

TWO HOMOLOGIES, MANY QUESTIONS AND A POSSIBLE ANSWER ON FATE PRESTO

by Marco Bazzini

Eighteenth century homology in introductory form

In the first half of the eighteenth century, while the European continent saw the birth of the so-called *ballet d'action* or pantomime, a new taste for the English garden was spreading in England. In reaction against regular geometric shapes, rigid architectural codes, and the gravel paths and bordered lawns typical of the Italian garden, the fashion became gently undulating land, green meadows, casual clumps of trees, freely-running water and lakes. It was a way of reproducing nature, always a feature of oriental gardens, and was thus defined by Tasso almost a century previously: “nowhere appeared the art which all this wrought”, when he described the sorceress Armida’s garden as a natural place of elegant negligence in Book XVI of his *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

This quite unexpected comparison should not come as a surprise since both these disciplines moved towards a more relaxed attitude, whether towards masks or geometry, and condemned all virtuosity and ostentation. Everything was to appear natural. This seems more obvious in the aesthetics of the English garden, yet it is nonetheless just as much present in dance.

Even as far back as *De Saltatione* by the Greek writer and satirist Lucian, whose influence was strongly felt in that century by the theoreticians of new ballet through the Italian translation in Florence itself in 1779, dancers were not to show greater effort than was absolutely necessary. In short, art was to be concealed in both garden and dance, thus not only reducing any obvious artifice or skill to achieve naturalness, but also forsaking every precedent.

Contemporary homology in ecological form

We are in the third millennium, the complicated Noughties, the years of economic injustice and serious environmental crisis; an unpredictable reaction looms over the great urgency since everything is implicated. In his text on dance, the relational philosopher Jean Luc Nancy declares that “the whole world dances, because it is nascent, innate, initial. Nothing more common not only to men but also to living things – yes, plants and animals – than raising, arising, moving forwards, towards, in a leap. Grass growing, ivy climbing, the worm wriggling...”

A statement to free dance from the chink among the arts where it is still unfortunately confined.

If it concerns everything living, dance knows no limits, just like the contemporary garden. Another Frenchman, Gilles Clement, in these same years has given us a further idea of garden and landscape, revealing the importance of the residual spaces – fragmented, suspended – of what is on the borders; he has suggested how the gardener must be “responsible for the living. Guarantor of a diversity on which the whole of humanity depends”.

No longer a closed, codified place, rather a stretch of land for the “adaptation of exogenous energies to endogenous energies, a permanent site of planetary crossbreeding that is one of the main evolutionary mechanisms.”

Extending Nancy's thinking, we might say that dance at this point can no longer be thought of as a territory bounded by impenetrable frontiers; it becomes a hybrid place where the idea of "the best" comes under attack. Garden and dance once again running parallel should not cause any new surprise since we have to consider the density of the living in each one, whether we speak of uncultivated ground, or a body, a community or an audience.

Their ecological orientation should not cause concern, however different from that of environmental safeguard. The latter, as well as showing them as open, emerging ecosystems, brings with it a wider reflection on cultural identity made up of common memory, of interpretative and operative models, of new resources for a community and the individuals within it.

Provisional conclusion, in the form of questions the reader will have

What has all this got to do with *Fate presto*? Should art be concealed in this case as well? Do we want an attitude yet more relaxed than the one we have now achieved? Is this dance formal or is it a harbinger of sense, does it make a stand? How can bodies, images and body images be made to dance within space? Is this a formless form? If it is lost, does its root remain? Body, space, time and memory: aren't these the cards to play to animate a platform so apparently disjointed? How can we today prevent different information and signals from coming within the borders? Why should we do so? Or, better, WHY?

So what is to be done?

A possible answer in non-decisive form

The spectator is left faced with these and many other unanswered questions that may continue to dance through his head long after his time spent in Alcatraz. An on-going state underlining yet once more how necessary his commitment is in order to resolve the questioning nature of what he has seen and how the role he has experienced leaves with him its load of responsibility well after his part in it. Overturning a well-known statement by artist Lawrence Weiner, we may say that the work can be appropriated without being fully understood.