

SURVA! BALKAN WINTER MASQUERADES

IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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SLIDE 1: TITLE

If ethnographic research had its own press agency, surely the following would work as a stop-press, news-breaking announcement. A few days before I set myself writing this lecture, an old research associate of mine phoned me and excitedly related his latest ethnographic scoop.

SLIDE 2: dead child

An elderly woman living in Treviso, a thriving, affluent city some forty kilometers North-West of Venice, reported that up until the Second World War the funeral of a young child called for a particular ritual treatment. The white coffin was brought to the cemetery still open, the corpse dressed in white and wearing a crown of asphodels (*asphodelus albus*). The funeral procession was lead by the age-mates of the deceased carrying a large white banner. Once at the burial ground, the banner was cut into two equal parts: one half was then used to cover the corpse before the coffin was eventually closed and lowered into the ground. The second half was handed over to the companions. On the eve of All Souls parties of children used perform greeting and alms-begging rounds from house to house: their faces were darkened with soot while the rest of the body was covered from head to toe with the white sheet gathered at the funerals of their age-mates funeral.

SLIDE 3: Djolomars 1 and 2, Begniste

Some fifteen hundred kilometers to the South-East of Treviso, in South-Eastern Macedonia the village of Begniste has reached ethnographic fame through the performance of the Djolomars. These are characters dressed in sackcloth, their faces disguised with soot and carrying long, overgrown beards and rounds of bells. They perform in the village square throughout the night preceding New Year (between the 14th and 15th of the Latin Calendar). Amongst their antics we find the chase of a white-clad bride which they eventually offer to the lust of passers-by in ribaldry and

laughter. The performance ends in the morning with a round of greeting and alms-begging from house to house. The Djalomars of Begniste are but one of the countless examples of similar masks – sometimes in form, in other instances in meaning, and occasionally at both ends of the signifying *spectrum* - to be found in the Balkans and beyond, throughout the European continent. While I am still working on the several semantic variations on the common Slavic roots to be found locally – all the more interesting and philologically intriguing as they are linguistically complex to unravel - *Stavros*, *Babugeri* and *Babajugeri* as they might be variously named from Croatia to Bulgaria, are masked characters which all point in the direction of the concept of ancestorhood as the ambiguous and ambivalent source of fertility and renewal. This, of course, according to a well-known – not to say anthropologically worn-out – cognitive pattern to be found throughout Europe. But where should we place *children* in all this?

SLIDE 4: *Kalikantzaros*

In Slovenia, the *skratiaci* are said to be children who died before being baptized. Restless and vengeful, they are dressed in white and play annoying tricks on their living relatives, very much the *moniceddi* or *monicelli* from Southern Italy, where *moniceddhi* are also called a local type of snail – an animal with obvious chthonic connotations – in the Salento area of Apulia. The same phenomenology applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the *kalikantzaros* of Greek folklore. These are described as little hairy beings, half animals and half humans – a detail which some writers want to be connected to the satyrs of the ancient Dionysian cults – though I will discuss the issue of ‘survival’ and ‘derivation’ in the last part of his lecture. *Kalikantzaros* are said to chase young women who used to resort to magic protective devices to fend them off. The term is a composite of ‘*Kalos*’ – ‘good’ and ‘*kantharos*’ – beetle. It has been suggested that the *kalikantzaros* are the modern result of ancient representations concerning the world of the dead. When the shadows of the dead found the doors of Hades wide open, they would swarm up onto the Earth in search of their living descendants. Masquerades of *kalikantzaros* are performed in the period running up to Christmas in Cyprus or in the interval of twelve days leading from Christmas to the Epiphany on mainland Greece – with apologies if my data are not entirely correct. As in all similar masquerades, taking the ribaldry and the excesses of the *kalikantzaros* in good stride while acknowledging their visits with offerings of food and drinks brings health, fertility and good luck for the coming year.

Two themes have emerged so far bridging spatial and cultural boundaries across Europe. The first is the periodical visit by masked being somewhat related to

the world of the dead. They peak around the Winter Solstice, which inaugurates a period of heightened ritual activity straddling for six days either way the date of the New Year. However, as it is the case with the alms-begging round of children in Northern Italy, similar rituals can take place also at Halloween, on the Eve of all Souls. This was another crucial date for the Western European calendar. The celebration was in-fact introduced in the Gallican liturgy in 998 by St Odilo of Cluny, prompted by an Eastern Orthodox monk on his way back from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In the event, Odilo was simply dressing with Christian clothes the celebration known throughout Celtic Europe as *Simhain*. Celebrated today in Northern countries as Thanksgiving, it was in fact the beginning of the Celtic New Year. Or so philologists and historians alike have it – who notoriously rely on such slippery evidence as provided by historical documents. However, the significance of the date has got to be of far greater antiquity, since practices obviously not datable to as late a Christianization of the event as the turn of the Millennium concerning the welcoming of the dead back to earth on All Soul's Eve are widely spread in areas having nothing to do with the Celts but a lot, I suspect, with the Autumn Equinox – Sardinia, for example, as far as my knowledge stretches.

This too will be a point of discussion for my Conclusions, but for the time being the symbolic logic of the event runs roughly something like this: provided that the last crops to be harvested at Northern latitudes were turnips and other root-crops, the idea of some sort of crucial work by the ancestors now living in the netherworld (let us recall that the Celts had definite ideas about life continuing after death) toward making the crops healthy implied the concept of an exchange-cum-reciprocity obligations between the living and the dead. As first hinted at in the famous essay on Father Christmas written by Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1952, children are the avatars of the ancestors because some have just come onto earth to start their earthly term of existence while others – many more – shuttle back and forth between the two worlds uneasy and undecided as to their true belonging – hence *skratiaci*, *moniceddhi* and other similar uncomfortable, unfulfilled and unhappy sprites.

In this respect it is not by chance that in many Slavic countries the days falling in the interval between Christmas and the Epiphany are known as the 'unbaptised days' – *nekrsten dani* in Serbian. This is, *prima facie*, a reference to the fact that in those days the newly born Christ had yet to be baptized. In that interval, Christ as the proto-child is a veritable potential *moniceddhu*, yet to be named and therefore firmly brought to 'this side' of the Great Divide. This is indeed cross-culturally the case with children in the *post-partum* crisis waiting to be named since we still cannot know whether 'they are here to stay' or whether on the contrary they are – in the lore of my

Vagla friends of Northwestern Ghana – vexatious when not nasty Spirits of the Bush – *tinnaanchogge* - playing tricks on humans.

SLIDE 5: *Wilde Jagde*

The Slavic concept of the ‘unbaptized days’ suggests an early successful process of cultural change leading to an albeit partial Christianization of a calendric complex of a representational nature which is once again seemingly far older than Christianity. In German languages the Twelve Days between Christmas and the Epiphany are known as *Rauhnachten* – ‘rough’, but also ‘dirty’ and ‘impure’ Nights. This is because it was believed that in that interval all the powers of the netherworld were unleashed on Earth making it extremely dangerous for anyone to wander about outside well-defined ritual space and time where such exceptional times could be negotiated. The set of beliefs and representations can be said to be underpinned by the symbolic paradigm of the *Wilde Jagde* – the Wild Hunt known in endless variations across Europe as the procession of the Dead coming back on earth at crucial cosmic junctions, and chiefly at the turn of the seasons. Some authors support the thesis that the *Wilde Jagde* originates in Germanic mythology, where it was originally held that around the Winter Solstice Odin or Thor, the supreme deity of the German Pantheon, travelled the sky and raided the Earth at the head of a procession composed of valkyries and the souls of dead warriors. The aim of the exercise was to reward or punish according to people’s conduct in the past year.

The earliest documented rendition of the Wild Hunt dates to 1091. Ordericus Vitalis reports in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* that on the eve of January 31 a certain priest Walchelin de Bonneval, in what is now French Savoy was heading home having spent the evening with some friends. At some point he stopped in his tracks as he heard a great and unpleasant noise approaching. Hiding behind a bush, he saw marching past a huge devil leading a motley crowd composed of all sorts of sinners, man and women variously tormented by devils who mercilessly spurred them on their way. Walchelin then realized that he was witnessing the passage of *familia Herlechini*, Harlequin’s Family, later known in French folklore as *Mesnie Hellequin*. The promptness by which the priest identifies the apparition with a figure since then familiar to the popular tradition of Europe testifies that the set of beliefs surrounding the nightly raids of the souls of the damned was competing for symbolic space with formally analogous sets of representations inherited from pre-Christian times. In fact, and in spite of the odd dissenting opinion, philologists agree that the etymology of Harlequin should be found in the old German *Helle Koenig*, Hell King, that is, a concept that came to subsume under one roof a variety of representational forms throughout Europe.

SLIDE 6: *Arlechign, Moena*

Modern Harlequins are – by and large – comical characters to be found in all sorts of guises and variations on the theme throughout Europe, as far East as Russia and as far South as Croatia, with some forays in Bulgaria itself. This is however the result of deep transformations of the character from its diabolical ancestry to the plots of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, spread throughout Europe by companies of travelling thespians which enjoyed great popularity to the point of finding their characters somewhat absorbed in local folklore. However, bearing in mind that one of Dante's devils in the *Divina Commedia* – and we are in the early XIV century - is called *Alichino*, it must be stressed that to date, in the most conservative areas of Europe, Harlequin is still a diabolical, violent and unsavory character. This is the case of the *Arlechign* of Moena, amongst the Ladins of the Dolomites. Besides charging into the crowd and stealing from house to house, the Ladin *Arlechin* covers his face with a veil, in the same guise as the ancient Roman *larvae*, explicit personifications of the Dead.

SLIDE 7: *Roman de Fauvel, ca. 1320*

As far back as 1977, anthropologists and historians came for some miraculous reason to *some* sort of consensus about the merging in Medieval popular culture of sets of representations of the 'Wild Hunt' type with what are known in French as *charivari* – and all sorts of local variations throughout Europe, including the English 'rough music'. Cutting short a rather complex argument: the nightly, raucous and often violent raids performed by the young unmarried men of rural communities to stigmatize and eventually punish unlawful marriages or other violations of the commonly held moral code were interpreted and understood by the populace at large as instances themselves of the 'real existence' of the Wild Hunt. Initiatory and other exoteric practices were involved in the events, while both lay and clerical authorities fought to uproot the custom both for reasons of public order and – most importantly – because they recognized in the practice something culturally and morally unbecoming.

The problem of what exactly is to be understood by the conflation of sets of representations held in the oral mode and their ritual and actually performed counterpart is a dilemma which has been haunting the present reader for years, at least since I was had the first of many chances to witness the reactions of non-initiates at the nightly performance of the masks of the *Sigma* secret society in Northern Ghana. While it is not my intention here to enter here the uncertain, cognitively rugged confines separating the make-believe to the believer's land, I wish

rather to explore the historical interface where beliefs and representations regarding masks eventually met ‘the real world’ to be sanctioned and – in so forcibly doing – let some at least of their basic foundations shine through to the ethnographers attempt at comprehending.

SLIDE 8: Edict of Rotarius/*Masca*

In the year 643 of the Common Era, Rotarius, King of the Lombards based in what is now the Italian town of Pavia, published his own code of laws, a mixture of Roman Law incorporating Lombard and local consuetudinary practices. In article 73 we meet for the first time in documented history the term *masca*, whence our ‘mask’ and whatever you wish to understand by that. A literal, if cumbersome, translation from the Latin is here *de riguer*: ‘Nobody should dare somebody’s servant as if she were a witch (*strigam*), which they call *masca*, since it is in no way believable, nor possible, that a woman can consume the inside of a living man’. The importance of the passage cannot be overlooked. Until then, ‘masks’ as both facial disguises and disguised characters had been known in Latin as *personae*. A well established philological tradition favours a derivation of the term from *Phersu*, an Etruscan infernal god always represented as a bodiless head. This chthonic connection is reinforced in the other term the Romans used for our ‘mask’: *larvae* were, in fact, both the shadows of the dead but also the death-masks held in family shrines and widely used in funerals and – especially – in initiation rites for young men. The fact that Rotarius feels compelled for the sake of clarity to specify that what he actually means for the Latin *strigam* – ‘a witch, a necromancer’ – is what the people understand for ‘*masca*’, opens an important window for understanding how we should draw the cognitive map – to use Roy d’Andrade’s terminology – guiding people at the time - and guiding them since – when venturing in uneasy cultural territories.

The term ‘*masca*’ is still widely used in Piedmontese dialects, and namely in what are linguistically the most conservative (and remote) valleys to the North-Est of Turin, in Northwestern Italy. The term means first and foremost ‘a witch’, but it also means ‘a spirit’, ‘a ghost’, ‘an apparition’ of some sort and – finally – ‘a mask’ in the current understanding of the term (by the way, and to prevent possible objections: the derivation of ‘mask’ from the Arab *mashkra* simply won’t work as Rotarius’ Edict is too early to envisage an adoption of the Arab term into common usage). In spite of Rotarius’ philological fastidiousness, in the centuries that followed the term ‘*masca*’ entered the language of ecclesiastical commentators taking with itself the entire gamut of meanings to be found in popular tradition: from facial disguise to necromancer or witch and perhaps demon or devil, *mascae*, *talamascae* and similar

variations on the theme were used interchangeably to the point of making difficult for the reader to understand what was actually meant by the term.

The precise etymology of ‘*masca*’ is still disputed among philologists some of them – as it often happens in impossible cases – pointing in the direction of some Pre-Indoeuropean root. But in the specific case this needs not to worry anthropologists. Etymologies are anthropologically useful not because they pinpoint our attention to some ‘original’ and therefore ‘authentic’ meaning of the vocabulary as against subsequent ‘corruptions’ of the selfsame. Etymologies are useful because they help us ‘to map’ semantic fields within which concepts, representations, beliefs and practices all orbit around each other as in a galaxy: none of them being the center and yet all attracting each other as into a common gravitational cognitive field, so to speak. As it happens in a galaxy and in the specific case of ‘*masca*’, the observers sees as a result a ‘fuzzy picture’ in which undefined – because cognitively undefinable - concepts – acquire some sort of visibility to the trained eye not because of their definition – which is inherently weak – but because of the sum total of the fuzzy appearance of each resulting in an optically relevant composite object.

‘Fuzzy representations’ of the class ‘*kalikantzaros*’ or ‘*masca*’ are semantically *denotationally* weak precisely because they mean nothing that can be pinpointed to any specific and clearly defined field in what Dan Sperber would term ‘encyclopaedic knowledge’. They are, however, *connotationally* effective in that they evoke, they conjure up and ‘bring about’ fields and eventually maps of cultural references all the more effective as they are meaningless if taken one by one. Even, it may be argued, their *illocutionary force* – their capacity that is and to say it with Charles Morris – to attract attention and attain cognitive salience in situations, such as ritual, where the formalization of action is constructed- and reaches a climax around events to be made relevant, depends precisely of their puzzling, arresting and counter-intuitive nature.

SLIDE 9: Chelnik Kukeri

Shortly after New Year 2008, following the big festival of masks held in Yambol, in Central Bulgaria, I joined a small team of fellow researchers in the village of Chelnik, not far from the main city. There we were to record the masquerade of the *kukeri* ‘on the ground’, as it were. The day was spent marching from house to house of the widely spread settlement reaching out to the most outlying building. The point was to greet all the villagers amidst merrymaking, horse playing and raucous ribaldries well watered with generous quantities of *rakia* to wash down bacon cubes sprinkled with paprika and other such delicacies until a closing offering of eggs, wine

and whatnot sent them on their way to the I will take for granted that there is no need to berate my audience as to the significance of the sequence, if only to avoid the repetition of what happened when I asked one of the participants about the meaning of what I was seeing. He – a burly, overbearing and overdrinking fellow laden with more rounds of bells than anybody can fathom shaking around for an entire day – looked at me and said: ‘If you cannot work out for yourself the meaning of what is going on here, there is no need to explain anything because your hearing must be thicker than your sight’ – or something like that. However, there are two details that I wish to point out as crucial for my final thesis. The first is that the *kukeri*’s behaviour goes through a crucial transformation as the ritual action progresses: from a motley, rough and undisciplined pack transgressing boundaries of all sorts – material, social and moral – they are slowly turned into a tame herd. Their aggressive behavior is firstly blandished by the kindness and generosity of their host, all willing to withstand their antics in order to gain their blessing. Later in the day, they appear domesticated: they align themselves square-wise (the spatial figure of order, hierarchy, discipline and ‘civilization’ as against the more ‘barbaric’ circle). In neolithic technological and cultural terms ‘the square (or rectangular) field’ is a crucial achievement in that it optimizes the investment of animal traction power. In the Po plain, where I was born, the unit of measure for the surface of fields is called ‘*tornatura*’ – literally ‘a going back, a turning’. It corresponds to the length an average team of oxen can pull the plough without over-exerting itself before it needs to stop as the plough is turned round and the operation starts once again. A circular, irregular field of the kind I have seen in West Africa where the only tool is the hand-operated hoe simply won’t do: regularity of effort is the only way to maximize the output of effort, as anybody with any experience of climbing a mountain would know. Thus, marking the field as a *square* field the *kukeri* complete their transformation from ‘being of the wild’ to ‘cultural heroes’. Like the *hermae* of ancient Greece they not only mark, but also *guard* the field boundaries from the encroachment of evil spirits and other negative forces. Their transformation is then completed when two of them – chosen as their champions – are harnessed to the plough and actively enter the cultured space of the field, literally leading the highly symbolical, connotationally dense of all sorts of metaphorical implications – from sexuality to moral effort and so on – operation of ploughing.

The transformation of the *kukeri* reaches a climax at the end of the ritual sequence. We must at this point bear in mind that the plough and all its accountments enjoy the status of ‘sacred’, tabooed objects in Neolithic symbolism. So, for instance, in the Dolomites, it was an explicit taboo justified in mythological narratives to saw a field when any iron object – meaning chiefly the plough – was

still ‘on the field’. Likewise, throughout the Middle Ages, oaths taken on the ploughshare were held as especially binding. The *kukeri* at this point perform an act whose sacrilegious nature is all but counteracted and redeemed by its ‘sacred’ significance: the yoke is turned from horizontal to vertical – something I have never seen done and was explained once by an old peasant in the Dolomites *should not* be done as it brings certain misfortune. Thus violated, that is transformed and sanctified by the very act of violation, the yoke becomes a veritable ‘Tree of Life’. On it climbs the freshly-delivered spouse, an altar whence auguries for the incoming agricultural year are followed by wishes and cheers for all and sundry.

SLIDE 10: Kukeri, Vresovo

This line of interpretation of the *kukeri*’s ritual progress came back to me a year later, in the village of Vresovo, district of Burgas, in North-eastern Bulgaria. Here, the first part of the performance followed the same template as in Chelnik, the rough hedges of the performance possibly heightened by the presence in the village of a substantial Turkish minority. However, the transformational sequence wild-tame-domesticated-civilized which the *kukeri* underwent was possibly even more explicit. The various groups which had scoured the village doing the day congregated in the main square in the late afternoon. At first they acted independently charging into the onlookers, playing with girls and women in an atmosphere of general havoc and ribaldry. All this came to an end when a character call the *agha* – a Turkish term for a military or administrative authority – began rounding up the *kukeri* first into a disordered, rowdy and unstable pack. With the help of uniformed characters, the *agha* first slowly pacified the pack. Then he put them through a long drill: the *kukeri* learnt first to march at a pace, then they began cutting figures of increasing complexity by interlacing in lines according to a sequence of stop-bend-lean-getup-and-go punctuated by the *agha*’s whistle. This lengthy exercise bore all the marks of a sophisticated military drill, occasionally interrupted by one of the *kukeri* breaking the ranks and attempting a flight, promptly pursued and brought back to the fold by the *agha*’s helpers.

The sequence marks, I suggest, the conflation of two sources of ‘ritual inspiration’ – if you pass the expression. There is on the one end – and undeniably – a reference to the period in which Bulgaria was ‘under the Turkish yoke’, to paraphrase Ivan Vazov. Sources for this period are few and far between, but it seems to beyond reasonable doubt that the performance of *kukeri* and other such practices acted as a point of resistance against total cultural assimilation. This is – incidentally – an enduring legacy which provides both continuity and a *rationale* – if not a justification

- for the persisting reading of Bulgarian popular culture according to a nationalistic/identitarian both intellectual and academic template.

For the purposes of this paper, however, what history in this case – as in many others – provides is a new coat of paint for a far older canvas. This point was brought home to me once again in the final sequence of the event. At some point, once the ‘pack’ had been transformed into a ‘herd’ to the point of being able to perform choreographed figures of knots and counter-knots worth a rural circus show, a character described to me as ‘The Shepherd King’ finally entered the scene. He was dressed like a shepherd of old: a thick, heavy sheep-skin cape completed a costume made of woolen fabrics topped by a conical hat. The King then directed the operations aimed at selecting a couple of *kukeri* to be harnessed to the plough from among the ranks which had respectfully aligned themselves along the hedges of the ritual ground. Ploughing and sawing then ensued. Finally, it was the Shepherd King who greeted the crowd and wished everybody a prosperous year.

SLIDE 11: *Mammuthones* and *Svončari*

The performance of the *kukeri* of Vresovo introduces a new element into our already complicated ethnographic canvas. If the Chelnik performance can be interpreted wholly within a Neolithic *agricultural* framework of reference, where the *kukeri* act as Spirits of Nature ritually harnessed to cultural purposes, in Vresovo a further variable enters the scene. Is the Shepherd King the Lord of wild, disorderly and ‘uncivilized’ sheep which have been finally tamed? Are the Vresovo *kukeri* then unspecified, cognitively fuzzy, ‘Spirits of the Wild’ in their final appearance as such before taking over – literally - the skin of ovines to be tamed and finally civilized – the military Spartan phalanx being the ideal order of the cosmos – that is to say the battlefield? Does this then imply the ritualized memory of a historically real changeover from Neolithic times when agriculturalists run their own Neolithic business to a later time when the People of the Kurgan were able to hegemonize both economy and ideology colonizing both with a set of pastoral representations and ideals?

As we are working on this admittedly rather tall research order – *mission impossible?* – the recurrence of the ‘domesticating’ pattern in masquerades of a ‘pastoral’ kind cannot be overlooked. From the *Mammuthones* of Sardinia kept in check by their red-cladded, overcivilized guardians – the *Issohadores* - to the Croatian *Svončari* of Histria who are instead rounded up by a character carrying the branch of an evergreen plant till they pack into a tight herd as if taking a protective stance against predators, pastoral imagery seems to be the symbolic, representational

and ultimately cognitive bridge connecting up Neolithic agricultural and pastoral *techne* to their representational and symbolic counterparts.

SLIDE 12: Survakari

Time is wearing my fig-leaf out – and certainly your patience – rather thin. So let me put my cards down. ‘*Surva!*’ is the greeting that the *Survakari* of Elovdol, in the mountains of Pernik, Western Bulgaria, kept shouting in greeting their hosts last winter, when I joined them for research and other unmentionable recreational activities. The *survakari* are the Western counterpart of the Eastern Bulgarian *kukeri* – take and leave some for the sake of my present argument.

SLIDE 13: Cornel and Mistletoe

Literally and paramouly in common usage ‘*surva*’ denotes the cornel tree , an evergreen which issues its strikingly red berries in winter. However, its complex meaning - as always disputed by philologists who ought to know better than to be bent in finding the ‘true’ and unique ‘original meaning’ of a given term – *connotes* alongside the plant *cornus mas* meanings related to ‘fierce’ and ‘dangerous’ via the perception of the plant as ‘hard’ and ‘resilient’. This is a constellation of mobile and interchangeable meanings readily available enter the galaxy where *viscus album* also belongs. The forest, by now that is of plants metaphorical of death, renewal and eternal life.

SLIDE 14: Frazer and Meuli

We owe to the unsung Swiss scholar Karl Meuli to have made explicit, and above all collated in comprehensible terms, the evidence for the ultimate relationship between masks and the world of the dead developed in what became European culture. This happened in 1943, a good three decades after the publication of that *Ur-text* of the so-called ‘Cambridge myth and ritual school’ inaugurated by Sir James Frazer which I beg leave to state resulted in more productive rhyzomes elsewhere in Europe, unhindered by the fast changing scenario at the centre of the action. While bearing in mind the hard-learnt lesson of ‘function-and-context’ of the Cambridge Masters, I also find it difficult to fully accommodate their tempering of the problem of cultural continuity with a resort to documented ‘history’ as we canonically know it. For surely, to go back to the concerns of the present lecture, Sardinian yearly rites for welcoming the Dead back from the underworld predate would-be Celtic origins as documented in ecclesiastical records. Similarly, the etymology of ‘*kalikantzaros*’ – and other similar cognitive structures of the Gospel-kind ‘demons are legions’ point in the direction of deeply set cognitive structures encoded in language. But this

applies – also – to that cluster of connotational representations whereby the Returning Dead are one and the same as the Spirits of Nature. Both – if properly cajoled, groomed, domesticated and finally harnessed – may become the ultimate subscribers of our policies for the future.

This opens up once again the issue of continuity. Now that I am approaching the end of my lecture, I am afraid I have to be blunt. If one were to ask me the question of how possible it is that ‘time old’ practices can have been handed down to us ‘from time immemorial’ I would answer as follows: think of how many times the Beatles’ ‘Eleanor Rigby’ has been sung and transmitted by all sorts of means. Then think that the kind of **YEARLY** practices that we have been discussing so far have been mandatorily performed over the last – let us take – 10,000 years – on *as many yearly instances* in a single community. Why should it be that ‘Eleanor Rigby’ remains the same after 10,000 plus totally unrelated performances, while our **kukeri** – *coeteris paribus* – performed within a community caught year in and year out between the alternative of dying out for drought, famine and epidemics as against a good harvest ought to have inevitably changed?

SLIDE 15: Bye Bye

What is now increasingly well-known in the academic community as the ‘Continuity Theory’ inaugurated by the linguist Mario Alinei of Utrecht University, supports the notion of a much deeper continuity than recorded in conventional documents, between our present-day cultures and the *debut* of human kind as a form of speciation capable of cross-referencing *techne* and *phronesis* in a synthesis whose main advantage – if advantage be – is to problematize *both* and thus urge technology onwards while constantly rekindling desire.

Such is, in a nutshell, the anthropological sense of *kalikantzaros*, *kukeri* and any other such representational devices meant ever so temptatively to bridge the gap between the human predicament and the longing to live forever.

Thank you.