INTERTWINING PROCESSES OF RECONFIGURING TRADITION
Three European Case Studies

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This article explores the three main concepts and experiential aspects at the centre of this special issue (re-enchantment, ritualization, and heritage-making), on the empirical grounds of three different ethnographic cases from Italy, the Czech Republic, and Catalonia (Spain). The text attempts to demonstrate how re-enchantment, ritualization, and cultural heritage-making can co-exist and interact within or around the same traditional facts as complementary (or at least not mutually exclusive) processes, and also in what sense their correlation and interaction can be thought of in terms of "tradition reconfiguration". This is also done by discussing the concepts of "(re)traditionalization" and "past-presencing", and related ones, such as symbolization, mythopoiesis, popular Frazerism, and (pseudo-)religious heritage.

Keywords: tradition, past-presencing, popular Frazerism, public rituality, cultural heritage

This article intends to expand on the three concepts at the centre of this themed issue of *Ethnologia Europaea*, which are connected with the broader anthropological problem of the "reconfiguration of tradition" and which have already been presented thoroughly in the introduction: the processes of "re-enchantment", "ritualization", and "heritage-making" (Isnart & Testa 2020). Its aim is to offer fresh empirical evidence and up-to-date theoretical reflections grounded in three different European areas in which I have worked over the last ten years. As the authors made clear in the introduction, the processes they call "re-enchantment", "ritualization", and "heritage-making" can happen independently, or be deeply and even inextricably interwoven. How both scenarios are possible and actually do occur will be established in the following pages. Three different European historical and ethnographic case studies will be evoked here and used as empirical bases on which to illustrate such sociocultural phenomena, although references will also be made to other case studies discussed in the scholarly literature. In so doing, my aim is to develop and demonstrate the hypothesis that such phenomena are not only interconnected, but that they also play an important role in the structuring and expression of several crucial dynamics at the community and individual levels. I also argue that these phenomena and dynamics are actually both based on and prompt other, complementary symbolic responses and sociocultural "complexes" connected with the spheres of collective memory, religious forms and practices,

the conception of the past, and the sense of social belonging. These other issues will also be discussed in relation to the main concepts of the article and to the three case studies, which were explored and studied relying both on historiographical (secondary) as well as ethnographic (primary) methods.[1]

Three Case Studies

The first case study is the revitalized carnival pantomime of the "deer-man" in Castelnuovo al Volturno, a small village in the Central Apennines (described extensively in Testa 2014a, 2014b, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2019, and in press a), in central-southern Italy.[2] The event, which displays interesting and fairly archaic traits, stages the interplay of several masked characters taken from local folklore, including principally the "hunter", who hunts the "deer-man", and "Martino" (an elf or fairy-like figure), who, in turn,

tries to tame him. This public ritual, like many other rural or provincial festivals in Europe, went through a period of relative neglect and abandonment during the 1950s and 1960s, only to be reborn and continued afterwards, from the late 1970s through to the 1990s, when it was revitalized, refunctionalized, and charged with new forms, meanings, and functions. Several actors played different roles in this process, with a variety of social agents actively involved in the transformation of the local tradition. It went through different phases in which new masks, dances, and an entirely new technical apparatus appeared on the stage of the pantomime. This revival was associated with institutionalization in different forms, specifically, the institution of a cultural association, the growth of a bureaucratic framework, and the establishment of a tight cluster of new political and institutional networks and affiliations, both formal

Figure 1: A moment in the pantomime of the deer-man. (Photo: Lorenzo Albanese, Castelnuovo al Volturno 2016)

and informal, between certain members of the Castelnuovo community and a variety of local and translocal agencies. The development of a touristic sensibility, a micro-economy, and a heritage discourse – all interconnected phenomena – around the revitalized tradition were a corollary to this process.

The second example is Masopust (a carnival-like festivity) of Hlinsko v Čechách in Bohemia, the Czech Republic, which is characterized by "mumming" performances, that is door-to-door processions of masked men who perform dances and other ritual or ritualesque (Santino 2009) actions to ensure, they claim, good luck and fertility (Blahůšek & Vojancová 2011; Frolec & Tomeš 1979; Testa 2017a, 2017b, 2016a, 2016b).[3] The Masopust in Hlinsko is not particularly original in itself and exhibits many features common to other carnival-like festivals in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and elsewhere in the Slavic world. However, unlike many similar popular manifestations, it was not prohibited during socialist times, although in Czechoslovakia, as elsewhere in the socialist world, the official position of the Communist Party towards this kind of events was one of discouragement, if not condemnation and prohibition. In any case, this festival also went through a phase of partial disinterest during the 1980s, but after the Fall of Communism, and during the 1990s, it acquired a new relevance and popularity, which have since continued to grow. During this process, the event became, just like with Castelnuovo, the gravitational centre of a variety of new sociocultural dynamics, among which institutionalization, mediatization, and commodification processes. Consequential political positioning or repositioning of certain actors in the town took place. Masopust in Hlinsko and in three surrounding villages was included on the Unesco Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010.

Figure 2: A leaflet about Masopust in Hlinsko published after the Unesco recognition. (Collected in Hlinsko in 2013)

The third case study is a very special carnival that has been celebrated in Solsona, central Catalonia (Spain), in its current form for almost fifty years now (Vilaseca & Trilla 2011; Testa 2019 and in press a).[4] Its features actually go back before the Spanish Civil War, but after having been prohibited during the Franco era, it was re-enacted, becoming one of the vehicles of the Catalan reaction against the regime, a veritable symbol of political and cultural liberation, and a free expression of Catalan (and Catalanist) sentiments – much in the same vein as the more famous Corpus Christi festival in the nearby city of Berga, the *Patum*.[5] In 1979, the Solsona carnival was declared by the Spanish government – in spite of its then emerging (and today solid) anti-Castilian stance – *Fiesta de Interés Turístico Nacional* (Festival of National Touristic Interest), that is a piece of intangible cultural heritage *ante litteram*. Between the second half of the 1970s and the end of the 80s, the festivity became the host of a series of much ritualized acts, which helped structure a then still young event. In the last few decades, those acts have crystallized, and the festival has grown exponentially, becoming a mass event participated in by most of the townsfolk and visitors from surrounding areas and *Comarques*, but also from Barcelona. Today, the *Carnaval* is the main event of the entire Comarca, one of its main identity markers, a piece of local heritage, and also a considerable source of income for many.

Tradition and Ritual: Processes of (Re)ritualization, (Re)traditionalization, and Re-enchantment

Among the many changes the first two of these three festivals have undergone in recent times, a rather striking one is the emergence – or re-emergence – of beliefs in their power to induce good luck and

Figure 3: The dance of the Giants (*els Gegants*) in the Main Square (*Plaça Major*) – one of the many performances of the *Carnaval*. (Photo: Victor Pisa, courtesy of the Associació de Festes del Carneval de Solsona, Solsona 2019)

fertility through the ritual performances. As a consequence, a set of magical or pseudo-magical acts from times past have been invented, re-invented, or re-enacted. This was a rather uneven process, which occurred during periods of great social transformations that occurred in both places between the late 1960s and the early 2000s. Different social groups and individuals, characterized by different social, economic, and cultural capitals, have been the actors of these processes, and this differentiation and diversification explain both the unevenness of the process and its multifaceted outcomes, some of which are described in these pages.

Drawing its strength from local traditional tropes, global imaginaries and representations of magic, primitiveness, and folkloric authenticity – we could call them "cultural scapes", paraphrasing Appadurai (1996) – the re-enchantment happening in these contexts in Europe can be conceptualized as a sort of "global-local" (or "glocal") vernacular religiosity. This has its source in the merging and interacting of the global circulation of representations and symbols (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1998) with local(ized) and vernacularized ones (Christian 1981; Primiano 1995). Whether this vernacular religiosity, which can also be considered a specific type of ritual folkloric magic, expresses itself within (and in interaction with) a rather secularized area like Bohemia[6] or in a context of "southern Catholicism"[7] (Charuty 2001; de Martino 2015) like central-southern Italy, they both are formally connected to the past but rooted in the existential and material needs of the present.

In the case of Castelnuovo, this reconfiguration shaped by popular creativity as well as by the constraints of a normative, almost dogmatic idea of "tradition" (widely observable in the peripherical areas of Europe) did not happen freely, because the former ritual tradition as it used to exist before the abandonment – or at least as the ethnographic sources show – constituted a strong blueprint for its subsequent restructuring and revitalization. In other words, what happened in Castelnuovo is more of a re-ritualization than a ritualization *tout court*; more of a re-invention of a tradition than an invention, for re-ritualization implies that the traditional fact

somewhat lost its ritual property at some point, only to re-acquire it later (which is precisely what happened). Similarly, the ritual fact deemed traditional was not invented *stricto sensu* in recent times, simply because it had existed before (at least since the 1960s, but quite likely in older times as well): it just needed to be *re*-invented to function in a radically changed context. In other words, what occurred in Castelnuovo can be conceptualized as a ritualizing re-traditionalization (or a traditionalizing re-ritualization). Micro-processes such as touristification, commodification, bureaucratization, and spectacularization were certainly and visibly involved in the macro-process of general reconfiguration of the local tradition. In the end, numerous are the causes and consequences of the transformation of Castelnuovo's carnival from a more or less well-established ritual performance contributing to explaining the order of things and shaping the symbolic universe of the local community, to an intermediary phase during which it was nothing more than a fading "cultural relic", into its final re-emergence as a public event with spectacular as well as heritagized, ritualized, and ritualizing traits.[8] After all, ritualization is also a means of (re)inventing or restoring tradition in itself. Insofar as for the locals the notions of ritual and tradition are almost interchangeable; both of them are believed to bring about the same properties of authenticity, immutability, and transmission. Re-enchantment in these two contexts, but especially in Castelnuovo, can thus be understood also in terms of a religious or pseudo-religious phenomenon, or as a more (post-)secular form of "charm", which emerged during the revival of the local tradition, and which continues to emanate from it, fascinating the locals as well as visitors and strangers.[9]

Whereas in Castelnuovo we see the (re)ritualization of tradition and the (re)traditionalization of ritual, in Hlinsko the local tradition has remained formally more stable, in many respects almost unchanged, and no ritualization *stricto sensu* (i.e. in the sense of a reorganization or reinvention of new ritual forms) has happened: since the ritual has remained formally and structurally the same (although certainly charged with new meanings and interpreted

differently by a variety of agents), it did not need to be re-ritualized. This feature does not seem to be dependent on or otherwise related to the socialist context. In fact, in "real-socialist" countries, such forms of rituality could either be abandoned or kept more or less spontaneously according to a variety of factors (de-ruralization, industrialization, secularization, migration patterns, changes in lifestyle and in religious habits, or actually, indeed, impositions or restrictions of the regime [Testa 2016a]). In Czechoslovakia, as already pointed out, the party policies concerning this type of events could vary significantly, and they did vary in different times and sites; for example Masopust festivities were mostly prohibited in Prague, but not always or everywhere in the rural areas. During real socialism, these performances, as well as any other manifestation of local folklore, were very often subject to censorship and even direct intervention in the form of content manipulation. Such manipulation mainly took the form of expunging and/or altering folk content and themes through their political alignment and normalization within the socialist (and national) ideological frameworks. These politics of culture were actively promoted and operated by state functionaries or even by scholars and experts specifically appointed by the party (Kratochvíl 2015; Pavlicová & Uhlíková 2013). This does not seem to have been the case, however, with the Masopust in Hlinsko.

Re-enchantment can also go hand in hand with the making of a form of cultural heritage out of the local tradition.[10] This has taken different forms in Castelnuovo and Hlinsko: changes in the local consideration of the festival from leisure to something expressing locality and "typicity"; the process of patrimonialization or heritagization proper (considering the local tradition part of the local, regional, or national "heritage", or, in the case of Hlinsko, the involvement of Unesco); and, of course, through musealization. Local museums, exhibitions, and cultural spaces devoted to presenting and promoting the local traditions have sprung up everywhere in the last few decades, having a strong impact on the changing mentality about how tradition is (to be) lived, preserved, and performed. The "charm" of

folklore and folkloric objects (masks, tools, memorabilia, etc.) merges with their vivid, performative life in the *piazza*, but also with the sense of awe and respect – devotion, even – and with the chrism of institutionality born by things in a display case: after all, as Sharon Macdonald has written, "once objects are in museums, they are in a sense sacralised" (Macdonald 2013: 148).[11] Hence, it is the social practices and representations so far described that, in a manner of speaking, "embed" themselves in museums, gadgets, pictures, masks, memorabilia, souvenirs, and other things; in this way, they "materialize". In fact, the material dimension alone cannot acquire, keep, or transmit meaning without its "intangible" counterpart, formed of the discourses, narratives, and representations that make the tangible objects socially recognizable, relevant, and desirable: it is the integrated or "symbiotic" nature of heritage (Nic Craith & Kockel 2015; Testa 2019).

Said sorts of cultural or folkloric fetishization, along with feelings of supreme care and respect and even devotion for the folkloric ritual objects, in addition to the "sacralizing" force of musealization through the selection and separation of certain "special" items from their material social life, are all elements that, in my ethnographic cases at least, have often assumed pseudo-religious characteristics or even inspired actual religious sentiments. Furthermore, in the case of Hlinsko, the ritual magic of the performances is explicitly mentioned in the Unesco candidature document.[12] With closer scrutiny, however, things seem to be more complicated.

(Semi-)religious Beliefs and Magically-induced Fertility

The inhabitants of Castelnuovo define themselves mostly as practising Roman Catholics. This, however, does not prevent some of them from believing in the fertility-bringing magical property of the carnival, or in the pantomime as an allegoric and dramatized ritual showing the struggle between Good and Evil. No wonder then, that the festival has always been more or less tolerated – and at times actually even praised – by the local clergy, in spite of the involvement of a set of masks and performances that are not exactly or-

thodox.[13] As a matter of fact, the appearance and the actions of the *janare* (the witches of the local folklore acting at the beginning of the pantomime) and of the deer-man himself during the popular drama are set and performed in such a manner as to highlight their supernatural, numinous nature. This is done also by means of a rather sophisticated technical audio-visual apparatus that dramatizes the appearance of the figures, shown precisely in a pagan and even diabolic light (see the cover of this issue for a vivid example of this), in a feast of primitivism which represents an emblematic example of (re-)ritualization of a European festival. If we look back at the 1980s in Castelnuovo, during the process of revitalization and re-ritualization, the evident primitivistic and pagan flavour described above was added to the pantomime on the basis of a then emergent global imaginary of magic, fantasy fiction, and medievalized representations, with the purpose of exalting its already quite archaic characteristics. This is patent in the visual and textual documentation, and even more so in the contemporary event (which results precisely from the revitalization in the 1980s and the 90s). However, it could not be stressed enough that Castelnuovo was and is a Catholic place, with a rich and diverse liturgical calendar scrupulously followed by many villagers. So how can such different if not opposite religious or quasi-religious practices and symbols go along together? Reconstructing this complex process is not the purpose of this article.[14] I will only specify that, within a few years, a new belief in magically-induced fertility emerged, and the carnival started to be considered a "pagan" survival. In the end, even the clergy, that is the one priest of the one local parish, as already pointed out, faced with the impossibility of blocking the revival of the local festival and its related symbolism, attempted to "normalize" it by writing a few pamphlets. In these, he exercised himself in the rather difficult task of bringing back the archaic imaginary of the deer-man within a more orthodox framework, namely through an edifying, allegoric interpretation of it. This, however, has not prevented most of the townsfolk from considering it as "pagan".

In Hlinsko, the magical acts aimed at fostering fertility are documented by the very first written sources, which date back to around a hundred years ago, but the contemporary magical or pseudo-religious connotations and beliefs of Masopust seem to be slightly weaker than in Castelnuovo, although in considering this, one should keep in mind that Czechia went through years of discouragement of both folkloric and religious practices, as has already been highlighted previously in this text. In fact, in Hlinsko both the process of heritage-making and the re-emergence of religious or pseudo-religious practices associated with it should be assessed bearing in mind the framework of the deep structural sociocultural changes that occurred during the post-socialist transition (i.e. in the last thirty years). This article cannot be the place for a general assessment of the impact of communist social engineering on institutional or vernacular forms of religiosity in the context of Hlinsko. Nor can it be the place for the immediately subsequent or later results of such an impact on the religious lives of the locals in the current "post-secular" age. Further research about those elements is needed and will hopefully be undertaken. However, my observations have led me to come to some provisional conclusions, namely the recognition that the aforementioned magical and/or quasi-religious traits can co-exist with secular and post-secular ones rather unproblematically.[15] They do co-exist, for example among many Masopust enthusiasts. Besides, they seem to subsist without those people involved being necessarily religious (or defining themselves as such). Nevertheless, the quasi-religious dimension of these popular facts remains quite evident, although this has not (yet?) resulted in recognition of them being at least partly religious (or secular but with religious characteristics). In fact, they are neither officially (by Unesco, national agencies, or the civic society) nor unofficially (by the locals) labelled as pieces of religious Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).[16]

"Taken away" by Rituals

This involvement of certain magical and/or religious convictions, however partial or peculiar, seems to sustain or fortify the interaction between different experiential dimensions triggering (and at the

same time based on) the reconfiguration of traditional things. Sacralization through musealization and re-enchantment through ritualization, as they have occurred, *mutatis mutandis*, in Castelnuovo and Hlinsko seem to have happened also elsewhere, as can be deduced from the pertinent literature, are powerful reconfiguring factors. However, in order to function so strongly and bear their transformative force, they need to be deeply incorporated within and catalyzed by the social agents involved, becoming – or rather structuring – their *habitus* but also involving and triggering the emergence of feelings and emotions. Indeed, these aspects have appeared during my ethnographic interactions, sometimes in vehement forms. I have often been surprised at how deeply embodied and vociferously expressed the convictions about the rituals, their magic, and their antiquity are, or at how vehemently the locals are ready to defend these features, willingly engaging in conversations and discussions about them, sometimes in order to react to criticism concerning this or that aspect of the tradition. This is true with regard to the very experience of the ritual *hic et nunc* as well as to the less immediate experience of viewing objects in museums, to the masks and other paraphernalia kept at home or exhibited in public spaces. The emotional involvement is strong, no matter whether it is channelled inwardly, towards how subjects say they "feel" (as they explicitly say in Castelnuovo, for example) when participating in the performances, or externalized in the emotional relationship with the traditional or traditionalized objects. In fact, numerous research participants and informants, both in Castelnuovo and in Hlinsko, have confessed to me the extent of their being "taken away" during the rituals. Gathering with the crowds, wearing the traditional masks and performing the traditional dances or pantomimes are often reported as being experiences bringing plenitude and fulfilment, but also rapture and even semi-ecstatic states of mind, not seldom induced or influenced by the consumption of substances (especially alcohol).[17] It is when these states and conditions occur that the individuals acting within the framework of the re-ritualized tradition form emotional bonds between

themselves and the traditional practices as well as among themselves, in a way that strongly brings to mind the shaping of the ritual *communitas* as theorized by Victor Turner (1966). This is most certainly the case with the people playing the figures of the deer-man pantomime in Castelnuovo, and also some of the figures characterizing the Masopust mumming in the area of Hlinsko. Hence, the emotional dimension of witnessing or participating in the performances, the direct and moving experience of "feeling the tradition" so often evoked by informants, and the passionate involvement on the basis of said practices are the emotional matter that substantiate the processes of tradition reconfiguration and (re-)traditionalization. These occurred not least through structuring behavioural patterns and insuring the successful keeping and transmission of facts traditional – or rather of what is deemed to be so.

Ritualization and re-enchantment, and their experiential and emotional dimensions, can also be linked to another complex that seems to pattern the cultural landscapes of European marginal areas: "popular Frazerism" (Testa 2017b). This term refers to the effects of an operation of "cultural bricolage" and symbolic manipulation and circulation (which the locals are often unaware of themselves) of a popularized version of Frazer's theses on European agrarian festivities and folk rituals, particularly those concerning the notion of ritually-fostered fertility, agrarian magic, the supposed pagan origins of carnival and other European festivals, and their being a "survival" of ancient rituals, at times considered to be of presumed unfathomable antiquity or even prehistoric.[18] In a way, popular Frazerism as I conceive it is also characterized by religious or pseudo-religious traits, and is therefore at work in the shaping of a vernacular religion, which in turn is somewhat "poured" into the heritage framework: in Hlinsko, as a form of folk religious belief in an otherwise highly secular context, and in Castelnuovo, as a local variation of Catholicism impregnated with magical elements, which are at times overtly conceptualized by the natives as "pagan", without this posing any particular doctrinal problem for them.

These last considerations open the floor to a few more general considerations on the cultural usages of time and the past, which will be discussed in the second half of this article, along (and with the help of) the third ethnographic example.

Enchanted Simulacra and the Religious Dimension

Carnival in Solsona lasts for seven days. Its well-circumscribed public rituals occur within the time-span of one week, during which the festivity wholly hegemonizes the public sphere. This festivity and its rituals bear a great significance for the local community, and are participated in massively, with extreme enthusiasm and even rapture. Both extreme enthusiasm and at times rapture characterize the emotional landscape of most of the Solsona people transversally, crossing economic classes, political identities, genders, and ages. The youth is particularly, vividly, and more loudly and visibly involved in the performances. To a casual observer, it might indeed seem that the entire town collapses into a maelstrom of frenzy, sleep deprivation, fatigue, and drunkenness; in many respects, carnival in Solsona represents a veritable world upside-down and exemplifies magnificently the typically "Bakhtian" carnivalesque representational and behavioural patterns. Nevertheless, in spite of the apparent disorder and chaos, a structure ordering the event is provided by several ritualized acts, which are well-circumscribed public performances within the ritual week. Some of these rituals or ritualized acts (locally called *actes*) are: *el Sermó* (the sermon), during which one of the carnival characters addresses the local and national politicians sarcastically and critically; *el Nomenament del Mata-ruc d'Honor* (the appointment of the honourable donkey-slaughter), which is a figure chosen from among the most prominent Catalan (and Catalanist) intellectuals and artists; *la Pujada dels Gegants* (the arrival of the giants), when the local giants, which are very popular and common figures in Catalan folklore, parade through the medieval district; *la Penjada i la Despenjada del Ruc* (the hanging and the "unhanging" of the donkey [or rather a simulacrum of a donkey]), the veritable cli-

max of the entire carnival, during which a mass of local people gather to sing the carnival anthem; and finally, *la Cremada del Carnestoltes* (the burning of carnival at the stake), the act that closes the festivity.

Most of these rituals also express in a rather explicit and vivid manner political and social critique. Even more importantly, the carnival helps people in Solsona to articulate and express their "being Catalans" in central Catalonia. Furthermore, it structures and formalizes an entire set of interpersonal and intergroup relationships, mostly through the creation, reproduction, and keeping of the *colles* and *comparses*, a very specific kind of formalized networks that function only (or better: apparently only) within, during, and for the carnival. Being the festival a time of hyper-socialization, it also allows for the integration of non-locals and non-Catalans into the local community, and at the same time the exclusion of those who do not participate, through the establishment of a dichotomous "us and them" logic ("us" intended as those who live in or are from Solsona and take part in the carnival, "them" intended as those who live or are from Solsona but do not take part in the carnival).

In Solsona, ritualization and heritage-making processes and their impact on the festival and on the local society as a whole is rather evident; the dimension of re-enchantment is less so. Nevertheless, Solsona's carnival is connected with the religious sphere in different ways: First, in European history, carnivals have always been a festival connected with the Christian calendar and with the coming of Lent and Easter; during its millenial history, carnival has often gathered and reused religious elements from a variety of sources and for a variety of purposes (Testa in press b). Second, in Solsona, the festival was born as an explicit parody of the local *festa major*, a religious celebration. Third, religious symbolism is visibly present during the week-long celebrations, though in a parodic – and at times actually overtly blasphemous – way. Religious symbolism in general is locally mediated in a variety of fashions, for example through reference to the long Catholic history and persistent identity of the town, often recalled by the vociferous local bishop. The

growing presence of Maghrebis (mostly Moroccans) in Solsona, currently around 15% of the townsfolk, nearly all of them Muslim, complicates things: in fact, the transgressive, irreverent, and sometimes blasphemous traits of Solsona's carnival are one of the reasons why during its happening, practically all of the local Muslim population disappears, not to be seen in public spaces and not participating in the local public life. What local informants have told me about that and what I have observed myself have led me to think that this is actually not only a problem of (partly religious) symbols and representations, but rather of how they are lived and experienced *in practice*: Solsona's carnival is a feast of behavioural excesses, which are freely expressed by individuals of all ages and all sexes, and of almost unanimous immoderate consumption of alcohol and consequent intoxication. This must be assessed against the consideration that the level of co-existence of Muslims of more recent immigration in Solsona (mostly from Morocco) with the non-Muslim local majority is generally regarded by the latter, as I have ascertained through plenty of formal and informal conversations, as rather poor, with a few exceptions. This has also been confirmed to me during interviews with the mayor and with other civil servants, some of whom are actively involved in integration policies and cultural initiatives aimed at fostering cohabitation and mutual understanding. It appears indeed that one of the reasons for this is precisely the social refusal of the Muslim population to not participate in the carnival, which, as already established, is widely considered the most important festival of the town and a time-span of hyper-socialization. I myself was fully and warmly socialized into the local community only after the rite of passage of my first carnival and my being accepted into one of its *comparses*. More generally, in a social setting where drinking alcoholic beverages in company and in public has a very important social function, being practically a non-written community norm, abstaining from alcohol consumption and from the social practices associated with it (especially but non exclusively the carnival) can seriously impair efforts of cohabitation. Most *Solsonins* love to eat out in res-

taurants. They love commensality, and drinking together; in fact, there are more than forty snack bars, restaurants, and places to eat out in a town of 9,000 inhabitants, which is a rather impressive ratio. As a consequence, those who do not do "as the Romans do" might be regarded with a mixture of surprise, incomprehension, and mistrust. Not drinking alcohol particularly during carnival, moreover, is normally met with puzzlement and scorn, no matter the social, ethnic, or religious background of the abstinent, while the fact of living in Solsona and refusing altogether to participate in the festival is likewise the object of social reprobation.

As suggested, more often than occasionally, the parody of the second most important festival in the town, the Catholic *Festa Major*, and of the Catholic Church in general, overflows into a curious kind of "carnivalesque blasphemy". The four most important carnival giants themselves are a parody of the older ones belonging to the *Festa Major*. Frequently, during the past carnivals, the clerical hierarchies have been the object of scorn; Solsona being an old episcopate, although a very small one, it is the bishop who is often made the object of mockery in always new, but very explicit and visually potent, ways. Even the most important historical statue of the city, the romanesque *Mare de Deu*, a revered Madonna hosted in the cathedral, which is present in the local prayers and folklore, has not escaped carnivalization: for example, in a rather blasphemous poster adorning one of the streets during the carnival of 2010, the baby Jesus in her arms was substituted for an image of the *Xut*, the giant owl of the local folklore.

Through these forms of syncretism, invention, and manipulation, the locals reflect, metaphorically, metonymically, or simply creatively and playfully, on their own relationship with the Catholic Church, on the paradoxes of this relationship, and on the very history of the town, which has always been characterized by the strong influence of the Church, not only during the Catholic regime of Franco, but also in more recent times. Like in all complicated relationships, extremes and roles are being played alternatively, and in fact, in an appar-

ently only funny manner, the Solsonins interpret and display their being "good Christians" during the pious *Festa Major*, and "bad Christians" during the transgressive carnival. This contraposition (which actually represents a complementarity rather than a real opposition), is one of the modalities that allow the local communities to articulate political as well as social concerns and critiques, but also express views on a variety of issues in which local politicians and the clergy are somewhat involved (and they are not scarce, as one might guess). Borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin's interpretation of carnival culture and the "carnivalesque" (Bakhtin 1984; see also Testa in press b), carnival in Solsona does fulfil the need to give a voice to the popular discontent, and it does so by ritualizing it.

Last but not least, the seemingly mundane simulacra populating Solsona's carnival are also "enchanted". Specifically, the figures of the giants, which are taken care of and puppeteered by groups of local youths united in the *comparses*, and the puppet of the ass, which every year is ritually hung on, then likewise ritually taken down ("unhanged", as the Solsonians say) from the medieval bell tower. These figures, the veritable protagonists of the festivity, are treated with respect, devotion, and even veneration, such as is to be found usually only with regards to religious statues, icons, tools, or parades used in the liturgy. In Solsona's otherwise rather secularized contemporary society, no other object used in the public sphere can be compared to the giants and the ass in terms of popularity and affection. People willingly and openly express their feelings towards the giants and the other figures, and this emotional connection is actually one of the engines that keeps the carnival machinery moving, working smoothly, and reproducing itself (and even growing) every year. This respect, devotion, and affection, which can also be noticed elsewhere in Catalonia, for example in the case of the Patum giants in Berga, can be translated into an emic native term, especially significant in the context of this article: *encant*. Several of the research participants that were interviewed during the fieldwork used this word to describe their feelings, or the relationship

between the locals, the "Solsonins", and these carnival simulacra. In Catalan, both the noun *encant* and the verb *encantar* are polysemous; while the former is used more parsimoniously, the latter can mean many different things: to please, to delight, to fascinate, to cast a spell, as well as to daydream, to look blank, or even to deceive. Most of these meanings can actually also be found in the corresponding words in other romance languages, such as *enchanter* (French), *incantare* (Italian), and *encantar* (Catalan, Spanish, and Portuguese). Solsona's carnival is literally "enchanted".

Time and the Ritual

The processes outlined above all share at least one element: the fact (or claim) of being linked to an actual or imagined past. The (f)actual transmission over time, in whatever form, the imagination and reconstruction of this process, and the feelings that are attached to or emerge from these poetics of time and temporality are the factors shaping what has been rightly called the practice of "past-presencing" (Macdonald 2013): making the past *present* (in the present).

The relationship to a past, or rather continuity along the axis of time – whether emically conceptualized as history, heritage, tradition, or differently – is the common denominator of the otherwise rather vast and diverse set of social facts, phenomena, and processes that qualify as traditional. In the case of events like those presented in the last few pages, that is carnivals or carnivalesque festivities, the best type of past, in a manner of speaking, is the antique time of pagan festivals, according to what has been called "popular Frazerism", a declension of a postmodern romantic imaginary, with its taste for magic, fantastic creatures, medievalness, or primeval times. It is this "sense of the antique" (more than any possible and actual antique feature, which can be easily altered or even invented), that permits the binding of a tradition and the people who practise it to a past that can be used to enhance collective sentiments of belonging, community, and identity, but also narrative, memory, and emotional structuring at the micro-level of the individual – as has emerged clearly

in the ethnographies undertaken in Castelnuovo, Hlinsko, and Solsona. These poetics and practices of time and "past-presencing" produce in turn symbolic depth, which fuels social memory and usually also translates into sentiments of tipicity, originality, and authenticity. Nathalie Heinich has written, "l'ancienneté est une valeur éminente: elle s'ajoute à la valeur d'authenticité en rallongeant le temps dans lequel s'inscrit le lien avec l'origine de l'objet […]" (Heinich 2012: 29), whereas Saša Istenič has stressed that "in this sense 'traditional' means not only old, but also original and authentic" (Istenič 2012: 79). The Italian anthropologist, Francesco Faeta, has more radically concluded that "in marginal contexts the antiquity of the festival is a very important element. Why does an 'ancient' festival function more efficiently in the construction and the maintenance of the locality? Because the stretching of the temporal depth of the festival means the widening of its symbolic density and stratification" (Faeta 2005: 163).[19] This can explain the emic usage of adjectives like "very ancient", "antique", "pagan", or even "prehistoric", all often associated with the carnivals of Castelnuovo and Hlinsko, for example, but also with many other festivities all around Europe; the equation at work is that the more remote the evoked past is, the more "authentic" the tradition.

With regard to the last point, the role of professional ethnographers, but also of non-professional, "amateur" ethnologists and local, non-professional scholars (especially local historians) in the shaping and emergence of these processes should not be overlooked (de Certeau 1975; Hodges 2011; Testa 2014a, 2014b, 2017b; Sagnes 2002). They can fulfil different local functions, especially as bearers of the canonized interpretation of the local tradition (and the local past), and as mediators between the academic ("etic") discourse and the vernacular ("emic") ones. Hence, local sentiments and practices merge with translocal imaginaries and academic notions through dynamics of circulation and re-appropriation that become components of an engine which, in the end, produces social poetics and practices that fuel *agency* at both individual and community level. In turn, the agency of the "tra-

ditionalized" social actors contributes to a variety of social claims, collective dynamics, and cultural processes: from social structural configuration to community self-representation and identity, from the shaping of emotions and sense of the past to the construction of local history and of the locality itself, but also political and social critique, and the positioning of individuals and groups within the community.[20]

Ritual and Mythopoiesis

The dynamics of social configuration based on the past-presencing analysed above and the interwoven processes of re-enchantment, ritualization, and heritage-making have proven, in one of my ethnographic contexts, Castelnuovo, to be correlated with another interesting phenomenon: that of social mythopoiesis. It can be argued that in some European areas, the process of heritagization and reconfiguration of traditions bearing religious or pseudo-religious characteristics may result in them acquiring a mythopoeic force. In fact, as Marshall Sahlins has written, "traditions are invented in the specific terms of the people who construct them. Fundamentally, they are atemporal, being for the people conditions of their form of life as constituted, and considered coeval with it. It follows that such traditions are authoritatively narrativized, […] just like charter myths" (Sahlins 1999: 409).

In Castelnuovo, no "legend", "myth", "folktale",[21] or other narratological form was ever recorded about the deer-man and/or other characters of the pantomime or any of its other features prior to its revitalization (late 1970s and 80s). This, however, has not prevented the fact that, in the last three decades, an entire imaginary has developed around the carnival event, notably with respect to notions of tradition and immutability, and poetics of temporality and deep past to which it is systematically associated. These (re)traditionalized representations have been so profoundly incorporated and naturalized by the Castelnovesi that they now refer to them constantly when questioned about the history of the village, and, inevitably, about what is "remarkable" or even "unique" about it, that is its "very ancient", "primor-

dial" or "pagan" carnival. It is precisely such a strong sense of temporality, inflected through essentialized "traditional" forms, which has been laid at the base of this mythopoeic process. As a consequence, the so temporalized and traditionalized festive practice has offered the symbolic material to cause its narrativization to acquire a foundational function, which is one of the main functions that characterize the type of narratives normally associated with myth and mythology.[22] Through its "ritual of the deer-man", the otherwise obscure history of Castelnuovo is thus anchored to an essentialized and "traditionalized" but nevertheless founding narrative of the past: in other words, this (mostly imagined) past is mythified.[23] By claiming the "prehistoric", "primordial", or "pagan" origin of the pantomime of the deer-man, or when claiming that it "has always been done" (*si è sempre fatto*, which is the almost unanimous answer one gets from the locals when asking about how old the event is), the Castelnovesi establish a direct, symbolic bond between the antiquity of the pantomime, the origins of the village, and the history of its community (i.e. themselves). This temporality can also be thought of as the *in illo tempore* of mythical narratives, which is to say the qualitatively "other" time of the myth, *conditio sine qua non* of all cosmologies, no matter how minuscule.[24] But what about the "actual" history of Castelnuovo then? It has almost no place in this narrative, and very few really bother about it in the hamlet anyway. "Gl' Cierv" (the local name for the figure of the deer-man), the veritable symbol of the village, is what matters, and given the paucity of actual historical sources about it, this scarcity becomes a metaphor of the *actual* history of Castelnuovo, one of obscurity, marginality, and unimportance, whereas the "traditional" tale emanating from the pantomime becomes its mythical reality.[25]

To recapitulate: the recent narrative about the antiquity of the pantomime and the stories about the deer-man and the witches that populate it may be not a system of myths in the strictest sense of the term, but it does bear mythical functions and traits. Said functions and traits can be thus summarized: its being placed in a primordial time; its telling a story about the past and the origins of the village; the fact of establishing a rather complex set of symbols, which are moreover transmitted in time; and, the capacity to mobilize people's imaginary and organize some of their beliefs and practices. Furthermore, I am not using "myth" exclusively as an etic notion: in the last few years, it has become emic as well, as certain social agents in Castelnuovo discussing/writing about its carnival (for instance several informants among the locals, but also non-professional ethnographers and folklorists connected with the village) openly speak of a presumed "myth" of the deer-man, as if an actual traditional tale had ever existed in the past that would somewhat explain the "rite" (the carnival pantomime). Instead, the contrary is true: it was the "rite" (or rather ritualization) that determined the practical conditions for a mythopoiesis of its temporality – and, by metonymy, that of the village and its community.[26]

With the revival of its carnival, Castelnuovo has produced a tale about its ritualized pantomime that has the narratological as well as functional characteristics of a myth, albeit perhaps not a myth in itself. A pseudo-mythical tale or a tale with mythological characteristics (a "mythesque" tale), one might argue. A tale which has turned an obscure and previously neglected masquerade belonging to a once almost forgotten past into the most representative feature of the entire community, and the deer-man into a sort of totem, *lato sensu*.

Indeed, I must admit that I consider myself a privileged ethnographer, who has had the good fortune to recognize and study the creation of a sort of mythological system of beliefs in its final process, emerging from the interaction between the local, micro-social practice and the much broader imaginary on which part of this very practice depended. This vernacular mythology, rooted in the locality but drawing its strength and pervasiveness from trans-local and even global representations, was constructed using the symbolic elements made available by and during the process of revitalization of the local tradition. This "glocal" mythology played and still plays a significant role in shaping local beliefs, and in allowing the festivity and its symbols to be communicated,

shared, and transmitted within and outside the community. It has also influenced the local official religious practice, to the point that even the local church, as already mentioned, has had to recognize its importance – though only to a certain extent, of course.

Concluding Remarks

All the processes previously outlined that reconfigure tradition through ritualization, re-enchantment, and cultural heritage-making, though manifesting themselves as an epiphenomenal, empirically observable complex of social dynamics, actually determine a deeper restructuring of the symbolic order of the communities in and for which they occur, as the operation of "myth-making" out of traditional features seems to suggest. Therefore, embracing a critical but nevertheless holistic idea of culture such as that proposed by Marshall Sahlins (1999), the ritual and ritualized logic – just like history and myth – results in helping organize the local symbolic taxonomies at large (Bell 2009; Sahlins 1994, 1999; Testa 2014a; Turner 1966). In parallel, the heritage discourse helps shape and substantiate a collective vision of the past and the future (Berliner 2012), but also ideas of cultural rights and the juridical and institutional framework comprising conceptual as well as factual matters of cultural property and ownership, and moral economy besides (Bortolotto 2011; Hafstein 2007; Tauschek 2010; Testa 2019). This is all the more present and relevant during times of structural and/or dramatic social transformations. In fact, it is the very concept of "traditionalization" (Mould 2011) that bears, in my opinion, a connotation of holism, because "tradition" can be rightly considered as not only complementary or a corollary of "culture", but actually consubstantial, based as they are on the same properties of ontological immanence, cultural necessity, and social transmission. These properties have been theorized throughout the history of modern historical and social sciences, but also seem to be often present, in some form, in reflections and considerations at the emic level. Keeping this complementarity or even consubstantiality in mind, it should therefore not be

surprising if social transformations based on processes of traditionalization cannot but involve and mobilize other and broader sociocultural spheres as well.

Traditionalization or re-traditionalization and mythopoiesis as have happened in the three cases presented in this paper also represent an interesting "bottom-up" modality of shaping a communal sense of time and historicity (thus also organizing or influencing other sectors of social meaning), without necessarily pairing with (and actually sometimes rather at odds) with etic or official historical or political discourses. After all, in the global, "liquid", accelerated, and media-driven interconnected world (Appadurai 1996; Bauman 2000; Eriksen 2016; Hannerz 1998) of late modernity, symbolic components for individual as well as collective forms of meaning construction are available in abundance. And if official or institutional narratives of temporality do not satisfy what Christoph Brumann called the "popular demand for historical veracity and authenticity" (Brumann 2014: 180–181), or if history itself is too scarce a symbolic resource to be called upon (Nic Craith & Fenske 2013), other sources and resources of the past, that is alternative, imagined, mythicized, nostalgic, or romanticized forms of past, can be mobilized and used (Amselle 2010; Creed 2011; Herzfeld 1997; Hutton 2008; Macdonald 2013; Testa 2017b). Indeed, these dynamics have happened under the sign of a resurgence of the need for historicity, for imaginaries of the past, and for poetics of time and memory, all gravitating, in the case studies here presented, around traditional practices, as well as around the very notion of tradition.

In small marginal communities in search of visibility and struggling to forge or retain their identities, local traditions, especially in their festive or public versions, can serve as strong cultural glue, sometimes a veritable social *raison d'être*, often in response to disruptive social changes and material or cultural dispossession brought about by late-modern processes. This should not be interpreted as a mere neo-functionalist argument: conflicts and negotiations are possible and indeed happen all the time within and around and for and

because of traditional elements. However, whether through social consensus, conflict, or negotiation, it is the "power of tradition" that makes the interpretations and representations hitherto discussed so significant, to the extent of becoming veritable social narratives embedded in tales, discourses, and even "myths". Moreover, these narratives shaped through heritagization and ritualization often become charged with religious or pseudo-religious connotations, as both the notion of re-enchantment and that of "popular Frazerism" hereby discussed explicitly suggest.

Notes

1 As for methods of historiography, I rely mainly on Burke 2008 and Hobsbawm 1995, and on the useful handbook by Howell & Prevenier 2001. My main sources of methodological inspiration and accuracy in ethnography are Atkinson 2001; Fetterman 2010; Wolcott 2008. Apart from occasional archival research and the collection and study of primary and secondary materials, I have operationalized a number of ethnographic research tools and an array of techniques in order to acquire empirical evidence and data from the field. Amongst these are participant observation, structured, semi-structured, and open interviews, questionnaires, annotation of informal conversations, field notes of different kinds, social networks analysis, audio, visual, and audio-visual recordings, and collections of written and other types of material from the field. A variety of social agents from a variety of backgrounds and affiliations have been involved as research participants and informants.

2 General research and ethnographic fieldwork in Castelnuovo al Volturno was undertaken in a timespan of about one year during 2010 and 2011. Frequent but short stays also occurred both before and after 2010–2011.

3 General research and ethnographic fieldwork in Hlinsko v Čechách (and in the surrounding area known as "Hlinecko" in Czech) was undertaken in a timespan of several months during 2013 and 2014 (with a few visits in 2015 too).

4 General research and ethnographic fieldwork in Solsona and in the Comarca of the Solsonès was undertaken in a total timespan of about one year between 2016 and 2019.

5 The "Patum" of Berga was the object of a beautiful ethnographic monograph by Dorothy Noyes (2003).

6 The case of Hlinsko can be compared formally, structurally, and historically to that of the Bulgarian masquerades described and analysed in Creed 2011, where the interconnected issues of ritualization and re-enchantment in the post-socialist world are problematized in an interesting way.

7 For de Martino (2015), "southern Catholicism" meant a trans-regional variation of Roman Catholicism existing in Mediterranean Europe (for instance in southern Italy), especially but not exclusively at the popular level, having incorporated, rather than refused or repressed, throughout history, non- or pre-Christian religious or magical elements. The phenomenology of such a variation of Roman Catholicism suggests that it be characterized by a thick, theatrical rituality, often impregnated with magical elements, and by rich local folkloric beliefs populated by saints, witches, spirits, and other beings.

8 This change in the ritual function and functioning – and therefore in the interactions and interconnections between the ritual and the social order in which it comes into being – can be classified also in terms of a phenomenal restructuring of the "meta-design" (Handelman 1999) of the ritual event.

9 Notice that the words "charm" and "enchantment" have a similar origin: both meant, in old French, "magic spell", both in turn coming from two similar Latin verbs meaning "singing spells" – or rather "cast a spell by singing".

10 For my investigations pertaining to processes of cultural heritage-making I have chosen an "agnostic" approach, i.e. the methodological third path theorized in Brumann 2014.

11 A rich series of works has problematized the historical, conceptual, and ontological connections between museums, the sphere of the sacred and religion, musealization, and material sacralization. See Horne 1984; Paine 2000; Pomian 2004.

12 "The actions of the maskers are associated with magically securing fertility," quoted from the official Unesco document: Unesco, Nomination file n. 00397, 2010, which can be accessed via http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/shrovetide-door-to-door-processions-and-masks-in-the-villages-of-the-hlinecko-area-00397 (consulted September 2018).

13 The relationship between the local parish and the carnival of the deer-man in Castelnuovo is analysed in Testa 2014a: 274, 398, 509–510.

14 See Testa 2014a, 2017a, 2017b.

15 On the category of "post-secularism", see the recent assessment by Parmaksız 2018.

16 An Italian case of an official and popular religious cult being labelled as heritage is described and analysed in Di Giovine 2015.

17 The emotional and psychological aspects of mass gatherings, festivals, and other manifestations of collective action and collective rupture have been the object of

intellectual interest as early as in the late nineteenth century, in Le Bon (1895)1988. Today, Le Bon's theses and conclusions are mostly disregarded or rejected by social anthropologists, but he remains one of the first ones to take an interest in those aspects. They have also been discussed in anthropological terms (Apolito 1993; Noyes 2003; Testa 2014c).

18 The cases of Castelnuovo and Hlinsko are far from being isolated occurrences. It is actually possible to find all or some of these traits in many European ethnographic records, past and present. See, for instance, Ariño & Lombardi Satriani 1997; Boissevain 1992; Bravo 1984; Creed 2011; Fournier 2011; Grimaldi 2003; Gunnell 2007; Noyes 2003 – just to quote a few. Popular Frazerism seems to be a pan-European phenomenon, just as pan-European phenomena were the diffusion of carnival festivities and the use of fertility rites in premodern times.

19 On the notion of – and the search for – authenticity in folklore and ethnology more in general, cf. Bendix 1997. On the relationships between authenticity and cultural heritage, see Bortolotto 2013.

20 The renewal of local traditions themselves and how they subsume and influence the former sociocultural dynamics can therefore rightly be conceptualized also as *champs* (Bourdieu 1994), i.e. symbolic arenas where different social claims, personal interests, and community needs, expectations, or tensions are expressed and negotiated.

21 Here I am using this traditional narratological distinction as described in Bascom 1965 in a descriptive way, with no pretention of analytical accuracy (and actually taking into consideration the criticism in Calame 2011).

22 The foundational and the etiological functions are at the centre of all theories of myth in anthropology and history of religions (Burkert 1979; Calame 2011; Casadio 2009; Dowden 2002; Malinowski [1948]1992; Lincoln 1999; Eliade [1949]1969; Brelich 1966; Sabbatucci 1978; Testa 2010b, 2012; Vernant 1974).

23 Mythification or mythization (the act of transforming a tale, a narrative, a figure, or anything else into a myth) may (or may not) be connected with mythopoiesis (the creation of a new myth). Cases of mythization are discussed in many studies and with references to a great variety of historical and ethnological examples, e.g. in Dowden 2002: 74–92; Eliade [1949]1969: 48–64; Sahlins 1981, 1985; Segal 2004: 119; Testa 2010a. It has been noticed that both mythization and mythopoiesis can be connected with the social production of locality and of a *genius loci* (which in contemporary times is also strongly connected with heritage-making processes: Lähdesmäki 2018; Nic Craith & Kockel 2015; Testa 2019 and in press a). Just like temporality, the

spatial dimension can also be at the base of mythifying or mythopoeic processes: "geography was – and is – viewed with no more objectivity than history: one locates us in space, the other in time. When the definition of our view of ourselves takes precedence over the accurate reporting of other places and times, we have opened the door to myth" (Dowden 2002: 133).

24 *In illo tempore* is a technical expression used by Mircea Eliade ([1949]1969), then also adopted by many other scholars working on myths and mythologies, which refers to primordial times (and their dimension of alterity and remoteness) characterizing foundational or etiological myths. This involves, especially, cosmogonies, myths of origin, and "charter myths", as Malinowski defined them ([1948]1992).

25 Here I am obviously paraphrasing what was convincingly theorized by Marshall Sahlins in his *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981).

26 This line of thought actually reinterprets a specific current of studies in the history of religions that seeks to place the ritual at the foundation of myth, and not the other way around, a current that goes from Frazer (1922) to Walter Burkert (1979, 1996) via Vladimir Propp (1985), Dario Sabbatucci (1978), and others. Something similar has happened in Castelnuovo, not in prehistoric times, but in very recent ones, even though it was ritualization rather than ritual *per se* at the basis of the mythopoiesis: it took only a little less than two decades (between the late 1970s and the early 1990s) for the process to be triggered, develop, and stabilize.

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