International Humanities Studies
Vol. 7(4), December 2020 ISSN 2311-7796 Online

'Reins And A Whip Make A Good Beast'*: The Cultural And Historical Roots of University Hazing

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Abstract

What is the origin of university hazing? What sort of meanings are hidden behind the traditional abuse and mistreatment of first-year students? This article reviews the historic roots of hazing as constituted by the confluence of institutional elements—tied to the guild roots of medieval universities—and factors derived from long-standing European violent cultural practices. Using an interdisciplinary methodological perspective, the text analyzes historical information, literary works, and ethnological materials, paying special attention to the ritual and festive manifestations of popular culture, and especially, of youth, as a period culturally perceived and defined as an age of rebelliousness and violence.

Keywords: Hazing, Beanus, youth violence, tradition, popular culture.

1. Introduction.

University life has been the subject of multiple studies, from those that address its idiosyncratic character as a community of knowledge or its role in upward social mobility, to those that look at the slovenly, rascally world of college students, where hazing stands prominent (Rodríguez-San Pedro Bezares, 2001).[1]

Regarded as practically inherent to university life, hazing has often been described as a rite of passage. It has also been designated as mere youthful roguery, or, in picaresque novels, well-deserved punishments meted out to the morally lax protagonists under the shelter of an independent scholastic jurisdiction (Torremocha Hernández, 1998).

* Old Spanish saying, "A bestia buena, vara y espuelas".
[1] The American Dictionary of the English Language defines hazing as: (1) To persecute or harass with meaningless, difficult, or humiliating tasks; (2) To initiate, as into a college fraternity, by exacting humiliating performances from, or playing rough practical jokes upon. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition*. S.v. "hazing."

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Hazing, however, goes well beyond funny pranks: it is constituted by violent and degrading practices that, according to its defenders, facilitate the integration and acquaintance of the initiates to their new social realm. However, the devil is in the detail, and the history of hazing reveals it as a rosary of violence and abuse that should lead us to reevaluate its origins, the context of its performance, and its meanings and implications, arriving at a deeper understanding of its practices and of the societies that produce them.

2. Aims and Scope

This article reviews the historic roots of hazing as constituted by the confluence of institutional elements—tied to the guild roots of medieval universities—and factors derived from long-standing European violent cultural practices.

We will see the complex world of symbolisms and significations that underly these practices, some of which have classical Roman origins, others are expressive of Judeo-Christian religious culture, informed by a shared European carnivalesque cultural matrix with high levels of normalized violence.

3. Methodology

This article is based on a qualitative investigation that has focused on the analysis of primary and secondary sources of the late medieval and Renaissance periods (12th to 16th centuries)—documents, memoirs, university manuals and rule books—on hazing and other abusive practices in university settings. The information thus gathered is compared to literary testimonies of the Spanish Golden Age (16th and 17th centuries) that record information on popular and student life. The sources and analyses are carried out using an interdisciplinary perspective that threads together history and cultural anthropology.

4. Origin and formation of hazing

Hazing involves complex customs of diverse historical origins and practices. Part of this variety has to do with the heteroclitic character of an institution such as the university, inserted in a highly hierarchical and stratified world but that allowed those who were not necessarily privileged to begin with to partake in an aspirational culture (González Navarro, 2001: 131). The heterogeneity of students' social and national origins meant a heterogeneity of customs, some of them in line with

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the institutional and hierarchical interests, and others operating as resignifications or transfers of popular practices.

Within this complex configuration, we can identity three major cultural substrata that conformed hazing practices: 1) A Classical tradition, linked to the process of the nationalization of the university during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance; 2) The transfer of practices that belonged to Old Regime popular culture; and 3) Youth as a cultural group. These three substrata intertwine and get re-signified in the development of new behaviors.

5. The Institutionalization of Universities

The earliest European universities emerged under the aegis of the Roman Catholic Church and royal patronage as *Studia Generalia*. Born for the formation of the clergy and, eventually, state officials, they shared a common substratum regardless of their location in Europe: that provided by the Graeco-Latin cultural heritage and Latin as the common language of learning. This propitiated the mobility of both masters (professors) and students across the continent. The ecclesiastical origin remained throughout the first centuries of the historical transformation of universities, embodied in the faculty, for among professors "the clergy predominated over the laymen, and canons among the former" (Rodríguez-San Pedro Bezares, 1991: 12).

The first direct descriptions of hazing practices relate those that took place in the old cathedral schools and monastic schools, in the novitiates of the mendicant orders, as well as in palace schools. "*Colegios mayores*"—residences for the students that belongs to the university—also incorporated this tradition.

The institutionalization of the *Studia Generalia*—royal foundations, with their privileges and papal confirmations—helped spur a differentiated intellectual identity across Europe, coherent with the stratified social model and the type of collective identities in place, a guild sentiment reflected in the medieval expression *university* (Barcalá, 1985). The medieval and Renaissance university allowed the men who wandered through its halls and classrooms to contemplate vital options that differed from those that seemed fated for them, serving a State that was slowly penetrating the control of collective life. Torremocha Hernández (1998) explains that universities' juridical autonomy encouraged a strong esprit de corps and granted students much leeway for their rogueries. The University thus enabled the incipient aspirational social segments, with a necessary "elitization" of knowledge.

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According to Le Goff (1996), the flowering of the university was tied to the growth of the urban world: a realm of new economic specializations, where civil governance was increasingly strengthened, in the midst of a cultural space and uses that were common to European Christendom. From this mutually encouraging relationship, intellectuals and civil servants, ambitious for ecclesiastical or civil power and a comfortable position, were born—as Jacques Le Goff would have it—. They were at the foundation and development of the modern State, priding themselves in their distance from manual labor. The 12th century man of culture, who taught and wrote, is a city man.

The desire for a strong corporate identity encouraged the adoption of rituals of initiation—always degrading—which were often endorsed in institutional statutes, with the participation of professors or university authorities.

The first information that we have on these rituals come from central and northern Europe, and they refer to the celebration of a ceremony entitled *depositio cornuum*. This ceremony began with the consideration of the new students as absolute *others*, not persons but beasts, and it included the presence of horns, teeth, and fur.

One of the earliest and most interesting documentations of a *depositio cornuum* comes from the University of Heidelberg—the oldest of the German universities, founded in 1386—the *Manuale Scholarium*, an 1841 text that is organized in 18 dialogues held between two university students, Camillus and Bartoldus. It seems that this document's purpose was to serve as an introduction to the use of Latin.

The *Manual* begins with the arrival of a first-year student who is assisted by a *magister*. After enrolling, the young man leaves his *depositio* is left in the hands of the teacher, in whose rooms it will take place—chapter II—led by the veteran students Camillus and Bartoldus under the supervision of some of the university's teachers and doctors.

In the Central-European terminology, a new student was a *Beanus.* In his famous *Glossarium mediæ et infimæ latinitatis,* Du Cange (1883-87) defines beanus as a "*Novellus Studiosus, qui ad Academiam nuper accesit*". Robert Francis Seybolt (1921: 18) sees in this term an acrostic: *Beanus Est Animal Nesciens Vitam Studiosorum*, Beanus Is an Animal Ignorant of Student Life.

The ceremony begins with the characterization of the *beanus*: his human deconstruction. We are told that the room smells as if it contained "a putrefying body, or a goat, the foulest of beasts," as Camillus remarks that:

> "(…) this beast has horns, a bull's ears, and its pointy teeth threaten to bite like a wild boar. It has a curved nose like an owl's beak, and red, rheumy eyes that are full of ire and threat

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> (…) [N]ever had I contemplated a beast that showed such cruelty and savagery in the absoluteness of its animal deformity" (Seybolt, 1921: 24).

Having thus established a relationship with the devil, as Camillus concludes by saying, Bartoldus begins his imprecations:

> "Will you scratch me with those claws? Shall I protect myself with armor to receive you? What are you doing sitting down, donkey? O good God, see him, stiff as a rod and unashamed even though all eyes are upon him. Look at him, he is suddenly exhausted! He has weak legs (…) See how the hair at the back of his neck is bristling" (Seybolt, 1921: 25).

Camillus chastises the beanus for being a scoundrel and pretending to poison the teacher's glass of wine with his beak, which is more poisonous than that of a basilisk.

> "You should drink muddy water with the cattle. Put your snout on the water like a quadruped, satiating your damned thirst like a pack horse that is exhausted after a long day of work. Slurp the water with your swollen lips" (Seybolt, 1921: 26).

At that moment, Bartoldus cruelly tries to break the boy by invoking his mother and the tears that she would spill if she knew the situation in which her boy finds himself, "treated like an ox." After digging into his emotions, he proclaims, "I would let the devil take the university rather than let you in it!", following this with more degradations: "O *beanus*, o donkey, o foul goat, o toad, empty zero, shapeless being, absolute nullity! May the devil cover and rub your feet and your belly with filth!" Finishing with, "You do not answer, you only mumble; you do not speak Latin, you merely lisp badly, owing perhaps to your mental confusion and the violent emotions that assail you" (Seybolt, 1921: 27).

It is then that the transformation of the young man begins. Bartoldus suggests that a doctor should be called, but then he decides that Camillus is sufficiently versed in medical knowledge:

> "You know, Cam, of course, how to pull out the horns of mad Bacchants, and the fangs. As is customary, the ears will be cut with knives, and we will also cure its weak eyes. Look at those hairs sticking out of its nose! We will pull those out first. It will be hard to cut such a long and bristly beard, however, since you have a sharp blade, carve it as if they were oak splinters. And then he shall confess his crimes. Only then, the teacher will remove that offensive odor, and he can become a member of our brotherhood" (Seybolt, 1921: 27).

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After many pages, the time comes to saw off the horns. Theatrically displaying instruments, ointments, pills, and other utensils, they carry out the transformation. The *beanus* is offered the possibility to confess, lest he die in the process. The poor appearance of the young man—whose name, Ioannes, is now revealed—encourages the veteran students to propose the final solution: “hang him from a rope over the inn’s stinking cesspit. If that calms and lulls him, he will regain his health.” They pretend to take his confession, and his sins are stealing geese and chickens from the peasants; the rape of a virgin; perjury for denying this last crime; and shameless behavior during the rite of the *depositio*. His penitence is to “ingratiate himself with his teachers through a generous dinner” (Seybold, 1921: 31-32).

Another record comes from the University of Wittenberg, a dialogue written by Andreas Meinhard de Pyrnis Lypsensis, in which a former student speaks with a freshman, and in whose thirteenth chapter we find a complete description of a *depositio cornuti* (Schreiber, 1945). According to Silanos (2012: 294), this text is based on *Latinumydeoma pro novellis studentibus,* written by Paul Schneevogel —Paulus Niavis— in Leipzig.

Meinhard offers other acrostics for *beanus*: “BEllua Amata NUSquam” and “Bestia Equalis Asino Nihil Vero Sciens”, and he describes a beanus as a “an ignorant man who carries in his bag a comb and a spoon, may presume to know much, but knows nothing and is but a mere beast who tolerates no one” (Schreiber, 1945: 25). Meinhard invokes Ovid, Horace, and Boethius to imbue the *depositio* ceremony with the desired solemnity, arguing that said ceremonies began in the Academy of Athens and that they are necessary “to eradicate deep-rooted coarse and gross customs, and inculcate others, honorable and decent” (Schreiber, 1945: 25).

The specific deposition that he describes begins after the freshman presents himself before the rector, pays his dues, takes the oath, and is inscribed in the enrollment book. “That afternoon, a doctor, some teachers, graduates, and students, ten in total, gathered in the bedroom to celebrate the ceremony.” The *beanus* is reminded that it is better to be initiated by the graduates and teachers than to fall in the hands of the students, who treat first-year students like “wolves treat lambs or eagles, doves” (Schreiber, 1945: 25).

The ritual action transpired in a filthy space where excrement was present, amid permanent allusions to the young man’s stench. He was brushed down and rubbed with ointments and absurd plasters, and his confession was taken. His sins were lubricious: “Virginem super fornacem cane vidente deflorasse confiteris”, and he was ridiculed for having female or hermaphroditic attributes: “sagging and menstruous breasts”; with a “large and moist uterus” … “wherein to engender the small

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beanus". Afterwards, large tongs were used to remove his false fangs, and red-hot pincers to cut his nose hairs; a file was used to correct the imperfections of his body, and a drill extracted feces from his hears. Finally, his horns were sawed off. This was the moment of the oration of transformation:

> "By the authority with which I am vested, commended, and tasked, I absolve you of the most vile and fetid condition of the *beanus*, so that you may enter the noblest brotherhood of the students, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. May fortune and happiness accompany you" (Schreiber, 1945: 27).

The ritual ends with the *beanus's* goliardic baptism—wine poured on his head—and his invitation of those who initiated him to a costly and abundant banquet.

As Howitt (1841) has shown, this type of ceremony was extended across Central and Northern Europe. Karl Von Raumer (1859) describes this institutionalized practice by looking at the description of a ceremony from the University of Upsala (1716) in a story of Friekle the Swede. It was headed by a *depositio* officer, a *Depositor*, and, as demanded by the university's statutes—which were similar in other institutions, such as those of Erfurt, Prague, and Greifswald—an official certificate was granted upon its completion. Such a document was necessary to prevent a student who transferred to another university from undergoing the ceremony for a second time. In any case, in the Upsala ceremony, freshmen's faces were painted black; horns and large ears were attached to their hats; boars' tusks were introduced in their mouths; and they were covered in black capes. Thus disguised, the *beani* were conducted, like cattle, from the *depositio's* chamber to the hall, where the spectators awaited. The Depositor stood them in a circle and made fun of them with gestures and reverences while he delivered a half-jocose, half-serious speech in which he spoke about the vices and follies of youth, and the need for them to improve, to acquire discipline, to become polished. As he spoke, he removed the porcine tusks, the donkey's ears, and the horns. Finally, he pulled a brush from his bag and rubbed their bellies, their backs, and their sides, saying to each: "In this same way, literature and the arts will polish your mind". At the end, he poured water over their heads and rubbed them with a coarse towel. In other universities, the rite ended before the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, who examined the *beani* and consecrated them by placing in their mouths a bit of salt, a symbol of wisdom. The final purification was accomplished pouring wine over their heads (Von Raumer, 1859: 37-39).

These descriptions allow us to see the rituals' formative elements, with their diverse cultural origins, their links with the Classical world, and resignifications that were coherent with the *new* university context.

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Depositio ceremonies had several precedents. According to Salvatore (1908: 737-738), in canonical law, a ceremony of deposition deprived a member of the ministry and privileges of the clergy, and his degradation was symbolized by the stripping of his ecclesiastical vestments. Depositions were also used to defenestrate monarchs in effigy (Morales Muñiz, 1988).

An antecedent more closely related with the university was the *depositio barbae*, a Graeco-Latin rite of passage from youth to adulthood, in which the first shaving of the beard was taken as a symbol of youth's manliness. In Ancient Rome, a boy ceremonially removed his protective amulet or *bulla*, and changed his *toga praetexta* for a *toga virilis* at around the age of 14, after which he and a retinue of friends and relatives went to the forum in a public ceremonial display of his passage onto a new social age. The liminal period of youth culminated with the *depositio barbae*, at around 20 to 24 years of age. In Rome, the hairs of the young man's first beard were offered to the family's favored divinities, along with other sacrifices, and a feast was held, especially during the imperial period. Petronius, Suetonius and Ovid wrote about this practice, which was especially important among the elites. Montserrat (1993) describes it in the Egyptian world.

It would be a mistake to think that in the late medieval period these rituals took place only in universities. *Depositions* were part of the initiatic rituals celebrated in urban guilds for their new members. As a matter of fact, the typographers' guild, which was economically tied to the university, practiced a very similar ritual (Blades, 1885). And, as Le Goff has pointed out, the flourishing of medieval universities was linked to the impulse experienced by cities in the eighth century. Universities were vindicated as places for "artisans of the spirit", who sought to form "corporations of students and teachers" (1996: 70). The University, in keeping with the spirit of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, claimed for itself a restricted identity, with a particular set of practices and privileges, its own hierarchical order, and the logical monopoly of knowledges associated with its degrees and positions: a guild of its own.

Symbolically, the *depositio* delved its roots in the Classical tradition of an identity reclaimed: the university was supposed to provide a transformative experience through which the savage nature of the uninitiated was overcome. It was the old struggle between the primal *ferocitas*— precultural nature, born as animals—and *humanitas*, the true human condition, attainable only through knowledge. After all, "[t]he idea of man in European history is expressed in the way in which he is distinguished from the animal. Animal irrationality is adduced as proof of human dignity" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972: 245). The principles subsumed in this opposition have also appeared under other names, such as *rusticitas* vs. *civilitas*. Rustics, as uncouth brutes, represented

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a sort of savage human. In the late Medieval, early Renaissance vision, the cultural *other* that was opposed to the university man was a hybrid creature that was both animal and peasant: it threaded together the characteristics of the beast (strength, incapacity of controlling bodily fluids and excretions, irrationality…) and the stereotypes associated with rustics (lewd, unintelligent, filthy, lazy, selfish…). Therefore, through their hard manual labor and quotidian contact with beasts, a peasant lived permanently as a *beanium*. The definition given in Wittenberg to the beanus—an ignoramus who carried in his bag a comb and a spoon—is none other than that of a peasant. This association of ideas underlies the term "villain", which originally meant that a person came from a village—a nucleated settlement in a rural area—and ended up denoting an evil, disloyal, cruel person. *Humanitas* is thus characterized by its lack of innateness. The acquisition of culture is presented in its etymological literary meaning: as an arduous labor of cultivation. And as *humanitas* is equated with *civilitas*, it is tied to the city.

Horace, Lucian, Terence, Plutarch, Quintilian, and later, Petrarch, provided the Classical theoretical framework that sheltered institutionalized hazing rituals. With this basis, the unenrolled youth is perceived as an impulsive, untamed animal. Indeed, as Howitt (1841) shows, the names given to freshmen were "animalized" all across Europe: in Spain, *novato* reminds the speaker of the word for calf (*novillo*); in France, they were called yellow beaks (*becjaune*) in England, greenhorns; in Germany, foxes (*fuchs*); etc. It is their passage through the *Studium Generale* what frees them from the paradoxical condition of natural savage by taming them in order to cultivate, and thus, humanize them (Velayos Castelo, 2013). Hazing was the first step in this "transformation" (Le Goff, 1996: 83-84).

From a psychological and an anthropological point of view, victimizers must dehumanize their victims before humiliating and abusing them. Viewed as animals, the first-year student's mistreatment is regarded as necessary and effective to bring about their transformation. The most representative symbols of the ritual—horns, teeth, beaks, and hooves—make this apparent. The principal element, the horns, were used all across Europe in degrading and punitive practices such as the *cencerradas*, and other subversive rituals related to carnival culture. Bajtín (1995: 198) describes how in the Renaissance, legacies of the ancient Feast of Fools survived in cities such as Rouen and Evreuz, where *Societas cornardorum* elected an abbey of the cuckolds and organized carnival processions. Related to the "women's quarrel", he also talks of the substitution of the useless and old, cuckolded husband by the new and vigorous young lover, a transference of symbols with the pertinent adaptations (1995: 216).

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Another implicit matter in the *depositiones* is the obvious maleness of the university student, as shown by the references to rapes and deflowering in the *beani's* confessions. Moreover, the hybrid condition of the *beanus*—characteristic of the liminal phases of rites of passage—was augmented by the hermaphroditism implied by his supposed possession of certain female organs. As Mazo Karras points out (2002: 63), the feminine was part of the negative, pernicious state from which the intellectual, masculine transformation would free the *beanus*. Therein the mentions of the Bacchants, the women in Dionisius' wild court who engaged in debauched, mystical rites.

References to the caprine stench add another sexual component. This smell is especially strong in male goats, whose odoriferous glands liberate pheromones that favor females' heat (Zarco Quintero and Álvarez Ramírez, 2001). There is behind this another suggestion of hybridity, that of satyrs, mythological beings known for their lechery. Indeed, the roguish sexual mores of students were part of university towns' character.

To conclude this section, let us remind the reader that German records mention two variants of the *depositios*: an institutional ceremony in which professors, authorities, and veteran students participated; and the purely unofficial one carried out only by students, which was crueler and more violent. This "spontaneous" ceremony evidences a constant in student practices that we will return to later: the attempt to conquer the ritual and incorporate it into their particular social segment, that of the young, who act behind, or against, adult society and/or the authorities.

In the rest of modern Europe, it was common to find short freshmen whose haircuts symbolized their separation from a life of savagery, their domestication, and sometimes their ears were also cut (as is mentioned in Wittenberg). The statutes of the *New College* of Oxford mention shaving (1400; and 2002: 70).

This introduces us to the second point: the weight of popular culture in hazing rituals.

6. Old Regime popular culture: transfers and legacies

Universities were invariably steeped in the social and cultural milieu of their historical and spatial environs, including popular culture and its various fetes and celebrations, which coexisted with the official sacred holidays. In fact, it was the culture of an age rather than of a class, which is precisely what encouraged almost grotesque blends. A large part of the different initiatory or hazing practices are linked to the cultural repertory of the carnival. This means that they also tie into the cultural substrate of Roman paganism—with its inevitable syncretism—which explains the coincidence of

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popular practices and significations across the different European countries (Caro Baroja, 1992; Heers, 1988).

The 15th and 16th centuries reveal great continuity in festive practices. Bajtín (1995) argued that popular daily life during those centuries was open to and marked by collective celebrations and noisy rituals in which violence and merriment mixed naturally. In some of its more powerful manifestations, it is difficult to separate the popular from the ecclesiastical elements—such is the case with the feasts of fools, the boy bishop celebrations—and this is also the case with hazing rituals.

According to Ginzburg (1982: 20), the threading of popular and patrician culture continued throughout the first half—and probably, the entirety—of the 18th century. But the Protestant and Catholic Reforms, with their constant and regulated penetration of churches, interfered with the elementary forms of everyday life. However, the reach of post-Tridentine ideology and the efforts at cultural homogenization and the purification of rituals, while powerful, and, in the end, effective, could not entirely eliminate the old practices, and change did not come quickly nor without resistance (Kamen, 1998). Centuries, that is, generations, that had embraced and reproduced certain cultural practices, could not be obliterated completely, even if the new ecclesiastical morality and its reformist ministers tried their hardest. This was especially true for several practices linked to carnival, which communally resignified boundaries and order/disorder.

Carnivalesque practices had strong doses of violence. According to Julio Caro Baroja,

> "from a social point of view, what reigned [in carnival] was an established violence, a license to deeds and speech that was adjusted to specific forms, thus the inversion of the normal order of things had a primordial role in the celebration" (Caro Baroja, 1992: 67).

Such behaviors are immediately observable in university hazing, which, in the hands of the students, enacts violence as enjoyment. Such enjoyment is generally one-sided, both materially—for newcomers are expected to pay for food, drink, and merriment—and immaterially, for the laughs of the veterans are obtained at the expense of the first-year students. Students are not preoccupied with subverting an unjust hierarchy or restoring a communal order that is perceived to be at risk, but to maintain an unequal and self-serving order.

Bajtín (1995) explained how Renaissance mockery, what he calls "popular laughter", conforms a sort of grotesque realism that encompasses biblical-liturgical parodies, violence, imprecations, gluttony—inevitable reminder of the Goliards—exploitation, with a concept of the body centered on its orifices and the stomach, mixing the filthy and the fertile, secretions and renewal, with the

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inversion of order. Such elements, with their particular symbolism and ritual language, appear in many historical records on hazing. They are also present in the heterogeneous complex of charivaris, as Caro Baroja (1980) has shown.

Thus, these practices link two seemingly separate universes—the university and the rural village—. When freshmen are recast as beasts, popular conceptions reveal their great staying force and their capacity to invert and grotesquely transform Classical frameworks.

In the Spanish case, one of the first mentions of practices that can be regarded as hazing—and which also contain that beastly characterization—appear in Juan del Encina's 1498 *Aucto del repelón*. In this medieval play, "two shepherds, Piernicurto and Johan Parmás" are "selling their wares in the plaza when certain students arrived, shaved their heads, and did them other, worse mischiefs". The play ends with a carol that summarizes the representation:

> "It's as if I was born today. / I bless and thank God / for not making me a *licenciado* [graduate]! / Happily, we came here / for by our wits we go. / Our masters ought to be scared / of the science that we learn. / Now, everything we have lost / and the donkeys we forgot / for not making me a *licenciado*! / He who makes it to *bachiller* [bachelor/graduate] / later wants to nettle more / but he who would not want to engage / in studies nor learning / will seem to yearn / after having been shorn / and transformed into a bachelor!" (Del Encina, [1509] 2002).

What we have just read is the description of a "shearing" (*repelo*) carried out by a group of students on two shepherds.[2] The victims were thus paradoxically granted the condition of *licenciados*. This metamorphosis that transmogrified them into members of the university community through shearing and grooming was, of course, but a humiliating prank carried out by the students. After all, transfers of uses and meanings are incorporated without contradicting institutional uses and authority, and their functions are modified depending on who carries them out. Through the vulgarization of *depositios* is a para-institutional context, students establish new connections with extended popular practices that are congruous with the dialectical games of *ferocitas* vs. *humanitas* (Rodríguez Gervás, 2008). With great ingenuity, the treatment meted out on the shepherds plays with the double meaning of shearing an animal to mark him, and a punishment given to unruly pupils, to generate a new meaning: the (in this case, transformation into a university student).

[2] Defining "repelar", Sebastián de Covarrubias (1674) says "removing the hair, particularly from the head, a punishment that is often meted out on youngsters", with *repelón* being "the name of said punishment".

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The *repelo*, or shearing, performed in hazings, reveals a transfer of what was a rural custom associated with livestock herding: the shearing and branding of semi-wild horses born during the previous year. Well-known, ongoing examples of this practice in Spain take place in Galicia (*A rapa das bestas*—the shearing of the beasts), and in Huelva (*La saca de las yeguas*—the release of the mares). In the *rapa*, the horses are rounded up and locked in a corral, and the yearlings are wrangled to the ground by the *aloitadores* (fighters), who shear their manes and tails and brand them (in the past, this meant cutting their ears), before releasing them again. It is no coincidence, that in Portuguese, university freshmen, *calouros*, are referred to as *bichos do mato* (beasts of the wild) in Brazil and *bixos* (beasts) in Portugal (Nunes, 2004).

The Heidelberg *depositio* described above mentioned the cutting of the *beanus's* ears. This paralleled the branding of animals as private property, and it signifies the symbolic appropriation of the freshman by the university. The parallels that can be established with the ecclesiastical tonsures and the ample code related to their meanings according to their shape, size, etc., are also evident: such tonsures signified that the tonsured man belonged to Christ and his church.

The *beani* are also groomed or brushed down in the *depositio cornuti*, further associating them with animals. And the description present in the Manuale of the freshman's unintelligible speech adds another element of their animalization: "You do not answer, you only mumble; you do not speak Latin, you merely lisp badly…" (Seybolt, 1921: 27). These words echo old Varro (2010), who spoke of domestic animals as *instrumentum semivocale*, perfect representation of the animalized *beanus*.

In keeping with their representation as animals, first-year students are under the patronage of St. Anton (St. Anthony of Abbot—feast day January 17th), the patron-saint of animals. In Alcalá de Henares, a popular ditty recorded by Asencio González (2004: 50) sang of how new students had their heads shaved on the patron's feast day: "St. Anton, St. Anton, freshmen will be shorn // St. Anton, St. Anton, freshmen to the pylon".

Another humiliation suffered by first-year students during Spain's Golden Age was the so-called "*rueda de nevados*" (volley of snow), in which they were surrounded by upperclassmen who spit at them. This is a case of duplicitous and paradoxical transliteration: on the one hand, spit has been historically associated with scorn—in Spain, spitting was associated with the Jews—but, in Christ's case, an element of miraculous awakening. Mentioned in *El Buscón, El Guzmán de Alfarache*, *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos, El pasajero* and the theatrical sketch *La burla sazonada*, such volleys seem to paradoxically play with the notion of Christ's saliva in a typically carnivalesque mockery. In John 9:6, we find that Jesus placed a finger smeared with earth moistened with his

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saliva upon a blind man's eyes and cured his blindness; and by introducing his fingers, wet with his saliva, in a deaf and mute man's ears and mouth, he cured him (Mark 7: 31-37), speaking his famous *Ephphatha*! (be opened!).

The release from the binds of blindness, deafness, and muteness are parodied in a paraliturgical act of spitting upon the first-year student, who thus receives his particular "cleansing", and, through it, the gifts of vision, hearing, and speech necessary for learning and the arts of oratory. Well-known, even quotidian, meanings and symbols are thus transformed cruelly into a carnivalesque ritual as filtered through the university lens.

Another recurrent practice recorded in Spanish picaresque novels was the so-called patent, and which was none other than an extortion extracted from new students by means of forced treats to food and drink. The sixth meaning given by the Spanish Royal Academy's *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1737) to patent (*patente*) is:

> "the contribution that the older members of an office or occupation force the new to pay. Common amongst university students, the practice extended from there to other institutions".

This patent, with this or other names, was present in hazing practices in universities in Germany (the *depositio* ended with a banquet paid for by the freshmen); France, Portugal, and Spain (Torremocha, 1998: 175). Francisco de Quevedo masterfully describes it in a scene in which Diego Coronel pays and is thus accepted into the student brotherhood or *cofradía*:

> "As soon as it was day, in came all the student pensioners of the house to my master's chamber and demanded their patent. […] Upon receiving it, they began to make a hellish music, crying, Long live our companion! Let him henceforward be admitted into our society and enjoy our ancient privileges! May he share the scabies, the torn clothing, and the hunger that is our lot!" (Quevedo, [1626] 1996: 90-91).

In Castile, there was another customary payment of a patent: a young man who married a woman from another town was made to wine and dine his fellows, as a compensation for his audacious breaking of communal binds (Fernández de Mata, 1997, 2018). Bajtín (1995) links this and many others of this sort to carnival practices of restoration, where conflict and feasting are linked, and food and order restore order, in this case, that of the marriage market. If, like the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1737) suggests, the custom began in the universities, or if, in fact, it arrived at the universities from other spaces, what is clear is that practice transfers took place through and across universities.

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Another habitual practice recorded in Spanish hazing ceremonies —in Salamanca, Alcala and Seville— was the boy bishop, one of the most popular festivities of the medieval Christmas cycle. The boy bishop refers to a festivity in which a youth—in university hazing, a first-year student—was chosen by his companions to represent a bishop, thus mocking ecclesiastical authority. He proffered scatological and ironic sermons, and accompanied by his court, was paid obeisance by all who encountered him. Born in cathedral and monastic schools, this tradition was linked to the festivities of Saint Nicholas, Saint Stephen, and the Holy Innocents. In the university setting, boy bishops and their retinues importuned any person or activity that they met in the streets and got into brawls and fights. Margarita Torremocha (1998) has found evidence of the tradition's continued annoyance of the Valladolid citizenry as late as 1743.

These parodic authorities evince a culture that was profoundly intervened by the ecclesiastical after the Church's efforts at conquering the pagan elements of European societies. The tensions between these two forces had made Hispanic priest Paulus Orosius declare in the fifth century that high culture was the heritage of the city —the realm in which Christianity flourished—while paganism was cornered in the countryside. It was not a matter of legacies, but of cultural practices that informed rural life and that were threaded along with the new customs that were imposed from above. This syncretism, which facilitated Christianization, was not condemned by the Church at first, which in fact encouraged the resignification of pre-existing rituals such as the saturnalia, the feasts of fools, or the king of the bean (Caro Baroja, 1992).

The volleys of spit, blanket-tossing, and blows, other mistreatments all fit in with carnival practices: they are all violent collective chastisements, full or mockery and imprecations. Jeers and scoffing were also central in both carnival and hazing. Covarrubias records the particular terms for the ritual slurs hurled at newcomers: in the University of Alcala, it was "*trato*" (treatment), while in that of Salamanca, it was *matraca*, which is the word for ratchet, a percussion instrument whose name in Spanish is also used to refer to an insistent and annoying noise (1989: 976). The fact that this was the name given to insults and gibes that targeted new students suggests that they were persistent and dogged.

These practices adapt elements of charivaris (also called rough music or shivarees)—always noisy and violent—with which a community expressed its disapproval of certain behaviors. Indeed, even the *depositio cornuti* points to the structure of a charivari: the new student is an outsider (he does not belong to the community); horns are used; he is degradingly paraded (whether on an ass or as

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an ass); he is insulted and gibed; he is covered in ash and pestiferous substances, baptized with wine, etc.

Indeed, let us compare this to a so-called stag hunt described by E.P. Thompson, wherein a victim was made to wear horns on his head (sometimes still bearing pieces of the animal's flesh) and was taken and released in a forest near the town, to be chased by the town's young men who, as a pack of hounds, followed him making a ruckus through streets, squares, and gardens. Thompson underlines the allusion to the diabolical horned beast and the persecuted in this ritual hunt (Thompson and Davis, 2018: 107-108).

In the *depositio*, the *beani* were threatened with being made to drink from a trough or muddy waters, recalling the end of the "riding the stang" punishment in which a victim ended up thrown into a pond after having made to "ride" a mule or a horse backwards (Thompson, 1991). In a skimmington described in the Wiltshire Quarter Sessions of 1618 and analyzed by Thompson (1992: 5), a man was made to ride a horse "with a pair of pots under him, and in them some quantity of brewing grains" while wearing "a white night cap upon his head, two shoeing horns hanging by his ears, a counterfeit beard upon his chin made of a deer's tail, a smock upon the top of his garments". Thompson's reflections regarding these collective punitive practices are translatable to the context of university hazing. First, dramatic forms are used, habitually paraliturgical processions. Second, practices are adapted or combined, according to the occasion or object, with relatively contained violence, for threats of greater violence are not necessarily carried out. Third, they are acts of public opprobrium. Participants, masked or uncovered, act in what amounts to a sort of trial in which the community exposes the accused's trespasses and openly scorns him. And fourth, consequences are long-lived, for victims "cannot free themselves from mockery or humiliation" (Thompson, 2018: 114).

As a rule, charivaris were carried out by the community's young men, and it is to this cohort that we will turn to in the following section.

7. Young men as a cultural group

Until industrialization forever changed towns and villages' social fabric, the cohort of young unmarried men had a significant weight in the life of European populations, particularly rural ones. Moreover, from the 15th to the 17th centuries, people seldom married before the ages of 20 to 25 (Davis 1993: 92). With students entering universities at a very young age, between14 and 17, many young men lived a lengthy period of wild bachelorhood (Torremocha, 1998: 21).

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Young, unmarried men acted as a sort of anonymous choral voice that meted out collective punishments against those who threatened the established morality. They were thus the guardians of local identity and communally established rights and privileges, acting collectively under consuetudinary societal structures (García Herrero, 2018: 37). They also were the driving force behind many of the intra and extra communal conflicts and rivalries.

We have seen them collecting a patent from out-of-towners; they were also the main stars of the charivaris carried out against those who contravened the unwritten rules that governed a tight marriage market, particularly the marriages of old men with young maidens, or marriages between widows and widowers. In the first case, because it was unfair competition—an old man, with an established livelihood, was a better catch than a young man who began his adult life with the bare minimum, and in the second case, because the inheritance of preexisting children was threatened. Certain marriages with out-of-towners could also merit a charivari.

The behavior of a town's young men gave it its fame. A perceived belligerence provided by young men who violently upheld the —perceived or real— local rights and privileges was one of the few mechanisms that a community had at its disposal vis-à-vis outside agents.

It was also young, unmarried men who organized certain communal festivities—feasts, carnival, courtships, serenading girls, adorn balconies with branches, march and may festivals, etc.—, and they had a significant role in the adaptation of carnivalesque uses in the configuration of other collective practices (Schindler, 1996, p. 316). Carnival was indeed a space in which youth found itself celebrated, insofar as the inversion of social roles led to the vindication of the new and lowly. Youth cultures in the Old Regime included mechanisms of social depressurization, in lives characterized by tension, strict power relations, and harsh economic and labor demands. The excesses committed by the young men were usually tolerated by their elders, with a "boys will be boys" sentiment that recalled their own youth and regarded the excesses as the last acts of freedom and wildness allowed before the full assumption of adulthood. Davis argues that "youth abbeys", as she called them, "survived under a kind of judicial tolerance" (1993: 107).

Ruiz Astiz (2012) describes an example in modern Navarre, where the courts saw several complaints filed regarding the disorders and excesses of groups of young men whose nightly rampages were characterized by the destruction and/or theft of carts and fruit from orchards, and the defilement of house fronts with cow dung or rotten produce. Playing loud and dissonant tunes, they reproduced the charivaris' insolence, as they humiliated and dishonored particular community members. They also wore irreverent masks and costumes, picked fights, and confronted the

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authorities. Such acts were worse during carnival when they attacked the very bases of the social hierarchy.

The demeanor and behavior of towns and villages' young men greatly resembled that of university students. They were violent, insolent, quarrelsome bullies, fond of wearing masks and costumes, and, although illegal, would often carry weapons and wear ostentatious garments as they harassed the local population and defied the authorities with their demands and their pranks (Rodríguez-San Pedro Bezares, 2001). As their village counterparts, they extort collations, banquets, and coin from newcomers, forming fearful gangs whose vandalism and abuses was often denounced by indignant townsfolk. As narrated by Mateo Alemán (1980 [1604], 106), members of such gangs went out

> "at night looking to stab the *corregidor* for the sheer pleasure of it; they taught me a thousand ways to cheat on cards; and, since the carteta's game [a card-game] was quite common, joining encounters and chance, knowing how to go wherefore opportunity came, and a thousand other tricks, with which I fleeced the freshmen".

It is clear that a large part of university students' mischief was, but a reproduction of the mischief wrought by young men in towns and villages. It was part of an age group' culture, a cohort that was aware of the traditional lenience granted to its excesses. Charivaris, *tratos*, volleys of spit, *matracas*, patents and forced "invitations", as well as boy bishop rituals, challenges to authorities, the abuse of young women/girls, including their recruitment for alterating the decisions over the distribution of chairs and the examinations… this was all part of the same culture, albeit with the inevitable differences and additions that universities and an urban context entailed. These behaviors, characterized by caprice, violence, defiance, rashness, and rampant hormones, are part of a "reserve of punitive or purifying traditions" that were socially accepted (Davis, 1993*:* 185), having become customs by the strength of their constancy and the obstinacy of their participants.

8. Conclusion

Hazing's multiplicity of origins is more complex than what a schematic analysis such as this suggests, but we can conclude that the three originating spaces outlined in this paper conform a common cultural background of numerous shared elements.

The first written evidence of university hazing coincides with the construction of a corporate and singularized identity during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Through his dehumanization, the first-year student is culturally *othered* as a beast—a brutalized rustic. When he first arrives at the university, the freshman, greenhorn, *craso*, *tyron* or *beanus* represents the

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opposite of the *humanitas/civilitas* principles that mark the spiritual horizon embodied by the university members vis-à-vis every other social group.

For the first-year student, hazings were degrading, painful, disgusting, cruel, and exploitative, while for the veterans—the *provecta*—and their accomplices, they were entertaining spectacles in which they profited from extorsion and enjoyed the exhilaration of power attained through violence and the humiliation of others.

Medieval cloister customs, Renaissance aspirations, the weight of youth culture and popular culture: they are all mediated by a common element, and that is a high degree of social violence. I all of these references once can see the cultural naturalization of mistreatment. Modern societies (15th-18th centuries) are characterized by high thresholds of violence permeating every relation and context, violence that is publicly celebrated and contemplated as a spectacle: physical punishment, public executions, autos-da-fé… The cruelty exercised against new university students by other students and by the institution itself were a distilled translation of the harshness of daily life in contemporary society. As Nunes (2004: 137) has argued, very little distinguished university violence from the violence practiced by a strictly hierarchical and carnivalesque society. The behavior of capricious, cruel, and quarrelsome students characterized the university environment, going beyond hazing practices. Student tumults and belligerence, as Torremocha (1998: 161) and Hernández Sánchez (2014) have shown, erupted in several moments throughout the year, particularly during certain feast days, and informed academic life and life in university towns and cities.

The quotidian character of violence did not entail its full acceptance, as attested by the multiple protests, critiques, and lamentations written against it, and the litigations started in courts against its excesses. We are not always sensible to the presence of cruelty in history, especially when it is garbed in the robes of tradition. But the longevity of cruel and abusive behaviors does not redeem them from what they are. Ignoring mistreatment and violence that humiliated, hurt, shamed, exploited, and traumatized thousands of individuals, is an exercise in complicity with the abusers of the past. There is a yawning gap between the historical contextualization and study of hazing practices, and their justification or resignification as simple pranks between students.

The woe caused by such acts, and the awareness that they were utterly unnecessary in an intellectualized comprehension of student life, were understood by contemporaries in every period and in every campus. They were habitually gathered in memoirs and novels, such as those recorded by Alonso in *El donado hablador*:

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> "I was amazed that lads who were as tall as their fathers would engage in such tomfoolery; but they told me that it was an ancient custom, and that everybody had to go through this, as if such absurd nonsense could not be avoided and renounced, for, indeed, the old man was first a lad, and to go from one place to another, one must traverse the middle; notwithstanding that, in good courtesy, newcomers who arrive at a town should be lovingly welcomed by the residents, not mistreated in word and deed, which is a thing for barbaric, inconsiderate people lacking in reason and purpose" (Alcalá Yáñez, 1980 [1624], pp. 22-23).

This character penned by Jerónimo de Alcalá Yánez, was not alone in his critiques. Suárez de Figueroa stated that "the jokes and ridicule suffered by the freshmen are not only exquisite, but harrowing, and the most refined slickers break their lashes upon their victims' suffering" (Suárez De Figueroa, 1945 [1617]: 214). Lope de Vega also voices these lamentations in "El bobo del colegio": How many discomforts / from discourteous students / I have endured in two months / of tormenting cruelties" (Lope de Vega, 2002 [1620]: 42).

Evidently, the *naturalization* of university hazing was produced by the acknowledgement of its frequency, not by the acceptance of its utility or legitimacy.

Under the mantle of being initiatory rituals or popular roguery, university hazing has been, first and foremost, violent, and traumatic experiences. Some research in cultural history have shown how underprivileged sectors of society often used certain modes of violence, particularly in particular festivities or marked times, as a means to protest and contest exploitation, poverty, or cultural asphyxiation. Many of the clashes and uprisings produced in the heat of carnivals had that background of overwhelmed frustration or revindication.

Most historians who have studied student life in the Old Regime have seen in hazing another mechanism of social depressurization that provided an outlet for pent-up, latent violence. As we have seen, there were indeed in these societies cultural structures that favored the exercise of this secondary violence, through institutional channels, or through the cultural transfer and resignification of particular customs and behaviors. Indeed, on some occasions, students used mockery and disruptive behaviors to express their discontent. And certainly, some ceremonies had initiatory values assigned to them. But what the facts show is that hazing practices and rituals were an end in themselves. As such, they were neither a mechanism of protest or contestation vis-à-vis conflicts or unfair privileges, nor a mechanism to integrate freshmen into university life. As

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Quevedo's *Buscón* shows, wealthy students who paid were exempt from the abuse, while the rest suffered lengthy affronts and extorsions.

One of the most disturbing elements of the long history of hazing is that it reveals an undesirable element of the human condition: that many among us enjoy evil. This is confirmed by multiple psychological studies. Julia Saw's concept of "everyday sadism" (2019: 32-35) is applicable to ordinary individuals who feel pleasure when they hurt others. The degree of damage can be great or minuscule, and it is practiced *naturally* in everyday situations (Avilés Martínez, 2006; Guimarães and da Silva Cabral, 2019).

The path to evil begins with the collectivization of the self: subsuming oneself in a strong group allows one to abandon individuality—and individual responsibility, accountability—to act according to what the group dictates. Those who are outside the group are othered as enemies, rivals, inferiors, non-persons. The other is the compendium of all that is horrible and inhuman, and their defamation is closely followed by the euphoria at their degradation and attacks that leads to their detention or humiliation.

Historic university hazing practices were constituted by complex and heterogeneous elements, but which were all degrading and humiliating. Their analysis and the confirmation of their antiquity and extension should not be taking as factors that legitimate them as "traditions". They were, first and foremost, abuse.

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HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER

Fernández De Mata, I. (2020). 'Reins Aand A Whip Make A Good Beast': The Cultural And Historical Roots of University Hazing. International Humanities Studies, 7(4), 1-24.

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