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Carnevali del XXI secolo

a cura di Alessandra Broccolini e Katia Ballacchino



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Abstracts

edited by Sandra Ferracuti

Pietro Clemente
21st-Century Indigenous Carnivals

If closely observed, Carnival is better defined as a ‘federation’ of symbolic expressions that share “family resemblances”. Nonetheless, the geography of its shapes appears extremely multifarious. During the 1960’s and the 1970’s, Carnival has been a focus of the historical and the anthropological debates on European popular culture, a protagonist of the contemporary. In Europe, it has been the object of comparative studies where winter masks play a prominent role. From Portugal, to Greece, but also South America, Carnival is the product of a process of adjustment of various symbolic expressions sharing the traits of the contemporary. In fact, the symbolic expressions of the Carnivals that have been inscribed on the Unesco’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative List between 2003 and 2012 do not only communicate their own internal world of practices of inversion and traditional cultural traits. They also parade the plurality of cultures, rights of inclusion and cohabitation, and highlight marginal areas and minorities. They are not at all characterized by purity and the permanence of ancient expressions, but they refer to the representation rights of hybrid cultural forms and to the recognition of the value of the different regions and localities that exist within the modern state systems.

Vincenzo Padiglione
On Masks: Glimpses into an Ethnography of Youth Culture

Comics, literature, and cinema heroes prove that masks may well convey protest. They hide the face of individuals who are frightened by the power establishment but do not renounce to reveal the aggressive *facie* of those who intend to challenge it. The contemporary novelty lies in the fact that terror and irony are once again combined in the same expression. This was also one of the underlying themes of the exhibition *StraVolti. Maschere abitate ed altri eccessi sociali* [StraVolti. Inhabited Masks and other Social Excesses], which I designed (www.castellorocasinibalda.it).

Ferdinando Mirizzi
Contemporary Carnivals and their Relations with Tradition

Contemporary Carnivals that are claimed to make reference to a specific, more or less longstanding or historically verified local tradition appear to be the outcome of a process of “retraditionalization” based on means of relearning local traditions: a neces-

sary prerequisite for them, which used to be social practices, to resurface today as cultural heritage. Such process is partly based on the assumption that actions and behaviors are persistent and partly – if not especially – on the authority and foundational power of writing, and its outcome is the acquisition of awareness of their being the signs of a traditional style that marks a distinction. Thus, within the scope of today's prevailing picturesque, theatrical, and playful character of Carnivals, they acquire the meaning and value of cultural symbols that assist the redefinition of local identities. From this perspective, contemporary Carnivals have the striking tendency to be timely by referring to the untimely, namely by drawing on the archaic and revitalizing it through communication, picking it as the topic of a discourse of and about the contemporary. This way, they have in many cases contributed, also thanks to forms of cultural creativity seen as the ability to innovate pre-existing models that have become objects of heritagization, to the construction of local identities and their exhibition within the scope of politics that focus on alternative and cultural tourism.

Sandra Ferracuti
Satriano's Carnivals and "Rites of Paysage"

In 2014, a group of inhabitants of Satriano di Lucania (Potenza, Italy) who were born in the 1980s brought significant innovations to the local Carnival performance, with a view to its revitalization. They occasioned the 'multiplication' of the historical mask of the "Rumit", and a "walking forest" invaded the streets of the village. In Basilicata (and not only here), 'Carnivals' pertain both to a ritual dimension that is fed by and feeds local developments and concerns, and to that of the 'exhibition' of cultural heritage, where they are events to be shared with a "cultural tourism" seen as a potential economic support to the survival of the locality itself, suffering a severe and long-lasting occupational crisis. Based on the dialogues, actions, and reactions experienced in the specific case study, this essay points to the current cohabitation of an art-historical paradigm that is centered on preservation with one that is aimed to safeguarding the cultural vitality of ritual events. In between these two options, and in the concurrence, on the one hand, of performances of a local cultural heritage to be 'exhibited' and 'promoted' and, on the other, of a locality performing, celebrating, and questioning itself (when both are aimed to contrast the social impoverishment caused by depopulation), a variety of individual and collective actors dispute among themselves the authority over the interpretation of tradition.

Giovanni Luca Mancini
Viareggio's Histories and Allegorical Floats

Within a few decades since its institution, in 1873, Viareggio's Carnival and its large papier-mâché floats have become an essential element of the city's identity and its tourist economy. When compared to other international Carnivals, Viareggio's exhibits distinct characteristics. Today's developments in the use of materials for the construction of floats seem to betray the nature of its core feature, to the disadvantage of traditional craftsmanship and the feelings of many citizens. The future of Viareggio's Carnival seems to lie in the opportunity to bring together past experiences and the chance to experiment with new materials and, above all, in a more mindful use of the economic resources that are necessary to its enactment.

Vincenzo Esposito

Persistent Traces. The Long Life of Montemarano's Carnival

A note on my film, which outlines the history of ethnographic research about Carnival in Montemarano, a small town in the province of Avellino, Southern Italy. The ritual is famous for its Carnival dance called “*Montemaranese*”. The “*Montemaranese*” is a Carnival dance in which “*Pulcinella capo ballo*”, the famous mask from Campania, conducts the other dancers with a stick. Accordions and clarinets accompany the dance. In the past, it used to be shawms. Ethnographers and students from the University of Salerno conducted the enquiries.

Paola Elisabetta Simeoni

*Celebrating Creativity: Carnival's Communities
and the Preparation of the Parade Floats in Bassa Sabina*

This essay examines the construction of Carnival floats and masks in various localities of Bassa Sabina (Lazio, Central Italy). The preparations for Carnival are fundamental if one aims to a good understanding of the ritual as a whole, and are the main occasion for the establishment of new social relations and the development of intimate processes. Year after year, spontaneous work communities are established, and they function as “lungs” for creative participation, which binds people together by shared projects and aims. The powerful creative energy is generated at the intersection of archetypal and mythical schemes that bear opposite signs, and the chaotic ritual performances generate complex vital processes.

Alessandra Broccolini, Katia Ballacchino

*The New “Heritage Communities” of the Carnival.
The Serino Mascarata and the Carnivals from Irpinia,
between Conflicts, Changings and Continuity*

The research on which this essay is based was initiated in 2011 in Serino, a town in Bassa Irpinia, Avellino. It explored traditional Carnival celebrations and the ways they have changed within the context of local and global patrimonialization processes. Folklore scholars know this area for its Carnivals featuring masks and for the symbolic and performative elements they share with other European folkloric Carnivals, with which the celebrations that are witnessed in Serino and its surroundings share multiple aesthetic and formal features. Over the last half-century, these Carnivals, organized locally within small communities, have alternated between periods of revitalization (with the studies by Roberto de Simone and Annabella Rossi conducted in the 1970s), decline, and subsequent local revival, beginning in the 1990s. These local carnivals involve theatrical enactments, moments of social interaction, and the sharing of musical and dance practices. Today, they represent expressions of “intangible cultural heritage” that are rooted in the present thanks to their ability to generate “heritage communities” and become expression of cultural creativity and social cohesion in the public sphere. At the same time, they are also the site of conflict and competition among different groups. In recent years, this area has been involved in a move to patrimonialize Carnival that has given rise to multiple networks within larger carnival “heritage communities”.

Alberto Mario Cirese
The Devil in Tufara (1955)

In 1955, Alberto Mario Cirese wrote about Carnival in Tufara, and his references were proverbs from Molise, one of the poems written by his father Eugenio (a poet from Molise), and above all a chronicle that was published in the Thirties based on a knowledgeable witness from Tufara. The essay highlights the ancient, rooted nucleus of the ritual that was recreated throughout the years with its core elements intact, for example the process to Carnival or its removal from the scene at the appearance of Lent. However, it also makes reference to the agony of the same ancient ritual, its turning into a festive occasion. The author attributes the predicament of the ritual to a series of socio-historical contingencies. Among others, emigration is seen as the primary cause for the weakening of the traditional mechanisms on which the local cultural system was based.

Vincenzo Padiglione
Tufara's Devil Peasant (1979)

This essay stems from an expertise given by the author to a television broadcast on folklore. It is focused on the meanings of Tufara's Carnival in 1977 and on the consequences of the insertion of a popular media of mass communication in its traditional structure. In this context, the researcher is not an external observer, a witness to the action at play, but an interlocutor, and one that is often privileged by its own actors. Such movement is accounted for and enhanced in presenting research results, for it empowers the synchronic anthropological gaze, which regularly fluctuates among the points of view of the various protagonists of the scene, the engaged peasants, and the film camera. The author argues for the necessity to devise a methodology for approaching complex symbolic ritual structures that gives visibility to the positioning and the authority of the researcher with respect to local social actors, so as to distinguish, and better evaluate, the converging and diverging movements among representations and practices, between discourses and ritual performances.