Theatre Translation as Historiography: Projections of Greek Self-Identity Through English Translations During the European Crisis

Maria Mytilinaki

The Graduate Center, City University of New York
THEATRE TRANSLATION AS HISTORIOGRAPHY:
PROJECTIONS OF GREEK SELF-IDENTITY THROUGH ENGLISH
TRANSLATIONS DURING THE EUROZONE CRISIS

by

Maria Mytilinaki

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
Theatre Translation as Historiography:

Projections of Greek Self-Identity through English Translations during the European Crisis

by

Maria Mytilinaki

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/19/2017

Jean Graham-Jones

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

4/19/2017

Peter Eckersall

Date

Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Professor Jean Graham-Jones

Distinguished Professor Marvin Carlson

Distinguished Professor David Savran

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Theatre Translation as Historiography: Projections of Greek Self-Identity through English Translations during the European Crisis

by

Maria Mytilinaki

Advisor: Jean Graham-Jones

This project focuses on theatre translation from Modern Greek into English through the examination of three plays translated in the early years of the ongoing Greek crisis (2012-2014). Currently Greek culture is received internationally through two important frames of reference: Hellenism, the admiration for the ancient Greek spirit, and the more recent negative associations with modern Greece provoked by the Eurozone crisis. The three translations I examine challenge these dual external projections onto Greek culture by promoting a more nuanced image that recontextualizes the Greek past. In their capacity to travel between cultures, often in bilingual iterations, these theatrical translations selectively elucidate obscure aspects of Greek history in a process of cultural self-representation as they attempt to renegotiate the preconceptions implicit in forming Greece’s image abroad. In this sense, translation serves as a historiography that contributes to a cultural politics within and beyond national borders. The three plays I analyze, *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous, Abandon the Citizens*, and *Sons and Daughters*, especially by way of their translation, propose new ways of seeing these histories and invite foreign audiences to reconsider their presumptions about Greek culture, whether they stem from an admiration for the country’s classical past or from contempt and pity for its current economic fate. I argue that translation functions here as historiography: without turning its back on Europe, Greek theatre in
English seeks to update its affiliations and to re-negotiate its Ottoman and Balkan influences by highlighting historical differences and reframing them under current cultural tensions.
To Brian
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Jean Graham-Jones for her commitment, valuable advice, and patience throughout the long process of developing my topic, designing the project, and finally turning this research into a finished dissertation. I would also like to thank the other two members of my committee, Distinguished Professors Marvin Carlson and David Savran for their generous feedback and guidance in my academic and professional progress.

I received generous funding for this research provided by the Fulbright Commission in Greece and the Enhanced Chancellor’s Fellowship from the Graduate Center, CUNY. Necessary research trips were made possible with the support of multiple Graduate Center Research Awards, the Provost Summer Research Awards, as well as the Graduate Center Theatre Program awards and the Rosette C. Lamont grant. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who recommended me and who read my applications for these awards. I am also grateful for the hospitable environment at the Faculty and Graduate Student Reading Room in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where I completed the final stages of this work.

Special thanks go to the translators, writers, and directors that agreed to be interviewed for this project: Eleni Drivas, Yannis Kalavrianos, Aktina Stathaki, Anna Stavrakopoulou, and Lyto Triantafyllidou.

The following people among the Graduate Center community made even the hardest times manageable: Lynette Gibson, who always found a way to help me even when I was facing most unusual problems, Anne Ellis, who guided me to opportunities and helped me navigate the financial aid system, and Jeanette Palmer, who helped me cope with the pains of graduate student life. I would like to thank my friends and colleagues in the Theatre Program, especially
those who shared the Green Room with me during all those years of graduate work. The intellectually stimulating atmosphere they cultivated, their compassion, and most importantly, their sense of humour will stay with me forever. Pamela Kierejczyk Thielman and Donatella Gallela were brave enough to join me in a dissertation Writing Group, and I would like to thank them in particular. I have been lucky to have begun doctoral studies with my fellow “international student,” Alosha Grinenko; I am forever grateful for his clarity and positive attitude.

This work wouldn’t have been possible without the support of my family and friends. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Bess, who has done more for me than words can say. And Christina and Periklis, who believe in me and supported me since this work was a dream that seemed so far away.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ..................................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1 An Eighteenth Century Greek Play Translated into English for the First Time: *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous* .................................................................................................................. 41

Chapter 2 Crisis and Memory on the Foreign Stage: *Abandon the Citizens* ................................. 84

Chapter 3 The Greek Twentieth Century with Supertitles: *Sons and Daughters* ....................... 129

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................................... 175

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................................... 189
Introduction

My project focuses on theatre translation from Modern Greek into English through the examination of three plays translated in the early years of the ongoing Greek crisis (2012-2014). Currently Greek culture is received internationally through two important frames of reference: Hellenism, the admiration for the ancient Greek spirit, and the more recent negative associations with modern Greece provoked by the Eurozone crisis. The three translations I examine challenge these dual external projections onto Greek culture by promoting a more nuanced image that recontextualizes the Greek past. In their capacity to travel between cultures, often in bilingual iterations, these theatrical translations selectively elucidate obscure aspects of Greek history in a process of cultural self-representation as they attempt to renegotiate the preconceptions implicit in forming Greece’s image abroad. In this sense, translation serves as a historiography that contributes to a cultural politics within and beyond national borders.

The three plays I analyze, *Alexandrovdas the Unscrupulous*, *Abandon the Citizens*, and *Sons and Daughters*, were presented to their original audiences under different circumstances and with different goals. In their circulation in English translation, however, they share some critical characteristics. All three were translated by native Greek speakers who attempted to export their work, and as such all three represent attempts to communicate the cultural tensions associated with the present socioeconomic circumstances beyond the Greek language. While none of the plays addresses the Greek economic crisis in a direct manner, each one’s translation and circulation take place during a time when there is a pronounced tendency to revisit recent history with the opportunity of the crisis, resulting in what Dimitris Papanikolaou has called “the
disturbed archive.”¹ Papanikolaou’s approach describes the ways the crisis has prompted an attack on the conceptual continuity between ancient and modern Greece. During the fiscal, political, and social disorder, Greek cultural production has turned to obscure moments of national history and marginalized personal memories and foregrounded these experiences in an attempt to reframe and question dominant narratives. The plays I consider, especially by way of their translation, propose new ways of seeing these histories and invite foreign audiences to reconsider their preconceived notions about Greece, whether they stem from an admiration for the country’s classical past or from contempt and pity for its current economic fate.

The theoretical framework for my examination is an amalgam of recent approaches to the crisis. They include Papanikolaou’s theory of “archive trouble” mentioned above as well as historical theories of cultural transmission in Greek culture that date back to the Greek Enlightenment (ca 1770-1820). This period is important, because it preceded and largely prepared the establishment of the Modern Greek state. The Enlightenment’s principles have influenced Modern Greek identity enormously, perhaps more than was previously recognized before the crisis. In my work, theatre translation serves as a field within which to study the impact of Enlightenment philosophy combined with the more recent discourse on the Greek crisis.

Background Discussion and Definition of Key Terms

While ancient Greek plays account for a large number of published and performed translations in English, modern Greek theatre is largely unknown in the English-speaking world. Indeed, theatre provides a vivid illustration of what anthropologist Michael Herzfeld defines as modern Greece’s “conspicuous absence.” Before I introduce the theoretical framework that informs my project, I will briefly describe the parameters that condition the reception of Modern Greek theatre in translation by defining the central terms “Hellenism” and “European crisis.”

In my research I use the term Hellenism in its cultural sense, that is, the admiration for the ancient Greek spirit. In Gonda Van Steen’s succinct definition, Hellenism is “the contemporary cultural and intellectual fascination with Greek antiquity.” Van Steen here intends “contemporary” to mean of the same era as another manifestation of enthusiasm for ancient Greece, the philhellenic political sentiment that prevailed during the early nineteenth century. The currency of Hellenism as an academic interest undoubtedly fueled the philhellenic movement that supported the Greeks in their fight for independence from the Ottomans. Philhellenism was in this sense Hellenism’s political expression against the Ottoman Empire. It was an imaginary construct upon which nineteenth-century Europeans relied to make sense of their conceptions of East and West and to interpret their selective political and cultural priorities. Because of Philhellenism’s limited chronological tenure, I use Hellenism instead, which, from a

---

5 Ibid.
Greek perspective, also denotes the ongoing relationship between modern Greeks and their past. While the foreign fascination with the ancients ceased to be a dominant academic interest after the nineteenth century, in Greece Hellenism, which in its cultural-historical meaning signifies the essence of being Greek, remained current as a term of cultural coherence for long thereafter. 

The recent European crisis added another frame through which to view Greece, and in doing so gave Greek culture a contemporary identity -- albeit a negative one still dependent on its classical image. The Greek crisis may be “modern,” but its frame of reference remains “ancient”: from the beginning of the fiscal crisis, international media accounts of Greece’s threatened debt default frequently employed symbols from ancient Greek culture and sometimes even the actual phrase “Greek Tragedy.” For Greeks today the use of such symbols as a metaphor for their fiscal situation contributes to a centuries-old tension between a projected identity and contemporary reality. The overuse of the theatrical expression leaves no doubt as to the validity of ancient Greek drama as an identifiable point of comparison, but at the same time it

---


underscores the obscurity of contemporary Greek theatre outside Greece, not least because of the common assumption that “Greek” means “ancient Greek.” The international repercussions of the European crisis gave rise to an unpleasant discourse in the media that cast certain countries in a variety of villainous roles.\(^8\) It may be tempting to relate Greece’s fall from grace to the “misfortunes of ancestry,”\(^9\) especially when comparing the German philhellenic sentiment for ancient culture to the more recent virulent defamation of the Greeks. While the negative representation of Greece escalated into a kind of “Greece-bashing” in Germany, especially in the early years, in the English-speaking media the Greek troubles were often depicted as a tragedy inflicted upon an undeserving people.\(^10\) In any case, analyses were polarized between the vilification or infantilization of the national economy, evident in metaphors either of disease or of teacher-pupil scenarios.\(^11\) The above went hand in hand with the widespread adoption of stereotypes about Southern Europeans as lazy, corrupt, or tax-evasive.\(^12\) Judging from the variations in attributing fault to the “PIIGS” countries,\(^13\) Greece was evidently the European Union’s weakest link.\(^14\)

---


13 PIIGS is the pejorative acronym for Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain.

14 Specifically, Bickes, Otten, and Weymann compare the representations of Greece and Spain in 2012 as follows: “The Greeks receive less sympathy and solidarity than the Spaniards, although
While the Greek crisis is associated with the supervision of fiscal performance in the frame of the Eurozone, I mainly employ the term “European crisis” because of the larger issues of European identity and policy that the crisis has brought to the fore. The current refugee crisis and the recent decision of Great Britain to leave the European Union both emphasize the perpetual questions regarding European border management and the privilege of circulation among the various European countries. The tensions between the East and the West in this context speak to a crisis of profound magnitude. Greece is located geographically and conceptually at the crossroads of these tensions.

The 2015-2016 refugee movement from Syria into the European Union has highlighted Greece’s role as both a transit zone and a stand-in for the West: the Aegean Sea is seen as the borderland between Asia and Europe, East and West. Thus, in broad terms, the east of the Aegean signifies Europe’s cultural and religious other. The West is Western Europe and specifically the historically powerful members of the European Union, such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, all desirable destinations for refugee and migrant relocation. Like all border zones, the geographical area of Greece historically has been inhabited by hybrid cultures. This hybridity, however, has been repressed since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the institution of the independent Greek state in the early nineteenth century. In order for Greece to be recognized as a European country, Greek culture needed to subdue any Ottoman influences. It also had to enhance its most reliable European characteristic, its claim of direct descent from the

---

they have been in the worst financial condition for more than two years. This situation might have been caused by the aggressive representation of the Greek crisis as being self-inflicted for the last few years, especially during the period of Greek bashing. Even though the Greeks have been blamed for a number of years, the tone of the media has not yet changed. None of the news magazines explicitly report that the Greek population cannot be blamed for the mismanagement of the politicians, in the same way in which the Spanish people cannot be blamed for their banking and housing crisis” (emphasis in the original). Bickes, Otten, and Weymann, “The Financial Crisis in the German and English Press,” 433.
Ancient Greeks. Greece needed to function as the geographical representation of Europe’s “myth of origin.” Modern Greece, as distinctly separate from Ottoman Greece, absolutely relied on proving continuity with the country’s classical glory, and its European affiliation was contingent upon that ancestry as well. In the early nineteenth century, when Greece was becoming independent for the first time, the Greeks embraced Hellenism as constitutive of their modern identity.

Translations from Modern Greek are relatively rare, but this understudied intercultural exchange is crucial to understanding past historical tensions and the more recent effects of the crisis. My project responds to this knowledge gap by focusing on the politics of theatre translation from Greek into English within the specific framework of the European crisis, but also under the pressure of the historical constructs that arise from Greece’s mercurial position between East and West. Theatre translation represents a reciprocal mode of communication that challenges the externally imposed frames of Hellenism and of the fiscal crisis.

Literature Review

I began the consideration of my dissertation’s topic as an attempt to understand the absence of Modern Greek theatre in translation, particularly given the consistent interest in and numerous translations of ancient Greek plays in English. The interdisciplinary nature of this research has required the review of scholarly work in two broadly defined areas: Modern Greek Studies and Theatre Translation. Therefore, I study my three examples with the help of Modern Greek cultural and historical approaches for the most part, as well as more recent works that analyze performance during the Greek crisis. In my review of theatre translation scholarship, I
focus on theoretical perspectives employed to describe cultural transfer for the stage and their related terms, as well as issues on performance with the use of supertitles.

Modern Greek Studies historically has had a particular affinity with Classics. In this project I am mainly concerned with how Modern Greek scholars engage with Classics’ findings and how they assess narratives of continuity between the classical era and contemporary Greece. In particular, Katerina Zacharia, Vangelis Calotychos, and Peter Mackridge discuss the disparity in cultural value attributed to the two periods and trace Hellenism’s influences on contemporary culture from a literary and cultural studies perspective. Stathis Gourgouris affirms the impact of the “phantasm of continuity” and relates it to modern Greece’s fate as “a nation forever situated in the interstices of East and West and ideologically constructed by colonialist Europe without having been, strictly speaking, colonized.” Gourgouris further problematizes Hellenism’s orientalist agenda in excluding modern, i.e., Ottoman, influences in Greek culture in his arguments on “the subtle colonial underside of the discourse of Philhellenism and the institution

---


17 Gourgouris, Dream Nation, 54; 6.
of classics in the nineteenth century.”18 In this examination of the interrelation between Hellenism and Orientalism, based on Edward Said’s work, he continues:

Though the adoration of Greek antiquity, which is traditionally taken to be the foundation of the “West,” seems the polar opposite of the allure of oriental exoticism, both share not merely the same social imaginary that generates them but also the same tools of the trade. Orientalists, after all, were engaged in the comparative study of Greek and Sanskrit in order to orchestrate Indo-European superiority over the Semitic languages. But more than that, both orientalists and Philhellenists were engaged in similar cadaverous approaches to culture.19 Building on Gourgouris’s work, Van Steen expands the critical view on Hellenism-as-orientalism in proposing to study this relationship and how it informed the Greek Revolution of 1821, as well as the collection and removal of antiquities by Western European visitors to Ottoman Greece at the time.20

These scholars’ work touches upon significant issues that bear on Greece’s present, particularly as debates on European borders have resurfaced during the wider European crisis. Antonis Liakos, for example, sees “an intra-European orientalism” in the discourse surrounding the borders of Europe, and specifically Eastern Europe.21 As Peter Mackridge notes, Greece was inevitably part of that bias, not least because of its religious affiliation.22 Further, Michael

19 Ibid.
20 Van Steen, Liberating Hellenism, 6.
Herzfeld sounds pointedly current in his anthropological analysis of Greece’s ambivalent European affiliation published in the late 1980s:

For many west Europeans the Greeks of today are a people neither dramatically exotic, nor yet unambiguously European. They are supposedly the willing servants of western interests, yet they are frequently disobedient to that role. In consequence, they receive public chastisement from journalists and politicians alike, not as the parent of all Europe, but as the political West’s poorly socialized and wayward offspring.  

Herzfeld exposes the paradox surrounding perceptions of Greece, as the “parent of all Europe” and yet not sufficiently European, since contemporary Greek culture does not perform according to its revered ancestors. The measure of progress for Greece still depends on the continuity myth.

In the subfield of Modern Greek Theatre, offering proof that theatre existed between classical and contemporary times occupies a significant part of Greek theatre scholars’ interests. The core of the Modern Greek Theatre curriculum, especially as the first Theatre Studies departments emerged in Greece between the 1970s and 1990s, has been the Greek Enlightenment. A particular comparative mode has assessed not only Greek playwriting, but also translations of French, Italian, and German plays, as these cultural centers attracted Greek intellectuals of the diaspora, who translated into Greek for the benefit of Ottoman Greeks. Dimitris Spathis’s seminal works on theatre of the Enlightenment include an extensively annotated edition of one of my three case studies, *Alexandrovdas the Unscrupulous* in Greek.

---

2008), 297.
Similarly, Anna Tambaki’s many books on the Enlightenment focus on Greek translations of Western plays and the ways the newly imported trends were absorbed. The emphasis on the Greek Enlightenment in Modern Greek theatre studies reveals that the main investigative angle was (and largely still is) devoted to assessing degrees of a Western orientation as proof of steps toward modernization. It becomes evident that translation is a formative component of Theatre Studies in Greece, particularly in the discourse on continuity with ancient Greece, as well as in the effort to demonstrate ties with Western Europe.

In more recent studies of Greek performance, scholars have already incorporated the crisis and its roots as an object of investigation. Marilena Zaroulia and Philip Hager’s edited collection on the crisis as a network of economies and dramaturgies considers the crisis as a more global phenomenon that goes against the entrenched Greek exceptionalism, while looking at the specific parameters of each culture. Zaroulia’s work in particular enables me to consider the performative aspect of the Greek recession, especially in how it is portrayed in the media and the ways my case studies are in dialogue with current images of Greece during the fiscal crisis.

In a different disciplinary field but in a similar direction, Antonis Liakos and Hara Kouki identify the connection between established tropes in Greek political and cultural

---


history and responses to the crisis from 2010 to 2014. The authors point out historical ambivalences in the adoption of Western standards of historiography that inevitably lead to reading Greece’s trajectory as a failed transition to modernity:

Modernity in Greece has been equated with Westernisation and was seen as the opposite to the Ottoman past and Byzantine traditions, which were presented as incompatible with modern democratic institutions. The past was contrasted with the present, as tradition was seen as inferior to the future. On the other hand, modernity was harshly criticised, not because of its principles but because of its connotation with “foreign” social actors intervening in internal politics as well as with domestic actors who uncritically praised everything that originated in the “West.” Already since the foundation of the Greek state in 1832, political groups and agents instrumentalised national traditions and modernisation prospects in different ways, in a long-lasting effort to come to terms with the past and an always “more developed” West that was equated with the future.

The tensions between domestic values and Western aspirations that Liakos and Kouki describe largely inform current debates on fiscal policies that are primarily perceived as mandated from outside the country.

---

28 The historical moment to which cultural memory returns in 2015 is, in the authors’ view, the mythologized mid-1970s, when the political system was reborn with the fall of the junta (μεταπολίτευση). Antonis Liakos and Hara Kouki, “Narrating the Story of a Failed National Transition: Discourses on the Greek Crisis 2010-2014,” Historein 15, no. 1 (2015): 50.

29 Ibid., 54.

The negative representations of Greece’s image that emerged abroad during the Eurozone crisis, as well as internal developments within the country, have had a substantial impact on Greeks’ sense of their history, and consequently an important cultural trend emerged: the repercussions of the crisis have prompted a reevaluation of the past in all spheres of culture.\footnote{Liakos elsewhere brings attention to the uses of nineteenth-century events of the Greek revolution in the articulation of activist messages during the 2008 riots and those that followed in the first years of the crisis. Liakos explains that, starting with the December 2008 riots in response to the killing of fifteen-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos, youth movements exhibited an ambivalent relationship with history, which he describes as a “double bond with the past: Break with the past, appeal to continuity, again rejection of the past.” He illustrates the contrast of sacrilege and appropriation of national history through the graffiti messages on national monuments in Athens. Antonis Liakos, “Has the Crisis Changed Greeks’ Perceptions of Their Past?” (lecture, New York University, November 20, 2014). On the retrospective view in Greek literature and non-fiction, see Socrates Kabouropoulos, “The Age of Discontent – Greek publishing through six years of austerity,” The Cultural Politics of the Greek Crisis (blog) January 12, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016, \url{https://culpolgreekcrisis.com/2016/01/12/the-age-of-discontent-greek-publishing-through-six-years-of-austerity/}.}

The choice of which past to examine, and what perspective is gained by this inquiry, is important because the Greek tendency to resort to the past is not novel in itself and did not begin with the present crisis. In Greek culture, modernity has always been synonymous with a selective historiography: the preservation of a valuable past was seen as the only road to modernization, which, following Western preoccupations, mandated a parallel obliteration of other not-so-useful pasts, such as the centuries between ancient Greece and the new Greek state founded in 1828.\footnote{The selective aspect of this burden to remember and preserve a heavy but largely usable past is the focus of an important number of works. See, among others, Peter Mackridge, “National Identity in Modern Greece,” in *Hellenisms*, ed. Katerina Zacharia, 308. Mackridge illustrates this point in his discussion of the term *anapalaiosi*. The invention of the word, which means “the process of making old again” (as opposed to *renovation*, to make new again), was necessary to describe the developments in the restitution of the Parthenon in the nineteenth century and similar work that followed on other ancient sites. The whitewashing that took place pushed to oblivion the Byzantine and Ottoman past of the monument. A new classicist (and Westernized) national symbol emerged. Like many ancient Greek monuments, the Parthenon had been in continuous use for religious and secular purposes throughout the centuries. Mackridge deftly points out that in fact its restitution according to the Western imagination only managed to destroy the evidence of *continuity* that the Greek state was so invested in.}
During the current crisis, however, a distinct shift occurred: domestic interest turned to the repressed periods and modern Greek culture moved to the foreground.

One trend in analyzing the crisis therefore focuses on cultural responses that involve a retrospective view of these obscure periods. As seen above, in their discussion on the role of history in current affairs, Antonis Liakos and Hara Kouki explain that Greeks “turned with urgency to the national past and re-read its transition to democracy, so as to make sense and render meaningful its troubled present.” In addition to examining a more recent past, however, new questions are being put to the classical era as well. A prominent example particularly useful for my project is Dimitris Papanikolaou’s concept of “the disturbed archive,” which exemplifies the retrospective glance that seeks to subvert established images in Greek performance. Papanikolaou explains the reaction to the crisis as a “disturbing of the archive,” where the assumed “undisturbed relationship between past and present,” until now nurtured by the wiping out of the middle periods, is most fiercely attacked. The crisis itself is the “very point from which the past should be reviewed, revisited, re-collated, reassembled and reassessed, both in political and in identitarian terms.” In his theory of “archive trouble,” Papanikolaou observes that the reconsideration of the past brings to the fore not only instances of obscure history but also targets popular preconceived notions about the classical era and the assumed continuum between that high moment in history and today. To this point, Papanikolaou uses examples of performance that blur ancient Greek elements with current events in order to criticize the present political and social circumstances and present a counter history to dominant narratives.

---

33 Liakos and Kouki, “Narrating the Story of a Failed National Transition,” 58.
34 Papanikolaou, “Archive Trouble.”
35 Ibid.
36 One such example is Kanigunda’s Nation-State (2011), performed in Athens at the inauguration of the Onassis Cultural Center.
Papanikolaou’s focus is on performance, and therefore the re-evaluation he describes implies an audience-oriented process, bound to progress according to each person’s pre-existing knowledge and reception. Disturbing the archive is a novel historiographic approach that challenges the continuity myth by calling into question the enduring image of modern Greece as “the quintessential archive of a perennial past.” In summing up the above main trends, therefore, Modern Greek scholars have analyzed the crisis not as a break with the past, but an opportunity to selectively bring Greek history to the foreground. During the profound political and social upheaval, the perpetual backward glance in Greek thought that ordinarily functions as a mode of cultural coherence has become a subversive historiography.

In my review of Theatre Translation Studies, I focus on three subfields that examine translation practices present in my case studies: translation for the stage that engages with cultural representation and is therefore not limited to the linguistic transfer, supertitles, and issues of self-translation. An important debate within Translation Studies concerns the term “cultural translation,” a wide-ranging, ambitious, and rather contentious term that claims any cultural contact as translation, without the presence -- or even knowledge -- of the languages involved. The contributions of Mary Louise Pratt and Maria Tymoczko to the forum in a 2010 issue of Translation Studies revealed the crux of the problem: by obscuring or marginalizing the significance of the linguistic contact, instances of monolingual (usually Anglocentric) creative processes are celebrated as enablers of communication between different cultures. This has

---

37 Papanikolaou, “Archive Trouble.”
38 Pratt, for example, begins her response by framing the matter in sharp criticism: “People could indeed be forgiven for seeing this as another plumed display of intellectual authority by privileged metropolitans who don’t know any languages and still want to uphold their monopoly on ideas.” Mary Louise Pratt, Birgit Wagner, Ovidi Carbonell i Cortés, Andrew Chesterman, and Maria Tymoczko, “Translation Studies Forum: Cultural Translation,” Translation Studies 3, no. 1 (2010): 94. Tymoczko also expresses an opposition to the metaphorical uses of the term
important implications in theatre translation, where phases of interpretation occur throughout a production, from the initial discussions to ultimately audience reception and after, as Cristina Marinetti analyzes in arguing against the “separation of the linguistic from the ‘dramaturgical’ and the ‘performative.’” She continues: “The risk of such perspectives is that the creative potential of cultural encounters begins and ends with the translated text, which is then passed on to dramaturges, playwrights, directors, and actors who no longer have the means to engage with the language of the source culture.” In bilingual performances, as with two of my case studies, engagement with language is central to audience experience and therefore not limited to processes before the rehearsals. As a consequence, linguistic transfer is hardly marginalized. “Cultural translation,” however, can still lead to dangerous assumptions in translations from Greek, because of the long history of exchanges between Greece and Western Europe that often over-rely on preconceptions rather than what is actually present in the content of the text in question.

As seen above, Pratt, Tymoczko, and Marinetti, among others, problematize metaphors that are in wide use in the field of theatre translation. A persistent image that I engage with in my work is that of spatial metaphors, especially as they are combined with temporal dimensions. In their editorial that introduced the 2013 special issue of *Translation Studies* “Global Landscapes of Translation,” Angela Kershaw and Gabriela Saldanha propose the term landscape as one that preserves the spatial aspect of older metaphors, such as “transfer, source, target, field, flow, and wave.” Landscape, however, is more appropriate in their view, because it also introduces a translation in certain contexts: “Using the term translation for the movement of people (except in the most concrete sense) is self-defeating if one wishes to have any real understanding of migration, diaspora and the result of cultural displacement and interface.”

---

40 Angela Kershaw and Gabriela Saldanha, “Introduction: Global Landscapes of Translation.”
more active concept for the context of where the translation takes place and enhances the agency of the translator. They elaborate:

The landscape metaphor refers to the environments in which translations are produced and received, and challenges images of such environments as stable substances within fixed boundaries. While this idea is in itself anything but new, we still lack a sufficiently sophisticated set of analytical concepts to describe the production and reception of translations in such a way that the dynamism and heterogeneity of the producing and receiving environments (landscapes) becomes an underlying assumption rather than something to be rehearsed and clarified in each new publication.41

Kershaw and Saldanha’s description immediately brings to mind Arjun Appadurai’s five scapes (ethnoscape, mediascape, ideoscape, technoscape, and financescape).42 Indeed, the writers attribute their preference for the term, because it is already associated with concepts of cultural flow in Appadurai and Anna Tsing, whom they cite in support.43 Theories of mobility are undoubtedly useful in translation and in my own research. I find that theoretical approaches to how we understand the conceptual and physical borders that border theories articulate are essential in cosmopolitanism’s prompt to respectfully transgress cultural boundaries. Important work on cosmopolitanism has updated the notions of inter- or cross-cultural performance and problematized the idea of multiculturalism in globalization. Focused on various forms of performance, the essays in Ramón Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young’s Performance in the Translation Studies 6, no. 2 (2013): 135.

41 Ibid.
*Borderlands* address both material and conceptual borders, but with an emphasis on the inseparable notions of the aesthetic experience and the geopolitical reality, what the editors call the “border sensorium.”\(^{44}\) Josh Kun’s concept of audiotopia, for example, describes the aural contact zone that allows the listener to imagine connections that may be prohibited in the sphere of the geopolitical.\(^{45}\) This utopian possibility can also be found in Nikos Papastergiadis’s work, and I borrow some of the questions he addresses to the visual arts in order to investigate aspects of reconciliatory processes in my case studies.\(^{46}\)

A related useful concept is that of translation as “transfer.” While I am aware of the criticism against the term transfer within the discipline, I find it suitable for the specific Greek context and I will explain how I employ it in my research. Spatial metaphors in translation, usually guided by the etymological influence of *trans* (and the meaning of *translate* as “to carry across”), have been criticized for their anglocentrism and generally narrow Western orientation.\(^{47}\) Of course translation theory could only stand to benefit from expanding its purview beyond English and Romance languages. If etymology is a factor in the formation of new


\(^{47}\) In the responses to the “*Translation Studies* Forum: Cultural Translation,” Andrew Chesterman and Maria Tymoczko explain the problem with relying too much on the English and Romance languages for the construction of translation theory. Chesterman states: “The corresponding terms in some other languages (such as Finnish, Turkish, Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Tamil) do not foreground the notion of carrying something across, but rather notions of difference or mediation.” Mary Louise Pratt et. al., “*Translation Studies* Forum: Cultural Translation,” 104. This is also the case of Greek, where the word *μετάφραση* does not imply carrying across. Tymoczko further elaborates that “the metaphors of translation, Übersetzung, traduction, traducción, and so forth for textual and linguistic translation are entangled with a regime of Bible translation, the history of Christianity in Western Europe, the history of Western colonization and imperialism, and other specific facets of Western European history and culture.” Ibid.,108.
paradigms, then it should at least take into account a greater number of languages. In the Greek example, the Greek word for translation (metaphrasi, μετάφραση) includes the prefix meta- (which in Greek means post-, after, among other definitions) and thus can imply a temporal dimension. Translation comes after – not strictly after an original, but certainly after some sort of start text.  

Both temporal and spatial dimensions are significant in my project because of Greece’s geographical and conceptual positioning between East and West.

There is another important reason why transfer applies in the Greek case, and it lies with its implication of the related metaphor of target. Kershaw and Saldanha provide a useful trajectory. While they recognize that translation as transfer is a resilient metaphor, they also wish to problematize certain aspects embedded in its use that center upon assumptions of linearity for the translation process and passiveness on the part of the translator.  

Keeping these objections in mind, however, I find the target metaphor -- that is part and parcel of transfer in their description – appropriate in the context of my work in translations of Greek into English, a historically hierarchical environment. Kershaw and Saldanha explain:

[The concept of target] suggests both unidirectional movement and one dimensional causality. Targets are something to be reached or attained: the underlying assumption is that the force is exerted from the source in the direction of the target, rather than vice versa. In the geography of translation, however, translation operates not only as an export item funded to disseminate cultural

---


50 Ibid., 140.
images but also as an import item, selected by the target culture to fill specific gaps or suggest solutions for socio-cultural problems.\textsuperscript{51}

While the multidirectional process Kershaw and Saldanha envision for translation may be true in many cases, in the Greek context I analyze, translation is largely unidirectional. It is the Greek artists and translators themselves who wish to disseminate their work abroad and they are usually not funded by the receiving culture or by the Greek state. Translation provides an opportunity to transfer their language, background, and overall experience that enabled the creation of the original to a foreign context. In the case of recent translations during the Eurozone crisis, such as my three case studies, the endeavor becomes a personal negotiation of national identity and representation of “Greekness” under difficult circumstances. Given the negative images the crisis has produced, Greek artists during the profound recession after 2010 sought to publish and perform their work abroad, to inscribe their voices in an international cultural landscape, and to engage firsthand with Greece’s cultural representation in the media. But because of the conditions under which the translations are produced – locally, without native English, and often in a process of self-translation – the envisioned target, while certainly an important part of the process, can be quite unstable. There is no specific English-speaking audience addressed in translations where English represents the world. For Greek plays translated into English the target to be hit or missed is essentially the significant opportunity for global visibility.

Regarding the more technical aspects examined in Translation Studies, another area I review is scholarly work that focuses on the use of supertitles. The lack of theory in this subfield makes it difficult to draw general conclusions from the published case studies. Marvin Carlson’s

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
Speaking in Tongues provides an important initial remedy to this gap.\textsuperscript{52} His study of languages in the changing international theatrical landscape has inspired translation scholars working in the field of intercultural performance, such as Helena Buffery. Buffery’s examination of “heteroglossia” in Catalan theatre performed abroad offers an intriguing model of local performance travelling beyond borders as a means of negotiating local concerns, a characteristic that permeates my case studies of Greek theatre performed abroad during the current crisis.\textsuperscript{53}

One of the areas where supertitles studies tend to be difficult to apply to other contexts is in studies of the effect of supertitles on audiences. Such is the case of Yvonne Griesel’s rather technical perspective, where her model of categories of spectators (native speakers of only the source language, native speakers of only the target language, and those with an understanding of both, who can also be native speakers, i.e., bilingual) is rather limited to her case studies of German into French and vice versa.\textsuperscript{54} Her narrowly defined categories would not hold in other settings of several languages present, such as international festivals. In contrast, Louise Ladouceur’s work on Canadian “heterolingual” performance is novel in its consideration of audience reception in that she takes into account varying degrees of familiarity with the languages on stage.\textsuperscript{55} In this respect, her contribution can be taken beyond her specific cases, as

\begin{footnotes}
\item[55] Louise Ladouceur, “Surtitles Take the Stage in Franco-Canadian Theatre,” *Target* 25, no. 3 (2014): 343-64, doi 10.1075/target.25.3.03lad.
\end{footnotes}
it can ideally suit diasporic settings, such as the one in my second case study, *Abandon the Citizens*.

Self-translation, another under-theorized aspect of translation, is an important component of Greek theatre into English, since it is most often the case that Greek artists themselves translate their work in order to help it travel abroad. Among the limited academic attention afforded to the practice of self-translation, which has mainly been historical, Anthony Cordingley’s recent edited collection *Self-Translation* provides a wider spectrum of examples that are closer to the Greek paradigm. For example, the sections on postcolonial perspectives and cosmopolitan identities combine novel approaches from a diversity of voices. From a different disciplinary perspective, but equally valuable to Translation Studies, Papastergiadis’s model implies a self-translation (and consequently, a self-representation), since by translating themselves artists render their culture more “visible.” Papastergiadis explains that translation persists because “[i]t thrives in the desire to bring your culture into the cosmopolitan dialogue.” In my review of self-translation therefore, I focus on wider culture-based approaches that illustrate translation’s powers of negotiating identity, past and present.

For a historical review of translation modes, I examine writings by Greek intellectuals of the early nineteenth century, because, as seen above, the Greek crisis prompted a re-examination of political history with a critical point of return the beginning of the Greek state in 1832 following the revolution against the Ottoman Empire in 1821. In cultural matters, the Greek Enlightenment that preceded the war is particularly significant to my work not only for one of

---


59 Ibid.
my case studies, but also for its enormously influential principles of communication with the West, which included methods of translation. I specifically focus on the work of Adamantios Korais (1748-1833) and his concept of metakénosis. This term referred to the transfer of the ideas of European liberal humanism through translation into Modern Greek. Korais’s translation program included French writings, but also classical Greek works. European thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was assumed by Korais to be based on classic Greek ideals, and its re-translation into Greek was undertaken in earnest in order to inspire sentiments of national unity, continuity with the classical past, confidence in Greek letters, and eventually mobilization against the Ottomans. Korais’s highly consequential principle for Greek intellectuals dismissed Eastern influences in Greek culture and emphasized the role of classical Greece in European thought.

Even though metakénosis only valued the direction of cultural production from Western Europe to Greece, I employ the concept in my research to study the historical biases that Greeks exhibit for their own past. Recent criticism seems to have rediscovered the links between a historical anxiety to catch up, that metakénosis implies, with the sense of “culture of surveillance” to which Greece has been and continues to be subjected through the external

---

60 The morpheme meta-, present in metaphrasi (translation) is also observed in metakénosis. In this view too, I consider the term transfer as useful in exploring the presuppositions inherent in the term metakénosis and its relationship with metaphrasi.


62 Adamantios Korais, Προλεγόμενα, δεύτερον εκδιδόμενα δια συνδρομής των ομογενών [Prologues, second edition published with the help of the diaspora] 1815 (no publication information). Some useful writers for Korais were, among others, Aristotle, Xenophon, and Plutarch, but also Racine, Corneille, and Rousseau.
supervision imposed by the fiscal crisis. However, the connection between the theoretical framework of historical metakénosis and current questions of cultural loans and debts has not been properly addressed in scholarship, which is what I hope to have accomplished here. While metakénosis may express a desire for the Greeks’ self-improvement, it is not simply an internal affair. On the contrary, its significance is founded on the fact that it was instrumental in the construction of modern Greek identity by providing a theory of continuity between ancient and modern Greece, and therefore conditioned the ways by which Greeks sought -- and still largely seek -- to relate to Western Europe. As such, metakénosis and its historical influence constitute a key investigation for my study of translation as cultural transfer from Greek into English.

Argument

My project examines translated theatre as the site where the questioning of history takes place: how the historicizing trends materialize in a framework of residual interpretations of classical Greece on the one hand and perceptions of the contemporary crisis on the other. In the globalized context of the crisis I do not focus on the introvert history performed within Greece, although elements of this trend are inevitably part of my analysis. Instead, I examine the outward-looking promotion of a new historiography that relies on translation. I am particularly interested in those elements that present a challenge in translation, such as politically charged historical references, and I highlight the negotiations that take place in their transfer into English for non-Greek-speaking audiences. The often subversive representations of history on stage or in print were understood differently by those who had access to the originals. There is a distinct

63 “Modern Greek culture had been, since its inception, a culture under surveillance.” Gourgouris, Dream Nation, 143. The conditions of surveillance imposed by German representatives in the European Commission with regards to debt relief for Greece are summarized in Sommer, “European Crisis Discourses: The Case of Germany,” 14.
esoteric tendency in Greek cultural products of the crisis that demands close knowledge of the historical past under scrutiny. Degrees of “archive trouble” were evident in the translations’ common struggle to make known a culture that has been bypassed: the non-classical, at times multilingual, non-Western aspect of Greek culture. The plays, and most importantly their translations, interrogate Greek culture’s position between the East and the West as they re-visit Greek history.

I argue that the manifold re-examination of the past evident in the crisis represents a way to re-negotiate Greece’s ambivalent position as a borderland between East and West. For Greek cultural politics, rejecting, or at least questioning the ancient past -- that was until now seen as the only valuable past, especially from a foreign perspective -- is a way to reject Western perspectives on Greek culture. Indeed, the crisis itself is experienced as imposed by Western economic standards. The question of whether Greece is a European (or Western) country has been a constant in Greek studies, evident in the many works that address this point. The crisis created an urgency to deal with this long-term issue in a global context and resulted in a more consciously historicizing perspective. By privileging a recent past, as opposed to the classical glory, or by reframing perceptions on ancient heritage, Greeks question the value attributed to their history according to Western standards and claim their own set of criteria by which to experience their national past. Liakos’s critique of historiography, for example, explains that Western Europe imposed a specific historiographic approach to peripheral cultures. In his view, the West designed a hierarchy of values that permeated historical thinking in all societies within

64 Kouki, “European Crisis Discourses,” 17.
65 For more recent work about the crisis and Greece’s position see: Anna Triandafyllidou, Ruby Roupas, and Hara Kouki, eds. The Greek Crisis and European Modernity (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 16.
its sphere of influence. The most deleterious effect of this was the “stigmatization” of those outside these parameters, which he argues traumatized these nations, and the trauma became part of their identity. Building on Liakos’s argument, then, I understand the recent questioning of official history during the crisis as directly linked to Greece’s negotiation of its self-image in a global context. The Greeks’ idea of themselves was constructed abroad, first by Hellenism and most recently by the international financial pages. The crisis prompted Greeks to reconsider their history and to reclaim control of their international image. Greeks’ rejection of the externally projected image, then, defies Western dominance. The now established trend of representing the historical past through personal experience, such as the popular genre of documentary theatre has come to replace official history. (Indeed, two of the three case studies I examine can be categorized as theatre of testimony.) But for the main part the performance of this disruption has remained within the confines of the Greek language, and therefore its effects have been examined mainly on local audiences.

My study of translations into English widens the scope of studies on the Greek crisis. Of course, the translation of this material poses certain challenges, as I demonstrate through my three case studies. My goal is to highlight the processes that take place in translation from Greek into English in the heightened environment of the crisis. Socio-economic developments obviously affect original playwriting and dramaturgy, as performance is enlisted among the tools that attempt to express how the crisis is experienced in Greece. The tensions that are still under examination within the Greek paradigm, such as the new perspectives on history that I described,

---

67 “Trauma was produced by Western historiography and expressed in a negative consciousness. That is, in a hetero-definition of the self.” Ibid.
68 In Greece the global trend of a popularization of history roughly coincided chronologically with the crisis. Liakos summarizes the many ways this tendency took form in recent years (e.g., popular magazine special issues, etc). Antonis Liakos, Πως το παρελθόν γίνεται Ιστορία [How the Past Turns into History] (Athens: Polis, 2007), 17.
also shape translation into English. The very specific historical references, even when presented under new light for Greek audiences, require a great deal of contextualization in order to communicate with a foreign audience, and that context can be difficult to provide in translated theatre. However, the reframing of recent Greek history that new translations accomplish in their circulation beyond Greece represent a more comparative and outward-looking historiographic approach that communicates the identity crisis to a wider public.

In my central question of how translation can develop a historiographical model, I find that theatre translation scholarship and the historical example of metakénosis have both proposed ways into the interconnections between history and translation. Within the Greek paradigm, metakénosis provides an established route of considering translation as historiography: by gaining intimacy with their forgotten classical heritage through translation, Ottoman Greeks could reorganize their view of their history. Metakénosis, then, was not simply a translation method or theory, but also a model of historiographical practice that relied on the awakening of a cultural memory. According to the metakénosis model, translation was a form of transfer in space and time: from Western Europe to the East that Greece was understood to be during the Ottoman occupation, and from ancient to modern times. Indeed, the image that Korais used to describe the term was a “transfer” of intellectual goods from Western “baskets” to those of the Greeks.69

Using the historical example of translation as historiography that metakénosis puts forth as a model, I would like to probe deeper into how history relates to translation in the context of theatre. In his treatise on translation of historical plays and New Historicism, David Johnston

---

69 In the original: “μετακένωσις από τα κοφίνια των αλλογενών εις τα κοφίνια των Ελλήνων.” Adamantios Korais, “Sequence and Ending of Impromptu Reflections,” 163.
asks: “What is the relationship between that act of translation and historiographical method?”

Johnston sets up an argument with considerable implications for translation as historiography: it becomes clear that the “dilemma of critical and historiographical practice” that the translation of historical plays poses resembles primarily a historiography of memory. Translation for Johnston does not rely upon -- in fact, it goes against -- separation between past and present; instead, it encourages a diachronic continuum through emotional and cognitive connections between the represented past and the spectators’ present, while acknowledging the differences between the two. In this capacity, translation is an inherently performative historiography, similar to memory, which defies the tenets of historiographical method that considers past and present as separate. This blurring of temporalities is very close to the Enlightenment’s metakénosis, which insisted on historical continuities, but also Papanikolaou’s notion of “archive trouble,” which foregrounds the tension between “official” history and shared memory. Johnston elsewhere suggests another way to conceptualize the historical disturbance that translation effectuates, as a “prism that releases, that fires off in different directions a series of intercultural and intertemporal moments that challenge and enrich spectator reception and experience.”

Theatre translation for Johnston can reconcile the two temporal dimensions, and because of this characteristic, I see translation as a tool for the archival disturbance that Greek cultural expression adopted as a response to the crisis.

---

71 Ibid., 12.
72 Ibid.
Translation, like historiography, can represent a method by which to reconstruct the past for a new audience; it “offers a different way both of thinking about the past and of locating it,” as David Johnston claims. This is why I argue here that translation is an overlooked but important tool that is used in some of the cultural responses to the crisis. It is also one that becomes even more useful in its capacity to communicate with a wider (i.e., foreign) public.

Translation from Modern Greek into English during the crisis is a historiographic approach that can unsettle, reframe, and question preconceived notions of Greek history. Drawn to either digested or previously ignored archival material, it is a historiography of popular means that combines indigenous conceptions of Greek identity and foreign perceptions of Greece constructed abroad, and then restages them in interrogatory mode in order to attack said preconceived images. Because the agents of this process (translators and performers) are largely Greek, through their work they represent a new notion of “Greekness” for foreign audiences and thus produce counter images to those of the crisis.

My three case studies cover a wide spectrum of different texts and performance contexts, from a translation of a historical play published in print, to the diasporic production of a bilingual text, to a devised production that traveled abroad after successful runs in Greece. The first play is a rare case of a translation from an eighteenth-century manuscript written in the form of satirical political libel. The second and third plays are based on archival material from the Greek twentieth century and fall into the category of testimony theatre. All three case studies move from the relatively intimate material of their originals to reach a wider public through their rendering into English. But their principal connective substance is their historical moment of creation. Because the three case studies were all translated between 2012 and 2014, the Greek

crisis has of necessity framed the works in some obvious and some less visible ways. Even in moments when the content of the plays does not address the crisis, the context within which they were all translated projects the crisis as a frame within which to receive them. In other words, the contemporary Eurozone crisis has added a certain degree of pressure to a modern Greek theatre that was already burdened by its classical past.

The three translations I examine all provide distinct perspectives on modern Greek theatre. Taken together, they represent the range of different texts that attempted to critique Greek culture under the recession, and to communicate this commentary beyond the Greek language. While all three case studies participate in the current archival disturbance, their varying status and form required me to adopt methodologies specific to each case study. I locate their main differences within three major interrelated strands of translation analysis: the translation strategies adopted, the role of the translator, and the audiences addressed in each case.

While I found it suitable to address the key issue of foreignization in the translations, the three plays occupy different positions along the spectrum of foreignization and domestication. In the first example, the translator of *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous* employed foreignization among the tools to address new audiences for her work. In *Abandon the Citizens*, the performer-translator first located the foreign within the different Greek dialects before engaging with the simultaneous presence of Greek and English on stage. In *Sons and Daughters* foreignization was initially an unintended outcome rather than a conscious choice. However, in the most recent translation of the work for the New York City production, the translator approached the other end of the spectrum and adapted the work for a specific community. A related issue to the assessment of foreignization is the translators’ status as non-native speakers of English. True to the general tendency in translations from Modern Greek, all three case studies addressed their
audiences as speakers of a lingua franca and did not adapt to a specific English-speaking audience, with the exception of *Sons and Daughters* in New York.

The status of the translator also influenced my approach in the analysis of the three examples. In *Alexandrovdas* the translator is an independent agent distanced from her original in time, and in a position to bring the work under the light of a scholarly audience. In *Abandon the Citizens* on the contrary, the translation is immersed in and disseminated through the performer’s body, as the roles of actor, director, dramaturg, and translator are combined in one person. In *Sons and Daughters*, the two English versions I examine represent two extremes in translational approaches: from the anonymous translator of the first version, to the specifically located and knowledgeable member of a tight-knit community in the second. Consequently, I modified the kind of analysis I applied according to the specifics of each case.

Overall, the plays in English negotiated diverse ways of bringing Greek theatre to international view, consistent with the dominant trend of archival disturbance, thereby foregrounding Greek culture’s Eastern affiliations. *Alexandrovdas* in English was published in Istanbul, while the production of *Abandon the Citizens* took place in Centers of Middle Eastern performance in the US. The third case study, *Sons and Daughters*, travelled to Sarajevo as part of its foreign tour. The venues themselves contributed to the translations’ subversive agendas. While the plays were all rendered in English, they did not simply address a Western audience for validation. Instead, the translations were presented in venues situated in cultural and religious crossroads.
Outline of Chapters

Each of the three chapters that follow focuses on a Greek play in English translation, in its broader sense that includes bilingual performance and the use of supertitles, produced or published during the first years of the Greek crisis. I examine how the translations in my case studies contribute to the novel historiographic approach that developed as a response to the crisis.

Chapter 1, “An Eighteenth Century Greek Play Translated into English for the First Time: Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous” examines Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous, a political satire written by Georgios Soutsos in 1785 and its translation into English by Anna Stavrakopoulou, published in 2012. The play, written by a member of a Greek minority of Constantinople, returned to its city of birth for the publication of its translation. I look into the reasons that drive the transfer of this piece from its colorful Phanariot Greek dialect into English for the first time at this point in history, more than two hundred years after its composition. Within the scope of my project, Alexandrovodas opens the stage for the examination of marginalized Greek history that is re-visited, reframed, and presented before an international audience as a response to the crisis. With this case study I take the beginning of this historical review back to the moment of emergence of a modern Greek consciousness that preceded the establishment of the Greek state.

Of the wide range of issues raised on this first occasion of a translated play from the period, I am particularly interested in the shifting narratives between the libel’s 1785 manuscript, privately circulating among the members of the Phanariot Greek-speaking minority of the Ottoman Empire of which the writer was a member, and the potential international audience of English-speaking readers that this translation allows. Due to its linguistic obscurity, the play has
remained exclusively under Modern Greek Studies’ purview. In her detailed work that builds on Spathis’s critical edition of *Alexandrovodas* in the original, the translator Anna Stavrakopoulou introduces the play to an English-speaking readership by providing background information about the world portrayed in it.\footnote{Γεώργιος Σούτσος, *Alexandrovodas o Ασυνείδητος*, σχολιασμένη έκδοση και συνοδευτική μελέτη “Φαναριώτικη κοινωνία και σάτιρα,” από τον Δημήτρη Σπάθη [Georgios Soutsos, *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous*, Annotated Edition Accompanied by the Essay “Phanariot Society and Satire” by Dimitris Spathis] (Athens: Kedros, 1995). What is more, by making the work accessible to Ottomanists, Stavrakopoulou re-positions the work within the canon of Ottoman historical and satirical literature. The play and its translation prompt scholars to reexamine historical Greek national and cultural identity in the interstices of East and West.

The 2012 English-language publication of *Alexandrovodas* allows me to position this play within the body of contemporary translations examined in this dissertation. The timing of the translation, amidst the Greek crisis, further supports my argument about the political function of translating from Greek into English. I first study the period and its theoretical framework of metakénosis and then turn to the methods Stavrakopoulou employed to update Greek theatre’s affiliations and to re-negotiate Greek cultural production’s Ottoman influences. I assess the English *Alexandrovodas* in my hypothesis of translation as historiography, particularly as it builds on the principles of metakénosis, the historiographical-translational approach that dominated the original play’s period.

The following chapter, “Crisis and Memory on the Foreign Stage: *Abandon the Citizens*” focuses on *Abandon the Citizens*, created by the Greek actor and director Aktina Stathaki in 2013. The play consists of a series of monologues, performed in Greek with English supertitles, that incorporated verbatim testimonies of refugees crossing the Aegean after the events that ended the Greek-Turkish war of 1922. The significance of the historical material Stathaki
selected requires a close look at the sources, which is where I begin my examination of the case study. Then I investigate the tools that aided the translational process, such as the gestures, sounds, and music used in the production. These elements were critical in conveying meaning to an audience with varying degrees of familiarity with the history presented in the play, and I consider them alongside the bilingual text and the use of supertitles.

This testimony play revisits an event that is far from marginalized in Greek historical narratives. However, Stathaki’s novel historiographic approach is found in the active reframing she accomplished with her work. Not only the text and its performance, but also the venues the writer-performer chose for her work, managed to expand this aspect of Greek history beyond national borders. In my research I study the methods in her translation and how they contribute to her performance’s accomplishment in portraying the specific event as common ground between the Greek and Turkish sides. My theoretical framework is informed by a nuanced understanding of “cultural translation,” where the languages involved are not marginalized, but instead drive the sensory experience of the performance.

With this case study I further investigate the retrospective mode in Greek cultural production through a Greek text but here performed in a diasporic setting. I examine performance elements along with the linguistic translation under the light of Papanikolaou’s theory of archival disturbance in order to draw conclusions on how the crisis affected not only the textual transfer, but also the tools of performance.

In Chapter 3, “The Greek Twentieth Century with Supertitles: Sons and Daughters” I explore the depoliticizing process of transferring into English the very popular in its original Sons and Daughters (written in 2012 and awarded the prestigious Karolos Koun national prize in 2014). I elucidate the responsibilities and inconsistencies in the representation of personal stories
that intersect with official national history in this piece of Greek testimony theatre, in its performances abroad with English supertitles. The stories in the play span the entire twentieth century. All scenes center upon significant historical events narrated by those who experienced them. The collage of important moments in recent Greek history that is offered to the play’s audiences formed an alternative historiography of popular means that often undermined dominant national narratives.

I examine this third case study by building on the previous chapter’s example of bilingual performance, and I further look into the issues that the Greek production encountered in its search for an international audience in the festival setting. With this play, shaped by the experience of the crisis during all the stages of its development, from initial interviews to enrichment with more stories in each subsequent season, I conclude my investigation of Greek theatre in translation during the turbulent times of fiscal and social upheaval of the years 2012-2014.

Methodology and Limitations

In my research methodology I have applied a combination of approaches from cultural and historical studies. The nature of my primary sources required both textual and performance analysis. After closely examining the three Greek originals next to their English translations, I conducted interviews with the translators and/or playwrights to establish their goals for their work, as well as the circumstances of the translation and circulation of the plays in English. I have studied this material along with reviews of the plays, where those exist, and with other evidence of the reception of the performances outside Greece, such as post-performance discussion sessions or reviews of the translation that have appeared in scholarly journals.
Because all three plays are based on historical narratives of great cultural significance for Greek audiences, my investigation of the specific historical context of each case study is accompanied by a brief discussion of the historical background. I then describe and evaluate the translation strategies with regard to their attempts to elucidate, omit, or reframe the cultural and historical connotations to which the artists presume that the original audience has access to. This step is crucial in reading the effects of the crisis on the new texts in English, because it is in these negotiations that take place in representing the Greek text abroad that the crisis has had the most impact, given the negative images of Greece in the media. Obviously, the translation process concerns elements beyond the textual transfer. In my first case study, where the translation was only published as a book, I focus my investigation on articles and reviews that reveal how the work was received in the scholarly circles the translator and publisher sought to reach. In the other two case studies, where the translated plays have been performed, I study the productions’ whole approach to transferring the works, not only in the text but also in the performers’ bodies, the visual and aural environment, and the audience expectations suggested by specific venues. I have had personal experience as a spectator in both Abandon the Citizens and Sons and Daughters, and I also studied the videos from the productions.

It is obviously essential for the present research to employ the most recent historical and theoretical approaches. However, given the subject matter of the proposed dissertation, “recent” in this context, especially for the historical section of this dissertation, would have to include work that spans several decades. Spathis’s important treatise on the theatre activity of the Greek Enlightenment, for example, is one of the most comprehensive available works of its nature, yet its date of publication is 1986. Critical editions of Korais’s writings and his concept of

76 Dimitris Spathis, Ο διαφωτισμός και το Νεοελληνικό θέατρο [Enlightenment and Modern
metakénosis appear much earlier. It is also important to note that Greece is a country that has been in crisis for a long time, longer than the official six years since the first bailout program. Academic research has been seriously underfunded since 2010, and academic publishing has dramatically declined since then. Nevertheless, there are additional reasons to include a significant number of studies on Greek culture published in English. The first is that cutting-edge research and provocative approaches, such as those of Papanikolaou, have been developed outside the country and mainly in English. Scholars such as Gourgouris, Calotychos, Pechlivanos, and Zaroulia, among others, work in universities in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom. There is more to this issue than funding concerns. The geographical and critical distance that is afforded scholars working abroad greatly influences their perspective, and of course, in this assessment I also draw from my own personal experience as a Greek scholar trained outside Greece. Another important consideration is that it is not unusual in Greek-language scholarly work produced in Greece to see biased representation of facts. I attribute this either to rigid political agendas, or at times simply to an inability to view the wider picture. Especially with historically sensitive issues such as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, it is hard to trust the assumptions made by Greek cultural theorists who must operate within a

Greek Theatre], (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1986).

77 For example, the universally trusted source for Korais’s own writings is K. Th. Dimaras, ed., O Κοραής και η Εποχή του [Korais and his Time] (Athens: Zacharopoulos, 1958).


79 Socrates Kabouropoulos, “The Age of Discontent.”
national network. A wider number of perspectives on the facts has provided me with a more nuanced understanding of the historical event and its role on Greek culture. Finally, because of the particular focus of my topic, translation, it has been important to examine the ways “Greekness” is considered from the outside. Scholarship in English has helped to underscore the idea that Greeks, perhaps like all cultures with an ancient past that is deemed globally significant, have historically never been in control of their self-image, at least not when they work in their own country. In order to have the opportunity to represent themselves, “to write Greece,” Greeks need to publish in English. The process is similar for the artists that I examine in my three case studies. Because of its hegemonic position in cultural affairs, English represents the world rather than simply English-speaking countries, and it is used as a pivot language for translation between other languages.

Contribution

My goal in this inquiry has been to bring Modern Greek theatre in English translation into the international scholarly conversation between theatre scholars, but without resorting to the too-common pattern of pitting contemporary theatre against its assumed classical models. Similarly, I hope to add the severely underrepresented areas of theatre and performance to the canon of Modern Greek studies. Translation can shed light on history and cultural practice. Translated performance in particular can sensitize cultural critics regarding their biases toward cultural representation, because it utilizes an expanded range of channels by which to enhance exchange. Performance engages a range of sensory receptors and provides alternative paths through which to explore foreign territory. And Modern Greek, given its marginalized status in
Classics and Modern Languages, certainly stands to benefit from an expansion of its purview beyond its traditional objects of study.

Another one of my goals has been to propose new and reinforce little-explored connections between Modern Greek theatre and current theoretical discussions in Theatre and Translation Studies, as well as relate these discourses to political and economic developments, such as the European crisis. In my dissertation I apply my long-term research and specialized linguistic skills to draw conclusions about the biases that diachronically enable or prevent contact between Greek and English. Ancient heritage and the Eurozone crisis currently over-determine the reception of Greek cultural products. Translation uncovers established relationships between the two cultures in question and employs or challenges them in order to promote communication and possibly counter such over-determinations. My study of the challenges and opportunities that arise when a local, minoritized theatre culture attempts to communicate through the use of a powerful language can extend beyond the Greek paradigm. I use the term “minoritized” here in the specific context of the Greek case. As Karen Van Dyck argues, Modern Greek is minor next to its ancestor, Ancient Greek, and also minor in the context of Modern European languages. The powerful language, English, is not simply the language of a certain English-speaking country in this case. Instead, Greek translators seem to operate under the assumption that English is a neutral medium that does not belong to any one culture in

80 “Modern Greek literature is not minor because only twenty million people speak Greek; it is minor because it is considered minor in the context of something major. What is obvious from Solomos to Seferis is that modern Greek literature has been constructed and has constructed itself in the shadow of a major classical language: ancient Greek. Modern Greek’s deterritorialized status is all too familiar to those of us who are continually asked to distinguish our work from that of the Classicists – ‘no,’ we say, ‘modern Greek.’ And when Greek is given the status of a modern European language it is invariably compared to ‘major’ European languages such as English, French and German.” Karen Van Dyck, “Introduction to Translation and Deterritorialization,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 8, no. 2 (1990): 170.
particular. Consequently, in the translations I examine, there is no specific target English-speaking audience but rather a loosely defined English-speaking community of theatre-goers and/or scholars. The unequal exchange environment created by this pair of languages is not specific only to my examples. Translation Studies can profit from examining its biases in the consideration (and re-consideration) of languages and areas, such as Greece, that have been until recently assigned fixed positions in academically conservative binary models. My three case studies bring forth the new orientation that Greek culture gradually adopted during the ongoing crisis. I apply the findings of my examination in order to uncover the unrecognized historiographical function of theatre translation more broadly.

81 “As a hybrid contact language, a lingua franca is more or less neutral, since it does not belong to any national language, national language community or national territory.” Juliane House, “English as a Global Lingua Franca: A Threat to Multilingual Communication and Translation?” Language Teaching 47, no. 3 (2012): 363, doi:10.1017/S0261444812000043.
Chapter 1
“An Eighteenth-Century Greek Play Translated into English for the First Time: Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous”

Introduction

This chapter examines the English translation of *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous*, a political satire written in 1785 by Georgios Soutsos, a member of the Phanariot Greek-speaking minority of Ottoman Constantinople. The play was translated in 2012 by Anna Stavrakopoulou, a theatre scholar based in Greece and specializing in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Greek theatre. The availability of this play for the first time in English during the Eurozone crisis, two hundred years after its composition, allows me to consider the work along with the other two more recent examples analyzed in this dissertation. I focus on the changes that occurred in the work’s transfer from Modern Greek Theatre’s relatively intimate scholarly circle, who have until now been the exclusive readership of *Alexandrovodas*, to a much larger English-reading audience of Ottoman and Empire Studies, World Theatre, and Translation. This is the first time that a play of the Greek eighteenth century is translated into English. I argue that this translation is an example of archival disturbance, per Papanikolaou, where an obscure past is foregrounded in order to challenge preconceived notions of Greekness. *Alexandrovodas* in English exposes to international view the largely unknown aspect of Greece as Ottoman (and therefore non-Western) and multilingual. This image is at odds with foreign perceptions of Greece as either the guardian of classical culture or, more recently, as the disobedient member of the European Union. Stavrakopoulou’s translation sheds light onto the obscure Ottoman Greek literary production at a time where Greek cultural production turns to its repressed past as a reaction to the crisis.
Within the scope of my project, *Alexandrovidas* provides an example of a published translation that showcases how a repressed Greek past is reconsidered beyond Greek borders as a response to the crisis. My investigation of modern Greek theatre in English translation during the Greek crisis begins with a review of the historical moment when a modern Greek consciousness emerged, the period of the Greek Enlightenment. The return to this point in history provides me with a historical basis on translation’s function as historiography.

The years of the Ottoman domination in Greece (1453-1821) constitute an important gap in Greek national history. That is not to say that the period is not studied at all. On the contrary, the years of τουρκοκρατία [turkokratía], or Turkish occupation, were fundamental to the creation of the national narrative. But their application has been limited to stories of war and conflict. Nearly four centuries are reduced to the couple of decades that led to the war of independence in 1821. Times of peace have received much less historical attention, and certain aspects of the multicultural and multilingual everyday life in Ottoman Greece, including the history of Greek forces of power, have until recently been pushed to the most obscure corners of the archive. An example of Greek participation in the Ottoman ruling class were the Phanariots. This Greek-speaking and Christian Orthodox aristocratic minority, who resided in the Phanari (Fener) district of Constantinople, were usually trained in diplomacy and languages, often in European capitals, and later occupied positions in the Ottoman court or as rulers of the Danubian principalities, also under Ottoman domination. Perhaps because of their in-between status – Greek-speaking, Christian Orthodox, and educated in Western Europe but serving Ottoman interests -- the polyglot Greek minority of the Ottoman Empire has not been adequately examined in Greek, Turkish, or Balkan studies. Stavrakopoulou’s translation has addressed the “standing debt for Modern Greek Studies, as well as the coterminous histories of the Balkans and
Turkey,” as Pechlivanos sees the Phanariot case.\footnote{Miltos Pechlivanos, “Δραγομάνοι και μεταφραστές: μεταξύ ανατολής και δύσης,” [Dragomans and Translators: Between the East and the West] in Η δύση της ανατολής και η ανατολή της δύσης: Ιδεολογικές αντανακλάσεις και στερεότυπα (τέλη 18ου - αρχές 20ου αιώνα) [The Decline of the East and the Rise of the West: Ideological Reflections and Stereotypes (End of 18th - beginnings of 20th centuries)] (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2005), 69. In the original: “Οι Φαναριώτες συνιστούν μια πάγια εκκρεμότητα για την επιστήμη του νέου ελληνισμού, όπως και για εκείνες τον όμορφον ιστοριών των Βαλκανίων και της Τουρκίας.”} The rich historical and biographical material that accompanies Alexandrovodas’s translation creates bridges between the Phanariots as Ottoman subjects and their Greek literary production. The translation contributes not only to studies of empire but also to the interdisciplinary scope of Translation Studies. The combined perspective of Theatre and Translation Studies that I bring to my inquiry considers the play from a contemporary perspective, that of the Greek crisis, for the first time in its scholarly trajectory.

Even though Alexandrovodas is not a contemporary play, the examination of its translation fits my project of examining translation and cultural representation during the pressure applied by the European recession. The English version may have been in development several years before the crisis became felt in Greece, but it was published in 2012, one of the climactic moments of the Greek debt default.\footnote{The translation was originally commissioned in May 2006, but Stavrakopoulou began working on it in the summer of 2009. The largest part of the work took place between 2011 and 2012, when the elaborate introduction was also written. The book was published in July 2012. Anna Stavrakopoulou, in discussion with the author, December 14, 2014. Microsoft Word file.} But the most important relation the work has with the Greek crisis is its innovative approach to the Greek past and the Greek national narrative. The process of reframing that the translation exemplifies reflects the tendency in Greek cultural politics to turn to its past in order to explain recent political and cultural phenomena. The archival disruption, to follow Papanikolaou’s approach of the disturbed archive that this translation accomplishes, stems from the fact that Alexandrovodas in English forces a reconsideration of Greek identity not only to include the Ottoman minority but, more
importantly, to share its cultural output with the neighboring country. The publication by a Turkish press brings what was until recently a Greek issue into global view. Phanariot literary production remained for a long time an uncomfortable other in Greek Studies. In theatre studies, by contrast, a gradual change was prompted by a more interdisciplinary view of theatre and translation that widened the scope of comparative literature beyond national borders. *Alexandrovidoas* in English actively disrupts the narrative that the Phanariots were solely a Greek affair, that is, belonging exclusively within a Greek studies’ field, because with Stavrakopoulou’s published translation, scholars without Greek can finally study this Ottoman play. I consider the work and its translation along my other two case studies of Greek theatre as another example of archival disruption effectuated by translation, regardless of the original’s date of composition.

The availability of this work in English for the consideration of Ottomanists, for example, raises some questions about the necessary intermediation of English, a vehicular language, to serve as a bridge between Turkish and Greek scholars. The absence of direct communication between the two neighboring disciplines is highly indicative of the two nations’ charged history. My particular interest in this paradox centers upon Greek cultural production’s fixation with the West to the detriment of the East. I argue that the specific moment of the publication in 2012 is significant for Greek culture, because it constitutes a break with the until recently accepted mode of historicizing Greece’s Ottoman past. The crisis opened Greek thought to the possibility of belonging to the East by questioning the image of an integral Western identity. Translation can offer new ways of looking into that history by discovering alternate passageways, and it is in this light that I study Stavrakopoulou’s contribution, for its role in disturbing the historiographic logic regarding the Greek Enlightenment.
Another important way Stavrakopoulou’s translation is aligned with the questioning that the crisis provoked, both internally but also beyond Greeks’ own understanding of their culture, is the translation’s potential for expanding our knowledge of Greek drama beyond the Western canon. In cultural purchase Modern Greek theatre has a weak value beyond the Greek language. *Alexandrovdas* is burdened by its status as a Modern Greek play. Its translation in English, however, highlights the play’s minority status as a product of a Greek-speaking but Ottoman and largely transnational community. The play, just as practically every other cultural product from Greece, falls into the cracks between what the West has considered its own and what is not at home in Europe. New avenues and networks must be sought in order for Modern Greek theatre to escape its marginalized position in the West and the rest of the world. In addition, the translation as a cultural event was certainly affected by its timing in the summer of 2012, amidst a particularly charged period where the discussion of a possible Grexit made international news. Greek cultural production was under even more pressure to represent “Greekness” in a first-hand manner. The play’s very contemporary political satire, dramatizing incidents of corruption in the handling of the named prince’s finances and the imposed taxation that allowed him and his family scandalous luxuries, creates vivid and universally recognized images that invite comparisons to more recent political developments (certainly in Greece and Turkey in a post-millennial society). The circulation of this work in English exposes these concerns more broadly.

The chapter’s case study allows me to focus on the translator more than the other two examined in the following chapters. This is for several reasons: first of all, the translator is

---

3 The “West” here means Western Europe. While ancient Greek culture is assumed to be European, Modern Greek cultural production often sits in an indefinable middle ground: not quite European, but also in an uncomfortable “proximity of distance” with its Balkan neighbors, in Kitromilides’s words, and in continuous tension in its relations with Turkey. Paschalis Kitromilides, “‘Balkan Mentality’: History, Legend, Imagination,” *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 2 (1999): 190.
named and agreed to be interviewed on this project, as opposed to the anonymity of the translator in *Sons and Daughters*. She is also an independent agent in the circulation of the work, which is not true of my other case study, *Abandon the Citizens*, where the translator’s role is not separated from that of the writer. Because of the translator’s role in promoting the play in the target language, in my analysis I am primarily concerned with the framing of the new translated work that Stavrakopoulou accomplished. All three case studies analyzed in my dissertation attempted to bring the translated works into an international dialogue. Stavrakopoulou’s project in particular consciously intervenes in a number of fields: Ottoman studies, Greek theatre, and the European eighteenth-century. The work is marked by a clear academic purpose that is unique in my project, where the other two case studies focus on productions of recently written plays. Its inclusion contributes to my dissertation’s scope to examine theatre translated during the Greek crisis, comprising not only productions but also publications.

In the following pages, I first provide some brief background information on the playwright and the historical minority that constitutes his milieu. I consider the work’s afterlife through the Greek Enlightenment’s dominant translational approach, *metakénosis*, or “decanting” of Western values into Greek. The highly influential principle dismissed Eastern influences in Greek culture and emphasized the determinant role of classical Greece in European thought. I then study the translator’s agency, in the sense of her freedom in certain alternatives and restrictions in others, and select aspects of the translation in order to underline her choices in

---

4 In the translator’s words: “The readership targeted, as it is stated in the introduction, are Ottomanists and theater specialists, who do not read Greek. I tried to link the play to current bibliography on the Phanariots (like Christine Philiou’s book on *Biography of an Empire*, describing the trajectory of another Phanariot in the 19th century) and to current bibliography on 18th century theater.” Stavrakopoulou, discussion. By exposing *AlexandrovoDadas* as a play of a historical Ottoman multiculturalism, Stavrakopoulou also significantly contributes to the Greek theatre canon and attendant assessments of the Greek Enlightenment.
bringing the text and its period under contemporary light. For my analysis I compared the published translation along with its colorful Greek original. I also consulted the translator to obtain a clearer idea about the translation’s commission and her goals for the project. Because Alexandrovodas has never been performed, as far as it is known (in Greek or English), my examination in this chapter focuses on the textual processes for its translation and circulation beyond the borders of the Greek-language readership. My consideration includes articles and publication reviews that reveal how the translation was received in the scholarly circles primarily addressed. The translation of Alexandrovodas sheds light on a first-hand testimonial that challenges foundational assumptions about Greek culture and its affiliations by highlighting the multicultural status of the Ottoman identity. The chapter lays the wider theoretical framework for my other two case studies, in the ways metakénosis as a trope diachronically informs networks of transmission in Greek cultural production. Ultimately, I relate the significant period of the Greek Enlightenment and its philosophical tenets with the more recent discourse on the Greek crisis by using theatre translation as the site of this tension.

The Play and Its Time

Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous first appeared anonymously in manuscript form in 1785. The play as a closet drama enjoyed popularity among those readers of the small circle in

---

5 The title of the play is a composite from the name and position of a historical figure, Alexandros the Voevod (1754-1819), “that is, the ruler of the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.” Anna Stavrakopoulou, introduction to Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous (1785), by Georgios N. Soutsos, trans. Anna Stavrakopoulou (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2012), 9. As Stavrakopoulou explains, the Christian Orthodox residents of the Phanari (Fener) district in Istanbul traditionally held similar positions. Ibid.
which it circulated. According to Dimitris Spathis, an important figure in Modern Greek theatre studies who published the work for the first time in 1995, the identity of the writer was soon discovered after the play’s initial circulation. The author, Georgios N. Soutsos (ca 1760-1816), belonged to the social circle that formed the target of his satire. His refusal to sign the manuscript is easily understood when considering that the main character, Alexandros Mavrokorodatos (1754-1819), Voevod of Wallachia and Moldavia (or Alexandrovodas, for short), was a real historical figure alive when the piece was written. The libelous play against him would have circulated among a community of readers who were most probably able to identify the characters and situations.

Alexandrovodas is not known to have been performed in its time or thereafter. However, the structure of the play follows the models of Western European eighteenth-century dramaturgy. It is divided into three acts, and there is a distinct dramatic arc. However, the action does not consistently contribute to the final climax. There are many scenes where specific knowledge of the facts and personages involved is required for understanding the action. These scenes make the play difficult to read at times and would certainly pose a challenge for any potential staging outside its small contemporary circle. Even so, the dialogues manage to stand out because of their lively depiction of the intrigues and their colorful language, which changes according to the

---


7 Spathis consulted four extant manuscripts for his annotated edition. Two of these are among the holdings of the Romanian Academy Library, while a third one is kept in the National Library of Greece. His edition was primarily based on a fourth manuscript, the Heliaskos Codex version, which belongs to a private collection in Greece. According to the author, the Heliaskos manuscript was the only version that included the whole play. Dimitris Spathis, εισαγωγή, [introduction] in Αλεξανδροβόδας ο ασυνείδητος: κομωδία συντεθείσα εν έτει αψπε: 1785 [Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous, comedy composed in year 1785] (Athens: Kedros, 1995), λα΄-λστ΄ (31-36).
person’s status and the situation in which they find themselves. The settings are mostly private sections of the ruler’s home. There are no stage directions and any information that may be significant to the plot is provided in the dialogue.

Before the play begins, Alexandros has just received his title as Voevod and is about to go assume his responsibilities in Moldavia. The first act opens with his sister and his brother-in-law as they discuss how they stand to benefit from his appointment and lay out their plans for gaining as much money as they can from manipulating him. Alexandros appears and asks for their advice in the management of his illicit affair with a concubine he has moved into his household. He refuses to receive his wife, who then storms in complaining to the sister and brother-in-law. They try to persuade her that she has no concern. These two comic characters have many asides in which the audience is informed about the personal and financial depth of their scheme. Alexandros returns and arranges with his courtiers to meet with his mistress, Tarse. Their encounter underlines the comical situation, where the powerful Voevod is madly in love with a calculating but silly woman. In his monologue that concludes the first act, Alexandros decides to kill his wife in order to lawfully enjoy his affair with Tarse. Earlier in his conversations with his sister, he connected his lecherous behavior to his experience of having lived in Europe: “I am not used to being enslaved to one woman only. Whoever learned to live in Europe wants freedom.”

The scenes in Act II help deepen the reader’s understanding of the circumstances, while introducing some more characters from Alexandros’s family and work environment. There are two main interrelated strands of action. First, the family members and their political plots, all around Alexandros and the handling of his enemies; and second, the issue with his wife and her

---

reaction to his mistress. The ruler’s stepsister appears along with other members of his household. This is the part where the comedy takes off in units of scenes, which are however not always connected to the main plot. Lewd humor is the overarching element in the dialogues, including a glimpse of the servants’ sex lives. A priest also appears to help convince Alexandros’s wife to forgive him for the extramarital affair. All forces join to reconcile the ruler with his wife, but he departs for Moldavia without her.

   Act III, the shortest in length, sees the continuation of the negotiations for the couple’s relationship. Alexandros, already in his new post in Moldavia, does not appear in any of the scenes but all conversations involve him and his actions. The priest is called again to help convince the ruler’s wife to join him. In her elaborate response, the lady exhibits deep knowledge of the diplomatic world of the Phanariots and she eloquently dismisses all of the priest’s attempts to justify Alexandros’s behavior. Her speech uncovers embarrassing details about her husband’s actions on his way to becoming a ruler. It is soon revealed that Alexandros misbehaved in his new post and that his protector was also replaced. Chaos ensues, and the comedy closes with the threat for the family’s money and Alexandrovodas’s life.

   The play’s comedy is based on the depiction of the characters’ calculating ways and ruthless goals. Behind the fierce attack on the ruler’s immediate family lies a satire of the whole aristocratic class of the Phanariots. Greek-speaking and Christian Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire, the Phanariots were an aristocratic class, most often highly educated in European capitals and usually employed as translators and interpreters (Grand Dragomans) of the Ottoman court. \(^9\) Many scholars of the period concur that the Phanariots sit uncomfortably within

---

\(^9\) Kitromilides defines the role of the Grand Dragoman: “A high office carrying the duties of a minister of foreign affairs, which was habitually reserved to a member of this group.” Paschalis
the Greek literary and national narrative, which was since the time of the play and thereafter pressed into the service of the nation’s independence.\textsuperscript{10} Because of the Phanariots’ status as capable translators between the higher powers and their subjects, but also because of their own positions of power as rulers with tax collector privileges, they are often “associated with words such as greed, abuses, hypocrisy, corruption, embezzlements, and rivalries.”\textsuperscript{11} All these attributes are present in Soutsos’s play.

In spite of their ambivalent identity, the Phanariots became particularly important to Greek theatre and literary studies for their numerous translations of Italian, French, and German plays. Their advanced linguistic skills allowed them to serve as the Greek translators of the West, but, as Pechlivanos points out, not for the Empire but for the benefit of their own Greek-speaking community.\textsuperscript{12} Their role as translators of the West had a dual function: diplomacy for the Ottoman Turks and literature for the Ottoman Greeks. As Paschalis Kitromilides puts it, “Their Ottoman consciousness was supplemented by a cosmopolitan European consciousness.”\textsuperscript{13} The Phanariots served their Eastern rulers while they gradually westernized their community by importing into the Balkan region ideas of the European Enlightenment through translations they published mainly in European printing presses.\textsuperscript{14} Consequently, their role was instrumental in the


\textsuperscript{10} Miltos Pechlivanos adequately summarizes the suspicions for a class that were both rulers in Balkan territories and enslaved non-Muslim subjects of a foreign court (ηγεμόνες-ραγιάδες). Pechlivanos, “Dragomans and Translators,” 70.


\textsuperscript{12} Pechlivanos, “Dragomans and Translators,” 78-79.

\textsuperscript{13} Kitromilides, \textit{Enlightenment and Revolution}, 33-34. For a similar point see also Pechlivanos, “Dragomans and Translators,” 75-76.

\textsuperscript{14} Pechlivanos, “Dragomans and Translators,” 75-76.
Greek Enlightenment, a movement that largely relied on translation of European ideas for the formulation of its principles. Those with the power to translate, such as the playwright Soutsos and his Phanariot circle, controlled access to the West. Indeed, Soutsos was a translator of Italian theatre. His best-known contribution was an adaptation of Guarini’s *Pastor Fido*, while many of his original works were modeled after Goldoni or Metastasio.\(^\text{15}\)

It is therefore not surprising that *Alexandrovodas*, a comedy by a highly educated writer, not only addressed the playwright’s own Phanariot circle as the target of satire, but also turned to the intellectual preoccupations of his time, specifically the Western influences in Ottoman subjects’ lives. In the following pages I briefly delineate those intellectual issues that concerned the Greek-speaking world of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The play was written during a historical moment when modern Greek consciousness emerged, amidst tensions between a classical Greek past and an Ottoman present. My investigation of the period when the disregard for Greeks’ Eastern identity was first theorized and the suppression of Eastern influences came to be the main path to Europeanization paves the way for my argument that the reconsideration of this material by means of translation at the present time, during a profound socioeconomic crisis, is connected to an active questioning of Greek culture’s consistent Western orientation in the past three centuries. My study of modern Greek theatre in English translation connects two periods of intense historical reflection where translation shaped the concept of modern Greek identity: the Greek Enlightenment and the current Greek crisis.

\(^{15}\) Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 14; Dimitris Spathis, *Ο διαφωτισμός και το Νεοελληνικό θέατρο* [Enlightenment and Modern Greek Theatre] (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1986), 28.
**Alexandrovodas and Korais’s Concept of Metakénosis**

*Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous* was written in 1785, a time when proponents of the Greek Enlightenment were actively gathering forces across a geographical network beyond the Balkan region and within the centers of European Enlightenment. The forceful cultural movement prepared Greek-speaking populations of the Ottoman Empire for the revolution that followed in 1821, as well as the establishment of the Greek state in 1828. During that time, translating the ancients was pivotal to formulating a national identity. However, translation from Western European languages was also central to ensuring that the citizens of the emerging Greek state were Europeanized. In the intellectual views of the era, the connection to their own ancient past and to the European present was one and the same.\(^1^6\) It must be said that the conflation of classical Greece and Enlightenment Europe was not an idea that began with the Greek intellectuals of the diaspora. In fact, the contemporaneous philhellenic movement in Europe envisioned classical Greece as the cradle of the European civilization.\(^1^7\) The fear of the Ottomans (and their Islamic religion) was expressed in the urgency to “save” the destitute Christian

---

\(^{16}\) “It was reasonable that for the Greeks, those ‘lights’ could mean no other route but the parallel turn to ancient Greece and contemporary Europe.” In the original: “Είναι εύλογο πως για τους Γάτρακος τα ‘φώτα’ αυτά δεν μπορούν παρά να περιγραφούν ως ταυτόχρονη στροφή προς την αρχαία Ελλάδα και προς την σύγχρονη Ευρώπη.” Miltos Pechlivanos, *Εκδοχές νεωτερικότητας στην κοινωνία του γένους: Νικόλαος Μαυροκορδάτος – Ιώσηπος Μοισιόδας – Άδαμάντιος Κοραής* [Versions of Modernity in the Society of the Nation: Nikolaos Mavrokordatos – Iosipos Misiodax – Adamantios Korais] (Thessaloniki: Aristotle University, 1999), 169.

\(^{17}\) As Olga Augustinos relates, Philhellenism was a European affair, and while for the Greeks it meant the possibility of their reconnection with their past, for the Europeans it “had already found its completion in the West.” And she continues: “This was clearly an instance of the semiosis of difference based on two divergent interpretations of the same signs. It was as this juncture that the legacy of Hellenism began to yield different heritages among the Greeks and the Europeans.” Later in the text, she writes: “Some of them [European intellectuals] even considered Classical Greece to be a prefiguration of Europe.” Olga Augustinos, “Philhellenic Promises and Hellenic Visions: Korais and the Discourses of the Enlightenment,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 175; 188.
populations of the Ottoman Empire and with them the tangible and intangible treasures that the ancients left behind. Ottoman Greeks in European centers of culture largely absorbed this ideology and developed it to suit their own national and cultural demands. The translators, the privileged Phanariots or other wealthy merchant Greeks educated abroad, were the ones saddled with this paradox: how were they to manage their own mixed identities? One way to do this was to deny their Eastern worlds entirely. Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), a leading figure of the cultural reform and architect of the new Greek language, best exemplifies this doctrine in his writings that to a large extend prescribe methods of translation. In one of his many addresses to his fellow patriots he coined the term *metakénosis* to describe the process of transferring those elements that distinguished Western Europeans for their progress to the intellectually deprived Greeks, who suffered under the ignorance imposed by the Ottomans. Translation was to become the bridge between the medieval darkness and the “Lights” of Europe.

Korais’s term is found in his *Impromptu Reflections* [Αυτοσχέδιοι Στοχασμοί], the thoughts that prefaced his numerous translations, where he compares the Greece of his time to fifteenth-century Western Europe. In his view, Western Europe used the same ancient Greek

---


19 “The Greek Enlightenment could be interpreted as a complex phenomenon of multiple transfers of ideas. All the mechanisms through which cultural transfers were transacted—geographical mobility, correspondence, and especially translation—form in fact the infrastructure of the Greek Enlightenment. … The main agency of cultural transfer in the Greek Enlightenment was provided by translations.” Paschalis Kitromilides, introduction to the American edition, in *Enlightenment and Revolution*, 8.

20 Adamantios Korais, “Ἀκολούθια καὶ τέλος τῶν Αὐτοσχέδιων Στοχασμῶν περὶ τῆς Ελληνικῆς παιδείας καὶ γλώσσῆς,” [Addendum and Ending to Impromptu Reflections on Greek Education]
materials to build its modern nations.\textsuperscript{21} The Greeks could now use them as well, not only because they were so useful to the Europeans, but even more so since they are the ancient civilization’s descendants.\textsuperscript{22} In the fifteenth century, Korais writes, the process was harder because the artifacts were scattered, but now that Europe had safeguarded the ancient treasures, this same process should be easier for the new nation of the Greeks\textsuperscript{23}: “The transmission of the sciences in Greece, if you follow the proper method, is a real metakénosis from the baskets of the foreigners to the baskets of the Greeks, and it does not differ in any other way besides that we can replenish our own without emptying theirs.”\textsuperscript{24} Metakénosis then was a process by which to enrich all nations while using the same grain of ancient Greek thought. Korais saw in the transfer a way to liberate the Greeks from their ignorance while not taking anything away from the civilized nations of the West.\textsuperscript{25} And while he expressed his sorrow with the situation of the Greeks on several occasions, he did not begrudge the Europeans for benefitting from his ancestors’ craft: “instead of envying the foreigners, who were enriched because of our ignorance, we must in a way be grateful to them because they saved the proofs of our ancient glory.”\textsuperscript{26} Korais believed that Europe had borrowed from classical Greece, and therefore the re-translation of this material

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{23}Korais, “Addendum and Ending to Impromptu Reflections,” 163.
\textsuperscript{24}In the original: “η μετάδοσις των επιστημών εις την Ελλάδα, αν ακολουθήσετε την καλήν μέθοδον, είναι αληθινή μετακένωσις από τα κοφίνια των αλλογενών εις τα κοφίνια των Ελλήνων, καὶ κατ’ άλλο δεν διαφέρει πλην ότι γεμίζομεν ταύτα χωρίς να ευκαιρώσωμεν εκείνα.” Korais, “Addendum and Ending to Impromptu Reflections,” 163.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 165.
\end{flushright}
did not demean his contemporaries. On the contrary, Greeks had rights to the European
Enlightenment as much as the Europeans who had enjoyed its fruit for years before.

What was the proper method that Korais implies? First, he urged his disciples to translate
from the ancients and from the enlightened nations of Europe, such as France, his own home
country of choice. It was evident from the addition of ancient Greek works in his translation
program that Korais’s goals were not reduced to assimilating foreign models; instead, he wished
to reveal the inner connections of the European Enlightenment to classical Greece. Olga
Augustinos summarizes Korais’s method in his three criteria for the selection of texts suitable for
translation: “why, when, and how.” The reasons for translating were “cultural enrichment and
edification,” and it follows that the content of the texts would promote the nation’s education.
The timing of this education was critical because it prepared the upcoming revolution against the
Ottomans. Therefore, the originals selected for translation were “didactic and instructive works
which combined the wisdom of the ancients and the scientific and political thinking of the
moderns intended to enlighten the mind and to form moral character in the service of the
common good.” As for the translation method in the narrow sense, Augustinos explains the
process as a “negotiation between faithfulness and intervention.” I would argue, however, that
the concern for faithfulness only involved translations from Ancient Greek. When it came to
translating the West, the approach was much more liberal than literal. In Korais’s translations
from European languages he deviated as much as he deemed necessary for the benefit of the

---

27 Korais, in a typical position of the displaced subject of colonized territories, explained that
because of the loathed Turkish presence he saw his native Smyrna “more like a stepmother than
a mother.” Adamantios Korais, “Αυτοβιογραφία” [Autobiography] in Ο Κοράης και η Εποχή του,
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 185.
nation, and he urged his circle to do the same. In any case, the domesticating strategy he adopted did not go against the dominant translation methods of his time. In contrast, with ancient Greek texts, as Augustinos argues, there was more of a concern to create a new Greek language and to illustrate and enhance the continuity between the two. This principle is better seen in Dimitrios Katartzis (ca 1730-1807), a prominent member of Korais’s circle, whose instructions Augustinos summarizes to support the period’s Greek translation project: “retention of the taste of the original text, enhancement so that the ideas could be rendered in a clear, natural way in the target language, linguistic enrichment and standardization of the native idiom to convey new ideas.”

Metakénosis was a way to translate Western European and ancient Greek works for the benefit of the Greek people. What we know of this approach comes from Korais’s letters to his disciples, and it mainly consists of liberal renderings that would make the end product immediately understood by readers of varying levels of education. In order to do that, Korais needed to prescribe the language appropriate to receive the lights of Europe and to disseminate them to as broad a readership as possible among the Greeks of the diaspora, but also, and perhaps most importantly, those Greeks living within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. The language into which the useful works would be rendered was not agreed upon by all Greek intellectuals of the diaspora. As Peter Mackridge summarizes:

33 Augustinos, “Philhellenic Promises and Hellenic Visions,” 185.
34 “When you speak and write, always have in mind that you are speaking and writing for a nation that is barbarized and more prone to follow the vulgarists and flatterers than to follow you, its true friend.” “Korais to Alexandros Vasileiou, 9 Aug. 1804,” in Αλληλογραφία 1799-1809 [Correspondence 1799-1809] Vol. II (Athens: Estia, 1966), 180-81.
Archaists and purists claimed that the best way to demonstrate the modern Greeks’ connection with the ancients was to imitate Ancient Greek linguistic models (chiefly in vocabulary and morphology), while vernacularists (later known as demoticists) argued that they could best demonstrate their direct cultural descent from the ancients by writing in a variety of Greek that was as close as possible to the spoken tongue, since, they asserted, the spoken language was the outcome of the natural and continuous development of the Greek language from ancient to modern times.36

Korais sought a middle way, a language that would sound like the Modern Greek of everyday, but purified of any vulgar elements that would blemish it.37 The perceived impurities were mainly foreign words with Ottoman roots, and their proliferation in the Greek language further distanced the Greeks from their classical antecedents.38 In addition, he prompted those who wrote (translations or original works) to use their maternal language, not the ancient form.39 It seems that translating European literature into Ancient Greek was persistent but hardly beneficial, at least not for Korais and his vision.

38 Adamantios Korais, Προλεγόμενα, δεύτερον εκδιδόμενα δια συνδρομής των ομογενών [Prologues, second edition published with the help of the diaspora] 1815 (no publication information), 494-95.
39 The persistent image for maternal language is the one they got with their mother’s milk, as he envisions it – he repeats this metaphor twice in the letter. Adamantios Korais, “Letter to Alexandros Vasileiou,” in Korais and His Time, 119.
Metakénosis as Historiography

Metakénosis was a translation approach that had the power to refashion Greeks’ perception of their past. The idea that Ottoman Greeks were descendants of classical Greeks was not part of their own historical narrative until the first attempts at a secular history emerged in the early seventeenth century. A decisive step towards this direction was provided with the Greek translation of Charles Rollin’s *Histoire ancienne* in Venice in 1750. The book advocated that eighteenth-century Greeks could claim the ancients as their direct ancestors, based on the common geographical space. Once the connection was solidly in place within their cultural consciousness, Greeks needed to find a way to reconnect to their ancestors. The European Enlightenment provided a shortcut in the belief that this confidence and familiarity could be attained by means of translation.

As Augustinos explains, the emphasis Korais put on the significance of the classical era and its potential for the nation’s rebirth in the early nineteenth century separated historical time into two phases: “the Hellenic era and the post-Hellenic era.” Obviously, all the centuries in between needed to be suppressed in order for contemporary Greeks to regain the required intimacy with their classical ancestors. The concept of *metakénosis*, which follows this historical logic while adding the parameter of Western Europe as keeper of the ancient treasures, becomes a model for historiographical practice. Korais’s concept of the past was conditioned upon the success of the transfer: if the Greeks could become “classical” again through their Europeanized liberal education, then the ties were indeed strong, and the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, even though detrimental for a period, would become insignificant in the Greek national narrative. In

---

41 Ibid., 71.
addition, the educational program, upon which this rebirth relied, required translation (and numerous translations) for its success.

Implicit in the image of Europe as the container of knowledge and Greece as the receptacle, the first pouring into the other, is a certain degree of cultural asymmetry. Much like Pavis’s image of the hourglass, the movement is unidirectional. The writings of the European Enlightenment were to enrich Greek thought by means of their translation into the receiving language. Consistent with its use of imagery, the concept of metakénosis fueled both nationalism and a sense of a cultural superiority among the Greeks, while at the same time nourished the insecurities and an overwhelming sentiment of absolute cultural reliance upon external powers (the colonial forces of the era) in the fight for intellectual independence from the Ottoman Empire. This paradox of superiority and inferiority, central to the Greek identity, is still evident today in discussions of the Greek crisis. Present in this discourse, then and now, is the importance of a classical legacy that is always to the detriment of contemporary culture. It is only through their ancestors’ achievements that Greeks were seen as belonging to Europe in the nineteenth century, and it is this performance of “cradle of civilization” that symbolically earned Greece a place in the European Economic Community.

The view of Europe presented in Alexandrovodas, however, is somewhat more complicated. In his role as a skilled and prolific translator of Western plays, Soutsos fulfilled his duty to the Enlightenment and the nation. However, because of its particular depiction of

---


44 “It is clear that Greece has a place in the construction of Europe. Why is it clear? The answer lies in another question: could we conceive of Europe without the country which gave it its name and which still today is one of the roots of its civilization?” From the EU Commission – Brochure *The Community of Ten: Welcome to Greece*. European File 17-18/80, November 1980, 1. Accessed September 4, 2016. [http://aei.pitt.edu/id/eprint/10628](http://aei.pitt.edu/id/eprint/10628).
European influences, *Alexandrovodas* creates its own frame of interpretation. Soutsos’s fierce critique of his characters and the almost grotesque representation of Phanariot everyday life is not one of the messages of the Greek Enlightenment.\(^\text{45}\) In fact, the writer’s anti-European stance was probably considered reactionary within his circle. In the play Europe is a controversial topic and the Western way of living is seen as the root of all evils. In two long speeches the main character explains his atheist and Machiavellian principles as being due to having been exposed to the European culture – presumably as opposed to an Ottoman way of thinking: “Whoever learned to live in Europe wants freedom.”\(^\text{46}\) And later in the play, expressing a mentality that has a shockingly current feel for Greeks today, he exclaims: “All I want is to pay my debts and put some monies aside; I won’t stay an hour longer. Europe and then again Europe. They know how to enjoy the world there.”\(^\text{47}\) Alexandrovodas the character, at least as he is portrayed in the play, sounds closer in his beliefs to Korais than Soutsos does. The meaning of “Europe,” of course, in the play’s context is limited to Russia, where the ruler has lived before and where he will flee after facing trouble with the Ottoman court. This is in itself interesting to note because in the play’s context the West is all those areas not ruled by an Islamic power. Soutsos obviously did not seem to believe in the West as the only source of intellectual lights. The defense of his world as it is set out in a play that severely satirizes the playwright’s own social milieu creates problems in the reception of the work as complicated as the Phanariot minority itself.

\(^{45}\) As Stavrakopoulou argues, “if one were looking for any signs of a nascent Greek identity in *Alexandrovodas*, they would be disappointed, as there aren’t any; there is no mention of Hellenism as a concept, simply because they all belong to the same milieu and no further clarifications are needed among members of a homogeneous group.” Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 42.
\(^{46}\) Soutsos, *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous*, 70.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., 97.
It is important to underline that metakénosis as a central principle of the Greek Enlightenment largely conditioned the reading of the period’s works for future scholars. Spathis, for example, reads *Alexandrovodas* in a way that is difficult to separate from the comparative ideology of adherence to Western models in theatre scholarship. As the scholar relates, Soutsos’s play was not included in previous treatises of original literary production of the era, and he offers three possible reasons for the work’s absence from the canon: One is the fact that an attack as direct was unprecedented, and another is because the satirical representation of a live person in fact included a whole social class. But third and most importantly, Spathis speculates, the satire remained obscure, because it targeted a figure who over the centuries has resided in the pantheon of national figures. Once rediscovered, however, *Alexandrovodas*, along with similar works from the Greek eighteenth century, has been expected to fulfill more than its satirical content. Not only must plays from the era of the Greek Enlightenment share the movement’s intellectual goals, but also theatre scholars often ambitiously present them as theatrical pieces of higher artistic achievement. Stavrakopoulou discusses the reasons for their treatment in her assessment that “Greek scholars … have at times overestimated their artistic value, owing to their scarcity and their significance in the national cultural narrative.” Her translation nevertheless adds another dimension to the study of *Alexandovodas* by opening up the work to a range of other disciplines beyond Modern Greek theatre, as I will elaborate in the next section.

Soutsos’s *Alexandrovodas* could not entirely fit Korais’s plan for the Greek nation in terms of its language either. The play is full of Turkish, Arabic, and Romanian expressions, all that Korais considered impure, while it also featured several words from Western European

---

48 “In a way it was as if it was seen as more suitable to put this disturbing text in the archive.” In the original: “Κατά κάποιο τρόπο, σαν να κρίθηκε πως ήταν σκοπιμότερο να μπει στο αρχείο ένα τέτοιο ενοχλητικό κείμενο.” Spathis, “The Dramatic Satire of G. N. Soutsos,” 341.
49 Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 11.
languages. At the same time, because it was written in the Phanariot vernacular, it was progressive in that it was a rare example of an original work that celebrated its author’s mother tongue. As Stavrakopoulou points out, because *Alexandrovodas* circulated in private, Soutsos did not participate in the language debates of his time. However, the play’s role in the national narrative shifted first with the publication of Spathis’s research in the 1990s, and even more so with its translation into English in 2012.

Spathis played his part in elevating the status of the manuscript in Greek theatre studies. After the publication of his considerable treatise in 1995, the play found its place within the canon of Modern Greek theatre. However, Spathis presented it to his scholarly audience from the perspective of his own time. During the first phases in the development of Greek theatre studies, which became independent of philology and literature departments for the first time only in the 1990s, the two major directions in the study of theatre of the Greek eighteenth century and the Greek Enlightenment consisted of, first and foremost, proving their relevance to contemporaneous European models. Another important concern was to trace the evidence of performances of the original literature and translations. *Alexandrovodas* was studied in accordance with its potential to fulfill the first requirement, but unfortunately failed to provide an example of performed theatre in its time. Therefore Spathis, not only in this publication of the manuscript but also in his seminal *Enlightenment and Modern Greek Theatre*, provided strong but cautious arguments for the importance of translations and the circulation of original work, regardless of their staging history, or lack thereof.51

50 Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 38.
51 Spathis, *Enlightenment and Modern Greek Theatre*, 15; 16-17; 47.
Spathis also exhibited the preoccupations of the spokesperson for a national dramaturgy: he was not appreciative of the many foreign elements in the play’s language. His efforts centered upon comparing Alexandrovodas to European comedy of the eighteenth century while ignoring other Ottoman genres. Obviously, the play retained an ambivalent status in Greek theatre. Soutsos’s own views may have complicated his play’s reception within Greek theatre tradition, a tradition vested with proving the continuum of a national dramaturgy, but the same anti-European views may also have ensured the play’s afterlife in the English version, not least because of today’s nuanced consideration of “the West.” This is where Stavrakopoulou’s work as the translator of Alexandrovodas builds on Spathis’s scholarly legacy to disturb the status quo of this literary history. Stavrakopoulou frames her translation by situating the work between the two worlds that allowed its creation: the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe. Her careful introductory analysis of the work foregrounds the city where the play was written, Ottoman Constantinople, and provides a compelling argument for the publication of its English translation in the Western-oriented Istanbul by a Turkish press: Upon its return to its birthplace, the play defies the categorization of East and West and becomes a useful historical document relevant to many more scholarly circles than was previously recognized.

In the previous section, I provided some brief context on the play’s original circulation in order to situate the work in its time. In the section that follows, I turn to Stavrakopoulou’s contribution and I focus on the reframing of the work that this translation accomplished.

---

52 Spathis’s assessment is that while Alexandrovodas is certainly a linguistic monument of its time, the play is “overburdened with Turkish-Phanariot idiomatic expressions.” In the original: “Είναι, βέβαια, παραφορτωμένο με τουρκοφαναριώτικους ιδιωματισμούς.” Spathis, “Introduction,” κβ’ (22).
**The Translation**

**The Text**

*Alexandrovodas’s* existence in English emphasizes the larger historical problem of mediation by a Western language for communication between two neighboring ethnic groups. The Greek text, written in an Ottoman dialect, had to be translated into English in order for Ottomanists to gain access to it, because, as Mackridge points out, “English (together with French) is the language by which Turkish intellectuals now communicate with the Greeks.”

However, the necessary mediation of the West in literary matters concerning these two languages is not new. In his study of the Phanariots, Pechlivanos illustrates how Greek and Turkish scholars of the time fervently translated the West. The paradox is that both languages were enriched by these translations but somehow worked in parallel trajectories without ever collaborating. He cites Elli Skopetea in support of his conclusion that the ethnic communities of the Ottoman Empire ignored one another in their literary endeavors, beginning with translations and later the original fiction that followed. Stavrakopoulou’s translation opened up the play’s potential in two seemingly separate spheres: the position of *Alexandrovodas* within the Greek national narrative and its relocation to Ottoman literature.

From a Greek perspective, what proves most useful in *Alexandrovodas*’s translational potential is the tension between conformity and resistance to the dominant movement -- the Greek Enlightenment -- performed by a writer of an imperial minority resisting the intellectual imperialism of Europe. These inherent qualities of the original and the timing of its publication into English frame the translation as a metaphor for the ambivalence of national and cultural identity, and particularly the question of an East-West oscillation. I present here select examples.

---

56 Ibid. 83.
to illustrate how the contemporary translator intervened in the text’s trajectory and the ways through which she secured an afterlife for a document that had been previously archived under limiting categories.

In the introduction, Stavrakopoulou explains that her intentions were to translate the play “as accurately as possible into English.”57 This is a considerable task given that the play was written in the colorful Phanariot dialect. The play provides a first-hand experience of what it must have been to belong, in the linguistic sense, to this privileged class of translators and politicians. However, in the translation the many languages present created an uneven territory where several strategies needed to be employed simultaneously. Stavrakopoulou’s creativity is evident particularly in dealing with the many foreign words used in the Greek text, with which she dealt rather efficiently. One of the ways she chose to work with the foreignness of the text was to preserve it in the translation. Consequently, she left several words from European languages, such as “curioso,” “per dio,” “interesso,” and “küchen” untranslated as they were in the original. Her strategy changed with those words in Arabic and Turkish, which she translated into English in the text. However, at the end of the book she includes a glossary of these “hellenized Ottoman words.”58 The list includes entries of the English translations, followed by their original in Turkish or Arabic. This glossary is presumably addressed to her intended audience of Ottomanists, who would require some degree of access to the original. While the terms in Turkish are crucial to supporting the cultural world of the play, the translator understands that their inclusion in the English version would create considerable possibilities for miscommunication. Erasing them entirely, however, would also deprive the play of its particularity and ultimately its roots as a work of Ottoman literature. This would go against

57 Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 7.
58 Ibid., 40.
Stavrakopoulou’s goals of expanding *Alexandrovodas* beyond the canon of Modern Greek dramatic literature.

In her review, Yota Batsaki appreciated the translator’s efforts in transferring the Phanariot vernacular into English, which she acknowledges as “an impressive feat.”\(^5^9\) The critic describes the original text’s “linguistic maze” of Greek, Ottoman, Italian, French, German, Rumanian, and Bulgarian as “surprisingly convincing and appealing,”\(^6^0\) and goes on to praise Stavrakopoulou for her achievement in maintaining the feel of the original in translation: “The thread is followed with agility and skill; the translation maintains the oral, colloquial texture of the characters’ language, and the reader unfamiliar with the original gains a glimpse of its variety by means of a concluding glossary of Turkish Ottoman words.”\(^6^1\) Indeed, the glossary is particularly useful and illuminating even for Greek speakers, because the original terms in Ottoman Greek are no longer in use and in fact are difficult to understand without some explanation.

The matter becomes more complicated with the many confusing titles of the court of Alexandrovodas. In this respect, the translator provides explanations in the list of characters and in notes where necessary in the play, but otherwise she preserves the terms as they were pronounced in Greek. Therefore, “pacharnikos,” which she explains as “the secretary of the ruler’s two secretaries,”\(^6^2\) is mentioned by his title in his many appearances and references in the text, while an explanation of the title in the character list gives the reader a glimpse of what kind of duties and privileges the role entailed. This and other words that denote titles in Ottoman

---

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Soutsos, *Alexandrovodas*, 64.
Greek remain untranslated in the English version. The strategy affords the translator more elements of foreignization in her end product. For an English language reader, both Turkish and Greek words would point to the foreignness of the work.

Stavrakopoulou’s strategy to retain the words in Italian, French, and German, while providing a glossary for the Ottoman terms, is noteworthy. Apparently, the translator assumed the words in these European languages would be understood by her readership, which is described in her introduction as a scholarly community of “Ottoman historians, Europeanists, and theater scholars who have no direct access to Greek texts.”63 However, she includes a suggestion for a contemporary equivalent of the linguistic plurality of the play for her Turkish readers: “not the Turkish spoken by members of the non-Muslim communities of Istanbul, but the Turkish spoken by businessmen, interspersed as it is with business English.”64 The varied strategy for Turkish and Ottoman Greek words, that is, to seek equivalence in modern-day situations as well as to explain the words in their historical context, provides a sense of the complicated project of this translation, which obviously crosses over to several networks of influence extending beyond the Greek theatrical canon.

Greek scholar Peter Mackridge has also addressed the intricate linguistic work that Stavrakopoulou accomplished in her version. Mackridge examines the work from a linguistic point of view and evaluates the result for what it can offer scholars of Modern Greek within their discipline. In his review that appeared in The Book’s Journal, a leading publication of cultural criticism in Greece, Mackridge pays homage to the unusual phenomenon of the translation of the work into English in a non-English speaking nation and highlights his article’s section on the

63 Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 11.
64 Ibid., 40.
linguistic translation with the headline “An English translation is published in Turkey.” His main criticism of Stavrakopoulou’s work is what he perceives as “a narrow attachment to the original” in the philological sense, which has resulted in renditions foreign in the English language. This charge is not unjustified; indeed, Stavrakopoulou retains the foreignness of the original in her version in a way that poses intriguing questions about the translation’s direction and intention. However, the reasons for the arguably pronounced distancing seem to be more complicated than simply a preference for literal renditions. Even when considering the same examples that Mackridge uses to prove his case, I find that the foreignness of the original dictates an equally foreignizing rendering. The many expressions in the Phanariot dialect stand out for today’s Greek speakers. Stavrakopoulou chose to retain the uneven texture of the original sometimes at the expense of a smooth English text, especially because, as she claims, her work is not intended for the stage. Therefore, I am reluctant to see this approach as a mere failure to follow the natural idiom of the English language, as Mackridge concludes. If anything, Stavrakopoulou’s native competence in English, evident in her published work in the language, should point to the contrary. Her Alexandrovodas delicately negotiates the tensions between an original marked for its plurality of languages and a translation that engages with the multicultural city’s past -- that is, an English text that is not necessarily intended for native speakers of English.

The transnational original, written by a member of the polyglot minority of the Ottoman Empire, was rendered into the lingua franca that English represents here. In fact, the English translation’s publication in Istanbul, where Turkish would be the most predictable language

65 Mackridge, “The ‘Lousy Phanariot’,” 37. In the original: “Μια αγγλική μετάφραση εκδίδεται στην Τουρκία.”
66 Ibid., 37.
67 Stavrakopoulou, discussion.
choice, emphasizes the transnational quality of the endeavor. Certainly, the frame of this publication, the Turkish press in Istanbul, is not insignificant in how Stavrakopoulou handled the translation. According to Mackridge, the publication of the work by a Turkish press points to evidence of persisting connections between Greeks and Turks, although he does not elaborate on the spheres within which he sees these ties.\(^6^8\) Both Mackridge and Stavrakopoulou commend Isis Press on its rich publication program of translations from Ottoman works into English or French.\(^6^9\) Isis Press indeed exhibits an impressive corpus of English, French, German, and Italian titles that are either translations of Ottoman and Turkish literature, or more often academic works originally written in the above European languages devoted to Ottoman and Turkish history and culture.\(^7^0\) In the case of Alexandrovodas in English, the publisher’s European objectives regarding the promotion of Turkish culture intersects with the Greek agenda of widening the scope of Greek literature, but to the opposite direction, to the East. While Alexandrovodas is rendered into English, its publication in Turkey for the benefit of Ottomanists, among others, not only makes the work known to a larger academic community but also redirects Greek scholars’ attention to the play’s Eastern attributes. This important feature of Stavrakopoulou’s translation justifies her linguistic choices that allude to the play’s foreignness.

The original is written in a vernacular that according to Spathis “sealed the text with a certificate of authenticity, an undeniable proof that the events happened exactly the way he described them.”\(^7^1\) Evidently, maintaining this authenticity in the translation by staying as close to the word as possible takes away from the colloquial nature of the original. I believe that the

\(^6^8\) Mackridge, “The ‘Lousy Phanariot’,” 37.
\(^6^9\) Ibid., 37; Stavrakopoulou, discussion.
\(^7^1\) Spathis, “The dramatic satire of G. N. Soutsos,” 397-98. In Stavrakopoulou’s translation. Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 38.
evident foreignization that marks the translator’s work ideally follows the spirit and form of the original, albeit through a complicated path. The illuminating role that a first translation of a work from the period fulfills can heighten the expectations for the communicative force of the new English text. However, as Lawrence Venuti has argued extensively, a “foreignizing translation is a dissident cultural practice, maintaining a refusal of the dominant by developing affiliations with marginal linguistic and literary values at home, including foreign cultures that have been excluded because of their own resistance to dominant values.”\footnote{Lawrence Venuti, \textit{The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation} (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 148.} 

Soutsos’s play is quite the deviant text in its original. As seen earlier, it exhibited a mostly contrary stance to Enlightenment values, and it openly targeted existing persons. As a rediscovered play with the opportunity for first publication in 1995, it was a rare occasion of a political libel in dramatic form but not quite a performance text. Because of its hybrid language, it was also not easily integrated in the Greek literary narrative. Providing an extended readership with an authentic historical source was one of the most important goals in this translation. As a consequence, the traces of the foreign in this document do not necessarily take away from its value.

Staying with Venuti, evidently Stavrakopoulou worked towards a translation as a “locus of difference,” as opposed to a strategy of homogenization.\footnote{Ibid., 42.} And while in this case the foreignization achieved cannot have the political ambitions of a dominant text, mainly because of the original’s minority status, it can certainly serve to “signal the foreignness … by choosing to translate a text that challenges the contemporary canon of foreign literature in the target language.”\footnote{Ibid., 148.} Indeed, the translation of \textit{Alexandrovodas} opened the play to a new readership, and its difficult language represents the hybridity of this target community. I acknowledge the...
criticism against Venuti’s principle of foreignization as resistance that is seen as only open to specific elitist contexts, but I find that his approach is suitable in this case, because the audience addressed with this translation is indeed a sophisticated readership that can assess the effect of distancing produced by certain translation choices. But there is also an important point among Venuti’s critics meriting elaboration. Anthony Pym, in particular, expresses the problem as he builds his inquiry on binary translation approaches on the premise that “all binarisms might thus be seen as silencing the middle terms.” The middle term that Pym in invested in uncovering is “the living translator.” This is especially applicable for Alexandrovodas, because the translator, as a Greek native speaker who translates into English, belongs to both her source culture and her target audience. In fact, as I hope I demonstrated in my analysis of the original, neither the source text nor the translation’s target readership are entities as stable as binary theories of translation would have us believe. As a scholar and translator, Stavrakopoulou is, as Pym defines it, an interculture in herself, much like the interculture of her target readership and the world of her source material.

It is therefore perhaps more productive to think of this translational endeavor (and to assess its accomplishments) in terms of creating new communities, even if these remain aspirational. As Venuti explains, “To translate is to invent for the foreign text new readerships

---

75 For criticism on Venuti’s foreignization in translation as a strategy of resistance, see Maria Tymoczko, Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), 211.
77 Ibid.
78 In Pym’s definition, an interculture is the point where two cultures overlap. He asserts that, contrary to the widespread belief that translators serve the target language, in fact they are more often operative in the middle ground. Anthony Pym, Method in Translation History (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998), 177. It is noteworthy that Pym recognizes academics as one of the professional communities whose members often occupy that middle space. Ibid., 188.
who are aware that their interest in the translation is shared by other readers, foreign and domestic – even when those interests are incommensurable.”

Lawrence Venuti’s concept of community contains the criticism to his more binarily inflected concepts of domestication and foreignization in his reading of Scheiermacher. It is in this context -- and with these precautions – that I believe that it is still useful to speak of foreignization as a translation goal and effect.

The Translator Anna Stavrakopoulou

The unique circumstances of this translation, when compared to my other two case studies, allow me to introduce the translation by providing some information on the translator. Anna Stavrakopoulou’s status as an academic whose work has been presented beyond Greek borders significantly affected the reception of the work. The usually obscure position of the translator from Greek is not a factor in this case study. Like in my other two case studies, the translator is a native Greek speaker. Contrary to the habitual practice in translations from Greek, Stavrakopoulou reverses the usual model where the interests they serve are solely Greek. Even though she is based in Greece, she was not restricted to a solely Greek network that could not gauge interest in the translation before undertaking the endeavor. There is certainly an interest on the translator’s part to promote the work beyond Greek letters, but the fact that this translation was directly commissioned by a publisher greatly increases the possibilities that this work will find its foreign audience (and that includes any English-reading audience, not necessarily native speakers of English). I will discuss the particular readership addressed by the English

Alexandrovodas, but first I will introduce the translator and her work in reframing the obscure eighteenth-century play.

---

Stavrakopoulou joined the faculty of the Theatre department in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2003, after teaching in the United States (New York University, Harvard University) and Turkey (Boğaziçi University). Her trajectory includes undergraduate studies in Greece (University of Crete) and graduate work in France (DEA, Paris III – Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle) and the United States (PhD, Harvard University). She is currently the Associate Director of the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies in Greece.\(^{80}\) Stavrakopoulou’s research on the Phanariots and period comedy ideally prepared her for tackling a text as demanding as *Alexandrovodas*. Sinan Kuneralp, publisher of Isis Press, commissioned the translation after reading Stavrakopoulou’s paper on the Phanariots, which was earlier presented as part of a conference on the concept of Empire at Yale University in Spring 2006.\(^{81}\) The long process of translating the text began in 2009 and was completed in July 2012.\(^{82}\) The translator took particular care in structuring the introduction, and provided elaborate notes and a glossary, which further testifies to the scholarly nature of the work. After a brief assessment of the status of the Greek original and the historical content of the play, Stavrakopoulou presents the author of the work and his milieu. She then turns to the real person upon whom the character is based. The main corpus of the introduction is dedicated to the play’s characters and plot, as well as the stylistic choices of the writer. Throughout Stavrakopoulou examines Soutsos’s choices along the political and social reality of his times and particularly the parameters of the ongoing Enlightenment. Her meticulous reading updates existing scholarship on the play in Greek theatre with more recent approaches, evident especially in her presentation of female characters. Even though she acknowledges a significant debt to Spathis’s long introduction, Stavrakopoulou’s research...


\(^{81}\) Stavrakopoulou, discussion.

\(^{82}\) Ibid.
contribution, “addressed mainly to a non-Greek speaking audience,” in her words, ideally complements work on *Alexandrovodas* and is useful to Greek and non-Greek scholars alike.\(^\text{83}\) She concludes her substantial treatise with an assessment of the work’s position in the Greek and the European eighteenth-century theatre in its Eastern and Western contexts.

It is Stavrakopoulou’s knowledge of the period that allows her to intervene with this translation in the discussion of Greek eighteenth-century theatre and the tensions between its competing statuses as Ottoman or European. When asked in our interview whether the play is representative of its period, Stavrakopoulou provided an answer that resides within the goals of the translation to establish the work’s position between East and West:

The accurate answer here would be yes and no. Yes, because it depicts with the accuracy of a documentary behaviours and trends in 18\(^\text{th}\) century Phanariot courts
and no, because political satire in the 18\(^\text{th}\) century was never so outspoken, particularly in countries where theatre was an established (and even state subsidized) institution. It is exactly because the play circulated in a manuscript form and because it was never performed (neither then, nor later) that the author could be so daring and outspoken.\(^\text{84}\)

The translator’s decisive framing worked alongside the publication of the work in Turkey to first expand the play’s horizon beyond its Greek minority status, but also to challenge the assumptions regarding Greek theatre as solely Western and Europe-oriented. Her unique position as a scholar of the period with the capacity to circulate her work internationally is crucial to the dissemination of the translation. If *Alexandrovodas*, even with the play’s availability in English, remains relatively unknown, the reasons for that cannot be explained by the ordinarily marginal

\(^{83}\) Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 11.
\(^{84}\) Stavrakopoulou, discussion.
position of the translator from Greek. The play’s case can serve as further proof of the marginalized status of Modern Greek, because the potential of the work was greatly aided by Stavrakopoulou’s movement within an international network of cultural and academic exchange.

Following my assessment of select translation decisions that I juxtaposed with reviews of the publication, and a brief presentation of the translator’s background, in the next section I focus on translation’s function in reframing the play and significantly expanding its potential, first within and then beyond the Greek canon. The English Alexandrovodas emphasizes the play’s historical Ottoman multiculturalism.

The Reframing of the Work

The translation’s trajectory in Greek studies in English was acknowledged in the prestigious Elizabeth Constantinides Memorial honorable mention in the 2013 Modern Greek Studies Association contest, a US-based institution. Following the award, an excerpt of the translation appeared in the October 2013 issue of Journal for Modern Greek Studies, the leading scholarly periodical published by Johns Hopkins University Press. However, according to the translator, this honor did not affect the play’s career in English. It seems that communication between Greek studies and the wider US academic circuit is still a one-way affair. The anticipated community that can potentially emerge with the availability of the translation, as envisioned by Lawrence Venuti, is still challenging to create. The field of Modern Greek Studies in foreign institutions can be considered the primary audience for the publication,

85 Ibid.
86 “Implicit in any translation is the hope for a consensus, a communication and recognition of the foreign text through a domestic inscription.” Venuti further explains the utopian in translation: “[the domestic inscription] is filled with the anticipation that a community will be created around that text – although in translation.” Lawrence Venuti, “Translation, Community, Utopia,” 485.
because the work was made available in English, thus allowing its inclusion in syllabi. The rarity of a work from the eighteenth century also ensures *Alexandrovodas*’s inclusion in courses outside Greek theatre studies. However, it seems that the translation filled a more pressing gap beyond Modern Greek studies.

While the translation was a far-reaching project, it is clear that, just like its original, *Alexandrovodas* in English was not intended for the stage. Stavrakopoulou explained that she did not believe that theatre practitioners would necessarily be interested in the new version.\(^87\) Perhaps because the play was never performed in its time or thereafter, as the translator affirms in the introduction, a stage translation was not among the goals she set.\(^88\) The expansion of the Greek play’s audience envisions a scholarly readership. In her introduction, Stavrakopoulou explains her goals with the translation of this unusual play: “The purpose of this translation is to make the play available to Ottoman historians, Europeanists, and theater scholars who have no direct access to Greek texts, with the hope that the information it discloses will be useful to their respective fields.”\(^89\) Expanding the work’s purview, Batsaki considers the translation “a compelling resource for all students and researchers of the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean.”\(^90\) Since this is the first time that a play from the era is used to insert Modern Greek theatre in Ottoman and empire studies, as Batsaki acknowledges, the disciplines that study the region can stand to benefit.\(^91\) The reviewer also signals the translation’s importance for

---

\(^87\) “Although the performance of the play is a possibility, I did not translate it to be performed on the stage: I translated it to be read mostly by fellow scholars in the fields of history and theater.” Stavrakopoulou, discussion.

\(^88\) Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 10.

\(^89\) Ibid., 11.

\(^90\) Yota Batsaki, “Review of *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous*,” 499.

\(^91\) Batsaki concludes her review of the translation by claiming that that play “adds an interesting literary source to the resources of Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies; it also makes a valuable contribution to studies of empire at the turn of the nineteenth century.” Ibid.
disseminating Greek literary production of the eighteenth century. Her assessment is in agreement with Stavrakopoulou’s goals, which are to expand the play’s cultural purchase beyond a narrow Modern Greek studies circle. For Ottomanists, Stavrakopoulou’s main argument about the importance of the work centers upon the information it accurately includes behind its forefront of a comedic plot. For theatre scholars, she makes an intriguing point about the real historical figures implicated in bold satirical plots, which are mentioned by their real names. The audacity of the work further supports the hypothesis that the manuscript most possibly only circulated in private circles.

Alexandrovodas’s bold language became in the hands of the translator an opportunity for targeted reframing, albeit not always immediately understood within Greek Studies scholarship. In his review, Mackridge isolates what he considers a mistranslation of the Greek. He criticizes the rendering of the word “πουτάνα” for which he accurately proposes “whore,” as opposed to the euphemistic -- in his words -- “courtesan,” that Stavrakopoulou chooses. However, the single example he employs to support the mild accusation for translational sanitization is neither just nor easily defensible. Stavrakopoulou’s text is full of the aristophanic, as she found it in the original, and does not strike me as a rendering that shies away from the licentious or even the scatological. But the specific choice of the word “courtesan” that Mackridge singles out may in fact reveal more of the translation’s goals than initially seen. Mackridge deplores that, in his view, the translator did not inform the readers of the “goals, principles and methods” she applied in her translation by which to evaluate the result of the translation. I believe that the detailed

92 Stavrakopoulou, introduction, 11.
94 “Δυστυχώς η μεταφράστρια δεν μας ἑξει δόσηι καμιᾶ πληροφορία για τοὺς στόχους, τις αρχὲς καὶ τὶς μεθόδους τῆς μετάφρασῆς τῆς ὡστε να ελέγξουμε ἀν τὸ μετάφρασμα εκπληρώνει τοὺς στόχους αὐτοὺς.” Ibid., 37.
introduction in fact provides clear guidance as to what Stavrakopoulou intended with her choices. The word “courtesan” alludes to a world of European comedy and can help to bring the work closer to the European eighteenth century. In the carefully laid-out introduction the translator devotes several pages where she strives to put Alexandrovodas in context within the European theatrical canon. Her section “European Theater in the Eighteenth Century” seems to be addressed to scholars outside the field, while the following “Realities and prospects of theater to the East of Europe” should be useful to scholars of eighteenth-century theatre simply unaware of developments east of Austria. As far as her choices go, at every step in the project, Stavrakopoulou worked with this translational reframing in mind. It is not outside the liberties permitted a translator to employ the word “courtesan” where the character speaking chose to describe the ruler’s mistress as a “whore.” In this specific case, the proposed word seems to fit a larger scheme desired for the translation. But there is another aspect to this choice. The freedom allowed to the translator, as opposed to the researcher who publishes a manuscript, for example, is evident in certain key aspects of the play’s modernization. Stavrakopoulou indeed renders the word “πουτάνα” usually as “courtesan.” But most importantly, in the character list, the translator changes the original into a more accurate word from today’s perspective. The female character Tarse is described in the original manuscript as “Alexandrovodas’s whore,” which Stavrakopoulou explains as “Alexandrovodas’s mistress.” The changed meaning of the word “whore” in Greek is important here. Stavrakopoulou updates the semantic reference according to more contemporary morals. In fact, the choice of English for the new version exposes the not-so-evolved language of sexual satire of the original and its cultural biases. “Whore” and “mistress” may have been one and the same in Soutsos’s time, but a new translation must address the evolving meaning even with the risk of linguistic inaccuracy.
Soutsos writes his characters with satire as his goal. As a consequence, he is not concerned with the political correctness of his claims. However, the dramatic change from a privately circulating manuscript among the members of a minority linguistic community to the potential of an international audience of English-speaking readers reframes our expectations of the work, and Stavrakopoulou, as a translator, is constantly confronted with this fact. Conscious of the transformed landscape of the play’s horizon of reception, the translator frames her work with an introduction that gives female and male characters equal space. The annotated publication in Greek in 1995 also analyzes the characters, but not toward similar goals: Spathis’s concern is to underline the comic element through character development and linguistic specificity. One example, and an important aspect that deserves further investigation, are the complicated sexual identities inadequately considered either in the Greek or the English introductions to the play. The scene where two male servants flirt with each other operates comically in both versions, but its potential can be greatly expanded with the update it received in the English version:

NIKODEMOS You devil, you are a bugger now, and you know that buggers, when they become wizened, become faggots.\(^{95}\) [...].

PHILODOROS And if I want to do that, can’t I find shapely lads?

NIKODEMOS It’s too late for you to find them now. You did find them once upon a time.

PHILODOROS And whom did I find?

NIKODEMOS Why are you treating Michales differently, compared to the other servants?

PHILODOROS Because he is loyal.

NIKODEMOS Loyal at night.

PHILODOROS You are full of shit.

NIKODEMOS I may be full of shit but you will beg me too. You won’t resist the temptation to try an Armenian too.

PHILODOROS Your jokes are gross and tasteless.

\(^{95}\) Italics for words in the Ottoman Turkish in the original, which the translator provides in the glossary at the end of the book (faggot= ibne, shit= bok, wizened= kart). Stavrakopoulou, glossary, in Soutsos, *Alexandrovodas*, 119-20.
NIKODEMOS Should I keep telling you that I am gross?
PHILODOROS But very gross.
NIKODEMOS Gross and crass, the crassest, but if you do me a favor, I’ll give it to you too.
PHILODOROS As to the favor, I am willing, but you have to agree not to ask for compensation.
NIKODEMOS I accept that, but you keep your word.
PHILODOROS Tell me and you’ll see.
NIKODEMOS I’ve learned that you are doing Tarse and I also want a share.
PHILODOROS You should not joke about such things, because if the friend hears it, he will do us truly.
NIKODEMOS This is no joke, for God’s sake, I also want my share.  

Stavrakopoulou’s translation provides an opportunity to examine sexual identities and class hierarchies through a more contemporary view. Her linguistic work significantly facilitates even Greek readers in their understanding of the manuscript, parts of which are not immediately understood because of the many Ottoman Turkish words. Perhaps the availability of Alexandrovodas in English can contribute to the expanding corpus of translations from Ottoman and Arabic satirical literature, such as Marvin Carlson and Safi Mahfouz’s translations of Ibn Daniyal, that have significantly changed the scholarly perspective on Middle Eastern dramatic literature.

Alexandrovodas’s English translation opened up the possibilities of the play in the European as well as the Ottoman theatre canon. Within Greek studies, Stavrakopoulou’s work also revived interest in the text and its writer. The scholarly conversation that started with the opportunity of the new publication, as seen in the reviews by Batsaki and Mackridge, addressed the Greek eighteenth century for the first time outside the narrow confines of Greek academic publishing.

---

96 Soutsos, Alexandrovodas, 88-89.
Conclusion

The translation of a Greek play from Alexandrovodas’s era two hundred years after its composition raises several intriguing questions that could not possibly all be addressed in one chapter. For example, the fact that the translated play is also written by a translator who satirizes his own Phanariot class, a translator community, is an opportunity for fruitful analysis of unmapped territory for Translation Studies. In addition, the Ottoman identity of this play opens it up for comparison to other Ottoman and Balkan genres of the period, another understudied aspect of theatre of the area. Beyond translation and theatre, Stavrakopoulou’s translation could be analyzed for its publishing venue in an attempt to dissect the cultural expectations of an Ottoman play from the point of view of a contemporary Turkish culture in search of its identity. While my project could not include all the above directions, my investigation focused on the very point that the availability of Alexandrovodas in English opens up significant possibilities for the play and its era for a variety of disciplines.

I focused on what the translation could offer from a Greek perspective, and specifically I analyzed the translation for the questions it set forth regarding the period of its original and the relationship of that period to the present crisis. The opportunity of Alexandrovodas’s translation directed attention to the Greek Enlightenment and the cultural theories that circulated among the Greeks of the era. This investigation prompted me to look at Korais’s metakénosis and consider his translational approach for its influence on contemporary Greek culture. Metakénosis has provided the theoretical model of translation as historiography for the analysis of all sections of my dissertation. The novel approach I proposed studies theatre from the period of the Greek Enlightenment for the first time along with more contemporary issues, such as the crisis. I was able to make these connections by leaning on translation for its historiographical potential across
different times and disciplines. *Alexandrovodas* in a new version provided a fecund field of study for the potential of translation as cross-cultural criticism, as historiographical approach, and as a cultural response to the Greek crisis.

My analysis of *Alexandrovodas* with the help of Korais’s metakénosis and Papanikolaou’s theory of archival disruption has helped me clarify the wider theoretical framework for the dissertation. Stavrakopoulou’s *Alexandrovodas the Unscrupulous* represents a form of archival disturbance, per Papanikolaou, in two ways. First, the circulation of the English translation places a previously entirely unknown Greek eighteenth century text on an international map. Second, the updating that *Alexandrovodas* underwent as an Ottoman play – framed as such for the first time by the translator’s detailed introduction – relocates the work from its exclusive Greek trajectory to excavate parts of its heritage that were not considered valuable before the crisis. My first example of Greek theatre in translation illustrates the challenges and possibilities of translations from Greek into English within an academic context, where the text is intended for reading rather than stage representation. The case studies I look at next expand the range of translational activity during the crisis to include performance of Greek playwriting with English supertitles in different settings. While I move on to more contemporary plays, all three case studies deal with the issue of revisiting history. The following plays perform recent Greek history on stage, each with its own aesthetic parameters. My next case study, *Abandon the Citizens*, builds on the theoretical questions regarding Greek culture’s positioning between the East and the West as I addressed it in this chapter. However, I adopt a different historical perspective, and, following the play’s exploration of a more recent past, I investigate a period in the early twentieth century, the Asia Minor Greek-Turkish war, an event that dramatically changed Greeks’ perception of their Eastern identity.
Chapter 2
“Crisis and Memory on the Foreign Stage: Abandon the Citizens”

Introduction
“Why aren’t some of those houses, manors and villas made available to the poor refugees?
Are they [state officials] waiting for the refugees themselves to seize them in their destitute situation?”

The above passage could come from any Greek newspaper on any given day in September 2015, when thousands of refugees were appearing on Greek islands after crossing the Aegean from Turkish coasts. Instead, this was news in September 1922, when, again, about 1.2 million refugees took the same passage with Greece as their destination. The similarities between the two dark moments in the history of the Aegean have brought about a comparative angle that permeates any discussion of current affairs in Greece. The refugee experiences of 1922, the year that marked the end of the Greco-Turkish war and the final days of the Ottoman Empire, is the topic of Abandon the Citizens, created and performed by Greek artist Aktina Stathaki in 2013. The play consists of a series of monologues for one actor. The refugees’ stories were taken from

---


two Greek publications: *Koinos Logos* (*Common Word*) by Elli Papadimitriou and *Exodus* by the Greek Center for Asia Minor Studies. ³ Both works recorded verbatim testimonies by survivors of the Asia Minor events that fled to or were forced to resettle in Greece between 1922 and 1930, following violent expulsions and later the mutual population exchange stipulated by the Lausanne Treaty (1923). Stathaki’s selection focused on accounts describing events that erupted in August 1922 around the Western coast of Anatolia. For the production’s text she preserved the language of the publications and translated the Greek text into English for the projected supertitles.

A theatrical reconsideration of the humanitarian crisis of the 1922 events is significant on many levels. *Abandon the Citizens*, with its focus on the refugee experience, clearly assumes a scope wider than that of a Greek national narrative. At the same time, the play also investigates an issue of major social and political importance in Greece’s recent past. This history resurfaces in incidents of forced migration today and particularly in the current moment of the refugee crisis. The Syrian refugee wave is clearly understood as an event with international repercussions, unlike the 1920s population exchange, which was largely seen as an issue between the recently established Greek state and the then-nascent Turkey. In *Abandon the Citizens*, an important aspect of reframing those events as a past that is shared among peoples in the area was accomplished with the choice of production venues. The play was first produced in Alwan for the Arts in New York City in May and again in December of the same year at the Martin E. Segal Theatre at the Graduate Center, CUNY, as part of the Middle Eastern and

Middle Eastern American Center programming. Producing the work in centers of Middle Eastern studies is novel in that it considers the 1922 events as part of the history of the region and not as an isolated event in separate national narratives as has been categorized until recently in Greek and Turkish history.

This chapter focuses on the ways Stathaki’s work both included the almost century-old tradition of narrating the 1922 trauma and subverted its nationalist undertones by recontextualizing this history as common ground on both sides of the border. For the needs of my analysis I rely on my personal experience of seeing the play and the audience responses in the venues it was performed, as well as the artist’s views as I recorded them in interviews I conducted afterwards. I examine the ways the historical narrative functions in its presentation in New York City before an international audience composed of Greek- and non-Greek-speaking spectators, and developed by a migrant Greek artist, amidst the economic and political turmoil in Greece and its international critique. While Abandon the Citizens does not address the Greek economic crisis in a direct manner, its production coincides with an evident cultural trend in reconsidering recent history through the lens of the crisis, what Dimitris Papanikolaou has called “the disturbed archive.” In his analysis of artistic responses to the crisis, as early as 2011, Papanikolaou saw the distinct preoccupation with history as “a radical political position,” a questioning of a national identity and “a trend characterized by its effort to critique, undermine and performatively disturb the very logics through which the story of Greece – the narrative of

---

4 Alwan for the Arts produced a previous version of the work, created and performed by Stathaki and a collaborator, Tina Yiotopoulou, and directed by Stathaki. That text included passages with gruesome descriptions of violence. Later, the play was reworked by Stathaki, who focused on the “quotidian aspects of people’s lives before the incidents.” Aktina Stathaki, in discussion with the author, New York City, May 13, 2015.
its national, political, sociocultural cohesion in synchrony and diachrony – has until now been told."\(^6\) For Greece in particular, a nation constantly looking to its past as a source of national and cultural coherence, as illustrated by the metakénosis model analyzed in the previous chapter, the shift from the Western orientation to a more problematized view of Greece’s eastern past is indeed a radical move. It is in its function in reframing the history and legacy of these events that *Abandon the Citizens* emerges as a product of the crisis: an outward questioning of the constant adherence to a Western identity and of the view that maintains an othering of any element that deviates from this identity. Stathaki used translation and the simultaneous presence of two languages to question historical assumptions about Greek identity and to elucidate the fluidity of borders in the Aegean, as it is recorded in the historical events of her play. I argue that translation, in its wider sense that includes the use of supertitles and other non-verbal framing devices, functions here as a historiographic approach: In its capacity as a “re-creative strategy,” as David Johnston suggests, translation can serve as a platform of reconciliation between the past and the present.\(^7\) At the same time, translation can question continuities by exposing the disjunctions between past and present while encouraging other routes of communication with a contemporary audience.

Because the play was conceived as primarily a Greek text with English supertitles with the addition of certain passages in English, translation is a central characteristic that will inform my analysis of both its creation and its reception. However, translation is a wider trope in the work, not simply in its bilingual nature, but also as its point of reference. Given the numerous allusions to cultural misunderstandings throughout the play, translation makes up a good part of

\(^6\) Ibid.

the content as well as the context of *Abandon the Citizens*. While I am wary of the overuse of translation in the figurative sense, often defined as “cultural translation,” a wide-ranging and ambitious term that claims any cultural contact as translation, without the presence or even knowledge of the languages involved, here I follow Cristina Marinetti in her critique of previous discourse on theatre translation that somewhat separates the text from dramaturgical reworkings and performance.9 Marinetti recognizes that phases of interpretation occur throughout a production’s trajectory, from the initial discussions to ultimately the performance and reception.10 During these stages the text can also evolve. It is therefore a mistake to think of a translated text as unchanging once it becomes available for rehearsal; the translation should allow the collaborators to engage with the foreign language instead of hiding the traces behind a fixed new text. It is in this sense that “cultural translation” is part of the creation and the reception of *Abandon the Citizens*, in the more expanded notion of theatre as a moment of cultural contact that does not, however, discount the mediation that takes place in the linguistic transfer process. This approach is fitting for Stathaki’s work, which insists on bringing Greek, a foreign language for some of her spectators, together with the archival material that she exposes to their view. Through a carefully selected soundscape, Stathaki mixes together “sonic spaces of

---


10 Ibid.
effective utopian longings,\textsuperscript{11} not only from the Turkish and Greek elements of this history, but also the Greek-American identity, consistent with the here-and-now of the production.

In this chapter I will first look into the play’s sources and provide some brief historical background that informed its creation. Then I investigate the tools that moved the translational process forward, such as the gestures, sounds, and music used in the production. These elements were employed for their translational potential, since they were the aspects most capable of conveying meaning to a foreign audience that could not rely on the text or its historical-cultural associations, and they complemented the supertitles in achieving the translational goals. I consider them along with the presence of two languages on stage, the use of supertitles, and the theme of translation in general. I will then examine Greek culture’s pronounced tendency of employing unofficial sources as tools of a popular and popularized historiography, and particularly as a response to the Greek fiscal crisis.

**The Text and Its Sources**

*Abandon the Citizens* consists of nine monologues, each separated into its own scene, with a total duration of about forty-five minutes. The play begins with a silent projection of some brief historical background in English on an otherwise dark stage:

In August 1922 the Turkish army under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk wins the war against the Greek forces who, at the end of WWI tried to re-conquer the coast of Asia Minor. Abandoned by the European allies and its own government, the Greek army recedes quickly while thousands of people try desperately to flee to Greece to escape the Turkish army’s revenge. Following the end of the Greco-

The placement of the text is at the top of a screen in the background, where the supertitles will soon appear. After the text fades out, the stage and seating space are immersed in darkness for a few seconds. Then gradually a very low light reveals the performer, Stathaki, sitting on a chair as she speaks the first lines of the play in Greek. She begins with the first monologue by a woman who informs the audience that she dreads telling her story, the memories stop her voice and she wishes she had forgotten it all. Immediately after, another female character, played by the one actor, briefly narrates life before the events. Waltz music is heard and Stathaki dances on her own as she narrates the story. The blissful memory is suddenly interrupted with rumors of war and the panic-filled days that preceded the flight by sea. The sudden rupture that she experienced develops into her family’s forced migration to Greece. In the following eight monologues-scenes different survivors, all impersonated by Stathaki, tell the stories of the day their lives changed dramatically and the subsequent passage across the Aegean. The account of the first unidentified woman is followed by that of a female professor, a male clerk, a female teacher, and three unidentified narrators, who are more or less separated by their stories, a mother, and finally the male survivor who narrates the epilogue. One of the stories briefly mentions what the refugees found in Greece, as a woman remembers the hardships of her family’s relocation in Lesbos. But overall Abandon the Citizens, as the title suggests, emphasizes the experience of being a civilian caught in the middle of a war conflict. Towards the end of the play, Stathaki performs a woman recounting a visit to her hometown many years later, a pilgrimage in the company of other

---

12 Aktina Stathaki, Abandon the Citizens (unpublished manuscript, December 6, 2013), Microsoft Word file.
refugees. There she finds everything changed to the point of no recognition, but the people now living in her old neighborhood, refugees of the reverse direction themselves, welcome her warmly. The play ends with a male narrator remembering the tortures endured during a forced march. His agony is contrasted with the memories of the peaceful village he left behind.

In its simplicity of means, *Abandon the Citizens* allowed the stories to unfold without significant changes in its visual environment. There was little to denote the passage from scene to scene and the change into each character. In most cases, the actor announced the identity associated with each particular story, as simply as “told by a teacher” or “narrated by a mother.” These designations are found in the play’s source texts. In some instances, the shift is underlined by a slight change of costume, such as the addition of a coat or a hat; sometimes the light and music cues assist the transition. Overall, the monologue format truncated by the projections, the sudden interruption of music, and fade-outs brought a cinematic quality to the documentary piece.

The play’s source texts are the volumes of *Koinos Logos* and *Exodus*. These two important publications in historical studies on the Asia Minor Catastrophe are the fruits of a long process of recording survivors’ testimonies.\(^{13}\) Elli Papadimitriou’s *Koinos Logos* (*Common

---

\(^{13}\) The term “catastrophe” is used to describe the 1922 events in the Greek-speaking world. Recently, and in an attempt to find a more shared viewpoint between the Turkish and Greek sides, there has been significant scholarly debate on the suitability of the term. Renée Hirschon addresses this issue in the preface to *Crossing the Aegean*, where she advocates the term’s use. Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), xvi. Antonis Liakos, on the other hand, sees the adoption of the term as the “hidden agenda” of a historiographical approach that is based on the perpetuation of trauma. Antonis Liakos, “Historical Time and National Space in Modern Greece,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 214. I understand the problematic assumption that “catastrophe” implies for two countries that see each other as historical enemies, but I include it here because of its ubiquitous use in
*Word* was published in four volumes between 1972 and 1979. Each volume is dedicated to one important historical event: the Asia Minor events, the Axis Occupation during World War II, and the Civil War of 1944-1949. The writer, herself from a refugee family, transcribed the oral testimonies from notes taken while interviewing subjects. The informal tone of the work testifies to a certain familiarity with the event and the interviewees. *Exodus* was published in three volumes (1980, 1982, and 2013 respectively) by the Greek Center for Asia Minor Studies. It was the result of interviews with about 5,100 survivors, and 145,000 pages of transcriptions of oral testimonies, of which only a selection was included in the published version. The title of the work consciously alludes to the biblical reference and draws from the Society of Nations’ characterization of the events, as recorded in Geneva in 1926. The interviews began shortly after 1922 and lasted about twenty-five years. The editors explain that some testimonies were taken in Turkish in the presence of an interpreter, and a few survivors submitted written texts. In cases where the language of the interviewee was Greek, the testimony was recorded as delivered with some minor editing for comprehension, although the editors do not elaborate on what that would entail. This is a significant point since the Greek idioms spoken in Asia Minor had distinct differences from those of the mainland. It is an

---

14 *Common Word* is the standard word-for-word rendition, but the original alludes to more definitions, such as *common sense* (in Greek λόγος = word, speech, logic). A small part of the work first appeared in 1964. Ioanna Petropoulou, “Αρχείο Έλλης Παπαδημητρίου,” Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών 13 (1999), 297, doi: 10.12681/deltiokms.149. [Elli Papadimitriou’s Archive, *Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies* 13 (1999), 297].

15 Ibid., 270.


18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., λ’ [30].
important tenet of the collection that the testimonies are to be considered the ultimate stories recorded from the events, since fewer and fewer people that actually experienced the forced migration were still alive by the time of publication – some thirty years after the end of the documentation process. At the same time, the editors acknowledge that they are testimonies of survivors, not official documents, and that makes them all the more special because, in their view, they are the most “authentic” accounts of that history.

The enormous effort of both Exodus and Common Word produced a kind of language archive of expressions that were not familiar in Greek territory before the arrival of the refugees and that disappeared while they gradually assimilated. Stathaki’s work includes some of that variety in a manner that foregrounds translation as a major theme in the play for Greek-speaking audiences, too. The particular use of the language served as a reminder of the refugees’ foreignness in both space and time. Stathaki was interested in maintaining the differences in the survivors’ speech. She saw different voices in her source texts and made sure to keep each separate in how she presented their story and in how she performed them. However, she also included familiar expressions that are so well known they are almost iconic. Oft-repeated phrases such as “we left the pot on the stove, as if we were to return within the hour, and locked the door” became a standard expression with which to describe the experience of the sudden flight.

---

21 Ibid., λγ’ [33].
22 Ibid., λδ’ [34].
23 Stathaki, discussion.
24 I have heard this expression describing the refugees’ experience first as a child from my grandmother, as she remembered leaving their home in Smyrna at the age of seven. I then remember this sentence repeated in school in a somewhat more official version of the “facts.” Somehow I did not find it strange that others had the same memories of the event as my grandmother. Later, I realized that this phrase was the accepted way of talking about the Great Fire of Smyrna, as I heard it again and again in people’s conversations and the media. It is interesting that the actions of the refugees abandoning their homes while leaving everything as if
From a personal memory of one refugee to a collective history, the phrase emphasized how unprepared people were for the eternal separation from their homelands. Similar instances in the play became moments of recognition for a “non-aggregate community,” in Naoki Sakai’s iteration, for the spectators who shared that background of specific custom words and phrases appropriate for speaking about this trauma.25

At the same time, the unofficial archive also posed a translational challenge for the supertitles. Stathaki chose to accompany the archival text with appropriate gestures to create different characters as she performed their respective testimonies. Her strategy illustrated an attempt to “culturally translate” the source material across time, space, language, and different media by embodying the historical material. This performed “archival disruption” relied on Stathaki’s chosen artistic idiom and imagination but also drew from a certain linguistic and cultural competence, since she felt that she belonged to the community she chose to translate.26

Before addressing the scenic interpretation of the piece, however, I will probe deeper into the historical background in order to show how Stathaki reframed the events for a contemporary performance.

*Abandon the Citizens* is based on the testimonies of the Greek ethnic Christian survivors. The sudden expulsion of these populations from their homelands in 1922 was the result of violent persecution of most Christian communities by the new Turkish army under Kemal Atatürk. Greek-speaking populations fled their homes for the safety of the Aegean islands. The hostilities were a response to the aggressive and rather ambitious military progress of the Greek

---

26 Stathaki, like many Greeks of her generation, has personal memories of family members’ narratives of 1922. Stathaki, discussion.
army to eastern Anatolia. Because of its implication, the Greek state had to assume responsibility for these refugees. Eventually, and after many years of diplomatic work, those who sought refuge in Greece relocated throughout the country but particularly in Northern Greece. This was mainly because Muslim populations there had also been forced to leave in large numbers, and there was a need to enhance the Greek presence. After all, Northern Greece had changed its status from part of the Ottoman Empire to Greek territory only ten years earlier. The term “exchangeables,” first used in diplomacy, was popularized in journalism of the time and accompanied the refugees and generations of their descendants, as the play documents.

For the Greek side, the Asia Minor expedition was the military and political expression of the Grand Idea, the irredentist narrative that consisted of uniting all “Greeks” then living in Ottoman territory and of reconstructing the Greek area of ancient glory. The concept is usefully defined in Stathis Gourgouris’s *Dream Nation*:

The Grand Idea revolved around the vision of a sovereign Greece that would extend its boundaries and exercise its State rule over all those territories where Hellenic culture still flourished. In the 1850s, these territories included the Asia Minor coast with Smyrne as its center; all the Aegean islands not yet part of the new Greek nation; Crete, Thessaly, and Epirus (including parts of Albania); Macedonia and Thrace (extending well into what is now Serbian and Bulgarian territories); and, of course, the land strip that constitutes now the “continental”

---

part of Turkey, namely Eastern Thrace with its crowning jewel, Constantinople itself, the quintessential signifier of Byzantine Hellenism.  

The phrase “Grand Idea” is attributed to a politician of the then newly established Greek state, Ioannis Kolettis, first noted in one of his speeches in 1844. According to Peter Mackridge, the concept changed the ways in which Greek intellectuals had until then related to their Byzantine past. The Grand Idea led Greeks to envision the unification of Orthodox Christian populations, who had until then no sense of unity based on nationality. The absorption of this nationalist ideology into Greek consciousness cannot be emphasized enough. Even Abandon the Citizens, which shuns the politics of either side and instead actively focuses on the experiences of civilians, refers to the expedition as an attempt to “re-conquer” the areas in question.

The conceptual continuity between ancient Greek culture, the Greek language, and Christian Orthodox religion on both sides of the Aegean served as motivation for the military expedition. The refugees’ assimilation was supposed to be facilitated by their common religion but, most importantly, by the strong belief of a shared classical and Byzantine past. But, once relocated in Greece, the refugees were not really the familiar others after all. First, there was the language: many of them only spoke Turkish, and those who had some Greek used many Turkish words in their speech, a trait that earned them the characterization “barbarian.” Many refugees’

---

31 Ibid.
32 In the background information projected in English, see block quote in p. 89 in this chapter.
33 Yiorgos Anastasiadis, “The Refugee’s Thessaloniki,” 150.
choice to use the purified form in everyday interactions was considered elitist. Then, there were the differences in familiarity with European culture. The refugees, large numbers of whom were former merchants, were seen as too progressive for the locals, especially in rural areas. Finally, their large numbers, about one fifth of the host population, temporarily swamped the economy. These facts shatter the myth of continuity that fueled the war from which the country was recovering. That myth was nevertheless gradually restored and even reinforced by the addition of the trauma of the lost homeland. Revisiting these issues around the reception of the refugees is very important to the analysis of Abandon the Citizens, because the play actively sought ways to commemorate the legacy of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, while underlining the possible controversy that emerges from the differences of what it means for Greek and non-Greek audiences today. Stathaki’s performance focused on conveying the suffering as found in the

---

35 The widespread stereotype of the Mikrasiates (people from Asia Minor) as progressive is hard to trace. It is often repeated in history books without contextualization. However, there is evidence that the large numbers of children among the refugees (see Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 101) sought to continue their school education. I believe that the correlation between the rise of female student attendance and refugee influx as seen in Sidiroula Ziogou-Karastergiou’s study on refugee student populations in Thessaloniki is an unmistakable sign of progressive attitudes, compared to those of the local populations. In any case, the stereotype is critical to the myth of Asia Minor as a place of abundance and culture. Sidiroula Ziogou-Karastergiou, “Πρόσφυγες μαθητές και μαθήτριες στα σχολεία της Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης στη Θεσσαλονίκη από το 1922 ως το 1926: Στοιχεία από μία πρώτη καταγραφή,” [Refugee male and female students in the schools of secondary education in Thessaloniki from 1922 to 1926: An initial documentation] in Οψεις του μικρασιατικού ζητήματος: Ιστορική θεώρηση και προεκτάσεις (Θεσσαλονίκη, University Studio Press, 1994), 153-73.
37 It is held on to with great decisiveness even today, evident in the obstacles it presents to contemporary historiographic research: in 2007 the then-new history book for the sixth grade of elementary school that revisited some assumptions about the fleeing populations was withdrawn and its writer, feminist historian Maria Repousi, professor in the School of Primary Education of the Aristotle University, suffered considerable slander in the media. An extensive bibliography (in Greek) of newspaper articles on the matter appears in Repousi’s institutional website: Maria Repousi, “Αρθρογραφία-Παρεμβάσεις” [Articles-Interventions], website, accessed September 4, 2016, http://users.auth.gr/marrep/PS_REPOUSI/EL/html/articles.html.
testimonies. The dramatic representation attacked the Greek nationalist narrative and constituted a critique of the politics surrounding the imagined continuity that the Grand Idea implied.

The forced homogenization of the region’s two countries, the new Greece and the new Turkey, both newly founded and post-Ottoman, turned each population to different desirable affiliations. The overpowering homogenization of both societies in terms of their religious orientation reinforced the construction of the Aegean Sea in between as the border between East and West, or Christianity and Islam, a very persistent geographical picture of this forced separation. Turkey turned to the East and fought against Western influence for the control of its territory. Greece focused on its Christian faith and looked to the West, but it also became highly suspicious of its Western allies and so began a vicious cycle of self-doubt and renegotiation of its already unstable identity. The role of the Great Powers in the resolution of this conflict has been under continuous scrutiny ever since. For Stathaki, the Great Powers’ performance of cruel neutrality, as narrated in several of the stories, underlines the nature of war, where innocent civilians suffer from international politics. 38 This was the connecting substance for contemporary audiences that could not necessarily identify with the specific configurations of the trauma, but could draw parallels to more recent events. At the same time, however, for Greek audiences, the reference to the Great Powers was a reminder of these countries’ ongoing control of national affairs, in the form of powerful members of the EU, and therefore a direct allusion to the contemporary European crisis. However, before turning to this aspect of the production in the final section, I will first analyze the ways the performance of Abandon the Citizens sought to relate to a diverse audience.

38 Stathaki, discussion.
The nine Greek monologues, all delivered with simultaneously projected English supertitles, were interrupted by four instances in which the Greek-speaking audience members were assumed to be bilingual. In three of these cases, independent supertitles provided historical information about the events. These texts were not translated into Greek, presumably because they did not provide new information to Greek-speaking audience members. The Asia Minor Catastrophe is, after all, an event that is well known to them. The effect of this monolingual mode of delivery on Greek speakers may allude to a process of cultural self-translation that the artist shared with certain spectators. A pivotal moment in recent Greek history was presented before a US audience during the politically charged climate of the fiscal crisis. While the Greek-speaking portion of the audience did not participate in the translation in an active manner, in a way they were in community with the Greek artist-translator -- and with each other -- by virtue of their shared knowledge of the information that the play attempted to make known to non-Greeks.39

The first instance of non-translation occurs during the initial projection of background information summarizing the events of August 1922.40 No source is given for this text. The second opportunity for “silent” supertitles occurs about midway through the play. The text projected reads:

The reason that led us to supporting Greece was not an emotional impulse but a natural expression of our traditional policy: protection of the Indies and the Suez

39 As a participant in this audience, I applied the usual critical eye onto domestic events presented before the non-initiated. My initial (and certainly culturally biased) reaction was that the English text in the beginning was a summary of the events that remained as neutral as it could ever be. I revised this opinion after studying the text more carefully. In particular, I am concerned with the use of the work “re-conquer” for the areas in question (see block quote in page 89 in this chapter).
40 See block quote on page 89 in this chapter.
Canal. For an entire century we supported Turkey, seeing it as the first line of defense to the Eastern Mediterran-ean. But Turkey proved to be an unreliable ally and so we proceeded to the second line [...] From a geographic point of view the position of Greece was unique for our purposes. Politically, this country was strong enough in times of peace so as not to cause us any expenses and weak enough in a time of war so as to be completely subjected to us.41

The source is projected in a separate supertitle: “Harold Nicolson, British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Memo to the Minister, December 1920.”42 The inclusion of the reference testifies to this passage’s use as a legitimizing element by framing personal narratives with more sources. As Carol Martin summarizes, testimony theatre relies on the exhibition of “evidence” on stage to communicate its “legitimacy.”43 Nicolson’s snippet of diplomatic history serves as the prologue to a dramatic monologue by a female survivor that recalls last-minute decisions taken before hurriedly leaving her home with a baby and two toddlers after her husband had been taken along with all Greek males by the Turkish authorities. Stathaki’s highly emotional delivery is immediately followed by another projection of information in English, without a given source:

The people that were left on the port were pushed and shoved by the Turks like sheep under the whip. People crying, screaming, and what an unforgettable immense havoc as the boat was leaving. You’d see a seashore filled with thousands and thousands of bundles of cloth and the people crying and pulling their hair.44

41 Stathaki, Abandon the Citizens.
42 Ibid.
44 Stathaki, Abandon the Citizens.
The English supertitles in the three cases just presented were not employed to clarify a Greek original but to introduce other historical documents by observers rather than survivors of the events. They were primarily used for their “narrative function,” as Louise Ladouceur explains in her study of supertitles and heterolinguality on stage.\(^{45}\) Ladouceur examines the use of supertitles beyond their dependence to a dominant text but as a tool among other scenic media that has the potential to “transmit messages divergent from those delivered on stage.”\(^{46}\) As Marvin Carlson has argued, supertitles can function as another “voice” in the production, far from the seemingly “neutral device” that simply follows the spoken text.\(^{47}\) Indeed, in Stathaki’s work, the contrast between two languages enhanced her targeted critique of international politics whose actors exhibited no consideration for the enormous impact their actions had on civilians’ lives. The artist used translation and the presence of two languages simultaneously on stage to put into stark relief the effects these experiences had on survivors. This was especially true in the one instance where the actor spoke her lines in English:

> The battleships of the allies were sitting quietly among the dead bodies floating in the bay of Smyrna, watching the massacre going on. A typical incident: the admiral of a ship got invited to dinner by one of his colleagues. He arrived five minutes late and apologized for the delay, which was caused by the dead body of a woman that got tangled up in the propeller of his launch.\(^{48}\)


\(^{46}\) Ibid.


The Greek-to-English language shift marked a clear departure from the voices of frightened narrators performed thus far. The actor in fact added a satirical affectation to her voice and gestures as she spoke the lines. For the audience, the sudden change helped emphasize the differences of fate between the voice of this narrative and that of survivors. In a way, the adoption of English, the language of one of the Great Powers present in this war conflict, mirrored the situation described in the controversial passage. *Abandon the Citizens* thus alternated identification points with different categories of spectators by either using the two languages in conjunction, or by privileging one over the other in distinct moments.

Because of the play’s theme and sources, *Abandon the Citizens*’ heterolinguality was not only contained in the interaction between Greek and English, but also surfaces in the play at times where the languages spoken by the refugees take center stage. Here I borrow the term “heterolingual” from Louise Ladouceur, who sometimes uses it in place of “bilingual” in her work on Franco-Canadian theatre.\(^49\) The coexistence of Greek and English on stage, together with particular dated forms of Greek as found in the testimonies, speaks to a certain variety of linguistic expression. Heterolingual play, therefore, is a more suitable term for my case study than bilingual, because *Abandon the Citizens* explores the theme of communicating in more than one language in its form as well as in its content.

An important scene that underlines both the misunderstanding and commonality of these people tells the story of an invasion turned into an act of hospitality. The story is framed by the inevitability of the conflict from a local point of view, the moment of dissolution of the Ottoman Empire when the different ethnicities could no longer coexist in the same area. The multiculturalism of the Ottoman Empire also ensured that populations in most places spoke

\(^{49}\) Ladouceur, “Surtitles Take the Stage in Franco-Canadian Theatre,” 348; 354.
several languages. While Turkish was the official language of the Empire, the inhabitants of Asia Minor were largely Greek speakers. A school clerk, Stathaki informs her audience, recounted the incident where a Turkish lieutenant and three soldiers entered his home. The invader asked for gold in Turkish, but the clerk’s wife didn’t understand, as she did not speak Turkish. This aggravated the lieutenant, who then threatened her with his sword. The husband intervened and spoke in Turkish. His accent betrayed his origins, Kayseri, deep in Anatolia, where the invader was also from. Upon learning of their shared homeland, the host invited the soldiers as guests to his home and to anything they may need. The lieutenant sent off his soldiers and sat down at the table, where they shared food and memories of their homeland. This scene of hospitality serves as a reminder of the common ground between the two sides, and as premonition of their similar fate that was about to unfold. The exchange of populations was to affect both sides dramatically. As Nikos Papastergiadis notes, in Homer’s *Odyssey*, “to share food and offer gifts to a stranger was considered the highest form of civilization.” Indeed, as soon as the clerk reclaims his role as a host, the invaders are no longer hostile, and instead they enter into community with the Greek family. However, the scene follows a reverse dynamic from the one Papastergiadis envisions: the host in this case is not the powerful entity and the invader does not possess refugee status. Instead, the newly formed Turkish army began this war as a way of reclaiming their own country from the Ottoman Empire and the infidel that the Greek family represents. The fact that the Greek speaks the Turk’s language, complete with his own regional dialect, ends the enmity between them. The scene becomes an example of “linguistic hospitality” that Paul Ricœur explains as “the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the

---

word of the Other into one’s own dwelling.” With this scene, Abandon the Citizens successfully foregrounds the linguistic aspect of the lost paradise of peaceful coexistence that contemporary post-nationalist approaches often imagine as the reality of everyday life in the Ottoman Empire.

Another example that effectively employs the variations in language and cultural knowledge is the title of the play. The performer speaks the lines “Save the army. Abandon the citizens” to great dramatic effect. The phrase is actually recorded in the stories as a telegram sent by the Greek government to their military forces. For Greek-speaking audiences, these words clearly assign blame to the Greek political authority, especially because of the language of the cruel order: it is expressed in purified form, the official language of the country at the time, a form that obliterated the vernacular from public life. The societal bilingualism of two forms of Greek, the official language of politics and the vernacular of the civilians, reinforced the meaning of the chilling telegram. Most critically, the short text is a source that rarely appears in historical accounts of the events. Regardless of cultural familiarity, all members of the audience

52 In the original: “Στρατόν σώσατε, πολίτας εγκαταλείψατε.” Stathaki, Abandon the Citizens.
53 Purified (the accepted translation of katharevousa (καθαρεύουσα): “[language] in the process of purification.” is an artificial mixture of nineteenth-century Greek and Ancient Greek. The katharevousa was a solution to the language question that emerged with the institution of an independent Greek state in 1828. Initially the result of language planning that aimed at bringing together the written Greek tradition and the spoken language of the early nineteenth century, the katharevousa, under Adamantios Korais’s decisive influence, practically meant the purification of improper forms in order for the language to better exhibit continuity with the Ancient Greek idiom. It was the main language taught in schools until the Education Act of 1976 following the fall of the Junta in 1974. Roderick Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature, second edition (Oxford:Clarendon, 1999), 302; 299; 301; 325. Its use until then imposed a sort of “societal bilingualism” on everyday life, since it was not the chosen idiom of any community but the administration and the army. Peter Mackridge, Language and National Identity in Greece 1766-1976 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31.
were invited to consider the order as a succinct summary of what the tragedy of Asia Minor was about: a miscalculation in military operations that affected millions.

It becomes evident that the subject of *Abandon the Citizens* is entangled in a complex historical trauma and its representation. However, in its performance before both familiar audiences and others who could not necessarily follow the deviation from the traditions of telling this trauma, Stathaki succeeded in extending the stories’ cultural purchase beyond the Greek narrative. The archival disruption that the play effectuates constitutes the production’s main intersection with the Greek crisis: a re-evaluation of a largely uncontested national history for the Greek audiences, and an attempt to make known an obscure past for those without knowledge of the Greek context. In the next section I address the strategies employed in the text’s translation and how different spectators might have received them.

**The Translation: Technologies and Audiences**

Stathaki was determined to retain the rhythm of the original as much as possible in the supertitles. Her general principle was to avoid literary renderings and instead translate the text following a principle of basic equivalence, an approach not without its challenges. The biggest one was to avoid staying strictly on a first level of meaning in moments where the original expressions were quite literary. The solution, as is often the case in translated theatre, was to be found in employing gesture to elucidate content. Her performance was based on very simple gestures that, together with the dated quality of speech patterns understood by Greek speakers and the unaffected version in English, created a captivating narrative of innocence before world politics. Since the production was created with a foreign audience in mind, the supertitles were not an external element added at a later stage but an integral part of the work. The technician
who projected the supertitles was advised to follow the physical rhythm of the performer, but not necessarily her speech. It is possible that this strategy developed out of necessity, because even though the job required some Greek, Stathaki was obliged to adapt to the linguistic skills of available collaborators. Nevertheless, as a result the actor could control the pace of the supertitles independently of the text, because her *gestures* were roughly the cues for each supertitle. The syncopated actions of the performer seemed almost based on a supertitle model, and hence the balance between the two was unusually successful.  

Stathaki was a live interpreter who did not only perform in one or the other language, but was in control of the technology that served the translation. The actor understood her role as a “filter” between text and audience, a tool that physically performs the particularities and old-fashioned ways of expression found in the text. With her emphasis on gesture rather than text in the translation process, Stathaki managed to overcome the difficulty of translating the at times literary text for the limited medium of supertitles. In addition, she succeeded in privileging the rhythm of the original even for non-Greek speaking audiences.

When asked about potential differences in reception, Stathaki admitted that her audiences exhibited a varied understanding of the text. By working within the genre of the *monopolylogue* on which Jill Dolan elaborates, Stathaki managed to inspire identification with the stories, while also drawing attention to the foreignness of the source material. The Greek

54 The same was true for the lights. I was in the booth for the Segal Center production as a lighting technician. The general principle was to follow Stathaki’s gestures as light cues, even though -- as a native Greek speaker -- I was able to make notes based on the text. It is important to note that competence in Greek was not stated as a requirement for the job.

55 Stathaki, discussion.

56 Ibid.

speakers focused on the politics portrayed and were more interested in the ways in which the play revealed previously ignored aspects of the expedition. The *how* was important to foreigners too, especially in nonlinguistic elements. Spectators without Greek, for whom the material was probably unknown, were found to have been moved by the human suffering, and by making connections to other refugee experience, past and more recent.

Engaging the audience’s bilingualism, as Ladouceur points out, is an important feature in performances where supertitles are an integral part. Indeed, the different levels of linguistic and cultural competency are significant concerns in similar projects and consequently in scholarship on the issue. Unfortunately, supertitles as a form are not vigorously considered in studies of intercultural theatre. For example, Yvonne Griesel distinguishes among three categories of spectators: the native speakers of only the source language, the native speakers of only the target language, and those with an understanding of both, who can also be native speakers, i.e., bilingual. This is a useful model to a certain extent, but it is rather limited in analyzing audiences in cities as diverse as New York. The bilingualism that Griesel and Ladouceur envision is mainly contained within either bilingual traditions, such as francophone Canada, or in

---

58 Stathaki, discussion.
59 The association with other events was evident in the discussion that followed the Segal Center production, coordinated by Aktina Stathaki and Asli Iğsiz, Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. Audience members related the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide to the subject of the play, and Stathaki included the Syrian refugees that were at that point (December 2013) relocating to Lebanon and Jordan in large numbers.
the context of cultural exchanges between EU countries. In general, their examples seem to
target comparable theatre systems, and, most importantly, they analyze reception within the
horizons of two languages and/or cultures, which would be an oversimplification of cultural
influences in the case of New York City audiences. As Cristina Marinetti and Margaret Rose
argue, the “plurality of perspectives” of contemporary audiences are better described in Arjun
Appadurai’s model of cultural exchange in an age of globalization.62 Appadurai’s concept of
ethnoscape mirrors complex communities where “both points of departure and points of arrival
are in cultural flux.”63

The audience of Abandon the Citizens was arguably quite varied. The majority were
patrons of spaces such as the Segal Center and Alwan for the Arts, English speakers more or less
accustomed to foreign theatre with supertitles.64 These spectators may or may not have been
familiar with the specific events portrayed. Another category of spectators drawn to the Greek
production were Greek-Americans. Of those, there is an important variation: those who speak the
language and are probably aware of the events, and those who have some Greek but are quite
possibly unfamiliar with the historical references. For instance, a younger generation of Greek-
speaking US audiences may not have been exposed to the institutionalized history of the events
with which Stathaki actively engaged. But even spectators with a full command of the cultural
references had the opportunity to cast a fresh look on the stories. I would argue that this was an
important goal of the production in its presentation outside Greece. When looking at this topic in

64 Alwan for the Arts in New York City is a cultural space dedicated to organizing and hosting educational and artistic events, such as classes, lectures, screenings, and performances concerning the Arab world.
New York City, the viewer and the artist were given the necessary distance and safety to look at the politics and to explore the feelings that emerge in the ways this overanalyzed piece of history relates to the present. The expanded consideration of different experiences that I attempted to delineate here cannot account for all those spectators who may have some understanding of the language or culture from indirect means, such as cultural images in history, the news, or even tourism. Theatre translation attempts to bring all those stimuli into focus in its search for key moments of communication. In this pursuit, all strata of images, references, or even stereotypes that could draw from Hellenism or the current Greek crisis can possibly operate between the translated text and its intended audience.

It becomes obvious that the tools necessary to the translator go beyond the concepts of foreignization and domestication. Indeed, what is foreign and what is familiar are constantly changing, not only in the linguistic sense but also in the cultural references in particular. The refugee experience is unfortunately not an unknown trope to most. Of course, there are significant foreign elements in Abandon the Citizens. The problem with isolating them in the translation process is that the original text, in its linguistic form, is not necessarily familiar to Greek-speaking spectators. If anything, one can speak of a foreignizing approach in the creation of the original, which is then simplified in the translation. The language of the testimonies constantly reminds the native speaker of the distance between the people who speak and the time of the events they remember. The historical moment that the play addresses, however, is not only known to Greeks but has acquired great importance in the construction of their identity. The separation of available options between foreignization and domestication may also discount the spectators’ need for the foreign in the familiar. This is what Papastergiadis defines as “an aesthetic interest in others and difference” that is framed by a familiar language, the English
supertitles in this case. Johnston has widely argued that there is no need for translators to
decide between the foreign and the domestic, as they can use both simultaneously. His view of
translation as a “prism” through which spring entirely different experiences of time and place
allows translation to move across a wide spectrum between the foreign and the familiar even
within a single play. The history that Abandon the Citizens seeks to communicate to a larger audience does not depend on simply providing the context, but also on creating the
“passageways of thought and feeling,” per Johnston, the heightened key moments for the
spectators. In Stathaki’s work, the audience’s potential for creation of meaning was afforded by
her pairing the almost literal in language with the unexpected in gesture. In the next section, I
describe examples of how the production succeeded in communicating the historical event to
foreign audiences by enhancing the linguistic translation with extratextual tools.

The Performance: Gestures, Music, and Sounds

In this section I address the artist’s choices in her performance and I set them in
conjunction with the stories she attempted to tell. Stathaki’s approach and performance relied
primarily on the actor’s body, particularly her voice and complementary sounds. In its two
performances in New York City, Abandon the Citizens did not have a set but simply a few props.
The simple scenic environment emphasized the play’s affiliation with the documentary genre. In
a significant departure from the “real,” however, Stathaki sees in her work a clear direction
towards a minimalist approach with “magical realist touches,” as she describes it. I am

65 Papastergiadis, Cosmopolitanism and Culture, 90.
67 Ibid.
68 Stathaki, discussion.
interested in analyzing her consistent juxtaposition of real-life material with “some type of magic or poetry” that unfolds in the details of the performance.\textsuperscript{69} For the artist, the magic consists of the unexpected (mainly in gesture or sound rather than in the text) that is revealed in small elements. It seems that the magic she accomplishes is a kind of \textit{distancing}, but one that does not necessarily aim at engaging a political point of view. The intriguing combination of the common and the unexpected is evident in every element of \textit{Abandon the Citizens}. Even though Stathaki did not necessarily intend for the magic to be found in the text, which she did not alter, but in the soundscape of her work, as it is set up the text also becomes an estrangement tool. This is particularly true because of the aural texture of the foreign language for a good number of her spectators, and the foreignness of the old language for the native speakers. As seen earlier, the texts were selected for their singularity of expression, their local quality, and an almost forgotten sentence structure.

Here I first address the gestural performance that accompanied the spoken and projected text. Then I move on to the sounds and the music that invested the production with aural passageways between the two cultures. In this trajectory, I find Peter Mackridge’s articulation of the myth of Asia Minor in Greek literature useful,\textsuperscript{70} and I examine it in conjunction with Josh Kun’s concept of “audiotopia.”\textsuperscript{71} Mackridge suggests that for the Greek populations, as in other similar cases of sudden imposition of borders, the forced expulsion and the prohibition of ever returning even as visitors to their homeland created the conditions for a mythology of a lost paradise.\textsuperscript{72} Since the 1922 events, literature on the subject, Mackridge relates, supported the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{71} Kun, \textit{Audiotopia}, 22-23. \\
\textsuperscript{72} Mackridge, “The Myth of Asia Minor in Greek Fiction,” 235.
\end{flushright}
image of a promised land that would be forever desired and remembered as a blessed place of abundance. I provide examples of how Abandon the Citizens is in dialogue with the genre. However, because of the aural medium of storytelling and stage representation, the mythology the play supports can also be studied with the help of Kun’s definition of aural utopias: “the space within and produced by a musical element that offers the listener and/or the musician new maps for re-imagining the present social world.” In addition, Kun’s approach affords a more complex investigation of the negative associations with the sounds of the Aegean border. The aesthetic tools that the artist employed underline the idea of Asia Minor as an imaginary land, but also the experience of crossing a border without the possibility of ever returning, at least not in physical terms. Both these approaches can be seen as drawing from and contributing to the representation of the trauma that Abandon the Citizens memorializes. It is interesting, however, that rather than grounding the experience in a culturally specific place and time, by engaging the tradition of Asia Minor’s mythical landscape Stathaki in fact opened up the stories to multiple interpretations according to the audience’s cultural understanding. In a way, she de-territorialized the stories by using the myth of abundance as a translational tool, that is, a transferrable symbol. This simple shift in perspective restructured the past for a Greek audience and invited in those who did not have any previous references to the events in a manner similar to other forms of cultural production that is observed during the Greek crisis.

Perhaps due to their scarcity, the selected props that Stathaki ended up using went a long way in reinforcing the narrative’s themes. Towards the end of the play, the artist, playing a woman who describes her pilgrimage to her family’s abandoned lands years after the events, took a tray with small glasses of water and offered them to the audience “to quench [their]

73 Kun, Audiotopia, 22-23.
thirst,” as she exclaimed. The theme of thirst is a dominant motif in the play. The narrators share vivid memories of agony and particularly of their remembered thirst’s relief. The male character of the epilogue speaks of his fear of the torturous feeling awaiting him after his death. His deprivation of water in the forced march in the hands of the Turkish army (one of many forms of torture recorded in that war, but the only one included in the narratives Stathaki selected) is framed by his fantasy-memory of the water of his homeland, another image of abundance. The fantasy of this paradisiac water seems to have been formed during the time of torture, but it remained with the narrator throughout his life in response to his traumatic memory of thirst. The theme of thirst is undoubtedly an opportunity of universal communication with any audience. But in the specific iteration, the trauma is tied not only to the events, but also to their cultural response: the fabrication of the myth of abundance in Asia Minor, as opposed to the barrenness found in the host country.74

The force of the actor’s presence was accentuated by the minimal use of props or lack of specific costumes for each character, an aesthetic choice that served the goals of the production well. In certain instances her stylized movements contradicted the climactic points of her narration, as, for example, when the image of chaotic crowds is enacted in slow and unexpected gestures. The juxtaposition of story and action on stage heightened the sense of threat that permeated the piece. Some of the people who “speak” were children when they fled. Their innocence and ignorance of the political developments in the narratives were of most interest to the artist. Her gestures mainly worked on illustrating the victims’ experience of the shock of their sudden change of fate and their instant reactions in coping with the trauma as it formed. In specific moments the ritualized movements of the performer resembled child play, a haunting

detail that foregrounded the characters’ age at the time of the events. Ritual was also evoked in Stathaki’s performance of crossing herself as if dreaming while she repeated her lines from the beginning of one of the scenes. The loss of family members in the chaos and the confusion of seeing unknown shores by boat were first expressed in some simple steps and eventually became a frenzied dance that ended in exhaustion. Yet at other moments in the play, the physical narrative was more in accord with the text: the sense of confusion in a scene, where the source text was missing articles and other auxiliary words, was matched with a highly emotional delivery. The “mistranslation” of the text in incompatible movements drew attention to Stathaki’s function as translator beyond the linguistic sense. In her presence as the enabler of this communication for diverse audiences, Stathaki joined a community of translators that “embody the act of translation,” as Marinetti and Rose explain. Her status as a bilingual migrant artist personified the anonymous refugees’ narratives that formed an archive with major historical importance for their community.

In the combination of all the roles she assumed, and in her embodying a foreign text for her spectators, Stathaki interpreted the cultural, historical, and linguistic particularities of the archival material. In this view, the translation of the work took place not only before but also during the performance, a method that illustrates what Marinetti proposes becomes the theoretical model for studying theatre translation. In Marinetti’s insistence on the many stages of cultural contact in the process of creating a translation for the stage, the interpreter can be a critical figure, whether it is the actual, acknowledged collaborator, or the practitioner that substitutes them on stage. Imagining the actor as translator/interpreter is an intriguing direction.

---

77 Ibid., 29.
in theatre translation scholarship. In his emphasis on translation as an embodied practice, David Johnston also compares the stage translator’s process to that of the actor.\textsuperscript{78} In this metaphor, he sees the actor (and the translator) as both immersed in the character, and therefore invisible, but also as an “active agent in its [the text’s] recreation,” because of their presence on stage or in the new text.\textsuperscript{79} It is the actor’s own body that the spectators see before them, even if convention requires them to believe they are seeing the character. For Johnston, this is the situation of the translator as well, since it is the translator’s creative interpretation of the work and their stagecraft that secures a fruitful engagement with the foreign text.\textsuperscript{80} Stathaki’s many roles in the production include those of actor, director, writer, dramaturg, and translator.\textsuperscript{81} The collapsing of one role into the other happened organically in a way similar to how the artist moved from character to character.

Of course, the limits of her creation, or fabrication of the narrative, are conditioned by the work’s documentary sources and the piece’s status as theatre of the real. In her study of the genre, Martin lists the diverse presences before an audience: “The person speaking onstage is a ‘real person,’ an actor, playing another real person who is known in the real world but is not actually present onstage and yet who appears to be present with the willing suspension of disbelief of the spectators.”\textsuperscript{82} EmbODYING the real person then means to imagine, just like any actor imagines, the gestures for another body. The now deceased “real” storytellers that provided the texts for \textit{Abandon the Citizens} are not represented realistically. As explained earlier, the gestures the actor selected for each person were not always in accordance with the lines she

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{78} Johnston, “Metaphor and Metonymy,” 16-17.  \\
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 17.  \\
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{81} I consider Stathaki as a dramaturg in addition to her role as a writer, because of her work in researching the archive and rearranging the verbatim testimonies she selected for her play.  \\
\textsuperscript{82} Martin, \textit{Theatre of the Real}, 10.
\end{flushleft}
spoke. This strategy afforded Stathaki the opportunity to instill the magical element that she wished to see emerge from the scenes from the sheer contrast between gesture and text. While a certain degree of distancing was accomplished, the approach did not detach the stories from their tradition of storytelling on the Asia Minor Catastrophe, as Mackridge describes it. Rather, Stathaki’s confidence in her cultural competence allowed her to experiment with more options in how she “translated” her material in gesture, sound, and visual images.

The focus on the actor’s body, her voice, and the surrounding sounds undoubtedly afforded Stathaki more flexibility in presenting her work in different spaces. It is important to consider the artist’s clarification that this decision came out of necessity as much as aesthetic choice, because she was forced to adopt a kind of “poor theatre approach,” as she put it.83 The soundscape in particular helped the work find points of contact with a foreign audience, while also transfer them to a distant place.84 Marcus Cheng Chye Tan explains that sound has the potential to communicate a specificity of place that is both known and imagined, one that engages the familiar, but can also frame the experience through foreignization.85 With minimal elements, Stathaki’s work was balanced between a certain level of auditory exoticism and qualities rendered recognizable for their universal associations with war. In addition, she managed to intersperse topoi of memory through music for her Greek audiences without alienating those spectators unfamiliar with the historical narrative. The sounds employed in Abandon the Citizens generally structured the narrated experiences in three distinct times: life

---

83 Stathaki, discussion.
84 I use the term transfer here in its usual meaning in Translation Studies as a metaphor for translation. While I am conscious of the unidirectionality that the concept often implies, I find that it is fitting the Greek paradigm within which I work, as I explained in the introduction.
before the war, the anxiety and fear during the flight, and the memory that conflates the first two. I will describe these three phases with examples of the soundscape heard in the production.

The play begins with a waltz that colors the narrative of a peaceful life in accord with the Westernization associated with the rich classes of pre-conflict Smyrna. The memory of the abundant land is emphasized here with the inclusion of cultural features that were also lost in the refugee experience - after the crossing, the refugees were forever associated with Eastern elements. This previous life was suddenly disrupted by amplified sounds of whispers, rumors of war paired with threatening drum sounds that at times sounded almost like the heartbeat of a frightened body. In Kun’s description of this border noise, the production in a way recalled “the sound of political geography telling its own stories about place, nation, and belonging, stories that must be listened to in order to be believed.”  

This middle period of the sonic narrative was also enhanced by unidentified Balkan singing in the form of prayer, not Greek, and thus further exoticized the soundscape for Greek and non-Greek audiences alike. Towards the end, it was music that crystalized contact zones among the performer and her audience, and the particular moment in Greek history with an immigrant Greek American identity. In the scene that described a visit to the lost homelands many years after her family left, the narrator found Muslim exchangeables who had inhabited the abandoned homes since, and together they shared traditional songs of the area. Finally, the song that concluded the performance is an amanes recorded in 1918 in the United States.  

longing, quite like the Portuguese *fado*, with distinct oriental elements.\(^88\) Improvisation is an important aspect, since lyrics usually consist of only one or two lines of verse, while the song can last over two minutes. The voice of Marika Papagika, a migrant artist from Smyrna, framed the experience emotionally with a sound that has become absolutely connected to the refugee experience after 1922. In the recording, Papagika sings “Hey there, Smyrna!” This is a standard feature in the *rebetiko*: at the end of the song, in improvisatory mode, a person is hailed as a way of bestowing honor or praise. In this case it is the city --or better yet, the memory of it-- that received the honorific. Smyrna may have not been a lost homeland for the Greeks yet, but it certainly was for the migrant singer. The song and its recording assumed iconic status after 1922, as part of a genre developed by Asia Minor refugees that was almost always sad and nostalgic. Stathaki’s use of the song “Minore from Smyrna” reinforced the connection between the specific moment in Greek history and the migrant Greek-American identity historically.

The three phases of the play, more discernible in the soundscape of the production rather than in any other element, seamlessly followed a chronological narrative that concluded in an eternal theme forever associated with the memory of Asia Minor. Music in the play served the idea that Asia Minor is a place “that can be seen and experienced only if it is heard,”\(^89\) as Kun puts it. The final song in particular with its oriental music produced in the West, like many other music genres, imagined the potential of a peaceful co-existence. Aural utopian formations are,

\(^{88}\) The *rebetiko*, one of the most distinct and celebrated popular Greek genres has developed a “Smyrnaic period” in 1923-1932. See: Stathis Gauntlett, “Between Orientalism and Occidentalism: The Contribution of Asia Minor Refugees to Greek Popular Song, and its Reception,” in *Crossing the Aegean*, ed. Renée Hirschon (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 248. The influx of the refugees and their tastes are obvious influences. The word *amanes* is connected to the Turkish exclamatory *aman* for pain or fear that is also used in Greek. Gauntlett provides Leigh-Fermor’s definition of the *amanes*, as “wailing, nasal, rather melancholy melopees in oriental minor mode.” Ibid., 252.

\(^{89}\) Kun, *Audiotopia*, 3.
for Kun, “identificatory ‘contact zones.’ They are both sonic and social spaces where disparate identity-formations, cultures, and geographies historically charted separately, are allowed to interact with each other as well as enter into relationships whose consequences for cultural identification are never predetermined.” In this configuration, particularly because of its hybridity, music indeed enabled contact beyond the cultures directly involved in the narrative. Kun’s assertion privileges music as a site of investigation for the mixing and unmixing that national identities impose on cultures. The unmixing of populations in Asia Minor through the formation of two distinct nations could not take effect in the music that the region produced and continues to produce. Music can be an ideal medium of expressing the nostalgia experienced in migration. In Abandon the Citizens, this function was instrumental in the artist’s goals of portraying longing and community for diverse levels of cultural knowledge. Despite its very specific traits, the music in Abandon the Citizens was one of the primary modes of deterritorialization of the historical events the play portrayed.

In concluding my analysis of the elements that helped the performer create bridges between a past event and contemporary audiences, I return to my experience as a spectator. Seeing Abandon the Citizens was not one of these instances where you leave the show affirming the assumptions you absorbed while growing up. The rearrangement and framing of this material did not follow the established national narrative. And while it did not upset those with a more Greek-sided view of the “facts,” it gradually introduced subversive elements that questioned assumptions of official historiography. In this sense it was most effective in teaching something new to Greek and non-Greek audiences alike. The paradox with Abandon the Citizens is that in its adherence to the traditions of telling the Asia Minor trauma (the mythologized land, iconic

---

91 Kun, Audiotopia, 10-11.
phrases, and music), the work turned these conventions on their head, so to speak. The here-and-now of the performance provided ways into this material that did not rely on collective memory. Because audiences with varying degrees of familiarity with the events could identify with the stories in the play, memory -- the ultimate device by which to honor this historical trauma in a Greek context -- was simply not the central tool of identification. In other words, the national narrative was deprived of its most valued asset: the idea that the Asia Minor Catastrophe is a past that can only belong to Greeks and that the memory of it is part of their particular national and ethnic identity. Stathaki promoted cultural communication in translational terms, which developed into its own historiographic approach, beyond national identity and history. In the previous sections I provided examples of how the translation and the performance of the play sought to renew the associations with the 1922 events for Greek-speaking audiences, and how it managed to communicate a wider message to non-Greek speakers. In the following section I focus on how Stathaki’s play partakes of the evident trend to revisit Greek history under the pressure of the European crisis.

**Disturbing the Archive**

As seen in the introductory chapter, the uses of the past during the first phases of the Eurozone crisis took different forms in Greece and abroad, but in both contexts the past was prominently positioned. This becomes evident when considering representations of Greece abroad. Even for an event as current as the crisis, Greece’s contemporary identity still depends on its classical image. The international media, fixated on a very specific Greek past, elaborated visually on the disappointing descendants of a glorious civilization. Images of ruined monuments and statues digitally manipulated into offensive gestures may have been experienced as a shameful reminder of the country’s inadequacies, but indigenous views on Greek culture
bypassed the classical past and focused instead on a more recent and largely repressed history. Criticism coming from inside the country mainly sought to make sense of how the crisis happened, how it related to political decisions since the country’s independent status in 1828, and particularly how the current dramatic events compared to other major historical moments. Because the crisis was immediately understood as a rupture in recent history, the idea that previous events might be comparable to current fiscal troubles was as much a critique of fast conclusions as it was a form of consolation. A cautiously optimistic message seems to underlie comparisons to the past: if Greece survived the Asia Minor Catastrophe and relocation of 1,700,000 refugees, perhaps it can bounce back from its current problems.

In alignment with Papanikolaou’s point on the disturbed archive, in the cultural sphere the crisis is not necessarily a rupture or a break with the past, but a projection and promotion of the past, as the example of Abandon the Citizens demonstrates. The retrospective mode, already in place in Greek thought, is now used in a subversive manner. As seen above, especially in communicating beyond national borders, a rejection of the past is not even thinkable, since Greece can only have a presence when it is considered the museum of classical culture. Only a calculated attack on this continuity, as Papanikolaou proposes, can have an impact. Translation can disrupt continuities and narratives, while encouraging other ways to relate to historical events. In its capacity to stage a new outlook onto the past for foreign audiences, translation provides an ideal tool for Papanikolaou’s archival disruption. Translation from Modern Greek into English during the crisis brings to the foreground unknown histories that have the potential to undermine the established notions of Greece as the origin of the West. In this view, translation casts a novel historiographical look onto past events with a goal to subvert established notions about Greece abroad.
The relationship between translation and historiography brings to the fore intriguing questions on how the divide between past and present operates in the theatre. As Antonis Liakos explains, historiographical practice has been based on the premise that the past becomes history once it is removed from the present. David Johnston argues that “translation may be seen as one of the most vivid forms of re-creative historiographical discourse,” because it encourages emotional and cognitive connections between the represented past and the spectators’ present, while at the same time acknowledging the differences between the two. In this capacity, translation is an inherently performative historiography, which offers alternative ways of considering the past and of “locating it.” As seen in the examples discussed in the chapter, *Abandon the Citizens* managed to restructure a specific historical past by making connections to the spectators’ present. The artist preserved the past quality of the survivors’ testimonies, but also effectively worked to uncover those elements that best illustrated the timelessness of the experience of a community’s uprooting. In addition, and particularly for Greek-speaking audiences, the translational mode of the work reconsidered a national past in order to reawaken a cultural memory of belonging, following the metakénosis model, which relied on the rediscovery and re-familiarization with a forgotten past for the formation of a contemporary identity. The play spotlighted the largely repressed memory that Greece was once part of the Ottoman Empire. What is more, the country had claims to Ottoman territory as late as the 1920s. The fluidity of borders in the Aegean region, as well as those between past and present, was one of the play’s central messages. The performance of *Abandon the Citizens*, far from separating that historical past from the present, in fact actively encouraged connections and identifications.

---

92 Antonis Liakos, “Has the Crisis Changed Greeks’ Perceptions of Their Past?” (lecture, New York University, November 20, 2014).
94 Ibid., 10-11.
Furthermore, Antonis Liakos in a recent article sets up an argument on the relationship between translation and historiography, where historiographical processes, by their strong comparative character, can be explained in translational terms.\textsuperscript{95} In his conclusion he describes historiography as a language of communication, and a way to “translate your experience.”\textsuperscript{96} The metaphorical use of translation here carries important implications for the connection of historiography with translation. First, the use of the metaphor is indicative of the interrelation and interchangeability of tools from both disciplines in making sense of the past. Second, there is a shared interest in promoting a consciousness of mediation in historiography that has been the axis of translation theory since Lawrence Venuti’s concept of visibility. Liakos’s elaborate body of work in historiographical method explains national historiographies as a way of conforming to and resisting the canon of Western historiography.\textsuperscript{97} The significant work in Translation Studies on the concept of canons can enrich the terminology for both disciplines. Liakos’s position that “our traumas return as history” provides another way to assess a performance such as Abandon the Citizens, which retells a historical trauma on stage.\textsuperscript{98} If history writing is the answer to this “trauma,” I can see theatrical representations as a healing process, since the affective aspects of the experience, as Jill Dolan relates, can and do have transformative effects.\textsuperscript{99} The additional interpretative layer that translation brings to these histories is that the historiographical approach


\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{97} As seen in the introduction, Liakos has argued on the trauma that Western models of historiography have inflicted on peripheral national cultures. More recently, the Greek crisis is seen as a failure to reach modernity in Western terms. See Antonis Liakos and Hara Kouki, “Narrating the Story of a Failed National Transition: Discourses on the Greek Crisis 2010-2014,” *Historein* 15, no. 1 (2015): 49-61.


that they propose does not only concern a local audience, but also spectators who do not necessarily have previously conceived notions of the past in question, and that certainly do not share in the mechanics of national memory. In a similar mode, *Abandon the Citizens* widens the scope of the Greek trauma and consequently subverts its nationalist agenda. The production’s timing compels me to see its accomplishments under the light of the fiscal and the more recent refugee crises.

The Greek crisis framed *Abandon the Citizens* in some obvious and some less visible ways. However, Stathaki did not consider the Eurozone crisis an important filter for the reception of her work.\(^{100}\) She believed that New York City audiences were not as knowledgeable or as interested in the Greek economy.\(^{101}\) In fact, she found the historical topic to be of more interest to them, since it is a major issue for the areas involved, but largely unknown on this side of the Atlantic. From the artist’s perspective, the 1922 events provided a platform from which to examine the position of innocent victims of international politics, cruel diplomacy, and national calculation.\(^{102}\) Indeed, the play’s main framing devices, such as the production venues and the exotic element of the myth of Asia Minor enhanced by the soundscape of the performance, distanced the work from a Greek crisis frame. However, whether consciously or unconsciously, *Abandon the Citizens* participated in the wave of recent Greek cultural production that has openly questioned national coherence, as well as Greece’s position in the context of its international relations. Similar inquiries became the epitome of the crisis as it was experienced in Greece. It is therefore hard to resist enlisting *Abandon the Citizens* among the cultural statements that the crisis produced. As the

\(^{100}\) Stathaki, discussion.  
\(^{101}\) Ibid.  
\(^{102}\) Ibid.
fiscal crisis gives way to a more consciously pan-European identity crisis, the play’s focus on the refugee experience further implicates it as an expression of critique of current international politics.

Conclusion

In this chapter I studied Stathaki’s methods in translating an important historical moment in the Greek twentieth century for foreign audiences and Greeks of the diaspora. I briefly looked at the historical background and the sources of oral testimonies so as to establish the position of the event dramatized in the play in the Greek national narrative. My approach drew from the concept of “cultural translation” and I problematized its application to include the linguistic processes that take place in a heterolinguial performance such as Abandon the Citizens. I analyzed the supertitles as a form and their particular application in this performance where they were integrated with the gestural creation of the actor. The production emphasized the sensory experience of linguistic variety, which was complemented by Stathaki’s mise en scène, her performance, and the soundscape she created for the production. The combination of all these expressive tools secured a successful engagement with the historical material and an impactful communication between the play and its audience.

Stathaki’s work re-familiarized her Greek spectators with an aspect of their history, in a way similar to the process that metakénosis promoted, and made known this Eastern past to her foreign audience. Metakénosis described the direction of cultural transmission from West to East, from what was assumed to be a progressive Western Europe to backward Greece. Even though the concept implied that modern Greek culture was inferior, this was only because of the Greeks’ state under Ottoman rule. Once liberated, at least intellectually, Greeks could reclaim their ancestral glory. In its essence, the concept presupposed confidence in Greek culture because
what helped Europeans advance were Greeks’ own ancient achievements. Therefore, Greeks had to re-familiarize themselves with their own past in order to reclaim that heritage and reach the Europeans’ level of civilization. *Abandon the Citizens* revisited a historical moment where the direction of cultural exchange looked to the East, as it was expressed in the Grand Idea, the concept that caused the suffering portrayed in the play. The Grand Idea was the more politically minded eastward looking version of metakénosis: the irredentist ideology of taking “back” Ottoman territory and uniting all ethnic Greek populations. However, while metakénosis did not pose any territorial claims, the Grand Idea in its expression in the Asia Minor expedition moved from the conceptual sphere to the actuality of World War I. The tragic consequences of the military defeat that resulted in a tremendous refugee crisis was the decisive moment when Greeks ceased to envision their country’s expansion to the East and once more firmly fixed their gaze to Western Europe.

Stathaki’s choice to return to this moment and reinstate the importance of an Eastern past that the refugees brought with them came at a critical moment when Greeks were revisiting their recent history as a result of an identity crisis. The artist, however, was not concerned with the usual function of the Greek national narrative: she did not present her material in a way that would reinforce the feeling of the lost homeland that ought to be reclaimed. Instead, she brought that history under new light as a shared memory among the peoples in the region. Metakénosis encouraged in the Greeks the sense of belonging to Europe and a certain confidence in their own past. In the new history that Stathaki’s work promoted, the confidence must now come from a sense of belonging to the wider Middle Eastern region.

More recently, the current Syrian refugee crisis provides Stathaki’s work with a lasting potential for political critique that exceeds its historical scope. Renée Hirschon’s summary of the
diplomatic developments that settled the population exchange following the 1922 events emphasizes the context in which these discussions took place, and consequently foregrounds contemporary concerns regarding the policies in place. Hirschon reminds the readers that the concept of “individual human rights,” and rights of minorities in particular, was not “an articulated value” until after the Second World War. The critical perspective to past diplomacy forces the reevaluation of a current position. How do we understand refugees’ rights today? And in the Aegean region in particular, how do other political and territorial considerations impact humanitarian aid? At the moment Greece and Turkey are obliged to collaborate under the supervision of the European Union, NATO, and international public opinion. The current enormous refugee and migrant wave cannot but build on previous relations between the two countries. In addition, the delay and inaction on the part of the EU bring to mind the seemingly neutral position France and Britain held during the events portrayed in Abandon the Citizens. While their involvement in territorial demands was decisive, their share in humanitarian aid remained minimal. The reconsideration of the 1922 events today may draw from diverse needs and desires to engage with the historical material. However, the stories’ powerful comparative element cannot but effectuate a critique of past and current political decisions, particularly seen as part of a generalized revisiting of political history during the Greek crisis.

In the next chapter I further investigate the retrospective mode in Greek cultural production and the performance of recent Greek history on stage through another performance with supertitles, which, however, was not as successful in integrating its translation as part of the creative process. For my examination I build on my analysis of extralinguistic elements of the

---

103 Renée Hirschon, Crossing the Aegean, 7.
performance that drive the translation forward, as seen in the case study in this chapter, and study them along the text translation that developed under different circumstances in the next chapter.
Chapter 3
“The Greek Twentieth Century with Supertitles: Sons and Daughters”

Introduction

In January 2015, amidst a profound financial and social crisis, the Greeks elected an anti-austerity radical left government. The motto “Left for the first time” not only promised a new beginning, but also drove home a historical lesson: whether the electoral result marked the fruition of the spirit of Mai 68, or reclaimed the territory lost since the Left’s defeat in the Greek Civil War in 1949, it was largely received as a message from the past. The past is great consolation in times of crisis. This is true especially for communities and social groups that see their shared identity under threat. The import of the backward glance in search of connecting elements is heightened in cultures that build their existence around “nostalgia for a past that defines a cultural high point,” such as the case of Greece.1 However, times of crisis can also fuel subversive discussions of history in an attempt to put the present in a larger context. This chapter examines how the historical introspection that appeared with the Greek crisis is negotiated in Sons and Daughters, an example of testimony theatre that sought to underline the homogeneity of its Greek audience during a profound social, political, and economic crisis. The play engaged with the conflict between personal and national identity at all stages of its creation and reception. Most importantly, in its career abroad, Sons and Daughters did not only pose the question of community to its Greek audiences, but also attempted to perform this tension beyond national borders. Translation in the play operated on many levels and each constituted an attempt to

rewrite recent Greek history for domestic and foreign audiences. In a contemporary take on the principles of metakénosis, the play’s translation employed select aspects of the Greek past in a process of cultural self-representation. The Greek crisis, while not a direct reference in the play, was an important frame in its creation and reception, and a decisive factor in its communication with audiences internationally. In this capacity the work is a particularly suitable example of archive disruption, a dominant mode of cultural production during the troubled times of the crisis.

*Sons and Daughters, a Play on the Quest of Happiness* (Γιοι και κόρες, μια παράσταση για την αναζήτηση της ευτυχίας in the original) was written by Yannis Kalavrianos. His company, Sforaris, first produced it in 2012. After a successful run in Northern Greece, it was staged in Athens and then toured all over the country, where performances were frequently sold out. The production in Greek, with supertitles when necessary, also travelled to Cyprus, Italy, and Bosnia Herzegovina. In October 2015 it was performed in a staged reading in Madrid in Spanish translation, as part of a tribute to contemporary Greek playwriting. In June 2016 it was newly produced in Zurich in Greek with German supertitles. The play’s most recent staging in Greek with English supertitles took place in the spring of 2016 in New York. The Greek script of *Sons and Daughters* was published in 2012 and reprinted in 2013. It has since been produced widely across Greece in university and community theatres and in secondary schools. During its significant career, *Sons and Daughters* was awarded the prestigious Karolos Koun national prize for best new play in Greece in December 2014 and the International Prize Il Teatro Nudo di Teresa Pomodoro in 2015 for its performances in Udine.

The receiving context for Kalavrianos’s play in Greece was a theatrical landscape of an extreme economic crisis and widespread inconsistencies. Despite the shocking rates of
unemployment in the six years of continuous austerity, theatre in Greece remains surprisingly rich and varied, with a large number of people maintaining professional activity in a growing field. But it is important here to define “growth” and activity in the current circumstances. The extreme conditions have changed admission prices and, consequently, the standards of acceptable professional practice. Overwhelming unemployment pushed theatres to operate on the basis of steep decreases in admission, and in some cases through voluntary contributions, as well as subscription packages that put the price of a show as low as one euro. The result are full auditoria and an involved public, often faced with tangible ways to ponder the relationship between art and politics. At the same time, these practices encourage the maintaining of a large number of unpaid collaborators, even in more traditional settings. The few artists that are paid are forced to make do without any benefits once associated with labor.


3 By Greek law, about a third of wages is withheld for health insurance and pension contributions, which are mandatory in all kinds of work. Of this amount, one third is paid by the worker and two thirds by the employer, in most cases. Explanatory tables are provided on the Labor Ministry’s website (in Greek): “The Greek System of Social Security,” Ministry of Labor, accessed September 4, 2016, http://www.ggka.gr/asfalistiko_main.htm. In flexible work conditions, such as the ones in the theatre, where artists are often considered self-employed, these benefits must be included in the individual payment amounts so that artist-collaborators can submit payments to their social security chapter. This is rarely the case in the current circumstances.
theatre under the extreme conditions of a world financial crisis is to be “willing to self-exploit,” as Claire Bishop puts it. Granted, the system largely offers substantial opportunities for artists’ collectives to self-regulate and to maintain full control over their processes and products. But Bishop’s definition of the contemporary artist as “the role model for the flexible, mobile, non-specialised labourer,” unfortunately seems particularly on point in the Greek case. *Sons and Daughters* shares many of the traits of collaborative work from the moment of its inception to its final form. Because of the production’s sustained presence on the Greek stage during four politically turbulent years, it can also serve as a case study for performance practices under the crisis.

As seen in the previous chapters, one critical response to the crisis has been the search for historical equivalences. The most recent example of this “translation” in history compares the current refugee crisis to the Asia Minor refugee wave of 1922, as seen in Chapter 2. During the crisis the recent past has been employed in metaphors, allegories, and direct references to political history in the media. In *Sons and Daughters*, the past as analogous to the present is not only found in the subject matter of the stories but serves as a dominant dramaturgical mode. If, as Antonis Liakos argues, historiography can provide a way to “translate your experience” for future generations, it is worth looking into strategies of translation as a means of writing history, and Kalavrianos’s play provides several opportunities to do this.

The text of *Sons and Daughters* was the result of an elaborate oral-historical process. The five members of Sforaris Theatre Company all worked together to conduct some eighty-five

---

6 Ibid., 12.
interviews with elderly Greeks from all over the country. The narratives were then intertwined and reworked into scenes that would preserve the interviewees’ anonymity. The company based their selection on each story’s relevance to major historical events and political developments, as they were formed in the background of the contributors’ subjective memories. One example of comparison between past and present was the focus on the elderly interviewees’ stories through their words, while young actors represented their physical presence. The coexistence of two generations onstage further supported the idea of continuity in historical narrative. While the play’s themes focused on the personal aspect of each story, when put together in the “official” chronological order, the scenes formed a more collective interpretation of recent history. In this well-thought-out creative process, Sons and Daughters managed to engage with personal and collective memories during a time where the tension between the two is central to discussions of Greek identity.

In the following pages I will illustrate how the past was used to instill knowledge and provide consolation about the present but also how comparison functions as a structural element in the development of the play. I focus on the play’s engagement with a national narrative and its subversion with the help of Dimitris Papanikolaou’s concept of the disturbed archive, which studies the evident trend in Greek culture “to performatively disturb” narratives of historical continuity with the opportunity of the crisis. For Papanikolaou the crisis itself is the “very point from which the past should be reviewed, revisited, re-collated, reassembled and reassessed, both

---

in political and in identitarian terms.”

Far from encouraging a break with the past, the crisis in fact brings to the foreground moments of Greek history that urgently require reevaluation. The alternative historiography proposed in Sons and Daughters emphasized the causal relationship between national and personal histories and allowed underrepresented voices to express that connection. By privileging personal history while constantly keeping the official history in view, Sons and Daughters participated in the archival disturbance that has been largely observed during the crisis. However, while the juxtaposition of past and present resonated with the Greek audience, those local concerns also created certain challenges in translation. I am particularly interested in how the play’s dramaturgy handled the conscious or projected “mission” of representing Greekness, especially during the politically and socially charged time in which the play was performed. Ultimately, Sons and Daughters, in its presence outside Greece, is a model that highlights how the unfamiliar, newly experienced qualities expressed in contemporary Greek theatre and an evident tendency for introversion might be handled in translation. Once more, the play’s translation functions as a historiographical approach, by obscuring certain references while promoting others.

For my examination I use translation in its broader sense, since the play was not actually translated into English as an independent text, but rather was performed in Greek with supertitles in several international stagings. The supertitles created with the occasion of the production’s performances outside Greece heavily relied on the non-verbal elements that could move the translation process forward, and therefore my examination of translation also concerns dramaturgical choices. This analysis is based on my methodological approach that examines the

---

original context and the processes that followed in order to elucidate the changes that take place with the translation. My assessment is informed by my own experience of seeing the play, as well as from reviews that appeared in the Greek press. I also support a substantial part of my commentary on information I obtained through interviews with the writer and director of Sforaris, Yannis Kalavrianos, as well as the translator (Eleni Drivas) and director (Lyto Triantafyllidou) of the US production.

The chapter is organized in four sections. After this first introductory section, in the second section I analyze the text and its translational potential in its process of creation. I examine the stories that were selected from the interviews and their references to major historical events, and I provide some brief historical information in order to put the stories-scenes in context with current affairs. In addition, I study Kalavrianos’s dramaturgical choices, especially with regards to said selection and their recreation into scenes, and consequent exclusion of other cases. Because the play initially developed as a devised piece, the text was inextricably linked to its trajectory on stage. It is indicative that the members of the company who worked on the interviews were largely the ones to perform the stories in the subsequent versions. I am interested in the development of the production in its Greek tour over four years, and a gradually more conscious engagement with the ongoing crisis. The devised nature of the work also had important implications for its translation for supertitles, the topic of the third section, where I focus on the choices made by the anonymous translator. The difficulties of transferring the elements that resonated with the local audiences are studied along with what little promotional material was made available with the opportunity of the play’s participation in international

---

10 The translator of the initial supertitles that were used for the Sforaris production in its appearances in Italy and Bosnia Herzegovina remains anonymous. Eleni Drivas created a new translation for the play’s production in New York City in April and May 2016.
festivals. Finally, in the fourth section, I turn to the play’s most recent version for its production in New York in April 2016. Drivas’s newly translated text for the supertitles was supplemented by monologues in English. I study the translation choices, the additions to the text, and their reception by the Greek-American community. Overall, Sons and Daughters can be seen as a work in progress. While there is a specific text that circulates as a book, the play’s engagement with recent Greek history can take many forms during turbulent times. The time span of the play’s trajectory is marked not only by profound measures of austerity but also by a tremendous identity crisis in Greek culture. My analysis of the play’s trajectory in Greece and its career abroad contributes to my dissertation’s overall argument that translation can promote an alternative historiography that challenges national narratives and can communicate the crisis to a wider audience.

The Text and Its Translational Potential

In this section I focus on Sons and Daughters and the trajectory of its creation for its Greek audiences in order to illustrate how its dramaturgy developed in ways that enabled the play’s translational potential. Building on the previous chapters and further exploring the relationship between translation and historiography in the Greek context, such as metakénosis as a process of selection from past events as a means of self-representation, first I examine the narrated accounts that were included in the text, and then their performance. The transfer of personal testimonies onto the stage constituted a form of translation between genres. The play’s topic and the extended interviews that enabled its development represented a novel approach to theatre-making in Greece. Here I juxtapose elements of the scenes with background information
on the historical events they portray and how the selection of the stories functioned as a translation of historical material into a new medium in the frame of the crisis.

The initial creative process of the play is summarized in the published book’s jacket: “Can you remember the story that changed your life? This was the question posed by the production’s collaborators to elderly people from all over Greece and Cyprus. From the collected stories, we chose the ones that developed parallel to well-known historical events and span the last hundred years of living in Greece.” The relatively straightforward description may obscure the significant tension between the personal interpretation of historical events in the interviewees’ lives and the construction of a national history with which the play engaged. In my analysis I first provide some information on the kinds of events that were included, and then I examine how individual identities are negotiated in the selection of scenes. I argue that the generalized preoccupation and comparison with the past that emerged in Greek culture during the years of the crisis have created tensions between personal history and identity and their sometimes forced political readings, especially in the theatre.

*Sons and Daughters* begins with a short scene that demonstrates the interview process: some of the five actors play themselves interviewing their subjects, while the rest of the team embody the elderly interviewees. After this introduction, the twelve scenes that follow are structured around a chronological narrative according to the historical events that develop in the background. The events appearing in the play go as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century, with the story of a Greek immigrant to the United States and the fate of his family members who stayed behind. After this long narrative that traces Greek history up to the end of the Second World War, five more stories unfold from during the War, followed by two accounts

---

from the Greek Civil War (1944-1949), each chosen to represent the two opposing sides of the Left and the Right.\textsuperscript{12} Up to this point, about halfway through the play, the prevailing tone is rather dark. This changes suddenly with the seventh scene, a memory from the 1950s, which focuses on the soccer madness of the era and a love story that revolves around a match. From that point on, the scenes all exhibit a more conscious engagement with the theme of love -- which is not entirely absent from the first half of the play but is somewhat obscured by the tragic historical events. The expulsion of Greeks from Egypt in the 1950s and 60s, the erection of the Berlin Wall, the Greek junta of 1967-1974, the election of 1981, and the 2004 Athens Olympics: all create a somewhat faint background to the protagonists’ love stories that are sometimes dramatic and other times humorous. The play ends with some thoughts on the nature of love.

As the playwright Yannis Kalavrianos frequently mentions in interviews, the initial creation of \textit{Sons and Daughters} took place in two stages: first, the five members of the company collaborated in the interviews; then Kalavrianos rewrote the material to transfer the oral testimonies to a dramatic medium. The process describes a form of collaboration not only among the artists, but also among the people who volunteered their personal histories. Indeed, after the first run of performances, several spectators who saw the production contacted Kalavrianos and submitted more stories to his compilation. Two different versions of the text were published, in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The latter reflected some of the additions that took place after the production’s tour in Greece.\textsuperscript{13} Both editions include an appendix with even more stories that were performed in previous versions. As the playwright explained, the work developed in its

\textsuperscript{12} In the most recent published version only two of the WWII stories remain, while another story was added from the 1953 earthquake in the island of Cephalonia. Kalavrianos, \textit{Sons and Daughters} (Athens: Sokoli-Kouledakis, 2013), 20-27.

\textsuperscript{13} The writer shared another working draft, an unpublished manuscript. In the communication he clarified that it was the version that would be used for performances in 2013. Yannis Kalavrianos, email message to author, March 10, 2013.
different performances.\footnote{Yannis Kalavrianos, Facebook message to author, July 24\textsuperscript{th} 2016.} Kalavrianos notably stated that he considers the text a “living organism” that will inevitably change just like the live people who perform the text.

I always treat performances like living organisms, as I do for the texts used in them. We gathered new material, saw what didn’t work in the dramaturgy in the first version, and we had the time and energy to rewrite the second version specifically suited to the Greek Festival performance space, where the scale was completely different. If you know the space you will perform in and your performers, you can make different choices in the text. We followed a similar process for the third version in the Neos Kosmos Theatre.\footnote{Ibid. The performances in the Neos Kosmos Theatre (Theatre of a New World) took place from October 2013 to April 2014.}

The company’s expressed need to adapt the play according to each performance space provides an interesting insight into how Sons and Daughters balanced its different components as a play in the narrative form. The text was obviously considered a malleable part of the production. The same cannot be said about its translation in supertitles, which remained unchanged for each performance abroad, an issue analyzed in the next section.

While each scene seems to follow a coherent personal story, Kalavrianos explained that he reworked several of the eighty-five interviews together.\footnote{Yannis Kalavrianos, “Σηµείωµα του Σκηνοθέτη,” [Director’s Note] vii.} As he makes clear in his director’s note, all stories were “real.”\footnote{Ibid.} However, one person’s narrative was used as the center of each scene, and details from other testimonies from around the same time were added to create a new narrative unit that would protect the interviewees’ anonymity.\footnote{Ibid.} The names for some scenes are assigned according to where the interviews took place, while others bear more literary titles that
draw from their subjects. As Kalavrianos also notes, he decided to go beyond the shocking elements in some stories and to focus instead on those testimonies that would facilitate audience identification based on their relevance to major historical events.¹⁹

The references to Greek history are evidently subjective, as Kalavrianos claims, because they were recorded as remembered by the people who experienced them. The goal of the production, however, was not to create an official record but to “transfer [these experiences] onto the stage as they happened.”²⁰ Judging from this statement, the writer’s goals seem to have been to create a hybrid that was as much documentary as it was fiction but that would certainly engage with recent Greek history. In its individual scenes, the play overwhelmingly promoted the personal over the collective. The play’s publicity material also encouraged comparisons between past and present. In June 2012, at the Greek Festival of Athens and Epidaurus website, the play was framed as a question of “What can make people happy today?”²¹ The question does not emphasize the historical aspect but instead sets forth a central message that the play was about people’s personal lives. Even though personal history was prioritized in the portrayal, the writer’s selection and arrangement of the scenes together in chronological order assumed a wider scope than a fictional creation: the play’s dominant pattern as a whole was a version of national history by unofficial and uncredited sources. The previously unrecorded history that Sons and Daughters brought to the stage enabled the personal memories of older generations to serve as a tool through which to read official history.

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid. In the original: “Ζητούμενό μας, όμως, δεν ήταν η επιστημονική καταγραφή, αλλά η αυτούσια μεταφορά τους.”
The tension between personal and national perspectives on history has not only been the object of this specific play but also reflects a widespread cultural trend during the Greek crisis. According to Papanikolaou, the contemporary crisis is not the first instance in which Greeks have reconsidered their past. He argues that postmodernism in Greek culture had already made its mark in upsetting certain given truths, particularly regarding national history. However, after 2008 the evident trend in revisiting the past according to Papanikolaou set the crisis as the filter through which to review the past. This is novel in Greek culture, and, indeed, in Modern Greek studies. For the first time a series of events caused by the recession -- and therefore experienced as having a negative impact on culture – had become the point of reference for reading that culture. Antonis Liakos and Hara Kouki, while agreeing that the return to the historical past is an effect of the crisis, position this retrospective focus differently and explain that Greek society in crisis revisited its recent past in order to understand its current issues. In this process, they write, a new paradigm emerged: “A product of media representations, business and elite interests and party politics, cultural traditions, national stereotypes but also international developments, popular dreams, anxieties and fears, this revisiting of the past has produced new historical meanings and vocabularies of its own.” A form of this new vocabulary can be observed in the theatre. Marilena Zaroulia, for example, explains that the performances developed during the crisis took up the theme of nation “in a much more direct, pluralistic,” and “chaotic manner.” The archival disturbance represents an expanded notion of history that includes personal histories such as those that take the stage in Kalavrianos’s play.

---

22 Papanikolaou, “Archive Trouble.”
23 Ibid.
25 Marilena Zaroulia, “Greece Still Remains: Performing Crisis, Nostalgia and Willfulness,”
The many historical events that form the background of *Sons and Daughters* were interestingly the past events that also resurfaced in the current social and financial crisis. A dominant theme in the play is the scarcity of money. In several stories this appears as a result of war, such as the hunger that followed the Axis occupation during World War II. Another recurrent image is that of loss or devaluation of money. The “characters” in the play are seen to constantly adapt to new financial challenges, quite similarly to the production’s contemporary spectators. Money and its value, the anxiety of having it in the “present” of each story or for the future, are constantly referred to throughout *Sons and Daughters*. The interviewees’ preoccupation with finances is evident as it was reworked into the text and made a vivid emotional impression on the audience, especially since the production coincided with a time when monetary references and financial solutions for national debt were omnipresent in all forms of media. Concepts that were thus far only known to financial experts very quickly became everyday topics for all brackets of the population. This undue financial education in the “era of financialization, in which money has become increasingly self-referential,” 26 inevitably impacts the performance text, which provides an opportunity to question those values historically. It is telling that the play begins with a story narrated by an elder person interviewed about a recent crime that follows a familiar pattern. Two robbers pretend to have business with his son. They ask to be compensated for some purchase and follow the old man into his own home, where they rob him of his pension. 27 The scene and similar material in the play created the potential for

---

27 Kalavrianos, *Sons and Daughters*, 3.
direct identification with a local audience, while at the same time descriptions of the financial situation in Greece could allude to global conditions of pauperization and the rise of crime.

The uncertainty and economic instability awaiting the audience outside the theatre often surfaced at other unexpected moments in the play. The storytellers’ simple human reactions to extraordinary hardships functioned as allusions to the present. One of the stories about World War II concludes with a direct reference to the younger generation: “You can’t even imagine what we’ve been through. I don’t blame you. It’s just the way you were raised; you just can’t picture this. And don’t think we were superhuman. We were children when it all started. It wasn’t normal. No, it wasn’t normal. But it happened to us.”

What could sound as a relatively banal assessment of today’s youth was in fact quite a poignant comment on the extreme conditions that today’s young people face in Greece, in the context of rates of unemployment as high as 51% in some sections of the population.

Historical events mentioned in the play, therefore, often took the form of direct comparisons between a tortured past and an ominous present. In a way, this new manner of considering history as a spectator in the theatre functioned along the lines of Liakos’s assessment of historiography as “a form of representing the past in the terms of the prevailing contemporary cultural settings,” or, as he further adds, as a way to

---

28 Interviewees’ responses on the experience of the Second World War, as they are recorded in the play. In the original: “Δεν σας περνάει από το μυαλό τι έχουμε περάσει. Δεν σας κακολογώ. Απλώς, έτσι όπως έχετε μεγαλώσει, δεν μπορείτε. Και μη νομίζετε πως εμείς ήμασταν τίποτε υπεράνθρωποι. Παιδιά όταν ξεκίνησαν όλα. Αυτά δεν είναι κανονικά πράγματα. Αυτά δεν είναι κανονικά πράγματα! Αλλά μας έτυχαν.” Kalavrianos, Sons and Daughters, 16.

“translate your experience.” Sons and Daughters offered several opportunities for inter-
generational translation.

The first full story performed, right after the initial scene of the robbery is entitled “A Brown Scarf with Yellow Flowers.” It recalls the life of an immigrant who, after being convicted for murder, flees the country. The spotlight is shared between his adventure in Athens, Georgia, and the fate of his family, back in Greece, who inherit millions after his death. The fluctuation of the family’s fate that follows their financial (and consequently social) position culminates in a dramatic ending provided by the horrific devaluation of the drachma after the war. Their dreams of buying a house and relocating to Athens, Greece, are shattered in the end. The play includes a reference to Law 18 of 1944 by Alexandros Svolos, minister of finance at the time. The law sought to stabilize the currency by devaluing it but had disastrous effects. Several members of the audience possibly became acquainted with this law by its name for the first time. Its inclusion in the play recalls an official but forgotten event and tells the unofficial story from an authoritative voice, a survivor of the adventure.

The scene, similar to the rest of the play in general, has an emotional effect focused on the personal drama played out against political and financial events. It seems to function both as a warning and as a consolation. After the war ends, and the family members regain access to their accounts, the only things they can afford with the pre-war millions are a pack of cigarettes, the scarf for the widow that gives the story its title, and some candy for the children. These objects are valuable, in the sense that they were extremely scarce during the Occupation and became accessible again only in 1945. The re-materialization of the abstract “millions” that soon lost their value has the power to produce emotional responses in the characters of the story: the

---

widow’s eyes water up at the sight of the luxury good, the scarf, and the children rejoice in the taste of candy. The meaning of the amount left to the family is recreated through their sensory experience, and Law 18 meant something very specific to them. Yet the only stable value is the family bond, a constant theme in the play. The young actors retell the story without embodying the roles, but the distance from the event is minimal for actors and audience, who live constantly under the fear of devaluation of their assets. Interest is generated not only in the aesthetic qualities of the scene and the fascinating personal drama, but also in the significance of financial history for the developments of the current crisis. The scene ends with a glimpse of the next generation’s fate: they leave for Germany as economic migrants, a choice made by many Greeks in the 1950s and 60s. This choice links two distinct moments in Greek history: the war and the emigration wave that followed. The play therefore negotiates several points of view in the exploration of the renewed interest in the Greek-German relationship during the European crisis, where Germany is seen as the gatekeeper to the European Union and its funds. The family’s drama retold on stage provided an example of historical translation into the present. However, the political undertones of the comparison between past and present in the scene were the most vulnerable in the linguistic translation process. In the translation of this material into English, the company was faced with a difficult negotiation between conveying the political, which needed more contextualization, and prioritizing the personal aspect, as I will discuss later in the chapter.

Another illustrative example of an event that has resurfaced recently is the Greek Civil War (1945-1949) that immediately followed World War II. This history appears as background to two stories in Sons and Daughters, chosen to represent both sides of the conflict. 31 The first scene follows a family whose male members were killed by the Left. The following scene tells

31 Kalavrianos, “Σημείωμα του Σκηνοθέτη” [Director’s Note], vii.
the story of a couple from two rival families, their activity in the armed Left, and their demise. Both accounts focus on love, family, and loss. However, the charged background of the conflict does not allow these testimonies to be received as personal tragedies. The heavy burden of engaging with the Civil War theatrically was evident in the play’s reception. Kalavrianos claims that it was very important to him that both scenes be included in all stagings, including those that followed by other production teams.32

The Greek Civil War is a period so systematically avoided in formal education that those who remember it, having to resort to personal accounts, often find it difficult to communicate the period’s nuances to younger generations. Tellingly, in the beginning of the play, the “characters,” representing the interviewees, are reluctant to answer any question relating to this event. December 1944 marked the defeat of the armed Left and the beginning of the Civil War. This untreated trauma resurfaced recently in the “new December events,” the riots of 2008 that followed the killing of the fifteen-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos by a policeman in central Athens. “The December events of our generation,”33 as they were recorded, directly referenced December 1944.34 While the financial crisis officially began in 2010 in Greece, with the bailout agreement, the Grigoropoulos riots mark the beginning of a social crisis and, at the same time, the radicalization of a large part of the younger population. This was the time when the Syriza party gained the momentum that allowed it to assume government in 2015.35 It is significant that the left government of Syriza was celebrated as a return to 1944, as a way of “starting over,” in

32 Yannis Kalavrianos, Skype communication with the author, May 11, 2016.
34 Ibid., 181.
envisioning what could have been if the Left had not been disarmed and later defeated in the Civil War. Images of this conflict in the play took the audience back to a time where “belonging to the west” was seen simply as an option among others.\textsuperscript{36} The historical ideologies intertwined in the play invite a political reading of the narrative. Even if the creators of \textit{Sons and Daughters} only meant to address the personal histories that were until now left untold, the relevance of the Civil War to today’s developments does not afford the play any desired detachment from the politics of then and now.

Indeed, criticism from leftist media focused on the unsuitability of Civil War material for stage portrayal, which was seen as trivializing the conflict.\textsuperscript{37} The critique concerned an early version of the work in June 2012 that was produced for the prestigious Athens and Epidaurus Festival. The critic specifically targeted the performance of the piece, which was Sforaris’s addition to that history, as well as the company’s arrangement of texts, which drew from real people’s testimonies.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[36] “Ανήκομεν στην Δύση” [We belong to the West]. The famous phrase by Konstantinos Karamanlis, prime minister of Greece continuously from the late 1950s, throughout the 1960s, and for another term after the fall of the Junta in 1974, was spoken in the context of Greece joining the European Economic Community as associate member in 1962 (documented in Alexis Papachelas, “In the West along with Everyone Else,” \textit{I Kathimerini}, March 5, 2013, accessed September 4, 2016. \url{http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite3_1_05/03/2013_485920}). The timing of this iteration is significant: according to the right-wing interests that Karamanlis represented, Greece was not to risk any political or cultural associations with the Soviet Union. Since it was first heard in the parliament, it became a constant reference in political commentary and is in frequent use in the years of the recession.

\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The dramaturgical compilation …. and the overdone “puerile” and “facetious” mise-en-scène “touched” upon our sociopolitical history only selectively, subjectively, superficially, and ultimately without drawing any meaning. The only goal seems to be to fascinate spectators with a mindless and noisy scenic “game,” to which the actors Anna Elefanti, Maria Koskina, Alexia Beziki, Konstantinos Dellas, and Yiorgos Papapavlou submit all their physical and expressional faculties.\(^{38}\)

The virulent attack on playfulness as noise seems to envision a motionless delivery as the ideal rendition of narrated stories – especially if these stories are \textit{true}. The antitheatricality implied here points to the expectations for testimonies to be transferred onto the stage with as little interference as possible. The above rather harsh critique of the play tellingly considers the text and its staging as inextricably linked and does not separate Kalavrianos’s text and his mise-en-scène.

\textit{Sons and Daughters} was initially conceived as a specific performance and could not be differentiated from its staging, similarly to how Joseph Danan describes “the paradigm of theatre as ‘art in two steps,’” that is, the separate processes of writing a theatre text, and then putting it on stage.\(^{39}\) Instead, Kalavrianos’s work as writer developed along with his collaborators’ creation of the characters, and the company together decided on the dramaturgical structure. The

\(^{38}\) Quotation marks in the original. Thymeli, “Δοκιμές νέων σκηνοθετών.” In the original: “… η παρατραβηγμένα ‘νεάζουσα’ και ‘παιγνιώδης’ σκηνοθεσία επιλεκτικά, υποκειμενικά, απλουστευτικά, ξώπετσα και τελικώς ανούσια ‘αγγίζουν’ την πολιτικοκοινωνική μας ιστορία. Μόνος στόχος μοιάζει να είναι ο εντυπωσιασμός των θεατών με ένα ανέμελα φασαριόζικο, σκηνικό ‘παέγνιο’ στο οποίο καταθέτουν όλες τις σωματικές και εκφραστικές δυνάμεις τους οι ηθοποιοί…”

performers’ work then became the prime semiotic and communicative – and therefore, also translational – tool in the play’s attempts to reach its audiences.

The tension between personal and national history was also evident in the selection process. While the writer often explained that the company chose those stories that had recognizable historical events as their backgrounds, more criteria about the process complicate the trajectory of Son and Daughters. In a television interview on the occasion of the production’s tour in Thessaloniki in 2014, Kalavrianos explained his goals for selecting the stories in the staged and published versions. He explains that “we left out the ‘weird’ stories; stories that were challenging for the average viewer [such as bigamy, or gender change, among the examples he mentions]. We had to be able to handle the narratives and to break from the surprise of the special cases; we wanted each person to recognize him or herself [in the stories].” It is obvious that the kinds of stories that stood out, while interesting and exceptional, were not seen as material that would resonate with a larger audience. These stories might resist the translation into the stage narrative that the writer wished to see evolve on stage. Even with the playwright’s conscious effort to record voices marginalized from the national narrative, his selection of cases aimed at some sort of uniformity. Kalavrianos responded to my questions on that point by saying that the main reason he left out stories that would directly identify the narrator was to protect the interviewees’ privacy, which was very important to him.

However, as mentioned earlier, identification was avoided anyway, since none of the stories were included whole. Instead, they were all meshed with other similar narratives. In

---

41 Ibid.
42 Yannis Kalavrianos, in discussion with the author, January 6, 2015.
addition, it seems that the publicity certain stories enjoyed appealed to some members of the audience. Spectators volunteered more stories after the first versions were staged, evidence that a good number of interviewees desired to have their personal stories immortalized on stage, even with the risk of having their identities revealed among their circle. The supported master narrative was popular with older generations, who offered their experiences to the company from which to draw in creating the play. The high level of audience engagement ensured that *Sons and Daughters* became a more collaborative work that relied on interactivity and participation for its development, not only at the initial interview stage, but also for the duration of its performances.

The collaborative approach is significant for Kalavrianos also in aesthetic terms. The artist explained that the sense of co-creation is very important in his work, but he observes certain limitations on how the sense of community can function in his theatre. He rejects the popular aesthetic of “a theatre of images,” a concept which he defined as work he and his group had seen and that usually develops in ways similar to theirs, that is, devised pieces with a substantial narrative component and a heavy reliance on physical theatre.43 His company consciously works against this form, because, according to Kalavrianos, it becomes “a theatre of easy associations that assumes some sort of common ground between the artists and their audiences. How can one assume that, say, a beautiful but abstract image out of context would mean the same to everyone? This is elitist.”44 This imagined “tank of associations” that companies and audiences purportedly share does not exist for the director and writer.45 Instead, Kalavrianos aims at creating a sense of community between the work and his audience by

43 Yannis Kalavrianos, in discussion with the author, January 5, 2015.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
establishing the parameters of the play’s universe each time and letting the spectator in.\textsuperscript{46} For 
\textit{Sons and Daughters} in particular, this method consisted of clearly defining the context of each 
story as the product of an interview. The idea of a pedagogy of the specific piece informed the 
production as a whole. For example, in the development of each scene the performers take 
simple props from around the stage, where they have been arranged beforehand ready for use. 
These articles appear in response to images and concepts mentioned in the story narrated each 
time. Simple objects such as a small toy house, coffee cups, etc., become the only visual aids to 
the stories besides the actors’ bodies, and they are re-used several times as signifiers for a 
multitude of references. The simplicity of the visual world of \textit{Sons and Daughters} emphasized 
the dominance of the text as driver of the action, but for Kalavrianos it also ensured that audience 
and performers communicate without unnecessary visual mediation.\textsuperscript{47} This strategy became 
particularly important in the play’s performances abroad, where communication with foreign 
audiences could not rely on the aural experience of the text.

The pedagogical and translational method described above also concerned the acting of 
the piece. Kalavrianos’s main approach is founded on a principle of “showing” rather than 
“acting” the text, or a presentation rather than a representation of the action narrated: “The 
approach is somewhat influenced by Brecht – I don’t mean this in the political sense though. It’s 
the aesthetic dimension of teaching the play that I’m interested in.”\textsuperscript{48} When asked in interview 
about how he sees the connection to Brecht, Kalavrianos explained that he uses distancing 
deVICES, such as the narrator, not in the hope to awaken an audience to action but to lead them to

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{47} Kalavrianos, in discussion with the author, January 7, 2015. 
\textsuperscript{48} Kalavrianos, in discussion with the author, January 5, 2015.
an alternative way of experiencing theatre.\(^{49}\) As a general principle in his work, he believes in having the actors always appear as “facilitators” before they assume their roles and provide commentary directly to the audience.\(^{50}\) In *Sons and Daughters* this was evident in several scenes where the young actors first enacted the interview process; in other words, they first played themselves interviewing their elderly subjects. Then they were gradually immersed themselves in the recorded stories assuming the role that the interviewee had in the story he or she volunteered. The revelation of the interview process and its enactment on stage included speaking the lines of the central interview question: “tell us a story about yourself, anything you want.” And later: “something that changed your life forever.” Including part of the interviews in the scenes further underlined the performers’ roles as facilitators, and therefore highlighted the “reality” of the work. However, it also exposed some of the layers of mediation that foregrounded the translational negotiation between the real and the fictional.

A significant strategy that both detracted from and reinforced the fictional aspect included the absence of a character list. In the text, the characters are designated by numbers (Character 1, Character 2, etc.). The actors alternate roles constantly, a strategy that is made evident in the introductory interview scene and then followed throughout the play. The numbers do not really serve character development purposes but rather seem to be more a device for organizing casting needs. In the beginning it is often unclear which actor plays which character, because each scene begins with several actors sharing lines. Gradually, however, one performer dominates as the character’s voice, and the others circle around to help the actor tell the story. They sometimes form the audience to the story, or they embody other characters mentioned by the main character. Commentary on each story is written as lines that surround the main narrative

\(^{49}\) Ibid.  
\(^{50}\) Ibid.
in each scene. The following passage, a story from the Axis Occupation, illustrates the play’s
dramaturgical pattern:

3 One day we ran out of salt
2 My mother goes to the black market man - who later became a congressman – and
tells him:
5 We need salt
3 There is no salt
5 The suit. The radio
3 What else do you have? Your wedding bands.
5 What?!
3 The rings
2 And what do you think I did?
4 She cooked with seawater
2 We lived in Patras, just a stone’s throw from the beach.
5 She put sea water in the pot.
1 The food was inedible.
2 But we ate it.
5 All of it.51

While the mother in the story is initially designated as character 5, it quickly becomes evident
that “5” is not so much the name of the character, as it is a designation for a performer. Lines
ordinarily belonging to the mother are shared by performer 2 (“And what do you think I did?”).
In addition, the scene opens with performer 3 announcing the circumstances as one of the family,
while later the same performer plays the black marketeer. Characters 1 and 4 are not involved in
the scene. Instead, they rather form a first audience that turns to the auditorium and comments on
the action. While the lines of all speakers are somewhat separated, there is no firm reason to
abide by each character because the conventions of the specific text are not those customary to
dramatic theatre. For instance, there is not a development of character in each scene, nor is there
one central plot in the play. This technique further avoided identification and promoted a sense

51 Kalavrianos, Sons and Daughters, 12. This scene was added in the third version of the text, as
it was published in 2013.
of interchangeability of experiences between the interviewees. The personal becomes more communal and perhaps even a part of a new national narrative.

The closely knit relationship between performance and text in *Sons and Daughters* had important consequences for the play’s translation. Kalavrianos’s method of teaching the parameters of the specific production was put to the test especially in the performances outside Greece. While the comparison between past and present resonated with Greek audiences, communication based on a shared historical background, a major factor in the play’s success with local audiences, was not an option for the performances abroad. Instead, the production relied on the most universally identifiable stories that could be understood by spectators without Greek, for whom English served as a vehicular language in the supertitles. Scenes that depicted financial hardships, for example, were obviously easier to transfer without elaborate contextualization. But the historical aspects of the stories, which in the crisis context created more politicized messages, were not evident to audiences who could not understand the Greek text.

**Translation in Supertitles**

In this section I move from the translational processes of the play that informed its creation to focus on aspects of the play’s linguistic translation and its presence outside Greece. My objective in considering certain translation decisions is to approach the practices critically, although I do not believe in the existence of one single solution. Due to the charged political circumstances where this exchange took place, the results of the translator’s work acquire particular importance in this case, especially in the translation of key moments during the play that portray important events in Greek history. While *Sons and Daughters* certainly participates
in the current cultural trend of revisiting the past as it was developed in Greece, it also expanded its remit in its circulation beyond national borders. The play’s translation is in itself a disturbance of the archive because of the alternative historiographic approach the new text sets forth. The translation’s most important contribution is that it attempted to make known this repressed history abroad, where only classical Greece could until recently be a point of reference. Obviously, the critique of Greece’s negotiation with its own past that Papanikolaou proposes requires specific knowledge of the cultural territory. However, Zaroulia relates that Papanikolaou, as well as other Modern Greek Studies scholars such as Liakos, “saw in the Greek paradigm the arena that could host a bigger battle – that between neoliberalism and the potentialities of resistance.” This is how the reconsideration of the past relates to the crisis: it represents an act of resistance, because, by considering other affiliations that stem from Greece’s discomfort in its idealized Western identity, Greek culture rejects the idea that Europe -- and consequently its current policies -- can be the only way forward. In Sons and Daughters this resistance is evident mainly on two levels: in the translated play’s emphasis on the personal as opposed to the political, and in the text’s reviving certain hostile relationships in the past, which question Greece’s position in the European Union.

Consistent with the precarious conditions for theatre-making in Greece, Sons and Daughters ventured abroad quite unprepared. Its translation was commissioned under mysterious circumstances. The text of Sons and Daughters was translated into English solely for the purpose of supertitles. The goal was to first add supertitles to the Sforaris’s production promotional video so that the company could send it with applications to international festivals. Later the same file would be used to project the supertitles during performances abroad. The translation was

commissioned and completed hurriedly in Spring 2013.\textsuperscript{53} When asked about the process, Kalavrianos refused to elaborate or even name the translator, who was not mentioned in any form of the publicity material (including the YouTube video entry).\textsuperscript{54} When discussing the quality of the result, Kalavrianos agreed that the translation was not very successful.\textsuperscript{55} I am not primarily concerned here with the text’s mistranslations, although there were several occasions of missed linguistic opportunities. There were obviously good reasons that the first draft of a demanding translation did not scan perfectly or even make sense in certain parts. But I feel obliged to pause and evaluate the status of theatre translation when a production that arguably relied on the power of its text for its Greek performances did not allow this crucial element the time and effort devoted to other aspects of the work. Two important issues stem from this and similar practices: First, the translator was evidently not considered a collaborator of equal status to others who worked on the production, such as the actors (some of whom also participated in the interview process), the composer, and lighting designer. The context of the crisis and current economic hardship heightens the sense of ethical consequences of this marginalization. Second, there seems to have been an overwhelming optimism regarding how much the physical and visual elements of the performance could communicate to a foreign audience.

Translation in supertitles hardly provides enough room for creative solutions in search of linguistic equivalence, and there can be no opportunity for compensation or additional

\textsuperscript{53} The supertitles were later published on the video of the production on July 12, 2013. Sforaris Theatre Company, \textit{Sons and Daughters: a Play on the Quest of Happiness} (version II, full performance with subtitles) YouTube Video, July 12, 2013, accessed September 4, 2016. \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMzse-cc4is}.

\textsuperscript{54} Indeed, it was impossible to record the name of the translator in any of the materials, nor from the information collected during interviews with the writer and director. Even after repeated attempts, he was simply mentioned as an (anonymous) external collaborator. Kalavrianos, in discussion with the author, January 7, 2015.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
information in footnotes. In the case of *Sons and Daughters*, the supertitles do not seem to follow a model of correspondence. The result is often one of foreignization; that is, the English text constantly reminds the spectator of the translation’s mediation: it certainly wouldn’t “pass” for the original.\footnote{Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.} In a paradoxical reversal to Venuti’s concept of foreignization as assertion of the translator’s voice, however, this was most probably not consciously a desired effect.\footnote{Ibid., 17.} *Sons and Daughters* is translated in a manner that effaces the translator without accomplishing the seamless domesticating effect that could enable a smoother transition of the work. The disparities seem to be more the product of ineffective analogy. It quickly becomes obvious that translation was treated as a technicality that nevertheless could have had a decisive impact in the play’s reception abroad.

With all their disadvantages, supertitles can offer an opportunity through their mediating function in performance. Marvin Carlson acknowledges that for an increasing number of theatre practitioners and audiences, supertitles are no longer assumed to be “the straightforward,” or “presumably neutral device not actually part of the production.”\footnote{Marvin Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 198.} Financial restrictions can sometimes prevent a more creative consideration of their potential. However, as Yvonne Griesel points out, successful subtitling for the theatre depends less on financial circumstances and more on “acceptance and creativity.”\footnote{Yvonne Griesel, “Surtitling: Surtitles An Other Hybrid on a Hybrid Stage,” *Trans: Revista de Traductologia* 13 (2009): 126.} In *Sons and Daughters* the English supertitles were not a foreign aesthetic language, but instead they were symptomatic of the work’s context of international circulation that had produced the aesthetics of the production in the first place.
Early in the play’s trajectory, in June 2012, Sforaris had the opportunity to stage their play in one of the city spaces of the Greek Festival of Athens and Epidaurus, the Piraeus Street building. The festival attracts a large audience, and because it takes place during the summer, its public often includes foreign visitors. While Sons and Daughters was not performed with supertitles at that initial phase, the context of the international festival with several guest performances was part of the play’s creative environment. Greek artists of Kalavrianos’s generation developed their work in a framework of international artistic exchanges, and most of them have had the chance to watch performances from visiting artists in their country, or worked abroad themselves. It is therefore surprising to see that the company neglected the creative potential of supertitles as side texts for their own performances abroad.

There is unfortunately very little information regarding how foreign audiences received Sons and Daughters. The production travelled to festivals in Udine, Italy, and Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina. Both these performances created special conditions for the reception. First, the text available to the audiences in the form of supertitles was in Italian and Bosnian respectively, and in both cases it was translated from the English translation of the Greek text. No information on the process or the translators involved was made known. In the Italian case the published press release available certainly speaks to the packaging of the work for an Italian audience. The publicity material on the occasion of the production in Udine framed the piece on two political fronts -- the present conditions and the ancient past: “…the country that has been on the verge of default risk for the longest time. And now we have come to see what’s happening, which

---

questions, demands, and curiosity move the ancient, yet always living art of the theatre during the crisis.”  

And on a relevant note but focusing on the glorious past, the release calls the production “an unusual collection of fragments of twentieth-century history and individual personal narratives from the country that has been the emblem of Western democracy and the \textit{polis}.”  

It seems like a missed opportunity to obscure the specific references to the crisis when the Italian performance of the play is marketed along the lines of a shared European identity with the neighboring country. In February 2013, when \textit{Sons and Daughters} traveled to Udine, Italians were struggling with their own financial and social disruption caused by the European recession. The Italian publicists clearly alluded to current and past similarities between Italy and Greece in their attempt to market the play for their audiences, but the Greek production did not adapt the translated text accordingly to make available the comparisons between the historical references and modern-day concerns as they are understood in the original Greek text.

The projected audience for the play’s translation was not very specific. The text was translated into one set of supertitles for any international festival that would invite Sforaris and not necessarily for a specifically situated native English-speaking audience. The uneven linguistic and cultural territory of international festivals certainly requires adaptation to diverse systems at the same time. Ideally, each production at every festival should adjust the supertitles just as other elements of performance are adapted according to the space, venue, etc. The more


\footnote{In the original: “…un riepilogo eccentrico di frammenti di Storia novecentesca e di vicende umane individuali, dal Paese che è stato l’emblema della democrazia occidentale e della polis.” Ibid.}
targeted the translation, the better its chances at communicating the particular and possibly local elements of the work to a foreign audience. The issue is not simply linguistic specificity but, most importantly, cultural recalibration. However, just as the translator was not credited for the work, the translation was obviously not considered one of the work’s aspects meriting adaptation in different circumstances. Accordingly, there was no clear sense of the audience addressed. The obligatory generalizations that resulted in the translated text were even more problematic because of the play’s narrative form, which overwhelmingly relied on the text.

Perhaps the scant attention that was given to the translation reveals the creative team’s position with regards to the tension between the personal aspect of their play and the historical references. At all the stages of development of Sons and Daughters, the members of Sforaris had to negotiate the significance of the historical material and their desire to perform personal stories without taking a political stance. However, this was proven impossible particularly during the crisis, where historical events acquired special political importance for their relevance to present financial and political conditions. As seen in the negative Athens review that resulted from the stage representation of the Civil War, Kalavrianos’s play was expected to fulfill certain expectations for its Greek audience that varied according to each spectator’s political views. The performances abroad were an opportunity to focus on the personal aspect of the stories, which could promote communication among different cultures. However, the circumstances of the crisis and its international repercussions raised the expectations for a Greek play. As a consequence, the supertitles in a similar project would have to be carefully considered for their capacity to contextualize those elements specific to Greek history so that an audience without the same frame of reference could understand them.

---

63 Kalavrianos, discussion, January 5, 2015.
An example of the supertitles’ communicative potential occurs at the outset of the play. The book version of *Sons and Daughters* included a director’s note in place of an introduction. In the subtitled promotion video, the same note is included at the beginning of the video, before the actual play begins. This reads:

Five young performers travelled all over Greece (from Athens to Thessaloniki, Crete, Mykonos, Corfu, Amorgos, etc.) for 13 months, interviewed senior citizens and asked them to remember the single significant story that changed their life.

Out of 85 stories, they picked those that were more attached to historical events and enact on stage true episodes that happened during the declaration of war by the Italians, the invasion of Greece by the Germans, the build [sic] of the Berlin Wall, the Coup of the Generals in 1967, the immigration to Germany, Australia and Canada, the elections on [sic] 1981 and the rise of the Social-democratic party of Andreas Papandreou until the Athens Olympic Games in 2004.

The final play is a mosaic of unwritten, short stories of the everyday life, which sometimes loses its way, but insists on wanting to be happy in a parallel world under the official, recorded History.64


The same text was translated by Eleni Drivas for the US production’s press release as follows: “*Sons and Daughters* is a play based on real interviews from people who are asked to tell a story that sealed their fate. Their stories are associated with important historical events from modern Greece, but above all describe the constant search of everyday people’s happiness, beyond the major political and social changes in the recent history of the Greek State.” Greek Cultural Center “Sons and Daughters,” press release, March 15, 2016.
This information in the video was projected on the supertitles screen at the beginning in the foreign performances in Udine and Sarajevo. In addition, this text was printed on the poster for the Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM) presented in the Bios art collective in Athens in October 2013. The event’s theme was the financial crisis and it brought together about 500 performances from different countries. The audience in this occasion was Greek and foreign participants of the international festival.

Only the English translation of the text was projected. The announcement foregrounds the play’s historical aspect and supplies the exact information a foreign audience would be most likely to miss. For example, in the scene about World War II, the references to bombings of cities may be recognizable, but the specific names and events included as markers of the event in the story would likely be recognized only by a Greek audience. The introduction in the projection, therefore, primarily informed the foreign audience of the general chronology of the events that would soon unfold before them. The historical references in Sons and Daughters, an important element of the play’s layered meaning for its Greek audiences, were not developed in the supertitles. The supertitles had the potential to question, and at times even subvert, the narrative by foregrounding the cultural tensions that were available to the original audience. For example, the concept of “the invasion of Greece by the Germans” was a phrase that communicated historical and current political nuances to the Greek audience, who overwhelmingly relate the Axis occupation in Greece in the 1940s with the current financial supervision. But it is unclear whether its rendering into English was actively placing “the

---


66 Media in Greece beginning in 2012 fueled the Greeks’ anti-German sentiment by comparing the German government’s position on the Greek fiscal crisis to the relations between Greece and Germany during World War II. Julia Amalia Heyer and Ferry Batzoglou, “When in Doubt, Call
Germans” as Greece’s enemy (which is what it does in Greek), or if it was simply a word-for-word rendering. Because of the translation’s resort to literal solutions, the supertitles failed to provide necessary contextualization. Similarly, references to the “Italians” and “Bulgarians” in ethnic rather than historical or political terms, such as the Axis Powers, while faithful to the original, required more conscious decisions regarding the English text’s political message of the text.

Ultimately, the translation of Sons and Daughters, perhaps more than the play’s Greek productions, reveals a tension between the personal and the political at a difficult time for Greece. The cultural force of the text did not translate into the supertitled performances. If the impact of the historical ideologies intertwined in the play, of which the construction of Greek national identity is at the forefront, would have been lost on a non-Greek audience, it is hard to find a reason behind the whole endeavor of transferring the work into a foreign language. Yet, it is exactly the present moment in European politics that gives importance to the translation of texts like Sons and Daughters, and it is the present moment that makes their reading political.

The US Production

An occasion with different results in Sons and Daughters’ career abroad was its production in New York City. The play was staged by the Greek Cultural Center in Astoria in

---

April and May 2016. It was performed in Greek with English supertitles that had been newly translated by Eleni Drivas. The Greek Cultural Center has a clear mission of reinforcing connections between the immigrant community in New York and the homeland as well as promoting Greek culture in New York. The theatre department began its work in 1977. Since then the Center has not only brought successful productions from Greece but also, true to their goals of engaging more members of the Greek American community, has produced work in Greek or in English that employs US-Greek artists as actors and other collaborators. Their production of *Sons and Daughters*, one of their three annual offerings, is an example of the above practices. Drivas learned about *Sons and Daughters* from acquaintances in Greece. After reading the published version, she appreciated that the work would find an audience in Astoria and decided to translate it. Lyto Triantafyllidou was asked to direct and four Greek American actors shared the five characters of the original play.67

The translator, Eleni Drivas, is the head of the Center’s theatre department and responsible for the repertory. She is Greek American, born and raised in New York. Drivas’s version is an adaptation of Kalavrianos’s text with the addition of four more monologues in English. These texts were the product of interviews with members of the Greek-American community that Drivas had collected earlier.68 She and the director were inspired to add more stories that would complement the scene of the Greek American narrative in Kalavrianos’s original. Drivas wrote the new scenes and decided their placement in the text together with Triantafyllidou.69 Triantafyllidou suggested they include them in English.70

---

67 Lyto Triantafyllidou, Skype communication with the author, May 2, 2016.
68 These were part of a project Drivas has been working on for two years. Eleni Drivas, in discussion with the author, May 25, 2016.
69 Kalavrianos was informed of their intentions and approved any additions, as long as the two authorial voices, his and Drivas’s, would be clearly separated. Ibid.
The new translation drew out those aspects in the stories that negotiated the tensions of belonging and added more scenes on that subject. That way the concept of home became a central theme in the play, following the personal interests of both the translator and the director, each with her own immigrant family and personal history. Triantafyllidou was particularly interested in bringing out the ways each person experiences the feeling of having two parts of the world as home. Drivas mentioned that the concept of home affected her translation decisions in relation to her own Greek American identity: “No matter where you are ... I think there’s always that feeling that Greece is the motherland and that everything will be great when I go there. And once you go there, it’s not exactly this .... perfect place that you have envisioned. That was something that I always felt. Growing up I always wanted to move to Greece.” In her attempt to express that feeling that is shared among Greek Americans, the additions were narratives by women from the Greek diaspora, and all of them treated the theme of the personal aspect of the immigrant experience. The movement of those immigrant women was a direct result of political developments. While their stories were different, the common personal element in the narratives aided comparisons to the present situation, where the fiscal crisis has added new Greek immigrants to the community. For Triantafyllidou, the emphasis on the personal aspect was a way to avoid representing these women as stereotypes. As she explained: “Too often in theatre that deals with immigration, or in political theatre in general, we end up with clichés. The very personal stories and the way we approached them I think helped avoid that.”

70 Drivas, discussion.
71 Ibid.; Triantafyllidou, communication.
72 Triantafyllidou, communication.
73 Drivas, discussion.
74 Ibid. Most of the actors in the production, and Triantafyllidou herself, were recent additions to the Greek American community.
The director and translator of the Astoria production had a clear sense of how they wished to balance the historical value of the work and the overall personal tone of the storytellers. In our interview, in response to my question as to how Triantafyllidou evaluated Drivas’s additional texts in the script, the director explained that she and the translator desired to see more of recent Greek history. The original play begins in the historical mode, but as I described earlier, about halfway through the emphasis shifts to more personal stories and the historical background is rather faint. Triantafyllidou wanted to push the exploration of Greek history and the four additions of the Greek-American community facilitated that goal. Drivas too was interested in staging the play primarily because of its potential as an alternative means of reading Greek history. For Triantafyllidou the added texts were an opportunity to learn more about Greeks in the United States, who also have had to deal with unfair stereotypes: “I wanted to encourage mutual sympathy between the Greek Americans who have been here for generations and those new additions who just arrived looking for work. Those established here for generations are considered stuck in the 60s! I think the performers’ and collaborators’ young age helped with that.” These images of immigrant Greeks, perpetuated in popular culture, do not only consist of how other cultures see Greeks but also form the image of the diaspora among the Greeks in the mainland. Because the Astoria production’s audience was made up of not only members of the more established community but also by newer additions of recent Greek immigrants fleeing the ongoing recession in Greece, the play constituted an opportunity to reconcile two aspects of a misunderstood culture. The adaptation provided insight into Greek history for Greek and foreign audiences, by recontextualizing that history along more recent

---

75 Triantafyllidou, communication.
76 Ibid.
77 Drivas, discussion.
78 Ibid.
developments. *Sons and Daughters* in this version became a means of self-representation for Greeks and Greek Americans that went beyond the usual images surrounding Greece or the diaspora. The new translation rewrote recent Greek history, and also the history of the Greek American community, and represented it for New York audiences.

The new stories by Greek immigrants added another layer to the linguistic experience set forth by the production. Kalavrianos’s text was performed in Greek with new English supertitles translated by Drivas. The idea of performing the new scenes in English without any Greek translation resulted after considering a series of factors. An important aspect for the director was the aesthetic interest in the bilingual effect that the presence of two languages would add to the text. In its original form *Sons and Daughters* addressed the audience aurally in Greek and visually in English through the supertitles. In the Astoria version, the mixed linguistic approach offered the director new ways into the work. The translator and Center’s theatre director agreed that “people who knew English better (than Greek) were more receptive to the English text.” This was not only the result of linguistic familiarity, but also a more direct identification with the stories, which all narrated immigrant experiences.

As a result, the Greek Center produced its first bilingual play. The new stories drew from and directly addressed a closely knit community. According to both translator and director, the four additional texts were stories of persons well known and recognizable to the audience, and this was something that Drivas felt contributed to the production’s communicative force: “Because the stories dealt with people the Greek American community knows and remembers -- important figures -- they were very receptive to these stories and were very happy actually that

79 Ibid.
80 Drivas, discussion.
81 Ibid.
we incorporated them.” The onstage performance reinforced the feeling of the here-and-now of the specific production, an important factor in a translated play’s success. Especially in cases of performance with supertitles that a large part of the audience can resist, having a translation that makes connections with its audience on a linguistic as well as cultural level can allow a play to create stronger bonds with its spectators. A sense of direct involvement had been a crucial element missing from previous attempts to stage Sons and Daughters abroad. In cases where the audience was not as carefully considered, such as festivals where the play travelled, the translation was reduced to the literal rendition of the text in supertitles. However, in New York, much thought went into the receiving end of this production, and the audience was present as a factor in the decisions at different stages of the adaptation.

The process resulted in a stronger translation that incorporated explanations and simplifications suited to the Greek-American audience. In addition, there is an evident freedom within the text in leaving out lines or scenes and substituting them with others that would communicate more to the specific Astoria audience. For example, early in the text, Drivas adds some references to the immigrant story to make it more relevant to and recognizable by her audience:

4 We built churches, schools. Had a newspaper! Ethnikos Kirikas. There were whole blocks and neighbourhoods with Greek stores, cafes and restaurants.

1 Just like the neighborhoods with Chinese or Arabic stores.83

82 Ibid.
83 Eleni Drivas, Sons and Daughters (unpublished manuscript, June 13, 2016), Microsoft Word file, 4.
The above text was added to Kalavrianos’s work. *Ethnikos Kirikas* [National Herald] is the Greek newspaper of the Greek community of New York and published in Astoria. The reference to “Chinese and Arabic stores,” also a local reference to New York, introduces the translator’s voice and turns the audience’s attention to the commonalities among all these immigrant communities coexisting in the same neighborhood.

When speaking about the challenges of translating *Sons and Daughters*, Drivas finds that in Greek-to-English translations in general, humor is the hardest to convey. She feels that it’s important that she is a Greek-American herself, well versed in the culture and the language of her target community. For this play, she needed substantial time to take in its subtle sense of humor and then to attempt and compress that for the supertitles. A somewhat easier task for Drivas was translating the play’s historical references. Her adaptive approach for the historical terms was to think through what each meant to the original audiences, and then to translate the words in the standard translation of the Greek term in English, when this existed in history books for instance, followed by a brief explanatory sentence. For example, the concept of the Grand Idea was translated into “the ‘Great Idea’ - that would incorporate more lands to Greece.”

This strategy ensured that non-Greek speakers could at least follow the history behind the personal narrative, especially in the first half of the play, where historical references are denser and more frequent. The translator found that the audience received the new text well.

---

84 Eleni Drivas, *Sons and Daughters*, 3. As discussed in chapter 2, the concept of the Grand Idea (or Great Idea; both translations appear in English language books on Greek history) consists of the irredentist political program that consisted of enlarging the Greek state into Ottoman territory by incorporating areas with a strong Greek-speaking population, such as Asia Minor.

85 Drivas, discussion.
When asked about the play’s relevance to the Greek crisis, Drivas believed that the crisis helped promote the play: “I think it was great timing for this play. To be honest, yes, the Greek American community was my target group, but also I was looking to bring non-Greeks to the Center. … And I thought that this was a great play in doing so.”

The interest in the Greek crisis internationally, combined with the Greek interest in recent national history, supported a nurturing context for the promotion of *Sons and Daughters* in New York. Triantafyllidou thought that even though the monologues in *Sons and Daughters* concern older events, the production reflected on the crisis for Greek and foreign audiences alike: “For me, the point of the play was to show how these big decisions in life make you who you are. The emphasis is on personal action within the given circumstances each time.” She pinpoints the crisis reference as an exploration of the Greek character: “[the play] was a more gentle or a better way to present the Greek character.”

It is interesting that the director found these stereotypes to be quite persistent among the Greek American community. Their knowledge about the crisis was apparently not always immediate, say, from relatives back home, but instead was frequently manipulated by representations in the media. Drivas, too, was aware of the evident cultural response to reexamine recent Greek history and believed that this trend has made a difference in the reception of the play. Her work as a doctoral candidate in History specializing in the Greek Civil War made her more perceptive to the shifts brought about by the crisis. She considers the Civil War the crucial part of the missing

---

86 Ibid.
87 Triantafyllidou, discussion.
88 Ibid.
89 “[Because of the crisis] Greek history all of a sudden is important. Being that I’ve been dealing with the Greek Civil War for 10 years now… maybe more … Never have I had people show such interest in my work.” Drivas, discussion.
narrative that has resurfaced in the past six years, and she was particularly interested in dealing with this subject through the translation and staging of *Sons and Daughters*.  

In addition to the story already included in Kalavrianos’s text, Drivas added a Greek American narrative of two women involved in the Civil War who experienced exile together. Both Drivas and Triantafyllidou found that the added stories reinforced the play’s connection to the Greek current affairs and the crisis in particular, because some stories actually touched upon the Greek recession.

Evidently, the US production of *Sons and Daughters* was afforded an opportunity to reach its audiences more than other occasions of the play’s performance outside Greece. The importance given to the translation for the supertitles, as well as a carefully thought-out adaptation, went a long way to conveying the play’s content. Drivas summarized her thoughts on the play’s suitability for the Center, the particular timing, and ultimately the play’s success: “For the first time people are realizing that there is a lot more to Greek culture than ancient Greece. And I think one reason why a lot of non-Greeks wanted to see *Sons and Daughters* is because I think they want to also understand why we’re at where we are.” When asked if she thinks that the play answers the question of who are the Greeks, her response strikes the elusive balance between the personal and historical aspects that *Sons and Daughters* engaged: “In a sense… to a great extent I think it does say a lot about who we are… we are a people that have struggled, have fallen in love…” The translation of this Greek play for Greek and foreign audiences functioned as a historiographic approach that connected the past to a turbulent present

---

90 When asked how she relates this revisiting in history with the crisis: “We go back to our roots. The last huge crisis in Greece was the Civil War…. No wonder you see people allude to that period now.” Ibid.
91 Ibid.
and managed to stage images from history that commented on the current conditions, but without antagonizing the personal aspect of the stories.

Conclusion

Papanikolaou explains the cultural response to the crisis as “a radical questioning that started from the current state of precariouslyness, in order to critique the reading of the past and ask: Who has been doing this reading on our behalf, in what ways and to what effect?” Sons and Daughters certainly engages in this “poetics of disturbed archival logics” in its reconsideration of Greek history of the twentieth century. For audiences in Greece, the play managed to stir passions over historical and political debates that have resurfaced with the crisis, and, even in moments of devoted personal focus, it participated in a much-needed collective narrative of “surviving the crisis.” The absence of even one individual name onto which the spectators could pin the stories made the play a story of Greece and Greeks. In its rejection of the official history, Sons and Daughters rewrote an alternative historical narrative of a community the ties of which are currently debated in high tones.

The past was a constant reference and point of comparison in the play. The effect this revisiting of history had on Greek audiences was significant. The success of the play, which was often sold out during its national tour, speaks to an increased interest in exploring Greek history through personal storytelling. Kalavrianos explained that people often found him after performances and shared more stories with him with a request that he include them in his play. In some cases, other projects were inspired after performances of Sons and Daughters. One of the projects was

92 Dimitris Papanikolaou, “Archive Trouble.”
93 Ibid.
94 Kalavrianos, in discussion with the author, January 7, 2015.
the actors in the first version of the play in early 2012, Konstantinos Dellas, moved his work outside the realm of testimony theatre. In August 2016 a woman who had seen the 2012 version called the actor “her father.” The woman was one of the people who narrated her story in an interview to Kalavrianos and other Sforaris members, and they included her account in the play. She explained that she had never met her father, who was killed when her mother was pregnant with her during the Civil War. Dellas had played her father in the story. The actor offered to help “create a memory together,” and then worked with her to reconstruct her father’s appearance from family pictures. They posed together in costume and makeup for a series of deliberately dated-looking pictures. The project was published on the actor’s Facebook page. This activity did not feed into the production, since it happened long after the final performance by Sforaris. However, its blurring of boundaries between the real and the fictional, as well as between performance and historical reconstruction, is indicative of the impact that plays like Sons and Daughters can have on their audiences and the actors that perform the testimonies.

The play continues its career with different companies in Greece and abroad, and is therefore open to more versions, especially in diasporic communities as the US example indicates. Translation in supertitles unfortunately could not offer a vantage point from which to negotiate the play’s potential in the initial performances abroad mainly because of the limited attention that was given to this crucial element in intercultural performance. The possibilities of a targeted translation became evident with the opportunity to perform a new version in the United States. Sons and Daughters, in its performances outside Greece, found itself caught in the middle

---

95 “Since the absurdity of the human race forbid you to meet your father and to have a family photograph with him, we will take one.” In the original: “Θα φτιάξουμε Αριστούλα μια ανάμνηση. Αφού η παράνοια του ανθρώπινου είδους σου στέρησε να γνωρίσεις τον πατέρα σου και να έχεις μια φωτογραφία μαζί του, θα βγάλουμε μια εμείς.” Konstantinos Dellas, Facebook page, August 22, 2016. https://www.facebook.com/kostantinos.ntellasA.
of two opposing directions: to conform to what was expected of a Greek play, that is, to lean on ancient Greek culture; or to project an image of what is happening to Greece now. The work at all stages rejected any allusions to the classical past and instead chose to foreground the personal experience under trying circumstances. Sons and Daughters was thus received in Greece as an allegory about the crisis regardless of its collaborators’ initial motives. It may not have begun its trajectory as a play about the crisis but it was certainly considered as such after the end of 2014.

Kalavrianos admits that, in conversations with European festival producers, there is demand for “plays about the crisis.” Sforaris had a clear problem in performing their work abroad: they were not engaging with classical Greek myths, and they were not addressing the crisis per se. Contemporary Greek playwriting is coming out of an admittedly limited system of public funding, and currently a bankrupt economy, to meet the requirements of a global market. Such circumstances invite political readings of the plays’ messages: it is these qualities that make the translation of contemporary Greek plays worthwhile, with all the challenges and risks involved in their effective transfer. It becomes obvious that, as a product of a minor theatre system, any Greek play must be presented along predetermined lines if it is to be given a chance to find an audience abroad. The crisis thus became for the Greek work a burden perhaps equal to the weight of ancient Greek heritage. Once it was revealed that the play was from Greece, there was no way escaping the crisis frame.

96 Kalavrianos, discussion. The writer expressed his frustration with this new form of packaging: “I don’t think I have to represent Greece in every work that I take abroad. If I were a Nigerian playwright, would I be obliged to write about Boko Haram just because this is what people associate with Nigeria at the moment?” Ibid.
Conclusion

In my research I asked how the impact of the crisis and its tremendous effects on cultural production in Greece can be observed in the theatre, and specifically in those texts and productions that travel abroad. One of the ways Greek theatre responded to the profound social and economic changes was to search for alternative narratives that revisit Greek history. The histories that figured consistently during the crisis are sections of the Greek past that were previously repressed, such as the Ottoman era. The prospect of manipulating a text for a new audience provided artists with the opportunity to elucidate or restructure obscure pasts, and thus the translated texts contributed to the reevaluation of previous periods. Translation during the crisis became a means of self-representation: texts translated by Greek artists and addressed to foreign audiences performed Greek cultural concerns and challenged fixed images about the country. Translation in this sense also served as historical reconstruction. My three case studies, for example, adopted new ways of presenting the -- until recently -- unchallenged national trajectory. Their translations especially questioned Greece’s relations with other European countries through the reexamination of recent (and evidently far-from-forgotten) conflicts, such as twentieth-century wars. The resurgence of both these themes, Greece’s fragile peace with its fellow members of the European Union and the country’s Ottoman past, is an indicator of a deep historical and cultural crisis. Ultimately, the translations renegotiate Greece’s mercurial position between East and West under the pressure of the European crisis, because they recontextualize the past as the history of a region exceeding Greece’s geography. By selectively elucidating obscure aspects of Greek history, translation serves as a historiographic approach that considers
non-Western influences equally valuable, and thus rejects the projected polarization between East and West.

With each of my chapters I attempted to cover a distinct area of translated work, from performances in different contexts to the scholarly translation of theatre texts for academic purposes. All three case studies contributed to my argument that the new history which these translations promoted springs from Greece and expresses an internal need to take charge of representations abroad. This is evident in the “asymmetrical investment and interest” observed in the translations in question, a point that Helena Buffery makes for Catalan translations into English and that bears similarities to the Greek example.¹ Buffery explains that managing to perform abroad may result in the promotion of local theatre to wider audiences, but the benefits of such endeavors are not limited to the increase of market value abroad, but also equally measured by their contribution to “identity construction” within their country of origin.² This is true for Greece as well. The cultural effect of these exports returns back to the homeland, because the new historiography proposed by these translations is not only capable of changing foreign beliefs, but also instrumental in shaping Greeks’ self-image. Translation’s contribution to the shifting national narratives is certainly felt domestically. Obviously, in a country with an exportable past and a tourist industry deemed as the driving force of the economy, translation is - - and always has been -- an important part of Greek culture. The specific parameters of the crisis, however, prompted more theatre practitioners to exercise control on the process by employing translation as a dominant way to represent themselves abroad.

² “The external visibility gained is at least as important for the construction of identity inside Catalonia as for external marketing purposes.” Ibid.
Cultural Politics in Contemporary Greece

A recent scandal in the Greek theatre world that involved translation and representation of “Greekness” occurred in the spring of 2016. In February Jan Fabre took over as artistic director of the Greek Festival (also called the Festival of Athens and Epidaurus). The festival, a major event for the performing arts that takes place during the summer months, was established in 1955. Initially its program included only ancient Greek drama and classical music performed by Greek and foreign artists. After 2006, the institution changed rapidly and supported contemporary Greek performance by smaller companies along more established national stages. The organization has the longest history in Greece, and it is the only theatre event of this magnitude in the country. The implicit concept behind Fabre’s appointment was the idea that an artist with an international reputation would benefit an artistic community that has not yet reached its artistic potential beyond national borders. Fabre himself seemed to understand the requirement to promote Greek work, when, for example, he explained his insistence on being called a “curator” rather than an “artistic director:” “I am not here to design an artistic program, but to create ties, networks, contacts, and to bring new ideas and perspectives.”

---


4 “Efforts were made to establish a festival that incorporated all forms of high art that were informed by the most significant, in the main Western trends whose influence had yet to reach the shores of Greece. The two main foci of the Festival were performances by major orchestras, and the revival and contemporary staging of the theatrical works of classical antiquity; an emphasis was also placed on dance at a later date.” Athens and Epidaurus Festival, “History.” Website, accessed September 4, 2016. [http://greekfestival.gr/en/content/page/history](http://greekfestival.gr/en/content/page/history).

5 The history of the Festival, as it is presented in its website, is structured into four periods: The Cosmopolitan Period (1955-1966), the Period of Isolation (coinciding with the Dictatorship, 1967-1974), the Period of Recession (1975-2005), and the Challenge (2006 and after). Athens and Epidaurus Festival, Ibid.

Yorgos Loukos, who managed the institution for ten consecutive years after leaving his post as artistic director of the Lyon Opera. While Loukos’s work was widely seen as a very positive contribution to Greek cultural matters, he was accused of overspending and asked to resign in December 2015. Under Loukos’s direction, the festival became an outward-facing event that included a wide range of performance by Greek artists and invited productions. Fabre, already known in Greece for his work, was therefore not a surprising choice for the office.

The press release of Fabre’s vision for the new festival was received amidst great disappointment and intense reactions by Greek artists. The program that Fabre designed was one that showcased Belgium and Belgian art. His Belgian vision featured eight pieces created by him and his collaborators out of a total of ten for the year. The following year would have also been mainly a foreign affair, and Greek works would be not admitted again until 2018. The name of the festival was also changed from the Greek Festival of Athens and Epidaurus to the International Festival of Athens and Epidaurus. But it was the complete absence of Greek productions that was the most incendiary aspect of Fabre’s proposed program. On April 1, a large group of Greek theatre artists mainly based in Athens circulated a letter of protest in which they denounced the ministry’s selection of artistic director. They also directly addressed Fabre


9 Dimadi, “Ελληνικό Φεστιβάλ.”
and asked him to resign. In their letter, they name Fabre “persona non grata.” A section of the artists’ grievances reads:

You admit that you do not have the slightest idea about contemporary Greek artistic activity and yet you consider yourself capable of leading (as curator!) the most important cultural institution of the country. You thus reduce Greek artists to a murky, artistically insignificant mass that supposedly ought to be grateful to you.

The protests centered upon Fabre’s insistence on promoting Belgian art at a time when Greek artists face real hardship in presenting their work even in their own country.

What is more, the timing of his designs coincided with a period of mistrust in Western Europe, where Brussels in particular has become the symbol of European Union bureaucracy.

---


11 In the original: “Παραδεχθήκατε ότι δεν έχετε την παραμικρή ιδέα για τη σύγχρονη ελληνική καλλιτεχνική δημιουργία, αλλά, παρ’ όλα αυτά, θεωρείτε εαυτόν ικανό να αναλάβει (ως curator!) τον κορυφαίο πολιτιστικό θεσμό της χώρας, υποβιβάζοντας έτσι τους Έλληνες δημιουργούς σε μία θολή, καλλιτεχνικά ανυπόληπτη μιάζα, που θα πρέπει να σας οφείλει και ευγνωμοσύνη.” Ibid.

12 “Athens and Epidaurus festival is much more than a festival; it’s a cultural institution and already an international one,” said Melpomeni, a stage photographer based in Athens who did not give her surname. “We welcome international participations, not international takeovers.” Quoted in Eleni Stefanou, “Greek Arts Festival in Turmoil as Artists Rebel over Curator’s ‘Belgian’ Vision,” The Guardian, April 5, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/05/greek-arts-festival-athens-epidaurus-in-turmoil-cultural-colonialism.

13 “Others have accused Fabre of cultural colonialism, drawing parallels with the treatment Athens is perceived to have received from Brussels during the eurozone crisis.” Ibid. The use of Brussels as metonymic for European Union bureaucracy was also evident in the discourse surrounding the British referendum in June 2016. See: James Freeman, “Britain Escapes the
attempt to “degrade” them. Their choice of words reveals that they experienced Fabre’s Belgian vision as an attack on their culture, dismissed since their own artistic level is not recognized. Fabre’s appointment did not last long; he handed in his resignation on April 2nd, five days after announcing the festival’s program for the first summer of his tenure.\(^{14}\)

One of the most intriguing aspects of this debacle was Fabre’s complaint about the Greek artists’ language, which was, predictably, Greek. In a letter co-signed by his collaborators, Fabre informed Greek artists: “To read your letter, we had to find it on the Internet in a Greek article and use Google Translate to get a grasp of the content.”\(^{15}\) Fabre considered this move as evidence of the Greek artists’ lack of desire to communicate directly. While his allegation about not being invited to the meeting is justified and understandable,\(^ {16}\) he was in fact directly addressed in the letter. But the mere thought that using Greek was a problem is indicative of scandalous cultural asymmetry. Why would a body of local artists be expected to address their

---

\(^{14}\) Renée Maltezo, “Greece Picks Own Director to Head Arts Festival after Belgian Artist Quits,” \textit{Reuters} April 4, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016. \url{http://reut.rs/25GNffA}.

\(^{15}\) The letter appeared in Fabre’s company page “Troubleyn Jan Fabre” on Facebook: “Open Letter from Jan Fabre and His Team in Reply to the Letter by Greek Artists,” “Troubleyn Jan Fabre,” Facebook page, April 8, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016. \url{http://us4.campaign-archive2.com/?u=66f70b9202e3612f601729153&id=4e2ede448e}.

\(^{16}\) The letter continues: “Why didn’t you have the decency to address us directly, to invite us in person to your meeting, to challenge us with your questions, your worries, your complaints? Why did you not even send us your letter? Why did you choose to act anonymously? Why do you reject any form of serious dialogue, any form of debate?” Ibid.
festival’s artistic director in a foreign language? Instead, Fabre might have attempted to learn the language before accepting the position, or employed translators for all communications in his new post. It is certainly not the duty of the artists in the host country to attempt to communicate in a mediating language. The fact that Fabre is from Belgium, a country with a proven sensitivity to acknowledging cultural agency in linguistic minorities, makes his stance even more surprising. Similarly, Fabre’s insistence on using English for his communications with the Greeks is incongruous for artists from two members of the European Union, an institution that heavily invests in translation and the preservation of linguistic plurality.

In fact, Fabre’s contempt for the Greek artists’ natural language of choice is similar to his treatment of their work. His attitude showed that he valued the access to venues such as the Epidaurus theatre and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in the Acropolis, which the Greek Festival manages, more than the contemporary Greek artists and theatre system that he was supposed to promote. The Greek artists’ performance of confidence in their work comes at a time when Greeks are reconsidering their relationship with their heritage, the value of their contemporary culture in relation to their classical past, and their options in a global future, often in anarchic modes, such as Papanikolaou’s disturbing the archive. The context of the crisis is instrumental in voicing this protest. For several participating artists, the festival represents an opportunity to secure funding for their productions, perhaps for the first time in the season given the dire financial circumstances of the recession. But most importantly, Greek artists do not wish to be educated in foreign models of cultural production that do not take into account their own local needs and particular artistic expression. In a way, the artists’ resistance seems to be reversing the metakénosis model, where absorbing Western European thought was seen as beneficial to the nation. Greek artists do not wish to import Europe for their advancement, but instead want to
participate in an international scene without adapting to models imposed from abroad. In their responses to Jan Fabre’s appropriation of their festival, these artists expressed their opposition to standards of cultural value imposed from abroad.

The intricate translation problem that the Fabre example illustrates goes deep into the issue of language and nation. In his statement, Fabre implied that the narrow national focus Greek artists exhibited in their insistence to be included impeded his artistic freedom: “I accepted the invitation by the Greek minister of culture on the condition that I could do my artistic choices under a regime of freedom. This is not possible any more in Greece.”

This is an important charge and one that problematizes Greek artists’ closing of ranks on an ethnic basis. Of course, Fabre also supported a national vision by promoting artists from his own cultural background. Although it is strange to think of Fabre (and any artist of his merit) as merely expressing the artistic production of his country of origin, with his insistence on Belgium the matter became a cultural war between the two national artistic systems. Sadly, theatre and performance became more a nationalist affair based on the interrelation between nation and linguistic community than an exchange of ideas from different worlds. The tension between globalization and the nature of theatre practice, that is inevitably local and specific to a here and now, lies at the heart of theatre translation. The miscommunication problem that the Fabre issue illustrates foregrounds translation as a key concept in the circulation of theatre between cultures. Indeed, Fabre himself used the expression “lost in translation,” albeit most possibly ironically, to attribute fault to the receivers of his message.

17 Ibid.
18 Some days after resigning, Fabre published another post on his Facebook page that expressed his opinion of Greek artists: “Apparently a professional Greek curator had to explain the word and the function of a ‘curator’. My position as a curator was clearly from the start ‘lost in translation’. While it is an international term that everybody in the art and theatre world in
Even though translation supposedly works to enlarge the circle in which an artistic product can operate, it may in fact re-inscribe it in other limited national contexts. A central binary in translation involves the concepts of foreignization and domestication. Domestication, while often successful in monolingual receiving contexts, is largely prone to reaffirmation of national images. The other extreme, foreignization, can also isolate a play, not so much from its origins, as domestication does, but from its intended audience. However, foreignized translations provide significant opportunities to engage a wider spectrum of affiliations that can challenge national identities both in the original play but also in the audience.

All three of my examples negotiated varying degrees of foreignness in their renderings. The audiences for these Greek plays were all asked to “travel abroad,” in Gunilla Anderman’s words. But this foreign travel had nothing to do with the usual circuit around Greek symbols. The plays did not reference the expected foreignness according to already established standards – what would, for example, be the distance created by resorting to Greek classical culture (ancient and therefore foreign, but still within the familiar expectations), or more contemporary allusions to “Greekness” shaped by tourism and isolated cultural symbols that developed into stereotypes (here the image of Zorbas comes to mind). Instead, these translations proposed three different ways of reconfiguring Greekness, informed by the cultural tensions that are currently present in Europe is familiar with. From what I understand, the Greek artists who already have the guarantee that they will perform in the festival this summer, were not present anymore, which is quite significant. I want to express my concern about the nationalistic reflex of a dominant group of mediocre and frustrated Greek artists mainly rejecting new visions and approaches from outside. I hope serious Greek artists will have a positive contribution to the changes that are needed to come to a challenging, new situation for the cultural context of the Hellenic Festival.”


As Gunilla Anderman summarizes, “either the translator brings the playwright to the audience, that is, the text is Anglicized; or alternatively, all foreign aspects of the play are left intact and the English audience is asked to travel abroad.” Gunilla Anderman, Europe on Stage: Translation and Theatre (London: Oberon, 2006), 8.
the country. The different strategies employed also brought about a variety of results. 

*Alexandrovodas’s* foreign character was skillfully negotiated along an unknown aspect of the Ottoman East (which included Greece and Romania currently not widely associated with the Ottoman past) and the European eighteenth century. *Abandon the Citizens* channeled the Middle Eastern aspect of the Aegean region. *Sons and Daughters* envisioned a common theatrical language for oral history that was not specifically Greek. These translations from Modern Greek into English during the crisis brought to the foreground unknown histories that have the potential to undermine the grounded notions surrounding Greece. Their foreignness contributed to their subversive historiographical perspective, an attribute that may have made it challenging for their audiences abroad, but which also served domestic goals.

**Contribution and Future Applications**

My project has sought to address the deficit of theatre translation research in Modern Greek Studies by focusing on translations of modern Greek theatre. The majority of works on theatre translation from Greek have been devoted to ancient Greek drama, while the limited research on Modern Greek is marked by the almost complete absence of works addressing translation in performance. I have engaged here with the concept of continuity, which is a central pattern in the discipline, but, instead of focusing on the relationship between the ancient world and modern Greek identity, I examined potential continuities between more recent historical periods and contemporary times. Such a period was the Greek Enlightenment, whose influence on the modern Greek state has not received the attention it deserves. For my project’s theoretical framework I built on historical concepts of cultural transmission specific to the Greek paradigm, such as Korais’s metakénosis, and combined them with more recent criticism in Modern Greek
Studies and theatre translation approaches. Metakénosis describes processes of cultural re-appropriation, which can be useful beyond the field of Greek studies.

The crisis has created its own subfield in Modern Greek. The specific case studies I examined, connected by the timing of their translation during the Greek crisis, together contribute to the emerging body of research on global crises. I consider my research a part of a new direction in theatre translation but with an expansion of its purview to include Greek. In my research I have combined historical examples of cultural transfer and examined them alongside the more recent effects of the crisis. The interdisciplinarian theoretical language that emerges consists of established and at times contested spatial metaphors, such as transfer, target, etc., but in new and expanded meanings that take into account the unstable context of the global crisis.

In each of my case studies, my main methodological approach has consisted of first establishing the history portrayed and then examining how the translations handled the transfer of that historical material in English. In this sense, I employed a translational methodology in that my research developed similarly to the translator’s process of grasping the surrounding context before engaging with the textual reconstruction. A considerable challenge in describing each translation’s framework was the limited reception material on my three case studies. The situation was somewhat more favorable for the translation of Alexandrovodas. The scholarly reviews following the play’s publication indicated an existing academic community. However, for my other two case studies, the scarcity of evidence on their reception meant that the interviews with the artists and translators became essential to following the works’ trajectories. As a consequence, subjective perspectives largely shaped the scope of my project into an examination of the Greek artists’ goals and expectations rather than an assessment of their results. This is a general problem that contemporary Greek theatre faces when performed abroad.
Its limited circulation in the margins of theatre systems means that its reception can at best be evaluated in more intimate settings, such as post-performance discussions, an important source that I employed in my work.

My own mobility as a scholar has been at times both beneficial and limiting. Working from the United States has afforded me the distance to see the potential of my topic and to design the methodology and overall structure of the project. Two research trips to Greece during the first years allowed me to access necessary bibliography and complete the interviews for two of my case studies. However, the fact that I was not in the country to experience the impact of theatre productions from day to day had its drawbacks in that it deprived me of important insight into how new playwriting developed along with political developments on the crisis. My relocation to Greece in the final year of my research helped me align my arguments with a personal experience of the recession. At the same time, delving into field research in my own ethnic and linguistic background at times limited my access to the essential but elusive middle ground that translators occupy in a philosophical sense. An examination of cultural phenomena always benefits from the translational capacity to stand in a theoretically relatively impartial middle and address a scholarly audience outside the specific area of research. At times the change of location, along with my shifting perspectives on the object of study, thus presented itself as the biggest limitation to my research.

The crisis is, to a certain degree, exportable. This is evident in the interest in festivals to include Greek work and frame it as a product of the crisis, as seen particularly in the Italian performances of Sons and Daughters. The international interest in the crisis means that more and more publishing rights have been sold abroad during the crisis for translations into English,
French, and German. It is difficult to predict whether this trend, which Socrates Kabouropoulos has named “a stereotyping of compassion,” will replace other pervasive stereotypes about Greece constructed by previous literary and cinematic symbols, such as Zorbas. The translation of plays, such as the three case studies I examined, have the potential to counter such sweeping generalizations as they deal with real issues important to the Greeks themselves.

Some future directions for the study of translation as self-representation and as historiographical approach can include a more context-specific study on the impact of tourism. A more focused study of the translational and performative dynamic of the Greek tourist industry may provide answers to how to integrate ancient heritage, Ottoman influences, and EU membership. Greece has a particularly fluid culture. In the employment of its classical heritage, with its membership in the European Union, and in the eyes of the thousands of refugees who struggle to reach its shores, it is the “West.” However, in its current economic position, its post-Ottoman identity, and in its marginal religious affiliation it shares with the rest of the Balkans, it corresponds to the image of the “East.” The obscurity of contemporary Greek cultural production internationally depends on many factors, but Greece’s ambivalent position between East and West is a principal parameter. As I have attempted to demonstrate through my three case studies, translation can sensitize theatre historians and cultural critics to their biases regarding linguistic hierarchies even among cultures that are seen as possessing cultural capital, such as Greece, which because of its ancient past is often categorized among the powerful Western languages by default. I believe that my project critically interrogates related biases and concepts, and

---

contributes to a research methodology that enhances connections among theatre, translation, and historiography as they are practiced under the current circumstances.
Bibliography


- - -. *Προλεγόµενα, δεύτερον εκδιδόµενα δια συνδροµής των οµογενών* [Prologues, Second Edition Published with the Help of the Diaspora], 1815 (no publication information).


- - -. “Surtitles Take the Stage in Franco-Canadian Theatre.” *Target* 25, no. 3 (2014): 343-64. doi 10.1075/target.25.3.03lad.
 - - - . “Has the Crisis Changed Greeks’ Perceptions of Their Past?” Lecture, New York University, November 20, 2014.


**Interviews and personal communications**


Kalavrianos, Yannis. Discussion with the author, Athens, January 5, 2015.

- - - . Discussion with the author, Athens, January 7, 2015.

- - - . Email message to author, March 10, 2013.

- - - . Skype communication with the author, May 11, 2016.


Triantafyllidou, Lyto. Skype communication with the author, May 2, 2016.