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Governing Carnivalesque Plays

Styrningen av karnevaliska lekar

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Preface

Without my supervisor, I would probably have gotten lost in the labyrinth-shaped philosophy section of the library, perhaps even absorbed in broad daylight into a black hole located somewhere between the hieroglyphs D and H. I would like to thank my supervisor, Jonas Qvarsebo, for guiding me through this thesis, as well as for organizing, with Johan Dahlbeck and Patrick Ryan, the Swedish-Canadian exchange course A tale of Two Childhoods. The latter was a partnership course between Malmö University and King’s University College (University of Western Ontario), which I had the privilege to attend in 2014.

I am grateful to have attended this course, as it gave me the tools to study the government of children’s carnivalesque play. A play that makes adults not know whether to burst into tears or into laughter, whether to hide in shame or to applaud with pride, which makes children laugh as if they could change the world.
Abstract


Nyckelord: barndom, bekännelse, Foucault, governmentalitet, karneval, lek, förskola.
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INTRODUCTION

Breakfast time, it is a quarter to eight. Mummins preschool follows its clockwork routine. The children sit and eat quietly around a rectangular table while the teachers stand and serve the food. So far, everything is in its right place. The teacher asks each child if they want bread or porridge, with a gentle voice. On the other side the children barely express more than two words in a row. The breakfast is calm and well timed, like the gears of an automaton. Even the two-years old children use their spoons in an utmost civilised fashion to eat their porridge. The preschool breakfast scene could have happened any day of the week or the year. It appears strikingly ordinary.

‘Free play’ time, it is already a quarter past eight. The routine unfolds as usual. Five preschoolers, 4 to 5 years old, play a variant of the tag game in the motion room: *Oh no! A zombie! Help!* Initially playing a ghost, the chaser metamorphosed into a zombie as the play gets louder and louder. The zombie, Hobbes, picks up a rectangular piece of grey paper lying on the floor and brands it like a weapon. While chasing the children he utters a haunting low-slung sound, like zombies in horror movies. The play has been going on for nearly half an hour with similar yet shifting rules and dynamics. The zombie’s haunting cry is intertwined with the chased ones’ high-pitched screams and laughter. The zombie tags Noemi, using his pretend-weapon to circle her throat, barely touching it.

The closeness of the tagging moment reminds of how Dracula would embrace his preys with slow motion theatrical gestures. Noemi falls and creeps towards the pretend prison. The play goes on until a teacher overhears the loud screams and laughter. She opens the door and exclaims: *Please stop running around. Sit still and do something!* The teacher instantly leaves the room to drink tea with her colleagues. Noemi, followed by Hobbes, roars like a wild beast while she walks to another room to build a playhouse, whose construction is interrupted by the assembly call. Nine o’clock, playtime is over. Every single preschool child is sitting in a ring in an ordered fashion, listening to the teacher’s voice. (Field notes, March 22nd 2016)

In praxis, whenever a play goes over the line, preschool teachers tend to intervene to alter, or silence it. Even if the so-called ‘free play’ is officially scheduled on the Swedish preschools timetables, it does not appear as free as it claims to be. The Curriculum for preschool clearly states that a “conscious use of play” shall be central to preschool (Lpfö 2010: 6). Notwithstanding, interrupting children’s play seems to be a legitimate, unnoticed, and rational thing to do. Yet, the teacher’s intervention seems problematic. Why stopping this form of child play and not others? What is wrong with this play after all? Such plays can be interpreted as being carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1968). This deserves further examination. Confronted on a daily basis by preschool teachers, this dilemma on play does also reflect a battle of ideas that is raging among researchers and influencing preschool policies and practises. Under the surface of the regulation of children’s play lie critical, though understudied, issues on the preschool institution and the government of childhood.
1.1. Aim and research questions

This thesis aims at analysing preschool children’s play from a carnivalesque perspective. Furthermore, this thesis aspires at examining how and why preschool teachers govern children in play situations interpreted as carnivalesque.

1. What does the concept of carnival mean?
2. How can children’s plays be understood as carnivalesque?
3. How can carnivalesque plays defy and problematize the preschool order?
4. How and why do preschool teachers attempt to govern children’s carnival play?

1.2. Outline

In the first chapter, the introduction showed glimpses of a children’s play that can be interpreted as carnivalesque, explained why the regulation of children’s play need to be studied, and presented the aim and research questions.

The literature review, chapter two, includes a review of governmentality studies on childhood and play, as well as previous research studies on children’s carnivalesque plays.

Then, the third chapter reveals the two theoretical perspectives applied in this thesis: the governmentality perspective and the carnivalesque perspective. On the one hand, the governmentality perspective presents the concepts of government, governmentality, and confession. On the other hand, the carnivalesque perspective focuses on elements of the rich concept of carnival.

The method, in the fourth chapter, indicates how the empirical data has been gathered, processed. Furthermore, this part comprises a discussion on the constructionist perspective and a presentation to the analytical approach.

In the analysis, chapter five, the research questions are answered across three thematic themes: (1) Time, discipline, and carnivalesque play; (2) Preschool visibility and
carnivalesque hideaways; (3) Confessing carnivalesque sins. Examples of carnivalesque plays, from the empirical data, initiate and punctuate the analysis.

Last but not least, the concluding chapter starts with a summary of the analysis, compared with findings from earlier research studies, and ends with reflections on carnivalesque elements that destabilise the preschool order, and on confession and the government of childhood.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Here follows a review of related literature and studies using governmentality or carnivalesque perspective on play, mainly within a Nordic context. At the time of writing this thesis, there exists no empirical study combining governmentality and carnivalesque perspectives on children’s play. This thesis is therefore located in a niche at the crossroads of those alternative perspectives, within the canopy of early childhood studies.

2.1. Governmentality studies on preschool and childhood

Kenneth Hultqvist pioneered in governmentality studies in Sweden with *The Preschool Child, a Construction for Individual Liberation and Solidarity* (1990). Hultqvist assumed that power was not only repressive by also generative, then that childhood was not natural but fabricated by knowledge and political rationalities. Hultqvist (1990) did so by reviewing the discourses on the history of the Swedish preschool, in parallel with the development of childhood as a political project. From Fröbel’s moral project to Myrdal’s *City-child*, childhood has been object and subject to an increasing institutionalisation (Hultqvist 1990). In very short, the preschool institution has been seeking to fabricate children able to govern themselves freely. Ironically, this freedom tends to express itself within restrictive and unquestioned frameworks.

In *Med Blicken på Barnet* (2011), Linda Palla mostly used Foucault’s concepts of gaze and governmentality in order to analyse how the teacher’s and special educator’s gaze could govern and shape preschool children as subjects. Her theoretical part brilliantly combines Foucault’s governmentality approach with Judith Butler’s concepts of performativity, submission and mastery (Palla 2011: 174). This thesis does also combine the governmentality perspective with another one, namely the carnivalesque. According to Palla’s study, preschool requires that children to avoid trespassing the preschool routine and to be able govern themselves. She also perceived how the friendly and subtle governing techniques of special education could produce children as subjects.
In her PhD thesis, *The well-regulated freedom* (2004), Charlotte Tullgren explored preschool teachers’ disciplinary techniques to govern free-play through the governmentality perspective. She analysed scenes of play and teachers’ interruptions as disciplinary strategy that is not only repressive but also productive, thus shaping them as subjects. According to Tullgren’s study (2004), play situations were governed in a future-oriented way. Teachers assumed that children ought to be corrected to fit in the construction of the ‘normal’ child, or the competent child. Even though it is a minor part of this study, Tullgren also noted that confession was a governing technique, as a “self-technique”, meaning a practise of self-regulation (Tullgren 2004: 115). Especially, when children are expected to open up and talk about themselves, or talk about their feelings. Further studies are needed on the governing of children’s play, henceforth the need for this thesis.

2.2. Previous research studies on carnivalesque play

In preschool, the concept of carnival can be transposed to analyse children’s play at preschool as carnivalesque. In *Bakhtin’s Carnival and Pretend Role Play* (2011), Lynn E. Cohen gives insights on how pre-schoolers can mock authority through play, for instance by changing the tone of voice. Her study scope does not comprise on the regulation of carnivalesque play, as she focuses on deciphering and understanding children’s play. Put together with her two other empirical studies on carnivalesque play (Cohen 2009; Cohen & Uhry 2007), her main axiom of analysis revolves around the dialogic dimension of play and children’s negotiation of identity through carnivalesque play.

Likewise, in *The Carnival goes on and on!* (2008), Maria Øksnes has observed carnival play in a Norwegian school recreational centre. Through Bakhtin’s perspective, she interpreted that children lead a dual life that the adults fail to grasp. Showing that children’s carnivalesque understanding of leisure is met with defiance by pedagogues’ and the school curriculum’s own conceptions of what a fun play can be. Silencing carnival plays could mean that children are not allowed to question authority at preschool. Even though children still manage to find ways to flee their institutionalized lives through carnival, by breaking through the preschool “organisation lines” (Deleuze
3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1. The governmentality perspective

Michel Foucault’s (1926-1984, professor of the history of systems of thoughts) lecture on governmentality (2009) and his influential works, initiated a new field of study: governmentality studies. Foucault’s concepts of power and discourses will first be described, before presenting how and why the governmentality perspective will be applied in this thesis.

3.1.1. Power and discourses in the preschool institution

When entering a preschool, or when reading the Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 2010), one may wonder: What is power? Where is power? Or, equally puzzling, how to study power? Power has no substance, no flesh and no head. It is not embodied any longer in the figure of the Machiavellian prince ruling over his territory. Neither is it a mythological monster as in the Leviathan, nor engraved in a social contract (Foucault 2009). Power seems to be conceived in singularities, ever shifting and contextual, hence the unfeasibility of defining it once and for all. This proves the impossibility of stating a universal truth, of having the last word by claiming that ‘power is so and so’. Paradoxically, this impossibility to define power releases analytical possibilities to study how power works in specific institutions and within a flexible framework.

The ‘how’ of power ought to be studied, how power operates and circulates, and most importantly, how power produces and shapes the subject (2000). Power can be understood in an alternative way, not as in common language or other theoretical perspectives. It is not something vertical, exterior, or repressive but immanent and productive, it is not opposite but dependent to resistance and freedom. Power is immanent to power relationships, teacher/pre-schooler, and to the self. The “micro-physics” of power can thus be studied on a small scale through techniques, singularities, and details regulating the power relationships between teachers and preschool children (Foucault 1991: 26). Power at school operates through “little things”: as when the teacher conducts the pupils’ volume of the voice and corrects the position of the fingers when writing (La Salle 1783, cited in Foucault 1991: 140). Power circulates also in
contemporary Nordic pre-schools in subtler, though reminiscent, forms than in 19th century schools.

Power operates through discourses and their corresponding practises, including scholar discourses on play and teachers’ in-play participation. According to Foucault, “power produces. It produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (1991: 194). It means that everything is produced through, and conditioned by, discourses. The overarching concept of discourse refers to systems of thoughts including speech, practises, and writings within a given context. Even though discourses are open ended and impermanent, they demarcate normal and abnormal conducts, what can be said and what can be played at preschool. Any practise inscribes itself in a web of discourses: the casual way one walks in the street, the way the judge enunciates a sentence, the way the preschool teacher regulates a play. In other words, discourses cover systematic knowledge, daily practises, modes of relation, of conceiving the world and the self. The preschool institution is embedded with politico-historical and scientific discourses that generate specific practises, such as confession, and particular ways of governing the self and others.

3.1.2. The government of childhood and governmentality

The curious concept of governmentality (gouvernementalité) results from the binding of two terms: government and mentality (Foucault 2009). Here, government should not be understood as in common language, but rather as the “conduct of conduct” (conduire des conduites, Foucault 2000: 337). To conduct others can mean to guide or to lead. When applied in a reflexive form, to conduct oneself means to behave oneself. Further, as a noun, a conduct corresponds to the regulation of behaviour. It is best exemplified in what is called a code of conduct, which is a programmatic text including a list of ethical values. Note that the preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 2010) is considered to be a programmatic text in this thesis, which justifies its presence in the upcoming analysis. The terms of conduct and government lies an immanent division of conducts/counter-conducts, of normal/abnormal (Foucault 2000). All in all, government has to do with how power circulates within children and teachers, and how power-embedded practises can shape subjects’ conducts.
The concept of governmentality involves any rational discourse on how to govern: how, who, and why “we govern and are governed” (Dean 1999: 30-1). Governmentality can be defined and applied in two distinct ways; however, this thesis, like most studies, will apply the second and broadest definition. First, governmentality can refer to the ensemble of governing techniques and strategies through their historical process (Foucault 2009). Meaning the interrelated apparatuses that have been used for governing specific subjects or the population. As opposed to the sovereignty over a territory and its inhabitants, the way of governing modern European states has shifted to a more complex and encompassing practises of governing human beings through administration and institutionalisation (Foucault 2009). It encompasses the set of technical practises that attempt to mould the subjects to particular ends, preschool children into citizen ideals. It focuses therefore on a historical consideration of institutionalisation processes in modern states.

Second, and most importantly, governmentality is not limited to governing per se but rather as the overarching “conduct of conduct” (Foucault 2000: 337). It comprises the mentalities of government — how the government of others and of oneself is thought and operated (Dean 1999). It is mainly concerned with the discourses embedded in certain practises, within neo-liberal state institutions, such as preschool or the psychic ward. When used as a perspective it can shed light on what is governed; who is governed; how it is and ought to be governed; according to which ideals; and based on which discourses, techniques and strategies. In short, governmentality is concerned with the conditions that make the everyday government of childhood thinkable, desirable, and possible within the preschool institution.

3.1.3. Confession as governing technique and strategy

Confession\(^1\) constitutes one of the most employed techniques and strategies of governing in the West (Foucault 1990). This governing technique is reminiscent of the Catholic practise of confession in the confessional booth, and of the principle “to take care of oneself” from Ancient Greece (Foucault 1988). Confession remains so widespread and internalised that it cannot be reduced to a mere technique. Beyond the

\(^1\) Confession is a translation of two synonymic concepts from the original texts: *confession* and *aveu*. The latter means admission of guilt and avowal (Foucault 1990).
governing techniques, confession is also a governing strategy. According to Foucault’s study on the *History of Sexuality* (1990), confession can be found everywhere:

One confesses in public and in private, to one’s parents, one’s educators, one’s doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell to anyone else, the things people write books about. (Foucault 1990: 59)

Foucault concludes that the “Western man has become a confessing animal” (1990: 59). Confession generates thus various techniques, practises, and mentalities. The singular yet polymorph confessing practises expanded to numerous fields from social medias to pedagogy. Whether in front of a judge, a friend, or when the teacher expects a child to say ‘sorry’, confession is embedded with a taken for granted moral order (Axelsson & Qvarsebo 2015). Once preschool children transgress the norms, they are expected to confess via apologizing in order to restore the moral order. Confession mostly occurs unnoticed, hence the need to study possible confessional techniques in the regulation of children’s carnivalesque play.

### 3.1.4. Analysing with the governmentality perspective

The governmentality perspective will be applied as a theoretical lens to analyse the regulation of preschool children’s carnival play. The governmentality perspective can be used to analyse the preschool everyday government, also referred to as the preschool order in this thesis. Following Deleuze’s interpretation (1992), the governmentality perspective can be broken down into four interrelated and conditioning apparatuses (*dispositifs*) forming the preschool order: 1, fields of visibility; 2, governing techniques; 3, ways of thinking; 4, the government of the self. This thesis analysis covers each of these apparatuses. Note that, for example, confession as an overall strategy can operate across these four apparatuses. For the sake of simplicity, the outline of the analysis will follow the three analytical themes that were outlined in relation to the apparatuses and to the empirical data. The governmentality perspective is flexible insofar as it allows to discovering new elements in the analysis of the data, whether through empirical observations or texts.

### 3.1.5. Why governmentality?

Looking back at how teachers used to govern children — shaming them in a corner, force-feeding them, using physical punishment — there is no need for further analysis
to grasp the cruelty of these scenes. It results harder to appreciate the cruelty of the present than past times, as it results harder to see barbarism in one’s own culture than in others’. Today’s practises of interrupting children’s carnivalesque play do not appear as violent, though they may be all the more effective, all the more vicious, and just as cruel. This is precisely why governmentality perspective is needed. Through these lenses one can make a critical “ontology of ourselves” (Foucault 1984: 45). By ontology of the self is meant a process of self-examination, of mise en abyme, by asking the following question: What “made us what we are”? (Foucault 1984: 46). This perspective permits not only to examine unquestioned institutional practises, but also to reflect on the limits reigning upon us.

3.2. The carnivalesque perspective
Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (literary analyst, 1895-1975) interpreted the medieval celebration of carnival as a metaphor of an ambivalent revolt against the everyday routine. Bakhtin used this metaphor in order to study the carnivalesque elements and literary genre in the novels written by Rabelais (1968) and Dostoyevsky (1973). From two fields of knowledge, from literary theory to early childhood studies, there is only one step. The carnival as an alternative perspective has been recently transposed to play studies and early childhood studies (in Cohen 2011, and in Øksnes 2008). In this thesis, the carnivalesque will be applied to observations of children’s plays displaying carnivalesque elements. To do so, this present part will first present the concept of carnival and its main carnivalesque elements (ambivalence, transgression, novelty spontaneity, and satire), and will set them in the context of the children’s play and the preschool institution.

3.2.1. Ambivalence and transgression
Carnival distinguishes itself from its opposite ritual; namely, “official feast” (Bakhtin 1968: 9; see comparative table in appendix A). First, organised by the authority, official feast is a tedious and scheduled ritual that glorifies the past and celebrate the present social order and hierarchies. The official feast refers to everything that carnival mocks, is a celebration too but a celebration of all that carnival satirizes. Second, carnival is the reversal of values and positions based on humour. It represents “life turned inside out” (Bakhtin 1973: 122). Everything can be upside down — painters can be kings,
preschool children can be teachers — for the time of a carnivalesque feast. Instead of sitting down, pre-schoolers may dare to laugh standing upon a chair. Norms and values are reversed during the carnival, leaving room for shifts of hierarchies and for chaos.

Beyond folklore, Bakhtin argued that the middle-age tradition of carnival could be seen as a symbolic act of transgression (1968). Accordingly, celebrating carnival was once a break from the medieval daily routine. Carnival can create a world of opposites: where good is bad, where children are adults. Alike most plays displaying chaotic elements, the example of a zombie tag play could be interpreted as a carnivalesque play. Carnival is “people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter” (Bakhtin 1968: 8). It supposes that individuals lead a dual life: official and unofficial lives. On the one hand, children lead institutional lives, as pre-schoolers, following the routine and teachers’ expectations. On the other hand, children’s unofficial lives consist in escaping the everyday routine through carnival. During the time of a carnivalesque play, a child can lead the life of a zombie or a father, a rock star or the pope of fools. In spite of its subversive dimension, Bakhtin (1973) insists on the ambivalence of carnival. In carnival, norms are recreated and satirized simultaneously.

3.2.2. Novelty, spontaneity, and satire

Carnival, thus carnivalesque plays, can generate novelty and grotesque realism (Bakhtin 1968). In carnivalesque plays, a gentle kitten could become an enraged dinosaur in the quest for preys. This example is an illustration of misalliance. A monstrous cat, like the pope of fools, is a misalliance of two opposites, which results in something new and grotesque. Grotesque realism refers to a satirical aesthetic that is transformative and odd, transforming the bodies to invent something new, exaggerated and out of proportion.

Carnival contains element of spontaneity, as it occurs unscheduled and unplanned. It happens in the spur of the moment — here and now — which makes it incompatible with a pedagogic activity or the teacher’s involvement who would probably exclude some carnivalesque element like satire. Carnival is a parodia sacra in its broadest sense, an unofficial parody of sacred and official rituals (Bakhtin 1973: 127). Satire can also be manifest through profanity. Bakhtin advances that satirical profanity and jubilation
go hand in hand in carnival (1973), which means that there is something liberating and hilarious when children verbalise profanities such as “poopy head”. Accordingly, uttering swear words in a carnivalesque play should not be detached from its inherent joy.
4. METHOD

The preschool discourses can be observed empirically at preschool through the daily governing of children’s carnivalesque plays.

4.1. Gathering and processing data

This empirical study has been conducted in two preschool classrooms during a month in Mummins preschool. One class consisted of 15 children (one and a half to three years old), while the other one consisted of 21 children (three to six years old). Three teachers managed each classroom. The classrooms have the exact same architecture and share a motion room. Besides the motion room, each section has its own building room, doll room, atelier in the corridor, hallway, and main room. The Reggio Emilia-inspired material includes mostly props for children, such as food props and baby dolls. On the other side, the learning material, such as language cards and puppets, is placed on higher shelves thus only accessible to the teachers.

4.1.1. Gathering data

Mainly two specific moments of children’s day-to-day lives have been observed: children’s carnivalesque episode plays at preschool and the teachers’ regulation of these plays. Children’s play and its regulation could occur in any room and at any moment of the day, including outside of the ‘free play’ sessions. Observations of children’s play were realised by taking field notes during non-participant observations. The non-participant observations consist in watching children’s play and its regulation while attempting to keep the interactions with the children and the teachers as minimal as possible (Löfdahl 2006; Alvehus 2013). Compared to other collection methods (as video recording, see Tullgren 2004) to take field notes during non-participant observations appeared to be the most adequate choices for observing without altering plays and practises in a significant way. Since I have been present full time at Mummins preschool, the observations have been continuous and daily. This allowed gathering some extra data that proved relevant and complementary in the analysis: the preschool timetable, teacher’s comments on surveillance, documentation and its display. The
incorporation of these elements can give insights on the daily preschool order, plus it can provide a deeper analysis.

4.1.2. Processing data

Based on the field notes, I attempted to re-construct a reliable and polysemous writing reflecting children’s play and its regulation. The scenes were observed in Swedish and translated to English during processing. The teachers’ interventions have been observed in a similar way as the children’s play. Children’s play could be interpreted as play episode insofar as they seem continuous and interactive play (Löfdahl 2006). A few playful moments that lasted less than 2 minutes were considered lacking continuity and interaction, hence unfit for further analysis. Play episodes were thereafter interpreted as carnivalesque if they displayed elements present in Bakhtin’s concept of carnival (1968; 1973). Once processed, the empirical material amounted to a total of 17 carnivalesque play episodes, from 2 to 50 minutes long.

4.1.3. Ethical considerations

The parents of the participating children have granted a written authorisation agreement prior to the start of the observations. The authorisation stated clearly all the information needed, in accordance with the ethical criteria emitted by Swedish Ethical Board (Vetenskapsrådet 2010). Parents were informed via the written demand of authorisation. Both teachers and children agreed to let me observe the play situations and their regulations. The empirical data have only been used for the present thesis and the children’s, teachers’, and the school’s names are fictive to preserve their anonymity. The children’s well being has always been a priority during the observations. I did not observe any play situation when children expressed, explicitly or not, that they wished to be on their own.

4.2. A constructionist perspective

Each methodology bears its lot of ontological assumptions, of strengths and delimitations. This thesis used ethnographic methods to gather and process empirical data. The method of observing practises on the field comes from the discipline of ethnography. The latter term is a binding of two Greek words, ethno-graphy, meaning respectively culture and representation. Rather than sitting on a university desk, the
ethnographer is a field-anthropologist who goes out on the field to “inscribe” social practises (Geertz 1973: 19). One of the countless paradigms of the ethnographic observation resides in its ethnocentrism, i.e. the ethnographer’s own culture is assumed to be superior to others.

This thesis aspires at using ethnographic method while refusing its traditional ethnocentric gaze of a civilized anthropologist staring at some wild primitive ritual; the gaze of a civilized adult bewildered at children’s wild plays. Today’s ethnography can tone down its usual delimitations, for instance via a constructionist perspective. Through constructionist lenses, there is no Platonic distinction between the subject and the object, or between subjectivity and objectivity. Everything is produced through and by, and producing, discourses (Beronius 1991). Language itself is constructed through discourses. Instead of studying objects or individuals the constructionist perspective is concerned with discourses.

Henceforth, the production of knowledge, as in this thesis, can be seen as perspectivist. Meaning that knowledge is bound to the researchers’ choice of methodological and theoretical lenses (Beronius 1991). The quality of a constructivist methodology relies on a non-objective ground, on its reliability. This study is reliable insofar as the constructionist methodology is combined with the theoretical perspectives of governmentality and the carnivalesque to ask new questions on the government of children’s play. Furthermore, the data was never embellished or altered. It is gathered and transcribed in a reliable and representative way, thus keeping its ambivalence and openness for the reader’s own interpretations of the empirical data.

4.3. Analytical approach

Both the carnivalesque and the governmentality perspectives are complementary, and in their own ways, offer new analytical possibilities and provide a more eclectic research compared to using only one theoretical lens. Introduced by an empirical example of child play and its regulation, each analytical part will be structured as follows:
As Foucault advocated, his concepts should be used as tools (1974, transl. by, and cited in Clare O’Farrell 2005: 50):

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area [...] I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.

The governmentality approach can be used through a multitude of perspectives, opening up new possibilities (Beronius 1991). The same argument can be made on the carnivalesque perspective. It is also versatile as it is applied across the faculties, for instance, in literary analysis, cultural studies, gender studies, and early childhood studies. Due its versatility, these two theoretical perspectives will be used to analyse empirical data through an ethnographic observations, via a constructionist perspective. Ethnographic observations make possible to get a closer look at preschool daily government of play on a micro-scale and at children’s play.

A practise of interrupting play at preschool, to give an example of governing technique, cannot be seen as a teacher’s own invention or impulse. There are conditions surrounding this practise that makes it rational, conceivable, and legitimate. The discourses — or Deleuze’s third apparatus, “ways of thinking” (1992) — encompassing this practise may be found in the preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 2010), or in academic discourses on play and childhood. The link between the observed practises and the discourses will be established in the analysis, depending on the empirical material. In doing so, this thesis would have a wider study scope. Although departing from one preschool, Mummins preschool, the discourses embedded in this preschool (mainly
embodied by pedagogic discourses and policy documents) have a Swedish, or even Nordic, resonance.
5. ANALYSIS

5.1. Time, discipline, and carnivalesque plays

5.1.1. Carnivalesque plays and the routine

Calvin, Duha, and Peter, each three years old, paint in the atelier:

They lay down the brushes and start painting with their own hands. Out of the blue, one of them sings out loud the traditional happy birthday song in English. The other join him almost instantly: Happy birthday you, happy birthday to yooOooOooou. They sing out of tune and exhilarated akin to how drunken sailors may sing after hours. Note that nobody’s birthday is scheduled this week, at Mummins preschool.

The teacher overhears the children. I startled, out of surprise, as she opens the sliding door. She addresses the children with a soft voice tone: No! What is this? You should not scream... You really have to calm down. She sighs and leaves the room. The children continue singing and painting their hands yet in a lower tone. The teacher comes back five minutes later: It’s time for the assembly! Let’s tidy up! (Field notes, March 10th 2016)

This children’s play can be interpreted as carnivalesque play, as an absurd, spontaneous, and transgressive (Bakhtin 1973). First, this play episode seems absurd, which etymologically means out of tune (ab-surdum). It reminds of a similar absurd birthday celebration: the “un-birthday” feast in Alice in Wonderland (Caroll 1911: 204). Second, this play was spontaneous insofar as it happened in the spur of the moment while the children were painting. Last, but not least, the play also shows signs of pleasure and transgression when the children joyfully transgressed the norms surrounding the birthday celebration. Nonetheless, this romantic view on transgression has to be nuanced. While turning the birthday song into ridicule, the children sing this very song. Transgression is ambivalent in carnival (Bakhtin 1973). Carnivalesque plays can thus reproduce and simultaneously transcend the preschool order.

Through the literary prose used by Bakhtin, one can find relevant illustrations of the elements of transgression and spontaneity (Dostoyevsky 1877, cited in Bakhtin 1973: 149):

Everything was happening the way it usually happens in dreams when you leap over space and time, over all laws of life and reason, and only pause where your heart’s desire bids you pause.

In this quote, the three elements that destabilized preschool in the carnivalesque birthday celebration are present: absurdity, “the way it usually happens in dreams”;
transgression, “over all laws of life and reason”; spontaneity, “pause when your heart’s desire bids you pause” (Dostoyevsky 1877, cited in Bakhtin 1973: 149). A carnivalesque play can be understood as a break from the routine. It allows children escaping preschool ordinary life for a moment.

Among these three elements, spontaneity is the one that antagonizes and destabilises the preschool routine the most. The observed carnivalesque plays were always spontaneous while all teacher-driven activities were either scheduled or planned to some extent, including ‘free play’. Within the carnivalesque perspective, all scheduled activities at preschool, such as the assembly, can be seen as a series of official feasts (see Appendix A; Bakhtin 1968). Contrarily to carnival, the concept of official feast can be applied to scheduled ceremonies or plays organised by the governors for the governed, tedious and with no room for any carnivalesque element. In Bakhtin’s own words, the official feast is “of all that was stable, unchanging, perennial…” (1968: 9). Contrarily to official feasts, carnival is “marked as the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal” (Bakhtin 1968: 9). Carnivalesque play appears thus as a break from the routine. While carnival thrives on spontaneity, preschool does not.

5.1.2. Teachers’ disciplinary interruptions

In the above example of children’s un-birthday, the teacher attempts to “calm” the children “down” via her soft intervention. In a way, she tries to reason the children to alter the play. Then, the teacher’s second interruption is inevitable — the routine must go on. The clock ticking interrupted more than half of the carnivalesque plays observed, concretized by teachers’ interruptions: “Hurry up, time for breakfast”; “Come on, stop playing around, it’s lunch time”; “It’s assembly time”. The teacher’s voice is mostly neutral, soft, and clear. At times teachers may show signs of anger and despair when intervention. For instance, when yelling at children during a carnivalesque play: “Why do you fuss like little girls?”; “Come out and sit still”; “What are you doing?”; “Sit still and do something with yourselves!” (Field notes, March 2016). This shows the challenge that carnivalesque plays may represent to numerous preschool teachers who urge the children to come back to reason.

Within the governmentality lenses the teacher’s interruptions during carnivalesque plays can be seen as a governing technique, a disciplinary practise (Foucault 1991). When
children cannot sit still during the assembly their body position is corrected. The same goes with plays perceived as unfit. Teachers have the legitimacy and authority of interrupting any play, while children do not have the authority to interrupt any of the scheduled activity. Teachers’ interruption is the most evident technology of governmentality in the regulation of carnivalesque play, and consequently the less interesting one to study. What is of interest, however, is how this practise is legitimate, and which effects it may have upon childhood. The teacher’s interruptions act like the tiny gears of a greater apparatus: preschool as a disciplinary institution.

5.1.3. Preschool timetable and a routinised childhood

The preschool timetable is followed to the letter, apart from small timing discrepancies from 5 to 15 minutes; cosy-Fridays during which children spend more time indoor; and rare excursions. The timetable is applied daily, whereas it is implicit. Meaning it is not written down or displayed anywhere in Mummins preschool. Here follows an excerpt of Mummins preschool daily timetable, according to the field observations (see Appendix B for the entire timetable):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Mummins preschool opens, ‘Free play’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>Breakfast, the teachers and children eat in the main room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>‘Free play’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Morning assembly and fruit-break, everyone sits in a circle at assigned places.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Field notes March 2016)

The preschool timetable attempts to fulfil children’s needs identified by scientific discourse and reflected in the Curriculum (Lpfö 2010). The dominant pedagogic discourses, such as in Bowlby’s attachment theories (1988) and Nodding’s ethics of care (1986), advance that children need security and care. These pedagogic discourses are represented in preschool policy documents, which in its turn influence the preschool research and practises. The preschool Curriculum emphasizes the benefices of a routinized “daily rhythm” and the importance of “security” and “care” at preschool (Lpfö 2010: 6-12). In Swedish, tryggt means secure, comfortable, and safe. Today’s ideal can synthesised in this taken for granted affirmation: ‘Children need to feel secure and cared for at preschool’, hence the need to follow a secure and comfortable routine. Nevertheless, these pedagogic concepts of security and care, as well as the preschool timetable have to be interrogated out of their pedagogic study field.

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Through the governmentality perspective, the preschool timetable acts as a core governing technique, as a disciplinary practise. Alike other disciplinary institutions built on the analogous model of the prison, preschool is built upon a strict routine that dictates the order and duration of its daily practises. As in monitory schools and prisons, the timetable governs the institutionalised bodies through time and space (Foucault 1991). Indeed, the preschool imposes a conduct to each and all children based on the timetable. That is why an institution such as Mummins preschool can be seen as a disciplinary institution (Foucault 1991). ‘Free play’ is limited to a specific duration, attempting the impossible task of confining the spontaneity of carnival to a ticking clock. The preschool disciplinary institution regulates the duration of children’s carnivalesque plays and interrupt them in favour of scheduled, thus higher valued, activities.

According to the governmentality perspective, disciplinary institutions aim at fabricating a “docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault 1991: 136). In this context, preschool moulds docile preschool children into specific subjects, through governing techniques such as the timetable and disciplinary interruptions. The way of governing through time protect children from being spontaneous, taking risks, or going outside of their comfort zone, while it restrains them into the banality of an everyday scheduled life. Under the discourses surrounding children’s need for security and care, preschool shapes routinised children. It shapes children who shall be able to schedule their existence, and whose present and future depends on their ability to obey to a schedule. In short, the preschool disciplinary institution produces a routinised childhood whose footsteps and plays are governed by a ticking clock.
5.2. Preschool visibility and carnivalesque hideaways

5.2.1. Governing through documentation

During a month of empirical observations in two preschool classrooms, none of the teachers have ever documented a child’s carnivalesque play, not even once. Extensive documentation has been realised at Mummins preschool solely during pedagogic activities. Only a handful of children’s plays have been documented: food and family games, singing traditional songs, classical dance. At Mummins preschool children are not allowed to make their own documentation, to hold the camera. Documenting remains thus the teacher’s duty. The teachers have hanged the documentation, laminated photographs, on the walls accompanied by a quote from the Curriculum (Lpfö 2010). At the parents-teachers meeting, the teachers chose to project a playful video of children dancing classical music: “They are so sweet when they dance!” (Field notes, March 6th 2016).

According to the preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 2010), the video- and photo-documentation serves as an evaluating and pedagogic tool for teachers. Far from its pedagogic aim, within a governmentality perspective, documentation constitutes a governing technique. For example, Foucault studied how diary-writing have become a widespread though unnoticed technique of self-government through which one confesses deeds and sins (1988). Today, new confessing techniques include diary-blogs in social media and celebrities apologising after a public scandal (Qvarsebo & Axelsson 2015). The versatility of confession raises two questions: first, on how the act of documenting could be considered a governing technique of governmentality; second, on how documentation renders carnivalesque plays invisible.

First, though it is not a self-technique, the act of documenting can be seen as a new way of writing diaries. The teacher is the author of and has authority upon the documentation process, while the child is subjected to it. The teacher is the one holding the camera and deciding which plays are worth documenting and which plays shall be silenced. The teachers write children’s diaries by using a camera instead of pens; by using walls instead of paper; by projecting videos of ‘good plays’ instead of reading; by displaying pictures of the good conducts instead of publishing confessions. Documentation resembles therefore an individual and group biography of each and all pre-schoolers and
it acts as a subordination technique between teacher, holding the camera, and pre-

schooler, subjected to the documentation.

Second, and insofar as it makes parts of children’s lives visible and others invisible, the
documentation display on the walls can be seen as a governing technique operating
through the preschool “visibility” lines (Deleuze 1992: 160). Only three fourth of the
pre-schoolers appeared on the documentation on the walls during the month of
observations (same proportions in both classrooms, field notes March 2016). Displaying
documentation upon the walls is a way of praising ‘good’ in-play conduct, while the
absence of display acts like a discreet form of shaming. Documentation on the
preschool walls forms a museum of glorified good plays, of a good childhood. In the
margins, carnivalesque play has not been documented, as if it was a part of children’s
institutionalised lives that should not be visible. The absence of documentation of
carnivalesque play in the preschool field of visibility produces it as an undesired play,
as an abnormal conduct.

5.2.2. Surveillance: “You can play but you cannot hide”

The teacher allowed Marcus and Peter (three years old) to use the pink play-dough in
the atelier:

I was sitting in the corner of the atelier and their teacher was coming by the door window
now and then, watching over them. They start fabricating small eggs and put them in a
cardboard egg-box. The atmosphere has been remarkably calm until Peter pretended to
dismember his hand with a plastic knife, a play-dough prop, they laugh. All of a sudden,
both children start crawling down under the table, plastic knives and the box of pink eggs in
their hands. They get closer to the round sewer lid on the floor. Marcus touches the lid with
his hand, Disgusssting, he exclams. They bring each of the four chairs closer to the table.
Under the table, nobody could see them. I could hear them playing with the lid and giggling.

Brigit, a teacher, notices the scene through the window door: Who is down there? Come out
and sit still. Although the choice of words is straightforward, Brigit’s voice tone remains
calm at all time. The children come out after bidding farewell to the exhaust grill: Bye-bye
poopy-head! We go home (laughter). Sitting back at on their respective chairs, they continue
their initial play under the teacher’s vigilant gaze. (Field notes, March 17th 2016)

The children’s play display several elements of carnival, notably reversal of values and
dual life (Bakhtin 1968). When Peter pretends to cut himself with a plastic knife while
laughing, there is a reversal of values. What hurts can become comic, even self-
mutilation. In carnival, the child can lead another unofficial life and may use a sharp
knife like adults, swearing like adults. This play shows children’s dual lives separated from official to unofficial lives, institutional from carnivalesque deeds (Bakhtin 1968). What happened under the table remains in an unknown territory from which I could only hear carnivalesque whispers. In similar examples children have tried to escape the teachers’ sight by creeping under the bushes outside and playing in the hallway, closing the doors of the motion room or the atelier.

Five minutes after the latter play episode in which children hid under the table, a teacher hastily explained to me how the surveillance works from the staff’s point of view: “We have to be able to watch over the children at all time. Just in case something happens, you know” (Field notes, March 17th 2016). The same formula is pronounced when training new interns at their arrivals. Within the governmentality perspective, the teacher verbalized the governing technique of surveillance and motivated it as a preventive measure. Even if children are playing hide-and-seek, the teacher should be able to observe, hear, and locate them at all time. In short, the teacher exercises surveillance at preschool. The teacher’s affirmation coincides with the teacher’s point of view on preschool visibility lines (Deleuze 1992). It can be re-phrased as it follows, still from the teacher’s point of view: “You can play but you cannot hide”.

Teachers’ surveillance, also called the “disciplinary gaze” (Foucault 1990: 174), is continuous though intermittent. Even if the teachers wish they could be able to watch pre-schoolers every minute of the day, their intermittent surveillance during free-play involves the permanent possibility of watching over and overhearing the children’s play at any moment, in any room. Other preschools create a hide-away for children’s ‘free play’, which is another problematic way of governing. However this has never been the case in Mummins preschool. No room and no moment are exempt from the teacher’s possibility of surveillance.

Due to the continuous possibility of surveillance and documentation, pre-schoolers behave “as if” there was always a guard watching, even if nobody is watching (Foucault 1991). Whether active or not, the mere possibility of surveillance and of documentation, suffices to have effects upon children. The child conducts her/himself as if being watched over and documented. The watched become the watcher; government become self-government (Foucault 1991; 1988). Both documentation and surveillance, through
the preschool visibility lines, incite children to take care of the Self according to what is expected of them. Surveillance does not happen externally to the power relationship between teacher/pre-schooler, from without. Surveillance is rather immanent to this relationship, and immanent to the Self, from within.

Surveillance and documentation, conditioned by the preschool visibility lines, are two governing techniques that control children’s carnivalesque plays. On the other side, carnivalesque play both defies, and is continuously subjected to, surveillance. By hiding from the fields of the visible children can go underground. In other words, when pre-schoolers play under the table, or behind closed doors, they “break up” the preschool visibility lines for a moment (Deleuze 1992: 160). As one goes through the looking glass, children go through the preschool visibility lines in carnivalesque plays, to the preschool secretive places. This lasts only an instant, a few minutes, until the teacher notices that a couple of pre-schoolers have disappeared from the preschool landscape.

**5.2.3. Preschool as a child laboratory**

Some pedagogic discourses make this practise of placing the child at teacher’s sight possible, notably child-centred discourses in pedagogy. Indeed, Reggio Emilia inspired preschools, like Mummins preschool, tends to place the child at the centre. The discourses placing the child at the centre emanates mainly from one of the founders of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy, namely Loris Malaguzzi’s discourses on childhood and education (Malaguzzi & Cagliari 2016). In Sweden, child-centred pedagogy has recently spread over numerous pedagogic discourses. Within the governmentality perspective though, placing the child at the centre has also oriented all the gazes towards one focal point: the child. Children are expected to be in the spotlight, and so do children’s plays. Nonetheless, placing the child at the centre does not only build a preschool pedagogy around the child. This materialises itself in the preschool architecture, for instance through sliding doors, door windows at adults’ height, and corridors, and by letting the doors open. In a child-centred preschool, it is easier to govern the children through the governmentality techniques of surveillance and documentation.

According to Foucault, the ideal visibility apparatus would be one having a “centre towards which all gazes would be turned” (1990: 173). In other words, from a teacher’s
point of view, the ideal visibility lines at preschool would be a child-centred apparatus. There is an uncanny resemblance between the preschool visibility lines and Arnold Gesell’s child laboratory architecture (1952; see appendix C). In the centre of the one-way mirror laboratory, akin to a police interrogation room, this laboratory is a metaphoric expression of how preschool visibility lines are built around the subjected child. The preschool visibility apparatus resembles an imperfect version of the one-way mirror laboratory architecture. It crystallises the governing techniques of documentation and surveillance and as a technique of subordination teacher/pre-schooler. Indeed, just like a one-way mirror, teachers can watch over the children through the door windows while children cannot since the window is high enough to be beyond children’s reach. In a way, preschool architecture does not really revolve around the child, but is rather directed by the see-through visibility lines from the teacher’s point of view, to facilitate the government of childhood and of children’s plays.
5.3. Confessing carnivalesque sins

5.3.1. Teacher/pre-schooler relationship: on pastoral power

We went to the outside world for the first and only time in a month. Yvonne put four children (each of them four years old) in a stroller and drove them all the way up to the library:

The children are exhilarated each time they see a vehicle:
- Look a car! (pause) CaaaAAAAaaaAaaaaaaaar!! The same play occurs five times in a row. First, comes the signal, often from Alma: Look a train! To which all children instantly respond: TrrraaaaaaaIIINNnnn! Sometimes followed by a few laughing outbursts!

The teacher, Yvonne, seems irritated by the children’s enthusiasm:
- Alrighty, can you sing itsy bitsy spider for me? She starts singing and the kids follow:
- The itsy bitsy spider climbed up the waterspout [...] The teacher congratulates the children: Oh, you all sing so well. Then, the teacher intones Oranges and Lemons. Most children recognize the song and sing along with her.

The song ends. Alma looks up at the road, exhilarated: There, a car! The children react in choir: CaaaAAAAaaaAaaaaaaaar!! The children laugh out loud. Instead of sighing, the teacher keeps pushing the stroller up the hill. (Field notes, March 27th 2016)

The play episode contains some carnivalesque elements: absurdity and the reversal of roles and values (Bakhtin 1968). First, the absurdity proper to carnival can be seen throughout the episode, in the way the children spontaneously yell at the vehicles: CaaaAAAAaaaAaaaaaaaar! Their reaction is overtly exaggerated. Apart from being loud, their screams are stretched and continuous, as if in slow motion. Second, the screams that may appear nonsensical could also be the signs of a transgressive role reversal (Bakhtin 1968). Indeed, children may be playing the role of an unbridled and grotesque version of the “baby” character, which is a popular character during pretend role-plays at Mummins preschool.

Within a governmentality perspective, teachers’ in-play participation remains a governing technique conditioned by pastoral power. In the above empirical example, the teachers’ interventions did not directly interrupt the play. The teacher never yells: “Stop playing right now!”. Instead of yelling, she murmured. Instead of ordering, she suggested. The teacher presented herself as a friend, as a co-player. In-play supervisions, as observed in the play episode above, were conditioned by and possible due to pastoral power. Pastoral power, as a mode of power relationship (Foucault 2009), unveils the discreet techniques of subordination that conditions the teacher’s way of
regulating play and the teacher/child relationship. The teacher acts as a pastor who has the duty of conducting, feeding, and taking care of each and all his sheep, or preschoolers (Foucault 2009). The teacher’s pastoral attitude also urges children to have no secrets from them, not even during ‘free play’. The teacher’s duty is to protect and conduct the child, and this is done through different governing techniques such as in-play supervision.

Pastorate aims at protecting each and all of the children for their salvation, as well as for the teacher’s own salvation (Foucault 2009). The pastor guards the sheep flock, and the teacher protects pre-schoolers, “against wolves and wild beasts. He gives his life for them” (Saint John, cited in Foucault 2009: 228). One may wonder: what do teachers protect children from? One of today’s wolves at the preschool institution is the carnivalesque. Teachers may feel obliged to alter or stop carnivalesque play because it might be perceived as a danger, as a new form of moral sin. The dangerous carnivalesque elements in children’s play — absurdity, transgression, spontaneity — may also be seen by the teachers as a threat envisaging that another order is possible, as a threat to pastoral power.

5.3.2. In-play supervision and confession

A teacher participated in the following play episode that took place in the atelier during a ‘free play’ session. The play involved two children, Marcus and Hobbes (each three years old).

Sitting still at the table, Hobbes offers a pink play-dough ball to Marcus: You want a poo?. Marcus answers: Oh yes, poopy-cheese! They laugh hysterically. The conversation goes on with five other food/poo combinations. A teacher, who had probably overheard the children’s loud conversation from the door next room, opens the atelier sliding door. She sits down with the children and looked surprised: Oh nice, are you playing with eggs? Marcus and Hobbes take a moment before answering: …yes, breakfast! The teacher nods in approval and stays in the atelier with the children. The children tone down the play, they simply concentrate on making eggs. (Field notes, 8th March 2016)

The play appears to be carnivalesque due its profane element. Indeed, children made several profane misalliances by mixing food, cheese, with ‘poo’, which they found hilarious (Bakhtin 1968). In terms of children’s role reversals, this episode highlights children’s dual lives as institutionalised pre-schoolers and as adults who can swear. The teacher did not stop the play, she altered it by asking a question. The teacher’s question
altered the play, silencing its carnivalesque profanity. Under the teacher’s close supervision, the play metamorphoses itself into a factory-like chain production of eggs. In other play episodes, teachers have made similar questions while attempting to play with the children, “Is this a restaurant?”, “What are you up to?”, “Are you playing the daddy/mommy?”. These interventions alter the play, erasing any carnivalesque elements, and turning them into more accepted forms of play.

To listen to children’s voices has been an increasingly popular pedagogic practise in the preschool institution, initiated by child-centred pedagogic discourses. These discourses on listening practises are most renown in Sweden in *Lyssnandets pedagogik: etik och demokrati i pedagogiskt arbete* (Åberg & Lenz Taguchi 2005). In brief, the child-centred listening pedagogy encourages teacher to gain knowledge on each and all children’s thoughts, needs, and plays. The aim of such practises is to adapt the preschool pedagogic practises to the child. Other than liberating the child’s voice, the child-centred pedagogy also reinforces, according to the governmentality perspective, the subordination teacher/pre-schoolers through the confessional techniques (Foucault 1990).

Confession can be described as an “institutional incitement to speak” (Foucault 1990: 18). In confession, the one who interrogates and listens is the one who has authority, and the one who speaks is the one that may confess sins (Foucault 1990). While it is known in the traditional form of a confessional booth, confession occurs also outside of church, in institutions such as the tribunal or preschool. At preschool, confession can take form of subtle questions asked in ‘free play’ sessions: “Is this breakfast?” or “What are you up to?” (Field notes, March 2016). The teacher wants to know what is happening in carnivalesque plays.

Instead of asking afterwards (“what do you wish to confess?”), this interrogation demands a sort of instant and preventive confession of carnivalesque sins (“what are you up to?”). The teacher incites children to open up and speak up. In a similar way the judge interrogates, listens, and has authority upon an accused who is obliged to speak up (Foucault 1990). The child alters the play in order to answer what the teacher wants to hear, as he said “breakfast” instead of “poopy-cheese”. The child alters the carnivalesque play as to avoid confessing carnivalesque sins. It works like a preventive
confession, preventing children from pursuing carnivalesque plays, without interrupting the play. Under the discourses of listening pedagogy, this in-play supervision reveals itself as a confessional strategy, which remains unnoticed despite being an omnipresent and brutally effective way to govern children’s play.

5.3.3. Carnivalesque resistance to confession

At rare times, pre-schoolers defy their teacher’s authority as in the following episode:

It is 8:30 and Elly, five years old, is slowly finishing her porridge. She is the only child left at her table, and her teacher Brigitte is standing by her side. I am sitting at the other table together with two teachers, one intern, and one toddler, who constitute the passive ‘audience’ of this conversation. Brigitte, the teacher, looks down to Elly and asks:
- Do you remember what we did yesterday? Can you tell us where elephants come from?
- No, answers Elly.
- Why? Don’t you remember the video we saw on Youtube yesterday?
- It’s a secret, says Elly with a light smile.
- No, it’s not! Tell us where elephants come from! Did you forget? Insists Brigitte.
- No! I didn’t forget... And it’s a secret. She looks up at Brigitte and laughs.

The conversation goes into a loop. The teacher insists and tries to make Elly change her mind, in vain. After three minutes Brigitte, hiding her irritation, gives up and starts explaining the birth of elephants:
- It is fascinating I can assure you. The baby elephants are in gestation during 21 months, isn’t that right Elly? It lives in a bubble containing air...
- Blabla blablabaaaa! sings Elly along while covering hear ears.
- ... in amniotic fluid...
- Blabla blablablaaaa!
- ... the birth is spectacular when it all splashes on the ground and...
- Blabla blablabla blablabla blablabla blablabla blablabla blaaaaaa!

When the story is over, Elly leaves the room with a smile. (Field notes, March 29th 2016)

Two main carnivalesque elements can be detached in this unusual play, transgressive roles reversal and spontaneity. First, Elly turns the preschool hierarchy upside down, reversing the roles, by saying no to the teacher while laughing. It is marked by the transgressive play in which Elly switched voice. She uses the usual everyday language in the first part, when she says “no”, defying the teacher. Then, in the second part, her language becomes a parody of the teacher’s narration: Blabla blablabla! (Bakhtin 1973). Second, carnival does not comprise participants or audience. Carnival happens spontaneously, here and now (Bakhtin 1968). Initially, the teacher wanted to listen to Elly telling what she had learned the day before. Against her will, the teacher got caught into a carnivalesque play.
This bizarre conversation on the birth of elephants says more about governmentality at preschool than about the miracle of birth among pachyderms. The teacher incited Elly to speak, however, she refused to do so: “No, it’s a secret”. When resisting confession, children might be prone to live with their unhappy consciousness after this failed salvation of the self. When a madman mocks a doctor, the madman remains mad and the doctor remains a ‘man of science’. This is not an insubordination like a soldier’s desertion. Carnivalesque plays act as “points of resistance” to confession, immanent to pastoral power (Foucault 1990: 101). It reflects the immovable subordination between a ‘man of science’ and his subject, between a teacher with a degree in pedagogy and a preschool child.

Though resisted through carnivalesque plays at rare times, the children can also internalize confessional techniques. Preschool children are subjected to confession to the extent that they internalize it to govern the Self. The preschool apparatus produce thus children as “confessing animals”, ideal citizens of the Nordic neo-liberal societies (Foucault 1990: 59). Ultimately, the aim of confessional techniques are that children would confess by themselves, like open diaries the authority can read aloud, transparent bodies with nothing to hide from the state institutions (Foucault 1988). The confession and pastoral power can thus have tremendous effects on the self, and how one takes care of the self.
6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

6.1. Summary of the analysis

This thesis has been steered according its twofold aim: to study children’s carnivalesque plays, as well as the everyday government of children’s play interpreted as carnivalesque at the preschool institution. The four research questions purported to analyse: (1) the concept of carnival; (2) children’s plays at preschool as carnivalesque; (3) how carnivalesque play can defy and problematize the preschool order; (4) how and why preschool attempts to govern children’s carnival play, and how it shapes and delimits children. To answer the aim and research questions, the analysis was structured in three themes (time and discipline, visibility, and confession), focusing on the techniques and strategies applied to govern carnivalesque play. Needless to remind that the analysis departs from empirical data gathered in one Swedish preschool, which means that the analysis purported to explore this particular preschool and corresponding discourses. For a more encompassing study on the government of play, on a larger scale, a genealogy would be more adequate.

6.1.1. Part one: Imagine preschool as a disciplinary institution

This analytical part emphasized on the preschool disciplinary apparatus, with a special focus on the timetable as a core governing technique. Most of teacher’s interruptions of carnivalesque plays were motivated by the timetable. Some pedagogic discourses concerned with children’s care and comfort would legitimise this well-timed routine. Analogous to all modern state institutions based on the model of the prison (Foucault 1991), the timetable appears as an unstoppable device, an insidious and omnipresent governing technique — a ticking clock one can only escape though carnivalesque play. This aspect of everyday life was not in Tullgen’s study scope (2003), but it was succinctly analysed in Palla’s thesis (2011).

6.1.2. Part two: Imagine preschool as a child laboratory

This second analytical theme concerns the preschool visibility lines. Governing techniques of surveillance and documentation operate through the visibility lines, by placing the child at the centre. Those practises appear to be produced and legitimised in child-centred pedagogic discourses. The absence of documentation on carnivalesque
play produces the latter as an abnormal conduct. Øksnes (2008) had also studied a similar institution, a recreational centre in a Norwegian school, with Deleuze’s concept of “visibility lines” (1992). Although we do not share the same aim, both her study and this thesis, agree that carnivalesque plays break the institutional visibility lines and thrive best out of teachers’ sight.

6.1.3. Part three: Imagine preschool as a confessional booth

Imagine the priest as a teacher, and the carnivalesque child as a sinner. The third analytical theme regards techniques of confession inscribed in the pastoral relationship between teacher and pre-schoolers. Discourses legitimising this practise seem to fall under the listening pedagogy. No matter whether asking questions and listening to children is considered in pedagogy, this is not the question. Confession takes the form of instantaneous and preventive governing technique, as the teachers ask children what they are up to during the carnivalesque play. Children usually alter the play, discarding all carnivalesque elements, and answer what the teacher wants to hear. Rather than confession, Palla’s study (2011) focuses on the gaze as a governing strategy within special education, which is another rich concept. It would also have been relevant, for further governmentality studies, to study the regulation of children’s plays through both governing strategies: gaze and confession.

6.2. Carnivalesque elements defying the preschool order

As this thesis shows that carnivalesque play defies and resists to the preschool time regime, the preschool visibility lines, the preschool governing strategy of confession and its corresponding techniques (surveillance, documentation, in-play supervision, pastoral power). Carnivalesque play manifests itself as a break from the banality of day-to-day life and as “a point of resistance” to the preschool everyday government (Foucault 1990). Three carnivalesque elements in particular — transgression, absurdity, and spontaneity — seem to challenge and resist to the preschool order. Carnivalesque play presents a challenge even during the so-called ‘free play’ sessions, which are continuously supervised.
6.3. How did we become “confessing animals”? 

In the church confessional, there is only room for the priest and the sinner. At preschool, however, confession can occur in any room, at any time, and can target each and all children. Confessional techniques take versatile forms. Notwithstanding, questioning preschool through the governmentality perspective means writing a critical ontology of ourselves, and asking how we became what we are (Foucault 1984). The governmentality perspective is predominantly concerned with the government of the self. In between the lines, this thesis asked questions drawing from Foucault’s study of the *History of Sexuality* (1990: 59): how did we become “confessing animals”? What made us confessing rather than wild transgressive beasts? These questions, concerning among others preschool teachers and children, deserve to be studied per se, ideally through a genealogy of childhood and pedagogy.
Bibliography


Appendix A. Comparative table, “official feast” versus “carnival”

This comparative table is based on my own reading of Bakhtin’s concepts of “official feast” and “carnival” in *Rabelais and his world* (1968) and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1973).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Official feast”</th>
<th>“Carnival”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Order</em></td>
<td><em>Order</em> and chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reproduction</em></td>
<td><em>Reproduction</em> and production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rational</em></td>
<td><em>Rational</em>, irrational, and absurd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Following the pre-existing norms</em></td>
<td>Transgression and liberation from the norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Past into present</em></td>
<td><em>Becoming</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hierarchized and normative</em></td>
<td><em>Dialogic</em> and heteroglossic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seriousness</em></td>
<td><em>Laughter</em>, satire, and grotesque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Repeat established order</em></td>
<td><em>Novelty</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B. Mummins preschool daily timetable

The following timetable is based on my observations (Field notes, March 2016):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Mummins preschool opens, ‘Free play’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>Breakfast, the teachers and children eat in the main room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>‘Free play’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Morning assembly and fruit-break, everyone sits in a circle at assigned places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>Outdoors ‘free play’, indoors gymnastics or indoors pedagogic activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>The children wait for the lunch to arrive. During the awaiting time, a teacher sings songs or reads a book for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Lunch-time, the teachers and children eat in the main room, at their assigned seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15</td>
<td>Those who are three years old or older have ‘free play’ outdoors. One hour nap for those under three years old and a shorter session of ‘free play’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30</td>
<td>Snack, the teachers and children eat in the main room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>‘Free play’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00</td>
<td>Mummins preschool closes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mandatory hygienic pauses (use of toilets when needed or change of diapers, and washing hands) are also parts of the routine: after breakfast, after the morning assembly, before or after lunch, after nap/outdoor free play, after snack. Besides, teachers follow a parallel schedule to take their break in the rest room, separated from the classroom area.
Appendix C. Gesell’s child laboratory

The photograph of Gesell’s child laboratory (Yale university) shows how surveillance and documentation function through what the one-way mirror visibility outlines (published in LIFE Magazine, 1947).