

The Intermittency of Masquerading Rituals as a Marker of Political Change

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Abstract: Traditional masquerading at carnival time and similar traditional occasions speaks the language of unbroken continuity through time and is generally perceived as a straight line from time immemorial to the present day. At closer quarters, however, it becomes apparent that most, if not all, masquerading traditions are marked by a considerable intermittency with frequent interruptions often lasting whole decades. A comparative outlook at a few masquerades, largely from Italy, will show this intermittency as a precise response to the ongoing stimuli of the larger political context.

Keywords: carnival, masquerading, ritual, intermittency, revolution and reaction

In a number of rural communities in a large area of Europe – from Iberia, across the Italian peninsula and its islands up to the Alps, Austria, part of Germany and Poland, and all the way to Romania and the Balkans – we can detect to the present day the diffusion of a category of masquerading originally meant to

celebrate the advent of the New Year, which James Frazer authoritatively recognized¹ as relics of ancient pagan traditions devoted to proclaiming the rejuvenation of time. In hundreds of villages spread across the breadth of “unreformed” Europe i.e. Catholic and Orthodox areas, on a specific day in the heart of winter masked impersonators surge out of nowhere, bells are clanged and a ritual walkabout of the village is performed as if to sanctify it with a renewed blessing whilst simple ceremonies, such as a mock wedding or the pulling of an old plough along the streets take place, and spells of good omen are cast in exchange for small offerings of food, drink and a little money. These are itinerant rituals of exchanging good wishes hinged on the return of ceremonial characters who reappear year after year during wintertime. In Catholic Europe, such rituals are usually specifically linked to the notion of “Carnival”.

Woven as they are in a continuous thread of “tradition” that supposedly runs from time immemorial to the present day, these yearly masquerades are instead subject to the frequent occurrence of gaps and interruptions. It is almost as if the same thread was on occasion frayed or altogether severed, only to be reknotted anew upon every resumption of the rituals.

In what follows – resulting from almost 20 years of research carried out within the scope of the *Carnival King of Europe*² project – we will undertake the investigation of folk masquerading from the viewpoint of such intermittencies being considered a normal occurrence and indeed far more so than any purported unbroken continuity through time. Within each particular local contest, however, the importance and the relative frequency of such gaps seldom come to the surface because often no data are kept for these unruly village occurrences, and the majority of the people involved seem to acknowledge such suspensions with a measure of embarrassment and some unwillingness to admit the occurrence of these lapses. A similar taboo is also frequently found in the literature, where seldom is there an account of a masquerade interruption nor the reasons thereof.

Given these difficulties in reconstructing the particular history of each masquerade, in this paper – on the basis of a random sample of ritual masquerades from various parts of Europe but specifically from Italy – we will attempt to provide a comparative account of such intermittencies as a characteristic feature of these rituals in order to reveal the larger political context in which the masquerades take place.

INTERMITTENT MASQUERADES IN THE EUROPEAN WINTER

Interruptions in masquerading traditions can be short-lived with delays of just a few years in the established yearly or plurennial pace but may become much longer.

Of these latter, the most extraordinary to our knowledge occurred in Tarrenz, Tyrol. Their *Fasnacht* had been officially stopped in 1797 following

a solemn perpetual vow pronounced to spare the town from the pending invasion of Napoleon's army. The vow was left standing for 187 years, only to be repealed in 1984, when the *Fasnacht* was again put on its feet (Pechtl 1998). Notably, 1797 also marked the termination of the celebrated, once-triumphant Carnival of Venice, ruled out by the Austrian government for fear of public disorders, to be then resumed as late as 1979, some 182 years after its enforced demise (Bertrand 2014).

The Carnival of Venice, however, when officially brought back to life in 1979, was a newly designed pantomime and an openly-declared tourist attraction, quite different from what it had been in its glorious heyday. To the contrary, after the vow was formally revoked in Tarrenz, the *Fasnacht* returned unscathed to its old format, thus indicating that a precise notion of what it once was had been kept under ashes for nearly 200 years. At present, the Tarrenz *Fasnacht* is hardly distinguishable from others held elsewhere on a biennial, triennial, or quadrennial basis in the neighbouring villages of Nassereith, Telfs, Imst, and Wald im Piztal in the Upper Inn Valley (Pfaundler 1998).

Albeit on a smaller scale, a similar sudden revival was registered in Wörth in the Salzburger Alps. A grandiose *Perchtenumzug* was resumed in 2010 some 46 years after its demise in 1964, and in a manner that made it very difficult for anyone to detect that such an interruption had ever taken place.

The *Tresterers* or “treshers” of Zell am See offer a similar story of a decades-long interruption followed by a sudden revival. Ruled out in 1944, at the darkest hour in the Austrian mountains under Nazi rule, the itinerant quest of dancers in high uniform and plumed feluccas with their cortege of musicians, devils, *Hanswurst*, a couple of Old folks dubbed *Låpp* and *Lappin*, a giant Fox, a giant Hen laying eggs, and other assorted characters was brought back to life in 1985. Thanks to the efforts of a local writer, Hermann Schmiderer (2006), the parade was revived from its ashes after 41 years, although any living memory of it had seemed to have perished (Zerling 2005; Kezich & Mott 2018).

Besides such lengthy exceptional interruptions, the most frequent intermittency is that of suspensions of twenty or thirty years, short enough for people to remember with some accuracy how the ritual should be performed and yet sufficiently long to make the risk of a complete extinction very probable.

In the one-time German settlement of Agnita, in the *Siebenbürger* in Transylvania, the *fuga lolilor*, namely the “run” of the *lole* – the self-styled Carnival “stutterers” wearing garments of red and black ribbons and a fencing mask of a kind framed in a fox-tail – is well documented in the local museum. Yet, since the XVth century, it appears to have been demised and resumed at least six or seven times: in the recent past alone, the masquerade was ruled out by the Habsburg government in 1878 for fear of public disorder, so that the *lole* still wear a very visible yellow numbered badge to be easily identified. Revived in 1911 for patriotic anti-Habsburg reasons on the verge of the upheaval that brought Transylvania into Romania, it was then ostracized by the communist

regime after 1946. The *fuga lololor* was again made legal after 1968 as part of Ceausescu's new national deal, demised after the 1989 revolution which had evidently brought other priorities to the surface, and revived once more after the year 2000 (Kezich 2015: 127–130).

In most cases the specific reasons for the decline and/or subsequent revival of a masquerade are found to be primarily political in character. In an important study, *Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria*, anthropologist Gerald Creed (2010) – without indulging in the attractive ethnographical conundrums which underpin masks and masquerading in the Balkans – managed to skilfully outline the primarily social scope of masquerading within the process of reconstruction of community and local identity from 1990 onwards after the communist era.

CARNIVAL MASQUERADING FROM SICILY TO THE ALPS

A sample of largely comparable Italian village masquerades was selected for our present purposes based on reliable information as to their intermittency in the second half of the 20th century.

Performed with unflinching regularity within the canonical Carnival time and most often on Shrove Tuesday, the selected rituals nevertheless seldom bear the name “Carnival”. The term “Carnival” only occurred once out of the nine cases studied, namely at Ponte Caffaro. Alternatively, “masquerade” is most commonly used (*màschira*, Cattafi; *mascra*, Castiglione Messer Marino; *mascherèda*, Val di Fassa; *mascherada*, Valfloriana), or the name of one of the main characters, e.g. the *lachèra* after the ubiquitous harlequin character known as *Lachè* in Rocca Grimalda; the *gnaga* at Fornesighe or the *zinghenèsta* at Canale d'Agordo.

In a radius spanning from Sicily in the South to Piedmont and the Dolomites in the North of Italy, and thus displaying exceptional regional variety in costumes, language and music, these rituals manifest many common denominators. In each case, the masquerade presents itself as a joyful parade of dancing characters, engaged for the better part of the day in an auspicious itinerary through the village, stopping for a dance in front of every house or hamlet where alms or small offerings of food can be collected in exchange for good wishes. Besides the dancing-cum-jumping squad, armed with a stick or whip, often dressed in white and bearing cumbersome colourful headpieces, other characters are paraded with a certain frequency: first and foremost, a Bride and Groom or a Bride-to-be and a cortege of assorted buffoons as well as the Bear, the Goat, the Old Folks, and so on. However, despite the regional differences, it would appear that the ritual being performed employs the same means, namely the dance, the quest and well-wishing formulas to achieve the same objectives (Kezich 2015).

An ideal tour route of these masquerades could start in Sicily and work its way northwards to the foot of the Dolomite Mountains. At Cattafi, just three or four miles inland along the northern coast of Sicily (Fig. 1), the *màschira* is founded upon the dance troupe of the so-called *scacciuni*, who evidently owe their name to the *chassée* dance which they ceaselessly perform for the duration of the day. At the centre of the dancing circle, a *Fioraia* or flower girl, impersonated by a man in drag as is common carnival practice, throws improvised rhyme tercets and posies of flowers to spectators as if she were a bride-to-be. Despite such an obvious festive nuptial context, the *scacciuni* are locally understood to be impersonating the local militia who chased away (“*scacciare*”) the Turks at the time of a purported invasion (1544) of the Sicilian coastline. For this reason, a great deal of martial pride is commonly bestowed upon them: yet despite the high prestige of these *scacciuni* and the circumfusing ideology, in 1966 the *màschira* was apparently abandoned for no specific reason, only to be resumed almost twenty years later (1985).



Figure 1. Cattafi, Sicily, 17th February 2019. The *màschira*: the *Fioraia* (“flower girl”) surrounded by the *scacciuni* (“chassée”-dancers). The masquerade was regularly held at carnival times until 1965; then it was revived from 1985 onwards.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

Castiglione Messer Marino in the Abruzzi (Fig. 2) harbours a magnificent masquerade whose central characters, the *pulgenelle* – locally equivalent to the *scacciuni* in Sicily and the harlequins or *lachè* in Northern Italy – bear a truly monumental headpiece towering almost 1 metre above the head of the dancer. Despite the huge investment that a ritual of such importance entails, the memory of the *masera* seems to be locally as scanty as the performance itself has been very irregular. In fact, no precise record prior to 1985 has been kept, apart from a single surviving scarf embroidered with “1913”, some allusions to performances possibly held in 1954 and 1957, one photograph allegedly taken in 1970 and a few other scanty clues.



Figure 2. The *masera* of Castiglione Messer Marino, in the Abruzzi, 15th February 2015. *Pulgenelle* dancing in an anti-clockwise circle. The masquerade is believed to have been held intermittently, at odd years: with relative certainty in 1913, 1954, 1957, 1959, 1970, 1980, and then again in 1985, 1987, 1989 and 1990, after which a new gap opened until the year 2000. Since then, it has been held again intermittently, with increasing frequency.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

The *lachèra* in Rocca Grimalda, Piedmont (Fig. 3), owes its name to the recurrent *lachè* character, the same brand of ritual impersonator called *arlechino* in Northern Italy, *zanni* in the centre, and *pulgenelle* in the South. Well known in the folk masquerading circuit at the time of fascism when it was called upon to

be performed in Venice and Rome, the *lachèra* has a long history of successive revivals. Like other masquerades of the same type (Valfloriana, Castello Tesino, Ivrea), it tells the story of a popular upsurge against the *droit du seigneur* – the purported right of the feudal lords over brides – in celebration of the final victory of the newlyweds against the arrogance of their lord. During the time of its long-standing popularity, the *lachèra* has nevertheless undergone successive stages of minute tampering with its performing order and its characters and came to a halt in at least two longish lapses of time, namely ten years from 1964 to 1974 and five from 1987 to 1992 (Barillari 2007).



Figure 3. The *lachèra* of Rocca Grimalda, in Piedmont, 8th February 2015. Dancing Bride and Groom with two *lachè* in high uniform. The masquerade had stopped in 1964; then it was revived in 1974, was halted again in 1987, to be resumed in 1992.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

Intermittencies in masquerading may also follow a completely irregular pattern and haphazard scheduling. This is what happens in Menarola, a cluster of minuscule hamlets perched on the mountains surrounding Lake Como in upper Lombardy where the local *bagùta* (*baùta* being the old Venetian word meaning “mask”) make up a bizarre cortege on the Epiphany (January 6th). Involving dozens of actors impersonating Little Brides, the Ugly Ones, the Madmen, the Wild Man, the Devils, the Priest, the Captain, Carabinieri and

a Robber, the Befana, Father Christmas, and the Three Kings to name but a few, this involves a full day's trek up and down to the dispersed hamlets, as a rather secret affair that takes place in a completely unpredictable fashion because it is not announced beforehand. In fact, the *bagüta* appears to have been performed on local whims in completely odd years (1963, 1973, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1995, 2006, 2017, 2024) with no particular certainty as to when it would be held next, or if ever again (Kezich 2015: 96–101).

The pageantry in Ponte Caffaro near Lake Idro, and in the neighbouring mountain village of Bagolino (Brescia) (Fig. 4), is very probably an offshoot of the Venetian Carnival of old since Venice's dominions extended that far to the west. The Venetian character of their Carnival is made apparent by the sheer elegance of the costumes of the *balari*, and their dancing to a very select repertoire of 23 violin pieces. Regrettably, a sequel of litigations broke out in the village in 1967 bringing the masquerade to a standstill for nearly ten years until, in 1976, it was once again spurred into action by a team of folklorists from Milan (Cappelletto 1995).



Figure 4. *Carnevale* in Ponte Caffaro, in Lombardy, with the dancing *balari* in full action. Note the minute gold jewellery sewn into the red headpieces. This celebrated Carnival was brought to a halt from 1967 to 1976.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

In Valfloriana (Fig. 5), the *mascherada*, which for the duration of Carnival Day operates on a rather exhausting quest for alms and foodstuffs from the highest hamlets to the valley floor some 600 metres below, features three completely different squads of *matòci*, *arlechini* and *paiaici*. These very aptly correspond to three subsequent acts of scaring people away, celebrating a mock marriage of some sort, and a sequel of uproarious skits and comedy sketches. Despite its highly structured character and the richness of its costumes, the *mascherada* has ranked rather low in local priority. Unsurprisingly halted after the devastating flood in 1966, it was not resumed until 1978, namely thirteen years later, when previous displaced residents returned from the outskirts of Milan with a heightened desire to put the ritual back on its feet (Kezich & Poppi 2006).



Figure 5. The *mascherada* of Valfloriana in the valley of Fiemme, 10th February 2018.

Arlechini ("Harlequins") dancing in circle, anticlockwise: this is the second group of characters in the masquerade, preceded by the *matòci*, and followed by the *paiaici*. The masquerade ceased to exist in 1966, and was revived in 1978, albeit not continuously.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

A short way to the north, we enter the celebrated Ladin *Sprachinsel* in Fassa (Fig. 6), where the local *mascherèda* has its own host of special characters; the *laché*, who loosely correspond to those of Rocca Grimalda and Valfloriana, the *marascóns*, and the *bufón*. The elaborate elegance of their attire, coupled with the great attention locally given to the protection of the Ladin language in all its

living contexts, would make one think that this masquerade had always been a must in the local calendar. However, we learn that it was in fact stopped in 1952 only to be resumed in 1975, twenty-three years later following some significant encouragement from the parish provost of Sèn Jan (Chiocchetti 1988).



Figure 6. The *mascherèda* of the valley of Fassa, at the social club in Penia village, 12th February 2013. A pair of *marascóns*, also dubbed *vacies* (“cows”), dancing with the *bufón* (“buffoon”), who specializes in jests and tomfooleries. This renowned masquerade had ceased to exist between 1952 and 1975 for no specific known reason.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

In other situations, it would appear that the interruption had been far too long for an authentic revival of the ritual. In a village called Fornesighe (Fig. 7) situated in the foothills of the Dolomites, the *gnaga* (i.e. the “*moggie*”) masquerade, abandoned in 1953, was revived in 1990 after 37 years. It served as a pretext for the staging of a yearly gathering from all over the Eastern Alps of wood carvers creating folksy masks of a kind which, by all accounts, in former times were never worn. Nevertheless, in spite of the impediment of these thick and rather spurious pine masks, according to tradition the *gnaga* has retained at its core the format of a nuptial cortege embracing every corner of the village to spread their good wishes (Secco 2001).



Figure 7. La *gnaga* of Fornesighe, in the heart of the Dolomite mountains, 5th February 2017. The *Gnaga* i.e. the “Moggie”, is here an elderly woman carrying a young girl in a pannier, and is followed by the Newlyweds and a host of other characters. This masquerade had stopped in 1953, and was revived in 1990, which is when the encumbering wooden masks of today first made their appearance.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

Another singular situation is found in Canale d’Agordo, a little to the north-east in the Dolomites (Fig. 8). The *zinghenésta* masquerade – named after the attractive gypsy *danceuse* who leads the cortege supposedly on the way to her wedding – had been dormant since the outbreak of World War I in 1915, and was only recently revived *verbatim* on the basis of the written account of a local ethnographer (Lazzaris 1931). The *zinghenésta* is a rather complex affair of about twenty different characters in costume: beside the *Zinghenesta* herself, these are the *matiéi* and *lachè*, the *Puster* (Wild Man), the Bear, the Goat (“*Caorón Spión*”), the ubiquitous Chimney Sweep, and then strictly local masks such as the *Caràgn*, *Pasqualón*, *Cortina*. All of the characters were painstakingly revived after an interruption of some seventy-five years in two separate attempts, namely from 1990 to 1998 and again from 2013 to the present.



Figure 8. The *zinghenésta*, in Canale d'Agordo in the Dolomite region, 7th February 2016. The *Zinghenesta* is a dancing gypsy girl, accompanied here by two *laché* and musicians. This masquerade, accounted for in the late XIXth century, stopped prior to WWI in 1915, was revived a first time in 1990, and halted again in 1998 until 2013.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

In this aforementioned account, as indeed in most of our examples, the contribution of *litterati* from elsewhere, folklorists, emigrés, and clergymen seems to have been significant to the revival of these masquerades after long periods of inactivity. This active interference did in some cases (e.g. Fornesighe) alter the original performance almost beyond recognition, but in the majority of cases it remarkably kept unwavering faith to the ideal template of the masquerade inscribed in the community's mind.

The table below indicates the relative intermittency of the masquerades that have been considered so far.

Extracted from a random sample of unrelated ritual events dispersed at the four corners of Italy, the chart shows a consistent parallel demise of masquerading between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, and then an equally simultaneous revival from around 1978 after ten or twelve years of inactivity. A regularity as such calls for some explanation which, with some plausibility, can be drawn from the general political scenario of that age. In the waning of the 1960s, Italy as a whole was facing the social effects of the intervening industrialization with the corresponding shift of large masses of the workforce

from South to North and from country to city, with a consequent dramatic depopulation of the rural areas, including many of the villages which hosted carnival masquerading. This anthropological catastrophe (Forni 2010) was soon grafted with the widespread rebellious ideology spurred by the student riots of 1968 resulting in a decade of generalized social unrest. On the one hand, this overtly pre-revolutionary climate progressively accompanied the electoral advance of the Communist Party (a peak of 34% was reached in 1976); on the other, it left room for manoeuvre to clandestine terrorist organizations, which acted as if to trigger the great Revolution looming on all sides (Gotor 2022). The abduction and subsequent murder of moderate leader Aldo Moro in the spring of 1978 virtually put a dramatic end to ten years of political confrontation and opened the way for a long season of political reaction still ongoing today.

Alongside the sudden demise in the political scenario of any grand-scale utopia and the beating to retreat of the Political Left, the early 1980s marked the beginning of a new ideology of a necessary “return to the country” and its never-fading traditional values. In many local situations, this new political climate quietly fostered a return to the carnival masquerades that had been abandoned without much regret some ten or twenty years earlier.

Table 1. A random sample of 9 Italian masquerades was chosen, from the south to the north: one in Sicily (Cattafi); one in the central Apennines (Castiglione Messer Marino, Abruzzi); one in Piedmont (Rocca Grimalda); six in the North-Eastern Alps (Menarola, Ponte Caffaro, Valfloriana, Val di Fassa, Fornesighe, Canale d’Agordo). A red square marks the years in which the masquerade was performed

Intermittency in Carnival masquerades (Italy 1950–2000)	
Cattafi	1950-1960, 1970-1980, 1990-2000
Castiglione MM	1950-1960, 1970, 1980-1990
Rocca Grimalda	1950-1960, 1970-1980, 1990-2000
Menarola	1970, 1980-1990, 2000
Ponte Gaffaro	1950-1960, 1970-1980, 1990-2000
Valfloriana	1950-1960, 1970-1980, 1990-2000
Val di Fassa	1970-1980, 1990-2000
Fornesighe	1950-1960, 1990-2000
Canale d’Agordo	1970-1980, 1990-2000
	1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000

CARNIVAL AND POLITICAL REACTION

Such a distinct association of the revival of masquerading with the onset of conservative, reactionary policies in the national scenario goes against many of the current prejudices in this field. For decades Carnival studies have been dominated by the presumption, mainly drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1968) and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s (1979) classic pronouncements, which envisaged

in Carnival the spontaneous expression of an otherwise dormant state of social unrest, encoded in a diffuse culture of disobedience (Burke 1978). This could at times break out, as in the case of Romans in Dauphiné, France (1580), into a sort of popular uprising where carnival celebrations could be used as a springboard for a revolution proper. Very aptly, carnival celebrations would be concluded in many places with the execution, most commonly at the stake but also by hanging or quartering, of a dummy impersonating the epitome of the festivities about to come to a close – a dummy held responsible for all the sins committed in the time of his misrule. This perception of Carnival as an unselfconscious, collective parody of Revolution, one in which social rebellion could rehearse its imminent progress by culminating in the final stages of dethroning and execution of a paramount ruler, has been sustained academically by the notion of Carnival as the enactment of a “world turned upside down” in the writings of Bakhtin (1968); a feast capable of ephemerally subverting the order of society by a temporary elevation of the lower stratum over the ruling classes as was allegedly the case in the midwinter festivities of *Saturnalia* in ancient Rome.

In the face of the available evidence, this view can now be shown to be by and large ideological. Since its early Italian beginnings in the XIIth century or so, Carnival festivals have consisted of conspicuous liberalities offered by the ruling rich to the common people, an example being the free distribution of food. Especially symbolic are the morsels of the pancake type such as the *gnocchi* in Verona; the *bretzel* in Nassereith, Tyrol; the *krapfen* in Agnita, Transylvania (Kezich 2018) – even the wastage of it with flour being flung away by the handful (Verona; Wald-im-Pinzgau, Tyrol and most significantly Galaxidi in Central Greece), the setting of grandiose scenographies, props and floats, and some impressive and pretentious display of riches. These are still prominent features of Carnival, with the family gold and assorted jewellery painstakingly sewn to the ritual headpieces and waistcoats (Ponte Caffaro, Romeno, Serino). Such uninhibited show of luxury happens to be an integral part of Carnival paraphernalia in its original Italian cradle (Caro Baroja 1989 [1961]) and can be verified in several pristine situations in the early Modern Age (Burke 1978): in Venice, where Carnival floats were made at the expenses of covens of young aristocrats e.g. *Compagnia della Calza* (Bertrand 2014); in Florence, where the main sponsor of the *carnasciale* had originally been no less than Lorenzo “il Magnifico” (Ciappelli 1997); in Verona, where the legacy of an illustrious XVIth century benefactor, Tommaso da Vico, is still publicly acknowledged every year (Centro 2021 [1847]); in Rome, where the introduction of Carnival festivities on a completely new scale in the mid XVth century is owed to Pope Paul II, Pietro Barbo, a Venetian prince, and his successor prince Alessandro Farnese, Pope Paul III (Forcella 1999). From such grandiose beginnings in the affluent, splendid city states of the Italian Renaissance, Carnival was endowed with an allure of luxury which would and did strive for centuries to replicate itself down to the most remote villages around the country where even today some display

of glittering mirrors, golden trinkets and paillettes is always the order of the day wherever “King” Carnival is in office.

Yet, with the waning splendour of the Ancient Regime, Carnival, too, had sooner or later to give way to the onset of a new era. In 1788, J.W. Goethe lamented that the celebrated Carnival of Rome had become “*not a feast that is offered to the people but one that the people offer themselves*” (Goethe 1976 [1789]) thus making it clear that in Rome he had been faced with a total shambles. Contrary to current interpretation, Goethe’s sentence is not meant to be in praise of the creative spontaneity of the people of Rome but it rather seems to point, not without a hint of irritation, to the faded glories of the Italian Renaissance, with their triumphant, flamboyant, well-ordered pomp which he had been pursuing from as far away as his native Weimar in Central Germany.

Goethe’s comment is revealing. By the time of his visits to Rome (1787 and 1788), the active support for Carnival by the ruling aristocracy seems to be faltering or is no longer seen to be there. As a sign of the times, a mere two years after Goethe’s first stay in Rome, the French Revolution broke out: an event whose first eminent victim, prior to King Louis XVI (1793), was possibly Carnival itself³. Performed in the streets of Paris at the heart of Carnival since very early times (1247), the *Promenade du Bœuf Gras*, a “Fat Ox” on his way to butchery, was abruptly stopped in 1790 until at least 1806, and has been resumed intermittently ever since as a barometer of the political atmosphere in Paris. It was cancelled again after 1820 (the assassination of the Duc de Berry), in 1848, and in 1871 with the Commune, to then be resumed in the height of the Belle Époque, albeit not regularly, from 1891 to 1897 (Faure 1978). Throughout time, it would seem that Revolution and Carnival stand on opposite sides so that when the one wins, the other loses ground, and vice versa. The same seems to be true when new rulers step in from afar, such as the Austrians in Venice (1797) and Transylvania (1878) or the Savoy in Rome (1874), where the new king Vittorio Emanuele hurriedly put a stop to the race of jolted horses along the Via del Corso, which had been the highlight of the Carnival of Rome since 1464 (Ademollo 2009 [1883]).

In this perspective, we can safely say that contrary to what we may think from following Le Roy Ladurie and Bakhtin, when historical events dictate the cruel reasons of innovation and progress, Carnival declines and vice versa. When innovation comes to a standstill and people are prepared instead to sit back and rather enjoy or accept their ephemeral stance in a world that will never change, Carnival is found to resurrect (Kezich 2019).

We believe that a similar pendulum motion that is dependent on the larger ongoing political scenario can also be observed in the intermittency of ritual masquerading with its alternating high and low ebbs even in the most remote local settings.

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PLACE NAMES INDEX

Austria: Imst, Nassereith, Telfs, Tarrenz, Wald im Piztal (Tyrol); Wörth, Zell am See (Salzburger Alps); **France:** Paris, Romans; **Greece:** Galaxidy; **Italy,** Rocca Grimalda, Ivrea (Piedmont); Menarola, Bagolino, Ponte Caffaro (Lombardy); Romeno, Valfloriana, Val di Fassa, Castello Tesino (Trentino); Fornesighe, Canale d'Agordo, Venice, Verona (Veneto); Florence (Tuscany); Roma (Latium), Castiglione Messer Marino (Abruzzi); Serino (Campania); Cattafi (Sicily); **Romania:** Agnita (Transilvania).

NOTES

- 1 Cfr. J. G. Frazer (ed.) 1959. *Ovid's Fasti*. London, William Heinemann; Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, pp. 402–403.
- 2 The project *Carnival King of Europe / Carnevale re d'Europa* began in 2007 at the behest of the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina of San Michele all'Adige (Italy), and secured the collaboration of important European museums from France, Croatia, Bulgaria and Macedonia in its first phase (2007–2009), and later (2010–2012) from the Basque country in Spain, Slovenia, Romania and Poland. These are the partners which have been involved: Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, San Michele all'Adige (Italy) as organizer; Euskal Museoa Bilbao, Museo Vasco of Bilbao (Spain); Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCem), Marseille (France); Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana (Slovenia); Complexul Național Muzeal Astra, Sibiu (Romania); Państwowe Muzeum Etnograficzne w Warszawie of Warsaw (Poland); Etnografski muzej, Zagreb (Croatia); Ethnographic Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (Bulgaria); Nacionalna Ustanova Muzej na Makedonija, Skopje (Macedonia). Within the project's framework, some additional fieldwork has been carried out in England, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Greece, thus totalling fourteen countries directly involved in the survey. For a complete view of the project, check the site www.carnivalkingofeurope.it.
- 3 The parallel is not far-fetched since the beheading of King Louis XVI is today still celebrated in France, on the 21st of January, with banquets of *Tête de Veau* as a modern metamorphosis of the *Boeuf Gras*. On this "*tête de veau*", Gustave Flaubert writes (translation by Giovanni Kezich): "It's an English import. To parody the ceremony that royalists celebrated on January 30 (the day of the beheading of King Charles I, another victim of democracy), the Independents founded an annual banquet at which ox heads were eaten, red wine was drunk in bull skulls, toasting to the extermination of the Stuarts. After Thermidor, our terrorists organized a whole new fraternity of this kind, which proves that stupidity is fertile" (*L'Éducation sentimentale, histoire d'un jeune homme*, 1869).

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