

la rivista di **en**gramma
2016

132–133

La Rivista di Engramma
132-133

La Rivista di
Engramma
Raccolta

direttore
monica centanni

La Rivista di Engramma
a peer-reviewed journal
www.engramma.it

Raccolta numeri **132-133** anno **2016**
132 gennaio 2016
133 febbraio 2016
finito di stampare febbraio 2020

sede legale
Engramma
Castello 6634 I 30122 Venezia
edizioni@engramma.it

redazione
Centro studi classicA luav
San Polo 2468 I 30125 Venezia
+39 041 257 14 61

©2020
edizioni**engramma**

ISBN carta 978-88-31494-14-4
ISBN digitale 978-88-31494-15-1

L'editore dichiara di avere posto in essere le dovute attività di ricerca delle titolarità dei diritti sui contenuti qui pubblicati e di aver impegnato ogni ragionevole sforzo per tale finalità, come richiesto dalla prassi e dalle normative di settore.

133

febbraio 2016

LA RIVISTA DI ENGRAMMA N. 133

Centanni | Decreus | De Laude | Giovannelli | Pedersoli | Rimini
Roberti | Rubino

ORESTEA 2.0

A CURA DI ALESSANDRA PEDERSOLI E STEFANIA
RIMINI

DIRETTORE
monica centanni

REDAZIONE
mariaclara alemanni, elisa bastianello, maria bergamo, giulia bordignon, emily verla bovino, giacomo calandra di roccolino, nicole cappellari, olivia sara carli, giacomo cecchetto, silvia de laude, francesca romana dell'aglio, simona dolari, emma filipponi, nicola noro, marco paronuzzi, alessandra pedersoli, danielle pisani, stefania rimini, daniela sacco, antonella sbrilli, elizabeth enrica thomson

COMITATO SCIENTIFICO
lorenzo braccesi, maria grazia ciani, georges didi-huberman, alberto ferlenga, kurt w. forster, fabrizio lollini, paolo morachiello, lionello puppi, oliver taplin

© 2019

edizioni**engramma**

La Rivista di Engramma n. 133 | febbraio 2016

www.engramma.it

SEDE LEGALE | Associazione culturale Engramma, Castello 6634, 30122 Venezia, Italia

REDAZIONE | Centro studi classicA Iuav, San Polo 2468, 30125 Venezia, Italia

Tel. 041 2571461

this is a peer-reviewed journal

L'Editore dichiara di avere posto in essere le dovute attività di ricerca delle titolarità dei diritti sui contenuti qui pubblicati e di aver impegnato ogni ragionevole sforzo per tale finalità, come richiesto dalla prassi e dalle normative di settore.

SOMMARIO

- 7 | ORESTEA 2.0
a cura di Alessandra Pedersoli e Stefania Rimini
- 17 | GHOSTS EVOKING GHOSTS
by Monica Centanni
- 37 | DIONYSUS, A TWOFOLD MASTER OF CEREMONY IN JAN FABRE'S *MOUNT OLYMPUS*
Freddy Decreus
- 49 | IL RISVEGLIO DEL MITO
a cura di Stefania Rimini
- 57 | RELOADING CLITENNESTRA*
Stefania Rimini
- 65 | ORESTE IN BRIANZA
Maddalena Giovannelli
- 69 | GASSMAN, PASOLINI E I FILOLOGI. *ORESTIADE* A SIRACUSA 1960: SAGGIO-DOCUMENTARIO
a cura di Monica Centanni e Margherita Rubino (2005).
- 103 | *MYSTERIUM PASOLINI: TRA PETROLIO E CALDERÓN*
Bruno Roberti

DIONYSUS, A TWOFOLD MASTER OF CEREMONY IN JAN FABRE'S *MOUNT OLYMPUS*

Freddy Decreus

Mount Olympus, a twenty-four hours performance to glorify the cult of tragedy, confronted its audiences with an endless stream of metamorphosing bodies carried away by time and bathing in fields of energy. It was a production that led all of us, spectators, into a mystifying landscape of myths and dreams, passion and sleep, that, at the end, one day and one night later, turned into a place of exaltation and euphoria, making us sing and bring a joyful ode to the courage it takes to be alive, fully human and energetic.

From a thematic point of view, we witnessed the mythic birth of man, we scrolled over Greece's darkest tragedies and passed by the highlights of the (neo-classicist and romantic) reception of Antiquity. Mostly, however, we got suffocated in awful kinds of hell and damnation, or to put it simply, we met our fellow-creatures in a long series of appalling and inflated egos. In any event, what we by all means had to do was to forget 'the beauty of fair Greece' that took pride in Edgar Allan Poe's ode *To Helen* (1831) or to tone down 'le miracle grec' that amazed and fulfilled so deeply Ernest Renan (1883). Accordingly, we also had to assess the political or ideological clichés that, all through history, had manipulated so cleverly our deepest human longings. Nothing so delightful and appealing to watch on the stage are myths we know so well, yet, nothing so difficult to grasp are their meaning and the reasons for their creation. After all, myths deeply penetrate the darkness that surrounds the desires formulated by beings that hardly understand themselves.

Though thematic choices were an important issue in this production, the psychoenergetic experience it generated even played a more significant part. Somehow and somewhere, it was the whole of our spectator's body that was captivated, since we felt an amazing somesthetic seduction operated through this body. We experienced that, somewhere deep inside of us (or was it spread out all over our cells?) something did touch and affect us and brought along a kind of metamorphosis that was hard to estimate and resist. Of course, the unprecedented ways that time has been expanded and condensed, evaporating all logical and chronological answers, repeating and enlarging itself in circles and waves, brought us into a state of loss between being and not-being, knowing and not-knowing, an experience that caused both the fall of old prejudices and the rise of a new type of consciousness.

The question to be treated in this issue of *Engramma* concerns the opposition between Apollo and Dionysus. In this labyrinthic production where homeless bodies were multiplied and time was melting, did an opposition of this kind still hold? Without a doubt, the main and leading character of this performance was Dionysus, the whole climate Dionysian, but in how far this very unique *Gesamtkunstwerk* had something to do with the well known couple Greek gods or Romantic aesthetic principles?

In what follows, I would like to ask attention for a new perspective that is embedded in some major transitions in the field of both the human and the natural sciences. The explicit use that Jan Fabre made of Dionysus clearly departed from the new paradigms of post-structuralism in the human sciences and new physics/new biology (Sheldrake 1981, Wilber 2000, Lipton 2006) in the natural sciences. That is why his approach staged Dionysus as a twofold master of ceremony who, in two different scientific fields, introduced radical changes that, in the end, came together in a grandiose moment of synthesis.

It is within the frame of a double sense of knowing, an indirect and more cognitive one that operates through the making of myths and stories (expressed in language and theories), and a more direct and holistic one (everything that exists is intrinsically related to the fabric of the whole) that I would like to question the old dichotomy between Apollo and Dionysus. Indeed, it is here, at the crossroad between myth and ritual, body and soul, spirituality and science that Fabre radically renovated the old cliché-like opposition between the two Greek gods.

In this production, on the one hand, there surely is myth and tragedy, stories about ourselves, products of language written down and handed over, generations long, within the Western cultural tradition. These narratives are the offspring of the kind of imagination and information we have cultivated of ourselves, cognitive and mental accounts of our ways of seeing/listening/feeling/reading, tainted though by the changing views we had on language and sign, myth and narrative, science and (classical) cognition. In this framework, myths always are built upon narrative patterns set up for the search of Self and Other, ways of making sense of a world that apparently is senseless by itself.

On the other hand, as Fabre notes himself, there is also this “forgotten language” obeying “to a different logic” when “we dream like a writer directing his astral body in his own dreams” (Fabre 2015, p.15), in fact an exercise in imagining worlds that cohere as integral wholes and transcend the hitherto known limits of time and space, as mentioned by Laszlo in his search for a ‘Reenchantment of the Cosmos’ (Lazlo 2006). Surely, the amazing reactions generated by this production, ending as they do in an explosion of energy and ecstasy raise questions about our position in and belonging to time and space, to physical and astral bodies, and hence to the interconnectedness of everything in the cosmos. Ever since quantum physics replaced the older mechanistic and materialistic worldview by a newer consciousness where energy plays the leading part, the two cultures model (‘scientists’ versus ‘humanists’) is no longer seen in terms of irreconcilable oppositions. Indeed, the latest findings in quantum physics reveal a closer convergence between all things in the micro – and makrokosmos. Or, as noticed by Kingsley L. Dennis: “Human thought in the twenty-first century needs to work toward a new model that immerses the human being within a vibrant, energetic universe” (Lazlo, Dennis 2012, p. 37). It is likely that energy, at work at all possible levels of knowing, reveals how mankind can understand and develop itself as an ever evolving species that, very consciously, can take part in this unfinished project, called human life. When not matter, but energy constitutes the new research programme to investigate the nature of man and cosmos, all human activities have to be reconsidered under this umbrella.

Moreover, the general effect that *Mount Olympus* had on its spectators resulted from a double activity that was in line with aspects that Dionysus, already in Antiquity, was associated with. Indeed, taking us on an unpredictable journey through ourselves, this ‘over three thousand years

old god' (Seaford 2006, p. 3) partly proceeded along perceptual-cognitive, partly along psychosomatic and psychoenergetic paths. As far as the classical approach of myth and tragedy is concerned, we have to consider first the indirect mode of knowing things, one that implies a subject/object split that needs language and symbols to express and consider itself. For sure, we can only produce mythical stories about ourselves, when an indirect way (a story) and a detour over language is guiding and helping us. But, of course, over the course of years, many different redirections of the mind have been tried out, some of them consolidated by religion and ideology and resulting into fundamentalist beliefs.

On the other hand, some ways of knowing also function in a non-local way, causing altered states of consciousness that bridge the subject/object split and stimulate brain resonances with the whole universe and timeless time, the world of Jung's collective unconscious and his *Unus Mundus* (the world of rituals, shamanism, meditation). It is in this perspective that Fabre situates "the intense floating" of "his astral body". As soon as the "nocturnal ritual has begun" and he feels he is "losing contact with daytime phantasms", he "shall tumble down into the depths of oblivion", until his "physical body is timeless and immobile" (Fabre 2015, p. 27).

Telling and staging the myth of Dionysus and all other tragic characters starts from within the limits of classical cognition and symbolic mediation, as it is part of so-called 'normal' states of consciousness and local perception. Yet, whenever it induces phenomena like a personal and collective *katharsis*, the perceptual-cognitive mode is left for a more direct mode of achieving knowledge. Then, Dionysus is no longer outside us, but felt from the inside, no longer bound by symbols and language, but experienced along 'a direct, intuitive knowledge of our own consciousness' (Freckska 2012, p. 93).

Mount Olympus, first and foremost, is a collection of stories that constitute the collective heritage of the West. What the performance was hitting upon was the mythical underpinning of the Western imagination, reinforced and exemplified by the typical Western tragic flavour it engendered (and was not savoured in the East till the 20th century). Surely, for Fabre, myth is no sacred story (Eliade), no story about lost paradises (Christianity) nor a mirror of the external world (Frazer). Today, it is obvious that older times asked older questions which mostly are not rele-

vant to us anymore. It is also obvious that Fabre's interest in myth does not raise teleological or soteriological expectations. Questioning continuously the existential position of a stuttering I, this impossible being obliged by its biological deficit to function as a "creature of deficiency" (*ein Mängelwesen*), as Blumenberg, in the wake of Arnold Gehlen, calls man (Blumenberg 1985), this indeterminate being needs to explain reality to himself, conceptually, mythically, spiritually and scientifically.



Mount Olympus by Jan Fabre

All along his artistic career, Fabre kept wondering why and how this creature, half animal, half angelic, is bound to make stories about himself, his provenience and destination. In doing so, he rather addressed the stage previous to the actual phrasing of myths and focused more on the impenetrable darkness that keeps on accompanying man on his quest for temporal clarity. In *Mount Olympus* he came back, once again, to the 'godlike animal' and its position half between the old reptile that "used to live in the Aegean sea" and provided him with a reptilian brain, and a Higher Self and Super Ego that planted the pineal gland in his brain, Dionysian device by excellence referring to the pine cone that coronated Dionysus' *thyrsos*. Ever since, this mixed being, bewitched and bewildered, lives "half of (his) brain always awake, and the other half asleep", he noted (Fabre 2015, 32). It is this situation of a principal 'bewilderment' (Fabre 2015, p. 15) that, in the eyes of the director, characterizes man in his search for appeasement and meaning in a biological niche he has not been created for. Therefore, mythic stories as indirect testimonies of our

longing to understand reality, will never result into definite answers, on the contrary, they contain the constant obligation to “imagine something new”, as the very last lines of the production suggest (Scene 14.6.): man has to “Take the power back / Enjoy (his) own tragedy / Breathe, just breathe, / And imagine something new” (Fabre, Olyslaegers, Tældeman 2015).

This is the new position of Dionysus as conceived and formulated in the last exorcizing appeal of the performance, a brief summation of the paradigmatical shift the old god has to go through. As part of the poststructuralist revision of myth, Dionysus, former Eastern and Olympian god, stimulates man to “take the power back and to enjoy our (his) own tragedy”, hence to awake from the clichés that kept him prisoner and assume a new symbolizing position. This implies a thorough awakening from the historical and existential position that coloured the ever changing feathers of this “creature of deficiency” (Blumenberg 1985), an instance that, by principle, is obliged to create a narrative identity thanks to which he is supposed to live and breathe. Or, as Dionysus mentioned himself: “Look at your horizon and see the vast cage / in which you have to dwell (...) The gods you like were made by you and your obsession / for punishment”.

For this reason, all along the performance, Dionysus proclaimed himself enraged, ready to turn everyone mad, since mankind never fully understood its *condition humaine*. All the atrocities and horror man continuously produced, never came to an end, and therefore, mythical characters are bound to never meet the bliss of an eternal return home. *Mount Olympus* showed the outcome of this failure in the way that all mythical protagonists will continue to be torn apart in an endless *sparagmos*, ripped further and deeper than ever was the case, impersonating the very rags they were dressed in, flitting and flittering memories of a scattered past.

Hence, what Dionysus was offering them in the beginning of the performance did not point at the happiest side of mankind: “lust, fear, thirst for blood, and ‘killing what you hold dear. / There is no end to this / This history is called ‘the beginning’. And it repeats itself / over and over again” (Scene 3.7.). Some twenty-four hours later, in the final scene 14.4., some threatening words that recalled Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and the raucous voice of Jim Morrison picked up the same ideas and closed the circle: “Is this it? / Is this the end, obnoxious friend? (...) The end, the end. / Is that really true? Perhaps it is. / For no man before / has managed to

stare into a mirror / and accept his true core of being. / He rather goes blind / before the ultimate unkindness / of truth, hidden within him” (Scene 14.4.).

In this articulation of a Dionysus who dispels former clichés that prevented humans to come to real knowledge, Apollo is clearly absent. His Delphian brother is never mentioned as divine character and plays no part at all in the mythical stories presented on stage. Moreover, gods in general are exposed as products of an inadequate and deplorable human imagination (“Laughing jumping chorus”, scene 5.1.), attacked (“The gods are jealous”, scene 5.4.), laughed at (“Your powers are pathetic”, scene 5.5.), but most important of all, the ridiculising in its full extent was done by a chorus of women (“Celebration of the female”, scene 5.3.). Furthermore, instead of the Apollonian male partner who helped to consolidate and exploit, all through Western culture, the male domination of mind and body, Fabre introduced Dionysus’ female counterpart, a vibrating cracked companion, Dionysa, who eagerly participated in the same rage he spread around (an excellent Barbara De Coninck). Together with twenty-five other sparkling actors, well chosen within the range of three generations of performers, possessed by an inextinguishable energy and undomitable fire, they excited the audience, made them dance and cry, and brought about a kind of collective *katharsis* seldom seen in the history of theatre.

Though from a thematic and mythological point of view, this performance may have been composed by a number of well chosen and well known stories, completed by some purely Fabrean scenes (especially about sleep), and though Dionysus and Dionysa may have been poststructuralist masters of ceremony asking for a radical revision of the old stories, a standing ovation lasting for about forty minutes (starting with scene 14.2. and ending with scene 14.6.) never can be ‘explained’ by just the special scenographic or postdramatic treatment of texts on the stage.

In order to do so, I turn to the second approach I mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the energetic, non-local, ‘intense floating’ of a more than physical body. Or to put it more precisely, the energy it takes to travel between a physical and astral body, between an everyday and a subtle body, between linear time and dreamtime, between clockwise time and the timeless. In this sense, the real protagonist of this production again was Dionysus, this time as god of energy and primary vibration, more particularly of free energy, of energy that liberates bodies and

minds, men and women. The kind of energetic fields that Dionysus and his spouse spread around was contagious, certainly for all spectators who only sparingly left the audience during the twenty-four hours. And as it happens to all forms of contagion, you never knew how or when the infection really got hold of you. Certainly, there was a vague spread of energy during the performance, built as it was on the alternation of highly demanding exercises, periods of excitation and rest, and rhythmical cadances ingeniously composed by Dag Tældeman. Often enough, these were well prepared by longlasting drum solos by Dionysus himself, Andrew Van Ostade, former drummer of the band School is Cool, extremely at ease in his overweight body.

As some hundred and fifteen different scenes were spread out over the performance, connected through three major Dream Times, the total pattern of action had a strong wavelike character that, each time again, failed to end in a definite moment of recognition (*anagnorisis*), unravelling (*lusis*) or final action (*exodos*). As circular and repetitive fields of tension never coming to a thematic end, these scenes primarily staged bodies at work, in endless undalative movements, proliferating and spreading around their energetic presences, though collapsing and succumbing at the end of every action. Therefore, this production was globally a major experiment in creating fields of energy thriving upon fully liberated bodies and very basic rhythmic patterns. Sitting and watching, half awake, half asleep, descending into layers of yourself that you hardly ever open in theatre, you clearly entered another world, becoming children of a



Mount Olympus by Jan Fabre

more subtle cosmos where energy fluctuated and transcended your individual bodies, an experience not perceivable with the normal senses.

The running scene (14.2) practically at the end of the production, around the twenty-third hour of the performance, suddenly revealed how deep a spiritual and holistic longing to become ONE had taken possession of all spectators. The indirect linguistic and symbolic references used here the notion of Greek hero, and questioned in fact our own heroic and existential position in life. Who are we, in the end, when analysed in more than one hundred tragic and mythic situations? How heroic can and must we be? Eight actors, in a mix of languages and nationalities, screamed their lines, running like fools ("Strong and beautiful, standing on the battle-field", "Au service de chacun d'entre vous", "Perché allora non mi onorate?"...), and five times they ended their separate parts shouting together the finishing line: "Now give me all the love you got!". As if these words were the well prepared signal for the whole audience to rise and applaud, spectators at that very moment, five times all over again, left their chairs, went crazy, started to cry and initiated an applause that kept going on and on. Apparently, Dionysus, the render of old clichés, and Dionysus, the god of energy, came together here and brought, in a huge energetic wave, a message that, without any doubt, hit a very important vein. A collective feeling of *katharsis* hit the audience, each time this particular line was pronounced. For the next thirty minutes, all performers, dipped in glitter, paint and colours began to freak out on the stage, bringing an amazing Ode to life, a wake-up call to remember the "lust for life" (Van den Dries 2014, 66) that characterizes Fabre's theatre so well.

CAST & CREW

Concept & directing Jan Fabre | Choreography Jan Fabre & dancers | Text Jeroen Olyslaegers, Jan Fabre | Music Dag Taeldeman | Dramaturgy Miet Martens | Directing assistant Floria Lomme | Images projection Phil Griffin | Invited dramaturgy Hans-Thies Lehmann, Luk Van den Dries, Freddy Decreus | Performance Lore Borremans, Katrien Bruyneel, Annabelle Chambon, Cédric Charron, Renée Copraij, Anny Czuppper, Els Deceukelier, Barbara De Coninck, Piet Defrancq, Mélissa Guérin, Stella Höttler, Sven Jakir, Ivana Jozic, Marina Kaptijn, Gustav Koenigs, Sarah Lutz, Moreno Perna, Gilles Polet, Pietro Quadrino, Antony Rizzi, Matteo Sedda, Merel Severs, Kasper Vandenberghe, Lies Vandeweghe, Andrew Van Ostade, Marc Moon Van Overmeir, Fabienne Vegt | Production management: Sebastiaan Peeters | Technical management: André

Schneider | Light design Helmut Van den Meersschaut | Costume design Kasia Mielczarek | Light technology Wout Janssens | Sound Tom Buys | Technical supervision Jan Balfort, Vic Grevendonk | Assistant costumes Maarten Van Mulken | Props Roxane Gire, Alessandra Ferreri | Production management during creation Ilka De Wilde

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blumenberg 1985 [1979]

H. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, 1985 [1979]

Frecka 2012

E. Frecka, 'The Direct-Intuitive-Nonlocal Mind. Another Foundation for Knowledge?', in: *Laszlo & Dennis*, Rochester, 2012, pp. 90-94

Laszlo 2006

E. Laszlo, *Science and the Reenchantment of the Cosmos. The Rise of the Integral Vision of Reality*, Rochester, 2006

Laszlo, Dennis 2012

E. Laszlo, K.L. Dennis (Eds.), *The New Science and Spirituality Reader*, Rochester, 2012

Lipton 2006

B.H. Lipton, *The Wisdom of your Cells. How your Beliefs Control your Biology*, Boulder (CO), 2006

Olyslaegers, Fabre, Taeldeman 2015

J. Olyslaegers, J. Fabre, D. Taeldeman, *Mount Olympus. To Glorify the Cult of Tragedy* (A 24-Hours Performance), Antwerpen, 2015

Seaford 2006

R. Seaford, *Dionysos*, London, 2006

Sheldrake 1981

R. Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life. The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, Los Angeles, 1981

Van den Dries 2014

L. Van den Dries, *Het geopende lichaam. Verzamelde opstellen over Jan Fabre*, Antwerpen, 2014

Van den Dries 2015

L. Van den Dries, 'Time without Telos. Telos without Time', in 'Olyslaegers, Fabre & Taeldeman', 2015, pp. 21-22

Wilber 2000

K. Wilber, *A Theory of Everything. An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Berkeley, 2000

ABSTRACT

The twenty-four hours performance *Mount Olympus* by Jan Fabre can represent a way to 'to glorify the cult of tragedy', that allows the spectators to enter into a mystifying landscape of myths and dreams, passion and sleep. The performance, one day and one night later, has also the power to turn the audience into a place of exaltation and euphoria. Furthermore *Mount Olympus* offers the possibility to consider the the opposition between Apollo and Dionysus: in this labyrinthic production, where homeless bodies were multiplied and time was melting, the main and leading character of this performance was Dionysus.



pdf realizzato da Associazione Engramma
e da Centro studi classica Iuav
progetto grafico di Elisa Bastianello
editing a cura di Sara Agnoletto
Venezia • marzo 2019

www.engramma.org



la rivista di **engramma**
anno **2016**
numeri **132-133**

Raccolta della rivista di
engramma del Centro studi
classica | luav, laboratorio di
ricerche costituito da studiosi di
diversa formazione e da giovani
ricercatori, coordinato da
Monica Centanni. Al centro
delle ricerche della rivista è la
tradizione classica nella cultura
occidentale: persistenze,
riprese, nuove interpretazioni di
forme, temi e motivi dell'arte,
dell'architettura e della
letteratura antica, nell'età
medievale, rinascimentale,
moderna e contemporanea.