

# Social Memory as Festive Therapy and Village Politics

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*The capacity of memory to heal has recently been of particular interest in both anthropology and psychology. Creating a narrative from fragmentary memories makes sense of past pain by giving it shape and meaning. The villagers of Rocca Sinibalda in central Italy had such an opportunity in 1556, after suffering sack and destruction, harsh forced labour, oppressive fines and taxes, and severe punishments. During the festive atmosphere of Carnival villagers both told their stories to a commissario sent from Rome to investigate and listened to those of others. Like a modern patient, a sixteenth-century village could perhaps rebuild its past in a festival of memory that was both curative and political.*

*Le pouvoir de guérison de la mémoire a récemment suscité un intérêt particulier dans les champs de l'anthropologie et de la psychologie. Faire le récit des événements à partir de souvenirs fragmentaires permet de comprendre la douleur passée en lui conférant sens et forme. Les villageois de Rocca Sinibalda, au centre de l'Italie, ont eu une telle occasion en 1556, après avoir vu leur village pillé et détruit, été contraints à de durs travaux forcés et s'être vu infliger des amendes et des taxes oppressives ainsi que de lourdes punitions. Durant l'atmosphère de fête du carnaval, les villageois racontaient leur histoire à un commissario dépêché de Rome pour faire enquête et ils écoutaient celle des autres. Tel un patient moderne, un village du seizième siècle pouvait peut-être rebâtir son passé à l'occasion d'un festival de la mémoire à la fois curatif et politique.*

IN RECENT YEARS both anthropology and psychology, separately and together, have taken up the subject of memory with renewed interest. Memory, of course, has always been central to both sciences, which combine the observation of present behaviour with the collection of information about past events and experiences. Recently, some practitioners in both fields have combined to study one particular aspect of memory, its capacity to heal. I take as my point of departure an encounter with scholars and practitioners who study victims of terrible events: a psychiatrist who looks

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at survivors of the Holocaust and their offspring;<sup>1</sup> an anthropologist who charts victims of emotional and sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup> Their work offers a suggestion central to my investigation of a sixteenth-century story of politics in an Italian village.

These scholars of memory hold that victims of trauma not rarely have at best only fragmentary, “dissociated” memories of a terrible experience. Much of the record of the past is often buried or disjointed. At the same time, recollection can be obsessively unbalanced, for certain dreadful images loom hugely in the mind of the sufferer. The therapeutic task, interestingly, seems to be the creation of a narrative that makes sense of the pain by giving it a shape and meaning. The therapist, then, plays midwife to the creation of a personal history which succeeds in framing traumatic images in a larger picture which, by its very coherence, cuts the old terrors down to size. This work, as we all know well, has effects not always neutral or benign; the present controversy over alleged false memory, constructed under therapeutic prodding and then sincerely both represented and presented as evidence in a court of law, proves how slippery and how political memory can be. All the same, whether truth, fiction, or slippery amalgam, these scholars hold, memory can heal. Just like a modern patient, a sixteenth-century village can rebuild its past in a festival of memory at once curative and intensely political.<sup>3</sup>

Let us turn to a place and a time where early modern folk lived out their collective memory. Our place is Rocca Sinibalda, a village of some hundred households in the eastern Sabine mountains, some 20 kilometres south of Rieti, a district town at dead centre of the modern Italian state.<sup>4</sup> Our time

1 Laurence Kirmayer, “Landscapes of Memory: Time, Narrative and Dissociation” (unpublished paper read at the Canadian Anthropology Society Conference, York University, Toronto, May 1993).

2 Paul Antze, “The Past in Multiple Visions: Re/Constructions of Memory in Multiple Personality Disorders” (unpublished paper read at the Canadian Anthropology Society Conference, York University, Toronto, May 1993).

3 Michael Lambek, an anthropologist at the University of Toronto and one of the organizers of the session I had heard, kindly gave me a copy of his paper, “The Bonds of Memory and the Memory of Boundaries” (read at the Canadian Anthropology Society Conference, York University, Toronto, May 1993). He also allowed me to read drafts of the introduction he and Paul Antze wrote for their collection, *Tense Past* (London: Routledge, 1996), and chapters by him and by Laurence Kirmayer. Dr. Kirmayer, a physician at the Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry at the Sir Mortimer B. Davis — Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, a teaching hospital of McGill University, also graciously furnished me with off-prints of other of his essays. Neither scholar has vetted the use to which I put his work; any errors and aberrations are mine. Lambek argues firmly against Western habits of seeing memory as individual and discrete, like old photographs. He much prefers a concept of memory as praxis, as collective, shared reconstruction of social identity. Lambek, no Thomist, would reject my sharp distinction between inner and outer, which, he would hold, reflects too occidental an image of the nature of persons as distinct from their societies.

4 Information on the village appears for the most part in the holdings of the Archivio di Stato di Roma (hereafter ASR). There is a complex of trials in the series: Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi. The relevant *buste* are: 25 (entire) (1556); 26, case 5, ff. 341r–350v (1556); 34 (entire) (1557); 35 (entire) (1557); 38, case 6, ff. 76–98 (1557). Occasional references appear in *busta* 22 of

is the winter of 1556. Rocca Sinibalda is, by modern standards, a handsome place, a fortified huddle of substantial houses at the feet of a soaring castle, which looms over it today as it did in the sixteenth century. While a mountain crowds the eastern horizon, to west and northwest the eye ranges far across cultivated bottom lands. To the near east and north, a scarp drops off 130 steep metres down to the tight valley of the little river Turano, which loops around three sides of the promontory on which the village stands. In the sixteenth century the Turano had its mill, two little bridges, and several fishing stations. Two large and handsome oils by the Flemish landscape painter, Paul Bril, commissioned in 1601 by the noble owners, show the village much as it must have looked 50 years earlier.<sup>5</sup> Fishermen dip their net and rods below the mill; goats browse the steep slopes; a train of laden donkeys climbs the path from the mill; magpies glide above paired oxen yoked to the plough; humped white cattle graze; women, calf-deep in the river, bend over their washing while clean laundry drapes the open ground along the road to Rome. In the foreground, the artist's fancy flushes both a boar and a deer for eager hounds and huntsmen. On the ridge, barely visible, the lord, or perhaps a guest, approaches in a litter, to the billowing salute of the castle's artillery.

Despite Bril's images of bucolic ease and tranquil labour, Rocca Sinibalda was no wealthy place. At 420 to 550 metres above the sea, the country has never been very fertile; the olives and vines that grew there in the Renais-

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the Atti of the same tribunal, ff. 117–127. Other trials from other towns, but regarding the same case against the duke Giuliano Cesarini, appear in *busta 27* (entire) (1556) and in fragmentary form in *busta 52*, case 9 (1556). The original sentence of Giuliano Cesarini seems to have disappeared. His acquittal and restitution of September 1557 appears in Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Regesta Sententiarum, 2, 35v–36r. The full *buste* are several hundred folia each. Thus, the proceedings against Giuliano Cesarini bulk large in the ample surviving records of the governor's tribunal for the mid-1550s. Other records in the same archive appear in Cameralia III, *busta 1757*, and the *fondo* Lante della Rovere, *buste* 200 and 439, document 9. Charters, privileges, and economic documents from Rocca Sinibalda and the two other contested Cesarini fiefs appear in the same archive in the *fondo* Sforza Cesarini, especially *buste* 89, 619, 622, 840, 846, 847, 852, 855, 1308, 1309, 1138, 1139, 1213. An external record of the trial of Cesarini appears at several points in the manuscript weekly newsletters, the *Avvisi di Roma*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Urbinat. Lat. 1038 and 1039, and in the dispatches of the Venetian ambassador, Navagero, published in Rawdon Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Venetian*, vol. 32 (6), part 1, pp. 304–305, 312, 1003, 1320, 1056. The Archivio di Stato in Florence contains a few records in ambassadorial correspondence: Mediceo del Principato 3275. A few notarial documents can be found in the Archivio di Stato di Rieti and in the communal archive at Orte. The cathedral archive has two relevant episcopal visitations. The great survey of the State of the Church, the Catasto Gregoriano of 1816, held in the Archivio di Stato di Roma, helps recover the old microtoponymy of the village.

<sup>5</sup> *Caravaggio e la Collezione Mattei* (Rome: Electa, 1995), pp. 131 and 133, publishes reproductions of the two paintings, which belong to the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini in Rome. On p. 128, a caption wrongly labels one of the paintings as a view of Belmonte. The painting is always mislabelled in this way on the theory that four fiefs deserved a painting each, since the Mattei, having purchased Rocca Sinibalda from the Cesarini, had commissioned Bril to paint views of their various estates. In fact, the artist painted Rocca Sinibalda from two sides.

sance have now quite vanished. In the sixteenth century the economy turned on grain, hemp, and mediocre grapes. Peasants rounded out their incomes by fishing, snaring birds, migrating out to work in other villages, tending vast, transhumant flocks of the lord's sheep and goats, and, on the sly, by smuggling, stock-thieving, and occasional banditry on the Neapolitan borderlands nearby.<sup>6</sup> As in much of Rome's hinterland, the village lived under a regime of fiscal and judicial feudalism; as a fief, it owed rents and fees, and paid fines to a baronial court. The villagers, as *vassali*, swore collective homage to their lord.<sup>7</sup> Since its foundation in the eleventh century, Rocca Sinibalda had passed through various noble hands before falling in the 1480s to a branch of the Mareri, a clan with extensive feudal holdings in the nearby kingdom of Naples.<sup>8</sup>

In the third decade of the sixteenth century came local shifts and shocks that rewrote the rules of lordship. These changed the fate of the village and fixed themselves in its collective memory. In November 1526 Clement VII removed Rocca Sinibalda from Mareri hands and granted it to Cardinal Cesarini.<sup>9</sup> This transfer did not go unchallenged; the old and influential clan of the Savelli, Mareri in-laws, went to war on their behalf against the Cesarini, relative upstarts and their rivals for power in the Sabina district. The war, which lasted about four years, ravaged the countryside.<sup>10</sup> It failed, however, to unseat the new lords.

For Rocca Sinibalda, the baronial war was traumatic. It divided the villagers, many of whom sided with their ousted lord, Giovanni Mutio di Mareri, and thus had to quit the village. Some 35 households went into exile. The Savelli troops sacked the countryside, cutting vines and stealing stock, and then broke into the walled village itself, carrying off goods and killing two men. Shortly thereafter, Jacobo Muti, a noble kinsman of the Cesarini and the cardinal's agent in residence, summoned seven villagers to

6 This general picture of the economy of the village emerges from Rocca Sinibalda's several trials and from the extensive papers of its feudal lords. In my eventual book on the village, I will lay out abundant proof for each detail.

7 In this part of Italy, the term *vasallo* was not confined to military retainers, but could refer to any subject of a feudal lord.

8 Francesco Palmegiani, *Rieti e la Regione Sabina* (Rome, 1932), pp. 607–609, gives an unreliable chronology. See also Giulio Silvestrelli, *Città, Castelli e Terre della Regione Romana*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Istituto di Studi Romani, 1940), vol. 2, pp. 490–494. In the sixteenth century the frontier of the Kingdom of Naples ran up the central spine of the Appenines and reached the Adriatic well north of Rome.

9 I have assembled my narrative of the history of the village from numberless references in the body of the several trials. For this paper, I will not cite folia for general information to be found *passim* in the corpus.

10 It is hard to date the beginning and the end of the war. It had gone on a while by the spring of 1528, as evidenced by ASR, Sforza Cesarini, 846, doc. 12, a brief of Clement VII dated May 14 of that year, sending out a *commissario* to intervene on the behalf of cardinal Cesarini. It was probably over by June 1531, as is clear from ASR, Sforza-Cesarini, b. 847, doc. 8: a copy of the papal absolution of Giovanni Battista Savelli for the damage his forces did during the war, dated June 17, 1531.

the old castle and, having used torture to extort dubious confessions of treason, smashed in their heads with a mallet and hanged them by the feet from the battlements.<sup>11</sup> Their women and children had to quit the village and forfeit their possessions to the cardinal. War, judicial murder, and exile would cast a long shadow on collective memory.

What happened next was little better. The Cesarini, determined never again to suffer sack, at the coming of local peace rebuilt their defences in the grandest possible way. Knocking down the medieval keep, in its place they threw up the present *castello*, half fort, half palace, the *roccaforte* of their Sabine lands. Their architect was the aging, great Baldassare Peruzzi, who in 1531 had designed the stage backdrop for the wedding of the cardinal's nephew and heir, the future baron Giuliano, and who had devoted some of the end of his illustrious career to the design of fortifications for the Siense.<sup>12</sup> Chronology is a bit murky; work on the castle seems to have begun shortly before Peruzzi died, in early 1536. It continued for at least two decades, sometimes under the direction of his son. The castle was a truly massive undertaking. It quite swallowed up much of the original village. The lords tore down the parish church and more than 80 houses, cannibalizing them for stones and beams. They impressed the men and women and their offspring for heavy *corvéés*, felling trees, building limekilns, hauling stone and wood and brick. A hanging garden at the foot of the great south bastion required tons of soil and trees fetched from miles away.<sup>13</sup> The work, paid poorly if at all, devoured the villagers' Sundays and feast days. Discipline was harsh; a broken brick or a short load required four more unpaid trips in compensation. Overseers jailed, fined, flogged, and shamed those who shirked or balked. They forced husbands to whip their wives and daughters. Women who talked back could be chained to the blacksmith's shop with a placard around the neck and an admonitory nail through the tongue.<sup>14</sup>

This harsh regime drove yet more villagers into local exile. Some of these attached themselves to the ousted Mareri lords. Under the terms of their peace with the Savelli, the Cesarini had restored some exiles' lands, but

11 ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi, b. 25, 109v gives the clearest story of the forced confessions. The other details appear *passim* in b. 25.

12 For the wedding, Christoph Luitpold Frommel, *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner* (Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1967, 1978), pp. 22–24. See also Giovanni Giornelli, *Il Castello di Rocca Sinibalda* (Rome: Istituto Storico di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, 1967); Giacomo C. Bascapè and Carlo Peregalli, *Castelli di Lazio* (Milan: Bramante, [1968]), pp. 14, 48, 126–128; G. Zander, "Due Disegni de Baldassare Peruzzi per il Castello di Rocca Sinibalda", *Palladio*, vol. 5 (1955), pp. 123–134. For Peruzzi's military projects, see Simon Pepper and Nicholas Adams, *Firearms and Fortifications: Military Architecture and Siege Warfare in Sixteenth-Century Siena* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 38, 178–181.

13 The garden is still there, full of handsome cypress trees.

14 ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi, b. 25, f. 237r–v, for the nail through the tongue. Since all manuscript references, unless otherwise noted, are to this series of trials, henceforth I will give only the *busta* number and the folia.

then, if the fugitives spurned return, forced sales to the castle at paltry prices. Conditions in the village grew ever harsher. Cardinal Cesarini, who in 1527 had suffered stupendous losses in the Sack of Rome, soon thereafter instituted in his fief a classic feudal reaction.<sup>15</sup> Where, till then, the seigneurial regime had been light, largely a matter of rents on a few demesne fields, the farming of the mill and the *gabella* tax, and fees on justice and on the fishery, the Cesarini imposed a thoroughgoing baronial fiscalism.<sup>16</sup> They auctioned to the highest bidder the usual *banalités*: the mill, the bakery, the butcher's shop, the inn, the dry-goods store. The lords shut the village gate and began to levy fees on outsiders who spent the night. They imposed universal guard duty and sold exemptions. They put a very low limit to dowries and confiscated the equivalent of any excess.<sup>17</sup> Banning inheritance by any but sons and daughters, they confiscated other legacies. Capitalizing on the peasants' mounting debts and on heavy fines the castle court imposed, the Cesarini rapidly engrossed more and more village lands. The lords also tried to revise the statutes. When the villagers protested this last affront, the court arrested the ringleader, dissolved the town council, abolished the old statutes, and banned meetings of more than four men.<sup>18</sup> In the space of a generation, Rocca Sinibalda thus forfeited much of its patrimony and its freedom.

When the cardinal died in 1542, his nephew, the baron Giuliano Cesarini, succeeded to his Sabina fiefs. Like his uncle, the new lord ruled largely in absentia, through officials and through Jacobo Muti, the Roman noble deputy who had hanged the seven men. Giuliano cut a prominent figure in Rome. The hereditary Standard-bearer of the Popolo Romano, he was known for his pride, his ferocious temper, and his sumptuous dress in the public festivities to which his honorific sinecure invited him.<sup>19</sup> Notoriously, in his youth, in a quarrel over his immunities, he had cut off the hand of the pope's chief secular magistrate, the governor of Rome. Then, as often, he sheltered from papal wrath with his imperial sponsors, the Habsburg court.<sup>20</sup> It was Giuliano Cesarini's imperialist connection that finally offered the villagers respite from their unhappy lot. When the zealous, fiercely puritanical Paul IV rose to the papal throne in 1555, he and his ambitious Caraffa nephews almost at once tilted against Spain and the German Empire,

15 Judith Hook, *The Sack of Rome* (London: MacMillan, 1972), p. 170, reports an estimate of the cardinal's loss at 200,000 ducats, though suspiciously round, an enormous sum.

16 B. 25, f. 130v gives a good summary of the old feudal rights.

17 B. 25, f. 106r. The limit was 36 *scudi* plus 8 *scudi* in clothing. Don Tibaldo, the parish priest, reports this figure. Many peasants declared a personal wealth of 100 or 200 *scudi* or even more, so the figure is not high.

18 B. 25, f. 131v.

19 Nicola Ratti, *Della Famiglia Sforza* (Rome: Salamoni, 1794, 1795), vol. 2, pp. 261–262, 285–288.

20 Biblioteca Casanatense, Manoscritto 2378, ff. 109–123, "Magalotti Monsigr. Governatore di Roma assalido da Giuliano Cesarini Confaloniere de S. Chiesa sotto Clemente VII". Other copies survive in Vatican collections.

then still united under the aging Charles V. Paul, unlike his immediate predecessors, tried to shake loose the Habsburg hold by appealing to the habitual counterweight, France. Cesarini had married into the eternally imperialist Colonna clan, an ancient and powerful family who straddled the road to Naples. He and they soon sidled into a cabal against the new policy. At the end of August the suspicious pope confined the baron to Rome.<sup>21</sup> Nervous, Giuliano began in December to smuggle his bullion bit by bit out of Rocca Sinibalda, hidden under saddle-bags of apples.<sup>22</sup> When on New Year's eve a fellow hostage, the aging Colonna duchess, fled her gilded cage, her Roman palace, for ancestral lands in the Abruzzi, papal suspicion fell on her son-in-law, Giuliano, who had visited her the afternoon before. Ten days later the authorities clapped Cesarini into Castel Sant'Angelo, the great papal fort and prison on the Tiber-side, and sent garrisons to seize his strategic fiefs and fortresses.<sup>23</sup> At Rocca Sinibalda, the papal detachment found 36 cannon, with ample powder and shot, and gear for some 300 men-at-arms.<sup>24</sup> Amidst talk of war, the fort and its furnishings made a handsome prize.

The sudden fall of their lord galvanized the men and women of Rocca Sinibalda. They greeted the pope's new castellan with cries of *Chiesa! Chiesa!* (Church! Church!).<sup>25</sup> Within a day or two, they went *en masse* with their elected leaders to the legal borders to meet three of the exiles, banished for assorted crimes and rebellions, and ceremoniously bade them return to the village: "Let's go! Let's go. The populace will reinstate you. The castellan said that we were the ones to do it."<sup>26</sup> Rocca Sinibalda elected a new Council of Twelve and a new quadrumvirate of *massari* (headmen) friendly to the recent exiles, who became influential in the politics of the day.<sup>27</sup> A revolutionary spirit swept the village. In a heated nocturnal meeting at the house of one of the returnees, a leader proposed an oath on the missal, "To be united and not to counter the community in any way and to all be good vassals to his Holiness and to the Apostolic See, and

21 Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, Ralph Francis Kerr ed., vol. 14 (London, 1924), p. 99.

22 B. 26, case 5, Anselmo's interrogation of those responsible for the smuggling of the bullion. Within four days, the mulateer carried off the not inconsiderable sum of 1,300 *scudi* (f. 344r). I do not know where the money ended up.

23 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [henceforth BAV] Urbinat. Lat. 1038, 124v. The *avviso* of January 11, 1556, reports the arrest of Cesarini the day before and the taking of Rocca Sinibalda.

24 Giovanni Giornelli, *Il castello di Rocca Sinibalda* (Rome: Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, 1967), p. 27, publishes an inventory of the arms found in the castle at the time of its confiscation.

25 B. 25, f. 3v.

26 B. 34, f. 50r. "Andiamo andiamo il popolo te remeterà [*sic*]. Il castellan ha ditto che facciamo noi." *Popolo*, not easily translated, is best understood in this instance as the collective populace as a civic entity. The words are reported here by Colantonio, one of the three exiles, under hostile interrogation in his Roman trial. In his version, the exiles at first demurred.

27 B. 25, f. 3v, for the new *massari*.

if anyone says he wants Signor' Giuliano or Signor' Giacomo, the son of Signor' Mutio [Mareri], let him be killed.''<sup>28</sup> All came forward and swore. In the same house a day or two later came another, even more dramatic meeting.

Caponero began to tell the other *massari* to say what they wanted, and one after another the other *massari* said, "You tell us! You tell us!" Finally, it was decided that Caponero should say. Caponero began to speak, "I will tell you, but I don't want it to end up the way it did the other times, when you made me tell you and then you did things your own way." And, since they answered him not to worry, and to say what he wanted, he said, "I want you to swear on this mass book not to contradict what I will say." And so, I believe, if I remember well, that he first gave the oath to Giovanni Lorenzo, who was one of the *massari*, and then to all the others who were around me there — but I don't remember if I swore or not — and once the oath was given he began to lay out a plan that a man from each hearth should come to Rome.<sup>29</sup>

In Rome, Caponero urged, they should all kiss the pope's slipper and beg him to transform the village into a fief of the church. When, in quick succession, Giuliano's estate agent and two other men refused to go, an enthusiast stood up and declared, "If we had punished the first, the others would not have said it." Up went the cry, "Let them be punished!" Then, to shouts of "Fire! Fire!", the meeting spilled into the street where the men grabbed firebrands and kindled the houses of two of the three dissenters.<sup>30</sup> Only shots from the alarmed garrison in the fort high above the tumult and the death-blow to an adolescent, struck by a stone between the eyes, quelled the riot and let women douse their burning homes. The next day, two of the nay-sayers appeared in church before the community, "on their knees" and

28 B. 25, f. 4r. See also b. 34, f. 205v. "Da essere commune et non contravenire in niuno modo alla comunità et esser buoni vassali tutti a Sua Santità et alla sede apostolica et se alcune parlasse et dicesse voler il Signor Giuliano o il Signor Giacomo figlio del Signor Mutio che fosseno amazzati." *Da essere commune* meant not to establish a commune, but to be of one will.

29 B. 34, f. 196r. The speaker, Antonio di Palocco, is in jail and is trying hard to distance himself from these events. In the passage below, I add a bit of modern punctuation for easier reading. The scribe omitted many final vowels, which I do not replace. "Caponera cominciò a dire a gli altri massari che dicessero loro quel che volevano e l'un e l'alt [*sic passim*] de massari diceva, 'Di tu! Di tu!' e al ultimo fu resolut che Caponera dicesse. Caponera cominciò a dir, 'Io dirò, ma non voria che intravenesse come le altre volte che m'havete fatto dir e poi havete fatto a vostro modo.' Et perche li fu replicato che non dubitasse, che dicesse quel che volesse, lui disse, 'Io voglio che iurate sopra questo officio de non contradir a quel che dirò.' E cossi credo se ben me arricordo che desse prima el iuramen a Iovanni Lorenzo che era un di massari e poi a tutti li altri che erano li intorno me, ma io non me arricordo se io giurasse o no, e dato el iuramento, cominciò a esporre che dovesse venter un homo per foco a Roma."

30 B. 34, f. 101r. "Se levò Iovanni Lorenzo de Colini e disse se havessimo castigato quel primo questi altro non diriano cossi, e cossi cominciorno il populo a gridar che si castigano, ... foco foco."



“with a halter at the throat”, begging communal pardon and volunteering to lead the protesters to Rome.<sup>31</sup>

The march took place as planned. Having first sent emissaries to the Cardinal Nephew, a papal kinsman who held the strings of power, the 97 heads of household trooped to Rome. Three miles outside the gates, they received word the pope would hear their petition. They roared, *Chiesa! Chiesa!*<sup>32</sup> Astute observers of Roman politics, taking note of their arrival and of the nature of their complaint, mused that the baron Giuliano might have to wait a fair while longer for his liberation.<sup>33</sup> After penning a hurried petition, still extant, on a rosary seller’s bench on Saint Peter’s medieval porch, the villagers had their audience. They saw first the pontiff, at whom they shouted, “We have been in the hands of Turks!” and “Justice! Justice!” and then his potent Cardinal Nephew, with whom they were just as raucous.<sup>34</sup> The wheels of state ground fast; within days, the authorities dispatched lawyers, *commissari apostolici*, to Giuliano Cesarini’s eastern fiefs, Montecosaro and Civitanova, both on the Adriatic coast near Macerata, and to Rocca Sinibalda.<sup>35</sup> Rumours of war with Spain made these border strongholds attractive to a nervous state. Peruzzi’s massive and well-stocked castle helped secure the Via Salaria, the northeast road from Rome, and the southern approaches to Rieti. Rather than main force, the Caraffa pope preferred the seemingly trappings of judicial confiscation. Thus, the itinerant lawyers were to garner testimony to fodder Cesarini’s trial.

On February 1, 1556, Rocca Sinibalda’s *commissario, dottore* Anselmo Canuto, rode in with a local escort, two horses, a notary named Ercole, and a servant.<sup>36</sup> Lodging in a smoke-filled peasant house, Anselmo began assembling evidence.<sup>37</sup> He and his notary were thorough and methodical. They stayed two months, recording story after story about wrongs suffered, lands confiscated, 80 houses and a church demolished, a confraternity uprooted, statutes abolished, rights trampled, livestock worked to death, services unpaid, harsh and arbitrary punishments, and ancient travesties of justice. At the end of their labours, they produced a fat dossier, handsomely penned and methodically cross-referenced, where more than 400 witnessed statements testified on behalf of 134 personal *querelae* (complaints) against

31 B. 34, ff. 77v, 175v, 205v. “Con una correggia in canna” (“with a halter at the windpipe”). This image appears only in the last locus cited here. It may be an instance of a figure of speech, an image of submission at least as old as Dante. Or the men may have indeed worn the leather straps around their necks.

32 B. 25, f. 5r.

33 The march of the Rocca Sinibaldans left its trace in the *avvisi*, the weekly reports from Rome: BAV Urbinat. Lat. 1038, f. 129r, *avviso* of February 1, 1556. A Florentine agent reported on their arrival to the Grand Duke: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 3275, January 22, 1556, f. 1v.

34 B. 34, f. 197r, for the scene on the porch; B. 34, f. 215v, for the shouts in the papal chamber.

35 Anselmo’s letter patent is dated January 25.

36 B. 34, f. 218r, for the escort.

37 B. 34, f. 149v, for the smoke, which “almost blinded” the notary.

the duke. Within days of Anselmo's return to Rome, Cesarini's trial came to an end.<sup>38</sup> Condemned, the baron was destined to remain in the papal fortress for another 14 months, until late September 1557, when the victorious Duke of Alva, having conquered most of the Campagna Romana, sprang him free in the peace that settled the pope's utterly lugubrious Spanish war.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Rocca Sinibalda and Giuliano's other fiefs would remain in the hands of the Church for yet two more years, until the death of Paul IV spelled the collapse of the whole Caraffa enterprise and the restoration of the Colonna and the other imperialist barons. Rocca Sinibalda would thus enjoy a nervous four-year holiday from Cesarini rule and then return to its former servitude.

By a fluke of politics, we know volumes about Anselmo's diligent inquiry. In 1556, though down, Giuliano Cesarini was in no way out. His wealth, his popularity, and his connections in the city and the world made him a force to reckon with. In April of 1557, though still in jail, he assented to the marriage of a wealthy niece to Matteo Stendardo, a papal general who was also a Caraffa kinsman.<sup>40</sup> Almost immediately, as if the wind had veered, a second, less friendly *commissario*, one Cesare Fusco, went out to Rocca Sinibalda. Fusco was no Anselmo. He examined, jailed, and tortured village miscreants and hauled to Rome all the leaders of the revolt. In Fusco's haul were *don* Tibaldo, the adulterous priest, and his ally, *fra* Santo (Brother Saint), who procured the priest's abortion potions, who warehoused stolen grain and horses in his monastery, and who prowled the district with a gun up his cassock in hopes of shooting the castellan. In Rome the governor's court tried the prisoners not only for the murderous oath, the riot, and the fires but also for assorted non-political crimes: theft, fencing stolen grain and livestock, smuggling, fraud, forgery of the communal seal, attempted abortion, banditry, assault, murder. The Roman trial of the villagers also turned to Anselmo's original inquiry, digging for signs of malpractice. By July both Anselmo and Ercole were also prisoners of the court, hard pressed to defend the probity of their inquiry.<sup>41</sup> In the dock, they did not hesitate to descry in their prosecution the hand of the Cesarini.

This summer trial lets us reconstruct how, 18 months earlier, Anselmo had conducted his winter investigation. Under his guidance, it transpires, Rocca Sinibalda had celebrated a veritable festival of therapeutic memory.

38 BAV Urbinat. Lat. 1038, f. 133. Also, Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, vol. 14, p. 119.

39 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, vol. 14, p. 171; BAV Urbinat. Lat. 1038, f. 266v, *avviso* of September 25, 1557.

40 The niece was worth 80,000 *scudi* or more, Navagero, the Venetian ambassador, reported to his Senate on April 3, 1557. *Calendar of State Papers Venetian*, VI (vol. 2), p. 1003, doc. 851. The *avviso* of the same date opined over-optimistically, "Questo matrimonio pare che debba presupporre la liberazione del Signor Giuliano" (this marriage seems to presuppose the liberation of signor Giuliano). BAV Urbinat. Lat. 1038, f. 211v.

41 For Fusco's work in Rocca Sinibalda, see b. 35. For the subsequent Roman trial, see b. 34. For Anselmo's first appearance in court, see b. 34, f. 28.

It was as if the commissary's visit offered the village the chance to heal its pain and regain its autonomy by recapturing and reinventing its history. The depositions had drawn a crowd, who marvelled to hear their elders' memories. "Sometimes there were more than sixty persons...";<sup>42</sup> "The room was so full no one else could fit in.... The man was around ninety years old and he was informed about everything."<sup>43</sup> The villagers, especially those of the dominant faction, had drawn Anselmo into their society. Armed, they had sat in on the depositions.<sup>44</sup> Almost daily, if Anselmo had not been invited out to eat, they and their hangers-on had shared his table, bringing food from home.<sup>45</sup> After dinner there was often music and dancing at his lodgings; men brought their wives. Even Anselmo and his notary sometimes danced with local women.<sup>46</sup> Anselmo seems to have responded to all this hospitality by becoming an ardent local champion. To further the festivities, perhaps because Carnival was on, at communal cost he hired a guitarist.<sup>47</sup> With reforming moral zeal, he arranged the marriages of unwedded couples and danced at the weddings. Ercole and Anselmo even sometimes shared their common bed with a peasant's adolescent son. To the partisan eyes of the court, such irregularities cast grave doubts on the probity, objectivity, and legal standing of the proceedings against Giuliano Cesarini. To twentieth-century readers, the same details help unravel how villagers stored, fetched, deployed, and presented social memory.

Anselmo's *querela* book itself is a treasure chest of local memory. Heaped inside it are countless mundane records of gifts, dowries, rentals, prices, yields, techniques of cultivation, and judicial matters, all of them useful for the social and economic history of the village. Intermingled with these prosaic details are highly coloured stories of moral indignity, appalling suffering, and grievous loss.

He [Jacobo Muti, Cesarini's harsh lieutenant] had us put in a well, where we were naked, and when it rained, the water was up to our knees, and the well was six palms wide and eighteen long. There were ten of us there, and we were in for ten weeks, and we had to sleep where we saw to our bodily needs and drink the water that ran down the channels of the roof. They gave us a little loaf per head in the beginning, but some days they gave us nothing. One day a bone came into my hands, for I took it from a dog who was carrying it in his mouth and who came up to the window of the jail. I ate it. I ground

42 B. 34, f. 99r.

43 B. 34, f. 62v. "Ero presente quando esaminava Caruccio de Sperillo che allhora era piena la stanza che non ce ne poteva capir piu et messer Anselmo lo esaminava sopra delle portamenti del signor Giuliano et delli sui *antichi* [?] et di molte altre cose grande perche costui havea circa 90 anni, et era informato de ogni cosa."

44 B. 34, f. 85r, for armed men.

45 B. 34, ff. 61v–62r, for bringing food, and f. 72r for inviting Anselmo to the houses of others.

46 B. 34, ff. 61v, 62r, 72r.

47 B. 34, f. 99r, for the guitar. *Martedì Grasso* was on February 18, in the midst of Anselmo's visit.

it, and I made it last me three days, and if I had been able to grab the dog I would have eaten it too.<sup>48</sup>

Such dramatic tales reveal a great deal about the moral, psychological, and political vocabulary of the peasants of Rocca Sinibalda. Vivid stories and dry tallies together, these records constitute a collective memory. But the memory in Anselmo's register is no longer potency but act. Here memory is performance, upon a smoke-filled semi-public stage, under festive circumstances dictated by Anselmo and by his collaborators of the ruling party. We see the village, not as it usually remembered itself in strands and skeins of reminiscent yarn and gossip in the tavern, by the fireside, or on the threshing floor, but rather as it wove its past for a particular audience on a charged occasion. Such self-recording was clearly no ordinary event. Occasioned by the judicial inquiry and by the eager, anxious politics of the dominant faction, the festival of memory seems to have taken on a life of its own; commemoration invited celebration which, in turn, surely evoked yet further mental rummaging.

Like any remembrance, this one took form from its setting. Several languages and purposes formed and encoded the production. The tense political climate in the village shaped and coloured the accounts. So did the court and papal lordship. Rocca Sinibalda thus filtered its stories through several sieves: reminiscences passed first through the villagers' edgy sense of local faction and their anticipation of the interests of Anselmo and the law and state he embodied.<sup>49</sup> They then had to conform to the rules and formulae of his interrogation. Finally, Anselmo deformed the memories yet again, but — as other village documents prove — not very much, as he dictated a summary of each deposition to his notary.<sup>50</sup> Because the judge's hand was light, his visit has left us with a codex in which to read his handsome representation of Rocca Sinibalda's self-presentation. His judicial

48 B. 25, ff. 108v–109v. ‘‘Noi li faceva mettere in un pozzo nel quale stavamo nudi et vi stava l'acqua quando pioveva a ginocchio et detto pozzo era largo 6 palmi et longo 18, et ci stemmo che eramo dieci. Restamo in detto pozzo da dieci settimane in circa el li bisognava dormire li dove faceamo del corpo et bere l'acqua che correva per li canali del tetto, et ci dava una pagnottella per uno in principio et stemmo certi giorni che non ci portorno niente da magnare et abbattendome un osso per le mani ch'io lo levai d'un cane che lo portava in bocca et s'affaciò alla fenestra della prigione mello magnai et lo tritai et mello feci bastare tre di. Et s'io havessi potuto agiappare il cane l'haverei similmente magnato.’’ The speaker, a native of La Posta, up the valley, had been locked in the old fort during the Savelli war.

49 B. 34, ff. 153r, 158r. We know that some villagers delegated their *querelae* to village leaders or to the village priest, a partisan of the rebellion.

50 The initial petition to the pope survives, in b. 34, f. 198r, as does a prolix memorandum drafted in anticipation of the *commissario*, in b. 34, ff. 208r–214v. These two documents prove that Anselmo contributed little to the moral and political rhetoric of Rocca Sinibalda's self-presentation. For Anselmo's methods of keeping records, see b. 34, ff. 120r, 136r–v, 147v, 196v–197r. For the presentation by the four *massari* and their *viva voce* emendation of the main body of the *querela* of the community, see b. 34, ff. 200v–210v. For the *querela* itself, see b. 25, ff. 10r–15v.

misfortunes of the following summer and those of his hosts produced yet other codices which let us reconstruct the winter *mise en scène*.

Memory, in any place and time, has its practices and habits. The fat legal dossiers help show how Rocca Sinibalda in particular recorded and retold its past. The village had its memory theatre. In place of the famous imaginary theatre-statues of Cicero's ideal orator, it had the amphitheatre of its immediate surroundings. The outer reaches are the nearby villages of the eastern Sabine district, the common markers the many names of fields, streams, springs, hills, and woods, and of roads, inns, shrines, and churches. Local anchors include the village gate, the bridge of the castle, the little monastery, the old parish church that the lords had destroyed. These figure repeatedly in stories. Occasionally, Rome itself appears, but well below the usual, narrow horizon. Though one literate witness mentions Pope Clement VII and the Sack of Rome, the larger history of the world seldom lifts its head.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, there was a strong sense of a local history, which hinged on local calamities, above all the war, the sack, the destruction of the church and houses, the appalling hanging of the seven men. These events were landmarks, as were the several lords, their deputies and castellans, and the priests. Dates counted for little.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the culture seems otherwise to have been very number-conscious. Villagers had a keen memory for the figures that mattered: the size of dowries, the level of tithes, the price of fields, the worth of houses, the amounts of fines, the days in jail, the tally of stones carried to the castle. If they neglected the calendar years, it was thus because other conditions, such as the quality of the harvest and the price of grain, had far more local meaning. Time itself, as history, did have shape and significance; there was a golden age of sorts, a time of *libertà* under the good old lords, followed by latter-day miseries.

It has been more than fifty years that I have been conversant with Rocca Sinibalda, for my mother was here. And I remember that at the time of signori Giacomo and Samuele Mareri, and then of signore Giovanni and signore Giovanni Mutio, this community and its inhabitants were free. And they lived with these lords freely, like brothers. And at the time of these lords, every one was master of his own, in selling, and in pledging, to whomever he wanted, immovable and movable goods, and in going, and leaving, and in returning. And free, each in his own power, to lodge friends or kinfolk, or to keep an

51 B. 25, f. 124r. “Dopoi in nome del Cardinale Cesarino li face iurare vassallagio et poi che li lanzi intorno in Roma che fu il sacco il Sr. Giovan Battista Savelli come parente del Signor Giovan Mutio di Maredi mosse guerra con Il Cardinale per conto di questa terra.” (“Then in the name of cardinal Cesarini he made them swear vassalage and then after the *Landesknechts* entered Rome — that was the Sack — signor’ Giovan’ Battista Savelli, as kinsman of signor Giovan’ Mutio Mareri, made war on the cardinal on account of this village.’) The speaker, Caponero, the most articulate of Anselmo’s witnesses, had once himself been a *fattore*. He bore his literacy easily.

52 At the same time, villagers could be very precise about duration. The cardinal took Rocca Sinibalda 29 years and four months ago, said one witness, who did not give the date (1526). B. 25, f. 131r.

inn, or a cheese shop, or a butchery, or a bakery. It was allowed to everyone. I remember, for in my mother's house there was an oven, and she ran it, and my aunt helped her.<sup>53</sup>

Agency was weak; in village memory, no great actors stand out. The single Rocca Sinibaldans, their almost implacable lords, and God himself barely shape events. Even Providence stays its hand. Religion most figures in its negation: the church destroyed, the relics shabbily housed, the confraternity and its festival dissolved, and even, on several occasions at a moment of despair, God denied.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, Anselmo's pious sympathy evoked such tales of pitiable unbelief. At the same time, the antiquity of some such incidents and the vivid detail in which they are couched argue that, aloud or silently, they had often been rehearsed.

[Don Martino] ordered Mocaino either to pay ten *scudi* or to whip [his daughter] in public. And because Mocaino was poor, he burst into tears and I saw him cry. He was forced to go with a rope and whip and beat Gieronima, his daughter, there at the foot of the small tower and I, for compassion, didn't want to watch, but I heard the shrieks well enough a little afterwards. Mocaino went back to his house and I saw Gieronima, his daughter being carried into the house. And that evening, in his desperation, Mocaino wanted to kill his daughters and go away. And I, as a neighbour, and Chiara my wife, went running to his house and exhorted and prayed Mocaino to have patience. And he was crying mightily, with all his family, both for the great shame and because he was poor and could not pay the ten *scudi* and so had to whip his

53 B. 25, f. 121r. "Sono piu de cinquanta anni che io pratico in questa Rocca Sinibalda perche ci havevo mia madre et mi ricordo che al tempo delli signori Iacomo et Samuelle delli Mareri et doppoi Signor Ioanne et del Signor Ioan Mutio questa communita et i suoi particolari erano liberi et vivevano con li predetti signori liberamente come da fratelli et al tempo delli predetti signori ogn'uno era patrone del suo tanto in vendere come impegnare a che volevano tanto di beni stabili come mobili et stare l'andare et ritornare et libero in podesta de ciascheduno et in loggiare amici o parenti o fare hostarie o pizzicaria o macello o forni. Era lecito a ciascheduno et me ricordo de quello che in casa de mia madre c'era il forno et la faceva lei et de mia zia anchora." The speaker was parish priest at the nearby village of Montelione. As an outsider, he called on the memory of his mother to help to authenticate his evidence and to firm up his connection to Rocca Sinibalda.

54 B. 25, ff. 249r-v, 159 bis v: "Signore, noi eramo sette donne priggione et tra l'altre me ricordo che ci stava Bernardina moglie di Bernardino detto Scheglia et un giorno trovandose il modo dargli da magnare et tutti magnavamo il pane della ghianda et essendo in detta chiesa con pezzo di bastone in mano disse [Bernardino] voltandosi ad una imagine della nostra madonna, 'Oh Vergine Maria, non ti tengo vergine Maria facendomesi queste che me se fa.' Et con disperatione tiro detto bastone all'immagine della vergine Maria et colsela voltandosi poi alla sua moglie dicendogli, 'Sciancata tutto questo che patisco et fo e per causa tua.'" ("Signore, seven of us women were in jail and among other things I remember that Bernardina, wife of Bernardino — called Scheglia — was there. And one day, when they managed to be fed, and we were all eating acorn-bread, and we were in the church, and Bernardino had a piece of a stick in his hand and he turned to an image of our Madonna. 'Oh Virgin Mary, I don't think that you are the Virgin Mary, when these things are happening to me.' And with desperation he threw the stick at the image of the Virgin and hit it, and then turned to his wife, saying to her, 'Fie on [literally: may it be lamed] all this that I suffer and do on account of you.'")

daughter in the presence of *don* Martino and of many others. He told me that he had been forced to hit her until *don* Martino told him not to hit her any more. And Mocaino and his daughters have continually been put to labour at the construction of the *rocca*, in spite of his children.

Aurelia, Mocaino's wife, about a year ago, had a daughter at the breast, and she was under orders to go to the *rocca* to work for the court. And so it happened that the little girl she had at the breast, as I've heard from Mocaino and his wife, was weak at the breast. And Bernardina, my wife [*sic*; a later wife than Chiara?], often cried over that little girl, and went running there when Aurelia was working under orders for the court.... And because Mocaino was desperate, often, at his door, in public, and in his house I have heard him say that Christ was not the son of the Virgin and did not rise from the dead because he did not remember us.<sup>55</sup>

When it comes to agency, the actor that most often figures is the village as a collective whole. It appears as *tutta la terra*, *tutto il popolo*, and *la comunità*. Everyone was there; everyone shouted *Chiesa, Chiesa!*; everyone swore the oath, kindled the houses of the foot-draggers, did homage to the new lord. The whole village protested against the loss of liberties. By "everyone", one often meant, of course, the male heads of household, often "one per hearth". To a degree, this rhetoric of community serves a legal case that pits the collective village against the Cesarini and that negotiates with the authorities in Rome. To a degree, it shelters individual actors from blame. At the same time such formulae seem to correspond to a way of encoding the record of the past. Where individual villagers do appear, it is often in their quarrels, where the precise order of angry words, gestures, and blows seems to have been well remembered. Anger, then, anchored memory, as did grief. Again and again, as in the tale of Mocaino and his daughter, Anselmo heard of tears.<sup>56</sup> Weeping put an event into italics.

55 B. 25, ff. 247v–248r. The Italian of the end of the passage: "Et essendo detto Mochaino disperato piu volte nella porta pubblicamente et a casa gl'ho inteso dire che Cristo non era figlolo della vergine et non era resuscitato perche non si ricordava di noi." Ten *scudi* was a very burdensome sum for a peasant to pay. A dowry in his class would be about 30 *scudi*. A man's property might be worth 100.

56 B. 25, f. 160r: "Sancto padre de detto Gabrielle tornando a casa quasi piangendo dolendosi delli soldati del p.to S.r Gio. Batta disse che gl'haveano tolta trenta sette coppe de sementa segato." ("Santo, father of the aforesaid Gabriele, came home almost crying, bemoaning the soldiers of the aforesaid signor Giovanni Battista, saying that they had taken 37 bushels of rye from him.") B. 25, f. 170r: "La roba non lo so, ma so che io lo viddi piangere et lamentarse..." ("I don't know about the goods, but I saw him crying and lamenting...") B. 25, f. 159 bis r: "In detto tempo tornando detto Sancto quasi piangendo si lamentava che gliera stato tolto detto grano." ("Then Santo returned almost crying and he complained that the grain had been taken from him.") B. 25, f. 175r: "Appicato che fu sei figlole femine che erano di lui restate cinque senza marito minore furno discacciate della terra et del suo territorio et io trovai detta Lucretia con dette sue figlole alli pozzi strillando et gridando tutte con dire che erano ruinate et scacciate da mr Iacomo." ("When he was hanged, six of his daughters, five minors without husbands, were chased from the village and from its territory and I found the aforesaid Lucretia with her aforesaid daughters at the wells shrieking and shouting, saying that they were ruined and chased off by messer Giacomo.")

This, then, is a memory without many convenient pegs. There are few mythic tropes to organize the record of the past. There are no bandit heroes, no saintly clerics, no paragons of wifely virtue, no vengeful God who wreaks justice. Even natural calamities barely punctuate the scene.

Under Anselmo's prodding, the villagers produced both a story and a document that in some ways approximates a history of the village. Of course, nowhere does one find the historian's clear narrative line; grievances, not time's progress, set out the argument. Anselmo's fat dossier works not by telling a coherent tale, but by generous repetition of fact after superabundant fact. Nevertheless, urban, literate, latinate law has, in Rocca Sinibalda, been the midwife of an historical argument. Pierre Nora has argued, provocatively, that history and memory are less complementary than antagonistic. Traditional rural worlds are so steeped, he says, in living memory that they have no need of stiff, literate, indeed frozen history.<sup>57</sup> History, in his eyes, is a symptom of modern alienation, cultural fatigue, and uprooting. Though he does not use the terms, memory, for him, flourished in good old *Gemeinschaft*, which had no need of sterile *Gesellschaft's* written record. Discounting Nora's dubious nostalgia, there is some wisdom in his argument; oral culture does not easily sustain historical narrative. As details fade, oral stories easily gravitate to stereotype and myth.<sup>58</sup> Anselmo, urban and literate, could coax out a story and could preserve on paper the details that so readily slip between the fingers of memory. On the other hand, it is unwise to overstate the gulf between city and country. Poor and remote, Rocca Sinibalda was nevertheless no lost, immobile world. Its denizens often went to Rome, some only to pay their fines at the Cesarini palace, but others to visit kinfolk or to settle communal business. The village leaders were themselves literate, and several had notarial skills. Certainly some of the history, as Anselmo gathered it, was of local origin; the basic, classic peasant-rebel story, of good old days followed by sad erosion of treasured rights, appeared in the original petition to the pope, days before the *commissario* set foot in town, prior to resurfacing, much embellished, in the collective *querela* of the community. Clearly, then, even as history, Rocca Sinibalda's tale was a work of collaboration between the village and its itinerant legal champion.

This work of collaboration between the papal *commissario* and his hosts is also reminiscent of the shared work of healer and patient. Some anthropologists and sociologists of medical narration have of late become interested in the complex, layered messages that pass back and forth.<sup>59</sup> Medi-

57 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, vol. 26 (Spring 1989), pp. 7–25, especially p. 8.

58 James Fentress and Christopher Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1992). See also Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 21–24.

59 Byron J. Good, *Medicine, Rationality and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Laurence Kirmayer, "Improvisation and Authority in Illness Meaning", *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, vol. 18 (1994), pp. 183–214.



ciné, they say, can be a form of memory work. Our argument here reverses the analogy, holding that memory work can also resemble medicine. Medicine, like the law, has its jargon and its protocol, for both are the domain of authoritative experts; patients, like witnesses, do not always knuckle under, however. Rather, in both consulting room and legal chambers, several voices vie for the floor.<sup>60</sup> Patients can use intonation, timing, gesture, and posture to enlarge “band-width” and to negotiate with the healer; Rocca Sinibalda could use crowds and food and music to broaden, to accentuate, to gloss its story and to manoeuvre for support. There can be a subtle politics in the consulting room, as beyond a doubt there almost always is in the precincts of the law, a struggle to be heard, to be believed, to have one’s view accepted.<sup>61</sup>

If something like healing was afoot, one must seek it between the lines. Rocca Sinibalda spoke a double message. On the surface there was a tale of grievance. Past injuries, the village held, argued for future redress. The place deserved a change in lordship. The second story, a bit deeper, concerned integrity regained. The village had, in fact, suffered several losses: some of its sovereignty, social fabric, and ritual calendar, and the lives, a generation back, of seven of its men. Given the usual slings and arrows of pre-modern Italian peasant life, there is nothing extraordinary in this catalogue of woes. One other loss does however single Rocca Sinibalda out, and that is the destruction of its fabric: its beloved forest consumed to fuel the limekilns, its houses and its church smashed. A generation earlier, the building zeal of the lords had thus knocked away many of the physical props of collective memory.<sup>62</sup> Students of social memory have pointed out that dispossession and dislocation can unravel a people’s story.<sup>63</sup>

60 I would like to thank John Shotter for a copy of an unpublished paper he wrote with Arlene M. Katz, entitled “Hearing the Patient’s Voice: Toward a Social Poetics in Diagnostic Interviews”, in which the authors argue for listening between the lines for other messages.

61 On the politics of testimony, see E. S. Cohen and T. V. Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trials before the Papal Magistrates* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 19–20. For a comparison, see also Kirmayer, “Improvisation and Authority”, pp. 183–185, for the struggle between physician and patient to define the ground rules of conversation.

62 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 37, discusses the importance of a stable material milieu for social memory. See also Peter Burke’s discussion of Halbwachs on the importance of space and place to social memory in “History as Social Memory” in Thomas Butler, ed., *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 101. See also Charles Tilly, “Afterword: Political Memories in Space and Time” in Jonathan Boyarin, ed., *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Space and Time* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 241–156, especially pp. 242–244, on how “spaces provided the moral frame” in *ancien régime* France. For the influence on German cinema of the destruction of the relics of the past, especially in the films of Edgar Reitz, see Erich L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), especially p. 72. In Reitz’s *Heimat* films, the bucolic Huhnsrück serves as a quintessential *milieu de mémoire*, as Nora would have it.

63 Michel Bozon and Anne-Marie Thiessé, “The Collapse of Memory: The Case of Farm Workers (French Vexin, pays de France)”, *History and Anthropology*, vol. 2 (1986), pp. 237–259.

Alongside the tale of woe and interwoven with it was a story about recovery; Rocca Sinibalda was trying to repossess itself, to gather up the raveled sleeve of its past cares. Certainly, speaking of individual persons, some hold that memory work has a profound restorative effect: “the narrativization of suffering serves to reconstitute the lifeworld unmade”, for “space and time are overwhelmed by pain”, as one anthropologist of medicine would have it.<sup>64</sup> The editors of a new book on memory and suffering put the matter thus: “As humans, we draw on our experience to shape narratives about our lives, but equally, our identity and character are shaped by our narratives.”<sup>65</sup> So the villagers’ project may have had two ends: to give shape to an unhappy past and to fashion a new political order. By accomplishing both at once, it hoped to draw a firm demarcation line.<sup>66</sup> That is why the events of the revolution itself are so central to the regime’s testimony surrounding the commune’s own collective *querela*: the nocturnal oath, the fires, the reconciliation with the nay-sayers, whose death the Holy Spirit alone had forefended, the march on Rome, and the great shout: *Chiesa! Chiesa!*<sup>67</sup>

Alongside their political utility, the endless recitation of private griefs and losses also had local, cultural import. To answer again and again Anselmo’s stock questions must have had its own mnemonic and even poetic power: a story often told, according to a formula, begins to take on some of the traits of liturgy and epic. Attending, day after day, the same stories may have given villagers a sense of the solemnity of their history.<sup>68</sup> What sort of history? Certainly not the classic narrative of strivings and obstacles overcome, but rather a tale of suffering which, in the Christian eyes of Anselmo and his papal masters, should justify the sufferers and earn them grace, not only hereafter, but also here and now.<sup>69</sup>

64 Good, *Medicine, Rationality and Experience*, pp. 136 and 126. For a very similar argument by an historian of the sixteenth century in Italy, see also Kenneth Gouwens, “Life-Writing and the Theme of Cultural Decline in Valeriano’s *De Litteratorum Infelicitate*”, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1996), pp. 87–96, especially p. 95: “the dialogue allows Valeriano to script his own life, resituating himself in the world of post-Sack Italian humanism.”

65 Lambek and Antze, “Introduction: Forecasting Memory” in *Tense Past*.

66 For the notion of “demarcation” as exemplified in revolutionary France, see Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 10; Tilly, “Political Memories”, pp. 248–249, on the French Revolution’s impact on habits of memory. For the peremptory, cautious question, “against what” is memory invoked, see Natalie Z. Davis and Randolph Starn, “Introduction” (to an issue on memory), *Representations*, vol. 26 (Spring 1989), p. 2.

67 The formal *querela* of the the village occupies folia 7–15 of b. 25. Before it are statements by the four *massari*, laying out the events of the past weeks. For the Holy Spirit, see f. 8r.

68 Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 60, cites in this regard the argument of the linguist and literary scholar, Roman Jakobson, to the effect that repetition is central to epic poetry and gives it weight.

69 Elizabeth Heinemann, “The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity”, *American Historical Review*, vol. 101, no. 2 (April 1996), p. 355, notes that in German war memories, as in most, there are three basic scripts: victimhood, accomplishment, and judgement. Certainly, in Rocca Sinibalda, there was little of the second and not all that much of the third.

Grace, the unmerited, only-hoped-for gift, applied as well to worldly power as to divinity. In a drastically unequal society and polity, much largess came down as not right but arbitrary grant. Uniquely, the pope's hybrid church-state dispensed a blurry plenitude of sacred and profane good. Accordingly, in a florid gesture of supplication sanctioned by both religion and lay culture, to bargain for grace, Rocca Sinibalda added to its rendered past a vision of a desperate future: "We would rather give up our houses and go wander like the gypsies than ever again return under signor Giuliano."<sup>70</sup>

I have pursued here an extended set of similes. Clearly my argument dwells in the reign of metaphor, for, in fact, a village is no patient, a lawyer is no psychiatrist, serried testimonies are no collective history, hard times are no illness, and even festivity is not quite liturgy. If so extended an analogy as mine is to persuade, historians must find other places where similar folk behaved in like ways. As usual, Occam's razor would prefer simplicity; Rocca Sinibalda's ruling faction merely chose to eat and dance with an honoured guest whose help in Rome was crucial. Crass calculation, the usual peasant *furberia* (guile), nothing more! Nevertheless, much of the best in cultural history encourages us to think that convivial food, drink, music, and the sway of dancing bodies had, here, a larger meaning. To the sound of guitar and stamping feet, the village may have exorcized its pain and marked out its hopes for easier times. Telling stories may have effected cure. If so, reminiscence, healing, and politics tangled inextricably in an up-country festival of memory.

70 B. 25, f. 6r.