

Bohemia and the Dream-life of the Colonial City

ANDREW McCANN, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Nothing evokes the pleasure of the nineteenth-century city as directly as the term “Bohemia”. By the time Marcus Clarke arrived in Melbourne in 1863, the pleasure of Bohemia, merging economic marginality, cultural distinction and carnivalesque inversion, was already a staple of nineteenth-century writing, a trope in the representation and aestheticisation of everyday life. Needless to say the term does not index the demographic reality of the nineteenth-century city as emphatically as it does the fantasies the city generated about itself. It is no coincidence that the exploration of Bohemia is often phrased by ethnographic journalists as a descent into an underworld hidden beneath the respectable surfaces of society. No metaphor better captures the sense of Bohemia existing in the dream-life of the city, in what Richard Sieburth (after Benjamin) calls its “collective unconscious and phantasmagorical innards” (17).

In so far as textual evocations of Bohemia involve a move towards a heightened and apparently autonomous aesthetic realm, they also suggest, in the manner of affirmative cultural forms, the material conditions motivating the production, circulation and consumption of the sensibility they embody. In Clarke’s writing images of Bohemia invariably return us to the material actuality of commercialisation and commodification, both in nineteenth-century Melbourne and in a broader, increasingly global economy. What turns out to be striking here is the iterability of the representational conventions associated with Bohemia. If nineteenth-century print-culture, journalism especially, seems to devolve upon the local, the cosmopolitanism of print-culture also undermines this sense of local specificity in the textual fabrication of ubiquitous, intensely aestheticized urban experiences. This paradox, I want to suggest, is specific to a kind of colonial modernity in which the local and the everyday emerge as objects of representation at precisely the moment when the transportability of tropes, conventions and sensibilities, erodes their substance. What I ultimately want to get at here is the manner in

which the Bohemian – related to notions of vagabondage, itinerancy, ephemera and marginality – negotiates or embodies this contradiction, pointing to an identity grounded in the groundlessness of modernity itself.

A COLONIAL GRUB STREET

According to James Smith, writing in 1878 in the *Melbourne Review*, “Colonial literature has not yet emerged from the Grub-street condition, and the ‘poor author,’ unless on the staff of a newspaper or in the safe anchorage of a Government appointment, occupies much the same position as he did in England in the time of Goldsmith and Richard Savage”. Local writing is neglected in the colonies, Smith goes on to explain, because colonial taste is predictably beholden to the “the shadow of England’s mighty and ever-spreading literature” (“Colonial Literature” 337–38). As a consequence, literary life in colonial Melbourne was characterised by the confusion of two realms that in England were regarded as embodying quite different degrees of cultural distinction: journalism and literature. Because the distinction between literature and journalism corresponds, for Smith, to a distinction between “literature as art and as mere merchandise,” the inability to separate the two seems to condemn colonial writing to the fallen space of the market, where writing is mass produced and ephemeral, rather than of enduring cultural value. The terms established here are indicative of a conservative set of categories that oppose disinterested literary production, oriented towards some sort of spiritually or morally renovating experience, to merely popular forms of writing directed at and defined by the marketplace. The spuriousness of these terms is quite directly born out in textual evocations of Bohemia. While the Bohemian could make a claim to cultural distinction by embodying an heroic, Romantic temperament that defined itself against the market, s/he was also thoroughly implicated in the economics of writing, forced by sheer necessity into hack-work, which is a central trope in fictions of Romantic suffering. Representations of this dilemma, which themselves frequently claim to be written from the margins of official literary culture in the name of economic necessity, almost by definition confound the distinction between high and low culture. Aesthetic resistance to the logic of commodity-capitalism reappears as a form of light literature in newspaper supplements or popular journals. If we can designate something like a Bohemian style in the period, it would be precisely the self-conscious propagation of cultural distinction and aesthetic resistance as qualities one circulates through forms of writing emphatically associated with a broader commercialisation of culture.

Though the terms Smith deploys fail to represent the diversity and complexity of nineteenth-century literary production, they did, nevertheless, have sufficient currency in the period to impact upon the ways in which writers and readers positioned themselves in both Britain and the colonies. According to Smith, the fact that the colonies

had not managed to progress beyond a repetition of the Grub Street dilemma implies, quite predictably, a distinction between the colony and the imperial metropolis, in which the former is seen as lacking the kind of cultural distinction that was possible in London. But Smith was also insightful enough to explain this as a consequence of the market for literature in the colonies, where readers were oriented towards metropolitan writing and journals, to the neglect of local authors. Partly because of the ways in which cultural hierarchies were mapped onto the relationship between the metropolis and the colony, colonial writers seemed sentenced to struggle interminably within the literary marketplace, with little hope of finding the wider novel-reading public capable of delivering them from the purgatory of a colonial Grub Street. Local writers with the Romantic aspiration of separating themselves from the compromising pressures of the marketplace were thus seldom under the illusion that they were not also emphatically subject to the marketplace, forced to adapt their writing in more pragmatic directions in order to survive. To the degree to which a literary public sphere developed in mid-century Melbourne, it did so as an extension of the newspaper office. If anything, this meant that the compensatory romance of literary Bohemia in colonial Melbourne was all the more intensely and self-consciously performed.

In 1867 Clarke began working for the *Argus*. He quickly found himself immersed in a world of journalists and writers that reproduced itself in a colonial version of café society. Together with Adam Lindsay Gordon, George Gordon McCrae, Frederick Haddon, Alfred Telo and J.J. Shillinglaw, he founded the Yorick Club in 1868 (Clarke was its first secretary), and in doing so created one of the enduring images of nineteenth-century Melbourne. It is on the Yorick Club and the figures who formed it that a Romantic vision of nineteenth-century Melbourne is based, a vision in which the colonial city harbours the possibilities of a Grub Street or a Latin Quarter, such that Melbourne itself emerges as a kind of demimonde, a site of grotesque realism in which the city embodies the transgressiveness of Bohemia, as Balzac evoked it in his “A Prince of Bohemia” for instance. This fantasy, of course, is evident in much of Clarke’s own journalistic writing, in which grotesque images of urban space associated with literary and theatrical society are frequent.

The reality of the Yorick Club, we can be fairly sure, didn’t quite live up to the images of Bohemian revelry associated with it. The club began as an informal gathering at Nissen’s café, but due to the stolid nature of the regular patrons Clarke, Haddon and Shillinglaw decided to rent a room next door to the *Argus* office. The Yorick Club was initially conceived as a literary society, but quickly lost its exclusivity. According to Hugh McCrae “there were not enough bookmen to give it numerical strength” and as a result the rules had to be altered to include not only “the fellowship of the press,” but men of much more diverse backgrounds: “Mute inglorious Milton’s, doctors who had published treatises on whooping-cough; even lawyers, responsible for indigestible digests, began to drift in” (35). As the Yorick Club lost its ability to represent cultural exclusivity or distinction, the office of the *Colonial Monthly*, then owned and edited by

Clarke, became an alternative meeting place, known as the Cave of Adullum, described in *Twixt Shadow and Shine* as the Society of the Native Companions (Clarke, 60–65).

Clarke took control of the *Colonial Monthly* in 1868 and gave it up little more than a year later. His involvement in it proved to be financially disastrous (see Elliott 107–29). This first attempt to run a literary journal, however, does indicate a dynamic quite central to the imagining of a Bohemian literary culture. If the image of Bohemia is deployed partly as a way of claiming cultural distinction, as a way of distinguishing oneself from middle class professions that had a much more pragmatic orientation to the world of commerce, the Bohemian ideal was to translate this notion of distinction into a social position that was safely sequestered from the necessity of literary hack-work in the press. While poverty might have been a badge of honour, Clarke also tried to forge an identity as a writer that would allow him the freedom from necessity that is the dream of Bohemia in the first place. This, of course, involved attaining the cultural legitimacy of the consecrated writers that James Smith, for instance, juxtaposed to the mere producers of journalism. The *Colonial Monthly* was Clarke's first attempt to claim this cultural legitimacy. Through it he published his first novel, *Long Odds*, but the journal also paid attention to Australian literature as a specific entity in its own right capable of sustaining critical reflection. It included a series of articles discussing the poetry of Charles Harpur and Henry Kendall, who himself regularly published poetry for the journal, and it implicitly tried to produce a meta-discourse about its own production and circulation. In so doing it also made a claim for its cultural significance, which would reside partly in its ability to circulate and survive as an object of critical scrutiny – an object, that is, of contemplation rather than mere consumption. These issues are raised directly by the journal in an 1869 essay criticising Victoria's postal laws, which restricted the circulation of colonial literature with the high cost of mailing serials and magazines:

as matters stand, we have practically no literary rewards, honours, or hopes of fame to offer to colonial youth . . . The local author in Victoria has been and is systematically kept down. It is appointed by law that he shall not write for popular serials, because the publisher's profit is so artificially restricted, that he cannot afford to pay for original composition, and he must not raise his price in the face of English competition artificially favoured. ("Restrictions upon Colonial Literature" 23–24)

In January the following year, after Clarke had relinquished control of the journal, Henry Kendall echoed these sentiments with a plea for the cultivation of a colonial literature: "We have men amongst us who can and have done something racy of the soil, who are willing to continue their efforts in the domain of polite letters, and who are only waiting for some assurance that the Australian public appreciate those efforts" ("Introductory" 327). The demand of the local public for imported writing, and the

way in which the postal laws had been framed in acknowledgment of this, seemed to prevent colonial writers from attaining the kind of distinction associated with a phrase like “polite letters”, and activated an anxiety about the very existence of a public colonial writers could address at all.

There was, needless, to say, some financial urgency in all of this. Clarke would have been aware of the example of Charles Whitehead, a talented journalist and novelist in London who succumbed to alcoholism and finally migrated to Australia. Arriving in Melbourne in 1857, Whitehead also failed to make a name for himself in the colonies and died in poverty in 1862, nursed by James Neild (who would himself become a member of the Yorick Club), the year before Clarke’s arrival. For James Smith, predictably, Whitehead’s failure in Melbourne indicated the difficulty with which the genuine man of letters adapted to the economic realities of the colonies. Whitehead, Smith wrote, “was a man of letters to his fingers’ ends; refined, scholarly, sensitive, delicate-minded, and but scantily equipped with worldly wisdom.” This sensitivity, in Smith’s view, was radically incompatible with the vulgar demands of the marketplace:

He was devoid of self-assertion, aggressiveness, adaptability to the circumstances of a new country, impudence and push; and was therefore foredoomed to failure. He was over-flowing with talent; but it is a talent of that kind which is only marketable in an old and highly civilised community. He was a poet, but he did not know how to write songs to be sung in a goldfield’s concert-hall. He was a novelist of more than ordinary ability, but he was not the sort of man to manufacture sensational clap-trap out of a murder in a hansom cab. (“A Forgotten Genius” 1054)

Whitehead’s image lingers like a spectre over the Bohemia Clarke imagined. In fact *Long Odds* in many ways reflects the struggle for literary legitimacy that was being played out in the *Colonial Monthly* at the time that it was being serialised, presenting bleak portraits of writers who, much like Whitehead, struggle and fail to drag themselves out of the rut of either literary hack-work or menial labour. One of the novel’s principal images of failed literary ambition is Septimus Bland, who is linked to eighteenth-century figures like Richard Savage in much the same way that Whitehead would have been, by virtue of his own novel, *Richard Savage: a Romance of Real Life*. Clarke’s portrait is a harrowing image of mediocrity crushed by market forces and compelled to retreat into historical nostalgia:

He fell gradually from the writer in magazines to the reporter for the Sunday papers, then to the picker up of odds and ends for the ‘dailies.’ His style of magazine-writing was too old fashioned for the present day – too much like the *Spectator*, or an odd page of the *Rambler*. Moreover, his wife fell ill; how could he write articles when his wife was dying? The publishers,

however, did not care about his wife or anybody's wife; they wanted matter, and if Bland could not supply it, someone else could. By and by his wife died and then Bland lived anyhow . . . when he did not succeed in dining with one of his former friends, [he] would buy himself a chop or steak in some small tavern or eating-house in the city, where he would sit, after satisfying his hunger, and think of Johnson and Garrick, Boswell and Savage, and the former race of tavern-haunters. (*Heavy Odds* 37)

The more depressing aspects of literary life in colonial Melbourne are also evident in much of Kendall's writing. Kendall wrote for the *Colonial Monthly* and, with Clarke, co-edited *Humbug* soon after. It is not surprising that his most morbid evocation of literary Bohemia should also turn to the figure of Charles Whitehead. Echoing the demimonde poems he wrote for *Humbug* ("The Demon of Drink," "Rhodopis in Melbourne," and "Famine and Fashion"), Kendall returns to the streets of Melbourne in an 1879 poem, entitled "On a Street". The poem opens by linking urban space to memory: "A fierce old memory drags me back – / I hate its name – I dread the street." But memory quickly becomes hallucination and haunting: "A ghost is with me day and night." Kendall goes on to tell the story of Whitehead ("poor W – – of Melbourne" as he wrote in a note to the poem) and his wife, evoking both melodrama and the Gothic atmosphere that frequently accompanies his evocations of landscape. Bohemia is an underworld and Charles Whitehead, a patron saint of all literary failures, is its spectral inhabitant (*Poetical Works* 417–20).

The poem shares a great deal even with Clarke's most flippant descriptions of café life and theatre going. Kendall's poem, with its Gothic overtones, is a sombre piece of Romantic grotesquerie in which elegy is also bound up with dreams and hallucinations. Even Clarke's most light-hearted accounts of Bohemian life also suggest elements of the grotesque, evident in competing images of excessive consumption and abject poverty. Like Kendall's poem these are also bound up with the optics of hallucination and phantasmagoria. If the plight of the writer in the colonies was one defined by the difficulty of obtaining cultural distinction and even a simple livelihood, as Whitehead's example illustrates, textual representations of Bohemia seldom take place in the register of a social realism supposedly adequate to these hardships. On the contrary, the imbricated experiences of both commodification and colonialism through which the colonial writer was subjected to the laws of the market without the hope of transcending them, is also constantly giving way to various forms of aesthetic pleasure linked to a heightened imaginative capacity. If the trope of Bohemia suggests the writer's marginalisation in regard to notions of cultural distinction and his thralldom to the hack-work of the press, it also constantly suggests an imaginative overcoming of these relations: a release from the banality of the quotidian, into the pleasures of the imagination, which is made substantive in the visions of the writer's mind. Precisely as a meditation on economic reality, the text of Bohemia generates a range of hallucinatory effects through

which it asserts its aesthetic autonomy from that reality. This autonomy, in turn, marks its desirability as an object to be consumed. No one exploited this dynamic more effectively than Clarke.

THE CITY AS PHANTASMAGORIA: SKETCHES OF MELBOURNE LOW LIFE

In 1868 and 1869 Clarke wrote a number of ethnographic sketches of Melbourne's Bohemian demimonde and criminal underworld. In the "Night Scenes in Melbourne" series, published in the *Argus* between February and March 1868, Clarke's visions of the city are lent some veracity by the claim that his urban explorations took place with police assistance. But for Clarke the persona of the bourgeois journalist as an agent of official surveillance was a fleeting one. In articles like those published in the *Australasian* as part of the "Lower Bohemia" series the following year, the sense that his journalistic descriptions of the city were somehow allied to official efforts to maintain order and police Melbourne's criminal elements gives way to a more deliberately stylised set of literary effects that make no attempt to conceal their interest in the city as an imaginative space. At this point in his career Clarke was clearly infatuated with the Romantic grotesquerie of Victor Hugo. His interest in the carnivalesque, and the related figures of the harlequin and vagabond as embodiments of its transgressive energies, clearly reflects this. No word captures the *frisson* of these urban sketches better than the one Clarke himself used, inspired no doubt by Hugo, to describe his own principle mode of descriptive prose: phantasmagoria. In "A Melbourne Alsatia," for example, the poverty, disease and crime of the city is a "phantasmagoria of horrors, ever changing and shifting" (Hergenhan 126), and indeed Clarke never tired of using the term, which itself has an almost talisman-like quality in his work. The notion of the phantasmagoria raises an ambiguity that is central to the affect of Clarke's journalism. In the nineteenth century the word referred both to images generated by the imagination and to those generated by the spectacular and increasingly mechanised forms of popular culture that developed out of devices like the magic lantern. It was frequently used to mark the undecidable relationship between these. Phantasmagoria suggests, in other words, the point at which the autonomy of the imagination as it is expressed in the subject's psychic life – in dreams, fantasies and the kind of poetry associated with the Romantic movement – is itself mediated by forms of popular culture associated with a developing market for urban entertainment. Terry Castle describes the phantasmagorical spectacle as partaking of the "bizarre, claustrophobic surroundings, the mood of Gothic strangeness and terror, the rapid phantom-train of images, the disorientation and powerlessness of the spectator" (155). This passage nicely describes the kinds of textual effects with which Clarke was fascinated, and which repeatedly appear in his sketches of urban life.

These sketches, despite their stylistic excesses, also resemble what Walter Benjamin described as dioramic or panoramic literature, which was also intimately connected to

the development of journalism in the nineteenth century and a sense of its place in a competitive market. According to Margaret Cohen, panoramic literature is related to the emergence of the “everyday” as a viable object of social and literary inquiry. This can be attributed largely to the development of a bourgeois reading public for which the press became an important mode of self-confirmation and self-exploration. Panoramic literature, by this reckoning, examined first and foremost the social characteristics of a newly-dominant class formation and, in the case of ethnographic journalism oriented to the policing of the lower classes, consolidated this formation with images of threatening social difference. In a British context the work of both George Sala and Henry Mayhew, both of whom Clarke greatly admired, conformed to this genre. While panoramic literature, in Cohen’s discussion, refers to bound books dedicated to the representation of contemporary life, it is also clear that this style was shared by a number of other genres – notably cheaper, mass-produced *physiologies* and the kind of ethnographic description and reportage that appeared in the supplementary sections of the daily and weekly papers.

In mid-nineteenth-century Melbourne these forms were also evident. Daily papers like the *Argus* and the *Age* both published weekly supplementary sections (the *Australasian* and the *Leader*), which became spaces for serial fiction (*feuilletons*), and reportage in which the everyday life of the city, and indeed the cityscape itself, emerged as an object of representation and consumption. At the same time publications like the *Australian Journal*, which Clarke edited between March 1870 and September 1871, devoted considerable space to the trivial, everyday events of city life, including descriptions of city streets and social types (such as “the dandy”), and regular sections devoted to “monthly gossip” and current crazes. Indeed much of the fiction published in the *Australian Journal*, Mary Fortune’s detective fiction and Patrick Shanahan’s demimonde sketches, for example, develop out of the availability of the everyday, such that an intimacy with the minutia of urban space – street names, addresses, recognisable landmarks etc. – literally enables narrativisation. The forms of descriptive prose involved here themselves assume that the writer is situated in urban space with a degree of leisure requisite for disengaged observation. The persona of the Bohemian was thus both appropriate to, and a natural outgrowth of, the panoramic genre. In the first of his “Wicked World” sketches, published in the *Herald’s* supplement, the *Weekly Times*, in 1874, Clarke describes the origins of the panoramic mode, and in fact the everyday itself as an object of representation, as direct results of his peripatetic idleness:

Standing one day and surveying the struggling humanity beneath the twenty yards of verandah, I thought – is there not here a life which might be with propriety depicted, is there not here something of human interest not altogether unnoteworthy, something of modern civilisation not quite unentertaining? And thus reflecting I conceived the notion of a series of sketches which should embody this Camomile Street civilisation, this

evanescent life of the share-market, this fleeting romance of speculation, this pushing of doctors, this preaching of parsons, this confusion of opera, carriages, mines, misery, journalism, theatres, politics, and worldly prudence which we call Life in Fawkner's-town. (Hergenhan 307)

As this passage makes clear, the realm of the everyday, what Clarke refers to simply as "Life," is also the realm of the ephemeral. The everyday is saturated by the logic of fashion in which interest is fleeting, cyclical, renewable, ultimately transient, and prone to obsolescence. This is also, of course, the economy of desire in which the journalist is caught. His writing is an object of consumption rather than contemplation. It is disposable rather than enduring. It seems to belong, in short, to the realm of the commodity, what Smith called merchandise, rather than to culture in the sense of something timelessly suspended above the marketplace.

Of course, from the point of view of the consumer, the allure of the commodity should not be underestimated. Marxist cultural theory has convincingly shown how the commodity involves what Cohen, drawing upon both Marx and Benjamin, calls a "phantasmagorical displacement of itself" ("Panoramic Literature" 239). That is to say that the commodity masks the process of production out of which it emerges and the process of consumption through which it is exhausted and finally discarded. Its fetish character is what enables it to conceal its materiality. The commodity, in other words, seems to remove itself from its own material context, seems to deny its own reality as both labour and as ephemera. This is the sense in which Walter Benjamin uses the word "phantasmagoria" throughout *The Arcades Project* to describe a kind of ideological projection bound up with the imbricated processes of fantasy and commodification (see Cohen's *Profane Illuminations* 217–59). If the word embodies the constitutive undecidability of interiority and exteriority, the sovereign imagination of Romantic literature and the forms of cultural mediation that typify popular entertainment, for Benjamin the term also suggests the ways in which desire, directed towards the mythic or utopian, is also inseparable from the commodity. This is the key to his interest in nineteenth-century Paris as a space dominated by phantasmagoric embodiments of collective desire that also reveal the historicity of capitalism – the dominance of the commodity form over psychic life. In the ephemeral cultural forms of the nineteenth-century city Benjamin reads the dreamwork of capitalism. What this dream reveals is the utopian desire for a release from the temporality of modernity, a release from the everyday as a place in fact defined by the processes of capitalism. Benjamin clearly states this in "Paris Capital of the Nineteenth Century":

In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history (*Urgeschichte*) – that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society – as stored in the unconscious of the collective – engender, through inter-

penetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its traces in a thousand configurations, from enduring edifices to passing fashions. (4–5)

Modernity, in other words, is the “world dominated by its phantasmagorias” (Benjamin 26).

In Clarke’s journalism the city is a space of desire, while the journalistic sketch is itself deployed as an object of desire within the space it represents. The sense of Clarke’s writing as phantasmagoric describes its orientation to the world of mass entertainment and visual technology, but also its materialisation of collective desire. The frenetic nature of his journalistic prose, in which an emphasis on the mobility of the narrative perspective and the changeability of the scenes being described evoke the “phantom-train” of actual phantasmagorias, seems to move beyond the static forms of the visual diorama and the cyclorama. By departing from a strict realism and processing the familiar world of the city as a grotesquely animated *tableau vivant*, Clarke’s own visions of Lower Bohemia also gradually alienate the reader from the city in the fabrication of a spectacular experience. Crowds slowly cease to be simply crowds and become motley collections of ragged, grotesquely disordered odds and ends. The familiar is reproduced as a dangerous realm of hidden difference before the reader’s very eyes. In this shift one increasingly experiences the city not as one’s own everyday context, but as an image of metropolitan life that marks itself as radically other to the everyday. The textual phantasmagoria becomes phantasmagoric in the sense intended by Benjamin. Precisely as a function of its aesthetic autonomy, it offers this utopian transcendence of the everyday.

COMMODIFICATION AND THE CARNIVALESQUE

Because Clarke’s sketches of Melbourne utilised a style of prose that was associated with the journalism of the European metropolis, they could also recreate Melbourne in the image of London or Paris. Yet these same sketches of Lower Bohemia also adapted the imagery of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and of Cooper’s American frontier, in order to portray it as an uncivilised wilderness threatening the very assumptions of bourgeois cultural normalcy. If his sketches identified the colonial settlement with the imperial metropolis, they did so partly because they also evoked the city as a place of illegitimate, transgressive and potentially anarchic pleasure associated with undomesticated nature, not culture. In a way the Bohemian, especially as it merges in the “Lower Bohemia” series, is an avatar of the kind of bestiality associated with Crusoe’s wilderness. Bohemia, whatever else it maybe, is also an image of the mob, of the people given over to transgression and the criminal exercise of its desire. This is, of course, bound up with the aesthetics of the grotesque and, relatedly, the phantasmagorical evocation of the city as a space of aesthetic intensity which Clarke derives from the European writers he admired so much – Dickens, De Quincey, Balzac, Hugo and Hoffmann. Hugo’s Court of Miracles epitomised the aesthetics of the grotesque for Clarke as he was writing the “Lower Bohemia” series. In *Notre-Dame of Paris* the Court of miracles is:

a city of thieves, a hideous wen on the face of Paris . . . a bogus hospital where gypsies, unfrocked priests, ruined students and wastrels from every nation, Spaniards, Italians, Germans, and of every religion, Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, idolators, were beggars covered in artificial sores by day and transformed themselves by night into brigands; in short, a vast dressing-room, in which the entire cast of the everlasting comedy performed in the streets of Paris by theft, prostitution and murder, donned and removed their costumes. (100)

This kind of passage has a complicated textual history. We find forms of description very similar in texts that set out to identify the various types of criminal and deviant behaviour inhabiting the city. Here the desire to produce an exhaustive taxonomy, in order to make crime visible and hence controllable, produced a form of descriptive prose which Jon Klancher nicely sums up with the phrase the “anthologised crowd” (82). Reproduced in a slightly different textual space, in something recognisable as imaginative literature as opposed to official observation, it could also represent the imagined pleasure of the very forms of transgression presented in such disciplinary texts.

Without doubt the most canonical image of the “anthologised crowd” we have is Marx’s famous evocation of the lumpenproletariat in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Implicitly drawing upon Hugo, Marx’s evocation of Paris under the spell of Bonaparte is suggestive of the anarchy and the theatricality of the Court of Miracles. A speculator in the gullibility of the masses, Bonaparte’s Society of 10 December remains marginal to the forces of production and legitimate class identity as Marx understands them, precisely because it is a conglomeration of isolated interests, each under the mesmeric control of the demagogue, rather than a collective identity capable of embodying the progressive forces of history. The sense of the mass as a series of grotesque individualities is captured in the taxonomic character of the description:

Alongside decayed roués of doubtful origin and uncertain means of subsistence, alongside ruined and adventurous scions of the bourgeoisie, there were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged criminals, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, confidence tricksters, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, sleight-of-hand experts, gamblers, *maquereaux*, brothel-keepers, porters, pen-pushers, organ-grinders, rag-and-bone merchants, knife-grinders, tinkers, and beggars, in short, the whole indeterminate fragmented mass, tossed backwards and forwards, which the French call *la bohème*. (197)

As Marx’s analysis makes clear, the lumpenproletariat, or as he calls it here, *la bohème*, is ephemeral in the sense that it does not embody an enduring form of class identity, but merely obeys the dictates of political fashion. Despite the fact that Marx is criticising the mob’s lack of progressive political commitment and the ease with which it is

seduced by Bonaparte, it is also clear that his description of the lumpenproletariat is laden with a kind of pleasure very similar to that embodied in Hugo's prose. Jeffrey Mehlman captures this very precisely when he describes the "Rabelasian verve" of the "motley cast of the Marxian *farce*" (13). It is no coincidence that Benjamin returned to Marx's image of Bohemia in his work on Charles Baudelaire, where the Bohemian emerges as a motif in the representation of everyday life, and embodies the phantasmagoric pleasure of freedom from the everyday, the promise of the classless society literalised in Marx's lumpenproletariat, but in a negative way. This, too, is the appeal of Clarke's "Lower Bohemia" series, where the rhetoric of the anthologised crowd is a central convention in the evocation of the Romantic grotesque.

Hither come, as in a dream of Jacques Callot, the ragged sinners, the sham-sick men, the worthless, the lazy, the good-for-nothing, the beggars, the liars, the imposters, the thieves, the vagabonds, the drunkards, the men who spend their lives between tavern and tavern, the men who hate work and live in the sun, like woodlice; the men who know no other existence than that which consists of periods of violent labour alternated with bestial intervals of ferocious debauchery; the swagsman, the station hand, the tramper from station to station, the worn-out toiler, the young thief, the hopeless, the houseless, venomous, barbarous tribes of Lower Bohemia. (Hergenhan 165–66)

As was the case for both Hugo and Marx, this description is closely bound up with forms of bodily pleasure and a kind of theatricality that carries traces of the harlequinade, of the grotesque, in short what, after Mikhail Bakhtin, we could call the carnivalesque.

In the introduction to *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin traces the migration of the carnivalesque practices of medieval and renaissance peasantry into the Romantic grotesque of nineteenth-century literature, where it is readable as a trace memory of the social energies embodied in the actual practice of carnival. By the nineteenth century stylistic elements associated with the carnival, and the forms of grotesque realism it spawned, had been separated out from an original communal context and redeployed as purely aesthetic tropes and conventions. Though the carnival ceased to be an actual social practice central to the life of rapidly modernising societies, its utopian energy still persisted, but now in the fallen world of the aesthetic. In the Romantic grotesque of Hugo, for instance, traces of the carnival are reworked into the various aesthetic affects that made his work so enthralling to individual readers. (In *Notre-Dame of Paris* these effects are literally associated with carnival in the procession of the feast of fools). The carnival becomes a spectacle, part of a purely literary tradition, just as its communal, utopian spirit is "transposed into a subjective idealistic philosophy" (Bakhtin 37) and finally associated with a range of affects that designate the repressed or obscene dimension of a rationalised society: the uncanny, the alien, the inhuman. The utopian

trace memory inherent in the modern grotesque accounts for the ambiguous kind of identification it evokes as both object of fascination and repulsion, pleasure and unpleasure. This is also the ambiguity inherent in Hugo's Court of Miracles, in Marx's lumpenproletariat and in Clarke's descriptions of Lower Bohemia as a realm of bestiality. The mob, the mass, the anarchic or the criminal crowd, in other words, emerge as figures for the pleasure and anxiety associated with carnival. By the middle of the nineteenth century, then, the image of the mass functioned as a source of imagined transgression and hence of pleasure for an audience of private readers. The mass, in other words, has become exactly the kind of image that Benjamin would describe as phantasmagoric – an image of freedom, of utopian desire, of classlessness, entirely contained by the forms and processes of commodification.

The textual representation of the crowd as an object of consumerist pleasure also effectively transformed the public itself into a society of docile consumers fascinated by commodified, objectified images of its own potential for disorder. The transformation of the dangerous collective into a society of isolated, monadic subjects, in other words, is partially related to processes of spectacularization oriented to the archaic image of the crowd itself (see Schwartz 1–12). For a colonial public, however, this kind of spectacularization was a good deal more complex. Clarke's journalistic examination of Lower Bohemia did not simply present the urban mass back to a public of readers, it also had the effect of urbanising space itself, of representing colonial Melbourne precisely as a space that was dense and mysterious enough to be spectacularized in the first place. In his journalism a city that was barely thirty years old emerges as one capable of producing that same sorts of aesthetic effects as Hugo's Paris or Mayhew's London. The citational quality of these sketches is important here. Because they so conspicuously evoked their European precedents, even citing them directly, Clarke's visions of Melbourne also embodied a certain kind of literariness which aspired to the cultural distinction of European writing. The colonial, in this sense, emerges as a miraculous repetition of the metropolitan, both in that the colonial city is implicitly likened to an imperial capital and in the sense that the very textual fabric of the physiological sketch evoked metropolitan textual norms. But the colonial, in so far as it is literally beyond the limits of the old world, is also a netherworld of sorts, a refuge for the Bohemian and criminal outcasts of Europe. And, needless to say, to be marginal in regard to metropolitan sociability can also embody something quite integrally modern. By this reckoning itinerancy, vagabondage and the colonial itself become signs of an identity that is exemplary in its modernity precisely because it is detached from residual notions of the local and thus embodies a radical kind of displacement.

The anthologised crowd, a powerful metonym for city spaces, emblematises this paradox of being grounded in groundlessness. On the one hand, the mass is the opposite of a people or a community, in the Romantic sense of *Volk* and *Gemeinschaft*, just as textual representations of it are so ubiquitous that they themselves lack any kind of local cultural specificity. On the other hand, its evocation was often all about locality,

or the appearance of locality – all about the mapping of particular urban spaces that frequently involve quite minute levels of detail. Both politically and textually ephemeral, its paradoxical nature imperfectly gestures towards its own location in a new and barely representable space defined by transportability, iteration and affect. In this space the public is a collection of consumers, the nation is a market, and the mythic is a moment of uncanny atavism in the aesthetic-subjective experience of the modern citizen. This is the space explored and occupied by so much of Clarke's work. It is a space where Bohemian fantasies of a local character end up collapsing into a non-space, a ubiquitous kind of urbanism, in which the Bohemian is always, but paradoxically, at home.

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