Greek Studies Now
Cultural Analysis Network

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ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1: PRESS, TRANSLATION, AND THE NATION

Christopher Jotischky (University of Amsterdam)

'Theotokis the Epicurean: *Οι σκλάβοι στα δεσμά τους* as Lucretian Exercise'

Slaves in their Chains (*Οι σκλάβοι στα δεσμά τους*) (publ. 1922), Theotokis's most extensive novel, was conceived around the same time as the author's translation of the Latin didactic epic of Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* (*De rerum natura*). Despite Theotokis's explicit reference to his own translation of Lucretius in one of the novel's climactic scenes, the more broadly Lucretian nature of the work has yet to receive full attention. This paper will demonstrate that Theotokis's translation of Lucretius operates throughout the background of *Σκλάβοι*, informing both central points of the novel's plot and the characterization of its central figures. Furthermore, the very notion of enslavement which is of such thematic importance to the novel is also linked to Theotokis's translation, in which he adapts Lucretius' Latin phrasing to emphasize enslavement in several passages. Ultimately, Theotokis's choice to write a Lucretian novel is linked to the didactic purpose of his translation: a novel with an implicit leaning towards Lucretius' Epicurean philosophy would attract a broader readership than the translation of Lucretius' poem itself, and hence acquaint the Greek public more quickly with what Theotokis regarded as a work of vital importance in the European poetic and philosophical canon.

Trisevgeni Bilia (University of Oxford)

‘On Translators of Modernism in Greece’

This presentation will focus on Greek literary figures who worked on translations of modernist texts into Greek. Revisiting my research on the trajectory of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in Greece, and bringing in cases of other key modernist texts, in this presentation I will explore examples of the translator figure in Greek literature. Examining the practices, through which *Ulysses* was translated, brought to the fore the involvement of non-canonical or marginal literary figures such as Nikos G. Pentzikis, Zoi Karelli, and Sokratis Kapsaskis, who belonged to literary circles and often engaged with translation more broadly. In my presentation I will explore the groups in which these figures participated, the networks they created, and the connections among them. Taking into account the role that translation plays in the formation of the nation, national identity, and national literature as illustrated by Lawrence Venuti (2005), this presentation will propose comparisons with other key modernist texts and their translators, such as T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), translated, among others, by George Seferis (*Η Έρημη Χώρα*, 1936), and Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927), first translated by Pavlos Zannas (*Αναζητώντας τον χαμένο χρόνο*, 1969-1988), to discuss perceptions and performances of translation in relation to modernism. Finally, this presentation aims to probe the question of how to approach a national literature through the translations of the foreign texts it accommodates proposing therefore a reconsideration of the reception of modernism in Greece.

Claudio Russello (University of Oxford / Princeton University)

‘*Πάλι*, the People, the Geography: Mapping Metamodernism in a Greek Journal of the 1960s’

As part of my broader study on the cultural and literary scene of the Greek 1960s, this paper presents and tests some initial arguments that will guide my research during a future postdoctoral fellowship at Princeton University. The focus of my presentation is the avant-garde journal *Πάλι*, which circulated in Greece between 1964 and 1966, serving as a striking example of the cultural shifts that defined the ‘long 1960s.’

This paper examines the journal from two perspectives: first, it analyses the intellectuals who contributed to *Πάλι*, mapping their relationships, connections, and movements, highlighting their exposure to and participation in international cultural movements. Secondly, it explores the editorial decisions regarding the works and authors that were translated for the journal, charting their origins, cultural impact, and Greek translators to throw into relief the journal’s intent to foster global literary dialogue.

Employing a metamodernist lens to analyse the journal, the people involved in its creation, and the geographical context of its development, this study challenges the view of *Πάλι* as a (neo)surrealist endeavour. Instead, it positions the journal as a central piece of 1960s Greek culture, offering a reassessment that situates Greece within broader global artistic and intellectual currents.

Yiorgos-Evgenios Douliakas (University of Amsterdam / Leiden University)

‘Fotis Yagoulas and the Law of Pardala’

This paper examines the conflicting spaces of justice that open up within the Greek Criminological museum in Athens. Inside a glass cabinet in this museum, and among those of other executed criminals, lies the head of the chief brigand of Mt. Olympus, Fotis Yagoulas. Following his decapitation on Kleftovrysi by the gendarmerie in 1925, after being publicly demonstrated on the fence of the Katerini train station for a few days, it ended up displayed in a cabinet, where it remains to this day. His sword, a yataghan named ‘Pardala’, lies just a few meters away in a different glass cabinet. Engraved upon it, one can read what Yagoulas called, the “Law of Pardala.” It is a manifesto about taking justice in one's own hands. It was formulated by Yagoulas following his disappointment with “the laws of men”. Unlike other brigands and their sword engravings, who are merely decorative or consist of a few words, also on display in the museum, Yagoulas stands apart for his decision to engrave his understanding of justice on his yataghan. This engraved legality serves as a moment of rupture in the lawscape that the museum of criminology fosters and sustains in its space. The law of the state, the law of the brigands, the right of a forensic discipline to continue to exhibit human remains—all of these manifesting themselves at the same time, and competitively attempting to seize a space for themselves. Taking into account human remains, material artefacts, and museum statutes, I probe into the legalities at hand to discuss what resistances co-exist today in this space, what pasts are unearthed or remain hidden, and the sensorialities as they are felt through metal and decaying flesh.

PANEL 2: WEIRD, QUEER, AND RESISTANCE

Orestis Tzirtzilakis (University of Oxford)

'*The Woman of Zakythos*. Hysterical Resistances in the Work of Dionysios Solomos'

This paper proposes an alternative reading of Solomos' main manuscript of *The Woman of Zakythos*, 'Z13', mapping its crucial intersection with the history of hysteria.

It situates Solomos' much-studied Z13 notebook in dialogue with the cultural and political discourses of hysteria in Britain and France, as well as their entanglement with the history of the Ionian Islands. Through a close reading of *The Woman of Zakythos*, it examines the text's material history, including its editorial transformations, the visual imagery it has generated, and related documents such as letters, footnotes, and contemporaneous writings.

Solomos inscribes symptoms of the disorder in the bodies and gestures of the two main protagonists—the Woman and the Hieromonk. Both figures participate in the national allegories that shape Solomos' archives, from the national pedagogy of Iakovos Polylas' *Prolegomena* to later re-editions and criticism. Rather than viewing hysteria solely as an inscribed pathology, this paper contends that its symptoms function as a disruptive presence resisting the making of national identity. The protagonists' gestures, shifting between repression and excess, reveal the disorder as both a tool of biopolitical control and a form of resistance against nationalist readings of Solomos.

Katerina Kalivrousi (University of Amsterdam)

‘Between Reality and Fiction: The “Weird” Art of the “Greek Crisis”’

By engaging with the films *Third Kind* (2018) and *Kepler* (2014) by Yorgos Zois and George Drivas, respectively, my research focuses on the genre hybridity evident in artistic responses produced during the “Greek crisis” (2009-2018). More specifically, I am looking into the relationship between realism and science-fiction in its manifestation in the above films and its connection to the “weird” mode and the rise of the “Greek Weird Wave” cinema. By utilizing Boletsi's “weird turn”, Papanikolaou's “biopolitical realism” and Ivry's “transscalar critique”, I bring forward the interconnectedness between different forms of globalized crises evident in the films’ narratives (Boletsi 2024; Papanikolaou 2020, 2021; Ivry 2023). In my analysis, I argue that the unique blending of the genres of realism and science-fiction in the films creates a hybrid aesthetic response to hegemonic rhetoric of crises, which propose that There Is No Alternative (TINA) to the modalities of capitalism in its intersection with modernity/ coloniality and the systems of oppression that they perpetuate (Boletsi et al. 2020; Boletsi 2024). Ultimately, the films provoke us to think beyond the binary logics of utopia/ dystopia, salvation/ catastrophe and lack of alternatives that neoliberal understandings of globalized crises bring forward. Instead, their genre hybridity is an aesthetic and political response to the entanglement of globalized crises and through this, they promote thinking and being together otherwise (Boletsi 2024).

Elliot Koubis (University of Oxford)

‘Curation and Method: Queer Kinship and Survival in Édouard Louis and Maria Cyber’

This paper examines how Édouard Louis in *Changer: méthode* (2021) and Maria Cyber in *Μια λεσβιακή ζωή* (2023) mobilise contrasting, but overlapping, strategies of queer survival and self-making: one through the body, the other through the archive. I read Louis through Cyber’s practice of ‘curation’, exploring how both authors reimagine queer kinship within the contexts of class, internal pressures on queer identities and the need to survive.

I will further explore Louis creative use of Bourdieu’s *La Distinction* to transform his body and class and will focus especially on his lists, social performances and language choices. By contrast, Cyber curates a photographic archive of transnational lesbian communities that place her in their histories. Her project reflects what Sam Bourcier calls ‘a living archive’, where the archivist and the archived mutually record each other.

I will argue that Louis’s inward-facing ‘care of the self', the main theme of *Changer*, is *not* the opposite of Cyber’s outward-facing, communal ‘curation’ of lesbian histories. My reading explores how these two strategies, these two "methods", could be seen as complementing each other, precisely as they zoom in on the transformation of oneself and others. My comparative approach will tentatively contextualise these writing and archival practices as responses to precarity of queer rights in the present.

Billie Mitsikakos (University of Oxford)

‘David Hockney, C. P. Cavafy, and the Indexical Impulse’

The present paper takes its cue from David Hockney’s twelve etchings on C. P. Cavafy’s poetry (1966/1967). It proposes that what Hockney pinpoints in Cavafy as an overarching, albeit diffuse trope, and reactivates in his own craft is an insistence on tactile engagement, a propensity for outreach and clinginess, a nod towards emergences of contact: a tending towards a *poetics of touch* as a modality for creative re/presentation and artistic production. I argue that the haptic lends itself as an alternative framework for knowing and recording queer existence, privileging embodiment and relationality over rigid classification and bio-/necropolitical regulation.

Hockney’s etchings and Cavafy’s poems, I suggest, abound with instances of queers touching, forming counterhegemonic archives of queerness. Foregrounding such archives of the haptic is rather anarchic for it runs counter to protocols of visual scrutiny and normative notions of the evidentiary employed throughout history to typecast and criminalise queer subjects. In turn, looking at the role of tactility in Hockney’s and Cavafy’s creative processes, I explore how their counterarchives of touches are predicated upon an indexical impulse: that is, an intensified use of semiotic *deixis* as a strategy for securing and signifying queer presence in an unmediated, intimate, and affirmative fashion.

KEYNOTE PAPERS

Alexis Radisoglou (Durham University)

'On German Literature (Written in Greek): Reflections on Aglaia Blioumi's *Αποχαιρέτα την τη Στουτγάρδη, Αστυάνακτα*'

Interweaving a reflection on my own position as a German-born *Auslandsgermanist* and grandson of a *Gastarbeiter*, with a close reading of the 2022 novel *Αποχαιρέτα την τη Στουτγάρδη, Αστυάνακτα* (*Say Farewell to Stuttgart, Astyanax*) by the German-born Greek writer Aglaia Blioumi – daughter of Greek guest workers in Germany – I will argue for an expansive conception of where the entity commonly known as German literature 'resides'. To attend to the (hi)stories and legacies of guest workers in Germany, as Blioumi's geographically and temporally expansive novel does, I suggest, not only brings into relief the constitutive transculturality and 'post-monolingualism' (Y. Yildiz) of any national literature, and the 'multidirectional' (M. Rothberg) forms of memory it must encompass, but – in its engagement with matters of class, racialization and the uneven dynamics of European economic 'development' – also complicates facile celebrations of a contemporary cosmopolitan conviviality and border-crossing. To read Blioumi's Greek novel, from within the domain of a British *Germanistik*, as *German* literature highlights the profoundly diasporic, or 'diasporizing', nature of the practices of reading and writing literature, thus stretching to their limits the conceptual parameters of both the discipline of *Germanistik* and its very object of study, German literature itself. What follows is the challenge and imperative to instigate new forms of (trans-)cultural analysis and multilingual reading that will transform the conceptual underpinnings and disciplinary boundaries that determine current practices of teaching and researching in the discipline of Modern Languages in the UK today.

Kristina Gedgaudaitė (University of Vienna)

‘Comics, Performativity, Critical Literacies’

Paul Gravett has once compared comics to sheet music that that “truly comes to life when it is directed and animated in the reader’s head. Because of this, each performance, each interpretation, each definition will be unique” (Gravett 2013: 31). In a similar vein, Mia Liinason views comics as a form of activism, where “hegemonic worlds can be challenged, through the creation of performative narratives that provoke and evoke other possible worlds and relationships” (Liinason 2025: 21). Taking up the performativity of comics medium yet shifting the focus from comics-reading to comics-making, this paper discusses several collaborative community projects I engaged in while conducting research on comics in present-day Greece. In these projects, comics were used to chart cityscapes and research journeys, capture the moments of everyday lives as well as offer a reader-response approach to other comics during workshops. While discussing these case studies, the paper provides an insight into the performativity of comics medium as means of documentation, affective engagement and the cultivation of critical literacies.