Festival Culture as a Means of Preserving Vital Differences in the Ideologically Equalised World

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ABSTRACT
Alexandre Gnes. Festival culture as a means of preserving vital differences in the ideologically equalised world. The Europeans are now exposed to ideological influence that liberates them of all forms of official collective identity: religious, ethnic, national, and recently even gender one. National cultures are gradually disappearing and giving way to sub-ethnic cultures, e.g. the Basques in Spain, Allemanni and Frisians in Germany, Székely in Hungary and Romania. The author proves that developing festival culture in modern Europe may provide an effective means of preserving vital national differences. Without recognising these national cultural differences, the European civilisation is doomed in the globalised world.

Key words: Europe, festival culture, feast, celebration, globalising world, Hungarians, Magyars, Balaton Festivals, postmodernism
Александръ Гнесь. Фестивальная культура какъ средство сохранения краеугольныхъ различий въ идеологически однородномъ миры. Въ наши дни европеицы подвергаются идеологическому влиянию, которое лишаетъ ихъ всѣхъ формъ коллективной идентичности: религиозной, этнической, национальной, а въ послѣднее время даже гендерной. Национальныя культуры постепенно исчезаютъ и уступаютъ мѣсто субэтническимъ культурамъ, напримѣръ, басковъ въ Испании, алмановъ и фризовъ въ Германіи, сенъвъ въ Венгрии и Румыніи. Авторъ доказываетъ, что развитие фестивальной культуры въ современной Европѣ можетъ обеспечить эффективное средство сохраненія жизненно важныхъ національнъкъ различій. Не признавая этихъ національно-культурныхъ различій, европейская цивилизація обречена.

Ключевые слова: Европа, фестивальная культура, праздникъ, торжество, глобализирующаяся миры, венгры, мадьяры, балатонскіе фестивали, постмодернизмъ

It is good when a something is born in a dispute between different civilisations, new, more perfect, but it is monstrous when they devour each other.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

HARDLY WE CAN ARGUE OVER THE FACT THAT A FESTIVAL2 is “one of the most popular form of celebration” (Nikolaeva 2008, 144; Reis 2019, 101, 118). What is this popularity explained by? First, modern festivals revive cultural and spiritual achievements of the past (Mackay 2011, 78; Watanabe-O’Kelly 2014, 152). Their role does not consist in creating innovative forms of culture or knowledge (Wu and Ai 2010, 366)3. In contrast to demonstrations of achievements in immovable premises (theatrical and operatic houses, art galleries, museums etc.), festival events are more focussed on an unconventional audience, while their intent is dedicated to a specific idea (Buch and Juárez 2019, 139; McKee 1995,

2 A Festival is a mass celebration, mass feast, that includes demonstrations of achievements in music, theatre and other arts.

3 Along with music, art and cinema festivals, theatrical festivals are usually being held (e.g., the Wagner festival in Bayreuth, a southern German city). Even the science festival were launched in Russia in 2006.
Three main stimuli encourage holding festivals: 1) a desire to learn new things, 2) a wish to preserve attractive elements of the old and, finally, 3) a passion for self-identification. In my paper I pay due attention to the latter, since the third stimulus is a prerequisite for the formation of local festival cultures.

Festival history dates back to the times of antiquity (Broda 2019; García-Dussán 2019). The ancient Greek theatre was created on the basis of holidays glorifying Dionysus. That deity personified creative forces of nature and he was considered as the patron of winemaking, while a bit later he became thought of as a god of art. On festivals dedicated to Dionysus, people revered him by singing dithyrambs, dressing themselves in animal skins and using products of winemaking for their make-up (oilcake extracted from pressed grape pulp) (Rutherford 2016, 71–72). Medieval festivals were represented primarily by carnivals. It was carnivals, as Mikhail Bakhtin (1990) supposed, that presented one of the first forms of folk laughter culture with theatrical performances and costumes. A carnival was a mix of spectators and performers. During the Renaissance, the first truly immovable theatres appeared. That led to a gradual displacement of festival-type holidays (Burnett 2011, 453). The festival type of art was revived again. It was resurrected at the very beginning of the twentieth century in close connection with mass media appearance and the rise of both national and nationalist sentiments in the countries of the Old World (Verderame 2017, 61).

Over the past half-century, in Russian national mentality a festival was transformed from a public feast to a mass celebration (Ozhegov 1964, 837; The First Explanatory Dictionary 2006, 1998). A festival as a cultural phenomenon suggests the existence of a certain audience its concept is aimed at.

No doubt that modern festivals cannot be considered outside the scope of mass culture. Mass culture averages, or rather standardises, all spiritual needs of a modern human. A modern human – not only in the Western countries – lives in constant lack of time. Indisputably, he or she has access to a wide range of information resources. But he or she receives information before realisation of any need for it. There is a very sad process of optimising and standardising spiritual needs of humanity. However, at the background of “spiritual standardisation,” talents and extraordinary abilities of individuals and artistic groups arise. As a rule, a festival demonstrates the best in particular genres. As well, it is always original, and that distinguishes this form of celebration from customary performances of artistic groups.

Since in almost any field of culture, art and knowledge, a festival more or less precisely reflects the postmodernist approach, we should, first of all, pay due attention to under-

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4 The basic propositions are summarized in my work written in Russian in journal Idei i Idealy (Ideas and Ideals) (Gnes 2014).
5 They might be festivals led by Christian clergy or popular festivals (Morais 2019). A commentary of the Editor.
6 Postmodernism is a cultural trend that manifested itself in a series of local artistic trends emerged by the end of the 1960s and characterised by radical revising modernist and avant-garde visual arts,
standing the essence of this phenomenon. The term “postmodernism” was introduced in 1917, in the book of German philosopher Rudolph Pannwitz The Crisis of European culture (Pannwitz 1917).

Fig. 1. Budapest Wine Festival, one of the most popular festivals in Hungary. © hungarianwines.eu

This book was published at the end of the First World war, and it is not fortuitous, since the first global world conflict evidently revealed the neighbourhood of civilisation and barbarism in the countries of the Old World. At the first time, stereotypes and prejudices against a neighbour, were used by propaganda to incite animosity in the Europeans towards each other. The belief in sanity of the “masters,” was also questioned by representatives of colonised peoples, who were forced to fight against each other due to the war of their lords in the Old World. The stumbling landmarks and values of the historical West survived two World wars. They were inherited by the post-war generations of Europeans in a changed, sometimes ugly form (Tompkins 2013, 31, 54–55).

In Modern age that preceded postmodernism, there were definitely axioms that could not be questioned, such as a faith in knowledge, progress, and finally, trust in human beings. In 1960–1970s, these fixed values became increasingly blurred and questioned. Such processes as the “Thaw” in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the awareness of the young generation of West Germans of the scale of Nazi’s crimes, the anti-military social movement in the United States and Western Europe, led to protests both in the streets and in the minds.

Postmodernism that finally replaced modernism in the late 1970s, made it possible to use the entire repository of images, signs, words and meanings available to mankind, regardless

music, literature, philosophy. None the less, the border line between modernism and postmodernism is blurred. The salience of postmodernist art includes an unorganised combination of styles and genres, a badly defined composition, and incoherent plot or script.
of their original content (Ryabushin, Khait 1994). Postmodernist artists refuse their own unique style in order to use a something that already exists. The entire postmodernist ideology is based not on revealing the truth, but on searching for local trends in the development and culture of societies.

Fig. 2. Balaton Wine festivals are held in different places on Balaton Lake shore. This photo is take at Siófok festival. © pannonland.com

Postmodern art is permeated with irony in contrast to modern art with its protest against and denial of all previous artistic forms (Kirillova 2006). This irony, combined with a sort of returning to tradition, largely determines modern holiday forms, including festival ones (Rehuher 2002).

Mikhail Bakhtin (1979, 5) correctly notes that the degree of success of a particular festival event is determined by the degree of participants and spectators inclusion. The participants and viewers inclusion in the festival stories presented, is obvious, e.g. in Hungarian folk
(folklore) festivals. From the rich anthology of Magyar songs and dances, the organisers take ready-for-use artistic forms. In Hungary, from the early 1960s until 1994, there was a music TV-festival called *Tancdalfesztival*.

This *Tancdalfesztival* laid the foundation for the preservation of folk components in the Hungarian festival culture. It also gave, perhaps, the only opportunity for novice dancers, musicians and singers to exhibit their talents. Nowadays, the famous Wine Festivals on Lake Balaton, whose integral part is performance of singers and dancers in folk and mixed styles, always include advice and show presentation of the winners of *Tancdalfesztival*. Balaton Wine Festivals are appealing, since they introduce various aspects of Hungarian culture (music, dance, cuisine, needlework) to both foreigners and the Magyars. They allow a person a little familiar with the history of Hungary, to feel all sorts of influence on the culture of the Hungarian macro-ethnic group from both the neighbouring Slavs and Germans (costumes and dances), as well as Ugric substrate (ditty-style chants). From July to the end of September, performances of artistic groups are held in almost all cities on Balaton shore. Presentations of dance groups on Balaton are planned in such a way that young viewers can partake in performance if they wish. For this purpose, a place is made in front of the stage for children who want to sing and dance. Magyars who wear their national costumes during festivals do not consider them as a source of profit.

Conversely, in Western Europe, there is a different attitude to the national costume. A tourist attending a holiday, say, in a German palatinate or Alsace may even be asked to pay for shooting a photo with a person clad in a national dress. Speaking more broadly, the Europeans are exposed to ideological influence that liberates them of all forms of official collective identity: religious, ethnic, national, and recently even gender one. National cultures are gradually disappearing and giving way to sub-ethnic cultures, e.g. the Basques in Spain, Alemanni and Frisians in Germany, Székely in Hungary and Romania. Central, Eastern and Western Europe, they are all characterised by folk and music festivals, which, at a first glance, are aimed at preserving the inheritance of ancestors, but in fact definitely serve the

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7 *Tanc* is a dance in Hungarian; *dal* a song; *fesztival* a festival.
purpose of registration, support and manifestation of sub-ethnic cultures. It is the representa-
tives of the foregoing sub-ethnic groups as well as many others that are the actual guardians of modern European ethnic identity.

Classical music festivals in Western Europe, dedicated to composers such as Wagner, Verdi and Mozart, are intended by the organisers to be educational. In reality they are more like elitist and commercial events held in places of outstanding natural landscapes and architecture (Chaney 2011, 52; Dantas and Colbert 2016, 80). An entrance ticket for these festivals may be as dear as several thousand Euro (Smyth 2007).

The topic of stereotypes is inextricably linked to the topic of the conflict of civilisations, with this conflict being based upon our false and even hostile perceptions of other cultures. One of the reasons for inter-civilisational conflicts (e.g., between the Christians and Muslims, as well as the Muslims and Hindus) is the lag between 1) the development of the cultural sphere of humanity and 2) evolution of scientific and technical spheres. A modern human in his or her yearning for improving his or her material comfort, has lost the basic need for parallel satisfaction of spiritual needs. Therefore, the interest in the spiritual world of the people around, shrinks. N. Kirillova (2006, 17) notes, “the category of culture denotes the sphere of existence and self-realisation created by people, the source of regulation of social interaction and behaviour.”

Separate cultures with their own norms of self-realisation and behavioural patterns form separate civilisations. We live in a world with more civilisations than it might seem at a first glance. In modern Europe alone, there are more than three of them: the Protestant-German, Latin-Catholic, and Slavic-Orthodox mini-civilisations with several transitional forms. The supercivilisation of historical West, with its shallow pluralism on the one hand, and its desire for unification and division into its own and the alien (and not just the others) on the other

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8 We can also put film festivals here, which represent truly closed elitist cultural events for the cream of society (see, e.g. Kim et al. 2015). A note of the Editor.

9 I would also add the English and Celtic civilisations in the row. They have naught in common with continental Protestantism and even less with the post-Roman civilisation. A note of the translator.
hand, has largely contributed to the emergence of tensions with traditional non-European cultures. The sense of superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans, was legitimated by the provisions of the peace of Westphalia of 1648, which allowed the former to have colonies.

Fig. 5. Youth Music Festival. It is a rare example of democratic festival accessible for everybody with zero-priced entry tickets. Usually classical music festivals are elitist events. © www.atthewatergate.com; Music School Union

Since the end of the nineteenth century, European anthropology has been dominated by the theory of diffusionism. Its proponents believed that the similarity in cultures of different peoples result not from a common origin, but from the fact that in the course of migration processes some groups of people adopt certain cultural elements from other groups (Bulow 1908, 62). According to the diffusionists, natural and geographical conditions, as well as migration processes were the two main factors in the development of cultures (Kretschmer 1892, 320). The success of non-European peoples was only feasible from their cultural contact with Europeans. These diffusionists did not treat non-Europeans with despise in their works, but the concepts of “culture” and “civilization” in their minds were inevitably associated with the Western Romanic-Germanic culture. This obsequiousness and servility exhibited by the Russian were severely criticised by Nikolay Troubetskov (1920). The diffusionists had a decisive influence upon the further perception of “others” by European
elites. A standard of who can be considered as a “cultured” and “civilised” person, was formed. Unfortunately, since the end of the nineteenth century, non-Europeans have been acquainting themselves with not the best aspects of European civilisation. Masterpieces of music and painting of the Old World were the objects of admiration and consumption of only elites and upper classes.

The role of cultural festivals in strengthening the local festival cultures is not so much about destroying “Eurocentric” stereotypes and reconciling representatives of different civilisations. The festivals mainly initiate a dialogue of cultures. This dialogue, if we turn to V. Biebler’s (1989) deductions, is extremely important, because each culture carries a certain riddle and at the same time its own specific key of solving it. In fact, Mr Biebler believes that in order to understand a given culture, it is necessary to “pass it through itself,” to process and even “digest” it.

CONCLUSION

A modern festival cannot be considered beyond the stints of postmodernist ideological approach. Postmodernist ideologists use previous artistic traditions, while participants of postmodern cultural festivals actively use “ready-for-use” forms of the past traditions. There is a reunion of the past culture with the present forms of its revival. Despite the fact that a number of festivals perform an educational function, and others allegedly help to preserve the heritage of venerated ancestors, the desire for self-identification of sub-ethnic groups and mini-societies is the main target of developing the festival culture in the modern Western world.

A festival is a potential means of communicating and establishing a dialogue between the audience and primary speakers. Dancers, musicians, and artisans communicate with the audience, whose participation in the dialogue is their own interpretation of what they have seen, heard, and tasted.

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

GNEIS, ALEXANDRE. FESTIVAL CULTURE AS A MEANS OF PRESERVING VITAL DIFFERENCES IN THE IDEOLOGICALLY EQUALISED WORLD.
Festival is currently one of the most popular form of celebration, both urban and rural. Modern festivals revive cultural and spiritual achievements of the past. Their role does not consist in creating innovative forms of culture or knowledge. In contrast to demonstrations of achievements in immovable premises (theatrical and operatic houses, art galleries, museums etc.), festival events are more focussed on an unconventional audience, while their intent is dedicated to a specific idea. In the article, we explain why three major stimuli encourage holding festivals: 1) a desire to learn new things, 2) a wish to preserve attractive elements of the old and, finally, 3) a passion for self-identification.

Two primary forms of modern festivals are elitist musical, cinematographic etc. festivals and popular ones. We pay particular attention to studying Hungarian popular festivals as instruments of opposing ideological standardising human life in modern times. Hungary is one of very few European countries that at the state level managed to preserve its specific culture, historical traditions, mentality, in spite of its being a member of European Union. Balaton Wine Festivals are good examples of Magyar festival culture, since they introduce various aspects of Hungarian culture (music, dance, cuisine, nee-
dlework) to both foreigners and the Magyars. They allow a person a little familiar with the history of Hungary, to feel all sorts of influence on the culture of the Hungarian macro-ethnic group from both the neighbouring Slavs and Germans (costumes and dances), as well as Ugric substrate (ditty-style chants). From July to the end of September, performances of artistic groups are held in almost all cities on Balaton shore.

Festival culture is closely related to building appropriate stereotypes about neighbouring and more distant cultures.

The topic of stereotypes is inextricably linked to the topic of the conflict of civilisations, with this conflict being based upon our false and even hostile perceptions of other cultures. One of the reasons for inter-civilisational conflicts (e.g., between the Christians and Muslims, as well as the Muslims and Hindus) is the lag between 1) the development of the cultural sphere of humanity and 2) evolution of scientific and technical spheres. A modern human in his or her yearning for improving his or her material comfort, has lost the basic need for parallel satisfaction of spiritual needs. Therefore, the interest in the spiritual world of the people around, shrinks. People usually do not realise that they integrate themselves not only in globalised world, but also in ideologically equalised world.

The role of European cultural festivals in strengthening the local festival cultures and global festival approach to culture is not intended for shaking “Eurocentric” stereotypes, nor for reconciling representatives of different civilisations in one European “melting pot.” The festivals mainly initiate a dialogue of cultures. This dialogue is extremely important, because each culture carries a certain riddle and at the same time its own specific key of solving this riddle.

Festival culture is one of the most effective and useful means of understanding the importance of preserving our core cultural and civilisational differences in multibillion world. Modern festivals help representatives of different cultures to see each other in an unbiased light not distorted by ideological influence of mass media and political discourse. Festivals are instruments of seeing a culture from the outside and therefore of processing it at different mental dimensions, the process almost impossible under “normal” conditions.

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