



'Whilst the onomania lasted, bickerings and divisions endured.'

Barthes is right in that he tells us that there is an onomastics of the Tour.

But in the time since Barthes, in a manner the semiotician may not have envisaged, that onomastics has descended from the heights of myth and epic having the status of Greek gods. They have descended from being these lofty signs of the valor of the ordeal, of beings signs of old European ways and ethnicity – Brankart le Franc, Bobet le Francien, Robic le Celte, Ruiz l'Ibere, Darrigade le Gascon; to being patronymics of the biopolitical, of homo sacer and the spectacle that sustains Empire.

Although Barthes' idea of an onomastics of the Tour still holds fast, sadly, in the time in which we live, Barthes' classic piece on the Tour de France as Epic no longer depicts the essence of events such as la Grande Boucle.

Cycling, entangled in the process of its own globalisation, is a game in flux. It is no longer the pure myth or epic as Roland Barthes wrote. Mont Ventoux remains a moonscape, bare, barren, rising out of the lavender plains of Provence and on this landscape those playing this game are no longer heroes of epic proportions but bare life, homo sacer.

The precarity of existence better depicts the state of the peloton today: Free as the birds to soar to the greatest heights – Pantani, Rasmussen, Dajka, Valverde, Vinnicombe, Vinokourov ... the list is endless; but unlike those Greek gods of the time of Barthes in this age they are free to be shot down at a whim.

The onomastics of the Tour today is an onomastics of criminality.

Cycling has always been an assemblage and... [Continua a leggere l'articolo in PDF.](#) (autor e M. Hardie)