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The Opening Ceremony: Immaterial Regulation and the Imaginary Architectures of Pleasure

Abstract

This paper will address the relations of production caught up in the architecture and event of the travelling street fair. Making reference to the organizational, material and spatial arrangement of the fair itself, analysis will move between one account of these relations as they are portrayed in the formal public ritual of the *Opening Ceremony*, to another, obscured account that can be traced in the immaterial and invisible architectures of laws, regulations and mores that underlie and determine this arrangement. It will discuss the locus and extent of 'imaginary distortions' (after Althusser) and relationships, or *charaktermaske* (after Marx), thus revealed.

Introduction

In his 1970 article, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards and Investigation)' Louis Althusser argued that:

'[A]ll ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them.'¹

This article considers the tensions he perceived between real and imagined relations of production, and how they are manifested or masked in the production of the travelling street fair. The travelling fair brings together rides, attractions, and food stalls which are set up for a short time—typically two or three days—in towns and villages all over Europe. The recorded histories of many fairs date back nearly 800 years, but they are almost certainly much older, and remain hugely popular forms of entertainment. In the UK in particular, travelling fairs squeeze into impossibly tight urban spaces, while others take up grand boulevards, some fill market places or take over open fields. The focus here is less on the architectural, material stuff of the fair as it is physically present on site—which is probably more familiar from our own experience of fairs, and which has been discussed by architectural writers such as David Braithwaite²—and more with the (invisible) planning and setting out of each fair. Combining archival study and fieldwork, this investigation focuses on Ilkeston Fair which occupies a number of central sites in the heart of this market town for four days every October, while also making reference to other street fairs that form part of the so-called 'Back End Run' of the annual calendar.

At Ilkeston as at other Charter Fairs and Wakes in England an Opening Ceremony marks the event's beginning. Siding with Althusser, I argue that these ceremonies epitomize a broader *productive misrecognition*³ concerning the relations of production pertaining between various interested parties, not all of whom are present at the ceremony. Moreover, although these ceremonies make explicit reference to ancient sources of authority that sanction and underwrite

the fair, little if any of this authority remains within the contemporary processes of production of these events. As with many other architectures, the relations of production of the temporary street fair are not directly legible in its product. Moreover, they are explicitly masked during the Opening Ceremony. Where this ceremony invites us to turn a blind eye, this article will examine the dynamics, processes and interests of production that prevail behind the scenes of the situation presented in this public ritual via three 'apparatuses': the site boundary; layout drawings; and financial (and other) transactions. 'Apparatus' is used here in Althusser's sense to name a discrete network comprising people, things, and communication, whose internal relationships regulate individual and collective behaviours. An apparatus can work at multiple scales and include various modalities of matter, and various forces of regulation or ideology determine its operation. Indeed, the article approaches the Opening Ceremony via these apparatuses because Althusser's formulation insists that we consider the 'immaterial' forces that operate within—the (invisible) planning and setting out of each fair; the laws and regulations that govern its material and architectural realization which will be referred to here as 'hard control', and which contrast to equally important forces of 'soft control' (sometimes referred to as 'social control'⁴) exercised through the unwritten mores pertaining to the various interested parties that produce and uphold the laws and regulations. According to Althusser, these need to be considered together: they all co-exist in particular ways in each historically specific, materialised example of apparatus.

The total environment of the fair—its physical extension and its atmosphere—is referred to as the 'tober', and the regulatory architecture that governs it is every bit as complex as that experienced by more conventional architectural production, and probably more opaque. It involves complex systems of rules and regulations, some of which are legislative, some of which involve more implicit or tacit codes. While the contemporary tober would be recognizable in fairs from 100 years ago, the less visible combination of hard and soft control that continues to prevail began to emerge 200 years ago. Throughout this period, soft control has had a more influential effect on the control of fairs than hard control, despite the significant accumulation of legislation on the statute book. The latter was usually associated with what could be termed *counterproductive misrecognition* that condemned, and tried to curtail, the permissive environment of the fair.

The Opening Ceremony

Two general views of the Opening Ceremony from Ilkeston Fair are given in figure 1. One was taken in 1969, the other in 2012 but very little difference is perceptible between them. Despite the continuity, tradition and solidarity demonstrated so deliberately in these ceremonies, they bring together a number of different groups with very different interests in the fair and very different capacities to assert control over the broader fair environment.

Opening Ceremonies foreground what the Annales School refer to as the *longue durée*, those all-but-permanent or slowly evolving aspects that are deliberately repeated in these rituals. Without exception, they involve the same kinds of characters and the same processes. It is common for a less formal walkabout to follow the more formal presentation, readings and speeches. In

some fairs, the exact location changes, but these changes are prescribed and follow a set pattern. In addition to the unchanging nature of the ceremonies themselves, the way they are reported is also very formulaic, especially in *The World's Fair*, the weekly newspaper for the travelling showmen's community.⁵ But the *longue durée* is fabricated, both by historians and participants. In Eric Hobsbawm's famous formulation, Opening Ceremony is an 'invented tradition' (and would fall across two of his 'types', symbolizing social cohesion and the membership of groups, real and artificial communities; and legitimizing institutions, status and relations of authority).⁶ Despite this portrayal of the deep historical connection, the *longue durée*, that exists between the town and the fair, the history of the fair in its current form is very recent. While there is some truth in the ritualized symbolic connections claimed and represented in the ceremony, those claims overreach the facts, while being caught up in a complex dynamic of continuity and change.

At Ilkeston, for example, the 'Civic Party' includes key representatives from the Local Authority (council officials), the Burghers of the town (the Mayor), the showmen (regional officials from the *Showmen's Guild of Great Britain* (SGGB)), dignitaries from the local area/region, plus ceremonial officials (the mace bearer, town crier, the ceremonial bells, and so on) as well as an officially invited gaggle of local school children and the watching crowd. The ceremony takes place on a small stage in front of the town hall, in the Market Square, facing the church, and adjacent to the Carnegie Library, Erewash Museum, and police headquarters. We can question how closely this ceremony represents the relations of production. Neither workers are present, nor dissenters: it is the employers, nobility, and civic figures who take up their place in the ceremony. The carefully staged relationships between these various parties are legible in a different way in the architecture of the fair itself. From the 'ideology' symbolized in the Opening Ceremony to the existing relations of production, the productive misrecognition that holds these two in an awkward relationship can be deconstructed to reveal something of the 'industries' involved in the invisible architecture of the fair.

So what relations of production are communicated in the Opening Ceremony? The Ilkeston ceremony makes explicit reference to (parts of) the Charter issued by Henry III in 1252. The Charter is taken to provide the founding authority for the fair, although as Vanessa Toulmin has argued, there is some ambiguity around what was actually granted by a Charter, to whom, and for whose benefit.⁷ Nevertheless, this ambiguity is forgotten and the Charter is read out as part of the ceremony. In the case of Ilkeston, the Charter states:

Know ye that we have granted and by this our Charter confirmed to our beloved and faithful Hugh son of Ralph... that he and his heirs for ever... at his aforesaid Manor of Elkesdon ... shall have there one fair every year to continue on the vigil and on the day of the assumption of the Blessed Mary Unless such Market and such Fair be to the Nuisance of the neighbouring Markets and neighbouring Fairs.⁸

This is interesting, as it only sets out a contract between two parties: the crown and the town or local nobility—here, 'Hugh son of Ralph, ... and his heirs for ever.'⁹ This could be stretched to three, if the neighbours are counted; or even to four, if the Church is included, which it is by implication. Neither the Showmen nor the citizens of the town are involved in this contract.

While the Opening Ceremony makes explicit reference to this Charter document, and to an imaginary (more straightforward) relationship it sets up, the full cast of the ceremony points to a fuller (but by no means definitive) set of relationships that includes the showmen and punters (children, crowd). To supplement the fetish of the Charter, these other relationships are frequently acknowledged and symbolized in the Opening Ceremony with additional fetishes. At Ilkeston, for example, the ceremony involves the ringing of a pair of silver bells which were presented to the town by the SGGB to represent the bond between them.

Figure 2 sets out the full list of protagonists and their institutional affiliation or symbolic role. While this clearly exceeds the contract announced in the Charter, when compared to the fuller account of the various institutions involved in the production of this fair set out in Figure 3, evidence of the lack of fit, or the extent of 'imaginary distortion' between the (imaginary) relationships at the Ceremony and the actual relationships operating behind the scenes, starts to become apparent. While many ritual theorists understandably emphasize the need to focus on the specificity and materiality of ritual, these diagrams indicate the extensive field that is omitted or obscured from the Opening Ceremony. And while Bell summarises a wide range of work that demonstrates such formality to be neither empty nor trivial, arguing that '[a]s a restricted code of behavior, formalized activities can be aesthetically as well as politically compelling',¹⁰ this is not the whole story. Indeed to overlook the less visible referents of the Opening Ceremony is to ignore Althusser's nuanced understanding of material.

Apparatus I: The site boundary (or 'Where is the fair?')

Althusser elaborates on the complex relationship between immaterial forces of law and regulation, and the material existence of the ideologies written into these forces. He asserts that all matter has an ideological existence: 'an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.'¹¹ As reflected in the sub-title, 'Notes Towards an Investigation', he offers a more practical analytical tip regarding how we should approach the 'material' of such investigations, namely 'that "matter is discussed in many senses", or rather that it exists in different modalities, all rooted in the last instance in "physical" matter.'¹² For him, these modalities of physical matter must be understood to include material actions (the movement of things and bodies through space), physical bodily movements, rituals, gestures, thoughts and speech acts. All these material practices are defined and directed by 'the material ideological apparatus' that operates to orchestrate and police behavior at the fair, but the very ideas governing such actions are 'reshuffled' out of sight.¹³

Taking up Althusser's advice into the context of the Opening Ceremony can guide an interrogation of the various ideological forces that lurk in different modalities behind the material scenes of the fair more broadly. Although the Opening Ceremony cites the Charter as the sole source of authority on which the fair is based, its key point of reference and legitimacy, in nearly all cases that document is vague about the fair's location and duration. Rarely do charters define anything like a 'site', they simply name a town or even a local nobleman. As Peter Dowling, Solicitor to the SGGB, has explained:

Where a market or fair is granted to be held in a district such as a borough, township or manor, it may be held throughout the district or in any one or more places within it.¹⁴

In practice, the instructions set out in the Charter have had to be supplemented with a range of legislation that has accumulated from the Victorian era (including the *Metropolitan Police Act 1829*, *Theatre Act 1843*, *Museums Act 1845*, *Markets and Fairs Clauses Act 1847*, *Metropolitan Fairs Act 1868*, and the *Fairs Acts 1871*), in order to set up the fair site each year, but the site boundary of the fair (identified perhaps through its street closures) remains ambiguous.

These fairs are now commonly organized by the local council, often through the Fairs Officer, although many other local, regional and national agencies and organisations are involved, each of which refers to different statutory instruments and Acts for guidance, instruction or authority. For example, the local council is able to close roads under Section 21 of the *Town Police Clauses Act 1847*, while the county council (highways agency) is able to close roads under Section 14 & Section 16A of the *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984*. Both of these instruments are brought to bear simultaneously in setting up the (moveable) boundaries and road-closures. Two different authorities draw on powers set out in two different Acts to organize the 'same' territory and event. (see Fig. 4)

As a 'site boundary' apparatus, then, some of its aspects operate at national, regional, and (very) local scales. They have material manifestations (signs, barriers), they have material consequences and an impact on vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow, and they have a prior 'material' or mediated presence (announcements in local papers, council websites, laminated notices around the town). They have ambiguous legislative powers behind them (the various Acts) enacted by different official bodies more or less simultaneously; and they are unstable (the boundaries move back and forth during the fair, and the full extent of permitted road closures are not often taken up, but are there to provide the Fairs Officer with some room for contingencies).

It is against this thoroughgoing ambiguity that the Opening Ceremony reasserts an unchanging aspect of the fair. It offers certainty in front of uncertainty. However, the only institution involved both in setting the site boundary and in the Opening Ceremony is the local council. Church, crown, regional and national government are typically all absent.

Apparatus II: Layout Drawings

Until relatively recently in the history of fairs, there was no planning, just a race to the site that resulted in many crashes en route between fairs, and frequent fights between showmen as they arrived on site. An anonymous article that appeared in *The Showman* in 1906 noted how, until the middle of the nineteenth century,

the shows were allowed to come into St Giles' Street at midnight [on] Sunday, and as in those days there was no one to allot the ground, there used to be some pretty squabbles and the free fights for the best positions and it was generally daybreak when everyone had got comfortably—or uncomfortably—settled down.¹⁵

The physical complexity of rides and townscape that gives each fair its character and identity is now carefully planned. The organization of fairs falls to the Fairs

Officer, and draws extensively on national and local government legislation, as well as the showmen themselves (mainly through the 'Rules' of their national body, the SGGB), although the respective intra- and inter-organisational relations, contributions and influence of these parties varies significantly.

Ilkeston Fair reveals some interesting blind spots in the various plans that have been produced historically, where one of the main areas of the fair situated on the Market Place has been organised by showman Pat Collins and his family, heirs and successors for decades, and is shown on the overall layout plan simply as a pink box. (Fig. 5) Surprisingly (given today's tendency for overarching control asserted in every facet of life) this historical characteristic has grown, and there are now nine organizational zones to Ilkeston fair: while six of these are overseen by the Fairs Officer, and one falls under her direct control, the organization of two zones remains with long established showmen's families (Pat Collins/Anthony Harris, and Mellors of Nottingham). What is experienced as chaos is planned by a multiplicity to be perceived and consumed as a 'whole'.

Another aspect of the fair's planning that disrupts the picture of its unchanging nature, its link to 'tradition' and deep history put about by the Opening Ceremony, can be identified on the plan drawings themselves. The Ilkeston plans show significantly different approaches to organizing and implementing what is claimed to be the same thing. Comparing plans from across the twentieth century, changes in graphic conventions are easy to spot. Some (usually earlier) plans just show the frontage line or 'fair line', with no depth drawn in on plan (Fig. 6). Like the experience of the fair, this graphic and organizational technique represents it as all façade no depth, and it raises the issue of the relationship between the fair and the town. When the fair arrives, it effectively cuckold the town, with rides and attractions located directly in front of shopfronts and businesses. Disputes between local businesses and showmen are often resolved with reference to a particular fair's Charter, which showmen use to 'prove' they were there first.

In addition to these disputes, those responsible for planning the fair have to arbitrate between different showmen regarding the positions of particular rides or attractions. Just as it is not quite clear who or what holds the 'right' to hold the fair (the Charter gave permission to Hugh, now assumed to have passed to Erewash Borough Council), or where it will be, nor is it clear when which showmen accrued rights to their particular pitch. The SGGB history dates from late nineteenth century, as an organization that emerged from the *United Kingdom Showmen and Van Dwellers' Protection Association (The Showmen's Guild)* (founded in 1890), and *The British Roundabout Proprietors' and Showmen's Union*, a related Union active in the early years of the twentieth century.

The 'Rules' of the SGGB only date from 1902 or thereabouts, but the establishment of rights at Ilkeston did not settle down until later in the twentieth century, as the council continued to exercise more power in the planning process than did the showmen. Clearly for much of the twentieth century (apart from one year during the 1930s, when Mellor & Hibble outbid Pat Collins for the prime site on Market Place), Collins has not been subject to the more detailed planning process organized by the local council. Collins was an extremely powerful man in the national organization of the SSGB (he was known as the 'King of Showmen'), and his heir, Anthony Harris, continues to exercise the same respect and

influence. It was clearly unthinkable for his claim to the Market Place to be contested. His claim to this area, and smaller operators' individual claims to particular locations, are now enshrined in the SGGB 'Rules' concerning 'Established Rights of Tenure at a Fair', more commonly known as the 'Two-year Rule': with 2 years' occupation of a particular pitch, rights are assured, transferable on death to family or transferred—at a cost—to another showman.

Duncan Dallas has argued that this 'Two-year Rule...is perhaps the most important of the Guild's rulings, [and] seems...to prevent the kind of pressures which normally operate in a free market.'¹⁶ While this has provided a high degree of protection to the fairground industry as a whole, ensuring that showmen with smaller resources were not simply swallowed up by the more powerful families, it has also effectively petrified the SGGB hierarchy in the form in which it was found in the early years of the twentieth century.

These 'Rules' are set out in the SGGB Yearbook, a confidential document only available to members. While they govern the majority of showmen in the UK, they have no legal authority. If the local council, who according to the Charter is the owner of the fair, were to ignore the Established Rights of Tenure at a fair, what would happen? The local section or national council of the SGGB could call the fair 'out of order,' but this could open the door for independent ride owners to take up the vacant sites that might not be possible in a fair the size of Ilkeston. Thus there remains an unvoiced negotiation regarding control over the fair's organization that goes on behind the scenes and exceeds the narrow constraints of legal frameworks and police systems. Both hard and soft control constitutes the dynamics of 'social control' but this full breadth of control is buried behind the smiles of the Opening Ceremony's Civic Party.

At Ilkeston, this situation has recently been taken up as a positive delegation of organization by the Fairs Officer. Although the Local Authority now 'own' the fair, the event can only take place with the extensive cooperation of the SGGB, an exercise of what Julia Black calls 'decentered regulation', that is 'characterised as dispersed across social, institutional, and political contexts, and not confined to any specific organizational form or process' as Rob Imrie and Emma Street put it.¹⁷ But paradoxically, at the very same time that they are delegating zones of the fair to showmen and changing the relationship between town and SGGB, the layout plans are showing the fullest possible control over the fairground environment. There has been a tendency for plans in the last 20 years to start drawing rides more fully in plan, and to add other supporting equipment including generators, living vans and more recently the police and St John's Ambulance posts. This progressive tendency to set out and control everything correlates closely to the increasing reach of the Health and Safety Executive and other legislation, whose influence is illustrated in Figure 7, which exerts another, changing layer of control at both the overall scale of the fair, and the scale of the individual rides' positions.¹⁸

Apparatus III: Financial and Other Transactions (or 'what is the fair for?')

Although the Opening Ceremony presents itself as a public invitation to consume all the fun of the fair, it also attempts to smooth over the variety of economic exchanges that take place in this market. The fair operates simultaneously with economies of pleasure and commerce. Regarding the latter, the town (who hold

the charter) facilitates a market relationship where the showmen can make money from the citizens of the town. In direct contradiction of this fact, at opening ceremonies the showmen frequently present money to the town from a collection amongst their members, to be donated to a good cause.

Another purpose of the layout plans such as that illustrated in Figure 6 concerns their role in calculating the rent (per linear foot of frontage) to be paid by the showmen to the Local Authority. Arguably, this rental is the most straightforward of all the economic exchanges that accompany the fair, and the local authorities do not make any significant money from it, running simply to cover costs (although the fair clearly brings attention and footfall to the town). As Peter Dowling has written regarding the legal justification for the 'monopoly' granted by the Charter:

The Monarch has always had the power to grant to a subject the right to hold a market or fair. Such right is in the nature of a franchise, the essence of which is that the holder has a monopoly. The justification for such a monopoly is that the existence of the market is for the benefit of the public. A grant of a new market usually contains a clause to the effect that the market must not damage any neighbouring market. If such a clause is not expressed in the grant it is implied by law.¹⁹

For the showmen, they are at the fair to make money, and behind the generous donation they make in public, their coffers are filled up by the crowds enjoying the event. In addition to this commercial transaction though, they are also in it for tradition, and with a strong sense of obligation and loyalty to the events where they have attended and presented rides and attractions for generations.

Within the community of showmen is a recognized hierarchy that influences who has the best (and most lucrative) sites, and as set out in the 'Two-year rule' it is common for the most powerful families to retain the best sites. At Ilkeston Pat Collins/Anthony Harris have remained on what is arguably the best site at that fair, located at its physical center and enjoying the most visible location. More recently, the Mellors family has operated in a similar way on Pimlico, a large site physically close to the Market Place, but that is more of an enclosed bottleneck that can draw and keep a crowd. Not only do these families have 'Established Tenure' on these sites, but they also exercise independent control over the layout of these two areas, each of which is effectively a fair within a fair. They are also influential within the SGGB, where there exists a rigid, hierarchical structure from established patriarchs down to gaff-lads. It is the top of this hierarchy who parade in the Civic Party, complete with their chains of office, and the ceremonial rides taken by the Mayor take place on their attractions.

Present too at the Opening Ceremony is an invited group of school children, which serves as a proxy for the punters in general. While these lucky kids at the ceremony are given tokens for free rides, the broader relationship between showmen and punters must not be lumped together and distorted—infantilized—in this way. The fair provides for many kinds of transaction between the crowds and the attractions, offering pleasures without price: many of those in the crowd go simply because of the event as a whole, while others go just to loiter at the side of a specific ride, and hours can be spent simply consuming the spectacle and sharing collective excitement. Within this economy

of pleasure, the town burghers arguably gain kudos for their generosity of spirit. Although they only set out to break even, a more expansive model of accounting would record them making a steady gain.

Apart from the simple and transparent rental calculations, these other exchanges are more difficult to quantify, prone as they are to the double imaginary distortion that Althusser observes. But while Althusser's thinking on ideology and production remains informed by his close reading of Marx, the industry of the fair confounds conventional Marxist wisdom in certain regards (while also playing out the paradox of industrialized leisure). Although the showmen's continuing investment in the latest technologies can be explained as a desire to maximize surplus value by speeding up the process of erecting and dismantling rides (reducing labour costs and increasing the time a ride can be operational) and by offering ever greater levels of experiential thrill for punters (maximizing the market for such rides), other rides and attractions play to the crowd's nostalgia: historical rides, beautifully preserved, grace most fairs—the carousel, the slip or helter-skelter, antique big-wheels, cake-walks and so on. There is even a niche for 'vintage' modern rides such as old dodgems and waltzers.

This offer of new and old, novelty and tradition, supplemented by familiar smells and surroundings, reinforces perceptions that the fair exists to give punters a good time rather than to make money for the showmen, and operates to mask perceptions that the system of social relations caught up in the production (and consumption) of the fair has changed at all. These contradictions are repressed all through the fair, and most explicitly in the symbolic form of the Opening Ceremony.

Conclusion

Although the 'misrecognition' that Althusser observes can be mapped on to the ritual processes of the Opening Ceremony, those participating in public rituals do so knowingly as several critical anthropologists and ethnographers have observed. Participants are not duped into attending, nor does everyone swallow the symbolic misrepresentation set out at the Opening Ceremony. Public events such as the Opening Ceremony are effectively staged by and for the various parties involved. Where the story it tells comes from is far less important than the how the ceremony gives a certain form to the dominant values holding the various parties (including the audience) together. Anthropologist and ritual theorist Catherine Bell asserts the specific and contingent importance of such public rituals for the various constituencies concerned. She argues that ritual systems are not concerned with 'social integration', but 'insofar as they establish hierarchical social relations, they are also concerned with distinguishing local identities, ordering social differences, and controlling the contention and negotiation involved in the appropriation of symbols.'²⁰ In this ritual, the extent of the contention and terms of negotiation are complex: in their broadest terms there are two aspects that have been covered in this article. Firstly, the distorted presentation of complex power structures that simplify the dynamics of soft power and social control; and secondly, a distorted presentation of the anything-goes, unstructured and uncontrolled nature of the fair, when this is in fact a highly controlled environment. In the former, the actual balance of power is

fairly stable, remaining broadly unchanged since the early twentieth century, although this is dressed up as a much more ancient relationship in the Opening Ceremony; in contrast, the latter experiences steady change, particularly with the increasing reach of health and safety legislation.

Indeed, at the fair, the 'necessarily imaginary distortion [of] all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production' soothes the conflict between many differing forms of regulation and control, from mediaeval royal charters, to Victorian public order & local policing Acts, modern highway legislation and Health & Safety Executive (HSE) prescriptions, as well as the (secret) Rules of the SGGB. While all of these are forgotten—or more actively displaced—behind the smiles of the Opening Ceremony, their impact is writ large into the architectural environment of the fairground. In common with more conventional 'industries' and sites of architectural production, the displacement of the powers that control relations of production remains largely unacknowledged or unspoken. However, at the fair, while the dynamics of exchange—involving complex economies of commerce and pleasure just noted—exceed the restricted economies symbolized at the Opening Ceremony, the same audience is effectively in attendance at both moments.

Marx set out the notion of *charaktermaske* to describe the general role-playing of 'buyer' and 'seller' in the market, and the dynamics of an agreed misrecognition that this involved. With the *charaktermaske* things and relations appear not as they are, but what is unusual about the architecture of the street fair is that the dynamics of masking or misrecognition are fairly clear for all involved, even if the detailed play of power relations remains obscure. The Opening Ceremony knowingly distorts these while providing prima facie evidence that the *charaktermaske* remains intact, an agreed conceit that fronts the ambiguous, real relations of production of the fair. Bell picks up a feature 'intrinsic to practice [which] is a fundamental "misrecognition" of what it is doing, a misrecognition of its limits and constraints, and of the relationship between its ends and its means. An appreciation of the dynamics of misrecognition as such goes back to the Marxist argument that a society could not exist "unless it disguised to itself the real basis of that existence."²¹

Although Althusser does not explicitly take up Marx's *charaktermaske*, the necessarily imaginary distortions of imagined relations that are presented in the ideology of the Opening Ceremony can be taken as a practice that operates with a similar, knowing self-deception or strategic blindness. Without *disguising to itself the real basis of its existence*, namely as a business venture run by the showmen, the event of the Opening Ceremony would falter. An appreciation of the niceties and motivations of its imaginary distortions has to exceed the juridico-legislative, state-centered relations enshrined in the Charter, and involve more complex and more obscure modes of social relationships pertaining between the communities of showmen and the citizens and burghers of the host town, some of which were sketched out here through three apparatuses.

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Notes:

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- ¹ Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)', [1970] in *Lenin & Philosophy*, tr. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 164–5.
 - ² David Braithwaite, *Fairground Architecture* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1976). For a lengthy consideration of architectural writing on the material objects of the fair, see my 'Illusory Objects and Fairground Architecture' in *The Journal of Architecture*, vol 20 no. 2 (2015): 309–354.
 - ³ I am borrowing this term most directly from Victor Buchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) who in turn borrows the notion from William Pietz, 'The Problem of the Fetish, I' in *Res* 9 (1985): 5–17, although several other anthropologists and thinkers have investigated the role of misrecognition. For a good overview, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. Ch 4 'Action and Practice'. With specific reference to Bourdieu's work on misrecognition and ideology, Bell emphasises: 'Misrecognition is [...] not a matter of being duped, but a strategy for appropriating symbols, despite how structured and structuring the symbols may prove to be in practice.' 190–1.
 - ⁴ A. P. Donajrodzki (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (London: Croom Helm, 1977).

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- 5 When a change takes place, it makes headlines: consider the sensational 'Break With Tradition at Hull Opening' by Malcolm Farrelly, in *The World's Fair*, no.5636, (12-18 October 2012), 1, 3.
For related articles concerning the Opening Ceremonies at the other fairs discussed here, see Paul Tandy 'Something for Everyone at Oxford St Giles' *The World's Fair*, no.5631 (September 7–13, 2012), 1–2; Andrew McKinley, 'Large Crowds for Opening of Ilkeston Charter Fair,' in *The World's Fair*, no.5645, (December 14–20, 2012), 4; and David Springthorpe, 'Partnership Works at Loughborough,' *The World's Fair*, no.5597, (January 13–19 2012), 5.
- 6 Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. [1983] (Cambridge: Canto, Cambridge University Press, 1992 edition). For a fuller explanation of all three overlapping 'types', see Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions,' *ibid*, 9.
- 7 Vanessa Toulmin, *Pleasurelands*, (Uckfield: Windmill Press, 2003), 5.
- 8 Henry III. Ilkeston Charter Roll, (Windsor, 10th day of April, 1252)
- 9 Henry III, Ilkeston Charter Roll
- 10 Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 141.
- 11 Althusser, 'Ideology', 166.
- 12 Althusser, 'Ideology', 166.
- 13 Althusser, 'Ideology', 169–70.
- 14 Dowling, 'Charter Fairs and Markets' section 19.2.1.
- 15 Anon, *The Showman*, 31 August 1906.
- 16 Duncan Dallas *The Travelling People* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 33.
- 17 Robert Imrie and Emma Street. *Architectural Design and Regulation*. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 18, on Julia Black, 'Critical Reflections on Regulation', Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation', (London: London School of Economics, 2002), 4.
- 18 In the UK, Health and Safety Codes pertaining to the travelling fair emerged officially in 1976, when the Home Office *Guide to Safety at Fairs* was published. This followed the transfer of responsibility for safety matters to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) established under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act. This subsequently developed into the *Code of Safe Practice at Fairs* (London: Health & Safety Executive, 1984), then the *Fairgrounds and Amusement Parks: A Code of Safe Practice HS(G)81* (London: HSE Books 1992), and then the *Fairgrounds and Amusement Parks: Guidance on Safe Practice HS(G)175* (London: HSE Books, 1997). These have been further developed following the *Roberts Review Of Fairground Safety*, 2011 (see 'Review Of Fairground Safety: Report to the Health and Safety Commission,' Prepared by: Paul Roberts (HM Principal Inspector of Health and Safety) Safety Policy Division, 02 August 2011.
- 19 Peter G. Dowling, 'Charter Fairs and Markets: An Analysis of the Law Undertaken on Behalf of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain', (Reading: Boyes, Turner & Burrows), 24th February 1994, section 5.1.
- 20 Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 130. 'It is important to emphasize a conclusion implicit in the many examples cited so far: ritual systems do not function to

regulate or control the systems of social relations, they *are* the system, and an expedient rather than perfectly ordered one at that.' *ibid* 130.

²¹ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 82.

Illustrations

All drawings, diagrams and photographs by the author unless otherwise noted.



Figure 1. General views of the Opening Ceremony from Ilkeston, 1969 & 2012. 1969 photo is taken from the collection of the National Fairground Archive, and reproduced with the permission of the University of Sheffield ©Ron Kinder Collection, NFA/University of Sheffield.

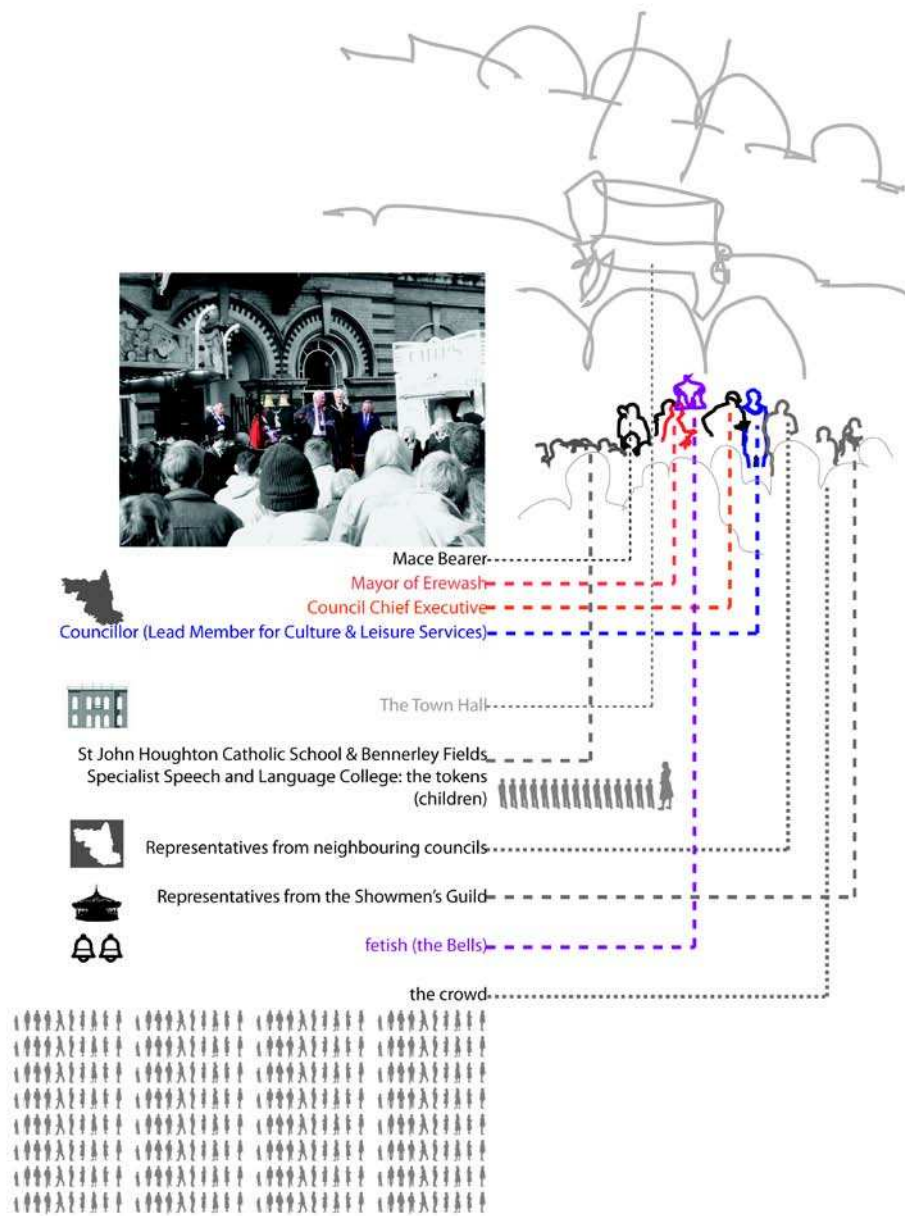


Figure 2. The protagonists in the 'Civic Party' at the Opening Ceremony for Ilkeston Fair. This includes key representatives from the Local Authority, the Burgheers of the town, the Showmen's Guild, dignitaries from the local region, plus ceremonial officials, and invited local school children.

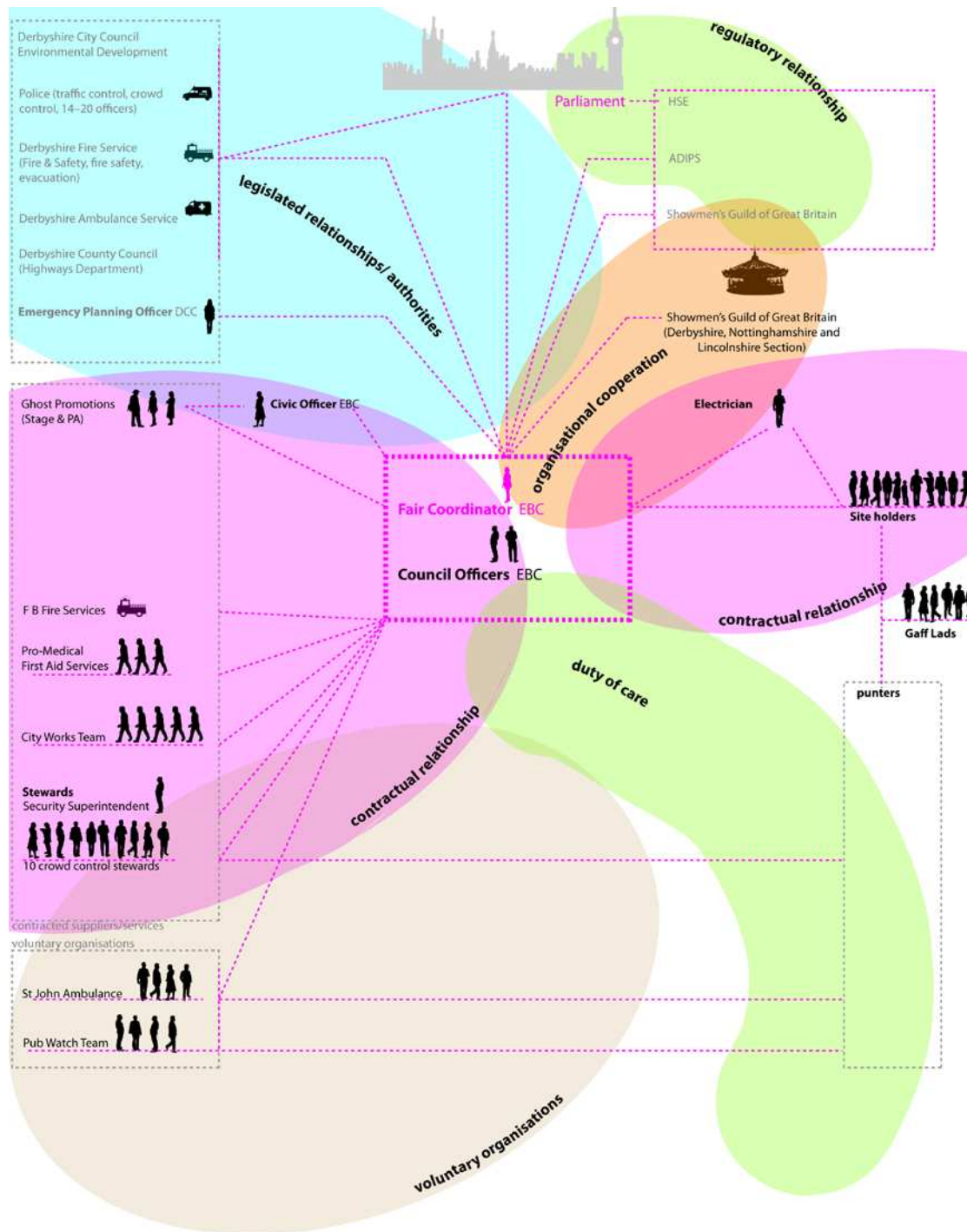


Figure 3. Organisational diagram showing those involved in the regulation, organization and consumption of Ilkeston Fair. This complex network revolves around the figure of the Fairs Officer. Also indicated are the broad natures of the relationships that prevail between businesses and legislative, administrative, organizational and trade bodies, each with varied legislative, quasi-legislative or soft powers, operating at national, regional and local scales: in simplified categories, these are legislated relationships and authorities; regulatory, contractual and voluntary relationships; organizational cooperation and duties of care.



Figure 4. Examples from Loughborough Fair, showing Local Council road closures under Section 21 of the *Town Police Clauses Act 1847*, and the County Council (Highways Agency) road closures under Section 14 & Section 16A, *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984*. Both Acts are used simultaneously, with laminated notices from each agency even being put up next to each other on the same lamppost.

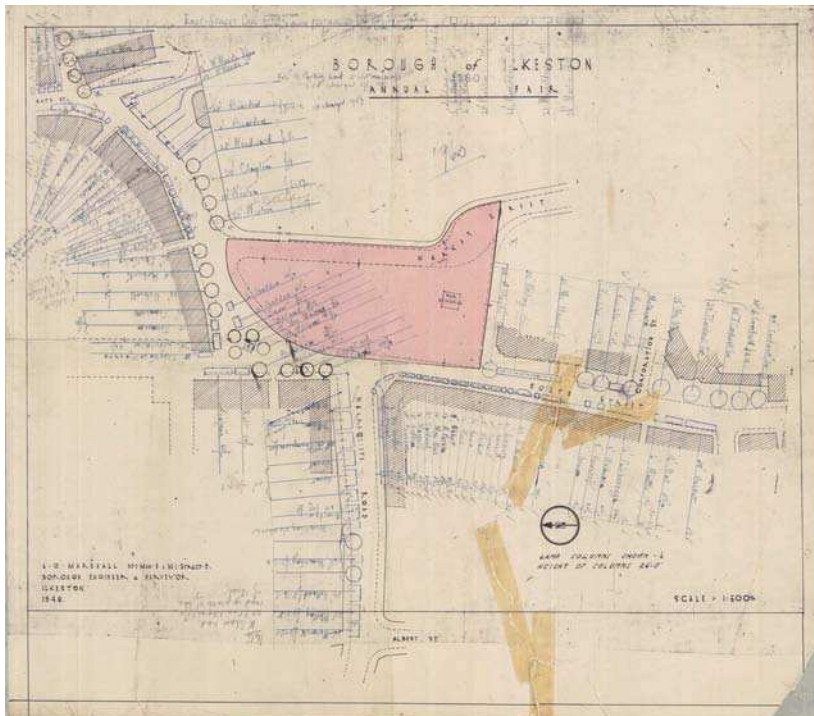


Figure 5. Ilkeston fair layout plan, 1960, showing one of the main areas of the fair situated on the Market Place, organised by showman Pat Collins, simply as a pink box. From the collection of the National Fairground Archive, and reproduced with the permission of the University of Sheffield.

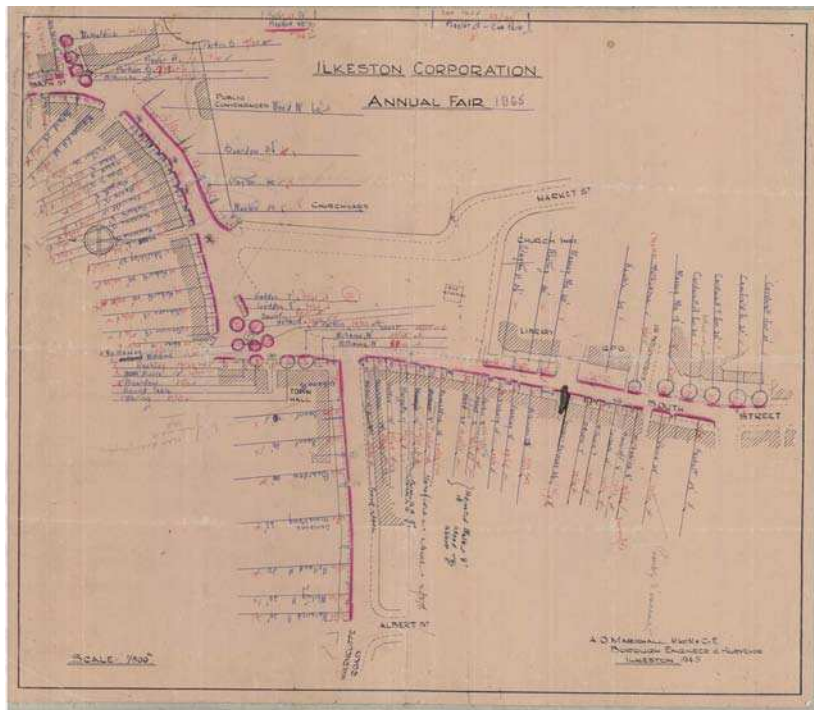


Figure 6. Ilkeston fair layout plan, 1965, showing rides and stalls being laid out only as frontage, or 'fair line.' This plan also give measurements of linear frontage with rental calculations. (Notice again the blind spot occupying the main market place area, where Pat Collins would fall under a separate economy.) From the collection of the National Fairground Archive, and reproduced with the permission of the University of Sheffield.

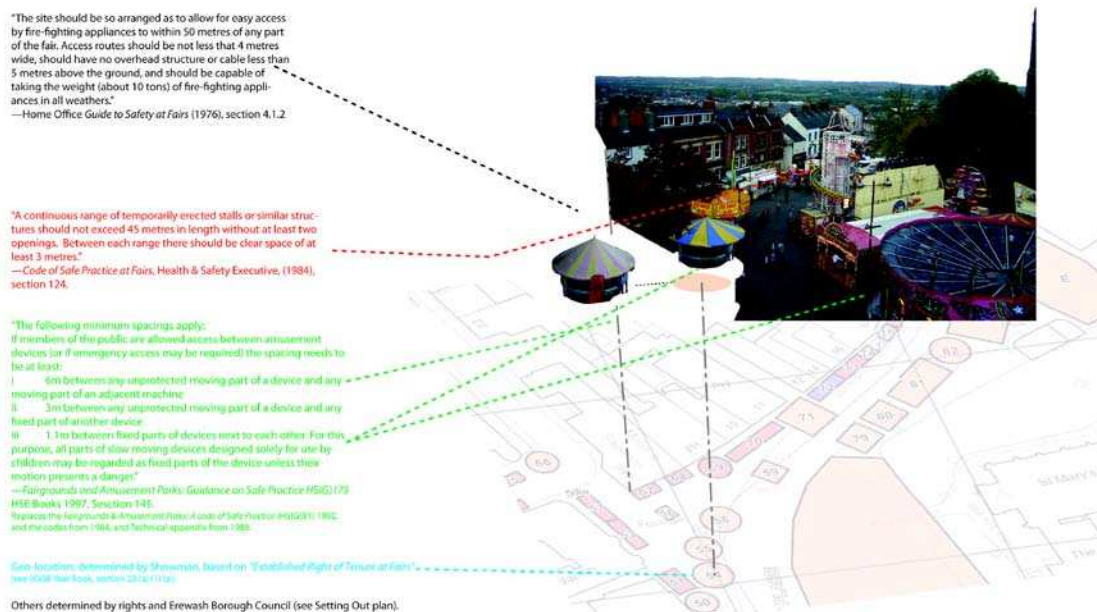


Figure 7. Diagram indicating several different sources of authority and control that bear on the overall layout and ride-specific positions of Ilkeston Fair.