



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

DURING THE LONG GREEK CRISIS: JAN FABRE, THE GREEK FESTIVAL, AND *METAKÉNOSIS*

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Currently Greek culture is received internationally through two externally imposed 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. I argue that the crisis has prompted a re-examination of Greece's ambivalent position between East and West and its European identity, through the renewed interest in its modern and contemporary history. The Enlightenment's principles have influenced Modern Greek identity enormously, perhaps more than was previously recognized before the crisis. Historical theories of cultural transmission specific to the Greek paradigm, such as Adamantios Korais's highly consequential principle of *metakénosis*, provide a way into the complex issue of national, European, and global identity under the pressure of the crisis. After a brief analysis of the historical concept and its legacy, I turn to a recent scandal in the Greek theatre world, that of Jan Fabre's short-lived appointment as artistic director of the Greek Festival in 2016. A large group of Greek theatre artists circulated a letter of protest in which they asked Fabre to resign. In their responses to Fabre's perceived appropriation of their festival, these artists seemed to be reversing the *metakénosis* model as they expressed their opposition to standards of cultural value imposed from abroad. The context of the crisis, as fiscal crisis, but also as a new paradigm of *krisis* as historiographical judgment, was instrumental in voicing this protest.

The crisis, the continuity myth, and Korais's *metakénosis*

The negative representations of Greece's image 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. In their discussion on the role of history in current affairs, Antonis Liakos and Hara Kouki (2015) 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” (58). The choice to examine *recent* history 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 that primarily focused on preserving a valuable past.¹ In the early nineteenth century, the classical past was seen as the only road to modernization, which, following Western preoccupations, mandated a parallel obliteration of other pasts, perceived to be not so useful, such as the centuries between ancient Greece and the new Greek state founded in 1828.² During the current crisis, however, a distinct shift occurred: domestic interest turned to the repressed periods and modern Greek culture moved to the foreground. Greek Enlightenment figure Adamantios Korais’s idea of *metakénoisis* and its historical influence constitute a key investigation for my study of the new historiographical model that emerged during the crisis.

Perhaps prompted by the dual meaning of the word *krisis* (κρίση) to mean both crisis *and* judgment in Greek, consistent with this special journal issue, recent Modern Greek scholarship has focused on cultural phenomena that study the current recession not simply as a rupture, or a break with the past, but instead as historiographic assessment that promotes the past. In several recent works, the crisis is first and foremost a selection process that elucidates obscure aspects of Greek history. For example, Antonis Liakos (2014) explains that, starting with the 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 study of graffiti messages on national monuments in Athens, in which the national heroes of the nineteenth-century Greek revolution were pressed into the service of Euroskepticism. On a similar mode, Kostis Kornetis (2010) analyzes the reappearances of past activist poetics in the December 2008 riots. The widely observed performative practice of rejecting the past while adopting its language emphasizes the younger generation’s ambivalence in handling the resurgence of a more recent, largely repressed history.

From brief allusions to elaborate treatments of historical events, history seems to have become a standard feature in Greek dramaturgy in the decade 2008–2018. During this period, forgotten classics of the Greek nineteenth and twentieth centuries reappeared in earnest. As Savas Patsalidis and Anna Stavrakopoulou (2014) put it, “whether in the form of an ‘alteration’ or an ‘imitation,’ ‘spinoff,’ ‘appropriation,’ ‘abridgement,’ ‘transformation,’ ‘version,’ ‘offshoot’ or ‘tradaptation,’ the past, ancient and more recent, is constantly reshuffled, reterritorialized, and rehistoricized in order to suit better the situation created by the economic crash” (13). The two scholars understand the 2010–2013 repertoires of the National Theatre and the National Theatre of Northern Greece in particular as the epitome of this retrospective tendency. With the outbreak of the economic crisis, these two institutions took a conscious direction in search of Greek cultural identity. Their repertory was dominated by contemporary and modern Greek plays, adaptations of ancient

drama, and even innovative use of folk elements in visual and aural elements of their productions. However, the “affective encounter with the past” (Zaroulia 2015, 15) was not restricted in national stages, but also concerned smaller companies, in their attempt to question grand narratives, genealogies, and borders (Patsalidis 2016, 5).

The renewed interest in history is also noted in publishing activity. Socrates Kabouropoulos (2016) presents statistics on the “extended usage of literature as a means of reaffirming notions of cultural identity, identifying with- and, at the same time, escaping from the harsh realities of the crisis.” He follows Greek readers’ turn to introspection during the crisis, demonstrated by a significant increase in Greek titles and a simultaneous decline of published translations. In non-fiction, an enhanced interest in publications on contemporary history prevails over economics and political science.

In summing up the above trends, therefore, the skepticism surrounding Greece’s European identity brought about a retrospective glance that sought to subvert established images and restrictive uses of the past. Greek performance, in a variety of forms, proposed a novel historiographic approach that challenged the continuity myth by calling into question the enduring image of modern Greece as “the quintessential archive of a perennial past” (Papanikolaou 2011). Dimitris Papanikolaou considers this 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 (ibid.). 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.” As early as 2011, Papanikolaou saw in artistic responses to the crisis 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 its national, political, sociocultural cohesion in synchrony and diachrony—has until now been told.” The reconsideration of the past, then, 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. During this period of profound political and social upheaval, the perpetual backward glance in Greek thought, which ordinarily functioned as a mode of cultural coherence, has instead become a subversive historiography.

In order to perceive the dramatic historiographical shifts that the crisis produced, it is worth unpacking the instrumentalized uses of the past as these occurred under the cultural paradigm that until recently dominated Greek historical and philosophical thought. The philosophical tradition of continuity that forgoes a large part of Greek history by focusing on the classical era harks back to another moment of crisis: the preamble of the Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire. During the last turn of the eighteenth century, 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 was seen as the intellectual preparation for Greek-speaking populations to revolt against their Ottoman ruler in 1821 (Kondylis 1998, 200–205). At the time, translating the ancients was pivotal to formulating a

national identity. However, translation from Western European languages was also considered central to ensuring that the citizens of the emerging Greek state were Europeanized (Korais 1958, 119).³ In the dominant intellectual views of the era, particularly as expressed by Korais, the ancient past and the European present became one and the same.

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. The contemporaneous philhellenic movement in Europe also relied on the belief that classical Greece was the cradle of European civilization (Augustinos 2008, 188). A decisive step towards the idea that Ottoman Greeks were descendants of classical Greeks was provided with the Greek translation of Charles Rollin's *Histoire ancienne*, published in Venice in 1750 (Kitromilides 2013, 71). Rollin advocated that eighteenth-century Greeks could claim the ancients as their direct ancestors, based on the common geographical space (72). Once the connection was solidly in place in Greek cultural consciousness, the continuity principle became part of their historical narrative: "For Greeks to feel as national subjects means to internalize their relationship with ancient Greece" (Liakos 2008, 205). Greeks then needed to find a way to catch up with their ancestors.

The Enlightenment first, as well as the Romantic period soon afterward, provided examples where familiarity could be regained by means of translation. Adamantios Korais (1748–1833), a leading figure of the Greek cultural reform and architect of the new Greek language, best exemplifies the doctrine of continuity in his writings. In one of his many addresses to his fellow patriots he coined the term *metakénosis* (decanting) to describe the process of transferring those elements that distinguished Western Europeans as progressive to the intellectually deprived Greeks, (Korais 1958, 163) who, in his view, suffered under the ignorance imposed by the Ottomans (Coray 1877, 452). Translation was to become the bridge between the medieval darkness and the "Lights" of Europe (Kitromilides 2013, 8). Korais's *metakénosis* first appears in his "Αυτοσχέδιοι Στοχασμοί" [Impromptu Reflections], the prefaces to his numerous translations, where he compares the Greece of his time to fifteenth-century Western Europe (Korais 1958, 163). In his view, Western Europe used the same ancient Greek materials to build its modern nations. The Greeks could now benefit from them as well, not only because they were so valuable to the Europeans, but even more so since they themselves are the descendants of an ancient civilization. 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: "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" (ibid.).⁴ According to the *metakénosis* model, translation was a form of transfer in space *and* time: from Western Europe to Greece, and from ancient to modern times.

Clearly, *metakénosis* was not simply a translation method or theory, but also a model of historiographical practice that relied on the awakening of a cultural memory. As Augustinos (2008) relates, 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" (172). All the centuries in between needed to be suppressed in order for contemporary Greeks to regain the required intimacy with their classical ancestors. In Korais's doctrine, proximity to that valuable 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 would become insignificant in the Greek national narrative. By reclaiming their forgotten classical heritage through translation, Ottoman Greeks could reorganize their view of their history. The concept of *metakénesis*, which follows this historical logic while adding the parameter of Western Europe as keeper of the ancient treasures, becomes a historiographical paradigm.

An important aspect in Korais's philosophical thesis was the implication of *debt* in the relationship between Ancient Greeks and Europeans. Korais believed that Europe had borrowed from classical Greece, and therefore the *re*-translation of this material did not demean his contemporaries (Korais 1958, 163). On the contrary, he proclaimed, Greeks had rights to the European Enlightenment as much as the Europeans who had enjoyed its fruits for years before (*ibid.*). *Metakénesis* presupposes a cultural debt about to yield profit to the Greeks, as beneficiaries of the valued heritage. In his address to the *Société des observateurs de l'homme* in 1803, he used monetary terms to paint a picture of Greeks and Europeans as two sides bound by a historical exchange of cultural goods: "The Greeks, proud of their origins, are far from closing their eyes to the lights of Europe; they have considered the Europeans as debtors, that will reimburse them for the capital they have received from their ancestors with very high interest" (Coray 1877, 457).⁵ The assumption that Europeans were bound by this debt and had an ethical responsibility to the Greeks has had a long-term impact in forging the complex relationship between Greece and Western Europe. The fiscal language that Korais employs moves *metakénesis*—and its association with debt—front and center in the current domestic questioning of Greek cultural politics in relation to Europe.

Implicit in the image of Europe as the container of knowledge and Greece as the receptacle, the former pouring into the latter, is a certain degree of cultural asymmetry. Much like Patrice Pavis's image of the hourglass in intercultural communication (1992, 4-5), the movement is narrowly understood as unidirectional. As per Korais, 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 *metakénesis* fueled nationalism and a sense of cultural superiority among the Greeks, while at the same time nourished the insecurities and an overwhelming sentiment of absolute cultural subordination to external powers—the Western 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 and widely analyzed in Modern Greek studies,⁶ resurfaced particularly in present times in the discussion of debt and sovereignty.⁷ For example, several recent works on the crisis deal with Nikiforos Diamandouros's concept of cultural dualism, which directly takes on the perception of the Western modernized versus the Ottoman-as-regressive segment of the population (2000, 8).

Metakénesis's significance today 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. Cultural production during the crisis exhibits ambivalent attitudes that, on the one hand, seem to reject the model of cultural dependency that Korais put forth, while on the other, embrace the study of the past as a means to analyze the present. Even when a more recent history is foregrounded, there is still an evident reliance on the past. In this moment of agonizing reassessment of national history, elements that deviate from the narrative of Western historiography receive greater attention. The theory of *metakénesis* seems to still function as the overarching principle in the intense comparisons to Western Europe as Greeks negotiate their sentiments of national pride and inferiority.

I now turn to the ways this re-examination and questioning of prior cultural thought and practice informs present-day political positions, stereotypes in international relations, and knee-jerk reactions, as these occur in the theatre world. A recent scandal that involved cultural asymmetry and stereotypical reading of “Greekness” occurred in the spring of 2016. In February of that year, Jan Fabre took over as artistic director of the Greek Festival (also known as the Festival of Athens and Epidaurus). His appointment, however, was rather short-lived as he was forced to resign within weeks as a result of vocal demands by a group of Greek artists. But before delving into the particulars of this incident, I will briefly sketch the situation in Greek theatre under a failing economy.

The theatrical landscape and the Greek Festival

Despite the shocking rates of unemployment in the long years of continuous austerity, theatre in Greece remains surprisingly rich and varied, with a large number of people maintaining professional activity in a society that struggles with alarming rates of unemployment.⁸ Here, it is important to define growth and activity in the current circumstances. The extreme conditions have changed the standards of acceptable professional practice. Overwhelming unemployment pushed theatres to operate on the basis of steep decreases in admission prices, and in some cases through voluntary contributions, as well as subscription packages that put the price of a show as low as one euro (Sykka 2015). The results 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. Granted, the system largely offers substantial opportunities for artists’ collectives to self-regulate and to maintain full control over their processes and products. But Claire Bishop’s definition of the contemporary artist as “the role model for the flexible, mobile, non-specialised labourer” (2012, 12) unfortunately seems particularly on-point in the Greek case.

In the above practices under the crisis, important institutions such as the Greek Festival provide performers with substantial support to reach a significant number of spectators. The Greek Festival

is a major event for the performing arts in Greece that spans throughout the summer period. Established in 1955, it is the only theatre event of such a long tenure and magnitude in the country. 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 and international stages (Greek Festival website, "History"). The year 2006 is significant, as it marks Yorgos Loukos taking over following his post as artistic director of the Lyon Opera. Loukos managed the institution for ten consecutive years before Fabre's appointment in 2016. Under Loukos's direction, the festival became an outward-facing event that included a wide range of performance by Greek artists and invited productions.⁹ 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 (Kanellopoulos 2015).

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. Speaking of the decision to include smaller-scale work from independent Greek companies, Eleftheria Ioannidou and Natascha Siouzouli (2014) argue that financial pressures, felt particularly after 2012 in the Festival's programming, propelled the institution towards an era of "a destabilizing new dynamic which challenges the existing institutional and cultural practices in a more radical way than the international collaborations of the preceding years" (115). Reluctant to take the risks involved in performing in crisis-stricken Athens, foreign companies left the space to local artists to access the festival's stages for the first time in the organization's history (ibid.). The crisis seems to have created the opportunity for emerging Greek artists to share their work with a larger audience in co-productions with an institution highly involved in forging a Greek cultural identity. This is the context in which the Fabre incident should be placed.

Jan Fabre takes over as curator

Jan Fabre, already known in Greece for his creative work, was not a surprising choice for the office of artistic director. The implicit concept behind Fabre's appointment was the idea that an artist with an international reputation would assist Greek theatre production in its connections abroad, as contemporary Greek theatre has not yet reached its 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" (Dimadi 2016a). His expressed intentions directly responded to Greek artists' desire to become better known inside and outside their country.

However, the press release of Fabre's vision for the new festival was received amidst great disappointment and intense reactions by Greek artists, as the program that Fabre designed was one that showcased Belgium and Belgian art. In the first year of Fabre's tenure, out of a total of ten productions, the Festival was to produce eight pieces by Fabre himself and his collaborators. The response in circulation in social media was succinctly expressed in the phrase "*Le Festival c'est moi*"

(Georgakopoulou 2016). The following year was designed to enlarge Fabre's Belgian vision to include invited artists from other countries. Greek works were not to be admitted again until two years later. The name of the festival was also changed from the Greek Festival of Athens and Epidaurus to the International Festival of Athens and Epidaurus (Dimadi 2016a).

The complete absence of Greek productions was the most incendiary aspect of Fabre's proposed program. Immediately following the announcement, 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 and asked him to resign. In their letter, they name Fabre "*persona non grata*" (Proto Thema 2016). 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.¹⁰

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. According to an anonymous stage photographer based in Athens, "Athens and Epidaurus festival is much more than a festival; it's a cultural institution and already an international one. [...] We welcome international participations, not international takeovers" (quoted in Stefanou 2016). The Greek artists' comments openly questioned what they read as Fabre's attempt to degrade them. Their choice of words reveals that they experienced Fabre's Belgian vision as an attack on their culture, and felt dismissed since their own artistic level was not recognized. Fabre's appointment ended immediately; he resigned the next day, only five days after announcing the festival's program for the first summer of his tenure (Maltezou 2016). After Fabre's resignation, the then minister of culture, Aristeidis Baltas, appointed Greek director Vangelis Theodoropoulos, who was among the protestors and a well-known figure in the Greek theatre world. The new program was announced in the following month and featured 72 productions of both Greek and foreign work (Dimadi 2016b).

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 and posted on Fabre's company Facebook page, 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" (Troubleyn Jan Fabre 2016). Evidently, 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, 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—and linguistic entitlement. Why would a body of local artists be expected to address their 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. 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 has heavily invested in translation and the preservation of linguistic plurality.

Fabre's contempt for the Greek artists' natural language of choice seems 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. The crisis created the community for this voice of opposition to be heard. The timing of Fabre's designs coincided with a period of mistrust in Western Europe, where Brussels in particular has become the symbol of European Union bureaucracy: "Others have accused Fabre of cultural colonialism, drawing parallels with the treatment Athens is perceived to have received from Brussels during the eurozone crisis" (Stefanou 2016). Indeed, the artists' knee-jerk reaction indicates the sensitivity analogous to Greece's "crypto-colonial" position, in Herzfeld's term (2002, 900), but also carries the resistance that stems from an intense search for a new identity. Fabre's lack of regard for the artistic scene in Athens was aligned with the financial treatment coming from European officials, who worked to reform the "disobedient" subjects of the Eurozone. The response from the Greek theatre world seems to have been enhanced by the anti-European sentiment that was gathering momentum in the past several years. In Marilena Zaroulia's iteration, this "alternative politics" that has become more and more visible in the streets as in the theatre, has raised hope in political philosophers who "saw in the Greek paradigm the arena that could host a bigger battle—that between neoliberalism and the potentialities of resistance" (2015, 8–9).

In the rest of his letter, Fabre asks: "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?" (Troubleyn Jan Fabre 2016). Indeed, the fact that the artists' reaction was immediate and centered upon the demand that Fabre resigns, rather than perhaps a request to open a dialogue on the matter, speaks to a charged environment that fosters polarization among the artistic community. The leadership of the important institution changed hands amidst a specific socioeconomic context that placed artists in a position of indignation. Greek artists evidently do not wish to be educated in foreign models of cultural production that do not allow for their own local needs and particular artistic expression. Their resistance rejects the unidirectional movement of cultural value, as envisioned by Korais in his *metakénesis*. Those involved saw no benefit in importing Europe for their advancement, but instead wanted to participate in an international scene without adapting to foreign models. The cultural exchange in the context of the Greek Festival would have to take place on more inclusive terms that take into account the specific socio-political moment. Instead, Fabre's questions above criticize the Greeks for entering this exchange in a way that he deemed as not "serious."

As a response, Fabre added insult to injury, so to speak: Some days after resigning, he 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 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. (Troubleyn Jan Fabre 2016)

The expression "lost in translation" was used ironically, to attribute fault to the receivers of the message. Fabre's comments contain the value judgment that Greek artists are not proficient in European theatre talk. With this accusation, the Belgian artist tapped into the age-old Greek anxiety to catch up culturally with the rest of Europe, echoing Korais and his contemporaries, who labored over the intellectual advancement of the nation. As Fabre suggests in his post, the cultural inferiority of those who were backward enough not to understand the concept of "curator" puts them in the "underdog" segment of the population, per Diamandouros's influential paradigm of cultural dichotomy (2000, 8). In this reading, the Greek artists targeted by Fabre's comment, particularly by way of their intense reaction, are seen by him as exhibiting the traits of the "highly defensive culture," backward and introverted, that has been named the culprit of everything that is wrong with the economy and the country in general (Liakos and Kouki 2015, 54). Fabre's publicly expressed attitude on the occasion of his resignation combines many of the above stereotypes that undervalue Greek culture, which remains trapped in a perennial comparison with a Eurocentric and anachronistic classical ideal.

While Greeks turn their attention to their recent past and reconsider their history as they bring it to bear on the present, foreign attitudes are obsessively limited to classical Greece. The foreign press often painted a dire picture, with images of distorted ancient Greek monuments employed to denote the Greek recession. For Greeks today these external projections put contemporary culture in an unfair comparison with classical times, as they emphasize the disparity between ancient Greek culture and the reality nowadays. The recent European crisis may have put Greece under the limelight and, in doing so, gave Greek culture a contemporary identity abroad. The Greek crisis may indeed be "modern"; however, its frame of reference remains "ancient." These new, unfavorable attributes are still dependent on Greece's classical image. The almost parodic images of mishandled ancient heritage serve more than to produce enticing visuals for news coverage: they indicate a deep crisis in historiographical practice. The bankrupt Greeks are portrayed as not worthy or capable of safeguarding the ancient lineage.

In the updated Festival's website, under the directorship of Theodoropoulos, the mission description at the end of the history section acknowledges the crisis as a factor in their decision making:

In these times of social and cultural crisis, it is imperative that the Athens & Epidaurus Festival contributes to social cultivation, encouraging love for high art. At the same time, the Festival needs to actively support contemporary artists. Highlighting contemporary art and paving the road for audiences that are more critically engaged are both instrumental in enabling the operation of a progressive, cultural institution insofar as they promote a better society: a society of proactive thinkers rather than a society of helpless people at the mercy of market forces. ("History," The Greek Festival website)

The political position expressed in the period of activism against Fabre was folded into the new wording, and expanded to express an important concern about cultural stereotyping: "It is of paramount importance to make sure that the Festival is actively engaged with the production of Greek culture, the goal being to re-introduce an aspect of Greekness that is divested of any stereotypical folklore elements" (ibid.) This short description summarizes the wider cultural movement in Greece in the post(?)-crisis era with regards to history and self-representation.

The uses of the past during the Eurozone crisis took different forms in Greece and abroad, but in both contexts the past was prominently positioned. Images of ruined monuments and statues digitally manipulated into offensive gestures may have been intended 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 foundation in 1828, and particularly how this understudied past came to bear on the present. The subversive historiographical approach that emerged with the crisis, informed by the cultural tensions that Greeks and other peoples experience, has the potential to update the ways we understand, analyze, and perform the past. During the crisis, more than ever, the historical theory of continuity between ancient and modern Greece and, consequently, the philosophical principles that support it, such as Korais's *metakénosis*, have been under intense examination. In an attempt to exercise control on the ways they represent themselves within the country and abroad, Greek artists create work that challenges stereotypes and restrictive readings of national history, and instead promotes a more nuanced image that recontextualizes the Greek past. In the past ten years, Greek stages have mounted bold attempts to address the wider symbolic framework of Greece as Europe's myth of origin, to question its assumptions, and to negotiate a new place for Greek identity. However, institutions in Greece and abroad are sometimes slow in catching up with the sentiment of the people they serve, as seen in the example of Fabre's unfitting placement as curator to the Greek Festival. Building on the confidence afforded by *metakénosis* and its legacy, while rejecting its hierarchical model of Western/Ancient/Eastern culture, the Greek artists involved took ownership of their festival and in doing so, pointed to the need for a democratic alternative: a more inclusive process by which to fill the office of leader in a

cultural institution. The Fabre scandal, arguably an intriguing episode in the Greek crisis saga, may well prove most impactful in regards to Greek cultural policy.

Notes

¹ 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 in Modern Greek Studies. See, among others, Mackridge (2008); Liakos (2008).

² 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. (2008, 308).

³ Greek intellectual Adamantios Korais urged his contemporaries to translate from European philosophers, as well as the Ancient Greeks. “Επιστολή προς Αλέξανδρο Βασιλείου,” [Letter to Alexandros Vasileiou] in *Ο Κοραΐς και η Εποχή του* [Korais and His Time] ed. K. Th. Dimaras (Athens: Zacharopoulos, 1958), 119.

⁴ My translation. Original text: “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, και κατ’ άλλο δεν διαφέρει πλην ότι γεμίζομεν ταύτα χωρίς να ευκαιρώσωμεν εκείνα” (Korais 1958, 163).

⁵ My translation. Original text: “Les Grecs, vains de leur origine, loin de fermer les yeux aux lumières de l’ Europe, n’ont regardé les Européens que comme des débiteurs, qui leur remboursoient avec de très-gros intérêts un capital qu’ils avoient reçu de ces ancêtres” (Coray 1877, 457).

⁶ Michael Herzfeld further checks this discourse of “living ancestors and wretched orientals” for its orientalist prejudices in his critique *Anthropology Through the Looking Glass* (1987, 49).

⁷ See, among others, Triandafyllidou, Gropas, and Kouki (2013), Murray-Leach (2014), Liakos and Kouki (2015).

⁸ In a study published in *Kathimerini* newspaper in June 2015, unemployment in the general population reached 26.6%, with 30.6% the estimate for women. Among people aged 18–25, a shocking 51% is surpassed by the 57% of unemployed women in the same category (*l Kathimerini* 2015). For figures on theatre production during the crisis, see Lympferopoulou (2013); Patsalidis and Stavrakopoulou (2014, 11).

⁹ Loukos’s tenure is often acknowledged as a “turning point” in the Festival’s history. See Ioannidis (2016, 76), Ioannidou and Siouzouli (2014, 109).

¹⁰ My translation. Original text: “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 μάζα, που θαΐπρεπε να σας οφείλει και ευγνωμοσύνη” (Proto Thema 2016).

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Biography

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