

Voices, Meanings and Identities: Cultural Reflexivity in the Opening and Closing

Ceremonies of the XXVIII Olympiad in Athens

Pavlos Kavouras

Cultural reflexivity as dialogical othering

People make and express images of themselves as cultural beings usually by relating their life experiences to other people. As relating is intertwined with receiving, the stories people tell about their cultures and, eventually, of themselves, are always addressed to particular, virtual or embodied audiences. Receiving depends on the audience of relating. What is acceptable for an audience in a culture might not be acceptable for other audiences in other cultures. Local audiences differ greatly from global ones and so do local performances of cultural identity as opposed to global ones. [1] This distinction applies also to performances of cultural reflexivity, the subject matter of this paper. My focus is on the production of the self image of a whole culture for local and global consumption. There is more at stake in any process of cultural reflexivity than the denotative meaning of the term implies. [2] Cultural reflexivity is an allegorical modality concerning othering. [3] By “othering” I mean the process in which a familiar Self is transformed to another, unfamiliar Self to comply with the emergent and multiple reality

of relating as both making and receiving. [4] Cultural reflexivity as a form of allegorical othering helps to bring together various voices, meanings and identities as cultural images for local as well as global audiences. Such a reflexive othering is, by definition, dialogical. Its dialogism, however, is not merely discursive. It involves a juxtaposition of multiple logics – the voices, meanings and identities engaged in the process of making and receiving images of cultural reflexivity. [5]

The binary scheme “local versus global” is quite problematic as a theoretical perspective for studying reflexive othering. Even the hybrid form of “glocal,” which denotes a fusion of the local with the global at the predominance of the first, is not conceptually sufficient, as it reduces the aesthetics and politics of fusion to a socioeconomic reality, that of the world market and global consumer society. [6] A better option might be to use instead the term “ecumenical,” which is primarily an ethical concept. “Ecumenical” signifies the spiritual fusion of the individual self with the universal self and implies an achieved form of humanity. Thus, “ecumenical” may modify both “global” and “local,” as well as their hybrid “glocal”. One may talk about local,

global and even glocal practices as being endowed or not with the ecumenical quality.

The Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the XXVIII Olympiad in Athens constitute an ideal case for studying cultural reflexivity as a form of dialogical othering. The Olympic Games is a global phenomenon. [7] Its homecoming in Athens in the summer 2004 led the concept creators of the two ceremonies to portray Greek culture as a diachronic unity, from antiquity to the present. They also identified Hellenism, the essence of this unity, with humanism as an expression of ecumenical rationalism. These ideas are clearly expressed in the official programmes and video-tapes of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, which together with journalistic literature comprise the research material for my discourse analysis. [8] The various discourses are presented and analyzed individually as well as in juxtaposition with one another. The planned and actually performed versions of each discourse are examined, in a perspective that looks closely at the visual and performing arts constituents of its form and structure.

Juxtaposing the official discourses of the Opening Ceremony

The official discourses of the Opening Ceremony deal with humanity in agonistic terms, fusing culture with athletics, Hellenic culture in particular, with the Olympic Games. Such a view of agonistic humanism reflects

the spirit of the Games, since their revival in 1896.

[9] The concept creators of the Opening Ceremony essentialize the idea of agonistic humanism by fusing it with Hellenism. Here is a brief and concise account of their perspective: [10]

The Olympic Games is the epitome of ancient Hellenic civilization. Its ecumenical ideas and images vividly live today in the hearts of all people around the world. These ideas and images are reflected in the humanistic and democratic spirit of the Games. The Games were born in ancient Greece and they now return to modern Greece. Hence, the idea of the repatriation of the Games: Athens Olympic Homecoming. The main rhetoric of the official discourses of the Opening Ceremony has a diachronic orientation: what happened then is still alive today. Modern Greece is an active part of the modern western world and capable of expressing new forms of ecumenical humanism by transforming the ancient element into a modern one while at the same time honoring the diachronic values of humanity as perceived and managed by ancient Hellenic civilization.

Apart from rendering the agonistic spirit of the Games as an essentialist fusion of humanism with Hellenism, the designers of the ceremony endow

this spirit with a ritualistic symbolism. The idea of the repatriation of the Games alludes to the idea of the re-incorporation of the initiate to his or her group of reference. [11] Such a ritualistic symbolism is already present in Coubertin's view of Olympism, but here it assumes full rhetorical power. [12] It emerges as an indisputable (qua cultural) legitimization of Hellenism's significance as a hierophant of the agonistic humanism of the Games.

Another main characteristic of the official discourses of the Opening Ceremony is their schematic dualism. Seven pairs of related ideas inform the conceptual framework of this ceremony:

- Hellenic culture - the Olympic Games
- ancient - modern
- local - ecumenical
- history - art
- ideal - actual
- "I" - "Other" relationship
- imaginary - real

Cultural images and ideas are expressed as athletic ideals and values. Ancient Hellenic culture is coupled with modern Hellenic culture. Ancient and modern Hellenic cultures are conceptualized as two distinct yet interrelated phases of a unique diachronic transformation of a culturally local perception of humanity to an

ecumenical one. "History" denotes "what happened in the past," lacking historiographic reflexivity, whereas "art" is considered to be an independent faculty for rendering the ancient spirit in modern form. The aim of the celebration is to yield an actual experience of the imagined ideals of ancient humanity through the symbolic mediation of modern art.

In the portrayal of the Opening Ceremony as an artistic journey to Hellenism, the artist as a journey maker is categorically distinguished from the spectator as another journey maker: where the artist ends, the spectator begins. Art transforms imagination to a commonly perceptible reality. Through artistic mediation, the ecumenical dream of humanity is perceived with eyes open. Ancient Olympia and the Acropolis of Athens serve as diachronic symbols of Hellenism, of the Games in particular, and democratic culture, and are expressed as different manifestations of an essentialist unity that informs the uniqueness of the Hellenic spirit of ecumenical humanism. In this perspective, the "ecumenical" is conceptualized anew as an exclusively Hellenic attribute and rendered artistically as an all-embracing and diachronic perception of humanity.

A rationalist perception of nature and humanity informs the artistic symbolism of the Opening Ceremony. The concept creators fuse such natural elements as water and fire with human rationality to tell a story about the uniqueness and ecumenical character of Hellenism.

They also associate the cosmological ideas of “the sea” and “light” – of the Aegean Sea in particular – with the “whiteness” of marble and, eventually, the “brilliance” of Hellenic culture. Statues and the olive tree complement the symbolic portrayal of Hellenism alluding to its artistic and political anthropocentrism through the glorification of the human body and the democratic polity. Conceptualized as a quintessential quality of Hellenism, anthropocentrism is intertwined with ecumenical rationalism.

It is to the ecumenical anthropocentrism of Hellenism that the president of Athens 2004, Mrs Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki refers by her official message to the Opening Ceremony, as the title of this message clearly evokes: “Of all things, man is the measure”. This is a famous sophist dictum, attributed to Protagoras. In blending ancient Hellenic thought by fusing uncritically pre-Socratic, sophist and Socratic reasoning, the concept creators present Hellenism as a vivid totality contrasting its archetypal image to humanity’s modern image of fragmentation. [13] As a result, the artist in the ceremony emerges as the hero of a cultural performance whereby the fragments of Hellenism are combined to yield a new perspective of humanity: an ecumenical response to the fragmentary ethos of modernity. By fusing the rational relativism of the Sophists with Socratic rationalism the production designers create an artistic hybrid of relativism and rationalism. This hybrid is endowed with a

double quality. It differentiates and integrates rationality, signifying at the same time the uniqueness of humanity as individual Self and ecumenical Other.

The Opening Ceremony: the show as a dramaturgy

The ceremonial show is a dramaturgical expression of Hellenism as ecumenical rationalism. Of major significance to the cultural reflexivity of the show is the diachronic journey of Hellenism in relation to the Games. The journey is marked by three spatial-historical orientations: the ancient site of Olympia and the modern Athenian sites of the *Panathinaiko* and Olympic Stadiums (1896 and 2004 Olympic Games respectively). These orientations are symbolic landmarks in Hellenism’s journey to self-realization through the Games. They represent the birth, the revival and the homecoming, or repatriation of the Hellenic ideal of ecumenical rationalism. Dramaturgy capitalizes on the unification of religion with sports, of rationalist thought with mythology and ritual. Following a naturalistic rationality, “the Games” come to represent Zeus, “water” pre-Socratic philosophy, “fire” divinity in humanity, “marble” the revival of the Games [14] and, finally, the *zeimbekiko* music the repatriation of the Games. Widely known in modern Greece as a male, improvisational dance with a rhythm in nine counts and eight steps, the *zeimbekiko* is associated by the concept

creators of the show with Zeus and Dionysus. Although the association is scientifically ungrounded, [15] it is important to consider here for analytical purposes, as it reflects the main perspective in which the ceremonies were conceived and realized: a dualistic rationality.

The show is a grand narrative that unfolds in two episodes: “Allegory” and “Clepsydra” (Sand-time). While both episodes deal with Hellenism’s diachronic journey to ecumenical rationalism by employing fragmentary historical evidence, they differ radically in the manner of their expression. “Allegory” is based on a symbolic modality of free association whereby fragments are treated as archetypes, whereas “Clepsydra” on a systematic synthesis of the fragmentary in an analytical perspective. Rationalistic dualism is quite strong and very clear in Allegory. In the portrayal of Hellenism as ecumenical rationalism, Apollo, the god of reason and rationality supercedes Dionysus, the god of sublime intoxication. [16] In the actual performance of Hellenism though, the Allegory show depends on festive intoxication both for inspiration and empathy. Allegory begins with a few lines by George Seferis, the 1963 Greek Nobel laureate of literature, poetry mediating past and present to transcend historical fragmentation:

*I woke with this marble head in my hands
it exhausts my elbows and I
don't know where to put it down.*

*It was falling into the dream
as I was coming out of the
dream so our life became
one and it will be very difficult
for it to separate again. [17]*

Mythology succeeds modern poetry as the archetypal discourse of the show. Allegory unfolds as a red centaur, a mythological creature which is half man and half horse, throws his spear into an artificial lake at the center of the stadium. Mythology introduces history, the history of Hellenism; and divinity mediates for the emergence of human rationality. Dualism assumes the form of a struggle between two extreme poles of rationalistic existence: divinity and humanity, spirit and matter, culture and nature, sublimity and instinct. Anthropomorphic and anthropocentric rationality is portrayed as the quintessence of Hellenism. Modern art aided by modern technology – a contemporary form of archetypal discourse – renders the transformation of mythology to history, and divinity to rationality in six steps. Hellenism presents itself in the following allegorical sequence: a Cycladic idol, a kouros, a classical statue, a cube – the Pythagorean symbol for the element of the earth and perfection – and, finally, Cyclades, the island formation in the Aegean Sea at the center of which lies Delos, birthplace of Apollo. The sixth phase of the Allegory features *Eros*, a new

anthropomorphic entity which stands for the unlimited force that brings opposites together and in composition. As the animation of Hellenic anthropocentrism unfolds, coeval achievements in philosophy, mathematics, lyric poetry and drama are presented. In these presentations of Hellenism, the divinity versus humanity dichotomy manifests itself also as a virtual versus real existence. While the first five parts of the Allegory are video productions, the sixth part glorifies the ecumenical aspect of humanity as an embodied reality. The god *Eros* is introduced by a dancer who can actually fly, thanks to modern art technology, thus appearing to exist between and betwixt the virtual and the real, the divine and the human. *Eros* is also portrayed in practical everyday discourse: a couple of lovers appear on stage enjoying their affair, their behavior being familiar worldwide.

The second part of the show is "Clepsydra," Sand-time. As its title reveals, the artistic emphasis is on time and temporality. The evolution of Hellenism is presented sequentially in eleven fragments of temporality, symbolically represented by eleven parading platforms carrying cultural evidence of the respective historical eras. Evolutionary rationalism pervades the conceptualization of Clepsydra which is saturated by the idea of progress. However, the production designers fuse modernist discourse with post-modern rationality concerning "progress." Their view of progress informing Clepsydra is incompatible with Laurie Anderson's and, eventually,

Walter Benjamin's critical reflections. Anderson echoes Benjamin when she writes that progress is "a storm blowing from Paradise, propelling the angel of history backwards into the future." [18] Such a view of progress is, of course, critical of any modernist discourse of evolutionary rationalism. [19] The reference to Anderson, a popular experimental artist of world renown, serves mainly to legitimate rhetorically the hybrid poetics of the dramaturgical notion of progress around which the show is conceived and realized.

The eleven phases of Clepsydra may be divided into two parts. Part I includes the seven first phases and part II the rest four. Part I deals with the ancient Hellenic world in a classical archaeological perspective. Five historical periods that are chronologically demarcated succeed one another in the show: prehistoric (Minoan, Thera, Mycenaean), geometric, archaic, classical and Hellenistic. Part II is rather superficially put together and runs through such huge and great phases of Hellenic history as Byzantine, post-Byzantine (also identified as "traditional") and "modern" which is directly associated with the revival of the Olympic Games (Athens 1896). The second part of the Clepsydra sequence reflects clearly the problematic conceptualization of the grand narrative of the Opening Ceremony as a whole. First, only scarce and superficial evidence of the historical cultures in question is presented. Second, as the evolutionist narrative moves towards

the “modern period” (early-mid nineteenth century to the present), the production designers employ the modernist umbrella term “traditional” to cope with the multiplicity and diversity of modern Greek cultural forms. Their awkwardness is evident as they fail to classify these forms under a culturally unified, albeit evolutionary, rationalist perspective of Hellenism. The second part of the Clepsydra show relies on the conceptualization of culture as folklore and is saturated by orientalist representations of the anonymous folk as “the great bearer of Hellenism’s glorious past.” These representations draw heavily upon the visual imagery of the modern Greek folk that was developed by the painter Yannis Tsarouhis, mentor and admirer of Dimitris Papaioannou, the artistic director of the ceremony. As a result, exoticized representations of the “traditional” and “folk” dominate Hellenism’s portrayal in the show. For example, Angels–Tsarouhis style appear carrying *rembetiko* stages and young men dressed in military uniform (another idiom of Tsarouhis’ imagery) are seen dancing to the rhythms and tunes of the *rembetiko* music.

Clepsydra ends in the same way Allegory ended. The symbolic and virtual become embodied and real. A pregnant woman shows up personifying the material bridge leading, in the words of the concept creators, “from history to the book of life.” Next to the female figure, virtual images of our galaxy and the human DNA

are employed to animate the ecumenical reality of an anthropocentric, yet not anthropomorphic, whole that lies beyond the physical limits of human perception: the common essence of humanity as manifested in the microcosms and macrocosms of its existence.

Musical discourse in the Opening Ceremony

To the exception of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the musicians, music ensembles and choirs are all Greek. Classical western and traditional Greek instruments are used. Special emphasis is placed on the *bouzouki* instrument, widely associated with the *rembetiko* culture, as a key symbol of modern Greek popular music. Besides *bouzouki*, the instruments of the show are identified in the Programme as follows: traditional violin, accordion and clarinet (*klarino*), traditional percussion (*daouli* and *toumperleki*), lute (*laouto*), oud, *lyra* of Crete and *lyra* of Pontos, santour and mandolin. Special emphasis is placed on musical diversity as a significant aspect of Hellenism. Musical differentiation is portrayed as local diversification of culture within the Greek nation-state, and also as diversification associated with refugee and Byzantine church music. The rhetoric of musical diversification underlines the multi-faceted unity of Hellenism qua ecumenical humanism and reflects a politically correct attitude which is in conformity with the hybrid ethics of the show.

The musical discourse of the Opening Ceremony is

informed by four distinct rationalities. Discrimination of rationality depends on the role musical compositions play in the show. The first rationality is associated with three auspicious phases of the ceremony: Welcome, Allegory and Opening of the Games. The music used in this context is all modern Greek art music, both “serious” and “light,” and includes original works as well as arrangements of classical, non-Greek compositions. Yorghos Koumendakis, the music concept creator of the ceremony, and Nikos Kypourgou, both students and admirers of Manos Hatzidakis, one of the leading composers of modern Greek music, express clearly with their music the reflexive rationality of the ceremony. This rationality is based on the premise that Greek modern art music covers the entire spectrum of global modern art music, being equally prolific and significant as “serious” and “light,” classical and popular. The *zeimbekiko* piece composed and directed by Stavros Xarhakos, another leading figure of modern Greek music, [20] serves mainly to bring together several conceptual dichotomies in the production design. Two such dichotomies stand out as artistic distinctions in the celebrations of the Games in Athens. The first dichotomy concerns the contrast between the Apollonian perspective of the Opening Ceremony as opposed to the Dionysian of the Closing Ceremony, whereas the second dichotomy refers to the structural dissociation of ancient Hellenism, metonymically identified with Zeus, from modern

Hellenism, which is symbolically represented by the *zeimbekiko* dance. Perceived as an aspect of Zeus in communion with Bacchus, the *zeimbekiko* serves as a symbolic mediation for bringing together the meanings conveyed by these dichotomies. Hence, the significance of Xarhakos’ opening piece titled *zeimbekiko*. Finally, the performance of Gustav Mahler’s *Langsam* (symphony n. 3, part 6) by Yorghos Koumendakis aims to underline the wide horizons and potential of contemporary Greek music. The first rationality of the Opening Ceremony reflects the music concept creators’ struggle to persuade their global audience that modern Greek art music is as ecumenical and achieved as any other such music around the world.

The second and third rationalities refer to contemporary popular music and its close association with sound technology and the world music market. Two popular disk jockeys, one of Greek origin, Konstantinos Vita, and a foreigner of world renown, the Dutch Tiesto, along with the internationally famous experimental popular singer Bjork, from Iceland, define with their presence and music a complex rationality. This rationality reflects contemporary popular aesthetics and has two distinct orientations. Both orientations point towards a common, ecumenical reality, while constituting different trajectories leading to the ecumenical from the perspective of nationality. In the first aspect of popular rationality the ecumenical is approached from a local

qua national, or Greek, perspective, represented by Konstantinos Vita, whereas in the second one from a non-Greek, international perspective, expressed by Tiesto and Bjork. [21]

The fourth rationality of the musical discourse of the Opening Ceremony alludes to the significance of the Hellenic diaspora – its musicians in particular – in maintaining and reinforcing the ecumenical ethos of Hellenism abroad and, eventually, worldwide. This view is symbolically expressed by the inclusion of the New Zealand–Greek composer John Psathas in the show. Like Koumendakis and Kypourgos, Psathas demonstrates his musical skills both as a composer of original music and arranger of great art music of non-Greek origin (Debussy and Shostakovitch).

The Closing Ceremony: concept and music

The Closing Ceremony merits an individual presentation and analysis that cannot be carried out in this paper. However, a brief account on its conceptual orientation and musical discourse may broaden our perspective concerning the dualistic rationality of the Opening Ceremony. The main philosophy of the Closing Ceremony is, according to its Artistic Director, Dimitris Papaioannou, “the celebration of life.” [22] This view informs a master plan of celebration that defies typical dramaturgy. The celebratory process involves communal singing and dancing not as mere representations of Hellenic festivities

but as symbolic vehicles through which the participating celebrants are invited to experience a sense of Dionysian ecstasy and enthusiasm. The members of the audience of the Closing Ceremony are asked to transcend their state of being spectators in a show that celebrates life and engage themselves actively in the festivities of the show. The aim of this transition, according to the master plan of the ceremony, is to enable the members of the audience to experience the Dionysian spirit and thus come to realize for themselves the ecumenical value of unified humanity as a celebration of life. [23] Hence, celebrating life implies celebrating “union in multiplicity.” This is the mystical epitome of the Dionysian faculty, which expresses humanity not merely as a feasting quality, but as an achieved reality. Dionysus’ juxtaposition with Zeus heightens the allegorical discourse on the dialectic between humanity and divinity. The unifying quality of and for humanity that Dionysus represents is intertwined with a significant aspect of Zeus, specially invoked in the Closing Ceremony: hospitality. *Xenios Dias*, or Hosting Zeus, underlines the archetypal significance of the value of hosting and, eventually, othering. As the supreme host of the Games, Zeus underlines the ecumenical perspective of the world as a unity. In the Closing Ceremony, Zeus’ presence implies humanity’s ethical obligation against itself as a realized condition of being in the world: the hosting Self must show respect for the foreign Other.

In staging the Closing Ceremony as a grand Greek celebration, the concept creators designed the show around the idea of the *ghlendi* –Greek for festivity and celebration. [24] Eating, drinking, singing and dancing in the company of friends are constituent elements of the *ghlendi*. These elements are vividly juxtaposed in the Closing Ceremony helping to stage an artistic representation of the *ghlendi* as a typically Hellenic quality of celebrating. The show qua *ghlendi* ceremony consists of two distinct parts. In the first part, the designers associate the *ghlendi* with the agricultural cycle of life through the symbolic imagery of the “wheat” and the “grape”. They employ music and dance to blend “traditional” with “modern” elements of Greek culture. In so doing, they assign equal significance to traditional folk and modern popular expressions. In the second part, they abandon the idea of staging “Greekness” as a representation and rely on the *ghlendi* itself to stage a non representational expression of “the celebration of life” motto. Popular singers appear performing on stage in the Olympic Stadium. Now, the stage loses its artistic centrality as a virtual space for dramaturgical action and emerges as a simulacrum of the stage in a contemporary night club. The *ghlendi* associated with night club entertainment shares some generic attributes with the peasant *ghlendi* of the agricultural society, but in reality the two forms of the *ghlendi* are radically different. The night club *ghlendi* is the most popular form

of entertainment in contemporary Greece. Its popular aesthetics have a vulgar orientation toward music and culture defying any categorical distinctions between “high” and “low” culture, as well as “art” and “non-art,” or “entertainment” music. Its main thrust concerns blending or fusing diverse forms of music regardless of their conceptual identification. The juxtaposition of the peasant *ghlendi* with the night club *ghlendi* marks off a major transition in the rationality of the Closing Ceremony, from “serious work” to “leisure.” [25]

The untold story of “Zeus encountering Bacchus.” An allegory of dialogical othering as sublime intoxication

In the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, cultural reflexivity is intertwined with the artistic expression of the diachronic essence of Hellenism. Hellenism is considered as a unique expression of anthropocentrism and ecumenical rationalism and, eventually, humanism. Hellenism is also taken to inform, precisely as ecumenical humanism, the core of western civilization. In fact, what the concept creators mean by “western civilization” is western modernity and more specifically, bourgeois ecumenical rationalism.

Socratic rationalism is ecumenical and dialogical. Yet, as the modifiers “ecumenical” and “dialogical” drift towards “global” and “monological,” Socratic rationalism is transformed into the totalizing and, eventually, hegemonic modality of pure reasoning. But which “rationality,” and

whose “purity of reason”? To fuse sophist “relativism” with Socratic “absolutism” amounts only to confuse cultural reflexivity as an othering faculty of humanity with ethics as a realized state of achieved humanity. Furthermore, to fuse the philosophical rationalism of the classical Hellenic world with the bourgeois rationalism of western modernity is to imply that Hellenism is the force that motivates modernity’s project of progress as a globalizing idea unifying all humanity.

Political unification as a result of socioeconomic globalization is one thing and symbolic unification as a result of realized humanity quite another. When cultural reflexivity becomes a form of monological poetics it aestheticizes reality and strips actual people of their own humanity. In this process, people end up consuming ideas about humanity, usually in a grand narrative form, and are systematically discouraged to engage themselves in a personal encounter with their own (and other peoples’) humanity. By aestheticizing humanity the artistic modality serves the rhetorical purposes of legitimating monological rationalism. In the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the global rhetoric is crucial for the artistic expression of Hellenism as an ethical prerogative of humanity. In spite of their cultural specificity, the ceremonies re-establish the global qua ecumenical ideal of western progress as a humanistic progress and, eventually, glorify the economic and political culture of western modernity on a global

level. The story of Hellenism is related in such a way so as to satisfy a wide, local and global audience. To this end, the rhetorical strategy of relating complies with two distinct yet interrelated aspects of receiving. The first aspect concerns a globalized culture as a local expression of humanity, whereas the second a globalizing perception of culture as the ethical locus of an ecumenical condition of humanity. This view results to a monological aesthetics which modifies completely the rationality and temporality of the dialogical juxtapositions of reflexive othering. Monological dualism reduces the emergent and transitory expressions of othering to mere objectifications. Yet, the logic of relating is not affected by such an objectification of othering: it remains utterly subjective: the authority of presentation relentlessly asserts itself as an indisputable reality.

The artistic symbolism of the ceremonies is informed by the rhetorical prerogative of monological dualism. The Opening Ceremony is symbolically identified with Apollo, whereas the Closing Ceremony with Dionysus. Zeus, the father of gods and protector of the Olympic Games, plays an equally significant role in the symbolism of the two ceremonies: he marks the beginning of the Opening Ceremony and the end of the Closing one. Zeus is absolute power and also the protector of hospitality. In this last capacity of his, Zeus hosts any expression of foreignness and othering. He combines the powers of absolute self assertion and ultimate othering. Apollo,

by contrast, is the god of light and reason, whereas Dionysus the god of sublime intoxication. An almighty Zeus, the protector of the Games, encounters Apollo in the Opening Ceremony to justify symbolically the power of Hellenic rationalism as an ecumenical possibility for all humanity. Conversely, a hosting Zeus joins with Bacchus in the Closing Ceremony to celebrate humanity as othering.

The symbolic imagery of the ceremonies reflects a bourgeois dualistic rationalism. Reason and emotion, the rational and the irrational are considered as fundamental aspects of humanity – its Apollonian and Dionysian qualities. The presence of Zeus underlines symbolically the structural dissociation between part and whole, difference and totality as historically realized and ethically distinct faculties of humanity cross-culturally. Zeus represents the power of homogenizing difference through othering differentiation itself. In the dualistic discourse of the ceremonies, the symbolic element of Zeus emerges as the epitome of the globalizing dynamic of ecumenical rationalism, powerfully appropriating difference through glorifying it.

Bacchus is the god of sublime intoxication. He is not the god of mere merry making and orgiastic entertainment. But when Bacchian sublimity is suppressed and finally replaced by the Apollonian element of absolute, conceptually abstract reasoning it loses its material quality and assumes a metaphysical authority. The

same applies to “intoxication”. Removed from its divine Bacchian context, the term in its variously acceptable cultural usages comes to signify the irrational; it becomes a rationalist objectification of the Other. The reason versus emotion bifurcation leads designers to aestheticize cultural reflexivity in the ceremonies. Exoticizing Greekness reflects the modernist power of orientalizing difference. Bacchus is exoticized as an artistic form of othering in contrast to an Apollonian Self. Yet, Bacchus as god of sublime intoxication defies any such exoticization. Rationality and emotion are unique faculties of humanity. But when they are fused together as a unity in multiplicity, a new form of consciousness emerges in which divinity dissolves in humanity. In the context of such a realization humanity understands itself as a unique condition in the world. This is a mystical experience. Any rationalistic rendering of such an experience and its symbolism is doomed to fail, for the two conditions of reflexivity are structurally divided by what Blaise Pascal would call a difference of order, not just a difference of degree.

The ecumenical spirit of Hellenism is expressed in the Opening Ceremony as a rationalistic sublimity, whereas in the Closing one as a rationalistic intoxication. The communicative success of the ceremonies lies in that they both tell a story of cultural reflexivity as a rationalistic discourse of ecumenical othering and do so by exoticizing Greekness and aestheticizing othering as

such. Cultural reflexivity through Hellenism re-asserts globalization as an apotheosis of western modernity; and helps also to demonstrate how an uncritical fusion of modernist and postmodernist modalities of reflexivity may end up re-establishing the monological dualism and ecumenical rationalism of modernity.

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Endnotes

1. Taylor (1997: xv-xix); Hall (1991: 33, 38-39).

2. On "cultural reflexivity" from an anthropological perspective of experience, see Bruner (1986: 22-23) and Turner (1982: 11, 76, 100). Barbara Myerhoff (n.d.) argues that "cultural performances are *reflective* in the sense of showing ourselves to ourselves. They are also capable of being *reflexive*, arousing consciousness of ourselves as we see ourselves."

3. On music, allegory and the dialogical in ethnographic writing see Kavouras (n.d.).

4. Using Arnold van Gennep's (1960) concept of liminality, Turner (1982: 27) argues that "(i)n liminality people 'play' with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them.

Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements.”

5. In this paper, I discuss dialogical othering as relating in association with receiving, not receiving itself.

6. From the combination of the words “global” and “local,” it refers to an individual or a group of people who can think globally and act locally. On “glocal” and “glocalization,” see Robertson (1995).

7. MacAloon (1984: 241-42).

8. The internet resources documenting my research material regarding the Opening and Closing Ceremonies are listed separately at the end of the list of print references.

9. On the ideology of Olympism as a form of agonistic humanism associated with Hellenism, see Coubertin (1967); MacAloon (1981); Turner (1982: 120).

10. The text cited is my own compilation of the official messages of the Opening Ceremony, delivered by the president of the Hellenic Republic, the president of Athens 2004 and the artistic director of the Opening Ceremony (Official Programme; henceforth, Programme).

11. This ritualistic symbolism is based on Gennep’s theory of the rites of passage (1960). The international athletics of the Olympic Games may be seen as an expression of what Emile Durkheim (1995) has called “secular substitutes” for both religion and ritual. On the notion of “secular ritual,” see Myerhoff and Moore (1977). Ceremony indicates, ritual transforms (Turner 1982: 80).

12. Coubertin (1967: 242, 251); Turner (1982: 120).

13. Fragmentation is a characteristic aspect of western modernity. MacAloon (1984: 249) writes that Coubertin (1967: 34) saw “the fragmentation of public celebrations not merely as a local problem of the Olympic Games to solve but as something diagnostic of modernity itself.”

14. The other name for *Panathinaiko* Stadium where the first revival of the Olympic Games took place in 1896 is *Kallimarmaro*, which literally means in Greek the “fair one made of marble”.

15. According to the concept creators, the *zeimbekiko* is a composite term referring to Zeus and *bekos*, bread, in Phrygian language, which is another name for Dionysus (Programme). However, no mention is made of the Zeimbeks, an Asia Minor group of people, whose name coincides with the word *zeimbekiko*.

16. In the production design of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Apollo and Dionysus are generally used as aesthetical principles implying contrasting modalities of perception and relating. There is no systematic connection, however, between the aesthetics of the specific ceremonies and Nietzsche's (1993) philosophical perspective of the intellectual dichotomy between the Dionysian and the Apollonian element. The same applies to the Delphic Festival revival administered by Aggelos Sikelianos and his wife Eva Palmer in 1927. Although in her autobiography Eva devotes a whole chapter, on Apollo and Dionysus and another one on Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy," she makes no reference to the aesthetic significance of these principles regarding the revival of the Delphic Festival (1993: 163-170, 171-174).

17. From the poem titled *Mythistorema 3*, translated by Edmund Keely and Philip Sherrard (Seferis 1995).

18. Anderson's poem, titled *Progress*, appears in the Programme. The poem is a reflection on one of Walter Benjamin's theses on the philosophy of history (1969: 257-58).

19. On a critical perspective of humanistic, 'modern' progressivism, whereby the term 'modern' is associated with an essentially Renaissance view of human action, see Schchner (1979); cf. also Turner (1982:16).

20. Besides Xarhakos and Hatzidakis, the third major figure of modern Greek popular music is Mikis Theodorakis, whose self-exclusion from the ceremonies became the topic of heated debate in the Press.

21. Ecumenical humanism is a characteristic attribute of Olympism. Coubertin discriminated between "cosmopolitanism" and "true internationalism" as aspects of ecumenical humanism. MacAloon explains why Coubertin was in favor of the latter (1984: 252):

The former view derides and devalues the significance of nationality and discrete cultural traditions and calls for a world citizenry in which all such differences are overcome and finally abandoned. The latter, "true internationalism," understands cultural differences as an enduring and marvelous feature of the human landscape and argues that world peace depends upon the celebration of human diversity and not the eradication of it.

22. Olympism – the ideological discourse concerning the revival of the Olympic Games – was perceived by Coubertin to be "a celebration of life." He called the Games "a festival of human unity" (1967: 131); see also MacAloon (1984: 248).

23. This way, the ceremony ceases merely to indicate humanity and becomes a ritual for transforming humanity; a secular ritual of transformation. Turner argues (1982: 86, 80) that with Industrialization modernity comes to mean “the exaltation of the indicative mood,” which is, according to him, the essence of any ceremony.

24. On the *ghlendi* as a cultural performance and reflexive modality of wide symbolic significance in Greece, see Kavouras (n.d., 2000, 1999, 1994 and 1991).

25. The rationality informing the structural distinction between the Opening and the Closing Ceremonies reflects another fundamental division of modernity. Since the Industrial Revolution, leisure is sharply demarcated from work. This division marks the dualistic rationality of the ceremonies. The Opening Ceremony is focused on the idea of “serious work,” concerning the artistic portrayal of Hellenism as ecumenical humanism, whereas the Closing one is designed to function as a “leisure” activity following the successful completion of the Opening Ceremony. Papaioannou himself made this point clearly in an interview for the Greek TV (NET, Pavlos Tsimas, 24 Hours):

(The Closing Ceremony) will be completely different (from the Opening one). More relaxed:

Greek song and Greek music, rather than a statement of ideas and expression of memory, as in the Opening Ceremony. Completely different: Let's relax, undo the top button of our shirts and loosen the knots of our neckties. Let's drink. We did it. Let's relax.

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