishment of the temporal shift. Although increasingly ordered and dominated by a rationalised programme, particularly in the schedule of events and entertainments perfected in the holiday camps, for the holiday-makers these days remained outside of the everyday spatialisation. The liminal zones provided a necessary escape from the built-in cues and spatialisation of 'normal', work-a-day life with its eighteenth-century towns and neighbourhoods dominated by their factories.

Mass seaside holidays marked not just a broadening of the social base of the British seaside but a mutation in its nature. What had been the ritualised world of the 'Season' and medicinal sea-bathing became a much looser carnival: the Bank Holiday trip to the seaside was a ritual in name only, for many of the structuring codes of the nineteenth century had been removed. To the horror of many commentators, classes mixed freely in this gay carnival and the beach; the times when one could swim and when one could not, the sort of attire suitable and the spatial division or mixing of the sexes, became nodal issues around which the struggle between personal freedoms and social morality clashed. There were still miraculous sea-water Cure stories in the 1880s but good summer weather was becoming more important (Pimlott 1975:179-80). The bathing machines were too costly and inconvenient so economical families opted for beach tents or toy-villa beach huts; the lower-class day-trippers brought umbrellas for a day on the beach and 'paddled', rolling up pants or daringly holding up dresses to walk along the water's edge, while children changed in the shelter of their mother's skirts (see the *Graphic* 1871 cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:30). There was continuing tension between the still-new re-appropriation of the seaside beaches by the British working classes and restraining Victorian morals. Besides this spatial aspect, the conflict was temporal, from the attempts gradually to extend the number of statutory holidays in the year and the gradual shifting of 'The Season' to the

disregard of the Sabbatarian ban on bathing or even sitting on the beach on Sundays (Walton 1983:197-207).

Brighton was the first of the seaside resorts to shed its primarily medical orientation in favour of the pleasure beach. It successfully made the transition from patronage to market; from aristocratic seaside spa to mass seaside resort; from eighteenth-century whimsy to the nineteenth-century romanticism of sublime breakers and winter storms, plus the populism of summer sun. Indeed, the stormy seashore suited the emerging Romantic view of the Sublime perfectly. Far from the sort of sunny summer day with a calm sea and throngs on the beach that the day-trippers were to seek, the Brighton seafloor of the winter Season was reserved for more adult pleasures. There was a genuine love of feeling that one was standing safely in the teeth of a gale. The Romantic Sublime required that nature display its forces at terrifying, nearly Wagnerian, levels. The daunting force of Nature and a sense of the puniness of human endeavour produced an exhilarating experience. There was a reaction against the ordered, confined, corporatist life of the spas expressed architecturally in Nash's Bath crescents. Each household had been assigned a place within the matrix of the crescent of indistinguishable units. The ruthless uniformity of the crescents functioned in part as a backdrop of univocal order and taste against which the mundane variety of daily life for the aristocracy was played out. By contrast, a fashion for mountain scenery and turbulent seacoasts came into vogue. Brontë displaced Jane Austen; Turner, Constable.

The new appreciation of the sublime was a precondition for the moving of the fashionable Season from August to September and then to October and November to avoid the masses which crowded the beaches and made traditional bathing by means of bathing machines and the 'proper' Victorian enjoyment of the beach nearly impossible. By 1874 Brighton was said to have

ever so many seasons from the time when the first spring excursionists come down in a wondering phalanx to the beach; and later still, when trainload after trainload of holiday-makers . . . [and] family parties determined to have their full seven hours by the seaside . . . swarm about the Chain Pier,

(*Brighton Magazine* 1874:289)

until the Season in the late autumn which might last until after Christmas while the fashionable indulged in crashing breakers and gale-force winds and attended the round of social engagements.

Politics nobody cares about. Spurn a

Topic whereby all our happiness suffers.

Dolls in back streets of Brighton return a

Couple of duffers.

Fawcett and White in the Westminster Hades

Strive the reporters' misfortunes to heighten.

What does it matter? Delicious young ladies

Winter in Brighton!¹⁸

(Collins 1868, *Winter in Brighton*)

Well-to-do Victorians – known as ‘anti-trippers’ (Becker 1884) – had sought quieter, circumspect places offering ‘rational recreation and health-giving pleasure’ (*Murray's Guide* cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:123). The ‘proper’ Victorian model of seaside recreation was to reject the socialising of the theatre and the assembly room. Instead, walks on the shore, botany collecting, and sketching (and no swimming on the Sabbath) complemented by comfortable lodgings would suffice to ‘*wile away* the summer holiday’ (*Murray's Guide* cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:123; added emphasis).

In contrast to this refinement, or dullness depending on one's point of view, ‘gaiety and dissipation’ still pervaded the atmosphere of places such as Margate and Brighton with their ‘contaminating atmosphere of excursion trains, rowdiness and uproarious multitudes’ (Manning-Sanders 1951:121). Despite Victorian censure, here, it was the ‘aliveness’ of the place that was the basis of its charm (Becker 1884). Even if fashion did change such that by 1863, men bathing at Brighton for the first time adopted striped French ‘caleçons’ as bathing costumes in deference to Victorian mores, it was widely held that,

There remained a flavour of rakishness, of freedom from restraint, of pleasurable excitement, of ‘naughtiness’ about the exhilarating air of Brighton right through the Nineteenth century... a week-end at Brighton meant something more than a week-end at other resorts.

(Manning-Sanders 1951:51; see Figures 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7)

Beaches had always been a ‘free zone’ of sorts by virtue of their status as uncertain land, the surface contours of which might change with every tide. The beach wasn't always a *pleasure zone* but had to be constructed as such, within the system of the social spatialisation. This had required not only changed attitudes, but also institutional changes. A transition accompanied this displacement. The liminal zone controlled by ritual and authoritative intermediaries such as the Dippers was superseded by a still liminal but more chaotic zone secured by the more subtle technologies of manners and modesty. Hence, it would be a mistake to fetishise the chaos of this new beach: in both cases, activities were routinised but under different regimes or sets of codes of social interaction.

Turner points out that the experience of liminality is a socially unifying one. Underscoring the sense of the liminal is the perception of unmediated encounters with other individuals also momentarily stripped of their social status. This experience of equal individuals fosters a sense of *communitas*, ‘society experienced or seen as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community or even communion...’ (Turner 1979:131). This characteristic is also fundamental to Bakhtin's notion of the Carnivalesque which shares the semantic space of Turner's more analytical use of liminality.

In *Rabelais and his World* (1984), an examination of Rabelais' description of medieval carnival, the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin treats carnival as both the ‘ritual spectacle’ of ecclesiastical processions and displays and as an anti-ritual of festive feasts and celebration. Thus ‘a carnival atmosphere reigned on [religious] days when mysteries and *soles* were produced’, while insisting that the heart of this classic carnival consisted of

‘forms of protocol and ritual based on laughter and consecrated by tradition... which were sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and [ritual] ceremonials. Carnival is a spectacle lived by people who are all participants, actors, not spectators.’

(Bakhtin 1984:7)

Carnival forms ‘offered a completely different, non official... extra political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom’ (1984:5–6) in which all people were reduced to the common

denominator of participants. This 'world inside our' was often in the form of feasts linked to the cycle of the seasons.

The lewdness and vulgarity of carnival were directly related to the low degree of control that people had over natural forces and their own emotions. People were openly interdependent upon each other for their bodily sustenance, well-being, recreation, safety and pleasure. We can imagine how populations that could be plunged into crisis by seasonal droughts . . . and other calamities of nature, might take an exaggerated pleasure in their mass leisure forms.

(Rojek 1985:27)

But significantly, if the carnivalesque has been associated with a mode of interaction characteristic of medieval holy days, fairs, and feasts, Bakhtin also finds carnival characterised by the speech and gestures of the marketplace, various forms of free abuse that he called 'Billingsgate', after the old London fish market. Both the work-time relations of the market square and leisure-time social relations provide a context for forms of carnival. The carnivalesque includes a

temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank [which] created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of a special form of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating them from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. A special carnivalesque, marketplace style of expression.

(Bakhtin 1984:10)

Descended from the Middle Age holy days and feasts, festivals marked a rhythmic cycle of anti-ritual in which social hierarchies, moral codes, and virtues were inverted and mocked. It would, however, be wrong to simply dismiss these as 'safety valves' for developing capitalist societies. The 'social control' argument conceals a conspiracy-thesis regarding capitalism which leads to non-explanation (as there is no political or ideological institution which could not in some way be interpreted as an agency of social control),⁹ and reinforces a fallacious notion of society as a closed system, an essentially stable functional totality. Carnival is stron-

gest today in those societies least integrated into the modalities of capitalism (Haiti, for example). Rather, I wish to argue that carnival is the occasion for the enactment of alternative, utopian social arrangements. It was for this reason that Victorian essayists so hotly condemned working-class behaviour on the beach where lewd 'fun' became a threat to not only the social order of classes, but also the discipline which was taken to be synonymous with 'civilisation'.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a 'process of gradual narrowing down of the spectacle, and carnival forms of folk culture, which became small and trivial' (Bakhtin 1984:33) took place. The state encroached on festive life and turned it into parade, while festivities were brought into the home and privatised. The privileges of the marketplace were restricted.

Carnival spirit with its freedom, its utopian character oriented toward the future, was gradually transformed into a mere holiday mood. The feast ceased almost entirely to be the people's second life, their temporary renaissance and renewal . . . but this carnival spirit is indestructible, it continues to fertilize various areas of life and culture.

(Bakhtin 1984:33)

Stallybrass and White (1986) note the manipulation and later villification of carnivalesque modes of social interaction (such as at the feast, fair, theatre) by the emergent eighteenth-century bourgeoisie culminating in Victorian state morality. The separation of the bourgeoisie from the lower classes entailed the repression and individualisation of the carnivalesque. By means of a rigidly enforced set of moral distinctions between 'high' and 'low', the relationship of the middle class to the 'low' and lower classes was transformed from one of inclusion to one of differentiation (Stallybrass and White 1986). However, despite repression and systematic elimination of fairs and fêtes, carnival did not entirely disappear but was merely banished to less 'serious' arenas such as the liminal beach.

Bakhtin's key contribution was his relational approach to the study of high and low cultures and the structural relations between authority and carnival. For example, he notes:

Earth is an element that devours, swallows up the grave, (the

womb) and at the same time an element of birth, or renaissance [sic] (the maternal breasts). Such is the meaning of 'upward' and 'downward' in their cosmic aspect, while in their purely bodily aspect, which is not clearly distinct from the cosmic, the upper part is the face or the head and the lower part is the genital organs, the belly and buttocks. These are absolute not relative topographical connotations.

(Bakhtin 1984:20)

Ivanov argues that Bakhtin anticipated structural anthropology by nearly thirty years. His analysis treats oppositions in a similar manner to that proposed by Lévi-Strauss, seeking links between binary opposites, a process known as *mediation*.

The structural analysis of the ambivalence inherent in the 'marketplace word' and its corresponding imagery led Bakhtin to the conclusion (made independently from and prior to structural mythology) that the 'carnival image strives to embrace and unite in itself both terminal points of the process of becoming or both members of the antithesis: birth-death, youth-age, top-bottom, face-lower bodily stratum, praise-abuse' (Bakhtin). From this standpoint, Bakhtin scrutinized various forms of inverted relations between top and bottom . . . which takes place during carnival. (Ivanov 1974:335)

The carnivalesque as a ritual inversion of the norms of 'high' culture is underscored by the celebration of the corpulent excesses and flows of the grotesque body and the 'lower bodily strata' as opposed to the controlled, disciplined body of propriety and authority. This 'lowest common denominator' is the opposite of the closure of 'taste' and propriety imposed on the disciplined body. Rather, it is un-closed, full of orifices, in becoming: 'a mobile and hybrid creature, disproportionate, exorbitant, outgrowing all limits, obscenely decentred and off-balance, a figural and symbolic resource for parodic exaggeration and inversion' (Sallybrass and White 1986:9) brimming over with abundant flows of energy and matter. The grotesque counterpoint to the formal propriety of authority was typical in the contrast between the medieval revels and feasts, on the one hand, and the ecclesiastical processions of the holy days on the other. In the classic case of the medieval

carnival, the grotesque provided a metonymic link between the sacred spaces of heaven and the secular places of the world through the principle of degradation, lowering all to the material level of the earth and body, asserting the primacy of life. The 'excessive' grotesque body, a symbol of the irrepressible processes and flow of energies, is associated in Bakhtin's analysis with cosmic, social, topographical, and linguistic elements of the world. It is not a manifestation of rational 'economic man' but of the collective, ancestral body of all people (Bakhtin 1984:19). This recoding or transcoding of not just the grotesque body, but all elements of the 'low' in the carnivalesque leads to the inversion and thence the displacement of high-low divisions. An immediate effect is the destabilisation of official meanings (*langue*) and authoritative discourses which rely on clear oppositions and categorizations. This situation of polysemy, Bakhtin calls *heteroglossia*.

The body exposed in the liminal zone of both the medical and the pleasure beach, common to all, shamefully uncovered and scandalously open to the world is exactly such a grotesque body. It is this body that is celebrated in the thousands of copperplate engravings, cartoons and in the pre-Second World War comic postcards (Figures 2.5 and 2.6). In this corpus, the grotesque body is expressed in stereotypes of fat bathers, holidaying dandies, and buxom ladies. The numerous possible transgressions of the 'classical body' are represented in the cartoons and postcards by the interaction of 'grotesques' with authority figures. Red-faced bobbies, army colonels and majors, or other stiff-collared guardians of public morality and propriety are thoroughly catalogued in this genre, along with drunkards, embarrassed lovers, bathers, and prostitutes. In effect, the comic postcards provide a commercialised form of documentation in which the interconnection of images of Brighton and images of the grotesque, carnivalised body is preserved.

If the mass-holiday seashore ever represented a 'safety valve', site of a capitalistic pseudo-liminality which replaced personal transformation with momentary gratification, it did not last long. The beaches were quickly taken over by the older, and more subversive, tradition of the carnival. While there was a shift from the socially coordinated discipline of the medical beach, the carnivalesque beach was controlled through a mixture of norms of

propriety and local by-laws which divided the beaches between different types of user. However, the carnivalesque operated precisely to dissolve the responsible and reasonable individual of Victorian morals into the common member of a mass or community. The carnivalesque zone of the beach liberated subjects from the *micro-powers* encouraging the norms, propriety, and the social dressage of the industrial worker. Amplified by the numbers of Bank Holiday revellers, this instability at the level of the subject was to pose a continuing problem. The debate over morality and dress highlights the operation of the carnivalesque which intervenes on precisely the same discursive level and on the same field as that of the those Foucauldian *micro-powers* which ensure the 'good governance' and commodification of the body. But the carnivalesque operates from the individual to the *social* to reverse these flows of 'coded power' and erase the inscription of individuals in abstract 'subject positions' such as, for example, their work-functions and titles, or their status as legal citizens as defined by the state. Chris Doran argues that this Foucauldian notion of power as a structuring force is manifest in the classification of people by superficially neutral experts and a supposedly neutral state.

Terms like 'working class' or other analytic equivalents... such as the 'people', have been emptied of their meaning over the last century or so, yet such terms have not disappeared. In fact they probably enjoy almost as much popularity today, as they did in their heyday of the early nineteenth century. The crucial difference today is that now such terms are popular among commentators rather than as terms naturally used by people to describe their own experience. This... is... the action of contemporary power. It doesn't work to punish bodies, or even to discipline them, it now works to encode them... The amazing power of this codifying power is that it works by reducing anything outside the code to nonsense.

(Doran 1987:4)

Moral codes can be conceived of as a regulating discipline imposed on the body – discursive codes of 'proper' conduct. However, the discursive effects of the carnivalesque have remained untheorised.¹⁰ The explosion of 'excessive' behaviour and

social pleasures and leisure forms which is found in the seaside carnival is a mark of *resistant* bodies which at least temporarily escape or exceed moral propriety. Against the restraining empiricism, cerebral rationality, emphasis on control and economy, carnival produces a momentary social space based on the politics of pleasure and physical senses. As a 'ritual of resistance', it is 'of the senses', but it decries good 'sense' (Fiske 1986:75). 'Affective investment... outstrips... cognitive meanings' (Maclaren 1987:79). The grotesque carnival bodies on the beach are thus temporarily outside of social norms and embarked on a liminal project, even if they are in sites commercialised and territorialised in such a way as to control or contain any outbreaks of liminality. The foolish, undisciplined body is the most poignant symbol of the carnivalesque – the unclosed body of convexities and orifices, intruding onto and into others' personal space, threatening to transgress and transcend the circumscriptions of the body in the rational categories of Individual, Citizen, Consumer, Worker or Owner. This is the heart of the ecumenicism of Carnival identified by Bakhtin and the source of its power to transcend class divisions.

The lack of sufficient controls (although they had certainly tried: rules, Victorian morals, bathing machines and so on) in the face of the carnival meant that the beach was essentially an open field for social innovation. This re-appropriation and reterritorialisation of the old liminal threshold onto the Other as a social field, the margin of transition between the safety of land and the expanse of the sea, was accomplished through not only the ritual features of liminality. The good-time anarchy of the festival held the old Sublime intimidations of the expansive sea at bay. For some it was more than they could take. Schnyder (1912) documents one local case of hysteria in 'Le cas de Renata', a Freudian study of a young Swiss woman who came to him for treatment for hysteria after a visit to Brighton. Coming from a strict Catholic family of Berne merchants, the sight of promiscuous holiday-makers on the beach provoked deep fears, anorexia, vomiting. Sallybrass and White argue that the case

reveals both the special phobic power of the carnivalesque... for the hysteric and at the same time nicely illustrates the way in which even the marginalized forms of popular festivity

could suddenly re-emerge in the heart of bourgeois life as the very site of potential neurosis.

(Stallybrass and White 1986:180)

Apart from the social carnival in specific spaces such as the beach, the carnivalesque was repressed in the romantic period into the private terrors exemplified by the Gothic novel and horror film – privatised isolation and neurosis rather than celebration and the insolent play with formal codes.

The crowds at Brighton were far more policed and regulated than the crowds of Bakhtin's ideal-type medieval carnival (through the requirements imposed by the conventions and schedules of railway travel and the commodification of the feast in the food stalls). However, there was a genuine reaching out to embrace the social totality of the *national* holiday. The scene on Brighton beach was no medieval carnival, nor was it simply a space of individualistic, bourgeois forms of leisure – a word which finds its etymological roots in the fourteenth-century Latin *leisir*, 'to be allowed'. Leisure is not simply the presence of what is pleasurable and the absence of 'unpleasure', nor is it the absence of work (a common usage). Leisure is what is *licensed* (from the same Latin root) as legitimate pleasure within an economy of coded micro-powers. The importance of the medieval carnival is that it was a classic case of an unlicensed celebration of a socially-acknowledged inter-dependence of all people, made especially poignant by the precarious circumstances of the Middle Ages (Huizinga 1924:30). The carnivalesque is a form of resistance to coded power which explains both the historical continuity of established leisure forms and persistence of the association between illegitimate pleasure and legitimised leisure. Bourdieu (1984) also notes that a bourgeois economy of the body which imposes a 'critical distance' between reflection and corporeal participation distinguishes middle-class spectacles such as the theatre with its ritualised applause and punctual but discontinuous shouts of 'encore' from more popular events such as the football match with its chanting and pitch invasions.

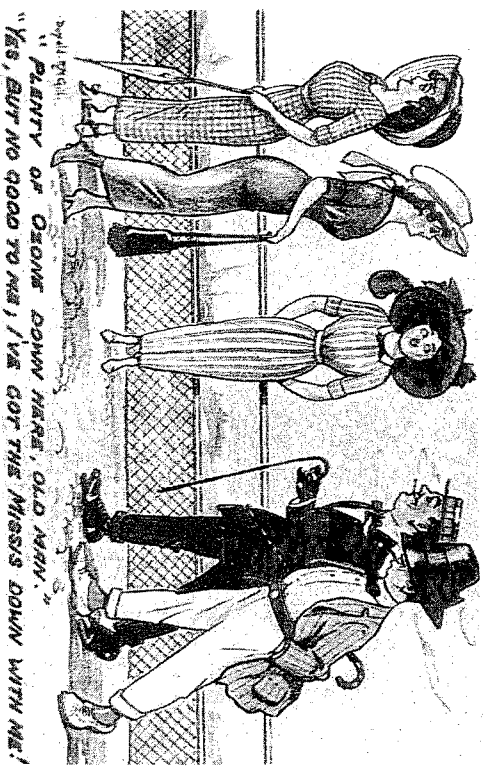
The sociality of the affective community represents an alternative set of social ties parallel to the formalised links of class, guild or work-place titles. The realisation, rehearsal, and celebration of this same interdependence are at the heart of the scene

of holidaying. Commoners who shifted aside the weight of moral distinctions of the Sabbath and propriety to practise carnivalesque forms of unlicensed, relativising, minor transgression along with the licensed, commodified, leisure 'attractions' that lined the beach. Particularly through humour, such transgressions deny class barriers founded on moral reasoning. The rowdy fun and mockery of the holiday-makers instigated a heightened level of reciprocity within the crowd from which it was difficult to withdraw and from which no one was exempt. Although not the individualistic, privatised crowd-practice of the late-twentieth-century *mass* (Maffesoli 1988b), these leisure crowds were modern in their size and their opportunities for anonymity. Nonetheless, they were not the threatening and exclusive late-twentieth-century crowds of, say, football revellers or the crowds occasioned by the alien religious days of groups foreign to us. The much-lamented anonymity of these holiday crowds may be seen as more of a metaphor of the carnivalesque loss of identity, the crowd's inclusive, cross-class character, the erosion of bourgeois privacy and marks of a social order founded on distinction. The crowded beaches and promenades permitted little privacy, and the masses of bodies swept over social divisions and distinctions like so many sand-castles before the tide.

The mass market success of the comic postcards marks the cross-class appeal of what was described as Brighton's 'aliveness'. Their repertoire of triumphant Privates who flaunt their dates before scandalised Majors and inebrates who present apparently logical excuses for their mishaps to red-faced, overweight bobbies in a parody of Reason includes also many 'pillars of the establishment' who are also accomplices in the fun. In many cards a 'moral figure' – often a woman, a policeman, or army sergeant – presents a caricature of the scandalised busybody. Pursuit of 'The Cure', 'taking the air', or 'the ozone' become codes for flirtation with prostitutes or apparently naive beauties (Figure 2.5). Claims to seriousness are lampooned or mocked by revealing these figures of authority playing on the beach like children, for example. Parsons indulge their desires (through alcohol or indiscrete slips of the tongue), or make ill-advised puns and 'Freudian slips' which hint at a lewd comment. Captions expose the risqué aspects of drawings of mundane encounters, carnivalising the seriousness and formally imposed on everyday life. The captions hint at a carnivalesque

parallel-text besides *all* serious discourse. The insistent double coding of a barely-controlled heteroglossia which hints at fundamental social divisions over interpretation and order.

Figure 2.5 'Plenty of ozone', comic postcard

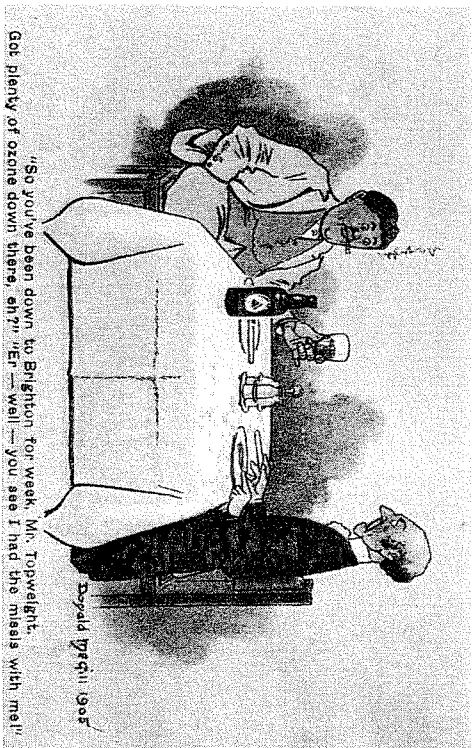


Source: Estate of Donald McGill, East Sussex County Library

Yet, within the carnivalesque one finds a mode of social regulation which tends to moderate the inversions and suspensions of the social order. Why isn't there a permanent, more extreme, carnival? The inversion and mocking of propriety is marked by an instability wherein the normative order is both presented and withdrawn at the same time. While transgressions are allowed, they are restricted to minor transgressions of morbidity, voyeurism, and flirtation with the illicit. In the case of sexual modesty, the comic postcards allude to the same fertile ground of innuendo as the dirty weekend myth. But if they wink at such practices they also exert a kind of governing influence by playing so much on the breaking or bending of taboos. The subject matter is both the carnivalesque transgression of social codes and the embarrassment of being 'caught in the act'. Abashed, red-faced

characters – patriarchs, clergymen, and buxom but mature women – appear often. These cards portray the moment when those freed to enjoy the beach catch themselves with a jerk, like a dozing train passenger. They return suddenly to their 'proper' comportment, having transgressed codes of etiquette, carriage, or social position. The cards present a dialectic of impulsive desires and actions which stop short, for one reason or another: discovery, a turn of the tide, vigilant wives or the revealing question of a child-in-tow (Figure 2.6). Such winking at petty scandal and shame-faced embarrassment points to a mode of self-regulation through shame within the carnivalesque which is quite distinct from the operation of justice and moral regulation through guilt which is more characteristic of Western cultures.

Figure 2.6 'Mr Topweight', comic postcard



Source: Estate of Donald McGill, East Sussex County Library

Despite its new-found popularity as a railway terminus resort, turn-of-the-century popular opinion had held that, since the departure of Victoria, Brighton had been in a long decline (see Preston 1928). Even so, Brighton was still the largest seaside resort in 1901 where all classes mixed. Despite large amounts of capital investment most of the developments (Punch and Judy shows, the aquarium, and dancing palaces) looked back to the early nine-

teenth century not forward (see Pimlott 1975:182). Royal patronage had been a fundamental ingredient in the constitution of the identity of Brighton. It meant an internal inconsistency and frustration in the continuing discourse about Brighton undertaken by such papers as the *Intelligence* and abetted by London journalists who placed it at the centre of the 'system of pleasure'. Even if the town was booming economically, the transition to mass tourist holidays and day-trips was incomplete and the signs of indecision and the decline of the old trade based on the aristocratic Season were palpably evident in the decaying urban environment (see Preston 1928).

However, King Edward chose to visit several times in 1908-9. 'Nothing could exert a finer influence on the fortunes of Brighton. Nothing could be more calculated to bring about an influx of rank and fashion to the town' (*Brighton Herald* 15 February 1908). In 1908 the railway commenced its luxury train service, the *Brighton Belle*, whose scheduled time of 50 minutes from Victoria has never been surpassed to date. The 1909 Easter holiday brought record hotel profits and the crowds in August were the largest ever seen (see Roth 1941:159; Cochran 1945:7).

The hotels became provincial residences for well-known boxers, artists and actresses reaching their zenith in the inter-war years. The Metropole was finished in this period and, as the most modern hotel, together with the West Pier cornered the more 'select' segment of the market (Musgrave 1970:290-1). Brighton hotels provided not only watering-holes but also settings for two generations of British authors:

The pale sea curdled on the shingle and the green tower of the Metropole looked like dug-up coin verdigrised with age-old mold . . . and a well-known popular author displayed his plump too famous face in the window of the Royal Albion, staring out to sea.

(Greene 1936:173)

Personalities were attracted specifically by Brighton's 'aliveness'; not only an image but also a reality of gay crowds and boisterous fun (see Gilbert 1954:215-216). This period saw the development of new forms of consumption with the extension of mass consumption but also with an increasing sense of relative deprivation. This was partly due to the new visibility of wealth through mass

circulation magazines (see Figure 2.7) and radio (see Stevenson and Cook 1979). Brighton boasted its own broadcast hour and resident 'radio organist'. Arnold Bennett's novels *Clayhanger* and *Hilda Lessways* about life in the Staffordshire Potteries were written at the Royal York Hotel and contain several descriptions of Brighton, which provided a thematic contrast with the Potteries which will be taken up in later chapters (Bennett 1910:476; 1911:239).¹¹

The train was in Brighton, sliding over the outskirts of town . . . Hilda saw steep streets of houses that sprawled on the hilly mounds of the great town like ladders: reminiscent of certain streets of her native district, yet quite different, a physiognomy utterly foreign to her. This, then, was Brighton. That which had been a postmark became suddenly a reality, shattering her preconceptions of it, and disappointing her she knew not why.

(Bennett 1911:239)

MODS, ROCKERS AND TURF GANGS: CARNIVALS OF VIOLENCE

Brighton's reputation as a town which accommodated both the wealthy and the poor, both the upright industrial bourgeoisie and the prostitutes and hucksters living by their wits, contributed to a lasting aura of petit-criminality. Inland from the smart Crecents and Parades were narrow terraces where slum-conditions reigned. Some local historians argue that this contrast is a persistent theme in the historiography of Brighton.¹² During the First World War, the impossibility of visiting the Continent had stimulated the Brighton hotel industry. A considerable number of Londoners took refuge from Zeppelin-raids in Brighton and the large Regency houses which had begun to go out of fashion before the war were again easily sold or let (Gilbert 1954:219). But up-turns in the local economy continued to be accompanied by a seedy underside and the striking contrast the poor provided to the very wealthy.

In the inter-war years, Brighton's race-tracks and gambling establishments became the haunt of rival 'turf gangs', who feuded at the race-track and on the front, slashing their victims and enemies with razors. Extortion, loan-sharking, and protection rackets persisted into the 1930s, giving Brighton an unpleasant

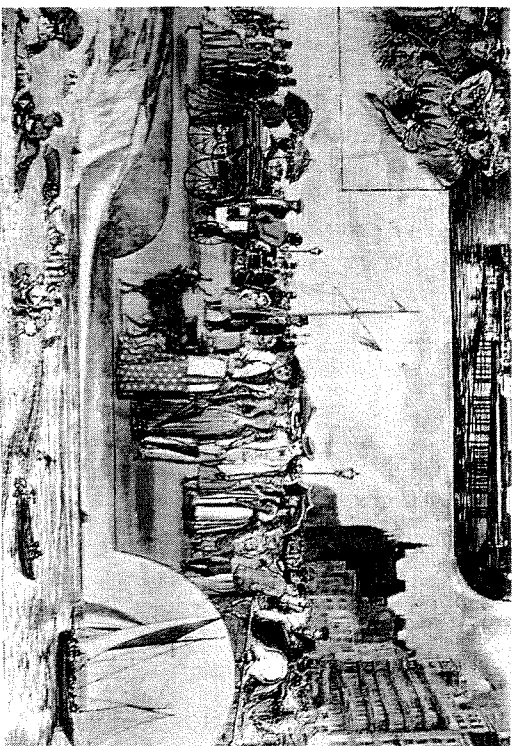
reputation as a 'nice place to visit' on a day-trip but not a nice environment to live in. It became dangerous to walk on the sea-front with assaults taking place even in broad daylight (*Southern Weekly News* 26 May 1928). These gangs reached their apogee in June 1936 when a gang of thirty men, the 'Hoxton Mob', attacked a bookmaker and his clerk but were detained after a mêlée with the police, who had anticipated violence. Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (1936) immortalised this period of gang violence. His Pinkie's gang was an invention and *Brighton Rock* fiction, but it was closely based on the actual reports of track violence. Apart from the slasings, the bizarre 'Trunk Murders' added to Brighton's unsavoury reputation. In one famous case, a man murdered and dismembered his wife, and sent different parts by rail to different destinations as baggage (see Lustgarten 1951:187-238).

But Brighton had long been known as a 'miniature Marseilles' (Lustgarten 1951:188). The Trunk Murders of 1934 were not the first of their kind, the classic case having also taken place in Brighton in 1831 (see Hindley 1875 and Lina Wermuller's *Seven Beauties* movie version, set in Italy). Lowerson and Howkin's argue that Brighton attracted 'rough cultures', a vertical banding of culture in contrast to the horizontal banding of socio-economic classes (1981:72). However, this poses the problem of why Brighton with its liminal and carnivalesque image attracted these groups. On the one hand, the loosening of restraints on violence is a constitutive part of the carnivalesque, exaggerating violent tendencies that might have emerged anywhere. On the other hand, the scene of relatively wealthy people, with a less cautious hand on their wallets, must have been irresistible to con artists and small-time hucksters. With the structuring elements of everyday life removed or destabilised and the primacy of enjoyment and adventurousness in Brighton, the bases on which judgements could be formed were eroded: people would spend more, more impulsively and take more risk.

The status of Brighton as a liminal zone made any and all rumours of transgression, decadence, crime, and degeneration the basis for sensational newspaper reporting, which formed a staple diet of 'Brighton stories' which have circulated in the British press for almost two centuries. These reports served to restate and confirm the spatialisation of Brighton, on the margins of the orderly sphere of 'good governance' which reigned over other

parts of the nation. The 'Brighton Rock' criminal image coexisted with the place-images of decadent, risqué and glamorous Brighton, reinforcing Brighton's liminal place-myth (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 'The million', cartoon, 1920s



Source: East Sussex County Library

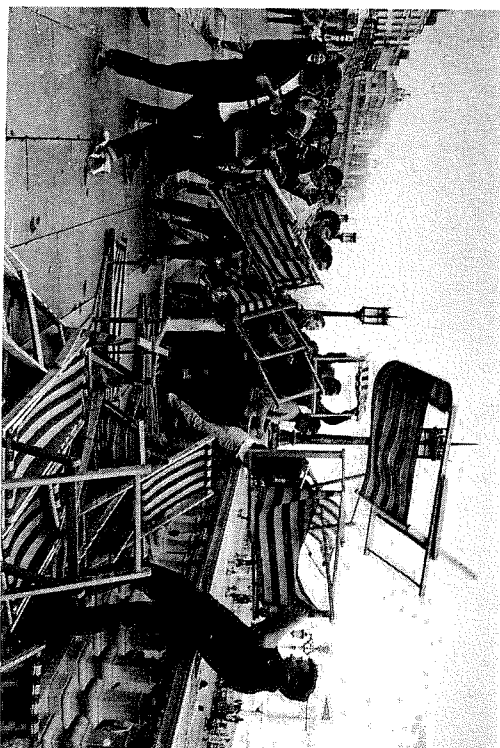
The beach fights between groups of 'Mods' and 'Rockers' of the early 1960s are another example of the liminal breakdown of social order (see Figure 2.8). From the late eighteenth century onwards, Brighton had continued to be a destination for anyone searching for escape: a liminal zone and social periphery in a marginal geographic location 'separated-off by the South Downs' (Brighton Tourism Committee 1954:8).¹³ Mods (from the bebop term 'Modernists') originated in the suburbs of London. Youth from a largely working-class but white-collar background attempted to abstract themselves from traditional class identities. Upward mobility was indicated with a neat, hip image adopted from the dandyism of black Harlem and European jazz artists. Stylistically the culture of the Mods was largely masculine in its trademarks. These included, for the men, suits with narrow trousers and pointed shoes, anoraks for scootering; and for the women, short

hair and a cultivated, dead-pan elegance (Brake 1985:75). Rockers, who eschewed the fashionable snobbery of the Mods (Nuttall 1969:338), presented their alter-ego opposite: class-bound and masculine, low-paid, unskilled manual workers (Barker and Little 1964). Motorcycles became Rockers' symbols of freedom from authority, of mastery and intimidation (Willis 1978), while Mods glamorised accessory-bedecked Italian scooters. Clubs allowed the Mods a glamorous dream world (being in a sense proto-discos) in which class background could be rejected.

The two groups came together on Bank Holidays in the established motoring destination of Brighton (from London, literally the end of the road) with its clubs, glamorous past and reputation for freedom from moral and class restraint. From London, there was no more appropriate Bank Holiday weekend destination, for none of the other seaside resorts in reach of London shared this combination of images. In fact, Mods and Rockers clashed at Brighton on only two occasions (the May and the August Bank Holidays, 1964). In the original news photographs we see scenes of, on the one hand, youths being kicked by assailants, deck chairs been thrown and, on the other hand, grins on the faces of some of the participants in the *mêlée* (see Figure 2.8). The 'riots' were boisterous and violent but the bitterness one associates with rioting is missing. After the media hysteria, those smiles leave the different impression of a boisterous carnival of violence rather than planned attacks by groups of bitter criminal enemies, or the frustration of disenfranchised ethnic groups or the poor. 'Media coverage of a small amount of damage and violence on British seaside beaches on a rather dismal national holiday led to a situation of deviancy amplification' (Brake 1985:64). Only after the notoriety of being media 'folk devils', was there a conscious embracing of the two deviant roles by large numbers of youth. The 'indiscriminate prosecution, local overreaction and media stereotyping' created a 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972) and implied a type of conspiracy: 'the solidifying of amorphous groups of teenagers into some sort of conspiratorial collectivity, which had no concrete existence' (Brake 1985:64). On Brighton beach, Mods and Rockers became visible and socially identifiable groups. The combination of alcohol, drugs, and the release from the restraints of everyday domestic surroundings combined to make the beach

an appropriate and available stage for an explosion of the tensions between the two groups.

Figure 2.8 Beach fights between Mods and Rockers



Source: Brighton and Hove Argus, East Sussex County Library

DIRTY WEEKENDS AND THE CARNIVAL OF SEX

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter noon

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

(T.S. Eliot 1922, *The Waste Land*: III, ll.207-214)

The switch to day-trips and holidays with a broad appeal had brought families, not the single and independent few who could afford the services of prostitutes (who would have to wait for the conference trade with its lonely conferences to expand again).¹⁴ The 'Season' at Brighton, and seaside holidays generally,

continued to present opportunities for the young to meet and flirt with a broad variety of other youth away from the constraints of community gossip and in an atmosphere of relaxed parental surveillance.¹⁵ This was heightened by Brighton's exotic and 'continental' reputation – a reputation as an 'unreal' city widespread enough for T.S. Eliot to incorporate a proposition for a dirty weekend at the Metropole Hotel, into his poem *The Waste Land* (1922:III, 1.214).

The seaside holiday had for long been looked upon as an occasion for boy to meet girl So the precedents existed when the First World War ended and the Boys Came Home. Where precedent was forgotten was the ease with which couples could now pair off, without benefit of chaperon and out of sight of a calculating or a forbidding parental eye. Dance halls showed the way . . . [places] for young middle-class men on holiday to cut a dash and for the girls to have a fling.

(Hern 1967:176)

Despite its prominent image as a place of immorality and indolence, it is very difficult to determine whether or not Brighton's twentieth-century image as a 'dirty weekend destination' was supported by the actual number of divorces that stemmed from adulterous dirty weekends. Records for the Probate and Magistrates Courts and Courts of Assizes are not published in Britain and the original shorthand manuscripts are typically disposed of in an ad hoc manner after fifty years. Neither do law journals routinely publish divorce proceedings unless a point of law has been established. While newspapers generally reported the granting of *decrees nisi* (the nullification of a marriage) the details of the majority of cases are never discussed. Hotel records also prove uninformative sources. Thus, it is impossible to answer whether or not 'dirty weekends' in the 1920s and 1930s – not to mention post-1936 – were just nostalgic re-enactments of the Prince's infidelity. However, as has been argued in the preceding sections, the actual presence or lack of the activity is beside the point: one would not be surprised to find a few cases, but while Brighton enjoyed its 'raffish' reputation, the reality was mostly 'families and a few clergymen'. The question then is about the power of social spatialisation and myths to over-run reality.

Dirty weekends were less spontaneous than one might first expect. They were organised to stage an adulterous affair, as the excuse of infidelity was required for couples seeking a divorce until 1936.

Divorce . . . still carried a slight social stigma in old-fashioned circles, especially where the woman was the offending party; to oblige their guilty wives, therefore, most men were gentlemanly enough to go through the farce of adultery with a 'woman unknown' and thus give their wives grounds for divorcing them. Divorce lawyers, winking at this collusive irregularity, were usually able to fix the husband up with a professional 'woman unknown' and with chambermaids' evidence at some Brighton hotel.

(Graves and Hodge 1950:109)

The practice of what were really sham 'dirty weekends' was made unnecessary by A.P. Herbert's *Divorce Act 1936*. Herbert, a novelist MP, had made 'dirty weekends' infamous in his book *Holy Deadlock* (1934).

As a rule, the gentleman takes the lady to a hotel – Brighton or some such place – enters her in the book as his wife – shares a room with her, and sends the bill to his wife. The wife's agents cause inquiries to be made, and eventually they find the chambermaid who brought the guilty couple their morning tea. A single night used to be sufficient, but the President [of the court] has been tightening things up, and we generally advise a good long weekend-to-day. What you want to suggest, you see, is that there is a real and continuing attachment, not merely a casual fling or a put-up job. That is why Brighton is good, for all the wild lovers are supposed to go there, though I never saw any one at the Capitol but clergymen and family parties. . . .

. . . 'do I actually have to – to – you know?'

'To sleep with the lady? Technically, no. But you must share the same room and you must be in the same bed in the morning when the tea comes up.'

'Good God!' said John. 'What a world!'

(Herbert 1934:31)

The very common-ness of the ploy is fatal to the hopes of the couple for a divorce.

At the fatal word 'hotel', [the Presiding Magistrate], looked up from the pleadings before him and looked down at Mr. Ransom. . . . 'A hotel? At Brighton? . . . All this seems very familiar, Mr. Ransom. And now you are going to tell me, I suppose, that the respondent and the woman . . . spent two nights at this hotel, and were seen in bed by a chambermaid, and the respondent sent the bill to his wife - and so on?'

(Herbert 1934:99-100)

In the novel the husband hires a 'woman unknown' to take to Brighton where they stay at 'the Capitol', a thinly veiled reference to the paramount dirty weekend hotel - the Metropole. Popularly, the name appears to have become synonymous with the illicit. According to Brightonians, its corridors were reputed to be crowded with private detectives - hired by the co-respondent - who obligingly recorded the damning evidence for the case.

Why was Brighton a good setting for infidelity? Even if we took the novelist at his word that 'all the wild lovers are supposed to go there', the theory of the carnivalesque provides further insights. Brighton's liminal status pre-dated the re-formalisation of its image in the dirty weekend myth. In the spatialisation of the British Isles, the beach or the seaside provided an appropriate place, because it was a free zone, 'betwixt and between' social codes. It was a zone, even *conducive* (without being determinate) to lapses in normative behaviour. Second, the long association with the carnivalesque had resulted in a reputation for lack of restraint. Actual, as opposed to mythical, dirty weekends appear to be unconventional, but simply functional, ploys within an adverse institutional context which was hostile to divorces. Brighton was convenient to London, with an established reputation for not only frivolity but also continuing defiance of moral standards. Nonetheless, as a new element in the media-borne place-images of Brighton, the real facts of this material practice are relatively marginal and unremembered in a fable that has grown to mythic proportions. The dirty weekend phenomenon exploited the reputation of Brighton as the scene of the carnivalesque lifting of social norms with consequent immorality, violent murder, and general lack of respect for decency. Dirty weekends incorporated the

carnivalesque place-myth of Brighton into divorce cases, inflecting them with the emotional overtones of a shocking weekend of debauchery at an infamous Brighton hotel, to over-ride the hesitancy of a conservative judiciary. As a variation on Brighton's association with the liminal, the dirty weekend was designed to change the status of the man involved from that of a 'gentleman' to that of an 'advertiser'. The practice was drawn to Brighton, both extending and confirming the power of the town's place-myth.

Such a practice required both planning and enough money to hire a professional 'woman unknown' and to stage a highly visible weekend in Brighton's nightspots. This economic power had to be flanked by a concern for respectability, particularly that of the wife who became the co-respondent, but who was often the originally guilty party. Such features point to the dirty weekend being a middle-class practice. Those lower down on the socio-economic ladder would not have had the spare money and the wealthy and aristocratic would have maintained marriages for the purposes of maintaining family ties while being able to afford to carry on affairs without fear of being ruined by scandal because they did not depend on personal integrity but their titles. The dirty weekend myth represents a 'packaging' of the older myths of indolence and immorality which were reshaped by a material practice closer to the fantasies of middle-classes bound by Victorian moral sanction and norms which imposed a corset of chastity on marital partners and above all on the order of the family. It continued the liminal/carnivalesque place-myth of Brighton, providing a poignant example of liminal behaviour aimed at the heart of hegemonic Victorian middle-class values which was exploited by the press and novelists to great effect. So strong was its impact that this material social practice formed Brighton's carnivalesque/liminal *semiosis*, or meaning, into the particular form of the dirty weekend myth, inflecting the place-myth of Brighton to the present day to the extent that hotels run nostalgic 'Dirty Weekend Specials' where couples sign in anonymously as Mr and Mrs Jones.

The Beach remains spatialised as a liminal zone of potential carnival. In the late 1800s and particularly in the twentieth century up until the rise of foreign holidays eclipsed the seaside resorts in the 1950s, the modes of behaviour characteristic of the beach were normalised and generalised to other social fields and spaces - holiday camps, the interiors of clubs and hotels and so on. At

Brighton, the 'zone of liminality' itself was dissipated through the town, and the excesses of the holiday-makers were exploited by small-time entrepreneurs, who established clubs, hotels, and even brothels which depended on out-of-town day-trippers attracted by the general liminality of Brighton's place-myth. Hence the appropriateness of Brighton with its freedoms – for the elaboration of modes of marginality from the derelicts and the Mods to punks and homeless youth to Brighton's status in the tabloid press as the 'AIDS Capital of Britain' in the 1980s (although it cannot possibly have more cases than more populous London). Opposed to this, attempts to 'make Brighton respectable' may be seen throughout this century. In the 1950s the *Official Handbook* was purged of its allusions to 'Lovely girls in holiday high spirits' (Brighton Tourism Committee 1953:3 and 1954:2) and photos of 'bathing beauties' were replaced with a safe family sports emphasis (1955 through 1967:6–8) rather than the daily beach-front beauty contests in which women could participate to select a 'Queen of the Day'. The Borough Council had begun to promote the town from the late 1930s, attempting to intervene in the carnivalesque place-myth. The Council advertised using a promotional newsreel, 'Playground of the Kings', which was shown in cinemas in Britain, Canada and the United States. A full-time promotions officer was appointed and official guidebooks or 'handbooks' were published. The 1937–1938 *Official Handbook* featured a fictionalised visit by a reluctant couple, 'Northerners by birth and residence, and consequently – like all such – regard the south and all who dwell therein with a kind of indulgent condescension.' Despite their suspicions of Brighton's liminal status, they eventually fall in love with the town – and the guidebook takes every opportunity to stress the literary connections of the town with well-known authors¹⁶ – "Jane Austen would have felt at home here," said Aunt Penelope: "She would and I did," I said, "A visit to Brighton combines every possibility of earthly happiness," those were her very words' (Brighton Tourism Committee 1937:6).

To summarise, roughly three overlapping phases in the disposition of the beach as a social zone have been distinguished:

- *Phase I* 1800–mid 1840s. The medicalised bathing beach and its attached social promenade. The liminal Brighton of Dr Russell and George IV's seaside was established in relation to

what were seen as the staid social arrangements of the Spas and the grimness of London.

- *Phase II* 1850s–1920s: The Brighton beach of the mass seaside day holidays. The carnivalisation of the beach slowly displaced the medicalised, liminal beach and the sublime of the late Victorian middle class. This was complemented by the capitalist reorganisation of liminality by developers, the railway, and the local petit bourgeois. With the stress on 'aliveness' and freedom from oppressive codes of conduct, the carnivalesque beach represented the antithesis of the rational productivity of the everyday environment. Regulation was at first achieved by limiting access through the number of holidays but this was superseded by self-regulation through shame, embarrassment, and humour.

- *Phase III* 1920–Present: Dirty weekends and violence as the transgression of social norms supersede the controls of the institutionalised liminal zone of carnival throughout the town. The images of Brighton as a site of carnival become repackaged in the form of a slowly fading 'dirty weekend' myth.

The position of the beach in the overarching historical social spatialisation has been construed differently over time: reterritorialised from free zone of transition to liminal zone and carnivalesque pleasure zone. Against the theoretical dichotomy which transposes an economic division of production and consumption into geographical terms, this case-history suggests that such a division is overly-simplistic. In such an approach, for leisure to take place, it is presumed that there must be a separation of the site of work from the site of leisure, raising the problem of the different status of 'production spaces' from 'consumption spaces'. These terms have since been adopted by many urban theorists, most notably David Harvey (1982; see Shields 1989). This enshrines a separation which, in view of many men's use of the home almost solely as an after-work domestic leisure centre, excludes housewives from the analyses of some theorists (including some of those at Birmingham's Centre for Cultural and Community Studies cf. Hobson in Tomlinson 1981:65). Surprisingly, this leads to the conclusion that leisure does not exist for women, rather than to a questioning of this *gendered definition of leisure* and an investigation of women's 'non-work' and perhaps inverted forms of pleasure

(for example, the beach-front beauty contests – see *Brighton Herald* 15 August 1938), if it is not to be called leisure. The changing status of the beach, and the furor over the morality and appropriateness of the carnival which erupted at the seaside, open up the question, examined further in the next case, of the relations between genders and with different conventional roles in different periods.

We must take into consideration Bakhtin's contention that the erotic release of carnival is productive in the sense that it re-creates and rejuvenates the psyche. It re-unites the divided parts of the person. Real 'person-work' is thus being done under the guise of leisure on the beach. As the above case-history shows, what divides the beach (pleasure zone) from the factory floor is not a consumption-production divide but a spatial division according to the logic of *rational-libidinal* principles. This is not, then, simply a replacement of the 'hardness' of a geographical site for the intangibilities of 'leisure'. Libidinal energies, as Deleuze and Guattari have argued, are always real and productive (1976). Rational-libidinal divisions have emerged as a primary division of the social spatialisations considered in this case-history and will reappear in the chapters that follow. In an over-arching social spatialisation of Britain, the place-myth of Brighton is located in an imaginary geography *vis-à-vis* the place-myths of other towns and regions which form the contrast which established its reputation as a liminal destination, a social as well as geographical margin, a 'place apart'.

NOTES

1. Defoe said,

The sea is very unkind to this town and has by its continual encroachments, so gain'd upon them, that in a little time the more they might reasonably expect it would eat up the whole town, about 10 houses having been devoured by the water in a few years past; they are now obliged to get a brief granted them, to beg money all over England, to raise banks against the water; the expense of which... will be eight thousand pounds, which if one were to look on the town, would seem to be more than all the houses in it are worth.

(1724 cited in Manning-Sanders 1951:16)

2. Walton comments:

In Lancashire at least, the sea bathing of this time was prophylactic as well as therapeutic in its intent. At various points along the coast, from the Mersey to Morecambe Bay, hundreds of artisans and country people bathed and drank sea water regularly at the August spring tide, which was held to have special powers of purification and regeneration as well as curing all manner of diseases.

(1983:10)

3. The census of 1851 groups Brighton together with ten other seaside towns. Together with the four inland resorts, such towns had experienced a rate of increase in excess of 254 per cent between 1801 and 1851; higher than London (146 per cent) or the fifty-one manufacturing towns (224 per cent) (Census of Great Britain 1851 1852:xlix 'Population Table I').

4. For example, by 1733 it had become so popular that it was rumoured that Walpole proposed to tax sea-bathing:

considering the vast consumption of these waters, there is a design laid of excising them next session; and moreover, that as bathing in the sea is become the general practice of both sexes; and as the Kings of England have always been allowed to be masters of the sea, every person so bathing shall be gauged, and pay so much per foot square as their cubical bulk amounts to.

(Chesterfield 1773 cited in Pimlott 1975:51)

5. Claims and counter-claims regarding the climate at resorts, and even the publication of death-rate of rival resorts, marked the competition for, first, Royal patronage, then mass appeal. As one poet satirically put it in 1841:

If they say that it rains,
Or gives rheumatic pains,
'Tis a libel (I'd like to indict one).

All the world's in surprise

When *any one* dies

(Unless he prefers it) – at Brighton.

(Anon. 'Arion' in *Blackwood's Magazine* 184:150)

There were

calm waters and health-giving trees, breathing balm and correcting the 'too drying and heating property of the air' (at Bournemouth), or the... bracing, nerve-stimulating air (at Scarborough), or relaxing, nerve-soothing air (at Torquay), the 'continual swell and surf of the sea... which... annoys, frightens and spatters the bathers exceedingly' (on the south

coast, when an east coast resort is being advertised), or the 'million of tons of health-giving salt water that flow daily' past the walls of a hotel on the north Cornwall coast (when this is to be preferred to a milder retreat); the ozone in the mud of a muddy shore or the absence of mud on a sandy one; the life-giving emanations of the iodine in seaweed, or the complete freedom from seaweed's noxious effluvia – each and all can be turned to good account, according to the character of the particular place you wished to extol or condemn.

(Manning-Sanders 1951:48–9)

6. Prince Clement Metemrich and King Louis Philippe spent the winter along with the statesmen Brougham, Palmerston, and Aberdeen, as well as the authors Dickens, Macaulay, and Bulwer-Lytton.
7. Even the most localised seaside trades such as selling whelks or Punch and Judy were imported by a London coarser in the former case, and by performers from inland fairs in the case of the latter:

city dwellers at the seaside wanted 'a change of air' . . . They also want to find . . . [what] they were used to. And what they were used to included stalls or barrows selling gingerbeer, pies, sticky sweets, bowls of soup and jellied eels. Quite often the barrow-boy or portable stall-holder would travel down on the first train along with the earliest of his potential customers.

(Hern 1967:78)

8. James White and Prof. Henry Fawcett were the independent Members of Parliament for Brighton elected in July 1865 and re-elected in November 1868.

9. There is no indication in the phrase of who the agents or instigators of social control may be: no indication of any common mechanism whereby social control is enforced: no constant criterion whereby we may judge whether social control has broken down – certainly not conflict, for this may be ultimately, or even inherently, be a means of reinforcing conformity. Nor finally is there any fixed yardstick whereby we may know when social control has been reimposed. Since capitalism is still with us, we can with impunity suppose, if we wish to, that at any time in the last three hundred years, the mechanisms of social control were operating effectively. If a casual allusion to 'social control' turns out to be vacuous, it is equally clear that social control cannot merely be added on to a Marxist interpretation. The phrase social control suggests a static metaphor of equilibrium, which might be disturbed and then reasserted on a new basis. It suggests therefore three successive states – a prior functioning, a period of breakdown, and a renewed state of functioning. Even stopping at

this point we can see a basic incompatibility with any Marxist interpretation. For if we seriously wish to adopt a Marxist explanation, it is impossible to operate this mechanical separation of periods of control and breakdown. A mode of production is irreducibly a contradictory unity of forces and relations of production. Just as, in order to survive, the relations of production must be continually reproduced so is the contradiction embodied within those relations of production continually reproduced. Contradiction is not episodically, but continually present; the antagonism between the producers of the surplus and the owners and controllers of the means of production extracting the surplus, is a structural and permanent feature. Thus class conflict is a permanent feature, not a sign of breakdown, and the conditions in which class conflict may assume explosive or revolutionary forms bear only the emptiest of resemblances to a crude notion conveyed by the phrase 'breakdown of social control'.

(Stedman-Jones 1981: 164–165)

10. Except in the work of scattered writers such as Sade, Bataille, or Nietzsche who try to formulate Bacchanalian excess (see Maffesoli 1985; MacLaren 1988).

11. In Bennett's novel *Clayhanger* (1910) the whole description of the anticipation of an illicit trip to Brighton (though not actually for a dirty weekend *per se*) is given dubious overtones:

On the Thursday he had told Maggie, with affected casualness, that on the Friday he might have to go to London, about a new machine. Sheer invention! Fortunately, Maggie had been well drilled by her father in the manner proper to women in accepting announcements connected with 'business' It was a word that ended arguments, or prevented them. . . . At the shop, 'Stifford,' he had said, 'I suppose you don't happen to know a good hotel in Brighton? I might run down there for the weekend if I don't come back to-morrow. But you needn't say anything.'

'No, sir,' Stifford had discreetly concurred in this suggestion. 'They say there's really only one hotel in Brighton, sir – the Royal Sussex. But I've never been there.'

Edwin had replied: 'Not the Metropole, then?' 'Oh no, sir!' (Bennett 1910:475)

Later, upon his arrival in Brighton, he thinks:

As for Brighton, it corresponded with no dream. It was vaster than any imagining of it. Edwin had only seen the pleasure cities of the poor and of the middling, such as Blackpool and Llandudno. He had not conceived what wealth would do when it

organised itself for the purposes of distraction. . . . Suddenly he saw Brighton in its autumnal pride, Brighton beginning one of its fine week-ends, and he had to admit that the number of rich and idle people in the world surpassed his provincial notions. For miles westwards and miles eastwards, against a formidable background of high, yellow and brown architecture, persons the luxuriousness of any one of whom would have drawn remarks in Bursley, walked or drove or rode in thronging multitudes. . . . The air was full of the . . . consciousness of being correct and successful.

(Bennett 1910:476-477)

12. This argument has been advanced by my colleague at Sussex University, Kevin Meetham.
13. See also the recent movie *Mona Lisa* (1987) where the characters escape from London gangs to Brighton where they are caught up with and where a final seduction, betrayal, and show-down takes place.
14. This assertion is based on the author's own personal observation of the proliferation of 'For a Good Time Call . . .' messages around the Brighton Centre and seafroont conference hotels and the railway station in the late 1980s.
15. This continues today. See for example ITV's 1986 TV drama *Seaside*. The plot turns around the romantic encounter of two young people during family holidays at a seaside resort in the 1950s and around the young man's encounters with a youth gang who become his rivals in romance.
16. A later *Handbook* adds:
- In a novel by one of our most interesting recent authors, a man from the Midlands knows of Brighton as a 'romantic name'. That is what it had been for Arnold Bennett himself when he lived in the Potteries. It is a 'romantic name' to people all over the country. Outside the country too. Its reputation is international. No one who reads English books can help hearing of it. It has a secure place in literature.
- (Brighton Tourism Committee 1938:12)

NIAGARA FALLS

*Honeymoon capital of the world*¹

Father Hennepin, the first white man to see the Falls at Niagara in 1697, wrote of 'an incredible Cataract or Waterfall, which has no equal', whose waters 'foam and boil in a fearful manner':

I wish'd an hundred times that somebody had been with us, who could have describ'd the Wonders of this prodigious frightful Fall, so as to give the Reader a just and natural Idea of it, such as might satisfy him, and create in him an Admiration of this Prodigy of Nature as great as it deserves.

(Hennepin 1698)

Partly because Hennepin's illustrated monograph was so widely distributed, and partly because Hennepin was the first European to have actually seen the Falls,² his description became the paradigm for an image of Niagara which dominated the European imagination for a century: a disorganised topography where water pours from different directions over high, claustrophobic cliffs into a gorge set in an otherwise flat landscape (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

Progressive changes in the attitude towards Niagara Falls and its images and reputation have taken place as a result of opposed advertising images over more than 200 years. Unlike the case of Brighton, Niagara Falls acquired a reputation through self-promotion rather than notoriety. However, similar questions as in the case of Brighton can be asked about why the Falls were an appropriate site for certain activities and not others. Again, at Niagara these activities were liminoid in nature: for several generations of North Americans and still today for East Asian tourists from Japan, Korea, and China, the Falls formed a true pilgrimage