Festive traditions in modernity: the public sphere of the festival of the ‘Fallas’ in Valencia (Spain)

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Abstract

Festive sociability is central for the transmission of tradition and is a fundamental field of interaction between the festive tradition and modernity. This sociability has a reflexivity and a public sphere of its own. The dominant modernist opposition between tradition and modernity is questioned with the help of a recent study of the Fire Festival of the ‘Fallas’ (Valencia, Spain).

Introduction

This paper is concerned with the public sphere of the Fire Festival of the ‘Fallas’. It presents an articulation of the theoretical and the empirical. The theoretical section criticises a type of dominant ‘modernist’ thinking which emphasises the dichotomy between modernity and tradition, and looks at tradition as something opposite to modernity. This perspective restricts our perspective of the polity, and makes impossible the observation and theorisation of a multiplicity of alternative public spheres (such as the Fallas) which interact with the modern. Habermas and Giddens retain a bias towards this dichotomist tendency.

I argue that a focus on the mechanisms of the transmission of tradition helps us to see the limits of this dichotomist perspective. I present a basic connection between hermeneutics and George Simmel’s notion of sociability to construct the concept of ‘festive sociability’. This sociability is the core of the mechanisms of the transmission of tradition and is able to incorporate the modern and contemporary experience by means of its central activities (humour, play, communal eating, satirical criticism, etc). Festive sociability has a reflexivity which is the basis of the popular public sphere of the Fallas, heavily influenced by Carnival.

The empirical part of the paper includes examples from the public sphere of the Fallas and shows that there is an interplay between the festive tradition and modernity. I shall begin by explaining the general characteristics of the Festival of the Fallas. The second section deals with ‘sociable debates’,
daily conversation and meetings among the enthusiasts who run the Fallas. This ‘festive sociability’ is the basis of the Fallas’ sense of the public sphere or the ‘public thing’. The Fallas’ relationship with the mass media will be examined in the third section. The fourth and fifth parts focus on the aspects of the public sphere which are more relevant during the days of the Festival. These aspects of the sociability and the public sphere of the Fallas will show that there is an interplay between the tradition and the modern and contemporary experience. The festive tradition is brought up-to-date by means of the inclusion of present day experiences in the context of the central activities of festive sociability. Therefore, the modernist dichotomist a priory which opposes tradition and modernity cannot be sustained for the case of the Fallas.

1. Festive sociability and its public sphere

Sociologists have devoted a great deal of work to the institutional and cultural expressions of modernity, but a ‘sociology of tradition’ has still not been properly worked out. In particular, the specific forms of the transmission of tradition have not been the object of much attention by sociologists. Edward Shils is an exception. He noted that: ‘the modes and mechanisms of the traditional reproduction of beliefs are left unexamined’ (1971: 124). It seems to me that this neglect corresponds with another omission: studies of the public sphere specific to traditions. This paper aims to demonstrate the distinctive character of the public sphere of an ancient festive tradition, the annual festivals of the Fallas of Valencia. This popular public sphere is able to include the modern and the contemporary experiences as a product of the ‘dialogue’ of the tradition with modern life.

This absence of concern with the effective transmission of tradition is a consequence of the way tradition is portrayed in the predominant modernist discourses. As I have explained elsewhere (Costa, 1996, 1999: 37–39), these dominant discourses commonly assume that an opposition exists between ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ at the conceptual level. Also, this opposition is transferred to the historical-empirical dimension, and then traditions are presented as something ‘being lost’, ‘eroded’, ‘declining’, ‘surviving’, etc. This type of thinking looks at traditions as a sort of residual category, merely representing continuous and unthinking repetition in contradistinction to modernity, which is characterised by ‘reasoning’ and ‘reflexivity’. Of course, from this perspective traditions are not able to generate a public sphere of their own. This privilege is only conceded to modernity and its polity. Also, the dominant modernist discourses present their public sphere (normally connected to the State) as the only one. This dominant modernist thinking looks at tradition as something opposite, and so it makes it impossible to look at the diversity of links that may situate traditions, and festive traditions in particular, in relation to modernity.
The theoretical approach which underlies the study reported in this paper is primarily based on key concepts of phenomenological hermeneutics and on George Simmel’s notion of sociability. I argue that the central mechanisms of transmission of tradition lie in the ‘sociability’ of the community that sustains and, at the same time, reflexively renews it by incorporating features of modern and contemporary life into the sociable framework of tradition. The core of this study is illuminated by one central idea and two derivative ones. First, a basic connection is made between hermeneutics and Simmel’s sociability in showing that the artistic and playful nature of sociability may be interpreted as ‘festive sociability’ when it occurs in a community that reflexively ‘takes care’ of festivity as a tradition. Second, festive sociability is shown to have its own public sphere in which its reflexivity can be expressed through play and art. Third, it is argued that festive traditions, as ‘substantial traditions’, are not necessarily opposed to modern and contemporary forms of experience and reflexivity but that they can incorporate them as part of the dialogue that tradition establishes with present-day experience. This dialogue includes the artistic and playful as part of the central mechanisms for the transmission of traditions through sociability’s activities. As I shall show below, this is a richer dialogue than the one that characterises modern rationality and its public sphere according to authors such as Habermas and Giddens.

I understand modernity as a ‘social ideal’ (Durkheim, 1987 [1912]: 426ff) which has conceptual and historical dimensions. But an excess of faith in the ‘modern ideal’ may make it impossible to differentiate between the conceptual dimension of the ideal (which is part of the ideational product) and the historical-empirical dimension. This conflation makes it difficult to observe a plurality of ways to experience modernity in relation to particular cultures, traditions and alternative public spheres. Wagner (2000: Prologue) has proposed a conceptual clarification which is useful for my purposes. He characterises modernity as ‘a situation in which a certain double imaginary signification prevails. The two components of this signification, ambivalent on their own and also tension-ridden between them, are the idea of the autonomy of the human being as the knowing and acting subject, on the one hand, and the idea of the rationality of the world, ie its principled intelligibility, on the other’. Wagner reserves the term ‘modernist’ for approaches that conflate this conceptual, imaginary signification, with the factual realities of the social world in Western societies. In this sense, social science has tended to be modernist. The term ‘modern’ is then used in a wide sense which includes the ‘post-modern’ and a variety of existing critical social theories for the perspectives that see modernity as a ‘problem’ and are able to reflect on the limitations and conditions of possibility of the modern ideal. This modern approach does not conflate the imaginary component with the empirical. Therefore it is able to look at the plurality of socio-historical interpretations of the double imaginary signification of modernity, the ‘cultures of modernity’. The Fallas (and maybe the Carnival Culture) are able to elaborate an inter-
interpretation of modernity, which is a product of the capacity of the tradition to interplay with the present.

As I shall show, Habermas and Giddens cannot fully escape from a modernist tendency in relation to tradition. They have a restricted view of the public sphere which is linked to an impoverished understanding of reflexivity. This may suggest that the modernist opposition between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ is still exercising some influence on these authors, at least in relation to the small significance that present-day ‘festive traditions’ have in their sociological work. Their rationalist emphasis on procedure and communication in a modern public sphere has a ‘modernist’ bias which does not help to see the empirical existence of a variety of public spheres – for example, the satiric public spaces of the culture of Carnival and other Festivals such as the Fallas, other forms of reflexivity and a plurality of ways to interpret modernity.3

The modernist dichotomy between modernity and tradition had implications for our understanding of the polity. It made it impossible to see the existing ‘public spaces’, ‘public spheres’, characteristic of festive traditions such as the Fallas. The Dionysian sense of satire is still alive in many Carnivals and Fire Festivals in the world. The Fallas also include rituals and myths connected to a grotesque presentation of the body, but they are able to interact playfully with scenes from contemporary life, proposing a ‘dialogue’ with the modern that may take forms of ‘accommodation’, synthesis and re-composition but also the form of a sharp critical satire. As I shall show below, the popular ‘public square’ is still alive today. The ‘modernist’ approaches, however, which conflate the imaginary signification of modernity with the historical-empirical, overlooked this issue. As a consequence, modernity is seen as one, and its double imaginary signification is used as the ‘superior’ criterion and a watchtower from which to judge and legitimate everything (including tradition and festivity). This modernist tendency is still present in authors such as Habermas and Giddens.

Habermas (1992) acknowledges that his study is concerned with the liberal public sphere alone. The other public spheres, including the plebeian one, are said to have disappeared. No place is left for the satiric and popular public sphere: ‘Our investigation is limited to the structure and function of the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation. Thus it refers to those features of a historical constellation that attained dominance and leaves aside the plebeian public sphere as a variant that in a sense was suppressed in the historical process’ (Habermas, 1992: xviii). In general, his account is confined to the type of person who would be able to equate reason with public judgement and to read. The protagonists of that ‘emerging public sphere of civil society’ will be the bourgeois: ‘This stratum of “bourgeois” was the real carrier of the public, which from the outset was a reading public’ (Habermas, 1992: 23). Habermas’ impoverished view of the public sphere is connected to a restricted understanding of reflexivity, which is limited to language – in a immanent double structure of speech (Costa, 1994, 2002).
Also, the mode of ‘questioning’ of this reflexivity, in rational argumentation, restricts the potential of the participants to ‘question’ in different ways. For example, Habermas’ concentration on argumentation divides people’s attitudes into two extremes, with a big gap in the middle: either they focus on a rational thematisation to solve a problem (critical argumentation as the way to question) or they routinely take for granted stocks of rules, knowledge, etc., which are deposited in the life world. There is no place for a wider questioning, a ‘sociable thematisation’, which is able to retain its content but in a subordinate form to sociability. The festive sociability of the Fallas includes this wider, sociable and festive capacity to convey criticism through the medium of jokes, art or play.

Giddens’ conception of reflexivity is restricted to the cognitive, informational, ethical and political dimensions only. Art and the festive have no relevance for Giddens in relationship to reflexivity. Corresponding to this restricted view of reflexivity he has an impoverished view of the public sphere of traditions. For Giddens, traditions have to pass the test of a dialogical model of truth which is based ‘on the dialogical engagement of ideas in a public space’ (1994a: 6). Giddens assumes then that traditions have to adapt to the canons of rational justification as a condition of their persistence and legitimation. In a ‘post-traditional society’ tradition is supposed to dissolve in its ‘traditional way’, while the social reflexivity of the individuals in a ‘detraditionalising society’ makes it possible for them to decide about tradition. The predominance of cognitive decisionism is also evident when Giddens juxtaposes tradition and nature: ‘Tradition, like nature, used to be, as it were, an external framework for human activity which “took” many decisions for us. But now we have to decide about tradition: what to try to sustain and what to discard. And tradition itself, while often important and valuable, can be of very little help in this’ (1994a: 49).

My intention is to suggest that the ‘festive experience’ (and festive traditions) is also part of the problématique of modernity. Moreover, it is precisely the Nietzschean concern with the Dionysian that inaugurates a new way of looking at time in history, and Festivity is also at the centre of the Heideggerian mood, sensitivity and conceptualisation. The guiding theoretical lines of my proposal are clearly influenced by Heidegger’s work on festivity. Also, theorising and researching festivity, particularly the Dionysian sorts of festivities linked to popular culture, carnival and fire festivals, is perhaps a fruitful way of escaping the sterile dichotomy that opposes modernity to tradition. As we shall see in the empirical section of this paper, there is an interplay between the festive, the modern and contemporary life which takes place in the context of the rich permanent sociability of the Festival of the Fallas in Valencia. I think that the empirical evidence presented clearly illustrates the limitations in the type of modernist thinking which opposes modernity and tradition.

I have elaborated an outline of a theory of festive traditions elsewhere (Costa, 1996, 1999: 37–62). The central nucleus of this approach is constituted
by Heidegger’s theory of festivity, but the Heideggerian concepts are translated into other more ‘operative’ ones for research with the help of Simmel’s theory of sociability. However, it also draws on other authors – such as Gadamer, Huizinga, Freud, Bakhtin, Durkheim and Berger and Luckmann – to characterise the specific activities of what I call ‘festive sociability’ and its reflexivity.

In phenomenological hermeneutics tradition is always interwoven with the present, integrating many features of it into its own developing framework, some of them being typically modern. Moreover, the properties and forms of transmission of tradition are more flexible and malleable than they have often been portrayed. This interweaving of past and present has been said to correspond to a ‘translation’ (Gadamer, 1991: 116). I want to emphasise here that this ‘translation’ is produced at the very heart of sociable activities as a coming to terms of the tradition with present-day experience. Memory is connected to the rhythms of this festive sociable movement which becomes more intense during the days of the celebration. It produces what Heidegger (1995: 243; 1982: 71, 77) calls the ‘Event of Appropriation’ (Ereignis). The festive event re-unites the ties which link the ‘Fourfold’ (sky, earth, the sacred and the community), constituting a particular sense of the ‘near’ in relation to the world, which however keeps a veiled mysterious side.

I interpret the playful and artistic realm of sociability (Simmel, 1971) as part of that ‘gentle influence’, operated through art and play, that the ‘Fourfold’ exercise on the festive community through their ties that bind. This interpretation helps to make more operational for research these dense Heideggerian concepts because sociability has a foundation in the interaction generated by the concrete life of individuals. Sociability becomes ‘festive sociability’ in the festive community. It is expressed, and reproduced, by means of central activities such as ‘sociable conversations’, a variety of forms of play, humour, communal eating and joyful parading. The Festive Event is translated into sociological terms as an intensification of festive sociability.

The reflexivity of festive sociability is characterised by the creation of an existential distance (and proximity at the same time), a ‘re-move’ in my terminology, which parallels that of art and play, in relation to life and the world (Costa, 1999: 42–5, 50). The reflexivity of these central activities of festive sociability include the body and emotions as part of this existential re-move which helps to keep a sense of proximity in relation to the World. For example, as I shall show below, the satiric criticisms in the Fallas – which are paradigmatic in soft conversations, parades and in the ephemeral monument – are sociable; they are expressed with the body and generate a peculiar ‘festive reality’ which helps the participants to re-move in relation to the world.

In this paper I characterise the features of the Fallas’ public sphere. All the characteristics of the Fallas’ public sphere are grounded in the features of festive sociability and its reflexivity. They show that there is a distinctive popular public sphere which retains the sense of the ‘public thing’ that used
to characterise European popular culture, mainly throughout the culture of Carnival. This public sphere is able to make a bridge between tradition and the experiences of modern life. The body is at the centre of this exercise of ‘dialogue’ between the past and present. The participants mobilise their bodies in rhythm with music and they present them in costumes and fancy dress in a joyful manifestation of emotions displaying their festive identity and deeply rooted tradition. I shall call this mobilisation of the body during the Festival time ‘body at a re-move’. The Fallas, as the monumental sculptures that are ritually burnt at the end of the Festival, are a new, urban manifestation of the Carnivalesque popular inferno. They continue the tradition of depicting the body with the same type of grotesque metamorphosis that, according to Bakhtin (1987), was common in traditional European popular culture and is now combined with myths and other contemporary presentations of the body. Their satirical vein preserves the power of tragedy to convey criticism and expresses renewal. The criticism of the public sphere of the Fallas therefore has not lost its ‘sociable’ grass-roots and thus its capacity to bring tradition up to date by including present-day experiences. Contrary to Habermas, there is a sociable way to ‘question’ (wider than the argumentative) which is able to integrate myths and the grotesque as central elements to elaborate criticism. There is no contradiction between contemporary criticism and myths in the Fallas. As I shall show below, myths are a central feature of the sculptural monuments which are destroyed at the end of festivities. Rituals and myths are interwoven with other satirical criticisms of contemporary life.

2. The public sphere of the festival of the ‘Fallas’

2.1. The festival

Every year the city of Valencia, situated in the central area of the Mediterranean coast of Spain, celebrates a very particular sort of Festival: La Festa de Les Falles de Valencia. People refer to it as Las Fallas (in Spanish) or in the Valencian dialect simply as Les Falles or, also, as Les Falles de San Joseph. This last appellation highlights the fact that the event is associated with the Festivity of St. Joseph on the 19th of March. The night of St. Joseph is usually called ‘The Night of Fire’, La Nit del Foc, because at midnight the artistic and satirical constructions of wood and paper, that are Las Fallas, are burnt. It is the moment when the masses of participants, visitors and tourists who have been filling the streets of Valencia during the previous days in enormous crowds of up to 2,000,000 people, completely take over the streets and gather in the main squares to experience the burning of these constructions. The concurrent fires of this magic night, spread across the streets and squares of the city, are the central act of a Fire Festival, accompanied by fireworks that mark the climax of the whole Festivity.
The Falla is both the object and the subject of the celebration. The Falla, as an object, is the most visible part of the Festivity in each neighbourhood of the city; it consists of an elaborate construction of wood, cardboard and glass fibre between 5 and 30 metres high. Fallas are ephemeral monuments that are complex critical and satirical sculptures comprising many free-standing figures of mythical and fictional characters and celebrities drawn from various situations and scenes of life. They constitute a sort of ‘tableau vivant’ or static theatre, depicting popular or topical themes.

The behind-the-scenes part of each Falla consists of an association of supporters and active participants called the Commisió Fallera, or also ‘Falla’. In this usage ‘Falla’ is also the subject of the Festivity. The Falla associations are an important social phenomenon in Valencia, a city of about 750,000 inhabitants. Fallas are festivals sustained by a movement that is geographically widespread. They are a network of long-standing voluntary associations that have more than 200,000 members in the Valencian region. The basic organisational unit is the Commission of Falla, that normally comprises 200–300 members. These voluntary associations are highly organised and are distinctive for their combination of economic and administrative rationality that generates intense festive sociability in a solidly rooted tradition. There is an association of the artists who design and build the monuments as well as a central committee that co-ordinates the general activities of the Festivity.

Each association is rooted in a neighbourhood of Valencia or even in a smaller area. It has its centre of activity in a community building (like a community centre) known as a Casal. The Casal may also be called ‘Falla’ because it is the locus of the life of its association. The whole urban area of the City (and now many other villages and cities of the Region) is completely divided into these locales of the Fallas. The Casal is the physical base for the range of social activities that are at the heart of the sociability of the Falla. The activities are enormously varied, including organising committee meetings, annual general meetings, meals, dancing, youth disco parties, and other events for children, cards and other games, watching TV, theatre, money raising activities (with lottery tickets and raffles), ‘play-back’ (in which people dress up as popular singers and mime to their recordings), karaoke, other musical activities and many other different kinds of gatherings organised by the fallers in the Casal or in the nearby streets.

The Festival unfolds during the month of March, but the climax is between the 14th and 19th of the month. This period is organised as a programme of events and celebrations, which feature brass bands, fireworks, religious processions like the Offering of Flowers to the Virgin, L’Ofrena, satirical parades and a great variety of playful outside events that culminate with the plantà, the setting up of the Falla monument and its cremà (or burning down during the Night of Fire). This night brings to an end a year of activity dedicated to designing and constructing (or commissioning an artist for the design and construction of) the sculptural, satirical monuments that are called Fallas. The end of this enormous effort requiring such a huge amount of energy and money
is, paradoxically, the destruction of this very same monument. In the end, all the work and activity of the *fallers* is aimed at burning down the object that represents them, the monument that they would just have finished four or five days before, somewhere near their Casal.

The Festival also shows that tradition and modernity are not necessarily two irreconcilable opposites. Fallas are traditional but they bring the old myths in the rituals of fire up-to-date. They are also syncretic in so far as they bring in elements from contemporary experience and produce a peculiar *pastiche* of the old and the new. At the same time the Festival is a modern event that breathes new life into the collective memory of the community each year through the exercise of its particular, highly organised, voluntary associationism and festive sociability, incorporating art, humour and critical satire as tools to renew the tradition. From this perspective, the Fallas are not just a modern creation but they represent the persistence of ritual and myth in dialogue with present-day culture. Tradition is thereby enriched and made more complex. It not only ‘survives’ the attempts to replace it but it also persists. The old, sacrificial fires of the rural Fire Festivals (Frazer, 1963) are continued in the modern festival of *Las Fallas*.

2.2. *Daily sociable conversation and meetings*

The Falla’s public sphere is grounded in regular sociable encounters and meetings. In a previous study (Costa, 1999) I have described many situations when actors meet, talk and put festive sociability into practice. For example, the daily conversation of women about children, their schools and health, involves constant references to the quality of local modern organisations. The regular joking while playing cards or dominoes equally involves a sociable mixture of topics which bring ironic and satirical remarks to bear on local and more general events drawn from contemporary life. The playful substance of sociability is the locus of this interplay with the present.

For example, when I was interviewing two adult newcomers, an older Valencian came in and started to talk to them. He immediately got into a joke competition with Manuel, a Andalusian newcomer, by playing with the diminutive of his name in a funny voice: ‘Manolito, Manolito!’. Manuel answered by asking how things were; the other replied that he had got to go to the doctor. In the middle of his reply he spontaneously changed from Spanish to Catalan when he referred to the doctor. The italicised words were spoken in the Valencian language: ‘I have to come back Tuesday because I have to go to the doctor and have my blood pressure checked. Anyway, if he tells me not to do something I won’t take any notice’. Manuel laughed and asked why he was going then? The older man answered: ‘I don’t know because the doctors don’t take much care of me. However, I am a good boy: I don’t drink, smoke or fuck. So, he cannot prohibit me to do anything really’. Knowing that the other was a bit mean Manuel answered: ‘They will steal from you everything except money’. After this the conversation turned into
a long joking comparison between the decline of male sexual power, the brevity of aperitifs and cooking and eating snails. The old man shifted spontaneously to Valencian, while Manuel used Spanish in the context of this almost surreal joking conversation. The conversation ended with questions about the best place to collect snails in Valdella. Both men were aware that the forest where there used to be ‘millions of snails’ had been destroyed by recent urbanisation, which had provided luxury housing for newly arrived rich people. This had created a series of changes, including the relocation of the local National Health Centre. The old man said that his doctor was too far away from his house. The conversation included criticism of the local representatives of the leading political party which had framed its electoral promises with a view to obtaining the votes of the newly arrived people. The old man claimed that everything was being taken away and put closer to where the rich people lived: ‘The whole town is going to be taken there. Then they will put on free buses. Well, the buses don’t matter; but if they put buses on they will do so because *they have taken away everything that used to exist in the town there*. The encounter ended as it began, but this time Manuel used the same tone as the other did at the beginning: ‘Ay, Ay, you are always complaining, complaining’.

The conversation included joking, teasing, bragging and subtle shifts of language to make points about politics, modernity and the state of health services. This mixture represents the popular public sphere in action. The participants’ critical points are not constructed as a ‘rational argumentation’ (as in Habermas). Critical points which include modern features are made in the context of a joking mutual satire which is rooted in festive sociability and its playful-artistic reflexivity. The conversation also included the type of discourse on the body and sexuality which is central throughout the popular culture of Carnival.

But Fallas are also modern voluntary associations which have ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ spaces. Social festive situations are however at the root of administrative and economic decisions. The rational scheme of organisation is the result of thousands of micro-conversations conducted informally between members over many years. Members may question the relevance of specific parts of the programme in relation to their cost. Any change implies modifications to other parts of the programme. However, the real debates about economics take place informally, and negotiation between members happens during daily, spontaneous encounters, dinners or card games. They are normally conducted with a sense of humour, so that, for example, a negotiation between someone who wants more money for dinners and another who wants more fireworks may be solved through occasional joke competitions. Such was the case in the Falla Rodamon in the context of a decision as to whether to put more money into fireworks or into communal eating. The negotiation took a whole summer of joking and card games, between the two sections headed by the representatives of the ‘pyromaniacs’ and the ‘gluttons’. But their passions had to be balanced by the constant advise given by the Falla’s treasurer.
(who was acknowledged as the best card and domino player in the Falla), and so this process of decision making, grounded in sociability, constantly incorporated a knowledge on how to make modern budgets. Also, it was checked by means of democratic procedures and decisions in the Assemblies.

The definitive decisions of the Assembly or the committee follow a similar pattern. Even the meeting itself is a sociable encounter which includes a modern sense of democracy and generates rational bureaucratic procedures to keep the relevant data and information. There are long debates about issues in the assemblies when the issue has not been well worked through in the informal channels of the association. For these key decisions, the history and common experience of the association is taken into account. Therefore, organisation relies on the members’ shared experience. Formal debates are decided by votes: ‘You propose an idea, and the pros and cons are seen. If the majority agrees with only one or two dissenters a vote is not necessary; but if there are many dissenting voices, a vote is taken’. Even so, the organisational debates are permeated by a festive atmosphere which makes them last a long time. Topics change spontaneously, and people want to enjoy being there. According to the Secretary, ‘the general assemblies are un follón [a crazy disorder], and so we have to refer many topics to the Committee meetings’. This is not much help however because the habitual atmosphere of the Committee meetings is actually sociable. However, criticism develops, decisions are made and votes are taken in an atmosphere that defies the understanding of time as a useful and efficient instrument. The Secretary and the accountant, however, finish their work well: they elaborate files, memos and other current organisational requirements on a rational basis. Therefore, festive sociability is able to incorporate the modern experience into its own framework. This is done selectively according to the criteria of sociability itself.

2.3. Mass media

New media of communication have been making their presence felt in the Festivity. They coexist with the forms of written communication that the Fallas had in previous times: the llibret and the specialised press. The first medium of written expression and communication for each falla was the ‘llibret de la Falla’, which became ubiquitous in the second half of the 19th century. It was an small booklet centred on a piece of literary satire and comic poetry. It related the scenes and particular features of the monument to the common theme which represented an expressive maxim often taken from popular wisdom or morals. Sometimes the maxim took the form of a hieroglyph (or enigma), which the monument was intended to explain. People could speculate as to its meaning. The llibret still constitutes the basis of the Fallas’ literature, and there are poets who are skilled in writing them. Other publications include the festive programme, poetry for the Fallera Major (the Festival Queen) and other additions, such as pictures of the Falla and local advertising. The traditional literature of the Fallas also includes specialised
magazines for the Festivity and other associated satirical and humorous reviews and publications, typical of the Valencian sense of humour. They are in the background of the Festivity, helping people to interpret the Festivity for themselves.

The new media are significant in the home. They are at the centre of family life, particularly the TV, but also radio, press, video and computers. The extraordinary development of the new media has accompanied changes in social structure and helped to shape social relations in the neighbourhood. This process has been very intense from the sixties onwards as the Festivity has expanded through the newly urbanised metropolitan areas and the outskirts of medium-sized cities in the Valencian region. Some sensitive Fallers are aware of this connection between urban transformation and the new place of the media at the centre of family life. They and the artists, say that the new media – particularly the TV, are a main reason behind the choice of new targets of the Fallas satire (which are not so much local, as very general these days).

Fallas vary in their attitudes towards the TV and new media, but two attitudes seem to be predominant. One is of confrontation, the other is of negotiation. The second is more reflexive and critical of TV than the first. It may even involve the derivation of ‘new options’ for festive sociability from the relationship.

The confrontational attitude is clearly visible in the case of the Falla Valdella, which is constantly at war with the TV, particularly on two issues. One centers around the popular magazine programmes on Friday night, which may divert some fallers away from the ‘sacred dinner’ (on the same night). The second enemy is televised football during the Festival period. They may also distract many fallers or even spoil a dinner, as was the case in 1997 on the occasion of the match between Valencia and Schalke 04 in a European Cup competition. The match coincided with a dinner organised and paid for by the President (who did not like football very much). The Falla was totally divided: some tried to eat and talk while ignoring the match, and others were eating and watching (and criticising the President). There had previously been a big debate about the convenience of taking the TV set out of the Casal for everybody to watch while eating. As one of the women Fallers said, ‘the only god that can kill the Fallas is TV football.’ The adults in this Falla were opposed to the young people’s request for a big screen TV. Moreover, the ability to deal with new media technology is low, thus explaining why photographic and video dossiers on the Festival period are made by professional outsiders who are paid for their services.

The Falla Rodamon is an example of the model of negotiation. Members there take advantage of the new media to create reflexive innovations for sociability. First, TV events are used to draw people to the Casal or the square. The Falla has a big screen, and football matches may be seen by members, friends and neighbours. Such was the case for the final of the Spanish Royal Cup between Valencia F.C. and Deportivo which, according to a member,
helped to create a mixture of hooliganism and ‘fallerism’. Second, TV has a place in the context of daily sociability, as an ingredient in association. For example, young people may meet to watch TV in the Casal in small groups. Third, many members are able to use video cameras and recorders to film events in the Falla. This has another effect: it attracts a lot of people to watch themselves on the big screen, with all the associated humorous comments and good atmosphere.

Fourth, this collective watching of TV may include ‘rival’ popular magazine programmes, which are then taken as objects of all sorts of jokey commentaries and interpretations in the festive context. For example the Falla Rodamon made a parody of a well known Spanish programme about parodies, ‘The National Parody’. They invented a TV programme (and a fictitious TV channel) for the neighbourhood, with a silly name that represented its streets. All members of the association created the roles. Some acted as presenters, being carefully dressed to caricature the TV presenters. Other groups did karaoke parodies of songs, inventing new words to do with the Falla. Finally, and most imaginatively, others videoed funny sketches to make adverts including spoof chats with the people in neighbourhood shops and other satirical caricatures of TV advertising. Finally, this parody was used to liven up the Election of the Festival Queen one night, but this event was itself filmed, thereby providing a new reason to meet and watch it again. Therefore, modern technology and mass media may be incorporated creatively into a sociable framework for the sake of sociability itself.

The main events of the festive program are fully covered in Valencian TV, radio and press. Spanish TV normally provides a brief, and basic, coverage of the events, except for the final night of the cremà, which is almost fully covered. This coverage normally deals with what I have called the ‘other festivity’, the one intended for the general public who do not live the internal sociability of the Casal. This coverage is of the events organised by the City Council. It focuses on the more spectacular aspects of the Festivity: Ofrena, day and night fireworks and the burning of the monuments. The internal sociability of the associations is neglected, so that the audience learns nothing about the people who really work for the Festivity.

However, a different initiative was undertaken by a new private Valencian TV channel, called ‘Valencia Të Ve’, which has a very small audience. They went to the Casals during the year and made a programme to highlight aspects of the social life of the Festivity. When they came to one of the Fallas I had researched, the ‘Falla El Reteró’, I had the opportunity to witness the production of their programme. The result turned out to be an artificial caricature of life in the Falla, but members enjoyed performing for the camera and watching themselves, appearing to have a good time. The TV was a good excuse to be together in an atmosphere dominated by festive sociability. Again, sociability may use the modern mass media for its own sake.

In general, the Fallas’ attitude towards TV could be regarded as ambiguous in relation to its ‘aura’ but selective in relation to sociability. On the one
hand, members have a certain respect for the new media because of their authority and their ‘aura’. On the other, they make TV the main object of their satire, thereby raising the ‘power’ of TV only to bring it down to earth later on. But the festive communities also have selective criteria, originating in sociability, to protect and expand sociability itself when making decisions about involving the modern media.

2.4. Fancy dress and satirical parades

Festive sociability expresses itself by means of joyful parades. They are able to include modern content and contemporary criticism into a joyful satire which is centred on the body. Parades are an essential part of Fallas and a distinctive symbol which display other integrated symbols. The Falla intensifies the rhythm of festive sociability during the Festival days, producing a change in the family, space and time. Parades are in the context of this transformation which helps the community to update the tradition by means of a ‘dialogue’ between the contemporary forms of space-time and family relations and a community centred re-appropriation of space-time (Costa, 1999: 165ff).

Falla parades are not protests; they are ‘crowd joys’ and embodied emotions. They are the clearest expression of this ‘festive movement’. Parades situate the body in movement and emotions at the centre of an active and collective way to maintain a festive dialogue between tradition and contemporary life, which is re-presented through its symbolic display. I shall focus on the representational way in which the body is mobilised and portrayed, in a manner that could be called ‘body at a re-move’. The participants mobilise their bodies under the rhythm of music and present them with costumes in the context of a joyful manifestation of emotions that constitute a contemporary display of their festive identity and deeply rooted tradition. They also situate the dynamics of collective recognition and the making of popular criticisms in interaction with the public.

Fancy dress is important in the Festival, particularly in the comical, critical and satirical parade called the Cavalcade of the Puppets (Ninots). Fallas compete to organise the best, comic processions through the streets. The cavalcade in Valdella, in the metropolitan area of the City in which I did part of my research, may be summarised briefly as follows: Fallers wear fancy dress, normally carefully designed during the previous month to fit in with the organised shows. Each group of friends enjoys preparing these in advance, though sometimes they are rented too. The several little groups put on a show that sometimes resembles street theatre and incorporates prepared and improvised dialogues. Dancing and singing occur where the several groups meet up, describing patterns in movement, sometimes with the participation of spectators. On these occasions they may combine the prepared sketches with an improvisation specific to a particular section of spectators. This can take the form of teasing, slapstick or some other type of playful interaction. The shows are comical, ironic and critical at the same time.
The parade is very long, and may take more than four hours during the afternoon or evening. Participants finish exhausted, particularly those who dance. Each falla parades independently from their own Casal to the main street and back. They meet other Fallas in the main street and will co-operate to form a massed parade. The interaction between them often involves cracking jokes and ad libbing.

This cavalcade belongs to the genre of Carnival but never loses its focus on comic, satirical, popular criticism. It has a similar structure to the original Carnival parade of ancient Feasts. A distinctive feature of the Cavalcade are the critical sketches in which the players are not generally masked, and impersonality and anonymity are not emphasised. The Carnival of the Salon's rule about wearing masks does not apply. The players seek personal recognition from the crowd for their popular humour and satirical criticism, for this establishes an open interaction with the public. For example, a participant claimed that the street setting was crucial because it permitted greater liveliness and a sense of participation among onlookers who could comment on, and laugh at, the parade figures. Fancy dress is liberating because it brings what is hidden to the surface, and then, said a participant, ‘allows you to do things you don’t normally do, such as being a woman, a monster and things like that’. It is therapeutic because it enables people to laugh at themselves and throw off their inhibitions, but actors also see the potential for criticism in this joyful liberation.

The joyful display of these collectively made disguises and compositions is the basic element of the Cavalcade. It is not a movement of protest, its basic purpose is one of common enjoyment, ‘total fun’ (‘una juerga total’); and it generates laughter among the spectators by using a colourful way of presenting a topic for criticism. An experienced participant said: ‘The truth always emerges from the criticism of something. We criticise something particular. This year there were several men who disguised themselves as Roldan, Felipe and Guerra [contemporary Spanish politicians], and they were hitting each other in the middle of the road. It is always a satire of the present’.

These topics for popular criticism and enjoyment include: general politics; abstract ethics; general social criticism like the obsession with technology as a fashion (using fax and mobile telephone disguises); self-criticism; arts (with no direct critical purpose, such as being disguised as ‘zingaras’ who tease or hit the spectators with an stick and ask for money in exchange for dancing); or caricatures of fashionable films or TV programmes and adverts.

Festive sociability is again the basis for the incorporation of modern contents into the framework of tradition. This also includes criticism; for example, the cavalcade is particularly sensitive to the ‘negative effects’ generated by the technological side of modernity.

The Cavalcade may also incorporate topics from the monument itself that are displayed with the help of some of the ninots (puppets) in its more representative scenes. Its joyful satirical character, which clearly depends on fundamental activities of festive sociability such as humour and play, is
the spontaneous satire of the people. Like the ephemeral monument, it is difficult to control by power.

2.5. The ephemeral art of the monuments

Monuments are central to hermeneutics in relation to the power of tradition to constantly interact with our present (Gadamer, 1991: 117). In the Fallas, the ephemeral art of the monuments is central to collective memory: it puts together the ancient and the contemporary in a particular way which emphasises the cyclical and perishable. The satirical criticism of the monument is able to generate an interplay between the old myths and the grotesque body, on the one hand, and the current events of society, on the other. By doing so the ancient art of satire updates an ancient way to move the people which is the centre of a popular public sphere. The ‘re-moved’ body is central to this sense of the ‘common things’.

The complex historical transformation of the old figures of straw, cardboard and wood, the parrot, into the present monuments cannot be dealt with here. Nor it is possible to account for the diverse character of the monuments and their forms. The symbol of the Phoenix is common in these accounts. Life, death and rebirth are a characteristic of the symbolic universe of the Fallas, which is fully permeated by a practice of the ephemeral and the satirical, seeking transcendence by means of a full acceptance of life and finitude. An artist explained his understanding of the connection between humour, criticism and effective change as follows:

The Falla begins with a critical sense of humour. The content of this critique is social, economical and political. The meaning of it is that the Falla is erected, exposed to the public and burnt, to be immediately born again. There is something fantastic here, and some people don’t understand why it has to be burnt . . . Well, there is a market economy, with wrong effects. The logical thing is to criticise it, and next year go to something else. It is necessary to burn things. This is not like the activity of the banks that keep things. No! No! We set things on fire so that other things can grow again from the ashes. This is the meaning of the Fallas, and I find it beautiful.
A monument is a sculptural composition, as such, a representation. A prominent artist went so far as to call it a piece of ‘static theatre’. Artists also mention a relationship to cartoons and the puppet theatre. This theatre of the monument is not independent of the neighbourhood square in which it is erected. It is at the centre of a public square which will become the critical square of ‘popular judgements’. Experienced artists first go to the square to get ideas before they do the initial drawing of the monuments. The square makes the monument, but the monument remakes it too with its novel presence. The space and visibility are particularly important, because they are the key to a good burning.

The themes and characters of monuments are essentially of two sorts. One is related to current social and political life. Consequently, politicians are usually the object of strong criticism and satire, so that Fallas produce a critique of power. This consideration of current events is normally contrasted with the past, so that Fallas are also a permanent conversation between the modern and the old.

A second, common theme is Valencian traditions and popular myths. Monuments often represent a variety of them. I am only going to refer to some cases that highlight the uses of the grotesque body in the monument. Figures often display exaggerations, distortions and metamorphoses of every part of the human body that can be transformed into vegetable, animal, mineral and even technological items. Inverse transformations also occur, with anthropomorphised animals, rocks, vegetables, houses or well known landmarks of the city.

But one of the central motifs of European popular culture is sex and reproduction. Fallas are very uninhibited about sex; they use visual similes and metaphors often featuring Valencian agricultural produce. As one would expect, genitalia, their form and efficiency or deficiency of function, are a favourite target. For example, a bird or a big carrot can represent a phallus. Artists, when asked about this way of picturing sexuality often say that they are the ‘narrators of people’s lives’ and that this is their vocabulary. Last year one of the artists who sculpted a monument that was critical of the commercialisation of sexuality on TV, devised a scene about an erotic telephone with which people fell in love; the telephone took on a phallic form.

Mythical figures often appear in association with the presentation of the grotesque body. They are normally in the central part of the monument and help to hold the scenes together. Artists express confidence about the persistence of mythology: ‘We put in a lot of mythology because the characters who have endured through all the civilisations are mythological: the satyr, the centaur, the siren. They’ll never die’. But these myths may be associated with other figures, such as a dragon or the devil who is said to be very important because the devil, said an artist, ‘is everywhere, it is hell and we put many hells in the Fallas’. The Falla as static theatre can also be compared with an altar-like form of representation; but other figures, such as the devil, are said to occupy the place of the Saints.
Monuments are burnt on the 19th of March in an atmosphere of collective melancholia, but once the mythical and grotesque figures are burnt, and the beautiful descendant of the original figure of straw, the parot, is destroyed, the President resigns, and everything starts again. The moment of the burning is one that really affects the body. The static monuments still have an old power to ‘move’ people: ‘you feel an emptiness, and then you understand that the monument was occupying a place’, ‘it is a renewal; this night we also have died.’

3. Sociability as a mundane art of existence

These aspects of the sociability and the public sphere of the Fallas have shown to be central as mechanisms of the transmission of tradition. They are able to incorporate the modern and the contemporary as part of the potential of tradition to be translated, interact and ‘dialogue’ with present life. The festive tradition is selective and critical in relation to this inclusion. The main criteria which regulate this process of interplay are rooted in festive sociability. Sociability is self-reflexive: it selectively includes the elements of modernity which help sociability itself to multiply and expand; but it checks, keeps in a subordinate way or criticises other aspects, basically ‘instrumental’ and technological, which may destroy sociability, the community and nature. In general, the Fallas tend to include aspects which derive from ‘autonomy’, such as democracy, but they criticise and protect themselves from the effects of other aspects of modernity which express an excess of faith in an instrumental reason which masters the world, such as social fragmentation, selfish instrumentalism or the destruction of nature.

The reflexivity of sociability is not restricted to language; it includes an existential ‘re-move’ which incorporates the body as central. This reflexivity is able to ‘question’ and expresses itself by means of the central activities of festive sociability, but its paradigmatic expression is satirical criticism, the main art of critique, fully aware of the ephemeral. Therefore, sociability constitutes a fertile basis for the practice a ‘mundane art of existence’. This sociable, embodied, way to ‘question’ the world is wider than the rational-argumentative.

The body in the Festivity of the Fallas is actively and skilfully put into action, or portrayed, as a joyful medium for constructing identity and establishing an expressive and emotional collective dialogue of recognition with the public. It is also a site where the memory of festive tradition is lodged in complex articulation with the modern life. The body at a festive-existential ‘re-move’ represents relations of coexistence, overlap and mutual interaction between tradition and modernity. In the Fallas modernity does not obliterate or enslave tradition. On the contrary, there is a dynamic of ‘accommodation’ between tradition and modernity, and the ‘festive’ body is at its centre. It is in movement in parades when clothed in gala costumes or fancy dress.
also portrayed as grotesque in the ephemeral monuments. At the same time, the contemporary body has not lost its association with mythical figures and rituals.

In short the body serves as an instrument of comical, satirical and popular criticism that starts by questioning itself (‘re-moving’). But, unlike formal critique, this embodied questioning starts with a joyful, humorous transformation and ends with the burning of the grotesque characters and mythical figures, thereby generating an experience of ‘mysterious inaction’ and a melancholic tone that resembles tragedy. The body in the Fallas retains its ancient capacity to move or affect the Public. Contrary to Habermas’ dismissal of the Plebeian Public Sphere then, the Fallas of Valencia indicate that a Popular Public Sphere is still in operation (at least in Valencia) and that myths (and rituals), far from having disappeared from modern life, may still be at the centre of popular criticism in modernity.

Habermas and Giddens’ procedural rationalism has a peculiar ambivalent tension between the ‘modern’ and the ‘modernist’ perspectives. On the one hand, they see modernity as a problem and are aware of many limitations of the modern project; therefore they are not ‘dogmatic modernists’. On the other hand, however, they fall into a conflationist modernism because (a) they tend to see one form of modernity only – perhaps an ‘heritage’ of the mainstream modernism of the social sciences but ‘softened’ with a minimalist procedural rationality, and (b) their form of rationality is seen as ‘superior’, being extended without question and, more important and as a consequence, as constituting the criteria to legitimate other practices, forms of experience and traditions.

The facts described in this paper, however, show that there is another reflexivity linked to a festive-artistic and sociable way of being in the world which constitutes a ‘mundane art of existence’. This artistic reflexivity has a public sphere of its own which is grounded in reflexive activities of festive sociability such as play or humour. This mundane reflexivity may interpret modernity and is able to include expressions of modern reflexivity into its own framework. But festive reflexivity has a wider basis than the ‘procedural-communicational’ reasoning because it does not lose sociability (and the body) and keeps a wide form of satiric criticisms which go back to old satire and tragedy. Also, the ‘Carnivalesque social ideal’ has always accompanied, as a satirical shadow, the historical evolution of the ‘modern’ in Western societies. Therefore, festive-artistic reflexivity challenges Giddens and Habermas’ claims to have a ‘superior’ form of reflection which would be the only criterion to grant legitimacy in a public (common) sphere.

Giddens’ emphasis on a ‘post-traditional society’ and Habermas’ search for a ‘formal identity’ (or a ‘post-national’ one) derive from a belief in the superiority of a rationalist way to question things and obtain legitimation by means of argumentation in a modern public sphere. This belief is connected to their view of modernity as one. By doing so they lose perspective on the limits of their ‘rationalist ideal’, which is also, as Durkheim (1987 [1912]: 231)
said, a faith which considers rational debate as sacred. The wider universality of laughter and the persistence of a satirical way to question the world in modernity have helped us to see some of the limits of this faith – which has difficulties when looking at other social ideals which can claim the same ‘rights’. Finally, they open a way to research a variety of social ideals (and their mutual interaction) which are present in a plurality of ways to experience modernity and constitute its critique.

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Notes

1 However, there is a variety of authors who discuss the creative use of tradition in modernity. For example Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1988 [1983]) invention of tradition, Gadamer (1991 [1977]: 116–17) on the capacity of tradition to be translated into contemporary terms and Durkheim’s (1987 [1912]: 231) remarks on the new festivities during the Revolution. Also, a postmodern sociology includes a sense of time (from Nietzsche and Heidegger) which makes it possible to overcome the dichotomist perspective. The itineraries of this dichotomy between modernity and tradition, have also been explained by Peter Wagner (2000: chapter 4) in the context of the inescapable vanishing point of modernity which generates both its peculiar difficulties in relating to the past and nostalgia. ‘Tradition’ plays an inescapable role in the modern discourse, and is part of the problem of modernity. The limits of this dichotomist framework of the modernists discourses are clearly seen from a perspective of time which redefines the sense of the historical. Such a perspective began with Nietzsche and was continued by Heidegger and others. A sociology of modernity should be concerned with identifying a ‘problématique’ which pushes towards a ‘common ground’ of reflection from a plurality of modes of theorising. Modernity is also analysed and researched as a multiplicity: there are ‘varieties of modernity’ (Wagner, 2000: Epilogue and Prologue).

2 This paper draws on data from this study, a qualitative research I conducted on the Fallas as part of my PhD (Costa, 1999). This study included data from other festivities as well. The names of the Fallas and their members have been substituted in this paper to preserve anonymity. I am very grateful to James A. Beckford (University of Warwick, UK) for his help, ideas and excellent supervision of my work.

3 The empirical-historical presence of festivity in many European and American countries must be considered in relation to descriptions of ‘varieties of modernity’. For example, the huge importance of festivity in the social life of many of the predominantly ‘Catholic countries’ is too obvious to be neglected. It seems to me that much work is needed to link festivity to the different patterns of structuration of the ‘sacred’ and generally to the diversity of life worlds and institutional frameworks of modern societies.

4 Habermas overemphasises the dimensions of one ‘region’ (or reality) in the life world which is characterised by the opposition between the implicit in daily life, in the life world, and the
moment in which a problem appears (argumentation). The life world, however, has multiple realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 25ff), and some of them demand an existential process – which may include language as one aspect only, and the emphasis is not in argumentation – to be able to get into them: they require a transition, with phases of entry and exit. This is the case in the central activities of festive sociability: humour, play, communal eating, etc. Also, P. Berger (1987) has explored the reflexive qualities of humour by means of a consideration of the specific reality it generates in the life world.

Moreover, there is no such thing as artistic reflexivity for Giddens: ‘Is there such a thing as aesthetic reflexivity? I don’t think so, or at least I wouldn’t put it this way. I am not at all sure that, as Lash puts it, there is “an entire other economy of signs in space” that functions separately from “cognitive symbols”’ (1994b: 197).

A break with the opposition between tradition and modernity that the festive produces has consequences for our understanding of ‘nostalgia’. In festivities the ‘unknown lost object’ is in the festivity itself. The absence is particularly felt when the celebrations finish (‘Pobre de mi’, ‘Woe is me’, says the song that gathers masses of people together at the end of the Fiesta de San Fermín in Pamplona, Northern Spain). This specific form of melancholy however longs for the festive itself, and has an effective therapy: working together in real festive communities to construct the Festival again the following year, trying to make it even better. This is a way in which to gain a joyful proximity, a nearness, with the world, but it is also a fight to know ‘a lost object’ which always retains a veiled part of its mystery. For the participants ‘home’ is a way to be in the world, an ability to make ‘proximity’ in relation to nature, people and the sacred in a festive community. For them this means joyful play, but also an imperative of sociability. In a similar way Nancy (1991: 11) has explained the making of community as a present imperative that happens to us (quoted in Wagner, 2000: chapter 4). Therefore, this push to overcome melancholy is also important to understand the re-making of the ‘gentle law’ which links the festive community to the world. Melancholy (and not only mourning) is therefore also important to understand law in social theory.

Several authors and schools have essential coincidences which direct our attention to sociability as a centre field to practice a ‘mundane art of existence’. Simmel (1971: 140) indicated that sociability parallels art and play in relation to its power to create a specific reality which helps to gain a distance and proximity to life; this makes it possible to penetrate into the wholeness and mysteries of life. It also has a therapeutic potential. In addition, Berger and Luckmann (1967: 25), following Shütz, refer to transitions, with an entry and exit, for the multiples realities of the social world (such as dreams, play, art, etc). The reflexivity of the joke is analysed by Freud (1998), Bergson and Berger (1998). Play, which also creates a distance from rationality and daily life, is analysed by Huizinga (1972: 22ff). Bakhtin (1987: 250ff) has referred to the symposium in the Banquet. In the context of hermeneutics, the intensification of the central activities of festive sociability during the Festive Event have global consequences which are linked to collective memory and a re-appropriation of experience. Also, the community reflexively takes ‘care’ of a cyclical ‘festive project’.

According to Emili Casanova (1990) the word ‘falla’ has its origins in the Latin facula, diminutive of fax-cis, meaning ‘torch’.

Fallas (and other Carnivals) have a peculiar sociable ‘inclusive universalism’ which makes it easy for migrants to become part of the new community (Costa, 1999: 17).

The Fallas in those new urban areas involve many newcomers. This suggests that festivity is playing a significant role in ‘integrating’ the new neighbourhoods. The social cohesion generated by festivity ‘compensates’ for the negative aspects of this rapid modern urbanisation, such as isolation and fragmentation. The participants are able to make this explicit (Costa, 1999: 86).

11 John Lofland (1985: 63) has conceptualised crowd joys and he has also convincingly argued that ‘although crowd joys are extremely important, they have been almost totally neglected by scholars in recent decades’, while fear and hostility tend to dominate recent research into collective behaviour.
12 In phenomenological hermeneutics the existential moods of the Dasein are prior to a differentiation between ‘mind’ and ‘body’ or between ‘reason’ and ‘emotions’. The ‘re-moval’ of the parade is a part of the festive and artistic movement, Ereignis, which cyclically pushes the community to re-present itself and its symbols in relationship with the World. Body at a re-move then has two meanings in interaction. On the one hand, it is the movement and display of the existing emotional festive mood of the community. On the other, it is a symbolic representation of the community. The community therefore re-cognises itself. The support of that re-presentation, which is a public display, is the body in joyful parading. The critical side of the satirical parade is therefore depending on a wider ‘sociable’ and ‘festive’ movement, represented by the ‘body at a re-move’.

13 Spontaneous parading in fancy dress also occurs. On one occasion a group of members from the Falla Valdella made a contemporary replica of the Carnival burial parades of big sausages, pigs, etc., that Bakhtin (1987: 250) describes. A man disguised as a widow was accompanied by other people in fancy dress, all crying and carrying a coffin to the Casal. The ‘dead body’ was an enormous piece of bread (full of sausages) with the roasted head of a pig on top. Of course, the parade finished with a meal.

14 The main categories are: (a) adult and children and (b) special and normal monuments. See Ariño (1992).

15 The connection between ‘judgements’, sacrifice, purification and renewal is also characteristic of other religious Festivals. See, for example, Arthur Weiser (1986: 35ff) on the place of the Psalms in the Covenant Festival.

16 The ephemeral monument, as a contemporary ‘Counter-Panopticon’, shows the limitations of Foucault’s (1978) consideration of the body and the form and transformation of rituals which he proposes in Surveiller et Punir. According to him, the rituals which are developed in the centre of a square and watched by the population transform into a ‘central eye’ (of which prison is the model) which is thought to be watching everybody. Fallas, as popular judgements, remain however in the centre of the square. They display a different line of transformation of ‘plebeian rituals’. Foucault (1988: 78) rightly thinks that the plebe is ‘the limit’ of the Panopticon, but he does not analyse a wide enough variety of plebeian rituals. Therefore he can only see the body as disciplined.

17 Falles also have some characteristics of the roques, the large mobile altars which displayed scenarios for short religious tableaux in the Corpus Christi procession. One of these mobile altars, the most popular, is still dedicated to the devil: La Roca Diablera.

18 Interestingly for people with a taste for psychoanalysis, the name of the original figure of straw, the parot, means ‘big father’.

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