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The Greek Body in Crisis: Contemporary Dance as a Site of Negotiating and  
Restructuring National Identity in the Era of Precarity

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

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# Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the result of four years of intensive research, even though I have been engaging with this topic and the questions discussed here long before that. Having been born in Greece, and having lived there till my early twenties, it is the place that holds all my childhood memories, my first encounters with dance, my friends, and my family. From a very early age I remember how I always used to say that I wanted to study dance and then move to the US to pursue my dream. Back then I was not sure what that dream was, other than leaving Greece, where I often felt like I did not belong. Being here now, in the US, I think I found it and I must admit that when I first begun my pursuit in graduate studies in dance, I was very hesitant to engage in research concerning Greece. It made me uncomfortable, because it was too personal. Looking back now, I am extremely grateful to all the people who in their way pushed me towards this direction and assisted me in unpacking all the complexities of this project and interrogating my initial personal resistance to it. This tension has been the most fruitful and productive site in this process.

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In its early stages this research was primarily concerned with the discursive distinction between Hellenism and Greekness but through discussions and continuous reframing it came to be what you have in your hands now. A glimpse into this project's early stages of development, which gave birth to some of the questions discussed in chapter one, has been published under the title "Appropriations of Hellenism: A Reconsideration of Early Twentieth Century American Physical Culture Practices" in *Choros International Dance Journal*, 3 (Spring 2014), pp. 50–68. An excerpt from the third chapter "Bodies of Silence and Resilience: Writing Marginality" will appear in the 2015 CORD conference proceedings.

My fieldwork in Athens has been facilitated by the staff at the National Library, the Library of the Lyceum of Greek Women, and the Library of the National School of Dance. Although the sources on dance in Greece are limited, their suggestions and assistance has made the process of digging through these archives a lot easier and more pleasant. During my time in Athens, most of my close friends had been abroad for either work or graduate study and I only saw them sporadically, but they still supported me in this process and accompanied me to performances whenever they could. For this I would especially like to thank my friend Kostas who accompanied me to several performances, and assisted me by proof-reading translations from scholarly sources and interviews from Greek to English. Also, Alexandra, who I could always count on for double-checking inconsistencies and verifying historical sources.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Greek Body in Crisis: Contemporary Dance as a Site of Negotiating and Restructuring National Identity in the Era of Precarity

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Critical Dance Studies  
University of California, Riverside, June 2015  
Dr. Marta Elena Savigliano, Chairperson

This doctoral dissertation explores the development of Greek contemporary dance practices as a site for engaging with national identity construction during the recent (2009-2015) sociopolitical and financial crisis. Following archival research and ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that the financial crisis has become an opportunity to reassess and challenge rooted beliefs concerning the composition of national, cultural, and social identity in Greece through artistic practices.

The structuring axes of this work are the discourses of ‘Hellenism’ and ‘Greekness’, which are understood as two contrasting theoretical approaches to nationalism that inform contemporary Greek identity construction. ‘Hellenism’ is perceived as an aspired ideal pertaining to ancient Greek philosophical values, whereas ‘Greekness’ connotes a more modern manifestation of national identity following the establishment of the Independent Greek State (1832).

The dissertation explores the slow shift that occurred in embodied practices, which in their early stages were mostly associated with Hellenism, but later gave way to a

different understanding of national identity, more closely associated with Greekness. This move away from ancient Greek narratives towards an engagement with previously marginalized histories became particularly evident during the late stages of the crisis (2013-2015), when artistic production became a site for critical assessment of many aspects constituting contemporary Greek identity, such as people's relationship to their past, gender hierarchies, or the issue of racial construction of Greekness. While chapter one traces the historical shift in embodied practices from the beginning of the twentieth century till the early 2000s, the coming chapters comprise choreographic analyses of performances created during the recession. These works provide glimpses into the experience of navigating precarity, or inhabiting a precarious state of existence, such as immigrants or political refugees, and paint an image of the fluctuating social landscape.

Utilizing contemporary dance as a lens into a society that has been severely affected by the global financial crisis, this study raises questions about how national identity is critically examined and re-evaluated during the recession era. It aspires to serve as a framework for the ways that crises directly affect people's bodies not just on a material, corporeal level, but also on a phenomenological one.

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## Note on Transliteration

In the process of coming up with a transliteration method, I looked at various different approaches and realized that most of them were targeted to audiences with some knowledge of Greek language, such as scholars in Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies. I have thus decided to pursue my own system, drawing on the approaches of Neni Panourgia (2009) and Robert Fitzgerald (1998), in an attempt to make the transliterations accessible to readers who have no prior knowledge of Greek language. Following Greek grammar and spelling, I use accent marks in vowels (see below) to indicate which part of the word is accentuated. I do not use accents in names but follow the transliteration that each individual prefers. I do however follow existing rules of transliteration for names and terms that have an established spelling in English (for instance Oedipus, catharsis, Antigone, or Jocasta instead of Iokasti). Below are a few notes that explain how diphthongs, vowels, and consonants should be read:

### Two-lettered vowels should be read as one vowel and not separate:

ei or oi: (long *e*) as in *feel*

ai: (similar to *ae*) as in *aesthetic*

ou: (long *ou*) as in *oozing*

### Accented and non-accented vowels:

e: (short *e*) as in *men* (not accented)

é: (short *e*) as in *Edgar* (accented)

o: (short *o*) as in *Ophelia* (not accented)

ó: (short *o*) as in *auto* (accented)

i: (short *i*) as in *in*

a: (short *a*) as in *polar* (not accented)

á: (short *a*) as in *apple* (accented)

Consonants and other sounds that have no direct equivalent in English:

g: (soft and long *g*) as in the Spanish *fuego* (stands for the Greek Γ or γ)

d: (soft *th*) as in *that* (stands for the Greek Δ or δ)

x: (short *ks*) as in *axe* (stands for the Greek Ξ or ξ)

Other notes:

ps: as in *psalm* (stands for the Greek Ψ or ψ)

th: as in *theater* (stands for the Greek Θ or θ)



## Note on Translation

All translations in this document from Greek to English, or from German to English, have been the author's, unless indicated otherwise. All interviews as part of the ethnographic component of this research were conducted in Greek and the chosen excerpts have been translated by the author. The only exception is the interview with Despina Stamos and Jill Woodward that was conducted in English. In the instances where some terms could not be translated directly into English, or had more than one possible meaning the translation is accompanied by a footnote explaining the particularities.

## Introduction

# Moving ‘Homeward’: Encounters from an Alternative Fieldwork Experience

*One can return home after realizing that  
home is a place never before seen.  
(Ursula Le Guin – *The Dispossessed*)*

The purpose of this study is to explore contemporary dance in Greece during the still ongoing (2009-2015) sociopolitical and financial crisis and to investigate its relation in the process of national identity construction during this period. I argue that the devastating impact of the crisis has not only affected the country on a financial level, but it has also initiated a wave of radical reconsideration and renegotiation of national identity, the social sphere, and the self<sup>1</sup>. This dissertation is concerned with the various ways that embodied practices, and particularly contemporary dance, have been taking part in this process of reconsideration and redefinition of the Greek self.

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<sup>1</sup> There are varying approaches regarding the conceptualization of the self. To paint an image of the Greek self, I primarily draw on the work of Emmanuel Levinas (1987) and Mark C. Taylor (2000). Levinas theorizes the construction of the self through an encounter with the “other”. I draw on this paradigm to approach the construction of the Greek self following Greece’s independence from the Ottoman Empire, when, as chapter one will discuss, the composition of the Greek self was grounded on elements that opposed any relevance to Ottoman influences. Taylor, on the other hand, acknowledges the influence of society and the state in the constitution of the self. Following this approach, and understanding the Greek self in the context of societal and state forces, it is important to consider the prominent role of the Greek Orthodox Church which advocates for rather conservative values such as an emphasis on heteronormativity. While more extensive theorization of the Greek self will be provided in the chapters to come, it is important here to summarize the two aforementioned approaches and draw a rough sketch of the Greek self, pending further analysis. Thus, following up on the aforementioned lines of reasoning, the Greek self emerges as predominantly identifying with Western values and opposing any Oriental elements. As a result of this orientation, the Greek self is mostly asserted as racially white. See also (Goldberg 1996), (Faubion 1993) and (Hamilakis 2009).

This is what a proper introduction to a doctoral dissertation should look like. Allow me to pause here though and interject. Albeit academically correct, such an introduction makes me feel dishonest and uneasy. It conceals the internal struggles that gave birth to this project and undervalues my positionality. It emphasizes the importance of fieldwork, which I must admit has not been the primary source of my scholarship. In reality research *in* the ‘field’ has been more of a framing mechanism. What initially gave shape to this project has been the personal urge to acquire a sense of belonging, and to understand where the absence of this sense originated in the first place. This urge that was first articulated when I was a Greek student at a German high-school, when I dreamed of leaving Greece to study abroad, only to wish I could return as soon as I caught my first flight. A recurring sense of not belonging where I really wanted to, and belonging where I did not care.

Behind this project’s focus on the crisis lies a focus on understanding and laying bare the complexities of Greek identity construction. The decision to situate this investigation in the temporal frame of the crisis pertains to the belief that the extremities evidenced during this time offer a fertile ground for such discussions. Additionally it responds to the heightened personal conflict that intensified precisely because of the crisis and the negative representations that circulated about Greece and Greeks in that context. Being fully cognizant of how such an approach runs the risk of being deemed too personal, I still invite the reader who neither knows me, nor identifies with my dilemmas, to indulge in this exercise with me, because beyond any personal motives, this research captures the image of a society that is currently undergoing a major change. I like to think of what unfolds in the pages that follow as a glimpse into the local manifestation of a global

phenomenon: that of the financial crisis that first broke out in the USA in 2008. As I am writing these lines the aftermath of the global recession is still in flux and thus this study acquires the function of a photographic lens. It freezes its object in time, but the object keeps moving, it keeps dancing.

So let me try this again. A more honest approach would be to choreograph this introduction as a series of encounters. Although fragmentary and disconnected, these encounters introduce some of the complexities inherent in this project and provide significant background information for life in Greece, life as a dancer in Greece, and as a student and teacher of contemporary dance in Greece and abroad.

## First Encounter: The Theoretical Axis

Within the first two months of moving to the USA from Greece to pursue a doctoral degree I found myself at the Social Security Administration office in Riverside to issue a social security card in order to be able to work on campus. When my turn came a bespectacled lady behind a glass-guarded desk politely asked for my passport. I placed it in the metallic rotating drawer beneath the glass window. She pulled a lever and rotated the drawer to access the passport. Now that it was on her side of the desk there was no way for me to get hold of it anymore unless she placed it back in the drawer.

- Where are you from?

- *Greece.*

Pointing at the golden letters engraved in the maroon cover of my passport she raised her voice indicating her developing frustration.

- It doesn't say so on your passport! What kind of language is this? Does it have English anywhere?

*- It's Greek. The countries are listed on the first page in many different languages.*

The lady shuffled through the pages once more. She opened it to the first page and then turned it towards me so that I could see through the glass.

- It only says European Union, it doesn't say which country!

*- Yes, there are two columns, on the right one it says European Union and on the left one it has the country: "Hellenic Republic".*

- So not Greece?

I took a short breath in preparation of a response, but her actions interrupted me and made it clear that it was not my place to speak. Her eyes remained focused on the passport and she opened it to the second page. She pointed her finger at the green letters hovering over the passport number.

- What is Hellas? Why doesn't it say Greece if you are from there?

I let out a sigh and quickly collected myself. I must be patient and polite, I do not want to unnerve her, do not want to make this even more uncomfortable than it already is. I attempted an explanation.

*- In Greek, Greece is called Hellas (Ελλάς) or Hellada (Ελλάδα). That is the 'official' name of the country, but in English it is called Greece. If you look over my passport-picture it says 'GR', which stands for Greece.*

She glanced at the passport once more and looked back at me in disbelief.

- I still do not understand why they can't just say 'Greece' clearly.

Her last observation was accompanied by a raised eyebrow and a slight head tilt, which made it clear that her frustration had escalated. To appease the tension I shrugged and smiled politely as she turned her gaze to the computer screen and started the application process.

In retrospect, this encounter had been one of the first times that I became aware of the discursive implications inherent in the distinction between ‘Hellas’ and ‘Greece’. The Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) defines Hellas simply as “Greek for the name for Greece”; however, having a sense of the term and its vernacular use, I think that it means a lot more than that. Even in Greek ‘Hellas’ as opposed to ‘Hellada’, which is the term used in demotic Greek<sup>2</sup>, is not just a word, it is the archaic and poetic term for Greece that in six letters captures the essence of Greek nationalism and patriotism. In this project, the difference between Hellas and Greece extends beyond a mere linguistic distinction as the two terms and their derivatives are utilized to capture the antithesis between two distinct approaches to Greek national identity construction and in extension two varying approaches to performance aesthetics.

At the core of this distinction are two conflicting stereotypical perceptions of Greece that are circulating both locally and internationally. On the one hand there is the glorified and idealized image of ancient<sup>3</sup> Greece pertaining to the values introduced by the ancient Greek civilization, such as democracy, philosophy, mythology and the classical

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Demotic’ is the term for modern Greek language as opposed to ancient Greek and *katharévousa*, which has archaic references. (for more on *katharévousa* see Appendix)

<sup>3</sup> ‘Ancient Greece’ is here used as an umbrella term to connote both the archaic (eighth to sixth centuries BC) and classical (fifth to fourth centuries BC) eras, whose ideals, aesthetics and artistic achievements have been repeatedly used as points of reference for the glories of the ancient Greek civilization.

aesthetics. On the other hand, the most common projection of Greece in the past few years (from 2008 to 2015) revolves around negative connotations of financial downfall, portraying Greeks as lazy<sup>4</sup>, and focusing on the numerous uprisings, and conflicts between civilians and the police, or violence caused by extremist right-winged party adherers against immigrants. Situated in opposite extremes of the spectrum, neither of these circulating perceptions accurately describes the present reality.

As various anthropologists and Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies (MGHS) scholars have observed (Anagnostou 2006, 2009; Hamilakis 2009; Herzfeld 1982, 1989; Faubion 1993; Gourgouris 1996), the dominant discourses for the construction of Greek national identity significantly rely on an emphasizing of the glorious ancient past, often at the expense of more recent histories being marginalized. An attempt to illuminate previously marginalized histories has been observed in foreign scholarship since the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the discipline of MGHS expanded beyond the study of language and literature to include Cultural Studies and Anthropology<sup>5</sup>. In the past few years, however, since the dawn of the financial crisis (2009), a similar process of actively engaging with previously marginalized histories has also been observed locally. There has

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of Greeks being lazy has been a notion that started circulating amongst Europeans during the crisis as a possible explanation of why the country is experiencing financial downfall.

<sup>5</sup> Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies (MGHS) emerged during the 1960s. The discipline was first hosted in University departments in the USA and its emergence coincided with waves of Greek migration. MGHS did not at first (and still often does not) constitute a department of its own, but it is being hosted in other departments such as Classic Studies, Literary Studies, Linguistics, Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Byzantine Studies, and sometimes Arts. Initially it had a linguistic and literary focus, but after the decline in publications of Greek prose, a second wave of scholars (1980s) reviewed the disciplinary focus and made it applicable to contemporary cultural trends (postmodernism) and philosophical concerns (poststructuralism). The discipline underwent a third wave of redefinition following the popularization of anthropology and ethnographic methods in the 1990s. (Lambropoulos 1997, 197-198) In this changing disciplinary structure, critical theory was utilized to problematize Greek national identity construction.

been an evident discursive renegotiation of the relationship to the past, which has become especially clear in artistic circles during and after 2013.

This distinction between glorified histories of ancient Greece that comprise the dominant rhetoric for constructing Greek identity and recent histories that are deliberately being invisibilized will heretofore be referenced as the binary between *Hellenism* and *Greekness*. Hellenism encapsulates the cultural ideals of ancient Greece, such as the sociopolitical structure of democracy, philosophy, aesthetic standards of classicism, as well as the imagined entity of the Greek nation, both within the borders of the Greek nation-state, as well as in the diaspora<sup>6</sup>. Greekness, on the other hand, is utilized to reference the construction of Greek identity following the establishment of the Independent Greek State from the Ottoman Empire in the early 1830s.

These terms are not set in stone and there is no scholarship that clearly sets the two apart in the way that I pursue them in this project. Rather, my definitions have evolved following numerous readings from the fields of Anthropology (such as Herzfeld 1982, 1989; Holden 1972; Faubion 1993; Loizos ed. 1991), Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies (such as Gourgouris 1996, 2010; Hamilakis 2009; Makrides 2009; Panourgia 2009; Tziovas 1997, 2003; Zervas 2012), as well as Dance Studies and Dance History sources (such as LaMothe 2011; Preston 2011; Stavrou Karayanni 2004). Going through these works I noticed that the use of either term connoted distinct temporalities, which is what led me to pursue the above chronological distinction as the primary means of definition.

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<sup>6</sup> While the term Hellenism is primarily perceived as pertaining to the glories of the ancient Greek past, the references to it as encompassing the diaspora come from the Greek term “Ἑλληνισμός” (Hellenismós) that is often used to refer to communities of emigrant Greeks.



References to the ‘Hellenic’, the Greek people as ‘Hellenes’, or to ‘Hellenism’ more generally, are primarily seen in regard to ancient Greek classical ideals or aesthetics, whereas the term ‘Greekness’ more commonly occurs in texts that pertain to the period following the establishment of the Independent Greek state in the early nineteenth century. As such, Greekness is closely linked to Greek modernity and has an overt religious connection to Christian Orthodoxy that starkly contrasts to Hellenism, which in religious terms refers to paganism<sup>7</sup>.

Prior to delving into this analysis any further it should be noted that the linguistic distinction between the two terms is only feasible in English (or other foreign) academic discourses, such as Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies (MGHS), Anthropology, and several Dance History sources. Greek language does not allow for an etymological distinction between ‘Hellenic’ and ‘Greek’. Both terms are captured under the adjective *ελληνικό* (*hellinikó*) and thus there is no linguistic discrepancy that can easily point to a distinction between the two. The English term ‘Greek’ derives from *γραικός* (*graekós*) and it is related to the Latin *Graeculus*, which referred to the decadent, degenerate and servile Greek (Babiniotis 1998). It is perhaps due to such negative connotations that the term is not commonly used in Greek vernacular language.

Instead, in Greek language the term that has similar temporal and political connotations to what I hereby refer to as Greekness is *Romiosini* (Ρωμιοσύνη).

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<sup>7</sup> According to Religious Studies scholar Vassilios Makrides: “The notions of Hellenicity and Hellenism were to experience a *major* challenge with the advent of Christianity and its collective opposition to paganism (along with a whole array of other religious, philosophical, and cultural points of contention). For the Christians, the term Hellene came to represent all pagans, regardless of ethnic decent, cultural provenance, or specific religious tradition”. (Makrides 2009, 40)

Etymologically, there are two different approaches as to what *Romiosini* can refer to. One possible explanation is that it used to be an identification of Greeks under Roman rule (Romiós – Ρωμαίος – in Greek means Roman), and the other explanation is that it was a term coined during the Ottoman occupation of Greece since the Turks referred to the Orthodox Christian communities as “millet i Rum”. According to the work of anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (1989) *Romiosini* refers to Greek national identity as it developed in the post-Byzantine era, thus tying it to the advent of Christianity. Since the mid-twentieth century, following the publication of a poem titled *Romiosini* by famous Greek poet Yiannis Ritsos, the term has acquired symbolic significance as well. As the poem was written during the Greek civil war (see Appendix), *Romiosini* attracted connotations related to the character of modern Greeks and was concerned with ideals such as fighting for one’s freedom, or for justice thus becoming an emblem of the modern Greek state.

Pursuing this fruitful distinction even further, its manifold applications become apparent especially in regard to the arts, where they are captured in the contrast between high art and popular art. The idealized notion of Hellenism connotes a refined, eclectic aesthetic, and an elitist approach. This contrasts to popular art, which is often perceived as less refined, and thus more appealing to larger audiences. The latent rhetoric of eclecticism and elitism in this distinction assists in the uncovering of an additional layer of Greekness, which encompasses a comparatively less refined aesthetic that includes rural and regional aspects that are excluded from Hellenism. This last distinction sheds light on a constant struggle between an unattainable ideal (represented by Hellenism) and the reality that

cannot fulfill these expectations (represented by Greekness). Herzfeld (1989) refers to this situation as a “falling from grace” to comment on the position of contemporary Greece in contrast to its glorious antique past.

Although on a discursive level it is easy to discuss these terms as clearly contrasting and removed points in an imaginary spectrum of Greek national identity definition, in reality they are in dialogue. In an exercise I pursued during my fieldwork, I asked people how they perceive the two terms, and where they would situate contemporary Greek identity. Most of them responded that they would see it “somewhere in the middle” and that “it really depends on who you ask”. While I acknowledge that identity construction is a multi-layered and subjective process, I think that viewing it in terms of a binary approach makes it easier for people, who are unfamiliar with Greek history, to perceive the complexities.

To embark on a short exploration of one of the various ways that Hellenism and Greekness converge and inform one another it is worth familiarizing with the concept of *historical constructivism* discussed by anthropologist James Faubion (1993) and the idea of the *usable pasts* posited by historians and archeologists K.S. Brown and Hamilakis (2003) as well as by ethnic studies scholar Anagnostou (2009). Both concepts refer to a selective process of historicization that emphasizes certain historical events, while overlooking, or deliberately marginalizing others. In more detail, “usable pasts” hint towards a tendency to selectively create links to certain historical periods that are hailed as more ‘glorious’ than others and in doing so render “the past [...] subject to the interpretive

fashions and, potentially, the political demands of the present” (Brown & Hamilakis 2003,

1). Along the same lines, and following Faubion’s discussion:

Historical constructivism is [...] a practice of *significant* reform or reformation, though a practice whose reforms can and often have had immediate and direct repercussions on institutions and behavior. Its methodology consequently cannot be reduced to the sheer logic of means and ends, the logic of rational decision and rational action. Its methodology and its teleology both demand powers of judgment quite different from, quite beyond those that would enable its practitioners merely to determine the relations among causes and effects. Historical constructivism requires of those who would practice it the further power to judge and to maintain semantic and connotative coherence from one reformative step to the next. (Faubion 1993, xx)

Further implications of this phenomenon are rendered visible in the chapters that follow and especially in chapter one, but suffice it to say here that as Faubion observes, the means through which the connections to Hellenism have been manufactured sometimes defy logic and historical linearity. The preoccupation with the Hellenic and its importance for Greek modernity is also addressed by Hamilakis who observes that Greek nationalism needs to be understood not as a political ideology, but as a cultural system (2009, 85). In the case of Greece, culture and cultural capital hold a prominent position; Hellenism’s material heritage –the ancient ruins, the recovered temples, or other archeological findings that have been preserved –is a symbolic capital, or as Hamilakis (2009) remarks, “a defensive symbolic weapon, a conduit through which to understand and deal with globalized capitalist modernity” (7). In its role as symbolic capital, or cultural currency, Hellenism emphasizes the aspect of *unity* –a continuous uninterrupted national entity –and *lineage*,

which Hamilakis terms “a nostalgia for the whole<sup>8</sup>”. The opposite of the ideals of unity and lineage, the notions of *interruption* and *fragmentation* are seen as a threat. As chapters two and three further elaborate, it is precisely this perceived threat and the fear that it inspires that have fuelled the present process of reconsideration and renegotiation of the constitutive terms of Greek national identity.

Attempts to balance the Hellenic aspect of Greek identity with modern formulations of nationalism and contemporary culture have been a continuous occurrence. Oftentimes the emphasis and the predominance of the ancient past resulted in the marginalization of more recent events that tarnished the history of the modern Greek state. In the past few years (2009-2014), however, motivated by the crisis, these power relations are being reconfigured as the previously marginalized histories are often coming to the forefront of political discussions and artistic experimentations. The changes in these power dynamics constitute the core of this project as the trajectories of the shifts are traced in the development of contemporary dance practices and the narrative and aesthetic focus of contemporary dance works.

Relying on limited scholarly sources (Choupis 2011; Klein 2007; Sevastakis & Stavrakakis 2012; Sutton 2010; Tzartzani 2014) that similarly investigate the aftermath of crises or other events that have caused radical social and political reformations, as well as on my own ethnographic research, and the oral histories that I documented, I argue that

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<sup>8</sup> In his 2009 book *Nation and its Ruins* Hamilakis suggests that “a key mode of imagining the nation is the *nostalgia for the whole*: fragmentation and dispersal, not only of antiquities, buildings, and statues but also of national entities overall are seen as a threat.” (Hamilakis 2009, 296) The anxiety to uphold a sense of unity was also an underlying concern during the early stages of development of folk practices and modern dance, as chapter one discusses in more detail.

this reconsideration has most likely been set in motion due to the many extremities characteristic of the recent years. The radical shifts in the urban demographic due to the increasing influx of illegal immigrants (Onisenko 2014) and political refugees (Cabot 2014), in line with the increasing rates of unemployment amongst Greeks, the rise of physical violence and political populism (Sevastakis and Stavrakakis 2012), the abuse of bodies that commonly occurs in protests (Pourgouris 2010), as well as the precarity and uncertainty for the future that, albeit not direct, still has its toll on bodies have all contributed to a need to comprehend the present and gain the tools to navigate this new and constantly fluctuating landscape. The first step to approaching comprehension has been looking at the recent past in order to contextualize and critically engage with the present.

## Second Encounter: On the Politics of Writing about Dance in Greece

Six months after the discussion I had with the employee at the Social Security Administration office I was offered a fellowship to teach a few dance classes at local elementary schools around Riverside. I began planning an improvisatory class that would teach students basic composition skills such as use of space, levels, and partnering. Upon presenting my plan to one of the fellowship coordinators, I was met with concern.

- “Can’t you do something different?” the coordinator asked.

- *I am not sure, do you have something specific in mind?*

- You are from Greece right?

- *Yes?*

- Do you know any folk dances for example? That would be so much easier to ‘sell’ than an improvisation class.

I asked for some time to think about it. I was completely conflicted. In Greece I would never be asked to teach folk, I would never even *dare* propose it. Folk and contemporary are two opposing worlds in Greece. On the one hand, my degree in dance technique and pedagogy did certify me to teach folk dance amongst other genres, such as ballet and contemporary, that I felt a lot more at ease with. On the other hand, I had the voice of my folk dance teacher Maria teasingly asking me “is this too bucolic for you Natalie?” Maria’s comment implied the qualities required to ‘properly’ embody folk dances, which at the time I was clearly lacking. To the day, when the coordinator assumed that since I was Greek I should be able to do it, I firmly believed that I did not possess the necessary qualities. This discomfort was rooted in my education and upbringing. To be able to properly and fully embody folk dances you had to grow up doing them, you had to learn them from your parents, attend rural festivals<sup>9</sup> and performances, have them be a part of your upbringing, your heritage, your rural connection. And here I was, having grown up with a German grandmother, a mother whose first language had been German, and a father from a Greek island that we rarely visited because he had actually grown up in Athens. I had attended maybe one rural festivity in my entire life and was now being asked to embody something I never identified with.

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<sup>9</sup> Rural festivals are known as πανηγύρια (panigiria pl.) They are traditional Greek gatherings usually organized at the central church of a village or neighborhood to celebrate and honor the Saint in whose memory the church was build or in order to celebrate another national holiday. It is common for a *panigiri* (sing.) to have tables all around the churchyard and live folk music for people to perform folk dances and socialize. Depending on the holiday or the Saint who is being honored, people sometimes hold bazaars around the churchyard or sell church memorabilia and other merchandise.

I ended up agreeing to teach folk dances but was overwhelmed by a sense of guilt for doing so. Going through the first few classes the guilt slowly subsided and was replaced by enjoyment. That did not last long either, as I was soon confronted with a different sense of conflict. I chose a dance called *Kalamatianós* (Καλαματιανός), which is the most popular and widely performed dance in Greece, and at the end of the class I allowed some time for questions. The teachers more often than not encouraged students to “ask her anything you would like to know about Greece, now is your chance!” Students had mostly no hesitation to do so –as I believe is the case for most seven year olds –so the questions poured on me like rain.

- “Do people in Greece still wear togas?” I assured them that “togas were only being worn by people in the ancient times, nowadays we are dressed just like you”. This was surprisingly (or maybe not so much) the most popular question and it always seemed to spark faint memories of Greece in the minds of other students who pursued the same route drawing on various cultural stereotypes.

- Can you name all of the Gods from Greek mythology?
- Do people believe in Zeus, or do they believe in Christ?
- What do the houses there look like? Do they have pillars?
- Why are you breaking plates when you celebrate?
- What does “opa” mean?
- Does Greek yogurt taste different in Greece?

I always answered all of them to the best of my knowledge and made a habit of noting down what I thought were the funniest ones. Skimming over those notes is what



initiated my second wave of uneasiness. I was being exoticized, and by playing into this trope I was ultimately partaking in what Marta Savigliano (1995) has termed “autoexoticization”. This realization lies at the core of what I initially referred to as dishonesty in the opening of this introduction. In Savigliano’s work autoexoticization is a theorization developed to counter a long history of colonialism and occurs in the context of a decolonizing project. Even though there are hardly any correlations between Greece and the kind of colonial exoticization that Savigliano is referencing, there are some crossovers, as Greece, following its independence from the Ottoman Empire, has often been subject to Orientalizing tendencies. Furthermore, the predominance of the Hellenic often initiates a process akin to what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (2004) has termed “colonial mimicry”<sup>10</sup>. While the type of exoticization discussed here is not directly related to a politically inferior position of Otherness, I use it as a frame of reference to infer the dynamics that prompted me to present myself in terms that I do not identify with, and allows others to frame their perceptions of me (and of Greeks) under such terms.

The unpacking of the complexities of (auto)exoticizing tropes and my compliance to these mechanisms has been one of the most significant steps in the process of articulating my positionality and acquiring a sense of belonging. The dishonesty inherent in my aforementioned compliance to identify with aspects of Greek identity that I was previously

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<sup>10</sup> In his 2004 book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha describes colonial mimicry as “the desire for a reformed recognizable Other [...] Mimicry is thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power.” (Bhabha 2004, 122) In regards to the ways that Hellenism was constructed, the ‘Other’ that it referenced and appropriated was not a politically inferior position, but the ancient Greek ideal that was temporally so far removed that it could be presented as a desired Other. Thus in this instance the concept is used to refer to mimicry of aspects of that past and their appropriation alongside their recurring emphasis in the present practices, which contribute to the process of exoticization.

alienated from has been fuelled by desire. A desire to move 'homeward' while being so far away. Even though this study is not an auto-ethnography in the strict sense, it is subjective and self-reflexive, as its theoretical axis has been molded by personal inquiries and revolves around a genre -contemporary dance- that makes me feel 'at home'.

Beyond my positionality and the personal reasons that inspired this project however, lies a different agenda, which I perceive as a political intervention concerned with the theorization of an under-represented and under-theorized genre that has thus far been almost absent from English language Dance Studies scholarship.

Bringing Dance Studies in conversation with political theory and the discipline of Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies (MGHS) is a rather unusual pairing, especially taking into account the trajectory of MGHS that lacks prior associations with embodiment and performance. It has nevertheless been a strategic choice, because MGHS has provided the necessary theoretical foregrounding to critically unpack the intricacies of Greek identity. I perceive of this pairing as a political statement, because it draws on two relatively underrepresented disciplines within academia, and does so in order to introduce the history and workings of a largely unknown dance practice into mainstream dance scholarship. In doing so, and having been inspired by the work of Jens R. Giersdorf (2013), who successfully introduced East German dance into mainstream scholarship, I hope that my work will similarly contribute to the process of questioning established discourses and hierarchies in the field of dance studies and that it will assist in the popularization of "dance as a tool for understanding social structures" (Giersdorf 2013, 8). Further political nuances

inherent in this research will become clear upon explication of the disciplinary framework as it is constructed in local (Greek) academic scholarship.

Dance and Dance Studies in Greece are still characterized by the Cartesian divide and are not recognized as valid academic disciplines. There is a widely popular perception that “you become a dancer, because you do not like reading”, which to my dismay was a belief also shared by some of the people that I came in touch with for the purpose of this research. Staged dance practices (ballet, contemporary) and competitive dance forms (ballroom) are perceived as bodily regimes of exercise and thus people engaging in them are mainly appreciated for their skillset and technique, or their dedication to their art-form rather than for their intellect or the agency of their work. The intellectual labor behind dancing and dance-making is thus largely undervalued and absent, as well as the historical significance of embodied practices. The only dance genre in Greece that enjoys a prestigious academic treatment and its historical and national significance go unquestioned is folk dance.

There is extensive Greek scholarship that documents and theorizes folk practices, both music and lyrics, as well as dance. Mention of Greek folk embodied practices also appears in English language scholarship either in anthropological studies, such as the work of Jane Cowan (1990), in dance studies, such as the work of Anthony Shay (2002 and 2008ed.), or some translations of Alkis Raftis’ (1987) work. In all these examples, folk dance is approached as a social phenomenon upholding and perpetuating social and familial values, or as a continuation of tradition. In most of the Greek scholarly sources on the other hand, the study of folk dance is primarily conducted in regards to folk dance’s

association with regional or national identity and its ties to a long lineage of traditions and mythological narratives. A more extensive analysis and critique of such associations is conducted in chapter one. For the purpose of highlighting the prestigious position that folk holds in Greek scholarship however, it suffices here to point out the fact that it is offered as a rubric of specialization at the Department of Physical Education in the National Kapodistrian University of Athens. That is the primary instance where dance is recognized as an embodied form of inquiry and an academic discipline that is officially incorporated in a University curriculum. Courses in the specialization of Greek folk dance foster theoretical engagement and scholarly research by introducing students to ethnographic methods, history, and notation. Other than the department of Physical Education, Greek dance scholars have also been integrated into departments of Musicology, Theatre Studies, and Pedagogy, since to this date there is no Dance Studies degree being offered by public higher education institutions<sup>11</sup>.

Training in theatrical dance practices is thus offered in the form of Higher Professional Dance Schools<sup>12</sup>, resulting in Vocational Diplomas recognized by the Ministry of Culture, rather than University equivalent Degrees. In these schools emphasis

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<sup>11</sup> In Greece all Universities are public. Private higher education institutions are annexations of foreign Universities or Colleges (such as New York College, or the American College of Greece), or technical colleges that offer vocational/professional diplomas not equivalent to University degrees (such as IEK Akmi, IEK Delta, or the Higher Professional Dance Schools). Some of the private colleges offer degrees or majors in Dance Studies.

<sup>12</sup> Up until February of 2015, there are 16 higher professional dance schools in Greece, most of which are situated in Athens (National School of Dance, National Opera, Aktina, Despoena Gregoriadou, Niki Kontaxaki & Nikoletta Bakali, Sonia Morianova & Lily Trasta, Rallou Manou School, Vassiliki Marouli, Anna Petrova, Maria Chatzimichael – Charlafti, Alexandros Chatziaras). Three are in Thessaloniki: Andromachi Kafandari, the Higher Professional Dance School of the municipality of Thessaloniki, Demotic Public Benefit Company of Stavroupolis. One in Larissa under the auspices of the Municipal Tourist Agency and one in Patras, the Center for Dance and the Arts.

is placed on the cultivation of technique and skill, rather than the theoretical grounding of dance. Primary courses usually include classical ballet, repertoire, and modern dance technique, or ‘contemporary’ as it is commonly referred to. The techniques offered vary across schools, but primarily draw on Graham, Limon, Cunningham and Release. Secondary, or elective courses also vary but according to the guidelines set and approved by the ministry of culture since 1983 they must include choreographic composition, Greek folk dances, dance technique theory<sup>13</sup>, dance pedagogy, anatomy, psychology and dance history. Elective and secondary courses are offered once a week and as it becomes clear, hardly any encourage theoretical engagement<sup>14</sup> or critical analysis. Professional conservatory type training is offered under two different educational systems: the aforementioned higher professional dance schools that provide degrees recognized by the Ministry of Culture, and secondly professional dance certifications offered by the ISTD (Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing) or RAD (Royal Academy of Dance)<sup>15</sup> operating with an international board of examiners.

This distinction on the grounds of academic significance between the fields of theatrical dance and folk is only one of the reasons that results in the different treatment of the two and their perception as two non-convergent discourses. Another potential reason is the fact that theatrical dance practices are perceived as an ‘imported’ and thus foreign

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<sup>13</sup> Dance technique theory refers to a class that pairs anatomy and pedagogy to map out the stages of teaching ballet and contemporary dance techniques to various levels of students. Starting from classes for elementary school children up to pre-conservatory level.

<sup>14</sup> In this instance, “theoretical engagement” refers to a cultural studies or critical theory approach to dance, which is not common in secondary classes and is usually at the discretion of the dance history teacher.

<sup>15</sup> Both the ISTD and RAD are international independent organizations with which the Ministry of Culture or the Greek public sector have no involvement.

genre, whereas folk dance is perceived as an indisputable element of Greek tradition, often claiming direct descendancy from ancient Greek embodied practices. As such, the two are rarely brought in discussion, or examined side by side, which is what chapter one explores.

The lack of crossover in theoretical inquiry is transferred to the stages as well, since there are very few contemporary choreographers incorporating folk dance elements in their works, or experimenting with folk music. By pursuing a historicization of the development of folk dance next to contemporary dance in Greece from the early 1900s to the early 2000s, chapter one aims to illustrate such previously unacknowledged interconnections between the two genres as they developed in parallel. In doing so I seek to unsettle the established premise that folk is indisputably national due to its domestic character, whereas contemporary lacks similar associations because of its external influences and imported status. On the contrary, I seek to uncover the highly politicized, political, and equally national character of contemporary dance.

The lack of theoretical inquiry initiated on an academic level has led to dance studies in Greece being at its rather early stages of development. It should be noted that here the mention to dance studies refers to the theoretical inquiry and analysis of staged theatrical dance practices. The analysis, historicization and documentation of folk is more closely related to ethnography.

Most of the published works circulating thus far in Greek dance scholarship have a historical, or biographical focus or are selections of essays that examine interdisciplinary approaches to dance. Examples of such collections are “Terpsichore: Seven Moves” (Savrami ed. 2002), which encompasses essays on the collaboration between dancers and

musicians, the process of choreographing, the interaction between digital technologies and dance, or the relationship between the performers and the audience, and “Art Judgments: Essays on Critique” (Savrami ed. 2002). These books belong to a collection called Τέχνες (*Téchnes* – Arts), that comprises a series of biographies and institutional histories. Some of the works included in this collection are: Nina Alkalai’s (2002) “National School of Dance: Past, Present and Future” that explores the institution’s genealogical trajectory; an essay collection of dedications and writings about Dora Tsatsou (Savrami ed. 2005), one of the directors of the National School of Dance; as well as choreo-biographical studies of Haris Mandafounis (Savrami 2012) and Zouzou Nikoloudi (Savrami 2014).

There are many books that have been translated from English to Greek and regard international dance history, or ballet, but only few books by Greek scholars that discuss the international scene. One such example is Vaso Barbousi’s “The Art of Dance in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” (2004); a comprehensive study on the development of modern dance in relation to the social and political context where it originated. Such comprehensive works have to this date not been published for the Greek scene, with the exception of Barbousi’s (2014) “The Art of Dance in Greece in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, which primarily focuses on the work of Koula Pratsika, the “mother” of Greek modern dance. The book draws on oral histories of Pratsika’s students and examines her work in line with the sociopolitical context of the time. As it will be discussed in more detail in chapter one, some of Pratsika’s works were created in the framework of the dictatorial regime of Metaxas, and in this book Barbousi questions and explores these connections.

Another category quite common in Greek dance publications is that of anthologies, which compile and present the archival materials available for a choreographer –drawing on personal archives, journals, and publications –or index contemporary dance companies, thus serving as comprehensive guides for the local dance scene. An example belonging to the former category of a compilation of archival materials is Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou’s (ed. 2005) *The Archive of Rallou Manou: Her Life and Work*. As the title describes, this book gathers images, notes, and personal accounts of Manou and presents them in a chronological order interspersed with biographical narratives. Works that belong in the latter category include: *Choros* (Grigoriou and Mirayias 2004), a collection listing all the theatrical dance companies that were active in Greece in 2004 accompanied by a chronology of their productions, each company’s mission statement, and a short video excerpt from the work of each company in an included DVD; *Choros and Theatro* (Fessa-Emmanouel ed. 2004) a collection published by the Theatre Department of the University of Athens that includes a short historicization of theatrical dance in Greece followed by an alphabetical list of biographies of the most influential choreographers; lastly *Chorotheatro Oktana 10 years* (2000), which indexes the work of choreographer Konstantinos Rigos – the director of Dance-Theatre Oktana.

As these examples attest Greek scholarship thus far includes very limited sources that critically theorize and analyze dance practices in the context of racial, gendered and national frameworks, as it is common in European and American dance discourses<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the latest publications (2000-2014) mentioned include brief discussions on the gendered or national politics inherent in these practices but bear hardly any reference to race and racial politics. Such



Journal publications that used to provide a source to initiate these kinds of discussions, such as a Greek language magazine called Χορός (*Choros*) have ceased production during the crisis as have other art-related journals, due to budgetary cuts. Print publications concerning dance have been replaced by websites and blogs as most of the performance reviews and critically reflexive articles on dance in Greece at the moment can be found on sites such as dancetheatre.gr, dancepress.gr, or the individual blogs of choreographers such as Konstantinos Mihos' "Παρατηρητήριο Χορού" (Dance Observatory).

Extending the prior discussion on the academic standing of dance, and scholars' limited engagement with critical theory as a means to approach dance, attention should be paid to the increasing number of Greek scholars and students who pursue research and graduate degrees in Dance Studies abroad (mainly in the UK). Not all of them choose to pursue research concerning Greece but the few that do provide valuable insight into varying aspects of Greek contemporary dance history and the ways that dance constructs national identity. Such works include the PhD thesis of Ioanna Tzartzani (2007) from the Department of Dance and Theater at the University of Surrey titled *Interplays of Ethnicity, Nationalism and Globalisation within the Greek contemporary dance scene: Choreographic choices and constructions of national identity* and the thesis of Steriani Tsintziloni (2012) from the Department of Dance at the University of Roehampton, titled *Modernising Contemporary Dance and Greece in the mid-1990s: Three case studies from*

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works are: Barbousi 2004; 2014 and Savrami 2012; 2014. Other works that engage with gender, and correlations between national politics and performance are essays and video-documentaries by Natassa Hassiotis such as *A century of contemporary dance in Greece* (video documentary 2000) and *Artists as Immigrants: Albanian Dancers in Greece* (1999) as well as articles by Elena Patrikiou such as *A performance on resistance with art as its topic* (2014).

*SineQuaNon*, *Oktana Dancetheatre* and *Edafos Company*. Tzartzani's work focuses on the 2004 Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and explores how dance in the ceremonies intersects with what she calls "the National Issue": the delineation and establishment of a coherent national identity. Tsintziloni's on the other hand is a historical and comparative study of three Greek contemporary dance companies in the mid-1990s. She explores how these companies negotiated notions of community, cosmopolitanism and homosexuality in response to changes in the social milieu.

It is the underlying premise of this research that during the years of the crisis (from 2010 until the moment of writing in 2015), scholars' and choreographers' interest in interrelations between dance and political or social theory has increased as it has probably been sparked by the seriousness of the crisis. Initiatives such as forums, workshops, and seminars<sup>17</sup> interrogating the body in crisis, or the state of performance before and after the crisis, have started to emerge thus recognizing dance's involvement and important role as a site of reflection in moments of distress. A similar turn towards critical scholarship on dance has been the founding of an international peer-reviewed journal called *CHOROS International Dance Journal*, which was established in Greece in 2012 with the support of the Onassis Public Benefit Foundation and comprises both a Greek and an international editorial board. The rise of interest in academic engagement will be further validated pending the hosting of the international dance studies conference that will be held in Greece in the summer of 2015 (CORD/SDHS Annual Conference; Cut & Paste: Dance Advocacy

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<sup>17</sup> Such day-long conferences or seminars include "Το σώμα σε κρίση" (The body in crisis) held by the Onassis Cultural Center (OCC) in November of 2012. Discussion forums on similar topics have also been frequently held in EMBROS theatre. (for more on EMBROS theatre see also chapter 2 – section 2.5)

in the Age of Austerity), which aspires to initiate discussion around the institutionalization of dance. Although conversations on dance becoming an academic discipline in Greece have taken place in the past and were really close to becoming realized in 2011, the governing political party had then changed and as a consequence the plan fell through<sup>18</sup>.

Having provided this comprehensive, albeit short, panorama of Greek dance studies I hope that this research will contribute to ongoing discussions on the institutionalization of dance, as well as emergent discourses on Greek contemporary dance as a site of advocacy. Additionally, in an attempt to introduce a lesser known approach to Greek dance scholarship, in this dissertation I employ performative writing in order to diverge from the widely established paradigm in local discourses of the author as the objective authority. As it has been evident in this introduction thus far, I often intertwine personal narratives with critical theory in order to attain theorization through a more casual narration. Performative writing<sup>19</sup>, thus allows me to seamlessly interweave and explore connections between theory, movement practices, and the politics of culture.

## Three Encounters: Coffee & Homework

### #1

Coming out of the metro I was hit by the warm sun. I instinctively clutched my purse closer moving through a swarm of people in Syntagma square. I glanced at the

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<sup>18</sup> The reasoning behind the change of plans as being related to the governmental change (from PASOK to Nea Demokratia) comes from the interview I conducted with dance scholar and choreologist Katia Savrami (01/09/2014)

<sup>19</sup> My approach to performative writing has been significantly informed by the works of Savigliano (1995; 2003), Srinivasan (2012) and Susan Foster (2003; 2010)

Parliament looming behind me and proceeded to the bottom of the square to cross over to Ermou Street. Ermou is one of the most densely packed streets with stores and I was surprised, that even here so many stores had closed. Some were just empty waiting for someone else to take them over, whereas others (surprisingly many) had turned into pawn shops. Big yellow banners were hanging over the door, or at the side of the stores' balconies proclaiming in bold black letters: "ΑΓΟΡΑΖΟΥΜΕ ΧΡΥΣΟ" (*Agorázoume Chrisó* – We buy gold). At first I was befuddled, but the more time I spent in Athens, the more I realized that pawn shops seemed to be the new trend in business entrepreneurship. They were everywhere!

I continued all the way down Ermou past the Kapnikarea church, glancing at the side streets where some popular coffee places were, wondering if they would still be full or if they had closed too. They were full. Some had closed but new ones had taken their place. Others were renovated and full of vibrant energy and people in business meetings, catching up, or just taking a break before returning to their jobs. I continued to Monastiraki square and took in the smells of all the corner bakeries and the souvlaki stores as well as the buzzing sounds of people chatting, talking on the phone, or selling goods. On my left the Parthenon was dressed in the white morning light, but I turned right to one of the side streets in search of a 'hidden gem' coffee shop. My friends had assured me that "you had to be Athenian to know how to find it" and I took it as a challenge to prove I could still navigate my way through downtown. A challenge that proved to be a good training since most of the interviews I conducted thereafter took place over a cup of coffee in various other 'hidden' or more easily accessible coffee shops around Athens and its suburbs.

#2

My appointment with T.<sup>20</sup> was underneath the train station in Maroussi that was full of coffee shops. We would meet in front of the ticket counter and then choose someplace to sit for the interview. It was May, so the sun was already warming up and there was a gentle breeze that made it pleasant to sit outside. We met and walked together to the last cafeteria in a row of at least six stores and I remarked how this had been my old neighborhood. I had spent most of my childhood and teenage years catching the bus to school right across the cafeteria we were now sitting and then in my early twenties I would walk down this path every morning to catch the train to my dance classes, and to the University in the late afternoon. Eighteen years of memories that all came flashing back just in the mere act of walking down the paved road parallel to the train tracks.

We settled in our seats and ordered (a Greek coffee black and a Frappe sweet with milk). We had not met before other than our short email exchange so we spent the first few minutes chatting about the neighborhood, and how T. lived on the other side of the tracks but further down, her performances, my studies. When the coffees came we commented on the style of serving (the waitress had brought T.'s Greek coffee with the *briki* to serve it to her and allow for the *kaimáki* to develop)<sup>21</sup> and the condiments that accompanied it. We

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<sup>20</sup> Since these interactions described in encounters #2 and #3 contain references to some personal information I have decided to refer to the people mentioned with just initials (not corresponding to their real names) to avoid identification, because all subjects have agreed to full disclosure of the interview transcripts but not the interactions outside the frame of the interview.

<sup>21</sup> “Greek coffee” (also known as “Turkish coffee” although not commonly referred to as such due to political tensions with Turkey) is a method of preparing finely ground coffee beans by boiling them in a small pot (called *briki*). The coffee rises and foams on the surface and this forms the so called *kaimaki*. This kind of coffee and its preparation has traditional and occult value. For instance in rural areas some women (more commonly than men) are known for “reading” or “telling” the coffee, which is similar to palm reading. As people drink it the grounds settle at the bottom of the cup, forming a thick paste. To “read” the coffee people

slowly transitioned to the interview and I set the recorder on the table joking about how I hoped that it wouldn't pick up the noise from the guys playing backgammon two tables further to the side. It turned out that the hitting of the checkers on the wooden frame would be the least of our problems, since the recorder was more likely to pick up the sound of the train passing through the tracks right above us. It was impossible to hear T.'s soft-spoken voice whenever that happened, and after a few tries to vary the tone we just gave up and made a habit of using the train-crossings as chances to sip on our coffee.

### #3

Although most interviews with choreographers and dancers took place around various coffee-shops, interviews with dance scholars most commonly took place either at their homes or at their offices. One of these interviews took place in an apartment in Exarcheia<sup>22</sup>. I had not been there since I graduated from the University, since we used to often visit the Exarcheia square to play board-games at the local cafeterias. I had not walked through the neighborhood since 2008, when it received a lot of negative publicity following the murder of a high-school student by a police officer<sup>23</sup>.

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stir the muddy paste around the cup and turn it over so that it dries and forms shapes on the inside of the cup. Knowing how to interpret these shapes constitutes the practice of “coffee-telling” that is supposedly able to predict what the future holds and see “what is in the drinker’s heart”.

<sup>22</sup> Exarcheia (Εξάρχεια) is the name of a neighborhood in downtown Athens that has received a lot of negative fame following the uprisings of 2008, as it is considered to be frequented by Greek anarchists. It is also near the National Technical University of Athens, which is where the Athens Polytechnic uprising took place in November of 1973. (for more on the uprising read Appendix) It is the place where many intellectuals and artists live and where many activist groups reside or gather, as well as the home of the Στέκι Μεταναστών (Stéki Metanastón – loosely translated as “House of Immigrants”) a self-managed forum that organizes anti-racist festivals, language classes, screenings and many other activities for immigrants and anyone else who is interested in joining.

<sup>23</sup> More information about this incident and the series of uprisings that it caused is provided in the opening section of chapter 2.

It was a grey and rainy afternoon and the neighborhood was desolate. I only came across two people on my way to E.'s house. For the most time my attention was absorbed by the shapes, slogans, taglines, and graffitied images on the exposed brick fences and building walls. In some balconies there were forgotten drying racks with clothes still hanging on their strings soaking wet from the rain. I consulted the hasty sketch of the neighborhood that I had penciled after a map found on the internet and saw that it was time to turn right.

It was an apartment on the ground floor, E. greeted me at the door and invited me in. She asked me if I wanted anything to drink –just water thank you- and she sat across me on the dining table. I set up the recorder as she fumbled through some papers with notes she had prepared. Our interview ensued.

About an hour and a half in, she asked if I would mind taking a break. Of course not, I countered. “Come to the kitchen, I want to make some coffee, would you like some too?” It was during those ten minutes of chatting over the boiling water for the coffee, when the recorder was paused that I found out the most about her. Where she had studied, who her mentor was, how she felt about her graduate experience, a conference she attended, a talk she gave. It seemed that the ‘ritual’ of coffee preparation had brought us closer and made the level of our interaction a lot more personal.

While seemingly the only common point between the above excerpts is coffee, and its importance may at first appear trivial, I felt compelled to include it in this introduction because it plays a quintessential role in understanding and conceptualizing Greekness. As anthropologist Peter Loizos has argued (1991) ‘coffee’ is not just a habit or a casual part

of one's day in Greece, it is an institution and one of the fundamental points of socialization. Coffee and Καφενεία (Kafeneia – loosely translated as Coffee Houses and different from Cafeterias) play a significant part in gender construction and affirmation of one's sexuality<sup>24</sup>. As a space of socialization coffee-houses and cafeterias have been central to the ethnographic component of this research. Supplementing this process, archival research in libraries in Athens<sup>25</sup> has played an equally important role. Both approaches have been further supported by comparative literature, statistics and choreographic analysis. The primary fieldwork was conducted from December of 2013 until the end of September 2014 in Athens, and has also been supported by several shorter (two weeks to one month) trips to Greece that took place intermittently from 2010 to 2012.

The return to Greece for such a long period of time after being away for almost six years was a much needed time close to my family, but at the same time it was a unique learning experience as I was approaching 'home' from a removed position. Having grown up there I was an insider to Greece and its culture, but having been away for so many years, especially during such turbulent and politically crucial times, made me somewhat of an outsider. For the first month, I found myself intently listening to the way people talked and observing their tone of voice, their colloquialisms and gestures. I made mental notes of greetings people used and quickly updated my internal dictionary of trending vernacular expressions to be able to make myself more relatable and 'become Greek' again. As I

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<sup>24</sup> This has been the case more in the past than currently, though it is still an occurrence. Kafeneia are all male idioms of sociability and attending these spaces is enough to ascertain one's masculinity. (see Loizos ed. 1991, 221-233)

<sup>25</sup> The main libraries visited were the library of the Lyceum of Greek Women, the National School of Dance Library, and the National Public Library.



settled down and devised a plan for conducting my fieldwork it dawned on me; even though the months spent in Athens constituted ‘fieldwork’, I had actually been doing it all along. All those awkward encounters I had had abroad, such as the one at the social security office, or the classes that I taught, had already been a form of ethnography, a kind of fieldwork, or as Kamala Visweswaran (1994) has termed it “homework”.

Visweswaran plays with the concept of the ethnographic field being a localized place of dwelling – and thus a home away from home – as posited by James Clifford (1992). Visweswaran uses the term ‘homework’ to refer to a critical engagement with one’s own methods of schooling. She opens the discussion with the ‘reinvention’ of anthropology that took place in the late 1960s to early 1970s, and was concerned with a decolonization of the discipline. In that process ethnography was no longer only conducted in non-Western, or underdeveloped countries, but it took a turn to “enact a different politics of location, one that redirected the gaze homeward rather than away” (Visweswaran 1994, 104). In this instance, ‘homeward’ signifies a critical look at one’s own practices but Visweswaran furthers the discussion and parallels it to the notion of ‘homework’. ‘Homework’ prompts for a look at one’s methods of schooling and the questioning of unexamined points of privilege<sup>26</sup>. The substitution of the word ‘field’ with the term ‘home’ also calls for an examination of one’s positioning since ‘home’ signifies a familiar and safe place, whereas

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<sup>26</sup> In her essay “Feminist Ethnography as Failure” Visweswaran notes that: “This questioning of heretofore unexamined points of privilege and blindness form the basis on an accountable positioning that seeks to locate itself in and against the master discourses of race, class, and sexuality that inscribe it.” (Visweswaran 1994, 104)

‘field’ reiterates the ethnographer’s position as an outsider and is characteristic of a colonialist anthropological approach<sup>27</sup>.

For the purpose of this research project, the travels to Greece have always been more than a visit to a localized place of dwelling, they were a return home, in the deeply personal sense of the word. Yet in the last few years, ever since I got settled on this particular research project, home in the wider sense, signifying the place where I grew up, became a field, and thus a place never before seen. The more I immersed myself in Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies approaches to Greek identity, the less it felt like I knew the place I used to call home. I was living in my old room, having dinners with my family, seeing childhood friends, yet as soon as I stepped out of the confines of my house, it was a whole new world. My schooling away from home and the critical methods of training had further enhanced my sense of out of placeness. Although I felt safe and at ease in the field/home, because I knew how to navigate it, the research pushed me to uncover previously un-encountered aspects and become involved in a vibrant network of scholars and artists that composed a revised image of home.

The process of rendering my interactions with these people and the experiences I had as part of this network into writing in a way that allows for their subjectivities to

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<sup>27</sup> The characterization of it as a colonialist approach relates both to the method of choosing subjects from colonized areas, but also to a practice of Othering. In this project I perceive of this Othering as often manifesting in terms of the aforementioned distinction between the past and the present and therefore also turn to Johannes Fabian (1983), who discusses the interrelation between Time and the construction of Otherness in anthropology. Fabian’s framework is particularly helpful for considering Hellenism as a past identifier that results in a comparative “othering” of the present. According to Fabian: “Anthropology’s claim to power originated at its roots. It belongs to its essence and is not a matter of accidental misuse. Nowhere is this more clearly visible, at least once we look for it, than in the uses of Time anthropology makes when it strives to constitute its own object – the savage, the primitive, the Other. It is by diagnosing anthropology’s temporal discourse that one rediscovers the obvious, namely that there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also a temporal, historical, a political act.” (Fabian 1983, loc.155 of 3762)

manifest and in turn comments on the construction of Greek identity has been a challenging yet enjoyable task. To remake the observed I pursued a practice suggested by George Marcus. According to Marcus (1998, 62) the construction of the subjects of ethnography can be achieved through problematizing the construction of the spatial, the temporal, and of the voice. These steps are concerned with strategies for establishing the analytical presence of the researcher.

The spatial interrogation takes into account both the sites and locales where the subjects dwell, work, and perform, but it also “recognizes the powerful integrating (rationalizing) drives of the state and economy” (G. E. Marcus 1998, 63). In this particular research project the sites primarily comprise performance spaces and theatres, the dance studios where the choreographers rehearse or teach classes, the homes and offices of scholars, and a variety of other public places where the interviews were conducted. As far as the state and economy are concerned, the spatial interrogation is framed by works addressing the social landscape of the financial crisis. Such approaches include the theoretical construct of neoliberalism (Harvey 2007), the crisis of capitalism (Žižek 2010), and the so called shock doctrine (Klein 2007)<sup>28</sup>.

In Marcus’ analysis the temporal construction is mainly concerned with oral histories and collective memory. Since this project primarily revolves around the present, oral histories have served to reconstruct marginalized aspects of Greek dance history and to contextualize and inform the impact of the crisis on dance since 2009.

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<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that I am well aware of the many scholarly critiques regarding potential historical inaccuracies in Klein’s *Shock Doctrine*, but I am only using it to the extent that it develops a framework for theorizing and approaching the human response in the aftermath of a crisis.

Finally, ‘voice’ or perspective are concerned with the power relationships that develop between the subjects and the researcher and the means of producing knowledge through writing. My positioning in this writing draws on feminist approaches of experiential reflexivity and is thus subjective. My self, in all of its facets (woman, dancer, writer, Greek, migrant, and the embodied presence in all of the aforementioned sites) is continuously present in this writing as it shapes the trajectory of this dissertation, and informs the modes of inquiry. Furthermore, assuming a self-reflexive position is a necessary intervention to challenging analytic objectivity as the shifts in my positionality from one chapter to the next attest. This approach has to a great extent been informed by Jens Richard Giersdorf, who similarly adopts his writing style and subjective engagement from chapter to chapter. As such, for chapter one, which has a historical focus, my subjective engagement is less apparent. In the coming chapters, when the focus is on the present, the subjective engagement becomes more evident.

In regard to the method of inquiry and the process of determining which case studies to include, during my fieldwork in Athens I attended more than twenty-five performances and the selection has been based on the relevance of the performances’ topic to the crisis, as well as the means that the choreographers had at their disposal to create these works. In the era of austerity and the consecutive budget cuts, most choreographers have had to rely on their own means to fund their choreographies. In this project, as the case studies in chapter two explicate, I have chosen to primarily focus on works that have

been produced through such means<sup>29</sup> and not under conditions of access and affluence. In the early stages of this work, some of the scholars that I contacted about this project expressed the view that a dissertation about Greek dance should draw attention to some particular choreographers or dance ensembles who hold a prominent position in the local scene, or who have a regular audience following and are known for working and presenting work at big venues (such as the Onassis Cultural Center, the Pallas Theatre, or the Megaron). I deliberately refrained from an extensive mention to such works because the conditions of their production were more affluent than the average works created during the time of crisis<sup>30</sup>. The decision to look at non-funded ensembles assists in the process of defying the established canon and redefining agency in the burgeoning field of Greek dance studies. Conclusively, it is reflexive of the current reality, rather than being an instance of desired (albeit still not ideal) conditions of production.

## Chapter Outline

The chapters in this dissertation progress historically and follow the correlations between contemporary dance and the discourses of Hellenism and Greekness from the early twentieth century up to the present. This historical approach reflects a transition from a national orientation of contemporary embodied practices to a more transnational approach and awareness that is reflected in the narratives and aesthetics of later

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<sup>29</sup> The only exemption to this has been *Quiet Voice* one of the two works analyzed in chapter 3 that has been sponsored by the Athens and Epidaurus festival. More details on the reasoning behind this choice are provided at the final section of the introduction and in the chapter.

<sup>30</sup> Scholarly analysis has already been performed on these works –by graduate students and doctoral candidates abroad– as they represent the canon of the current contemporary dance scene. This is an additional reason why I wanted to refrain from including them, because I consider it important to move beyond canonization to a more all-encompassing approach.

productions. Apart from the temporal structure, each chapter has a distinct discursive focus that explores the different facets in the aforementioned process of reconsideration and renegotiation of established values and aspects of Greek identity.

Examining the ways that contemporary dance in Greece has been adhering to purist rhetoric of Hellenic identity throughout its various stages of development from the early 1900s serves to highlight the significance of the shift of attention towards more marginalized histories in the recent years. Chapter one *Mythology, Tradition, and National Imaginings: A Choreographed Negotiation of the Past* is a comparative study of contemporary and folk dance and the ways in which they relate to the past. This parallel examination points out a series of correlations that exist in the development of the two genres. Although at first glance, a theorization of folk practices may appear irrelevant to a project that primarily concerns contemporary dance during the crisis, I deem it necessary because the comparison provides a clear perspective of how embodied practices have been used to construct national identity throughout several critical stages in Greece's political history. In doing so, it also enhances understanding of the somatic construction of Hellenism and Greekness. Additionally, the historicization that takes place in the first chapter sets the foundation for later chapters that explore how and why the relationship between folk and contemporary dance has shifted, where this 'shift' is located, and how folk is currently revisited in contemporary practices as a constructive and critical tool.

While chapter one is primarily based on archival research, supplemented by oral history, chapters two and three are mainly drawing on ethnographic work and choreographic analysis, which are brought into discussion with Dance Studies, Political

Science and in particular European and International Studies, Critical Race Theory and Whiteness Studies, Critical Theory, and Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies.

The second chapter *Fragments of a Precarious Landscape: The Crisis from within* explores the impact of the crisis on dance in both financial terms and on the level of human relations and interactions. It draws an analogy between the process of coping with the crisis and the five stages of grief<sup>31</sup> in its exploration of the response of choreographers and dancers to the socio-political landscape. These stages unfold through a close analysis of two performances *Fragile Nothing*, by Syndram dance company (choreographed and directed by Chrysiis Liatziviry) and *On the Seesaw*, by Amalgama dance company (choreographed and directed by Maria Gorgia). The former is based on experiential research and centers on the impact of the financial crisis on human relations as it examines the alienation and lack of altruism characteristic of a society in shock. The latter draws on Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Declaration* (2012) and Guy Standing's *The Precariat* (2011) and turns the performers into precariats who navigate a dysfunctional relationship with themselves, each-other, their social environment and the political system of their country. The topics raised in these performances, both in regards to the political system, as well as in reference to the relationships between people are indicative of a society that upon being under such (financial) pressure and facing the extremes that this situation has given rise to, is on the brink of an intense introspection and reconsideration of established societal

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<sup>31</sup> Swiss psychologist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross first proposed a scheme for the various stages that people go through when experiencing grief, after for example a loss, or learning about a terminal illness. The stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. Slavoj Žižek (2010), uses the scheme of the five stages to analyze the crisis of global capitalism. It is Žižek's framework of analysis that I am utilizing in the second chapter to create a parallel to the stages of coping with the financial crisis in Greece.

and political values. These performances actively partake in this introspective process, and critically engage with it as they grapple with the complexities of existing in an unstable situation and negotiating identity formation on shifting grounds.

Following up on this notion of reconsideration, the third chapter *Migrant Narratives: Negotiating Greek Racial Construction and Redefining Citizenship* focuses on the negotiations that are currently taking place in regards to the racial construction of Greekness, through attention to immigrant performances. This chapter delves into the topic of migration and particularly the increasing influx of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers in Greece who have contributed to a heightening of racist rhetoric from extremist right-wing parties. The theoretical foundation of this chapter revolves around the increasingly complex racial profile of Greekness that stands in dire contrast to the indisputable whiteness and purity of Hellenism. The racialization of Greekness is also being reconfigured in the aftermath of the crisis and in this chapter I examine some of the ways that this occurrence is being approached through embodied practices. Similarly to the second chapter, the main argument is constructed around two works: a live performance by choreographer Ermira Goro, titled *Quite Voice* and the video-dance documentary *Bodies of Resilience* choreographed by Despina Stamos and film-edited by Jill Woodward. Playing with the notions of ephemerality, and precarity, as opposed to permanence as it is raised by the varying media of these chosen performances, the chapter focuses on the impermanence of the immigrant experience in Greece and the conditions that immigrants encounter upon entering the country. The liminality of their experience is juxtaposed to dominant narratives definitive of Greekness, such as religious beliefs, heteronormative



standards, and ideals of masculinity, as well as gender stereotypes that are similarly being challenged through such performances that capture the urban diversity and multiculturalism of contemporary Greece.

The chapters are structured in such a way as to provide glimpses into Greek society following a linear temporal progression. I treat this work as a window in time and hope that it will serve that purpose for future readers and for scholars who will similarly be interested in engaging with, or researching dance at a time of crisis.

# Chapter One

## Mythology, Tradition, and National Imaginings: A Choreographed Negotiation of the Past

*“Looking at the past is like lolling in a rocking chair. It is so relaxing and you can rock back and forth on the porch, and never go forward.”*  
(Martha Graham, *Blood Memory*)

One of the very first stories of the Greek mythology series I owned and loved to read over and over again as a child begins with the war of the Titans and the birth of Zeus, the father of all Olympian Gods. According to the myth, Zeus was the son of Cronus and queen Rea. At a young age Cronus had overthrown his father (Uranus) and had taken over the reigns of the world. Uranus had then cursed him to find the same fate from one of his children. Trying to ensure that the curse would not come true, Cronus killed all of his children by eating them right after they were born. Rea was devastated and when she gave birth to Zeus she hid him in a remote forest cave and then tricked Cronus into eating a large stone, which he believed to be his last child. The cave where Rea nurtured Zeus was on the island of Crete and as the myth goes, she taught a sword dance to the locals, and instructed them to hit their swords on their shields in rhythmic patterns so that the noise caused by their dancing would obscure the crying of her hidden son.

This brief reference to dance that appears at the very beginning of ancient Greek mythology has since been treated as evidence that dancing was first documented in ancient

Crete, during the Minoan times<sup>32</sup>. In a 1979 documentary concerning the origins of dance practices in Greece<sup>33</sup>, the story of Rea is treated as evidence that the thrusting of the swords on the shields of the Minoans has survived in today's traditional Cretan dances through the slapping of the dancers' thighs. Such survivalist arguments that weave threads between ancient Greek and current dances have been a very common practice since the mid-twentieth century –as the examples of Dora Stratou, Zouzou Nikoloudi, Koula Pratsika, and Rallou Manou amongst others suggest –and have played a pivotal role in constructing embodied practices as national –and indisputably Hellenic –forms of expression.

In this chapter I trace and unravel these threads as they materialize in the trajectory of the development of Greek traditional dance practices in parallel to what has come to be known as 'contemporary' dance, during the twentieth century. Covering a hundred years in a few pages can be a rather risky endeavor, as one may succumb to over-generalizing or omitting details, but I nevertheless deem it necessary, because a focus on the genealogical paths of these genres will allow me to unravel the skein of Greek history and thus provide a solid framework to situate and contextualize the current crisis and the ways that it manifests on an embodied level.<sup>34</sup> The case studies comprising this chapter attest to the

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<sup>32</sup> The Minoan civilization flourished in Crete during the Bronze age (2600 BC – 1100BC). Alongside the Cycladic civilization (3200 BC – 2000 BC), these two are considered the earliest examples of human civilization in the geographical area now known as Greece.

<sup>33</sup> The Documentary is titled *Ελληνικός Χορός: Χτές και Σήμερα - Hellenic Dance: of the Past and the Present* and is accessible on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LdQc0rbcto> (accessed 12/19/2014). The research and narration have been conducted by Rallou Manou, one of the pioneers of modern dance in Greece, as the chapter later explains.

<sup>34</sup> The parallel analysis of these two dance forms deliberately excludes ballet in order to allow for a narrower scope of analysis because these two dance forms (contemporary and folk) shared a lot of common elements in the early stages of their development that were not observed in ballet. Additionally, the choice to exclude ballet from this genealogy stems from the dance's strict movement vocabulary and structure that renders it less likely to be employed for furthering a Greek national agenda.

various stages of development of embodied practices in Greece and illuminate the kinds of political, national or social tensions that people engaged with throughout the tumultuous events that marked Greek history during the twentieth century. Thus, becoming familiar with these issues and their varying complexities assists in a deeper comprehension of the ways and the reasons that these existing tensions were laid bare, intensified, and eventually ‘exploded’ during the recent sociopolitical and financial crisis.

As observed in the *Introduction*, contemporary dance scholarship has still not developed into a recognized academic discipline in Greece, whereas traditional dance has been an object of ethnographic study and a recognized discipline since the early 1900s (known as *laografia*). This presented an interesting paradox in the process of researching archival sources for this chapter. The sources on traditional/folk practices were so rich that I had to limit my study to the two most pivotal institutions in the development of the genre: the *Lyceum of Greek Women* and the *Dora Stratou Dance Theatre*, which form the axis for my examination of folk practices. On the other hand, the historical sources on the development of what came to be known as contemporary dance were so limited that I had to draw on almost all of the sources I had at my disposal in order to be able to get a sense of a developmental timeline. The archival research has been extensively supported by interviews with dance historians, theorists and practitioners from both fields, including some of the students of the people that are discussed as the leading figures of Greek dance history.

In more detail, the primary discourse that this chapter engages with is concerned with the ways that dance was employed as a means to ascertain a claim to ancient Greek

history and to negotiate the dichotomy between Hellenism and Greekness. The discussion of this divide inevitably uncovers other pending issues concerning the relations of Greece with its European counterparts, which underline a growing sense of anxiety and a pressure to live up to occidental standards and establish the Greek self as quintessentially Western. As the case studies attest, dance played a significant role in the process of approximating the West and distancing the Greek self from its oriental referents, by repeatedly drawing on internationally acclaimed and popular dance practices and approaches, such as *Ausdruckstanz*, Graham technique, Limón-Humphrey technique, and later on Release technique and Contact Improvisation. All of these ‘foreign’ influences that gave rise to what has now been established as contemporary dance contrasted with folk dance that was perceived as ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ form of national (and thus indisputably Hellenic) expression. Furthermore, the recognition of these diverse elements in the configuration of Greek contemporary dance practices poses the question of ‘What makes them Greek?’ rather than just a continuation of European or US based practices.

Answering this question has been one of the most challenging exercises, but one that is worthwhile, because I believe that it lies at the core of understanding why the crisis is here considered as the turning point, or the herald of a ‘new era’ for dance and embodied practices in Greece. Lastly, the engagement of this chapter with these varying levels of analysis attests to the significance of dance in Greece. It thus allows me to establish dance’s relation to politics throughout the different stages of its development and popularization and underline its role as a tool in the process of nation building, as well as its significance as a means of asserting and constructing gendered and class identities.

To avoid extensive and tedious references to Greek historical events, I have created a comprehensive *Historical Timeline* (Appendix) that can be read separately, or in parallel to this chapter. The timeline provides a detailed analysis of certain pivotal historical events or concepts since the Greek revolt against the Ottoman Empire (1821) until the 1990s and serves as a map of the dynamics and complexities that inform my argument and shape my mode of inquiry.

## 1.1 In Search of a ‘Hellenic’ Dance in the Newly Established Greek State

A quick look at the history of Greece after its establishment as an independent nation state in 1832 attests to the turmoil and the political instabilities that have taken place since the declaration of independence. Having been occupied by the Ottoman Empire from 1453 until roughly 1830, and having been under the heavy influence of various foreign powers in the early decades since its establishment as an independent state, Greece has been home to many racial and ethnic groups, some of whom identified as Greek but did not speak the language. This has contributed to a fragmented notion of a linear national unity and an almost absent perception of national history. Attempts to amend that were immediately made by the Orthodox Greek Church, which embarked on a mission to unite the populations of the recently liberated territories by offering lessons of Greek language. Other attempts at the time to facilitate a sense of national unity were evidenced in the reform of the educational system, in which the Orthodox Greek Church had a significant input. I will return to the point on education shortly, as I would first like to draw attention to another approach geared towards constructing a sense on national unity that was at play

at the same time: the intellectual movement of the Greek Enlightenment. Even though the Enlightenment ideologically opposed the method of the Orthodox Greek Church because it privileged a secular way of thinking, it also contributed in the process of developing a sense of national identity.

According to Political Science scholar Paschalis Kitromilides (2013) the major shift that characterizes Greek Enlightenment lay in its new approach towards history. It moved away from a focus on the history of men to a focus on social and cultural history, which justifies the newly-found interest in Greece's ancient history and the links to its cultural heritage as an approach to understand national identity. As Kitromilides notes the major turning point in this process was marked by the publication of Charles Rolin's *Histoire ancienne* in the mid nineteenth century. As Kitromilides elaborates:

The publication of a sixteen-volume work on the history of ancient peoples, focusing primarily on the civilization of the ancient Greeks, was a clear sign of the new sense of time and the new understanding of history. Such a far-ranging project, designed to increase familiarity with the classical past, can be taken as the clearest indication that a sense of connection between ancient and modern Greeks was in the making. This sense of continuity, stemming from an increased awareness of living in the same space and speaking a new form of the language of the Ancients, gradually became a critical dimension in the formation of the Neohellenic consciousness. (Kitromilides 2013, 71)

This text and other historical manuscripts that followed similar premises were translated and became increasingly popular amongst Greeks who relied on them to construct the basis of their historical identity. Translations were also incorporated in educational textbooks and promoted the ideals of lineage and national heritage from a very early age. In the

discursive context of the contemporaneous quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns<sup>35</sup> the emergence of the rhetoric of lineage also contributed to the rise of tensions regarding Greece's position in relation to its glorified ancient past and its modern European counterparts, thus beginning to illustrate what has since intensified and almost become a point of anxiety to meet European expectations. Discussing the various ways that this 'anxiety' was also evidenced in education, history of education scholar Theodore G. Zervas observes:

[a]lthough the Philhellenes and other "outside" forces helped shape a Modern Greek identity, the Greek school would become a national symbol for clandestine survival of that identity. As a national institution, the school system reproduced a Greek historical consciousness and identity. After independence the Greek state was committed to a nationalized school system. Compulsory education was mandated surprisingly early when compared to other nations (1834), even though few schools existed in Greece and the state lacked money to build new schools and train new teachers. [...] Greek identity was predominantly aligned with European notions of a Greek identity. This identity was heavily linked to the Greek Church and Christianity, as the Church took most of the credit for protecting and preserving a Greek identity after the formation of the Greek state<sup>36</sup>. Notably, those communities in Greece that had not yet acquired a national identity and those communities that did not speak Greek adopted Greek identity with no resistance. (Zervas 2012, 57-58)

Greek traditional dance was also immediately employed in this endeavor as a tool that would physicalize the claims for national unity. As anthropologist Michael Herzfeld

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<sup>35</sup> In regards to the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns Kitromilides observes the following: "The dispute between Ancients and Moderns was consequently articulated around the issue of what were appropriate relations between modern Hellenism and the two civilizations between which it places itself: those of ancient Greece and modern Europe." (Kitromilides 2013, 157)

<sup>36</sup> The significance of religion (Greek Orthodoxy) as part of Greek national identity is something that prevails to this day. In Section II (Relations of Church & State) of the current Greek constitution Article 3 reads: "1. The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ. The Orthodox Church of Greece, acknowledging our Lord Jesus Christ as its head, is inseparably united in doctrine with the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople and with every other Church of Christ of the same doctrine, observing unwaveringly, as they do, the holy apostolic and synodal canons and sacred traditions." (THE CONSTITUTION OF GREECE 1975)



demonstrates in his book *Ours once more* (1982), folklore (song and dance) became a tool in the process of constructing cultural continuity and linking ancient to modern Greece. The dances that were incorporated in the school curriculum were *Kalamatianos* and *Tsamikos*, both originating from different parts of Southern Greece (the Peloponnese), which was the first area that was liberated from the Ottoman rule. The incorporation of these dances in the mandatory school curriculum immediately labeled them as ‘national’ and they were employed as tools in the country’s long struggles to balance its Eastern influences with its Western cultural legacies.

The perception of dance as providing evidence of cultural continuity has its roots in the second part of the eighteenth century in an idea developed by Mrs. Elizabeth Lomaka – Chénier (mother of Greco - French poet André Marie Chénier) who in a letter to another French poet exclaimed that there was proof that modern Greeks were descendants of the ancient Greeks; it could be found in the ways that they danced (Raftis interview 01/27/2014). This idea became popular as time progressed and it was later adopted and furthered by the leading figures of folk dance.

Up to here I have been using the terms *traditional* and *folk* rather interchangeably but with a consistency as far as their connotations are concerned. In order to move forward however, an etymological distinction should be made between ‘traditional’ dance and ‘folk’. I follow the definitive delineation made by Alkis Raftis in his first book *The World of Greek Dance*. According to Raftis a dance is deemed “traditional” when it is learnt and performed in the village where the dance originated and in the context it was created for (e.g. weddings, other types of celebrations, or dances made to tell the story of the area),

whereas “folk” dance is the term used “for traditional dance when performed out of its traditional social context” (1987, 23). Both folk and traditional are captured by the term “demotic” (δημοτικοί) meaning “of the people” in Greek.

The incorporation of dance in the national education system fits under the category of folk, since teaching these dances in a classroom takes them out of context. Similarly, the examples that will be discussed from this point on also primarily concern folk dance rather than traditional dance as they are mainly staged and highly stylized instances that occur in the context of folk dance companies.

### 1.1.1 The Roots of Greek Physical Culture and the First Dance Festivals

Physical culture in Greece started to emerge during the final decade of the nineteenth century when the so called *Union of Greek Women* (Ενωσης Ελληνίδων – *Enosis Hellenidon*) started training professional gymnasts in 1897<sup>37</sup>. Gymnastics had been a component of public education for male students since 1878 but until the 1890s it was still highly reminiscent of military training regimes emphasizing discipline, rather than focusing on bodily cultivation. The ‘Union of Greek Women’ founded pedagogical gymnastics departments in 1897 and thus assisted in the establishment of the teaching profession as a socially acceptable female occupation. The activities offered at the ‘Union of Greek Women’ and later the ‘Lyceum of Greek Women’ could be paralleled to those

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<sup>37</sup> In an essay titled “Female Body Culture and the contrivance of national tradition: The contributions of the Union of Greek Women and the Lyceum of Greek Women (1897 - 1940)”, Eleni Fournaraki notes that up to the late decades of the nineteenth century the State was not providing education for women, because it was still perceived as a marginal issue. Only elementary education was mandatory for all but middle or professional education for women was offered by private institutions during the early twentieth century. (Fournaraki 2010, 368) Such institutions were the *Union of Greek Women* and the *Lyceum of Greek Women*.

offered in the Settlement Houses across the Atlantic during the Progressive era (1890 – 1920), which equally played a definitive role in the creation of a space for young women to socialize and become professionally competent (Tomko 1999). At the same time it could be argued that the two institutions (along with the many clubs and unions that emerged thereafter) contributed to the essentialization of dance as a primarily female profession. A similar argument has been forwarded by several dance scholars (Burt 1998, Fensham 2011 et. al., Franko 1995, Huschka 2012) for the early stages of development of modern dance in Progressive Era US. Other analogies that can be drawn between *fin de siècle* Greece and emergent approaches to physical culture and embodied practices in the US concern the organization of festivals –that became established as a genre at the time –as well as the composition of *tableaux vivants*. In the North-American context *tableaux vivants* were associated with Stebbins’ rendition of the Delsartian technique of statue posing and can be defined as a reconstruction of still images.

The creation and presentation of *tableaux vivants* (see Image 1) that gained popularity at the time further confirms the above claim and positions the practices of the Lyceum in direct conversation with early twentieth century European approaches to American physical culture. Ancient Greek inspired *tableaux vivants* comprised parts of the Lyceums festivities until 1915 (Antzaka-Vei 2010). After that, the thematic references to ancient Greece were reduced to only a section of the festivities while the primary focus fell on presentation of rural costumes and dances. Overt references to Hellenism and the glorious past however still comprised parts of the Lyceum’s festivities until the late 1930s.

In Greece *tableaux vivants* mainly occurred in the productions of the Lyceum of Greek Women that was founded in 1911 by Kalirroï Siganou Parren, who is considered to be one of the first feminists in Greece. The Lyceum's mission statement was, since the beginning, very clearly concerned with preservation of cultural artifacts and the education of women in a variety of different fields. Dance took on a central role and, along with the collection of traditional local costumes that the dancers wore when performing, it became the signature of the Lyceum.



**Image 1:** Tableaux vivant “*Around the Altar*” composed by G. Iakovedes, at the Royal Theatre in 1912. “*Εφημερίς των Κυριών*” (Ephemeris ton kyrión) issue 1015 (1912) p. 1849 – reproduced from *The Lyceum of Greek Women 100 years* (2010) p. 236, Library of the Lyceum of Greek Women.

Parren organized the first festival only a few months after the Lyceum was founded on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May in 1911. They named the festival *Anthestiria* (Ανθεστήρια), which had

been a direct reference to an homonymous ancient Greek celebration<sup>38</sup>. It was presented in Zappeion, a neoclassical building located at the heart of Athens in the National Gardens.

Reflecting on that first festivity Parren is quoted as saying:

The Hellenic *Anthestiria* is the first truly Hellenic fest; a festivity of the first of May with Hellenic dances, Hellenic songs, Hellenic music, and Hellenic clothing. Our old and our new life in a beautiful combination, in a very graphic and poetic brotherhood. Our dancers, young girls from the best of our families performed the Hellenic dances with their beautiful archaic clothing and through the grace of their movements and the nobility of their poses they established that the dances that have been preserved are indeed the circular<sup>39</sup> ones performed by the ancients around the altars. All of the songs in that festival were demotic and the *Mandolináta*, who politely took part in the festivity, performed an original Cretan dance under the direction of Mr. Lavdas. (my translation Parren, in Antzaka Vei 2010, 233)

In this short, albeit very rich, account of the first festival organized by the Lyceum one can clearly observe the process of weaving the thread between the past and the present through a multitude of devices. First and foremost, the name of the festival is a revival of one of the most famous celebrations of ancient Greece. Secondly, as Image 2 faintly demonstrates, the long white draped dresses that the dancers wore, which Parren in her account described as “Hellenic clothing”, bear a strong resemblance to ancient tunics.

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<sup>38</sup> *Anthestiria* was one of the four celebrations that took place every year in classical Athens in the honor of Dionysus. “They were celebrated during the month called *Anthestirion*, which meant that the wines from the previous fall had been ready. The celebrations lasted for 3 days. They started in a happy and festive mood and ended in a bittersweet and often sorrowful way. This was due to the belief that during the second day of the festivities the souls of the dead rose from Hades [the Underworld] and wondered amongst the living, whilst on the third day they entered their houses and dined with them.” (my translation from the lemma *Ανθροστήρια* in the Encyclopedia Υδρογόειος)

<sup>39</sup> The emphasis on the circularity of dances (“indeed the circular ones”) refers to the structure of most folk dances that are performed in a circle. As the quote attests, the circular nature of folk dances is perceived to be a remnant of ancient Greek dances that were usually performed around altars.



**Image 2:** The parade of the dancers (entering from the center of the picture and extending to the left) at the *Anthestiria* of 1911. “*Εφημερίς των Κοριών*” (Ephemeris ton kyrión) issue 1004-5 (1911) p. 1592 – reproduced from *The Lyceum of Greek Women 100 years* (2010) p. 235, Library of the Lyceum of Greek Women

The fact that Parren mentions how the Cretan dances were performed to the orchestra of mandolins is another insightful allusion to the ancient roots of dance in the Minoan times. Of course this is not the first instance where circular dances are openly tied to Greek antiquity, because this view had been circulating since the mid eighteenth century, but it is nevertheless important to note that the performance of the first *Anthesteria* in Zappeion possibly entailed further significance and provided Parren’s claim with more validity than it would have if the festivity had been held elsewhere.

Zappeion, since the mid nineteenth century, had been a symbolic site in the history of the revival of ancient Greek ideals, such as the Olympic Games and other kinds of festivals similar to the *Anthestiria*. Evangellis Zappas, a visionary of the revival who owned the building that later came to be known as Zappeion, had also sponsored the restoration of the Panathenaic Stadium which hosted the first Olympic Games under the auspices of

the IOC (International Olympic Committee) in 1896<sup>40</sup>. Zappeion had hosted the fencing games of the first IOC Olympics and as such it can be perceived as a landmark for the survivalist argument, which renders its significance even more symbolic.

The *Anthestiria* festival of 1911 only marked the beginning in a series of festivals and celebrations that similarly aspired to establish the modern Greeks' descent from the ancient Greeks. Revisiting Parren's quote and her mention to "our old and our new life" and the way that these were captured in a "poetic brotherhood", I cannot help but remark the strong nationalist implications of her claim, as well as her overt efforts to establish these festivities as instances of transhistorical seasonal celebrations and evidences of national unity and brotherhood. The dances performed in these festivities drew on elements from traditional dances, but had been reworked to appear more elegant and graceful. Adding to this appropriation were the costumes that resembled tunics; a choice that further facilitated the process of aesthetic refinement. The incorporation of ancient Greek signifiers (i.e. costumes, festival names) assisted in the grounding of these dances as 'Hellenic' rather than 'Greek', because their aesthetic presentation relied on elements of a glorified and idealized past. The Hellenic aesthetic by no means bore any resemblance to the recent state of the country that was marked by wars, struggles and the 'national schism'<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> This is not to imply that 1896 was the first time when the Olympic Games were revived in post-Ottoman Greece, as it had been a central element in the modern Greek political agenda following the war of Independence. Olympic Games had been organized in the Panathenaic Stadium prior to 1896 but this date is mentioned to signify the involvement of the IOC in the process.

<sup>41</sup> The period between 1910 and 1922 is known in Greek history as "national schism", because the political beliefs of the people were divided between the policies of Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos and King

Some sources (such as Herzfeld 1982, Stratou 1966) mention that traditional dances and folk songs were being performed throughout the era of the Ottoman Empire occupation as a means for Greeks to stay in touch with their customs and traditions<sup>42</sup>. As such, they played a very vital role in the construction of a post-Ottoman national mythology that emphasized patriotism, heroism and bravery. References to the more recent past were incorporated in some of the Lyceum's twentieth century festivities through presentations of the myth of Zaloggo.

The “dance of Zaloggo” has been incorporated in national history as a tragedy showcasing the heroism of Greek women and their patriotism during the times of the Ottoman Empire. As the story goes, 18 years prior to the beginning of the Greek revolt against the Ottoman Empire, in 1803, the women from a village in Northern Greece decided to commit massive suicide instead of surrender to the Ottoman powers. At the time, slave trade of white females was still legal and thus it is said that it was used as a means to threaten Greek men and take advantage of their women. The *Souliótisses*, as these women are known in Greek history, convened and decided to first throw their children to the death off a cliff and then jump off themselves. Various accounts of the event, that have been documented either by Greeks or foreign travelers at the time, note that the women were holding hands and singing lamenting songs while walking towards the end of the cliff, which explains why this incident is known as ‘the dance of Zaloggo’.

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Constantine I. Their disagreement mainly regarded foreign policy matters, such as the decision of whose side Greece should take in entering the First World War.

<sup>42</sup> It should be noted, that it was a common practice in the Ottoman Empire to allow subordinated people to continue their religious and cultural practices, as the Ottomans did not attempt to homogenize their subjects. This was one of the premises of the so called ‘millet’ system. (See also ‘milet i Rum’ reference on page 9)



Though references to it as an actual event abound, current sources challenge the truthfulness of this occurrence and position it in the sphere of national imagination as opposed to accepting it as a real event. As an invented tradition, the ‘dance of Zaloggo’ both serves to strengthen the sense of national unity, through its narrative of Greek resistance to Ottoman rule, while at the same time it produces a narrative of female heroism that subverts the dominant gender stereotypes in place since the establishment of the Greek state. Dance anthropologist Irene Loutzaki discusses the myth of the dance and its various reconstructions as an event that manages to bridge many different aspects of Greek identity.

As an event that is potentially unique the dance of Zaloggo has managed to convert the regional identity of the *Souliotisses* to a national identity, that encompasses the Souliotic, the Christian and the Hellenic [elements]. [...] A dance (where women part from their children and jump off a cliff) occurs as a protector of women’s reputation from the humiliation caused by the enemy. The image of the *Souliotissa*, in the way that it is presented, is based on a fundamental social value: self-sacrifice. To the extent that this value can be perceived dynamically and not passively, it seems to convert the weakness of the women into an act of heroism. Thus, through the mythification of this dance, women, who were previously perceived as weak, and in need of protection, became heroes. (Loutzaki 2006, 23)

The story of Zaloggo quickly spread through the Greek territories of the Ottoman Empire to the Philhellenes abroad and it has had tremendous impact on shaping national consciousness from a very early age, since it is incorporated in elementary school textbooks even to this day. As Loutzaki further observes, reconstructions of the dance of Zaloggo have also been part of elementary school curriculums, where girls would wear traditional garments and hold baby dolls.

Returning to the reconstruction from the Lyceum however, it should be noted that the presentation of the myth of Zaloggo was performed in a refined and polished manner approximating classical aesthetics. This reiterates the *archeolatrea* (worship of the

ancients), a prevailing trend at the time, that sought to revive ancient Greece as the direct precursor of modern Greece either by contributing to the invisibilization of Greece's confrontations with the Ottoman Empire, or by emphasizing the heroic aspects of Greek resistance.

### 1.1.2 The Delphic Festivals and the Re-Birth of *Orchistiki*

As many scholarly sources on the 'birth' of modern dance observe (e.g. Daly 1995, Fensham 2011, Macintosh 2012) ancient Greece was oftentimes utilized as the source of inspiration for American physical culture pioneers and European approaches to movement. Some of these important figures, such as Isadora Duncan and Eva Palmer Sikelianos visited Greece as part of their research travels and thus their trajectories are in direct dialogue with the emergence of dance in Greece. The early stages in the development of modern dance in Greece dating in the 1930s were referred to as *orchistiki*<sup>43</sup> (ορχηστική, the word for "the art of dance" in ancient Greek).

Greek sources locate the beginning of modern dance in Greece in an encounter between Eva Palmer - Sikelianos and Koula Pratsika. Eva Palmer was an American Philhellenist who married Greek poet and playwright Angelos Sikelianos. Sikelianos at the time had been preoccupied with the development of what Palmer in her autobiography

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<sup>43</sup> The ancient Greek verb *ορχούμαι* (*orchoumai*) referred to the movement of dance. It is etymologically very similar to the name of the stage part occupied by the ancient Greek tragedy chorus, which was called *ορχήστρα* (*orchistra*). According to Koula Pratsika, the first choreographer who 'revived' "orchisis", it was the dominant art of a Dionysian Dithyramb. As such it was perceived as the very first step for establishing dance as an art in ancient Greece.

recalls as a “thesis concerning Universal Principles” (Anton ed. 1993, 60), which later became known as the “Delphic idea”. The complexity of the Delphic idea is manifold, and does not concern this project, but in short it can be summed up as an ecumenical approach concerned with human equality and the Oneness of Man<sup>44</sup>. Sharing this vision with his wife, Sikelianos thought that the most effective way to realize it would be through the restaging of an ancient tragedy. Eva Palmer recalls him saying:

I have never believed that anything vital can be accomplished by merely talking. An infinite deal of wisdom is expounded every day in public and in private; but it does not pierce even the crust of human inertia. [...] But to reach below the surface where speeches cannot penetrate, our action must be organically connected with the very roots of the Greek people. We must use the great medium which alone can unite opposites: ART, and especially DRAMA. (emphasis in original - Sikelianos in Anton ed. 1993, 103)

The aspiration of an ancient Greek tragedy revival gave birth to the two Delphic festivals that were organized in the ancient theatre of Delphi<sup>45</sup> in 1927 and 1930. Playing into the same trope that the Lyceum had established in its festivities, Palmer also set out to

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<sup>44</sup> According to Georgios Kounoupis (Kounoupis 1960) who discusses the historical roots of Sikelianos’ Delphic Idea it is centered around a ‘universal’ principle because it signifies the harmonious equilibrium between matriarchy and patriarchy as the two primitive systems of rule, that had first occurred in the geographical area now known as Delphi. Sikelianos believed in racial and ethnic equality and according to Kounoupis this was one additional reason that ‘Delphi’ was of significance since it shared etymological roots with ‘*adelphoi*’ (ἀδελφοί) meaning brothers. As such, it was a way to imply a global sense of brotherhood and blood-relations amongst human kind. Beyond racial equality Sikelianos also believed in gender equality, which stemmed from the collaboration between the social systems of matriarchy and patriarchy and did not render women as inferior or sexualized subjects but continued to recognize and honor them as equal, if not superior to men (because of their reproductive value). Part of Sikelianos’ and Palmer’s vision was the internationalization of Greek language, because they believed that it was the most valuable factor that could unite all nations. This belief stemmed from the rich history of ancient Greece and its cultural milestones such as democracy and philosophy.

<sup>45</sup> The region of Delphi in Greece is an archeological site that, according to Greek mythology, was determined by Zeus as being the center of the earth (the navel of mother Earth – *the omphalos of Gaia*). Delphi was also the site of the most important oracle in the classical Greek world and the site of the ‘Pythian Games’, one of a series of very important athletic games that is considered the precursor of the Olympics. As such, the place is still often believed to have sacred properties and is a major tourist site, since the ruins of the ancient Delphic theatre, stadium, and oracle have survived through time and are still preserved and open to the public.

reconstruct and present the lineage of Greek history and interestingly also employed women from the Lyceum as performers<sup>46</sup>. The first Delphic Festival in 1927, which is the focus of this section, consisted of a staging of *Prometheus Bound*. This redirects us to the encounter between Pratsika and Palmer. Out of sheer chance, a tour guide (Marika Veloudiou) who worked with Palmer in Delphi suggested Pratsika (who then worked at a bank) to Palmer and this resulted in Pratsika becoming the leading dancer in the staging of the tragedy. In her autobiography Pratsika recalls this encounter:

1926. DELPHI. [...] Eva [Palmer] accepts me. I know not what awaits me; I know nothing of what I will live, or what will burden me for the rest of my life. The rehearsals in Palaio Faliro. In Delphi I am swamped with a light. I accept it like God's blessing. An unknown side of Greece is revealed to me, one unbeknownst to us Greeks. Not one of mere spirit, of study, of rhythm, of Plato, of the ancient texts and the writings. But a vivid presence, eternal, ageless, always youthful! Despite the centuries of slavery the Greeks are still reverently holding on to their traditions, their language, their religion, their idioms, their music, traditional instruments, their Byzantine music, their traditional dances, their art of weaving, embroideries, costumes, clay pottery, wood carvings, jewelry. [...] My soul fills with light: to work, to study, and to return home so that I too can contribute and pay the small price of my existence, to the country that I had the fortune to be born in. (my translation Pratsika in Minor ed. 1991, 16-17)

This extensive quote, not only reveals Pratsika's enthusiasm but it also attests to her fascination and vision to discover a 'different kind of Greece', which later propelled her approach. Additionally, it underlines her motion to align her view of Greece with foreign imaginings. Pratsika came from a very wealthy Athenian family and was educated and

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<sup>46</sup> It has been noted that Palmer initially did not want women from the Lyceum to perform because she considered them an inappropriate choice, since they were urban women that had "adopted the Western ethics and did not authentically represent the elements that had been preserved from ancient Greece." (my translation, Glytzouris 1998, 150-151) Sources from the library of the Lyceum of Greek women state that Palmer had collaborated with the Lyceum in the past as well and had assisted them with the staging of their so called "archaic" sections. Palmer's name is also mentioned amongst the contributors for the costume collection of the Lyceum.

artistically curious. Her mother was from Leipzig, Germany and Pratsika had visited family in Hellerau in 1923. In her autobiographical note she recalls that visit as the spark that fueled her fiery vision of making ‘this side of Greece’ –that she had first encountered in Hellerau and was reacquainted with later through Palmer –accessible to Greek audiences. In her recollection of her first visit to Hellerau and the Dalcroze school she writes:

Here, in this corner of the earth, in this German village they were teaching Hellas. The Hellas of dance, of rhythm, of music. The Hellas of Plato, the eternal Hellenic essence, so that they could serve Man with its rhythms, its body and its spirit. (my translation Pratsika in Minor ed. 1991, 15)

Perceiving her participation in the Delphic Festival as a calling Pratsika decided to pursue a career in dance and in 1927 she left to study eurhythmics at the Dalcroze school in Hellerau. Having met and having lived amongst some of the most influential personalities of German Ausdruckstanz (such as Mary Wigman, Rudolf Laban, and Harald Kreutzberg) and being ‘burdened’ with her mission to contribute to her country she opened a school for eurhythmics and dance upon her 1930 return to Athens. Being “deeply and incurably shaken” (my translation from Pratsika in Minor ed. 1991, 15) by the experiences she had gathered during her time in Germany, she became preoccupied with introducing the Hellenic essence to the Greeks. Circling back to the beginning of the chapter, this approach to an extent recycled the directives of the educational system that relied on European imaginings of Greek history to set its pedagogical foundations. She employed European eurhythmics principles but distilled them to reveal the Hellenic essence that lay at their core. For instance, she saw a reflection of ancient Greek principles in the harmonious balance between rhythm and body movement advocated by Dalcroze.

A dichotomy starts to emerge here between Greece and Europe and a tension and eagerness to fulfill European expectations, either by indoctrinating educational textbooks with foreign views of Greek national identity, or by reproducing and staging idealized versions of history, as seen in the festivities organized by the Lyceum and in Pratsika's post-1930 productions. It should furthermore not be overlooked that the people who were engaged in dance in the first half of the twentieth century were primarily upper class females, who, contrary to the majority of women at the time, had access to some level of education (beyond elementary school that was mandatory for everyone) and had the luxury to be involved in such a leisure activity. This observation raises questions of access in the trajectories of the two genres in the coming decades and is often criticized in local discourses as elitist.

The rebirth of *orchistiki* came at a very tumultuous time for Greece and followed a series of very traumatic events; the Balkan Wars during the first half of the 1910s, the First World War, but most impactful of all was the Catastrophe of Smyrna in 1922 (see Appendix). The Catastrophe of Smyrna in Asia Minor hindered the irredentist territorial claims of reviving the glorified Greek Empire as it stood prior to the Fall of Constantinople (1453) and signaled a massive migration movement of Asia Minor refugees to Greece. However, even though the territorial claims may have lessened in fortitude, Irredentism persevered in the intellectual sphere where it manifested as a survivalist argument that advocated for a close knit connection and a direct lineage between ancient and modern Greece. As it has been discussed, the survivalist argument was evidenced in the arts and in dance, and on a more general cultural level it was mirrored in the purification of the

language and the establishment of *katharévoussa* (see Appendix), that was an amalgamation of ancient Greek and demotic Greek, thus further enhancing the sense of lineage. The rich and glorious past seems to be almost a haunting presence hovering over the still struggling post-Ottoman Greek nation-state. It serves as a constant reminder of a ‘golden’ era that bears little to no resemblance to the present. Thus the mimesis of the past occurs as an understandable aftermath and the only possible solution to mold into and approximate European expectations.

In dance the irredentist ideal was approximated through intensive archaic revivals. If viewed in the context of the time this extensive regression and introspection (in terms of constantly looking at the country’s past and revisiting classical Greek aesthetics) can be theorized as a reaction to the traumatic events of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Such events include the aforementioned national schism, which further fuelled the fear of fragmentation of national unity. As such, the need to redefine the national self and body in a positive light articulated a need for stability in the aftermath of repeated political changes and regimental shifts.

## 1.2 Performing Greek Modernism & National Mythology

The exercise of historically contextualizing the implication of survivalist claims into dance could benefit from a parallel consideration of the movement of modernism as it has been written about in the context of architecture, literature and the visual arts. Greek modernism is theorized as reaching its peak during the interwar period (1922 – 1940). Even though it is mainly written about in the context of visual arts, a look at the main

characteristics and trends of Greek modernism sheds light on the development of *orchisis* in the early 1930s and provides a framework for understanding the shifts in the perception and representation of Greek national identity.

In Europe modernism had been associated with cosmopolitanism and a crisis of representation (Lewis ed. 2011), as well as with universal capitalism and cultural imperialism. In Greece however, according to Modern Greek Studies scholar Dimitris Tziovas, modernism was experienced as an identity problem and “can be seen as introverted, ethnocentric and anti-colonial” (Tziovas 1997, 2). I would add one more thing to Tziovas’ list: deorientalizing. Tziovas goes on to address the aestheticization of culture and the highlighting of indigenous aspects of Hellenism as two of the main characteristics of the generation of the thirties. In an anthology exploring European “core” (i.e. German, French, Italian, British et. al.) and “peripheral” (i.e. Portuguese, Turkish, Greek et. al) modernisms, Modern Greek historian Roderick Beaton observes the polarity characteristic of Greek modernism, which he sums up as follows:

On the one hand, there was the imperative to define and defend the new world of the twentieth century, a modern national identity predicated on the ancient Greek past. On the other hand, there was a strong urge to engage with European modernity, so as not to be left behind as “backward” or “provincial”. In short, the dilemma of Greek modernism was the dilemma of how to be both modern *and* Greek at the same time. (emphasis in original Beaton 2011, 235)

Even though none of these analyses involve embodied practices, they are nevertheless accurately reflecting the orientation of Greek dance practitioners at the time.

Literary modernism valued Greek tradition and the past and, according to Tziovas, upon a more careful analysis of Greek prose one finds that Greek modernism also highlighted fragmentation, hybridity of genres, and self-referentiality amongst other traits.



It is precisely these three characteristics that I plan to use as a guide to help track the resonances between modernism's prose and embodied practices.

As a point of departure, I would like to draw attention to a recurring trend in the early career and productions of Pratsika, who extensively drew inspiration from antiquity and centered the themes of her performances on the narratives of ancient Greek tragedies. In the first half of the 1930s Pratsika's productions consisted of an amalgamation of gymnastics, demotic dances, and eurythmics and they were very limited in number, since her main focus had been on teaching. It was after her school took on the organization of the ritual of the lighting of the Olympic flame for the Berlin Olympics in 1936 that she geared her interest more towards performing. One of Pratsika's students recalls the ceremony:

We entered Alti, 12 young girls with her [Pratsika] heading us. We were wearing short earth-colored-togas, didn't have make up on, didn't have our hair done; just like Priestesses we knelt around the big mirror that was pointed at the sun. The torch ignited from the hestia<sup>47</sup> of the sun and we honorably carried it [the flame] in a simple formation to the altar so that the first athlete would take it to the next one until it reached the stadium of Berlin. (my translation - Iliopoulou in Minor ed. 1991, 136)

The ceremony of 1936 was the first time that the flame was lit in such a ritualistic fashion and also the first time that the torch relay was organized and spectacularized in such a manner. It has since been established as a practice that takes place in ancient Olympia every four years and symbolically signifies the beginning of the Olympics while it simultaneously also highlights their Hellenic roots. It is fascinating here to observe that

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<sup>47</sup> Hestia is the name of the Greek mythology goddess of the hearth and its fire. As a modern Greek term *hestia* is also used to signify a hearth.

even though the Olympic flame ceremony is marketed as a Hellenic ritual pertaining to ancient Greek pagan practices, there has been no documentation of similar rituals taking place in antiquity to signify the beginning of the Olympics. Historical sources (Miller 2004) discuss animal sacrifices or other kinds of offerings (such as the pouring of wine) being made to the Gods prior to the beginning of important festivities or athletic events, but there is hardly any reference to any ritual similar to that of the priestesses at the altar of ancient Olympia, which has been established following the 1936 Olympics. Thus, this invented ritual once more highlights the anxiety to meet foreign imaginings (and in the instance of the 1936 Olympics: national socialist imaginings) of what classical civilization and its descendants should be like.



**Image 3:** Still image of an Olympic flame lighting ritual in ancient Olympia in 1964 (choreographed by Maria Hors – one of the first students of Pratsika). The costumes that the performers / priestesses are wearing are very similar to the ones worn in 1936 and even today. Reproduced from *The Lyceum of Greek Women 100 years* (2010) p. 63, Library of the Lyceum of Greek Women.

Drawing a connection to a model of literary modernism analyzed by Vassiliki Kolokotroni and Olga Taxidou, who explore the resurgence of Hellenism as a theatrical analogy and a point of nostalgia, the invention of the ‘tradition’ of lighting the Olympic flame can be read as a nostalgic iteration in the overall effort of Greek modernism to come in touch with indigenous traditions and ‘revive’ them in new light. This invention, with its clear pagan undertones, further demonstrates the eagerness of modern Greeks to satisfy European expectations and fit in the molds of the imagined Hellenic ideal. The choice to achieve that through a choreographed embodied practice highlights this discursive melancholia and showcases its aesthetic transference from a theoretical and allegorical plane to a material one. This nostalgic analogy evokes a sense of mourning for what has been lost and gives a sense of purpose to the ‘imagined’ traditions that piece together the fragments from the past and reconstruct it for use in the present.

These fragments are not just found in ancient texts, but they also exist in the physical space surrounding the performances in the form of ruins (either the ruins in ancient Olympia, or the partly reconstructed ancient theatres where some of the performances take place). The physical presence of such reminders enhances the sense of nostalgia and at the same time it legitimizes the aesthetic reconstructions as ‘authentic’.

Especially in the frame of modernism, when Greeks actively sought to redefine and claim a modern identity, this nostalgia became the driving force. As an affective economy, nostalgia obscures the accuracy of the reunification of the fragments and as such favors certain aspects of the past over others, which results in the marginalization and

invisibilization of certain histories. In a critique of this process Kolokotroni and Taxidou present the following argument:

If to be modern is to confront history without illusions, it is also to accept that perhaps such moments in the past have failed. In this sense to look at the past historically should also entail facing up to the paradoxical continuity of disillusionment, decay, disinheritance and catastrophe. The melancholia of the modern, then, is no mere nostalgia or crisis of originality: it is both the sense that as moderns we are by definition epigones and that what remains of a past that we selectively call “ours” is only apparent to us in ruins. To disregard the ruins would be willful self-delusion, the expression of a desire for the end of history. (Kolokotroni & Taxidou in Tziovas ed. 1997, 17)

Some acceptance of unpleasant aspects of the past has been demonstrated in the performances of the Lyceum, who started to incorporate themes and sections on the Byzantine era in their late 1920s performances. However, in the trajectory of contemporary dance the fragments of the past that were primarily referenced, were selected from ancient Greek classicism, tragedies, and/or mythology. As it has already been noted, the more recent aspects of Greek history were purposefully disregarded from these performances and it was only until a lot later that the marginalized aspects of Greek history were finally dealt with in an embodied fashion (see Chapters two and three).

The second half of the 1930s signified a rather dark period marked by the rise of extreme nationalisms in several European countries and the establishment of the dictatorial Metaxas regime in Greece (1936 – 1940). During the years of that dictatorship, the aesthetic reconstructions and re-enactments of antiquity intensified and were regime-driven, which resulted in associating the extensive employment of Hellenistic rhetoric with the ethnocentrism of the far-right. The case study of a fictional reconstruction of a pagan ritual such as the Olympic flame lighting ceremony and the toga like costumes seems to fit

right in this framework. The use of Hellenism as a corollary for nature, that first surfaced in the works of Isadora Duncan and was later revisited by Ausdruckstanz pioneers, replicates the resurgence of naturalism as it emerged in response to German National Socialism (in the form of German Nudity Culture / *Naktkultur*). It seems that the trope of following and fitting into European understandings of Hellenism once more resurfaces here. This occurrence, however, renders Hellenism's symbolism even more troubling as it is now employed to connote a certain cultural and racial distinctiveness.

To briefly trace the trajectory of these racial connotations it is fruitful to consider the discourse of "nature" and "naturalism" as a racially purifying agent. In the case of American modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan we encounter "nature" as the means to "establish a universal, transhistorical cultural authority for dance in America at the turn of the [twentieth] century" (Daly 1995, 178) and are introduced to the notion of the naked body as being the epitome of nature and a means of connecting to the Universe. In Ausdruckstanz discourses these notions remain in circulation and, during the time of National Socialism, emphasis is given on the classical standards of beauty that come to stand for Aryan aesthetics<sup>48</sup>. The fascist undertones that extensive references to Hellenism and its nature-related aesthetics can bring forth have been addressed by Tziouvas (1997) and are also discussed as potential traits of modernism alongside the tendency to emphasize aesthetic difference. As such, through these associations, Hellenism became one side of a

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<sup>48</sup> According to Karl Toepfer, a Theatre professor who has done extensive research on Ausdruckstanz, "Greek sculpture, with its stone-carved, white bodies, seemed best to reveal this Aryan aesthetic, and nude or scantily clad youths came to symbolize the strength and the vigor of the third Reich." (Toepfer in Linke 1999, 47)

binary between the sophisticated, elegant and aestheticized rendition of the ancient Greek past and its less refined equivalent: the modern Greek present.

Proceeding with the analysis of the invented tradition of the Olympic flame I consider it essential to expand on the choice of female priestesses to carry out the 'ritual'. It could be argued that the choice of women is associated with gendered perceptions of gracefulness and elegance. On a more careful look however, and taking into consideration the background of most of these women it becomes a hierarchical issue of class and potentially also political ideology. The materiality of the past that their performances brought forth was in direct contrast with their individual and gendered identities, which were overlooked in favor of the immaterial ideal of national identity and unity.

The National Socialist regime under the auspices of which the Berlin Olympics were organized, and Pratsika's associations with some of the German Expressionist Dance (*Ausdruckstanz*) pioneers, as well as her involvement in the coordination of the fourth of August festivities during the years of the dictatorship of Metaxas have recently fuelled discussions about Pratsika's political interests and affiliations with the extreme right.

The festivities of the fourth of August that were coordinated by Pratsika do not fall under the umbrella of elegance and Hellenization discussed in regards to the Olympics, but they present an alternative approach that focuses on the stylization of the *Volk* and thus as dance anthropologist Irene Loutzaki suggests, they demonstrate the unity of the nation and are used as an instrument of propaganda (Loutzaki 2008). In this context, the urban Athenian identity was united with the rural identities into a mass ornamental production in the likes of National Socialist movement choirs. The Lyceum was also eager to participate

in the movement choirs and they joined in with 200 girls that walked in the stadium and formed the words “4<sup>th</sup> of August” (4<sup>η</sup> Αυγούστου). As Atzaka Vei (2010) seems to imply, their involvement had been voluntary (i.e. they were not invited by Metaxas or any other institution immediately related to the regime), which attests to the nationalistic undertone of the Lyceum’s work and its mission during the first half of the twentieth century.

Taking a few steps back and trying to review Pratsika’s approach within the framework of extreme nationalism in the late 1930s, it seems that the ethnocentrism of the time fuelled her passion even further to discover and reconstruct that “hidden aspect of Greece”, as she called it, which had first been revealed to her in Hellerau and later in Delphi. Her passion was such, that in her search for an original form of expression she sought for the Hellenic element in everything and then singled it out from the pedagogies that she had encountered. As such her approach was informed by Dalcrozian eurythmics to the extent that they could be paralleled to the harmonious incorporation of rhythm and body movement found in ancient Greek texts. She was inspired by the improvisational approaches of *Ausdruckstanz* to the extent that these adhered to the notions of the natural found in European analyses of ancient Greece. She genuinely believed in a Hellenic ‘spirit’ and focused her efforts on finding it in all her undertakings. The following quote exemplifies her enthusiasm and her sense of ‘mission’:

[It was my dream] [t]o come to the School of Frau Baer, to be taught by these wonderful teachers in Hellerau about the Hellenic spirit, the Hellenic beauty, and bring those back home, back here where we ignored the eternal teaching of Plato. The eternal spirit of Hellas, the spirit that blew free in the European countries. The Hellenic spirit viewed by these foreigners with such respect, adoration, and love.

Hellas, the eternally youthful, always beautiful, always in the Meter [rhythmic meter] and the Rhythm. To serve my *patris*<sup>49</sup> HELLAS. (my translation - Pratsika in Minor ed. 1991, 15-16)

Being one of the first teachers and choreographers to engage with *orchistiki*, or what at the time was known as modern dance, Pratsika's fostered ties to ancient Greek practices could be perceived as an effort to legitimize an imported practice and ground it as quintessentially Greek. Situating her approach, influences, and sources of inspiration in the political context of the time, there are some resonances that can be drawn between the cultivation of German inspired techniques and the prevalent political regime in Greece at the time. This holds especially true as far as the aesthetics of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August festivities are concerned, which were highly reminiscent of German movement choirs. Totalitarian regimes are usually more invested in embodied practices as a great deal of the regime's success depends on the discipline of bodies. This aspect must certainly be taken into consideration in the process of understanding the historical development of dance and the Greek body politic until the mid-1930s to 1940s.

Following Greece's involvement in the Second World War that brought an end to the dictatorship of Metaxas, Greece underwent a period of Occupation and Athens fell under Nazi rule. Starvation and famine prevailed and there was social unrest as people were organizing themselves politically to demand access to food and supplies (see Appendix). The aforementioned national schism, which succeeded the collapse of the Great Idea, between Velizelist royalists and anti-Venizelists began to mold into an antithesis between adherers to right-wing politics and leftists. During the German occupation of Greece (1941-

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<sup>49</sup> "Patris" (*πατρίς / πατρίδα*): Greek word for the home-country.



1944) the dichotomy between opposing political forces was pronounced more clearly and created room for Greek women to become involved in the emergent political movements and thus enter the public sphere en masse for the first time.

Historian Tassoula Vervenioti (2000) observes how such periods of social upheaval and crisis tend to serve as vehicles for the expansion of women's roles and their increasing involvement in the social sphere. It is important here to note however that this observation primarily regarded the women of the Left. As Vervenioti continues, as soon as the occupation and the subsequent civil war (1946-1949) ceased, women's involvement in the social sphere also came to a halt. There was a return to domesticity and a resurgence of family values and distinct gender roles. Female activism on issues of gender equality emerged in the political groups that women were involved in during the occupation and the civil war, but when the war ceased female activism of the Left began to shrink and it was women of the right, who took the first stand in politics<sup>50</sup>.

Taking the social context of the time into consideration, and acknowledging the struggle for women's suffrage the productions of Pratsika and the Lyceum are illuminated in different light. A separation begins to emerge between artistic production and social reality, as the former adheres to European standards of the time, while the latter is

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<sup>50</sup> In her essay "Left-Wing Women between Politics and Family", Vervenioti notes the following in reference to female activism in the aftermath of the civil war: "the political struggle for women's rights inevitably took another path. In the light of the outcome of the civil war, it would not be the Left that would take the crucial steps toward granting those rights and liberties necessary for gender equality. In the late 1940s, the prospects for gaining such rights did not in any event, seem good. Upholding an ideology of traditional patriarchal values, the victorious postwar state –despite the democratic pretensions –was very slow to grant women the vote and refused to modify the family law code introduced under Metaxas. [...] Right-wing governments did not seem enthusiastic about granting women the vote. In 1949 women won the right to vote in municipal or local elections, but only if they were above the age of twenty-five, perhaps to exclude precisely that politicized generation which had played such an important part in the resistance." (Vervenioti 2000, 118-119)

characterized by fragmentation and a struggle to reconstitute national unity. This dichotomy is further explored in the coming section that investigates artistic production in embodied practices in the aftermath of the cold war.

### 1.3 Chorus, Choreodrama, and Folklorization

From the beginning of the Second World War until 1944 Pratsika's school ceased to hold regular classes and the students offered their help to the wounded soldiers. Even though it is not clear how many classes took place at that time, or how often, there certainly was some activity, because the first certificates were given out to the professional division of the school in 1943. Resuming her full choreographic activity after the war passed, Pratsika continued her quest for a Hellenic form of dance and presented two of her most famous works in 1946 (*The Beauty and the Rose*) and in 1949 (*Archaic Dances*), which she also performed in her tours abroad. The dates of these works also mark the beginning and end of the Greek civil war, between leftists and the conservative right (see Appendix). The narratives of these productions however, had no relevance to contemporary politics. In these choreographies the ancient Greek inspired costumes (togas) were again a trademark, as were some poses that the dancers held, which were said to have been direct imitations of ancient Greek statues. At this point it is important to clarify that even though Pratsika's works included references to statue poses, her approach was not related to Delsarte's or Stebbins' rendition of the technique. As Greek scholarly sources mention (Barbousi 2014, Minor ed. 1991) she just used them as a source of inspiration but did not seek to reconstruct the poses.

The descriptions and critiques that have survived from the 1949 performance of the *Archaic Dances* all talk about a revival of antiquity and of *orchistiki téchne* (the art of dancing), but at the same time they note a remarkable fluidity that breaks away from the static nature of a tableaux vivant or a mere statue posing sequence. They view Pratsika's work as a cinematic representation of historic truth and appreciate *orchistiki* as a living, vital and indisputable source of historical knowledge. Here is a brief selection of some translated quotes from the critiques that were published in 1949, which attest to the above points:

This significant artist [Pratsika] decided to liberate the godly apparitions from the silence of centuries, to emancipate them from the prison of the museums and to scatter them to their old dens, in this ancient theatre<sup>51</sup>. [...] Her purpose had been to approximate the essence of the ancient spirit, to give flesh and blood to the godly shadows, and move them to the pulse of ancient rhythms. (my translation, Dounias in *Kathimerini* 1949)

The archaic form of *orchesis* is not a deceased museum art. [...] If we can come near to the mystical core, around which all the dancerly shapes are harmoniously revolving, then we will discover the timeless human soul in the *orchistiki techne* of the ancient Greeks. (my translation, Chamoudopoulos in *Eleftheria* 1949)

In spite of the political turmoil of the post-Second-World-War period and the Greek civil war, the art of dance kept evolving, albeit a little slower than before. The first graduates of Pratsika became teachers in her professional division, like Rallou Manou, while others veered off to open their own dance schools. The Lyceum of Greek Women still prevailed as one of the most important institutions upholding and reproducing the Hellenic tradition until the early 1950s, when the landscape for both folk dance and contemporary was significantly reshaped. In the case of folk dance there was the founding

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<sup>51</sup> The performance was held in the restored ancient theatre of Herodus Attikus.

of the *Dora Stratou Dance Theatre*, whereas in contemporary there was the creation of new professional schools and contemporary dance companies. The boost of artistic activity as a professional occupation is what the coming sub-sections investigate.

Prior to delving into the flourishing of the institutional development of dance practices in the 1950s, however, it is necessary to make a deviation and situate the development of embodied practices in contrast to the social reality of the time. As indicated previously, artistic production seemed to operate in a rather separate realm from the struggle that the majority of people were experiencing in the aftermath of the civil war. The opening of this section (1.3) mirrors the approach commonly encountered in Greek historical sources on dance, which pause their narrations during the time of the German occupation of Greece, and the civil war and resume immediately thereafter. There are limited accounts about artistic activity coming to a halt and dancers engaging in helping the soldiers, or their families, but beyond such minuscule references the visceral implications of the war on a social and embodied level, are left unspoken.

Since the sources drawing connections between dance and the socio-political reality of the 1940s are limited, I draw on Occupation and civil war historians (Mazower 2000, 2001; Gerolymatos 2004), and bring their perspective in dialogue with the social milieu. Through this exercise I develop a hypothesis about the ways that dance and body politics intertwined at the time.

First of all, it is important to note that the dance scholarship explored in the coming sections concerns developments in embodied practices in urban centers, and does not take into account rural areas. As such, it would be a significant omission not to discuss the

differences between urban and rural areas. In the early 1950s, when contemporary dance enjoyed wider popularity and recognition as a legitimate profession and as an independent artistic endeavor (divorced from theatre) in Athens, persecutions and executions of communists still prevailed in rural areas. Prisons were still in operation and as Mazower (2000) notes, rightists in the villages were particularly trigger-happy and overtly used violence, which led a lot of people to flee and hide in the mountains, as they had done in the course of the civil war. Many women were imprisoned or fled with their husbands. They gave birth in caves or in the prison and raised their children there as well, which led to the characterization of that generation as “children in turmoil” (Dalianis in Mazower 2000).

These contrasting images raise questions about the political orientation of the choreographers at the time, who, according to existing sources, did not encounter any resistance of a political nature to their artistic endeavors (with the exception of Dora Stratou, who was imprisoned as discussed in the Appendix). At the same time, it also presents an image of contemporary dance functioning in a separate and somewhat ‘protected’ realm of activity, that required a certain social and financial status to enter, as the following case studies attest. In regards to the development of a Greek body politic at the time, and especially a gendered body politic, the social values of conservatism and domesticity prevailed. The expression of female sexuality was considered a taboo and something that should be rather kept in the private sphere.<sup>52</sup> According to information

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<sup>52</sup> Especially in regard to the generation of the “children in turmoil” as Dalianis and Mazower (2001) observe: “The children were often late developers sexually, which was scarcely surprising given the attitudes toward sex on the part of the authorities in the Children’s Villages, where girls suspected of sexual relations with boys were beaten and often expelled.” (Dalianis and Mazower 2001, 102)

published in a monograph by Mando Dalianis in 1994 titled “Children in Turmoil during the Greek Civil War, 1946-1949: Today’s Adults”, which Mazower adopted into an essay with the same title: “Greek society generally in the postwar years was still highly conservative in matters regarding sex education” (Dalianis and Mazower 2001, 102). Taking these elements into account will significantly assist in contextualizing and gaining a deeper understanding of the aesthetics and narratives that prevailed in the productions of the 1950s and 1960s discussed in the coming sections.

### 1.3.1 From ‘*Orchisis* to *chorós*’<sup>53</sup>

The two leading figures in the field of contemporary dance in the early 1950s and 1960s have been Rallou Manou and Zouzou Nikoloudi. Both began their studies with Pratsika and then Manou furthered her education at New York University (NYU) and the Martha Graham School, while Nikoloudi studied with leading *Ausdruckstanz* pioneers, such as Mary Wigman, Rosalia Chladek, and Harald Kreutzberg. Both choreographers developed very strong ties and collaborations with theatre (they both worked for productions of the *Théâtre Technis* and the *National Theatre*, where they choreographed the parts of the Chorus in restagings of ancient Greek tragedy) and were similarly concerned with fleshing out aspects of Hellenism.

The career of Rallou Manou began under the wing of Pratsika. Manou was teaching in Pratsika’s professional division from 1937 until 1946 and had been a choreographer’s assistant and co-choreographer of Pratsika between 1938 and 1946. Her main contribution

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<sup>53</sup> *Chorós* (χορός) is the modern Greek term for dance. In modern Greek “χορός” is also the term used for the ancient Greek tragedy chorus, so in this subtitle ‘chorós’ is used to signify both the *chorus* and *dance*.

lies in the creation of her company “Hellenic Choreodrama”<sup>54</sup> (Ελληνικό Χορόδραμα), her “import” of the Graham technique, as well as the founding of her professional school for dancers and teachers focusing on modern dance and ballet. She is considered to be the first person to introduce the Graham technique to Greek dancers, which has since been established as one of the main techniques taught in professional dance schools in Greece and is still taught to this day.

Manou’s early choreographies, especially the ones produced in collaboration with Pratsika, revolved around ancient Greek narratives, as did some early works that she choreographed by herself (Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrant* in 1941, *Archaic Sunset* in 1949, Aristophanes’ *Nepheles* in 1951, *Orpheus and Eurydice* in 1952 to mention just a few). Such works, as well as later recurrences of ancient inspired themes, were staged in a fashion very similar to Pratsika (i.e. with ancient Greek inspired costumes / presented in restored ancient Greek theatres) and as such she is regarded as furthering Pratsika’s vision. Having travelled a lot and having studied abroad for years, Manou was well versed in the postmodern approaches that had started to evolve in the US at the time, but according to Theatre Studies scholar Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou (2005) it had been a conscious choice for Manou to line up with the agenda of Greek modernism and to find ways to harmoniously combine the “spirit” of the times with the modern traditions.

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<sup>54</sup> *Hellenic Choreodrama* (1951 – 1988) was the first professional contemporary dance company. According to dance historian Steriani Tsintziloni “Graham technique was the basis of the company’s movement style and its repertoire was mainly inspired by ancient themes or folk stories.” (Tsintziloni 2012, 12)

The works that are considered to be the ‘landmarks’ in Manou’s career are the ones that delicately combine advanced dance techniques (a hybrid between ballet and contemporary Graham technique) and themes from more recent Greek traditions, such as *Six Laic Paintings* (1951), *The cursed serpent* (1951) and *The Wedding of Karagiozis*<sup>55</sup> (1951). In these works the highly aestheticized aspect of classicism that had been emphasized and placed at the epicenter of previous productions was set aside in favor of a more pragmatic and realistic representation of modern Greece that included grotesque elements and was concerned with topics ranging from Greece’s post-independence history. By engaging with such topics characteristic of the modern Greek State, Manou indirectly addresses the influence that Turkish culture had exercised on Greece. Additionally the grotesque image of Karagiozis (as he appears in the shadow theatre) creates space to address the less refined elements that also comprise Greek identity.



**Image 4:** A still image from Manou’s *The Wedding of Karagiozis*. The masks with the exaggerated features that the dancers are wearing are an imitation of the somewhat grotesque features of the Karagiozis puppet. (Source: *Archive of Rallou Manou: Her life and work* edited by Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou – Vasilakou 2005, p. 113 – accessed at the National Library of Greece)

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<sup>55</sup> Karagiozis is the main character of a folklore form of shadow theatre descending from the Turkish shadow puppet “Karagöz and Hacivat”.



This orientation to the more recent past (after 1830) was further enhanced through Manou's collaboration with important musicians, such as Manos Hajidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, and painters, such as Ioannis Tsarouchis, whose work was similarly concerned with configuring Greek identity in the postwar landscape. According to Physical Education Professor Pagona Bournelli (2008), these artists along with other literary figures and poets of the time, such as Odysseas Elytis, belonged to a leftist movement called *Pétrina Chrónia* (Πέτρινα Χρόνια – Stone Years) that sought to redefine Greek national identity in line with more recent histories and traditions (i.e. post-Independence). In one of her collaborations with Theodorakis *The song of the dead brother* (1962) Manou pairs Graham technique with *rebétiko* (ρεμπέτικο – more on the genre in section 3.2.) and thus creates a unique hybrid of internationally acclaimed artistic standards (Graham technique) and Cold War Greece (*rebétiko* songs and dances). Her attentiveness to contemporary matters and developments is in line with her endeavors to provide a new definition of 'Hellenicity'<sup>56</sup> and to develop a form of expression that is authentically and indisputably Greek. Seeking the elements that marked her productions as authentic she has remarked the following:

Of course dance is international and its technique, both in classical ballet and modern dance, adheres to the same principles in spite of some differentiations. However, technique is just the means. Art is the end. How can -as I think it should- our art of dancing be Hellenic? This does not mean that our dancers have to wear *tsarouchia* and *foustanélla*<sup>57</sup>. Hellenicity is not an external trait, nor an issue of

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<sup>56</sup> Hellenicity is here used to translate what Manou perceives as ελληνικότητα. I deliberately chose to translate this as a separate term beyond 'Hellenism' and 'Greekness' to indicate a discussion taking place about Greek identity, that is not taking into account the aforementioned complexities facilitated by the discursive distinction that I have drawn here.

<sup>57</sup> The *tsarouchia* and *foustanélla* are both parts of the traditional Greek military costume that was worn by the guerilla fighters during the war for independence. The *tsarouchia* is the term for the shoes they used to

citizenship. It's in your blood. You either have it or you don't. Nor does the narrative of a choreography always play a pivotal role. A lot of foreign choreographers are inspired by Greek narratives, but the result does not necessarily express Greece. I often quote a phrase by Martha Graham: 'My blood remembers'. Thus, I subconsciously carry tradition inside of me. (my translation - Manou 1987, 90)

Manou's eagerness to find a Greek form of expression adheres to the concerns of the leftist artistic movement *Petrina Chronia* and also pertains to the agenda of Greek modernism that sought the revival of tradition. At the same time, Manou's association with openly leftist artists, such as Theodorakis, alongside the fact that Graham technique was the 'means' to her artistic 'ends' presents an interesting juxtaposition. Taking into account that communists and leftists were still being persecuted by the ruling regime<sup>58</sup>, an overt association with *Petrina Chronia* appears dangerous. What seems to have been balancing it out was Manou's affiliation with such a popular American technique, as well as her familial ties. Sources suggest (Stamatopoulou Vassilakou 2005, and interviews 2014) that she was from a very wealthy upper class family of ministers and politicians and had ties with the royal family (her half-sister was married to King Alexander).

Greek dance history has not yet explored the political connotations of Manou's work, and the few sources that address them regard her approach as 'neutral' (Fessa-Emmanouil 2004, Stamatopoulou-Vassilakou 2005) and see her as avoiding to pick sides. While it is very difficult to know exactly what her personal stance had been, it is still nevertheless important to note that in post-civil war Greece, when Greece had joined

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wear that were red leather with a black fuzzy ball at the tip and *foustanella* is the name of the quilt-like garment that is characteristic of the costume. A man wearing this costume is referred to as a *tsoliás*. In my line of research I perceive of this image as tied to Greekness.

<sup>58</sup> After the end of the Second World War, and until the establishment of the junta, the regime in Greece was constitutional monarchy (1942-1967).

NATO (in 1952) and Cold-War balances were clearly leaning in favor of the US, the prominent artistic trend in the country also shifted to an American approach: Graham technique. Pratsika continued to choreograph and teach at her school at the same time, but Ausdruckstanz and her Dalcrozian approaches were no longer as popular since more and more dancers and teachers were educated in Manou's school and began spreading Graham technique.

This observation clearly attests to an immediate correlation between foreign influence and prevalent trends in embodied techniques. Pratsika's prime and Ausdruckstanz-informed approach coincided with a time when German forces occupied Greece, while Manou's rise to popularity happened at a time when Greece was recovering from the events of the Second World War and lined up with the US during the early years of the Cold War. Of course it is impossible to reach a definitive conclusion about this shift, since it is a compilation of multitudinous concurrent events that one cannot map out in their entirety. However, their work's aesthetics, themes and movement choices do indicate ideological alignments. Regardless, I think it is important to recognize the possibility of a correlation between such incidents that at first sight appear to be disconnected, because I believe that this sheds light on the deeply political nature of dance in Greece that has thus far been overlooked. At the same time, attention should be paid to the role that upper classes

and the elite<sup>59</sup> have played in the establishment of modern and eventually ‘contemporary’<sup>60</sup> dance, up to the mid-twentieth century. After the late 1950s there seemed to be a change both in terms of access as well as in regard to the political orientation of dance practitioners and teachers. The upper and elite classes were slowly giving way to the middle classes and a leftist awareness and orientation started to emerge, which, a few decades later, has been established as a recognizable trademark of artists.

When the 1960s rolled over, Manou was still at the prime of her choreographic career and also started lecturing about Greek dance to Universities abroad. The mid 1960s were marked by the *Hellenic Choreodrama*’s biggest tour and some of Manou’s works were being videotaped and broadcast on national television. This is a very significant opening for contemporary dance, which through television became more accessible to wider audiences. The latter half of the 1960s however signaled one of Greece’s darkest times in recent history, the Military junta (established on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1967) , also known as “the Regime of the Colonels”. The concentration camps of the civil war reopened and thousands of communists were arrested and imprisoned.

Interestingly, the political happenings and all the restrictions imposed by the junta (1967-1974) did not hinder developments in the field of dance and Zouzou Nikoloudi, who

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<sup>59</sup> As the oral histories documented in Vaso Barbousi’s (2014) book attest, most of Pratsika’s students (Maria Hors, Lena Zampoura, Maro Bournazou, Maria Kynigou amongst others) in the professional division came from wealthy families. Theatrical dance, belonged in the realm of ‘high art’ and being able to partake in it was a privilege, especially since women at the time were mostly uneducated, or confined in the domestic space. Most of Pratsika’s professional students, who later became the leaders of the field, had access to education and came from families who –even though they sometimes still deemed dance as a taboo or an inappropriate occupation –had the monetary means to support such a career. As Barbousi notes, during the Second World War some of them experienced financial hardship, but their social circles most of the times provided them with access and alternatives to resolve any difficulties.

<sup>60</sup> The term ‘contemporary’ corresponds to the Greek word for the genre, which is σύγχρονο (*sighrono*) and means ‘contemporaneous’ or ‘contemporary’.

founded her company *Choriká* (Χορικά) in 1966 was able to continue her work uninterrupted. The history of *Choriká* is divided in three periods, because it often had to stop due to financial hardships, and as such the eras of its main activity are summed up in the following time-frames: 1966-1974, 1988-1990 and 1995-2003 (Savrami 2014).

Similar to the other Greek dance pioneers discussed here, Nikoloudi had also been from a very educated and wealthy family. Her great-grandfather had been the private brewer of King Otto of Greece (who reigned from 1832-1862) and her extended family owned the Fix brewing industry, which until the 1960s was a virtual monopoly in the beer industry. Having been a student of Pratsika and having studied with Ausdruckstanz pioneers, Nikoloudi's vision was to interweave dance, music and poetry and, as the name of her company suggests, to reconstruct this interrelation in the framework of the chorus of ancient Greek tragedy.

Similar to Manou's quote cited above, Nikoloudi shared the belief that Hellenicity is something that one carries within herself and that being Greek is the key trait to reviving the ancient Greek chorus. As choreologist and dance scholar Katia Savrami (2014) observes, Nikoloudi believed that only Greeks are in a position to successfully incarnate ancient tragedy, because contrary to other Westerners they were born in the place where this civilization and its concurrent traditions originated. In a text from Nikoloudi's archive that was meant to be presented in national television she remarks:

As Greeks we are in the rare and fortunate position to hold in our hands a unique, maybe the only one in the world, an Ancient, Byzantine, and contemporary traditional treasure. Just as a Greek cannot perfectly perform one of Wagner's tetralogies or a musical jazz piece, so too a foreigner cannot perfectly render ancient tragedy like a Greek. (my translation - Nikoloudi archive, text for Greek Television dated 4/10/1971 – source: Savrami 2014, 52)

Nikoloudi believed that it was an advantage to be Greek if one was concerned with reviving ancient Greek tragedies. She thus made it her life's mission to restore and revive the ancient Greek chorus by establishing its significance as a solid genre that could be divorced from theatre and become autonomous. She founded the *Choriká* company (meaning of, or related to the Chorus) following repeated disappointments from her collaboration with theatre directors. Even though she promoted dance as a separate art form, her vision was driven by theatrical concepts such as *catharsis*. She extensively focused on the emotionality and the expression of the performers in order to instill empathy and 'guide' the audiences towards *catharsis*.

Nikoloudi's primary focus had been the unification of a variety of arts (as mentioned above dance, music, and poetry) and the belief that these elements were constitutive of an authentic restoration of the ancient Greek *chorus*. At a time when Greece was still suffering from internal ruptures, particularly the breach between communists and rightists, the focus on unification and the emphasis on a supposedly shared heritage can also be read as a statement in favor of national unification. Focusing on Nikoloudi's internal gaze (in terms of constantly revisiting the ancient Greek past) Savrami observes:

This cultural need for introversion is what highlights the term *Hellenicity* both within the borders and in the diaspora, thus ideologically connecting the cultural ideals with ancient Greek civilization and its philosophy, as well as with the traditions of modern Greece in an effort to display the unity, continuity and cohesion of the Greek nation. It is this approach to Hellenicity that Nikoloudi drew from. (my translation Savrami 2014, 22-23)

Other than the narratives of Nikoloudi's work, the choreographic devices that she used similarly attested to this sense of unity, to the point that individuality was often

obscured. She usually positioned the performers in a circle, a choice that definitely adheres to the position of the chorus in ancient tragedy, but at the same time it also is a reference to the prevalent structure of traditional and folk dance. Anonymity of the chorus is another element that she preserved by often using masks (such as in *Agamemnon* 1968, or *Eumenides* 1988). Thus, she once more stayed true to the initial purpose of the chorus in the framework of ancient Greek tragedy, which was meant to provide collective commentary on topics relating to the narrative of the tragedy, such as human choices, acts, or the characters' fate and will.

*Choriká* developed a repertory that *only* consisted of choral pieces, always pertaining to ancient Greek tragedies and being titled accordingly. The company went on extensive tours around the world (indicatively: USA, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spain, Bulgaria, Japan, France and many more), and this has resulted in Nikoloudi being characterized as a “cultural diplomat” or a “cultural ambassador” (Savrami 2014, Tsintziloni 1997). In Greek dance scholarship regarding the first half of the twentieth century, this characterization has only been attributed to Zouzou Nikoloudi and Dora Stratou, as section 3.2 will further elaborate. It is interesting to note here that the element that seems to make these two women ‘worthy’ of such a title is their exclusive and extensive pre-occupation with aspects of tradition that are perceived as quintessentially Hellenic. For Nikoloudi it was the highlighting of ancient Greek tragedy, whereas for Stratou it was the stylization of rural practices. Adding to the ongoing list of gender roles and characterizations, these remarks play into the trope of women as the preservers of classical tradition and keepers of ancient Greek aesthetics.

The popularization of various dance practices and the circulation and emergence of dance companies, or dance techniques with distinct and varying foci alongside the founding of new schools and companies, indicate a detachment from *orchistiki* and an introduction to the notion of theatrical dance. This shift further signifies a transition from a re-born dance genre (*orchistiki*) to a fresh one that was at first referred to as έντεχνος χορός (*éntechnos chorós* – translating as dance that requires *téchne*; a set of masterful skills). The emergence of professional schools and companies during the 1950s and 1960s also signifies a slow shift towards the professionalization of dance which became recognized as an independent art form, no longer tied to theatre. These incidents seem to be in line with the parallel development of other Western concert dance practices, such as the transition from *Ausdruckstanz* to *Tanztheater*, or the establishment and popularization of stylized embodied techniques such as Graham or Limón-Humphrey techniques that also gained popularity in Greece.

The prevalent approaches of the time that still drew their narratives and aesthetics from Greek tragedies and Nikoloudi's revival of the choral form made it hard to completely divorce dance from theatre and put some obstacles to the process of separation and the legitimation of dance as a separate art form. Even though antiquity and ancient tragedies continued to prevail as primary sources of inspiration, more recent histories and traditions also slowly gained ground. The constant recursion to antiquity may have functioned as a legitimation mechanism in the process of establishing *éntechno*, and in turn dance as a separate dance form.



One further attempt at legitimation may have been the expansion of the scope to include new embodied techniques and turn the internal gaze outwards to international stages in order to engage in a dialogue with international artistic standards. This last point was particularly evident in the process of legitimation of folk practices. In the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, when Balkan professional folk dance companies became very popular, Greek folk dance teachers and enthusiasts immediately engaged in efforts to catch up to the craze.

### 1.3.2 The Folklorization of Tradition & The Emergence of *Rebétiko*

A shift towards professionalization and touring of dance ensembles was observed in the field of folk dance as well starting from the early 1950s. At that time a lot of professional folk companies from former Yugoslavia toured Greece and their performances greatly influenced the Greek institutions' views of folk dance and its role. Their presence is discussed in biographical sources as the spark that ignited Dora Stratou's interest in creating a folk dance company that would meet the standards of the foreign ensembles. Dora Stratou, a former member of the Lyceum, who founded her own company (the *Dora Stratou Dance Theatre*) in 1952, has become known as one of the most prolific ethnographers of folk dances and music in Greece. Her work is considered of utmost importance for the preservation of tradition and she regarded herself as a cultural ambassador. One characteristic instance attesting to this point is a letter she sent out to a representative in Constantinople (Istanbul)<sup>61</sup> when she first created her company. In the

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<sup>61</sup> In Greek sources Istanbul is most commonly referenced as Constantinople, which was the Greek name of the city prior to its official renaming in the 1930s. The choice to refer to it as Constantinople is often a

letter she discusses the company's agenda and her interest to "tour, primarily abroad, for purposes of Greek propaganda and advertisement" (my translation Stratou in Agrafioti 1994, 85).

In line with the approaches discussed previously, Stratou believed that the traditional dances that were performed in Greece in the 1950s were the result of a long lineage that dated back to the Minoan times. Contrary to her predecessors however, she engaged in meticulous and systematic research to prove her point. In particular, from 1952 until 1959 she organized and conducted more than 25 visits throughout Greece to 'collect' and document songs and dances; sometimes she went on the visits herself, while other times she sent her colleagues. Her research was also informed by museum visits, where she observed the patterns and the shapes appearing on ancient urns and vases. Paralleling those to the floor-patterns of the dances, or the embroideries observed on traditional costumes, she drew connections between ancient Greece and modern traditions and grounded her argument in what she considered to be 'factual evidence'.

Her findings did not only serve the purpose of enriching and grounding her productions, but she also treated them as pedagogical tools. She published several books and two of her most famous works are: *Greek Dances. Our living link with antiquity* (1966) and *Greek Traditional Dances – Living link with Antiquity* (1978). While the first book was published by the Dora Stratou Dance Theatre, the second one was published by ΟΕΔΒ (Οργανισμός Εκδόσεως Διδακτικών Βιβλίων) the Organization for Publishing Educational

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political statement deriving from the numerous years of tension between Turkey and Greece. Here, the term Constantinople is used as it corresponds to the cited source (i.e. Agrafioti 1994).

Books and was as such incorporated into elementary school curricula from 1979 on. The argument that both books develop is very similar, with the exception that the second one comprises a collection of photographs and patterns that ‘prove’ the relationship between antiquity and the present practices. It also has chapters discussing the survival of the dances throughout the Ottoman Empire thus furthering the nationalist rhetoric and sense of lineage present in elementary school curricula. One very characteristic example of this is her explanation of the use of handkerchiefs in Greek dance, which she associated with the veil of Ariadne from Greek mythology<sup>62</sup>. In their entirety, both books strongly forward the same survivalist argument espoused by a lot of other dancers and performers of the time. In 1974 in a radio talk show called “The 24 hours of a Greek woman” Stratou observed:

Our traditional songs and dances have survived as the quintessence of our history. A history that has found expression through such a treasure that no occupier could ever take away. Dance expresses everything, even death... (my translation Stratou in Agrafioti 1994, 272)

I deliberately chose to include this particular quote of hers, because apart from pointing at the survivalist argument it also hints at the years of Ottoman occupation. As her speech

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<sup>62</sup> In the book Stratou discusses the argument first forwarded by Madame Chenier (as discussed in the beginning of the chapter) who saw a connection between the veil of Ariadne and the use of a handkerchief in many Greek traditional dances. The claim has its roots in the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. Theseus had traveled to Minoan Crete to try and save the Minoans from the Minotaur, a mythic monster that was half man and half bull and lived at the center of the labyrinth in the Minoan palace. Every year, seven young men and seven young women had to be sacrificed to the Minotaur and it was Theseus’ mission to save the youth and put an end to the sacrifices. Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos had fallen in love with Theseus and in order to help him, she gave him her veil right before he entered the labyrinth. (A different version of the myth talks about a ball of yarn instead of a veil.) Theseus ripped the veil and tied the beginning of its thread at the entrance and this helped him find his way back through the labyrinth. The argument on the use of the handkerchief is based on the fact that all thirteen youths were following Theseus by holding on to that thread and this is seen as similar to how the kerchief is used in some Greek dances today as a means to preserve a circle and create a connection between participants. The patterns that Theseus created by walking through the labyrinth were also examined and treated as the sources of a category in traditional dance that is being referred to as “labyrinth dances” such as is the case for a dance called *Tsakónikos*.

continues it becomes clear that her mention to death refers to the dance of Zaloggo (see also pg. 55-57). In this instance Stratou actively engages with and furthers the dominant rhetoric of patriotic heroism and its ties to dance, thus assisting in the transference of such survivalist arguments well into the latter half of the twentieth century. The symbolism of Zaloggo intensified as it was often recognized as a source for female empowerment that was often revisited in various critical historical times (interwar, postwar, civil war period).

However, if one scratches beneath the surface of this idealized packaging that presents dance as the bearer of history and tradition, what they will discover looks more like a Pandora's box full of histories that have been marginalized in the favor of national unity. Not many critiques or critical reflections have been written for Stratou's work, but I turn to Stavros Stavrou Karayanni, a Cypriot scholar of English and performer who problematizes Stratou's approach by fleshing out these instances of invisibilization and contextualizing them in a colonial, and deorientalizing framework.

Stavrou Karayanni examines Stratou's endeavors under the rubrics of "autoexoticization" and "autoethnographic expression" arguing that Stratou is an example of "an instance in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage* with the colonizer's own terms" (emphasis in original Stavrou Karayanni 2004, 130). Building upon the argument made at the beginning of this chapter on the structuring of Greek education, the folklorization of tradition and the exoticization of the Greek self (in terms of trying to present it as Hellenic) plays into the exact same trope of fulfilling European expectations. Stavrou Karayanni further emphasizes the deorientalizing undertone of Stratou's process of auto-exoticization and draws attention to her strategy of

exclusion and the highly selective nature of her work. In her expeditions to collect Greek dances, Stratou often deliberately excluded any songs or dances that had an ‘eastern flair’ or Turkish lyrics. Dance scholar Anthony Shay also attests to this point by observing that “[i]t is in the lyrics that non-Greek identity was first erased from the company repertoire” (Shay 2002, 187). As such, this strategy of exclusion can be perceived as an alternate, more aggressive approach to reaffirm national unity.

As a result, a lot of the regional idioms and ethnic minorities that were still considered Greek<sup>63</sup> were not represented in the *Dora Stratou Dance Theatre*. To this day, the under-representation of certain ethnic groups that live in Greece is still a very delicate issue and as Alkis Raftis, the current president of the *Dora Stratou Dance Theatre* explained, there are certain rules that need to be followed and this balance is very difficult to upset.

We may have different costumes, different regions and lots of other differences but other than that we are all Greek. This is what needs to prevail and the political dimension is very deep; it is our folk’s unity. This is an ideology. We happened to live in the same geographical area, where is the unity? Are the Sarakatsans, the Vlachs, the Jews, and the Armenians the same? No they are not. They are so different, yet you can’t see that because through the performance we cover it up. Stratou covered it up; and I would really want to not have to do it, but there is such a long tradition that it is hard for me to change things. I am playing the game by its rules. I am the president [...] it is a political act. We get sponsored by the ministry and if I decide to do otherwise I need to run it by them. (my translation from interview with Alkis Raftis 01.27.2014)

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<sup>63</sup> The reason why ethnic minorities were perceived as Greek is related to the dominant role of the Orthodox Greek Church. Zervas captures this sentiment in the following excerpt: “Non-native Greek speaking ethnic groups such as the Arvanites, Vlachs, and Slavs, as well as the Turkish-speaking Karamanlides of Anatolia, may have identified themselves more with Orthodox Christianity rather than a specific ethnic or cultural identity. With the formation of an independent state of Greece, localized groups, minority ethnic groups, groups not speaking Greek, and the more cosmopolitan Greek-speaking elites adopted a Greek national identity. Analogous processes had occurred elsewhere in Europe at the time. In the case of Greece, education was the main driving force behind this phenomenon.” (Zervas 2012, 20)

The internal ethnic diversity alongside the reluctance to incorporate some aspects of history into folk performances are still consciously masked or even ‘purified’ in order to adhere to an “exclusive axis of allowed versus forbidden national articulations” (Gourgouris 1996, 131).

Stratou also singled out certain types of dances that she deliberately did not include under the folk category, such as the male and female improvisational solo dances, called *zeibékiko*<sup>64</sup> and *tsiftetéli* accordingly. These dances alongside *chasápiko* and *karsilamás* belong to a category called *rebétika* that developed in the mid twentieth century (interview with Raftis 01/27/2014). *Rebétika* can be categorized as an ‘urban’ folk dance that developed primarily through the need of immigrants (mostly people from Asia Minor following the 1922 Disaster) and people from rural areas who moved to the city centers to find a ‘common language’ that would transcend their rural idioms and rhythms. The Eastern rhythmic influences of Asia Minor made these dances ‘inappropriate’ for Stratou’s work, because their orientalist flair and its connotations to foreign exoticism and sexuality rendered them transgressive. Adding to this sense of transgression was the improvisational nature of the dance (as far as *zeibekiko* and *tsiftetéli* are concerned) and perhaps also the very overt display of gender stereotypes inherent in these dances. Discussing the moments of solo improvisation Stratou mentions:

One of the most characteristic points of Greek dancing, as far as its “Greekness”<sup>65</sup> goes is the following: however intense a dance may be, even if it is steadily accelerating its rhythm, it never goes beyond the proper limits... You may see a

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<sup>64</sup> Contrary to the transliteration rules laid out on page xv the ‘ei’ in *zeibékiko* should be read separately and produce a sound similar to as ‘ai’, such as in ‘fail’.

<sup>65</sup> The term ‘Greekness’ is employed here to connote what Stratou perceives as the dance’s ‘Greek character’ and is not taking into account the aforementioned complexities facilitated by the discursive distinction that I have drawn between ‘Hellenism’ and ‘Greekness’ in this thesis.

dancer growing more and more excited, more and more dionysiac –And you think to yourself: “Where can this possibly wind up?” –Well the dancer simply stops and sits down calmly. [...] The “golden mean” prevails, the “golden mean” of the ancients. Balance in all things –Harmony. (Stratou 1966, 34)

Stratou here discerns between a controlled performance that she deems as the ‘proper Apollonian’ rendition, and one that gets lost in improvisation and succumbs to an ‘inharmonious Dionysian’ ecstasy that is indisputably transgressive. As such she is eager to clarify that any performance that could be termed ‘excessive’ should be absent from what she perceives as the quintessence of Greek national identity. In the case of *tsiftetéli* ‘excessiveness’ and lack of control results in overt displays of female sexuality, which according to Stratou, should similarly be absent. Therefore, Stavrou Karayanni argues that Stratou engaged in a process of de-sexualization:

Stratou’s attempt is to tame the dance and divest it of any potential for personal, as opposed to national, expression, because in her philosophy dance has to be practiced with control. [...] Underlying her comments I also hear the bourgeois anxiety regarding the dancer’s transgressive potential. Clearly Stratou needs to desexualize the dance, since the moment of solo improvisation is the moment of initiative and private artistic expression calling for attention to the individual dancer’s body. (Stavrou-Karayanni 2004, 134)

The intensive stylization and control over the dancer’s bodies and actions observed here about Stratou attest to the folklorization of the dance and its complete removal from its initial context. Improvisation holds a very important role in the expression of the peasantry in the dance’s traditional context and thus stylizing that or completely shutting it down is a very strong symbolic gesture. Taking into account the Eastern heritage that some of these instances of improvisation might reveal, the symbolism becomes even stronger. Through stylization the ‘national body’ is presented as highly disciplined and controlled. This serves to legitimize the dance as an art-form since it takes away its

spontaneity. Furthermore, hindering any sense of individuality serves to reiterate the notion of national unity.

Turning to Stavrou Karayanni for one last time I draw on his observations in regards to the systematic invisibilization of the Eastern elements of Greekness in order to direct the discussion towards a more in depth exploration of *rebetiko* and its connotations.

Officially the modern state has been prepared to denounce any ostensibly “Eastern” heritage in an anxious attempt to secure Western allegiances. Often this denunciation was an act that amounted to nothing less than a cultural self-mutilation, since a great deal of Greek culture qualifies as “Eastern”. The aphoristic treatment of music produced by the Asia Minor refugees (music known as “rebétika”) provides a paradigm of the cultural mutilation. (Stavrou-Karayanni 2004, 126)

Here it is particularly interesting to observe that in some instances the *rebétika*, such as is the case of *chasápiko*, have been legitimized in the national mythology as pertaining to the Byzantine era. In her book *Greek Dances* (1966) Stratou has an entire section weaving the threads of that lineage. Taking into account the emergence of *rebétika* in the mid of the 1900s, I would like to suggest the possibility that such claims may be conscious attempts to obscure their Oriental flair (in terms of the music and instruments used in *rebétika*) by tying the practice to a time that has been significant in the shaping of Greek religious conscience. It may have been another attempt at purification, since the lifestyle associated with the *rebetiko* genre was inherently transgressive and concerned with delinquency, unemployment and the lower classes. It was a tradition that developed in the fringes of



society and is often seen as a simile of jazz, the blues, Argentine tango, or Portuguese fado<sup>66</sup>.

The urban character and the assimilation of *rebétika* in today's prevalent trends of nightlife entertainment are indicative of the reasons why I deem it essential to consider this genre in the process of the development of folk. More importantly, however, my aim is to use *rebétika* as a case study that assists in illustrating the stereotypical polarity that is definitive of Greek gender politics. Thus *rebétika* become a tool in the construction of a framework that will heretofore act as a point of reference for the discussion of gender issues in the Greek context. The popularization of *rebétika* through internationally famous productions such as the films *Never on Sunday* (1960) and *Zorba the Greek* (1964) assisted in the sanitization of the genre and projected an updated, more modern, image of Greece and Greek *urban* identity to tourists and foreign visitors.

The two improvisational dances *tsiftetéli* and *zeibékiko* –female and male accordingly –are both sites of excessive portrayal of female sexuality and masculine machismo. As dance anthropologist and researcher Natalie Koutsougera observes, “these types of dances become a medium in proving whether someone is a ‘real’ man or woman”<sup>67</sup> (interview 03/23/2014).

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<sup>66</sup> An excerpt from Anthony Shay's *Choreographic Politics*, provides a very short and accurate description of the conditions surrounding the emergence of *rebetiko* (sing. – *rebetika* pl.). “There is also a rich urban tradition known as *rebétika* centered and developed in the social nether regions of nineteenth-century Ottoman urban society [...] The tradition continued after the population exchange of 1923 in Athens and Piraeus, where the unemployed, outcast, and criminal classes gathered to listen to music, smoke hashish, and drink. In contrast to the rural tradition of large communal groups, solo, couple, and line dances for two to four men predominated.” (Shay 2002, 178)

<sup>67</sup> Koutsougera's research was concerned with nightlife entertainment and the performance of these dances in urban clubs during the early 2000s, so this observation is based on timely research.

The prevalent image for females in the context of *rebétika* is that of a lover, who uses her sexuality to lure men and play with them. In this context the woman is presented as a dangerous femme fatale, who can potentially subvert the stereotypical gender hierarchy and take over<sup>68</sup>. This image is juxtaposed to another common portrayal of female characters found in *rebétika* songs, which is that of the mother or sister, and thus a figure that one ought to respect.

As a dance, *tsiftetéli* is aesthetically very similar to belly-dance, though one major difference is that there are no certain techniques or codified moves that one is taught in order to be able to perform it; it is learned through being a member of the community. The main movements include gyration of the hips, while the arms are raised high above the head and the wrists revolve in smooth circles as if tied together by an invisible knot. Like most folk dances that have been discussed thus far, even though this is a solo, the orientation of the dancer is still circular (using the hip gyrations to rotate her whole body and revolve around herself). It is a very overt display of an individual's sexuality and femininity and if performed in the wrong context (for example a single woman performs for, or even looks at, a married man) it can lead to embarrassing misunderstandings.

Dance anthropologist Jane Cowan (1990) has extensively analyzed the social construction of gender and sexuality through folk dance in Greece, and in regards to

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<sup>68</sup> In regards to the portrayal of females as femme fatales, Thaleia Spyridaki provides several examples of lyrics from *rebetika* songs that attest to this point: "Like a fish I was caught in your net, and forever your slave I will be", or "Your beauty is magnetizing – whatever you want I will do for you" (in Kotaridis ed. 1996, 98). She goes on to observe that the erotic relationship is mostly represented in competitive terms of domination and subordination, stated in the lyrics with expressions regarding 'finding one's freedom', 'being a victim', 'being a slave or enslaving', torturing or hurting. Women are mostly seen as the dominant subjects in these kinds of relationships.

*tsiftetéli* she observes that the idea of female sexuality as dangerous to society is a very deeply entrenched notion in Greece. She very accurately locates the roots of this belief in the patriarchal traditions of Greek Orthodoxy and ties them with bourgeois notions of respectability rooted in Enlightenment philosophy. She notes that in the advertising practices of capitalist culture of consumption, there is a tendency to “collapse the distinction between the female person and the female body, and to sexualize that body. The female body is thus seen as the *locus* of sexuality” (Cowan 1990, 198).

The metaphorical ‘demonization’ of female sexuality activated through the performance of *tsiftetéli* becomes a referent in the quest for gender ‘authenticity’, and the autonomy of the individual. In regards to the corresponding male expressions, *zeibékiko* is a site of *mangiá* (μαγκιά – swagger) and as Cowan claims, it is a “public performance of the inner self” (Cowan 1990, 177). In the context of the 1950s and ‘60s it started as a way for men to express their distress and anguish against the constantly shifting socio-political order and an attempt to break free from that.

The gaze of the performer is usually directed downwards at a bottle or a glass filled with alcohol, which becomes the center of the performance. The dancer totters around the object in a representation of an inebriated state and moves in a circle around it trying not to tip it over. His arms are reaching out and open in an imitation of an eagle’s wings, thus symbolizing the need to break away from the hardships. Examined in parallel to the lyrics, his posture, facial expression and movement vocabulary attest to some kind of suffering, or intense emotion that can only be expressed through dance. This is a very common trope encountered in regards to *rembetika* and can also be found in literature. One very

characteristic example is an excerpt from Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *The Life and Adventures of Zorba the Greek*, which inspired the homonymous movie that popularized *rebétika* :

Why don't you laugh? Why d'you look at me like that? That's how I am. There is a devil in me who shouts, and I do what he says. Whenever I feel I'm choking with some emotion, he says: 'Dance!' and I dance. And I feel better! Once, when my little Dimitraki died, in Chalcidice, I got up as I did a moment ago and I danced. The relations and friends who saw me dancing in front of the body rushed up to stop me. 'Zorba has gone mad!' they cried, 'Zorba has gone mad!' But if at that moment I had not danced, I should have really gone mad – from grief.”  
(Kazantzakis 1952, 72)

This excerpt presents an example of how intense emotionality –that is stereotypically associated with females –is here, in its expression through dance, normalized as an acceptable masculine trait. In the context of a performance, what Stratou had termed a Dionysian ecstatic emotionality finds a socially acceptable outlet. In the frames of *rebétiko*, and in particular *zeibékiko*, emotionality that is expressed via a performance of machismo converts the fragility associated with such intense emotions into strength and *mangia* (in terms of being strong enough to face and deal with these emotions).

In the post-World-War II and civil war era, *rebétika* became a way to affirm a shift in national identity and consciousness and to capture a more contemporary sense of the critical socio-political shifts that marked the post-war constitution of Greekness and marketed it as a renewed national image for internal and external mass consumption. What had started out as a marginal and transgressive practice, slowly turned into the 'authentic' song and dance of the city. As a 'modern tradition' *rebétiko* to this day serves as the foundation of many socially constructed notions about gender and still accurately captures aspects of the delicate balance between male and female. Their historical roots in practices

and populations hailing from Asia Minor are not only evidenced in the rhythmic patterns that are typical of the genre but also in the behaviors that these types of dances call forth. *Rebétika* were banned during the military junta (1967-1974), in contrast to rural folk dances, which regained their central position and were once more employed to further nationalistic agendas.

Following the model of the fourth of August festivities, folk movement choirs were revisited and presented in national festivals during the military junta. As dance anthropologist Irene Loutzaki observes, folk dances became an instrument of propaganda and a means to address the populace during the junta. In more detail:

Upon the establishment of the junta, the words “Greek Dances” acquired new dimension, since the dictatorship employed its own techniques and mechanisms to approach the populace. The propagandistic campaign was designed in such a way, that the products of traditional culture (dance, music, songs), through shows on radio and television –both turned into instruments of projection for “demotic culture”-, functioned as models according to which varying festivals were structured in the coming years. Easter, Christmas, the 28<sup>th</sup> of October and the 25<sup>th</sup> of March<sup>69</sup>, as well as the “birth date” [of the junta:] the 21<sup>st</sup> of April were ornamented with *tsoliádes*, demotic songs, national dances, ancient statues, byzantine icons, so as to shape the pantheon of heroism and Hellenic racial purity in stadiums, squares, and on the street. (my translation - Loutzaki 2010, 316)

Bringing this into conversation with the development of *éntechno* dance at the time, a new distinction begins to emerge on the level of political affiliation, which became extremely pertinent in the aftermath of the civil-war. *Éntechno* and rembetiko began developing in association with leftist liberal movements, whereas the repeated use of folk traditions by

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<sup>69</sup> Both dates signify national celebrations. The 28<sup>th</sup> of October known as the Όχι (*óchi*) holiday (meaning the ‘no’ holiday) refers to the answer that Metaxas had given to Musolini when he first attempted to invade Greece at the beginning of the second World War (1940), whereas the 25<sup>th</sup> of March celebrates the initiation of the War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1821.

dictatorial regimes connoted folk dance with a nationalistic and oftentimes ethnocentric agenda.

Overall, the decades from the 1950s and 1960s noted a shift in the focus of folk performers towards professionalization, and thus also marked the beginning of independent dance companies. Many folk-dance clubs and unions emerged in rural and urban areas at the time as well. Especially following the popularity of Dora Stratou's work and ethnographic practices, touring and collecting dances became a trend not only shared by the Lyceum, but also drawing the attention of local clubs. Collecting folk dances and music became a profitable business since it was not just limited to staged performance of the dances, but it also widened the scope to include selling of folk music records.

The impact of the professional folklore groups from former Yugoslavia was also not limited to Dora Stratou but it spanned to the Lyceum as well. The Lyceum adapted its practices accordingly by creating the so called *suites* (three or four folk dances from one area tied together through a choreography). This highly stylized approach comprised the new direction of the Lyceum until the early 1980s. This further attests to the rising trend of professionalization, stylization and aestheticization of tradition that prevailed during the '50s and '60s in both the fields of folk and contemporary dance.

While it could be argued that the focus of both folk and contemporary primarily revolved around national unity, the stylization of both genres also attributed to a clearer differentiation of gender roles. In the case of folk dance the stylization provided a separate movement vocabulary for men and women; for instance women put emphasis on swinging

their hips, whereas men had choreographed solos, trios, or quartets that broke out of the circle and returned to it. On the contrary, contemporary dance was still primarily female dominated and presented an alternative to the domestic image of femininity that was prevalent during that time period. While the aesthetics of theatrical dance productions were still mostly drawing on Hellenism, there was a slight narrative shift towards an engagement with contemporary issues, music, and other arts, such as Manou's choreographies attest.

#### 1.4 National Prosperity and Supranational Identity

The early 1970s were a period of widespread social unrest that eventually led to the fall of the junta in 1974. Presidential Parliamentary Democracy was established in 1975, and a new constitution was signed during the same year. Following the fall of the junta, the revision of the Greek Constitution in 1975 highlighted the interest of the state in the issue of cultural development. It was declared that "art, science, research and teaching shall be free and their development and promotion shall be an obligation of the State" (Konsola 2006, 222). In 1976 Greece began negotiating its admittance to the EEC (European Economic Community)<sup>70</sup> that was at first conditional, but once those conditions were met in 1981, it became a member. The entry to what is now known as the European Union (EU) signaled a period of national prosperity but at the same time it called for a renegotiation of

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<sup>70</sup> EEC is the former acronym for what is now known as the EU (European Union). The changes in names have to do with the political goals of the Union and the level of sovereignty that each formation required.

national identity and a transition from an introverted national understanding to a supranational<sup>71</sup>, more extroverted, and thus European-oriented approach.

In local discourses this period following the fall of the junta is known as ‘*metapolitefsi*’ (μεταπολίτευση - translating as regime change) characterized by democratic and civil rights reforms, social welfare politics and educational changes. This shift was expressed through three main movements: an opposition to state intervention and the dominance of political parties; an insistence on personal autonomy, authenticity and creativity, and a glorification of individualism as a prerequisite for personal, social and economic development (Voulgaris 2008, 30). The rising prosperity of Greece during that time implied a social condition that resembled that of modern western societies more than it had at any time in the past. As such, a conflict between local –and as some theorists call them ‘traditionalist’ –approaches and European policies became very evident during the 1980s and 1990s and can be theorized as the time when the financial issues that later led to the crisis had their roots. As political sociologists Panayis Panagiotopoulos and Vassilis Vamvakas argue:

One of the main consequences of Greece’s economic growth is rising prosperity of the middle class and development of a distinct culture in it. Expansion of income that began in the post-dictatorship period in 1974 (called *metapolitefsi*) led to the

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<sup>71</sup> The term ‘supranational’ is often used to describe the structure of the European Union along with the term ‘intergovernmentalism’. Both terms refer to the mode of exercising national sovereignty. “*Supranationalism* involves states working with one another in a manner that does not allow them to retain complete control over developments. That is, states may be obliged to do things against their preferences and their will because they do not have the power to stop decisions. Supranationalism thus takes inter-state relations beyond cooperation into integration, and involves some loss of national sovereignty. [...] *Intergovernmentalism* refers to arrangements whereby nation states, in situations and conditions they can control, cooperate with one another on matters of common interest. The existence of control, which allows all participating states to decide the extent and nature of this cooperation means that national sovereignty is not directly undermined.” (Nugent 2006, 558)



establishment of an urban way of life marked by conspicuous consumption. (Panagiotopoulos and Vamvakas 2014, 115)

Internationally, and more specifically in other European countries (such as the UK), this period from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s has been theorized as the emergence of neoliberalism<sup>72</sup>. In what follows I unpack the resonances, as well as the oppositions, of Greek policies during the *metapolitefsi* to this influential international financial framework.

The response of some theorists, and I must admit, my own initial response, is that Greece failed to implement neoliberal reforms. As Panagiotopoulos and Vamvakas observe “Greece’s participation in the European Union and the Eurozone were not followed by behavioral, institutional and economic adjustments they required” (2014, 114). Along these lines sociologist Val Marie Johnson observes:

from the 1970s forward also raises interesting questions about the recent framing of the economies of Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain as bloated and inefficient (literally PIGS)<sup>73</sup> because of their failure to implement neoliberal reforms (Johnson 2011, 330).

While it is true that Greece did indeed not adapt to neoliberal policies, for instance it did not privatize the public assets, deregulate the labor markets, or reduce progressive taxation, it nevertheless partook in some more abstract aspects of neoliberalism and, to borrow a

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<sup>72</sup> My understanding of neoliberalism primarily draws on the work of David Harvey (2007) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. According to Harvey: “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. [...]Deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision have been all too common.” (Harvey 2007, 2)

<sup>73</sup> PIGS is an acronym that became especially popular during the recent crisis and it stands for Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain.

phrase by Jean and John Comaroff, it altered Greeks' "phenomenology of being in the world"<sup>74</sup> (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 14). It is these alterations that I will primarily focus on.

#### 1.4.1 'Freedom' and Individuality

Since Greece's entry to the EU in 1981, Greek people were introduced to a framework that to an extent employed some of the overarching values of neoliberalism, such as the concept of 'freedom' that was one of the major changes that the incorporation to the EU brought forth in terms of 'free movement' across the borders of EU countries<sup>75</sup>. As it will be discussed, this provided international access to Greek choreographers and artists, who gained greater mobility and thus were able to have access to more techniques, workshops and performances. However, to fully understand Greece's position in this new framework, one needs to continuously revisit the particularities and internal tensions and, as Panagiotopoulos and Vamvakas note, try to view it in the Greek terms by taking into account the specificities and dysfunctions of the Greek state along with its deeply rooted infrastructural issues. The *metapolitefsi*, as a period characterized by supposed prosperity is exactly where the roots of the current crisis lie.

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<sup>74</sup> As Jean and John Comaroff argue, an example of how the notion of neoliberalism is altering one's phenomenology of being in the world can be found in the reliance on new knowledge system, or the adopting of new technologies of subjectivity (2001, 15).

<sup>75</sup> The policy of 'free movement' across member states of the EEC and later on the EU is called the Schengen Agreement and was first signed in 1985 between 5 out of the 10 members of the EEC. The initial members had been Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg, West Germany and France. It was put in effect in 1995 and it currently includes all 28 member-countries of the EU, regardless of whether they are a member of the Eurozone or not. The primary advantage of this agreement is that citizens have the right to seek for employment opportunities anywhere in the EU without requiring any additional documentation beyond their passport or national identification card.

The shift in the political order following the fall of the junta was clearly noticeable in the development of contemporary dance practices that started to flourish in the mid-1980s. Other than a quantitative change noticed in the emergence of many new dance groups and companies, the shift was also evident in the narrative and aesthetic orientation of the performances, which slowly moved away from the Hellenocentric emphasis of the past to a more anthropocentric or humanistic approach. The new focus also implied an emphasis on technique and the limits of the body as well as an emphasis on individuality. The latter point in particular seems to align with neoliberal ideology that revolves around the self and evokes a sense of introspection.

One of the most important figures during the 1980s was Charis Mandafounis, who had been a student of both Pratsika and Manou and later went to study abroad at the Alvin Ailey School in New York and with various dance ensembles in Europe. In the field of dance, he is known as the one who introduced Limón technique to Greek dance schools and dancers. It is important however to note that it was his own rendition of the technique that he furthered, which preserved some of the principles (fall / recovery) of the Limón-Humphrey technique but combined it with elements of ballet from the waist down. In 1980 he founded his own company, called *Contemporary Dance Group of Charis Mandafounis* (Ομάδα Σύγχρονου Χορού Χάρη Μανταφούνη – *Omada Sighronou Chorou Charis Mandafounis*) and from 1979 to 2004 he was a teacher at the National School of Dance. Through his position at the school he trained a lot of upcoming dancers and teachers and thus Limon technique slowly gained popularity alongside the predominant Graham technique. Mandafounis himself defines his approach as “completely anthropocentric”

(Mandafounis in Savrami 2012, 25). He notes how he is inspired by the characters and the relationships that can develop between people, which is what prompts him to create each piece's movement vocabulary. Contrary to many of his predecessors, his choreographies were not based on pre-existing histories or mythologies, but instead materialize at the time of narration through the dancers' movements, which draws even more emphasis to the centrality of the dancing body as the creator of meaning. I perceive of this trait as a characteristic of international productions of the genre of 'contemporary' dance at the time, which similarly tend to no longer (compared to ballet) have a set narrative structure or follow a linear progression. Instead they tend to be more abstract investigations of topics, discourses or ideas. (see also section 1.4.2)

Mandafounis' career ran in parallel to the last two periods of Nikoloudi's *Choriká* company but, as the emergence of numerous other companies at the time suggests, Nikoloudi's *orchistiki*-oriented pieces were an exception and no longer constituted the canon for contemporary choreographers. Of course this is not to say that the new generation of performers and artists completely disregarded the fascination with ancient Greece, mythology, and tradition that had been so vital in the previous decades; they just approached it in an entirely different manner. Mythological narratives (such as *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Orestes*, *Trojan Women*, *Narcissus* and many more) were still present in the repertoire of many companies, but the main focus was on attaining international standards and experimenting with fresh ideas. As such, and since some choreographers from the previous generations were still active, there seemed to be two trends running in parallel during the 1980s and 1990s. On the one hand, there was the thread of Hellenocentrism that

became more and more fragmented as the years went by, but that nevertheless continuously retained its position as a constant source of inspiration and reference. On the other hand, there were the new graduates who focused primarily on modern dance and emergent embodied techniques and experimented with different ways that the dancing body could be employed. It seems that these two tendencies worked together to establish contemporary dance in Greece and contributed to the creation of a space for it in the international scene.

A similar shift of attention towards dancers' bodies and individuality is observed in the new direction that the Lyceum took, following the initiative of one of its main teachers at the time: Eleftherios Drandakis, who broke away from the form of the *suite*. Drandakis attempted to revisit the 'roots' of folk dance and to revive the way that they were performed in rural festivities, which put an emphasis on individuality. In the context of local festivities, there certainly is a sequence of steps that everyone follows, but the manner that these steps are performed is not choreographed and each participant is allowed to add their own individual flair and style. In order to break away from set choreography and stylization and facilitate the performers' expression of individuality, Drandakis organized trips to the rural areas with the Lyceum's performance group and the dancers had a chance to experience and embody the dances in their festive, informal and celebratory context. As one of his students and colleagues Nancy Charmanda recalls, "he did this until we all managed to break away from the 'form' and were able to express ourselves. It was not as strict anymore." (my translation from interview with Charmanda 01.25.2014).

While this approach can also be viewed as a way to revive a lost sense of authenticity, in the realm of folk dance it seems to serve an opposite purpose than what is

observed in the individualization of contemporary dance. It seems to be a move away from professionalization, albeit still a highly stylized one, and a turn towards the initial character and function of ‘traditional dance’. This shift was similarly evidenced in the approach of the newly founded local folk dance unions and clubs that also saw a significant increase in popularity at the time.

Overall, the growing involvement of the middle classes in artistic practices that became more and more common in the early 1980s alongside the ideal of ‘freedom’ –that will be further elaborated in the coming section –and an increasing emphasis on individuality are worth examining under the prism of neoliberal theories. As Harvey (2007) observes, the principle of ‘freedom’ was highlighted as neoliberalism sought the creative destruction of prior institutional frameworks and powers. In some of the instances that compose Harvey’s main case studies, such as Chile, ‘freedom’ becomes a priority because in the very recent past it had been severely compromised by the ruling dictatorial regimes.

Similarly, in Greece the attention to individuality and the turn to fostering freedom of expression (as was discussed in the context of folk dance) signifies a reaction against the oppression of the military junta that collapsed in 1974. Along the same lines, the highlighting of the importance of individuality and the attention to dancer’s bodies, rather than an overarching and linear narrative or their coordination and unity, also points to a break away from totalitarian collectivity imposed by the dictatorship. The move away from the ideal of (national) unity, that had been definitive of many approaches to dance up until the 1970s, materialized into a highlighting of individuality. In turn this fragmentation of

the national collectivity also manifested as a break from the past, to a more extensive focus on the present, as the coming section more explicitly discusses.

#### 1.4.2 ‘Conceptual dance’ and State Sponsorship

Most of the companies<sup>76</sup> that emerged in the second half of the 1980s produced contemporary dance performances, with the exception of some, such as the Kondaxaki Group (1987) and Leda Shantala (1987) that focused on Ballet and Indian Dance respectively. The prevalence of contemporary dance gave further rise to the centrality of technique and professionalization. As the 1990s rolled on, the focus was primarily on the materiality of the body and its limits. Acrobatic and technically demanding sequences became a trademark of the Greek theatrical dance scene that was now experiencing an unprecedented prosperity. Some of the scholars that I interviewed tend to refer to the 1990s as “the Golden Decade” for contemporary dance in Greece.

One of the characteristics of this era was the public prestige and legitimacy attributed to dance through the funding system of support from the Ministry of Culture, and several European funding programs geared towards supporting cultural projects. This assisted in creating a dance ‘explosion’, as emerging artists and newly founded dance groups found support to realize their artistic vision. As mentioned earlier, other than the wealth and prosperity that the incorporation to the European Union brought about, it also

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<sup>76</sup> Here I include a list of some companies that emerged in the 1980s. Some of these companies (marked with an asterisk) received greater recognition during the 1990s and became trendsetters in the development of contemporary dance. *Mikró Choreftikó Théatro* (Little Dancing Theatre) – 1982 / *Anália* -1984 / *Me liga lógia* (In a few words) – 1984 / *Theatrokinisi* (Theatre-movement) – 1985 / *Omáda Edáfous\** (Ground Group), *Próskaeri Synthesi* (Temporary Composition), *Magnites* (Magnet) – 1986 / *Okyroé* -1987 / *Láthos Kinisi\** (Wrong Movement), *Roés\** (Flows) – 1989.

triggered a reconsideration of national identity. As dance historian Steriani Tsintziloni observes in her PhD thesis, which focuses on the prosperity of the 1990s,

[t]he notion of the contemporary for the artists signified a distance from, and distaste for, the past as heritage and a lack of interest in national identity [...] In this sense, the urgency of artists to free themselves from the past and to explore their own creative language may help explain the ‘dance explosion’ of the 1990s as a space for constructing new images of the self and re-envisioning history. (Tsintziloni 2012, 113-114)

This newly critical approach to the issue of national identity as well as the shift away from linear narratives and mythological stories contributed to the rise and establishment of so called ‘conceptual dance’, which refers to fragmented narratives and the investigation of abstract concepts rather than stories following a linear progression.

Choreographer and performer Konstantinos Mihos problematizes the emergence of conceptual dance by linking it to the subsidization of the art form by the state. He begins by noting how most of the press releases were concerned with overly general topics such as ‘the unknown’, ‘the state of being’, or ‘loneliness’. He argues that this way of discussing and presenting dance was tailored to appeal to selection committees deciding how and to whom the state sponsorship would be allocated.

When we still had state sponsorship, and people realized that you could actually make a living out of being sponsored, there was a pressure and a pending question: “yes but how are they allocated?” There was a rumor that sponsorship was an ideological issue, that they wanted [the criteria] to be as objective as possible. The conditions of production are amongst these objective [criteria] and therefore, everybody started to create very similar productions, meaning very rich and concerning very wide topics. What is objective anyway? I disagree, I think sponsorship was political; it is completely reasonable. (my translation from interview with Mihos 05/11/2014)

In the interview he continues to talk about his experience with state sponsorship committees and the ways that they decided in favor of, or against his productions



depending on the political orientation and ideology of the committee members. Looking at the allocation of sponsorships in the 1990s, one can indeed discern a certain degree of favoritism motivated by the agenda of the ruling political party at any given moment. Thus to revisit Mihos' observation, it seems that conceptual dance due to its wide-ranging and abstract topics that generally regarded the human condition and were thus widely appealing, might have been a way for choreographers and companies to navigate that terrain.

Continuing the discussion on the engagement of dance with national identity, there was an observed turn towards 'tradition' in some of the most popular productions of the time (such as those from the Sinequanon, or Láthos Kinisi companies). It was not so much a revisiting of tradition as it was a de- and re-construction of it. For instance, release techniques were being bridged with *rebético* music, or contact improvisation sequences were being performed to traditional music. This fusion of traditionalist aspects of national identity with internationally appealing techniques and practices was further complicated by the accessibility of the internet that first became more widely available in the early to mid-1990s in Greece.

The spread of the internet and the easy access to information brought about a new trend in the contemporary dance scene that now attempted to copy and incorporate some of the most famous approaches and techniques that circulated abroad. This point has been observed by many of the people that I interviewed (Barbousi, Charmanda, Loutzaki, Savrami, Tsouvala et. al.) and when viewed critically, the overall tendency is to regard the approach of this era as somewhat superficial in terms of not delving in adequate depth into

the techniques and trends that choreographers referenced. This *sampling* approach was primarily located on an aesthetic level, because some choreographers appropriated images seen in international performances. It thus attests to an evident interest and an effort to rise to international standards. As a result, *sampling* became a means of approximating ‘Europeanness’ and further contributed to the obscuring of national specificity and narratives. Indeed, even though Greek choreographers of this time began experimenting with American postmodern improvisational approaches to movement and to dance-making, their movement aesthetic and the emphasis on physicality that was characteristic of contemporaneous European productions still prevailed.

The focus on the materiality of the body was paralleled to a rise of objectification of the body, as it coincided with the proliferation of media and commercial culture. The adherence to international standards of expensive TV-shows, which, more often than not, presented the dancing body as a commodity, resulted in dancing bodies being perceived as sites of pleasure and entertainment. Popular prime-time shows such as *Ciao Antenna* (Antenna channel; 1992-1996) and *Bravo* (Mega channel; 1994-2000) promoted sexualized images of scantily clad dancers -primarily females- and connected dancing to spectacularized entertainment. In effect they significantly impacted audiences’ perception of what a ‘choreographer’ is and does as well as what is the role of dance. I would argue that such shows contributed to the origins of the widely established belief that ‘dance is for entertainment purposes’, which still circulates –or has been revived –with the popularity that shows such as *So you Think you can Dance*, or *Dancing with the Stars* have enjoyed in Greece in the last decade (2005-2015).

This presents a point for debate. The aforementioned acrobatic emphasis of contemporary dance may have emerged as a direct response to the spectacularized bodies seen on TV screens. Furthermore, a point could be made that bodies in theatrical dance are objectified as well, and that they are sometimes also presented in order to offer pleasure and entertainment. So what is it that distinguishes dancing bodies on stages from dancing bodies on TV? I would argue that the response lies in the means that bodies are employed to create meaning. In theatrical dance stages, and in the instance of conceptual dance that was flourishing at the time, the dancers and the choreographer's movement vocabulary became the tools for articulating the concepts that were being explored. On TV shows of the 1990s, on the other hand, dancers were presented as scantily clad individuals in flashy and shiny costumes who performed routines choreographed in accordance to popular music. In this context, the role of dance and dancing bodies was secondary to another ongoing event (that of the TV show) as it was used to accompany invited singers, frame the show's host, entertain the audience right after a commercial break, or draw their attention to one part of the TV set, while another part was being reconfigured. I would argue that following the popularization of this kind of spectacularized dance that was clearly meant to entertain audiences, contemporary dance was rendered as comparatively less accessible. In its engagement with the human experience, contemporary dance often addressed topics that challenged the audiences' comfort zones, or were perceived as unintelligible, due to their abstract conceptual nature.

This relative marginalization of contemporary dance is further justified by a variety of facts. For instance, the 'explosion' of productivity in the mid-1990s had a negative side

to it as well, because the rapid founding of dance groups also led to their rapid dissolution. The accessibility to European funds for cultural projects alongside the lack of infrastructure for dance in Greece produced temporary companies that consisted of groups of dancers who would get together to create one or two works and then dissolve. To understand temporary companies, it is worth noting that most of the Greek dance companies do not have facilities at their disposal as is the case for foreign companies. Many choreographers do not even have a regular space in which they practice, but have to rent studios here and there depending on what is available at any given time, or they do not have a set group of dancers who have signed contracts and are part of a company for a pre-arranged period of time. Oftentimes, they hold auditions for the purpose of creating a work so the performers come together for that production and then break apart again. The latter also hints at the fact that there are not regular seasons when companies are presenting work.

The abovementioned isolation is also explained by the fact that the contemporary dance scene in Greece seemed to be mostly for internal consumption, meaning that its audience comprised primarily of people who had a personal interest or an affinity for theatrical dance, or were dancers themselves. There seemed to be a lack of an educated lay audience for Greek contemporary dance (with the exception of the work of some choreographers such as Dimitris Papaioannou's *Omáda Edáfous*, Konstantinos Rigos' *Oktána*, the *SineQuaNon* company, or Mihos' *Láthos Kinisi* who attracted wider audiences and also educated them). On the contrary, foreign companies with international acclaim always attracted bigger audiences and were not limited to dance enthusiasts. This also had to do with the accessibility of international companies to large and prestigious venues,

since they received wider and more intensive exposure and advertising in comparison to their Greek colleagues.

It could be argued that it was after the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games opening ceremony in Athens that contemporary dance attracted the attention of a wider audience and that most people encountered the idea that contemporary dance *could* function as a site of national identity. However, it appears that even in this case the appeal that contemporary dance attracted was geared more towards the choreographer of the ceremonies (Dimitris Papaioannou) rather than enjoyed by Greek contemporary dance more generally.

Overall, I would argue that the ‘golden decade’ of the 1990s and early 2000s signaled the emergence of what has by now been established as ‘contemporary’. Drawing on a definition provided by Ann Cooper Albright contemporary dance is concerned with a body:

that engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience. It is through the act of choreographing these differences that the dances [...] mobilize cultural identities, unleashing them from their overly deterministic moorings while at the same time revealing their somatic ground. (Albright 1997, xiii)

In the Greek contemporary dance scene, the approach to these issues that Cooper Albright is addressing was there, but in a rather fragmented manner. Social commentary was evidenced in quite a few of the productions that circulated in the latter half of the 1990s, but as most of my interviewees have observed, the way that dance education is structured in Greece does not provide emerging choreographers with adequate infrastructure or tools to creatively engage with such topics. I would argue that the element of *sampling*, and the

many foreign influences that Greek choreographers sought to incorporate in their works is what really made Greek theatrical dance productions of the 1990s approximate the above definition.

This leads to another very significant factor that has shaped the generation of 1990s choreographers, which is that the overwhelming majority of them left to further their studies abroad upon graduating from one of the Higher Professional Dance Schools in Greece. The most common destinations were Germany, the UK and the US. This practice was supported and officially recognized by the State Scholarship Foundation (IKY – Ίδρυμα Κρατικών Υποτροφιών) that offered scholarships for the study of dance since 1982<sup>77</sup> and the Onassis Public Benefit Foundation that began offering scholarships for dance or dance studies in 2001. A lot of the dancers who studied abroad formed companies or dance ensembles upon their return and their experience abroad acted as a legitimizing factor that attracted young dancers to work with them. This practice of temporary migration further complicates the treatment of contemporary dance as an ‘imported’ genre. At the same time however, it attests to an embracing of the new supranational European order and can be interpreted as an attempt to mold into this new framework. Thus the recurring question of what makes Greek contemporary dance *Greek* is complicated even further.

I would argue that the intensive sampling of international trends was once more part of the anxiety to adhere to international standards and be considered ‘equals’ by partaking in the worldwide dominance of West European and North American embodied

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<sup>77</sup> This date is provided in approximation based on circumstantial evidence and recollections of my interviewees. The State Scholarship Foundation has closed since the crisis broke out and its website is no longer in operation, so it was very hard to verify the accuracy of the provided date.

approaches and techniques. Following Cooper Albright's quote, the desire for a liberated body (one that has been unleashed from deterministic moorings) is also installed in this process of *sampling*, but the access to the means of liberation is not. Thus on a first glance there really is not much that could be referenced to describe these approaches as Greek apart from some examples that use Greek traditional music or fuse folk elements with contemporary dance. I would argue that one point of contention that could classify as an act of liberation is the shift away from the preoccupation with fashioning the self worthy of the Hellenic towards a more substantial engagement with the present.

In concluding this section, I would like to quote an excerpt from a conference talk by Haris Mandafounis, who very accurately paints the landscape of Greek contemporary dance during the 1990s and early 2000s and speaks to all the issues raised in regards to the infrastructure of the educational system for dance, as well as the audience's perception of the genre.

The decade of the '90s can be characterized as the "golden" decade for contemporary dance in Greece. The last few years however, there is a stagnancy, we see it every day, we live it and we know that in the arts stagnancy equals regression, simply because the others keep moving forward. Therefore, it is important to find the table<sup>78</sup>.

We often read that dance people are Don Quixotes, utopians, romantics, heroes, because they have to face all these hardships and yet they do not give up. Maybe dance people are indeed all of these things. However, dance does not need heroes or Don Quixotes. Dance needs planning and support; it needs the creation of an infrastructure that is non-existent in our country, and a motive for the people who serve it. Such a motive would be to turn dance into a profession. In peoples' minds dance is more of a hobby rather than a profession. The question is all too common: "*And what do you do for a living?*" But dance should not remain a hobby. It is a beautiful thing to remain amateurs in terms of our love for dance, but we need

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<sup>78</sup> "Find the table" here refers to an ongoing metaphor in Mandafounis' speech, who emphasizes the need to find a table, around which everyone will sit (referring to the State and the artists) in order to discuss issues pertinent to dance and figure out solutions to the problems that he is pointing out in his speech.

to become professionals in terms of the sincerity that we approach dance with. (my translation- Mandafounis 2002, 77-78)

A decade later, things still remain rather stagnant –on the level of creating an infrastructure –and dance is undergoing one of its most difficult eras. As the next chapter will extensively discuss, governmental funding for dance has ceased completely since 2011 and it seems that the chance to ‘sit at the table’ is by no means a state priority at the moment. The need of choreographers to address this new order however, has not ceased. On the contrary, it keeps growing as they individually navigate the murky and stagnant waters of the crisis. This time the infrastructure is even more absent and thus the need to engage with the sociopolitical structure is far more tantalizing.

It is during these past few years (2009 – 2014) that the inward inspection and the navel gazing has intensified and has finally become more critical, as the sociopolitical crisis has become translated as a crisis of the self. More specifically, I perceive it as a crisis of the national self that primarily manifests as a reconsideration of marginalized histories, or an inclusion of previously invisibilized populations and perspectives in an attempt to better understand the present. As such, marginalized histories are rendered visible through dance and attention is finally paid to issues that have previously not been subject to such critical engagement through embodiment. This gives shape to a clear move away from Hellenism and from narratives pertaining to Greek antiquity, towards an engagement with the constituents of Greekness.



## 1.5 Concluding Thoughts

The exercise of tracing the development of folk dance and contemporary dance in parallel has demonstrated the various correlations that exist between the two. The multiple intersections in their paths attest to a rather uniform direction in the development of embodied practices in Greece.

The most significant change in this historical investigation has been observed at the beginning of the 1980s, and it intensified during the 1990s. In line with the emerging neoliberal policies in some parts of the EU, the value of individuality was highlighted in stark contrast to the recurring emphasis on unity and collectivity that underlined most artistic endeavors up to that time. Thus, in terms of observing a shifting relationship to the past, the focus slowly turned away from tradition, mythology, and the Hellenic, and instead centered on the human experience and more significantly on the body and its materiality. This shift of attention towards individuality correlated to a rising awareness of gender empowerment, which initially began in the 1960s with the popularization of *rebétika*.

The various stages in the process of development of both genres, demonstrate a close relation to concurrent socio-political events. Thus, even though the political affiliations of the leading figures in the field of dance are not always clear, and do not necessarily concern this project or the development of the genres, they nevertheless attest to the deeply political nature of dance practices in Greece that has thus far been overlooked. Especially attending to the close-knit relationship between dance and identity construction, one can certainly discern a correlation with the agenda of the ruling regime at each time, or with the broader political and ideological movements that were at play.

The extensive sense of ethnocentrism observed throughout most of these stages alongside the rhetoric of purification or Hellenic authenticity that surfaces in many of the choreographers' statements, suggest a recurring agony to deorientalize the Greek self and rid it of any references to its Ottoman-influenced past by establishing it as either Hellenic, European, or more generally Western. The process of negotiating Greece's position in relation to its European counterparts, illuminated a series of ongoing tensions either between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, or dominant and established histories as opposed to more recent (and often marginalized) ones.

Another important aspect addressed is the significance of dance in national mythologies and the building of a national consciousness. The first instance that attests to this point has been the incorporation of "national dances" in elementary school curricula that took place right after the establishment of Greek Independence in the mid-1830s. Another example is the popularization of the myth of Zaloggo that engages with a period of Greek history that is otherwise mostly invisibilized and turns that into a site of female strength, heroism and patriotism. Recent debates have challenged the accuracy of the sources and the accounts referring to the Zaloggo incident and discussions have been carried out to potentially exclude it from the history books of elementary school education. However, even to this day, this event is of such political importance in the process of shaping children's national consciousness that it has aroused heated discussions and the proposal to exclude it has been dismissed.

I would argue that to this point, the decade of the 1990s seems to be the closest that the Greek dance world has approximated ideal conditions of production. Funding was

accessible, dance critics (albeit still very few of them) were present and writing about dance in major newspapers, workshops were being facilitated, and there generally was a sense of exploration and mobility in the field that was to an extent supported by the state. This period of prosperity is in stark contrast with the conditions of production in Greece during the crisis and recession, where access to funds is minimal. As it will be demonstrated in the coming chapters, dance is once more flourishing after a period of relative rest in the aftermath of a shock (2009-2013). In spite of the lack of means, choreographers still find ways to produce and stage their works and for the most part, these works have disengaged from the trends discussed thus far as characteristic of the trajectory of Greek dance. On the contrary, the works produced in the past few years demonstrate engagement with the present, the socio-political sphere, and the precarious conditions of the crisis.

## Chapter Two

# Fragments of a Precarious Landscape: The crisis from within

*“Crises can create openings, cracks through which we can see the structures of society more clearly.”*  
(Barbara Sutton, *Bodies in Crisis*)

In December of 2008, only two and a half months after I had left home to study abroad and live alone for the first time, a series of revolts and lootings broke out in Athens. My housemates, classmates and acquaintances in England soon turned to me for explanations. “Why are Greeks so violent?” “Why are you guys rioting all the time?” “Can’t they find another way to resolve this, do they have to destroy everything?” As the events persisted and intensified over the course of weeks their quest for explanations turned into genuine concern: “You probably shouldn’t go back for Christmas it looks really dangerous!”

Being in the midst of all these questions, mostly posed by North-European friends (British, French, and German) I found myself in a dilemma. I wanted to position myself; part of me wanted to defend my Greekness, to explain that not everyone is violent, we are not rioting all the time, it is only a very particular group of people that engage in the lootings, you can’t just generalize like that! And no, it is not dangerous, it is HOME! Another part of me was afraid and hesitant. Afraid that if I was to say all these things I

truly believed, then I would lose my claims to ‘Europeanness’. I would be labelled as one of the PIGS<sup>79</sup> both figuratively but also perhaps literally. I wasn’t ready to do that.

These considerations alongside my removal from the Greek context were the initial motivators that inspired me to critically reflect on the cultural traits and stereotypes that comprise Greekness and eventually sparked my interest in getting involved with this dissertation topic. Especially in such an affectively charged period, as the crisis, with all the imposed austerity measures and the shifting political structures, the question that persisted for me was what will the toll of all these forces on contemporary Greek identity be? How (if at all) have artistic perceptions of identity shifted during the last few years? Has the crisis presented an opportunity for reconsidering aspects of Greekness? How is this new precarious order reflected in the popular uprising movements and the citizens’ bodily engagement in them? How can a reading of the performing body inform our understanding of precarity?

These are the main questions that this chapter seeks to address by conducting a close reading of two contemporary dance performances presented in Athens during the first half of 2014<sup>80</sup>. I must admit that in the process of writing this chapter I often felt at a loss, as I had difficulty finding theoretical sources to frame my argument. To overcome this

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<sup>79</sup> PIGS (or PIIGS) is an acronym grouping together four economies of Southern Europe (Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain). PIIGS includes Ireland as a country that was in probable risk of being affected by the financial crisis, when the term was first coined. Peter Bratsis, a Social Sciences Professor problematizes the use of the acronym PIGS (or PIIGS) and examines it as a sign of routinization of racism. He asks: “Why are the PIIGS, like the Greeks, pigs? They are pigs because they cannot control their urges. They cannot refrain from immediate satisfaction: an easy job, retirement at 42, with a beach house and maybe a chalet in Switzerland (if they have at least been a member of the Parliament).” (Bratsis 2010, 301)

<sup>80</sup> The two performances are: *Fragile Nothing* (SYNDRAM dance company), which I attended on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, and *On the Seesaw* (AMALGAMA dance company) which I attended on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

unpleasant hurdle, I focused on the dances. I meticulously compared my notes from the live performances to the videos that both choreographers (Chrysiis Liatziviry and Maria Gorgia) so kindly granted me with. Slowly through writing drafts of close movement descriptions, paying attention to the interactions between bodies on stage and overlaying my observations with the choreographers' interviews, the theoretical framework started to emerge. The blanks left by the dances guided me to the relevant theories and what initially seemed like an incomplete puzzle started coming together.

The reason for sharing this short anecdote is to advocate for the fact that theory *is* in the body, and that paying close attention to bodies' movements *can be* a way to attain discourse. As such, the discourse presented in this chapter has evolved out of close observation and analysis of performed movement and bodies in motion. Bodies protesting and marching down the streets of Athens, bodies performing on stages and on video, my body's interactions with these bodies and inevitably also my movement, my own personal trajectory of migration that has so significantly shaped and informed how and why I turn my gaze to these particular bodies.

I turn my gaze and research lens to them because in a way I also am one of them. I grew up amongst 'them' and, regardless of whether I agree with the labels attributed to 'us', I don't have the luxury of choosing to forgo my identity. I do have the luxury though to deconstruct it in a way that will allow me to understand its discrepancies, in a way that will be constructive for the reader who does not necessarily care about me as a person, nor even about Greece, but cares about how this new order of things following the global

recession, has impacted the arts. What kinds of rhetoric has it given birth to? How do people respond to what has come to be known as the “shock doctrine”<sup>81</sup>?

Accordingly, even though this chapter is looking at the crisis ‘from within’, this *inside* position can only be understood in constant dialogue with an *outside*: the EU, the Balkans, the East, the West, the globe. As such, this chapter begins with the protests that happened in Athens in 2008, which are often considered the starting point of the social aspects of the crisis. Attention is then paid to the financial aspects and particularly to the way that budget cuts and austerity have impacted dance productions. Sections 3 and 4 provide close reading of the two performances, *Fragile Nothing* and *On the Seesaw*, treating each as a springboard for further theorization. The last section zooms out of the particularity of specific examples and glances over the general shifts in narrative and aesthetic structure evidenced in recent performances thus contextualizing Greek

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<sup>81</sup> The shock doctrine is based on the premise that only a severe crisis can produce significant change. As Naomi Klein notes in the introduction to her homonymous book: “Believers in the shock doctrine are convinced that only great rupture –a flood, a war, a terrorist attack –can generate the kind of vast, clean canvases they crave. It is in these malleable moments, when we are psychologically unmoored and physically uprooted, that these artists of the real plunge in their hands and begin their work of remaking the world” (Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* 2007, 21). In an interview the author gave to a Greek newspaper (*Eleftherotypia*), when asked whether these events that she describes in the book relate to Greece, her response was: “To me it is a classic example of the things I wrote about. It’s heartbreaking to see the same tricks and the same tactics being used so brutally. And there’s been enormous resistance in Greece. It’s particularly distressing to see the violent repression of the social movements that were resisting austerity. And it’s just been going on for so long now. People get worn down.” (Klein, *Eleftherotypia* 2013, accessed 07/10/2014)

contemporary dance as an affective labor<sup>82</sup> unmistakably operating in a neoliberal framework of precarity<sup>83</sup>.

## 2.1 How it All Started

The 2008 insurrection started as a youth uprising in response to the shooting of a high school student (Alexandros/Alexis Grigoropoulos) by a Special Forces policeman. A few hours after the murder, high school students started filling the streets. They were soon joined by university students, immigrants, anarchists, “antiestablishmentarians”<sup>84</sup> (Panourgia 2009, xvi) and other urban groups. At first they gathered on the streets and organized protests, but later on they proceeded with occupations of the University, the Law School, the School of Public Governance, and the events turned more violent as they threw stones, looted store windows, set fires in downtown Athens, and threw Molotov cocktails against the authorities. The police and the Special Forces responded with tear gas, beatings and smoke bombs. For roughly three weeks downtown Athens had turned into a chaotic

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<sup>82</sup> The characterization of dance as affective labor is based on Michael Hardt’s (1999) homonymous article. The particular traits that I am drawing on can be summed up in the fact that even though affective labor “is not outside of capitalist production it is not directly productive of capital” (90) as well as the fact that affective labor is a “laboring practice produc[ing] collective subjectivities” (89), as is the case of the two performances examined in this chapter. In Hardt’s terms dance could be paralleled to “immaterial labor revolving around human contact and interaction” (95). Furthermore, I would contextualize it as “affective labor” based on the ways that it engages with affective economies and the affects that it produces as a result.

<sup>83</sup> Precarity is hereby referred to as a framework drawing on a series of articles that appeared in TDR (The Drama Review) Volume 56, Issue 4 (Winter 2012) in a special issue focusing on Precarity and Performance. I find that the ideas discussed in the journal are very relevant to understanding and contextualizing the state of performance in Greece at this pivotal time period. In particular I draw on Randy Martin’s article from the aforementioned issue titled “A Precarious Dance, a Derivative Sociality”, where he draws attention to the constant state of vulnerability characteristic of precarity and the ways that this sentiment is being negotiated through performance. Martin’s observations have been used to inspire the overarching framework of this section.

<sup>84</sup> Neni Panourgia (2009) provides the term “anti-establishmentarian” as a translation for the Greek term *αντεξουσιαστές* (*antexousiastés*) where ‘exousia’ means sovereign power.



violent landscape full of smoke from the chemicals and the fires. What had started as a protest against the violence of authorities turned into an “ongoing demonstration [...] demanding nothing in particular and everything in general” (Panourgia 2009, xvi).

At the time there was still little indication of the upcoming intensity of the financial crisis and the devastating impact it would have on Greece. The crisis had already begun in the US and some of its effects were felt in Greece<sup>85</sup>, but (at least as far as mainstream media were concerned) the Greek crisis was still treated as a bad omen, rather than a looming reality. The December uprising put in question the legitimacy of the State and got marked down in history as “the most popular uprising that has happened in Europe since the 1970s<sup>86</sup>” (Kouvelakis 2010, 306).

As Modern Greek studies scholar Marinos Pourgouris (2010) observes, the riots of 2008 appeared as a “revelation”. The violent execution of the student and the lootings and vandalisms that ensued “brought to the surface, yet again, social and political tensions, they unveiled a state of corruption and police brutality” (Pourgouris 2010, 299). Beyond this rather specific agenda of the demonstrations remarked here by Pourgouris, banners, graffiti and the slogans shouted on the streets reveal that there really was no agenda. It was more of what Panourgia noted as “nothing, and everything in general”. What is remarkable, however, is that it was the first time that so many diverse urban groups got together to

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<sup>85</sup> As European Studies scholar Michail Choupis argues: “The 2008 US crisis put an end to the euphoria of the roulette known as ‘the stock market’ and ended the lifestyle of ordinary Greeks” (Choupis 2011, 81).

<sup>86</sup> The popular uprisings in Europe, mentioned here probably regard the civil unrests in France that started in May of 1968. During the early 1970s, Greece was still under dictatorial rule. A youth uprising (the so called “Polytechnic generation”) in 1973 is known to have triggered the fall of the junta in 1974. (see Appendix for more)

demonstrate and were united against a common ‘enemy’. Each was fighting for their own cause (anything from the illegal use of chemicals from the authorities, to the immigrant’s rights<sup>87</sup>) as a growing number of people became organized in groups or unions and expressed their concerns and individual agendas.

Some political theory and anthropology scholars (Gourgouris 2010; Kitromilides 2013; Panourgia 2009) regard these events as the beginning of the crisis: a social crisis that was further deepened by the arrival of austerity measures in 2010. Political theorist Paschalis Kitromilides manages to briefly capture the origins and reasons that led to the crisis in one short paragraph.

The economic crisis was felt in Greece in 2009, in the wake of the 2008 international banking crisis. Its origins went back to public policies in the 1980s, with huge spending and skyrocketing expenses of the public sector. Consequently, huge foreign borrowing was needed to finance domestic spending. The cost of the 2004 Olympics absorbed a part of this spending and borrowing, but in this case expenses only compounded the already serious problems of foreign debt incurred in the 1980s and the 1990s. In fact, as was revealed by the economic crisis that escalated in 2010, Greece’s foreign borrowing was of such enormous proportions that a possible Greek default could affect the stability of the world economy. (Kitromilides 2013, x)

In order to cope with the crisis, Greece signed two bailout agreements with its creditors, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), EU (European Union) and ECB (European Central

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<sup>87</sup> The December of 2008 was the first time that immigrants got organized in such a collective manner and joined public demonstrations. An essay from *La Voix des Noirs* (The Voice of Blacks) a collective of immigrants reads: “For me, as a black person, my freedom stops at the threshold of my apartment. And I make a plea to the Greek youth that is concerned about the equality and the rights of all humans. For this reason, I join you in the noble fight you lead, because we know that you are not oblivious to the fact that the police is cornering us on the streets, the bus stops, the metro, or even in front of our houses. [...] Conscientious youth, Greek people, I feel like I live in the 17<sup>th</sup> century of barbarism, where shooting young Alex would be allowed. We are joining you once more in your cause and we are seizing this opportunity to express our condolences to his family and the Greek people” (my translation from the *La Voix de Noirs* flyer in Kyriakopoulos and Gourgouris eds. 2009, 82).

Bank) and was subject to an international control committee (Troika) that imposed severe austerity measures.

In response to the austerity measures and the significant increase in taxation people once more organized a series of protests in 2010 known as the *Indignant Citizens* movement (Αγανακτισμένοι – *Aganaktisménoi*), who gathered at the Syntagma square week on end and peacefully protested against government measures. The *Indignants* in Greece bore reference to the *Indignados* movement that originated in Spain for very similar reasons. One of the characteristics of this movement, as Slavoj Žižek points out, is that the figures of authority –against which the *Indignants* are protesting –are no longer composed only of politicians, but it is now a “‘neutral’ government of depoliticized technocrats (mostly bankers in Greece)” (Žižek 2012, 80).

Viewing these organized movements as a response to the failures of neoliberalism, political theorists and philosophers (such as Žižek 2012, 2010; Hardt & Negri 2012) have drawn connections between the *Indignant Citizens* movements and its branches organized in Greece, Spain and Italy and the *Occupy* movement that emerged in 2011 in the US. As such, Greece appears to be just one out of many countries that were affected by the financial crisis and that have inspired massive movements of civilian protests. Regardless of the relative globality of the crisis however, Greece was often treated as a unique “test case” (Choupi 2011, 83) because it was the first member of the EU to be threatened with default. The crisis that broke out in Greece in 2009 also had deep social roots, which became even more evident and problematic during the two rounds of presidential elections in 2012, when the extreme nationalist right-wing party by the name of *Golden Dawn* was met with an

alarming increase in the voting percentage and for the first time entered the parliament<sup>88</sup>. The implications of the rise of Golden Dawn and their racist rhetoric in contrast to the rising cosmopolitanism in Greece will be explored in more detail in chapter three.

Conducting fieldwork in this constantly shifting landscape has been an ethnographic challenge. Upon my return to Greece at the end of 2013 I could still not quite pinpoint it, but there certainly was a change in the air. During my earlier short visits for Christmas or summer in the intermittent period between 2010 and 2013 there was an unmistakable rise of negative affects. The stereotypical vibrancy of Greek people had faded and had been replaced by anger, misery, and a hovering sense of hopelessness. Walking down the streets it was very common to overhear conversations about how people could not pay for electricity, or how they had to take down the license plates from their cars to avoid taxation<sup>89</sup>, how unbearable that taxation was. People were irritable, they got into street-fights for nothing, they would swear at strangers as if they were the ones at fault for everything that was wrong in their lives. Experiencing the impact of the crisis on a daily basis, people were governed by anxiety and fear. As Sarah Ahmed, observes in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, “fear, like pain, is felt as an unpleasant form of intensity” (Ahmed 2004, 65). This intensity could certainly be sensed in the atmosphere.

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<sup>88</sup> In the 2012 parliamentary elections the Golden Dawn received 7% of the votes and entered the parliament. There has been an alarming rise of their voting percentage ever since. Indicatively in the first round of the recent municipal elections on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 the Golden Dawn candidate that was nominated for mayor of Athens averaged 16% of the votes. It is also important to note that the percentages have been rising in spite of an investigation conducted in the last trimester of 2013 following the murder of an anti-fascist rapper that led to the arrests of some high-ranking party members (including the party leader) and several charges against the party on the grounds that it is a criminal organization.

<sup>89</sup> Turning in a car’s license plates to the relevant tax authority became a common practice around 2009, because it signified that the car would no longer be in use (it is illegal to drive without licence plates). Thus, car owners who would turn in their licence plates avoided taxation, but at the same time they gave up the right to use their vehicles.

With the advent of 2014, as I was slowly becoming a member of a vibrant network of artists, choreographers and scholars, this view changed. People no longer appeared to be under the influence of the initial shock of being confronted with a never-before-encountered situation. Greece seemed to be slowly moving past the lowest point of the economic curve of the crisis and starting to climb the ladder. As Naomi Klein would argue, this perceived change is an accurate representation of the efficacy of the shock doctrine. Regardless of the perspective chosen to approach it though, it is undeniable that 2014 certainly marks a time of change. As Barbara Sutton (2010) pointedly remarks in her book on the financial crisis in Argentina in 2001:

As painful as they are, crises also generate possibilities for social change. While periods of flux and uncertainty are difficult to bear, they may also result in stolen moments of subversion and unexpected reconfigurations of prevailing social arrangements. Argentina is not exactly the same after the turning point of December 2001. (Location 70 of 4078)

Greece is not the same after the turning point of 2009. It is this premise of treating the crisis as a chance for reconsideration that this chapter is concerned with. To the extent that this reconsideration relates to performed narratives of collective imaginings it is also understood as an aftermath of the initial shock. Beyond the shock-rhetoric however, such “explosions” of critical reflection lie at the core of a post-Fordist<sup>90</sup> context, alongside affect, immateriality, and atomization, as Shannon Jackson (2012) observes. All these traits noted by Jackson are echoed in the pages that follow, in what other Greek dance scholars,

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<sup>90</sup> Post-Fordism is here understood as an economy where “labor is dispensable, disposable, and replaceable” (Ortner n.d.), all characteristics pertaining to the Greek landscape under crisis.

such as Ioanna Tzartzani, have termed “a reinventing of the self through dance” (Tzartzani 2014, 46).

## 2.2 The Impact of the Crisis on the Greek Contemporary Dance Scene

When the crisis broke out in full effect, I was still in the US completing the mandatory classwork and progressing through my graduate degree. As such, the ‘tools’ at my disposal to reconstruct the landscape of the crisis have been several blogs that I have been following about the Greek arts scene (e.g. dancetheatre.gr, dancepress.gr, Dance Observatory), limited media coverage, online videos, performances and performance reviews, but most importantly of all, the interviews and the discussions that I have had with the choreographers, scholars, dancers and my friends, with whom I reconnected upon my return.

In January of 2014, when I began the series of interviews, in my question regarding the state of dance during the crisis, some of the responses that I received echoed sentiments of absence, cessation, dormancy, or invisibility. Here are two of the most characteristic examples:

The period that we have entered now is one of suspension. Complete suspension. [...] Governmental funding for dance has ceased since 2011. A new committee was appointed and they tried to facilitate some residencies with rural theatres (ΔΗΠΕΘΕ)<sup>91</sup> but that never materialized, so the committee at some point stopped working. (my translation from interview with choreologist and dance scholar Katia Savrami 01/14/2014)

One of the characteristics of the period of the crisis is that the body is invisible. We are talking about the crisis, about the economy, about the austerity measures, the

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<sup>91</sup> Δημοτικό Περιφερειακό Θέατρο Ελλάδος (Municipal Rural Theatre of Greece)

memorandum; we are talking about institutionalized issues and actions of a political and economic nature that are being decided at a very high level. This impacts and affects the everyday life of all of us. In this day to day situation I feel that the body has no value. The body is being abused, abased, and for real! I mean all the things that we hear about the Golden Dawn... It is no longer only the immigrant, it is the average person, the worker, the citizen of this country. I feel that people are being pressured and enter a work process and a way of life, where the last thing they care about is their body. The bodies have disappeared from the public spaces. All we hear about bodies have to do with an abused side of them. There certainly is a passivity. I do think it [the body] is immaterial, in terms of there being a political ideology that completely disregards the material dimension of the body and is oppressing it in real, and symbolic ways. Thus anyone concerned with corporeality and the materiality of bodies is disregarded as non-existent and cannot be heard. We are re-entering an era of discourses. (my translation from interview with dance historian Steriani Tsintziloni 01/20/2014)

Indeed, cessation of artistic activity was also my initial impression. However, as the months passed and I started to get a better sense of where to look, a whole network of artistic activity became visible and accessible. At a first glance the dance scene appeared dormant because I was looking for performances in the places that I used to attend them prior to the crisis, such as big performance venues (the Onassis Cultural Center, or the Megaron) and central theatres. I quickly came to realize though that due to the limited funds choreographers were increasingly choosing smaller venues to present their performances.

With regards to Tsintziloni's point about an evident devaluation of the body and a sense of oppression, it is true that many performances adapted a similar approach to the body engaging with issues of abuse and instances of self-harm, or employing a choreographic approach that led to a slow exhaustion of the performers that became evident both through a shift in their movement qualities, as well as through their gasping and panting breath by the end of the performance. In my view this led to intense engagement with the materiality

of the body that emphasized its importance and its vulnerability, rather than contributed to its devaluation.

Other views in regards to the shifts brought about by the crisis were observed as an orientational shift towards issues concerned with political activism and a growing interest in dance as a leisure pastime:

If there is a change, I see it on the level that I hear more and more people joining dance classes. And this is something positive for me. [...] As far as dance companies are concerned, there certainly is a change because there is not enough funding any more. (my translation from interview with folk dance instructor Nancy Charmanda 01/25/2014)

Yes, there is a shift of interest towards sociopolitical issues. In 2008, following the murder of Grigoropoulos, they occupied the National Opera for the first time ever. [...] The dancers of the Opera got out in the streets, and I want to emphasize that it was them and not some other company, and they performed on the street and this was of major importance during that time. I consider it a significant milestone. (my translation from interview with associate professor in Theatre Studies Vaso Barbousi 02/18/2014)

There is indeed a shift of interest in issues concerned with the crisis, and this is certainly a bidirectional occurrence. Greek choreographers feel the crisis under their skin<sup>92</sup> and they sense the differences that occur in contrast to the past. People perhaps now have the need to see themselves and their situation reflected in a performance that tackles such issues. Therefore Greek choreographers have understood that and try to react to it. (my translation from interview with dance anthropologist and youth culture researcher Natalia Koutsougera 03/23/2014)

While I cannot definitively attest to the increasing involvement of people in dance activities as a leisure passtime, I have certainly observed an intensification of physical activity. In contrast to five years ago, it is more common nowadays to see people running, biking, or

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<sup>92</sup> This is a direct translation of a Greek idiom “στο πετσί τους” (*sto petsi tous*) referring to something that has an immediate and visceral impact on a person that they can sense it “under their skin” as if it has become part of them.



just walking with their friends in the afternoon. Dance scholar Ioanna Tzartzani makes a similar remark and in regards to dance during the crisis she notes:

[o]n the individual level, more and more people are taking a personal interest in dancing and, while the traditional ballet conservatories for children may be suffering, adult dance classes are widely popular, and the number of students participating in the entry exams for the professional dance schools is also high. (Tzartzani 2014, 43-44)

Participation, seems to be the throughline in these last three interview excerpts as scholars note an awareness and a direct engagement in political forums observed during the last few years. While it is not uncommon for a protest in the US to include a danced aspect,<sup>93</sup> in Greece the involvement of the National Opera dancers in the 2008 demonstrations was a rather unique occurrence. The Public participation of dancers in a political protest also ties to the point that Koutsougera made above, on the increasing interest and engagement of the public for performances with a sociopolitical edge.

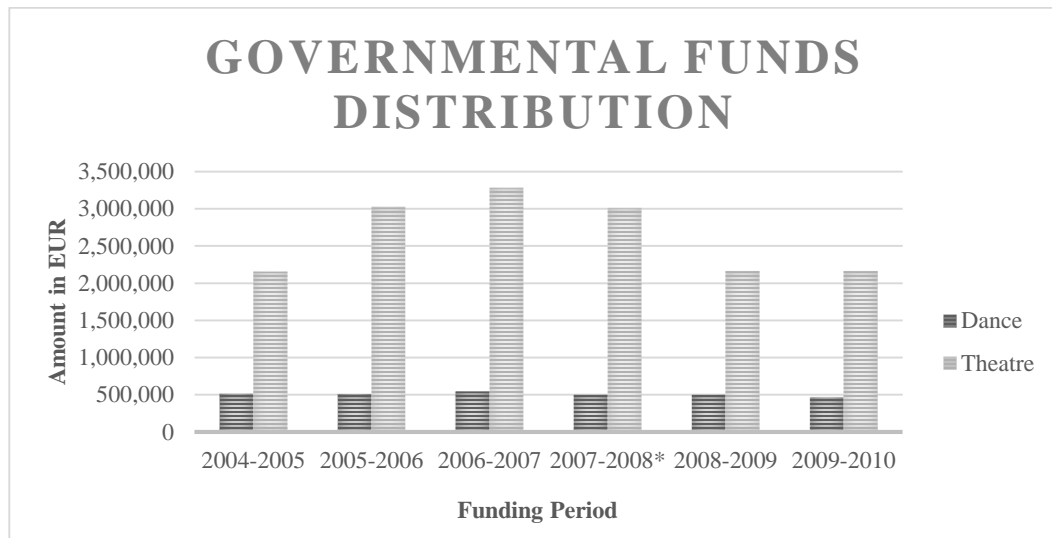
Furthermore, as these excerpts clearly state, the most immediate way that dance was affected when the crisis broke out has been the area of governmental funding. Until 2011, an amount was allotted to the Ministry of Culture each year for the funding of dance<sup>94</sup> and theatre companies. Any choreographer or theatre director who was interested could apply and after having their application material reviewed by the appointed committees some companies received funding that assisted them in their production for

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<sup>93</sup> I have personally witnessed drum-circles inviting protesters to dance in protests against the rise in tuition at the University of California, or in the ‘Occupy Riverside’ movement, and I am also aware of the use of short dance phrases inspired by the choreographies of the Batsheva Dance Company in the Palestinian boycott against Israel protests in New York.

<sup>94</sup> The dance companies that receive a subsidy from the Ministry of Culture as the funds in the graph showcase, are primarily (if not exclusively) contemporary dance companies and ensembles. In Greece most of these companies do not own a rehearsal space or a theatre, as is often the case with foreign companies, and thus these funds are their primary source of income for organizing a production.

the next season. As the chart below demonstrates, the amounts distributed to dance were consistently lower than those given out to theatre, but it should be remarked, that there are significantly more theatre companies than dance ensembles.



**Chart 1:** The data presented here is based on the approved proposed budget and does not always reflect the actual amount of money that was funded. All amounts are exact except for the amount distributed to theatre companies in 2008 marked with an asterisk (\*), for which no exact data was available.

The amounts reflected in this chart were divided to dozens of companies each year and there was a significant deviation between the first ensemble and the last one. Taking for example the funding period of 2006-2007 that, as shown in the chart, was the most prosperous one amongst the years portrayed, it allotted 544,000 EUR (736,000 USD)<sup>95</sup> to 31 dance companies, and 3,275,000 EUR (4,432,000 USD) to 66 theatre companies. From the 31 dance companies, the first one (Δύο – Two, by Dimitris Papaioannou) was sponsored with 50,000 EUR (67,000 USD), while the last one (Φυγείν Αδύνατον –

<sup>95</sup> All amounts in USD are approximate based on the exchange rate of EUR to USD on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Impossible to Leave) on the list with 4,000 EUR (5,400 USD)<sup>96</sup>. Comparatively, the company at the first rank of the theatrical funds (Θέατρο του Νότου – Theatre of the South) received 295,000 EUR (399,000 USD) while the lowest amount given to Βιολέττα – Violet was 10,000 EUR (13,500 USD).

The disparity in the funding clearly attests to the fact that theatre is valued more as an art form in Greece, but also to the difficulty of making a living out of being a performer. Receiving even one of the most generous offers for dance in the first or second ranking, which in the following years dropped to the 30,000 – 35,000 EUR range (40,000 – 47,000 USD), is still not enough to fund the costs of an entire performance and provide substantial salaries for the dancers, thus resulting in very minimally composed performances (as far as costumes, props and lighting are concerned) and equally low wages.

The words of Haris Mandafounis at the end of the previous chapter and the question of “*and what do you do for a living?*” that most dance professionals are accustomed to, echoes with a different gravity now. Most of the performers and choreographers also work as teachers, often in more than one studio, while a few own a dance school themselves, or hold other jobs on the side to be able to make a living. Adding to the instability of the

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<sup>96</sup> Indicatively, according to dancetheatre.gr, where the funding charts were published, for the period of 2006-2007 there were 70 dance companies in total that applied and only 31 of them received funding. The detailed distribution of the dance funds forms as follows (the amounts reflect the funding that *each* ensemble received according to their respective ranking on the list): First ranking 50,000 EUR (67,000 USD); second to fourth place 40,000 EUR (54,000 USD); fifth and sixth 25,000 EUR (33,800 USD); seventh to nineteenth 16,000 EUR (21,600 USD) each, twentieth to twenty-sixth 12,000 EUR (16,200 USD); twenty-seventh to twenty-ninth 8,000 EUR (10,800 USD) and thirtieth to thirty-first ranking 4,000 EUR (5,400 USD) (source: Dancetheatre.gr 2006)

dance profession is the fact that dance degrees are not recognized as equivalent to University degrees (i.e. Higher Education)<sup>97</sup>.

For instance, one of my friends was telling me that she used to teach contemporary dance technique at a public highschool, where she had to re-apply for the job every year because her degree from the Professional Dance School that she attended was not recognized as a ‘Higher Education Degree’ and therefore they could not appoint her as regular faculty. To tie this back to the point I made above on the crisis, the situation got even worse in the last couple of years, because the last time she applied they informed her that, due to budgetary cuts, she would be paid by the hour (3 EUR per hour / 4 USD). Needless to say that there was no other coverage provided, such as transportation expenses.

As far as dance studios and their employees are concerned, a similar situation is manifesting there as well. Wages for dance teachers were always rather low (averaging at about 10-15 EUR per hour – 13-20 USD) but during the crisis the precarity of the profession has intensified, wages have dropped even further, as have enrollments in some studios. An emergent practice has been to no longer have a fixed monthly wage, but adjust it according to the studio’s monthly income.

The cutting down on funding from the Ministry of Culture was followed by the cutting down of the wages of the Ministry’s exam committees thus threatening the

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<sup>97</sup> If someone only holds a diploma from a Higher Professional Dance School, but no University Degree, upon acquiring a Master’s degree from a University abroad, as many Greek choreographers and performers do, they encounter difficulty in having that Master’s recognized by the Greek state, because dance degrees are not recognized as equivalent to Bachelors degrees. This leads to a misrecognition of the qualifications of highly trained teachers who cannot aim for wages equivalent to their degrees.

cancellation of entry and graduation exams<sup>98</sup>. All these incidents attest to the despensability of the present situation and the impact that the crisis has had on the field of dance. Moreover, all these stories provide glimpses into the new globalized world order that Guy Standing (2011) describes as “The Precariat” in his homonymous book.

According to Standing:

Those in it [the precariat] have lives dominated by insecurity, uncertainty, debt and humiliation. They are becoming denizens rather than citizens, losing cultural, civil, social, political and economic rights built up over generations. The precariat is also the first class in history expected to endure labour and work at a lower level than the schooling it typically acquires. (Standing 2010, loc.39 of 5416)

This “loss” observed here by Standing echoes Klein’s premise for the “shock doctrine” that demands the wiping<sup>99</sup> (either literal or metaphorical) of people’s narratives in order to rewrite them in new terms. In the words of Nicholas Ridout and Rebecca Schneider “[p]recarity is life lived in relation to a future, that cannot be propped securely upon the past” (2012, 5). The significant changes that have followed the austerity measures and bailout agreements have certainly challenged the stability of the past as a springboard into the future and have created a new landscape that people are still learning how to navigate. In choreographic productions, this shift has been captured as an increasing engagement

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<sup>98</sup> In order to enter a Higher Professional Dance School in Greece students have to audition in front of the Ministry of Culture’s appointed committee of dance scholars and teachers. Students audition in Ballet, Contemporary, and Improvisation and have to write an essay. They get graded in each subject and then based on their GPA they either pass and have the option to choose which private school they want to attend to complete their degree, or fail and have to wait a whole year to retake the entry exams. Upon completing three years of study and progressing normatively through the degree in their chosen school students audition for the Ministry’s committee again in order to be assessed and graduate. The National School of Dance follows the same process but holds separate auditions only for the students interested in joining that school.

<sup>99</sup> In her interview to the Greek newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, Naomi Klein observes that “Just because something bad is happening doesn’t mean you’re going to go into shock. Shock is what happens when you lose your narrative, when you no longer understand where you are in time and space. You don’t know what your story is anymore.” (Klein, *Eleftherotypia* 2013, accessed 07/10/2014)

with events of the comparatively more recent past (such as issues pertaining to the civil war of 1946-1949, or the *metapolitefsi*) that could be argued to provide a framework for understanding the crisis and the present and for contextualizing current events. The works discussed in the coming sections showcase two different approaches to engaging with the current landscape and with the aesthetic of precarity.

To briefly contextualize what is meant by ‘the aesthetic of precarity’ it is worth deviating to take a look at the work of Katharina Pewny (2011) *Das Drama des Prekären*, where she lays out the historical development of what has come to be known as ‘precarious aesthetic’ in theatrical and dance productions. Pewny situates its emergence in the 2000s in the European space, when people started to increasingly engage with the social sphere and organize themselves as political subjects. She argues that the need to become politically active is an inherent component of precarious subjectivity, deriving from the uncertainty of their condition. As such, she understands precarious performances as those initiatives that seek to address the social differences (*soziale Differenzierung*), and the uncertainty, or insecurity (*Ungesicherheit*) experienced by people. She argues that such stagings have transformative potential (*Transformationskraft*) and that, when presented in a theatrical setting, they often tend to involve the audience’s participation to call for a direct engagement and dialogue. Precarity is thus treated not only as a new performance category, but also as a methodological approach to artistic creation. In its manifestation as a performance category, it aims to further the artistic engagement with the political and social development of people, through a focus on the fragility (*Verlätzlichkeit*) of the human experience (Pewny 2011, 21). These dynamics are examined in more detail in the

case studies that follow. Precarity as a methodological approach, on the other hand, is examined in more detail in chapter three.

### 2.3 *Fragile Nothing*

It was the coldest night in March. I entered the theatre early shivering to the core. When the doors opened I was still rubbing my hands to get them warm and buttoned up my coat as I sat down. The dancers were already on stage in their places and I caught myself wondering whether they were cold too. The lights dimmed and a shiver shook my spine as I sank into my seat to get comfortable.

*A house on the move, four isolated people. Boxes lying around. Not looking, not wanting to be seen. Hiding. Hiding behind a stack of boxes, curling beside them. Crawling around them slowly emerging. Getting out of the light. Getting lost in the darkness. Wanting to run.*

*A woman laughs in a corner. A man struggles as if fighting an invisible opponent. Another dancer drops to the floor. A figure at the back is pushing some boxes. Pushing and going nowhere.*

*They pause, the laughter persists. They are each in their own world. Not facing each other, battling their own demons. Each engaging in their own neurosis. Trying to stand and falling down. Laughing manically, almost crying. Staring into the void. Speechless. Engaging in the same routine over and over again, like four shadows of Sisyphus. An internal struggle, voiceless words. Speaking but not being heard.*

*A woman mumbling soundless words suddenly yells "STOP". The laughter stops, a man falls, but she moves on. For the first time she stands up. In the corner another woman is hitting her palm manically, her breath clearly audible from the exhaustion of countless repetitions.*

*And then a change. The struggle momentarily appeases. Movements become softer. There is still no contact. Everyone is on their own. The music accelerates. Moments of stillness alternate with dizzying turns. Invisible bonds drag the dancers to the wall.*

*The music stops and they all form a line facing the audience. The line becomes a diagonal as they are holding hands trying to break away from each other, away from the chain. The diagonal becomes a circle only to morph into other shapes and partnering relations. Like a vicious cycle it all resets and starts over again. Each time the relationships that are being formed are slightly different, yet they all seem the same. Even though they are bearing each-other's weight there still is disconnect. They appear empty, like vessels void of character; pawns being manipulated by an invisible hand.*

*It is at this moment that they see each other for the first time. Their eyes lock and there is real interaction. A visceral interaction causing spasms to some and driving others to a frantic circular run.*

From my (not so comfy) seat on the audience's side I hear the struggle in the dancers' breath and I feel the cold air of my breath entering my body. It leads to another shiver and I instinctively crunch my hands around my stomach in an attempt to warm them up without causing a distraction for fellow audience members.

*The woman is still running in circles around a couple now sharing an embrace. Her run ends in a fall and her fall causes everyone to break apart. Slowly another diagonal forms. The first person in the line is reaching out to something, struggling as she carries everyone else along. The last person is resisting, looking backwards, making it harder on all of them to transition. In the middle a couple is hugging as they try to hold on to the chain that is pulling them apart.*

*“STOP”*

*The chain breaks down as the room is engulfed in darkness.*

In response to the command I find myself holding my breath. My eyes are dilating, searching through the dark, frantically trying to adjust. In the silence I twitch and my seat makes a creaking sound. I remind myself the command and obey.

*The lights are still dim, only faint shadows are discernible moving in front of the countless stacks of boxes. Audible breaths in a struggle that seems to be repeating the vicious cycle. The dancers appear to be battling invisible sources as the light grows brighter and we can now see them more clearly. They are all alone again. A girl in the corner is whipping herself with her seemingly limbless arm.*

*The dynamics alternate and intense struggle is met by moments of stillness. A stillness so piercing and torturing that you can almost touch it. Their mouths open in silent cries. The intensity on their face makes you wonder who stole the sound.*

I am holding my breath again, a nuanced reaction to the soundless screams. I feel the tension building up around me, intensely wondering when they will scream for real. I want to scream! Proper audience etiquette would not allow that so I just clench my teeth and my



back responds with a subtle ache. I had been clenching my muscles involuntarily and now they were sending me warning signs.

*The silent screams continue. The movement sequences alternate between the dancers. It is really hard to tell who is who any more. Even though they are clearly distinguishable based on the color of their hair, and clothes they seem to be merging into one character and then breaking apart again. They oscillate between individuality and singularity. The screams persist. Still, nothing is heard.*

*Following this intense breakdown is a moment of regrouping. Realization comes after the outburst as they gather and reset. Fixing their clothes and hair, there is no longer anything reminiscent of their outbreak. They look at the audience almost ashamed of what they just let them witness.*

*Upon regrouping they start experimenting with different ways that they can create connections. Touch and withdraw. Hug and be separated. Form couples and break apart. Gain a leader and lose her. Be thrown down and fall, sometimes being helped, sometimes being just pushed aside like worthless obstacles. No relationship that forms is solid. It's all in a constant state of flux.*

*Fluctuation slowly turns violent. People are being pushed to the ground and every time they recover they are forced to the ground again. Sometimes they protest by raising their arm to stop the one in power, but the authoritative figure ignores it and keeps pushing. The reaction of the suppressed grows more and more violent until it turns into a forceful embodied reaction; almost a fight, a flight.*

At the edge of my seat I manage to slide my hand inside the back of my buttoned up coat and apply pressure to my back. The twitching muscle relaxes and the pain is momentarily alleviated.

*The repeatability of the reaction against the authoritative figure has by now turned almost mechanical. One raises a hand, the other forces it down, over and over again. A third person intervenes and the boundaries between individuality and subjectivity become blurred once more.*

*The lights change and they are all shifting to form an equally spaced diagonal. They each have a spot but abandon it in vain attempts to move further. All they achieve is to end up where they started. A new routine has developed. This time it's almost ritualistic as they vacillate back and forth. A lulling sensation that gives off a deceptive sense of security and confidence.*

The tender and soothing music is almost hypnotizing and I barely notice that this whole routine has moved them all to the edge of the stage and has caused a new door to open, which gradually swallows three of the four dancers.

*The new opening emits a faint light that now visibly marks the diagonal that had been previously shaped by oscillation. All dancers but one have drifted offstage and the one left behind hesitantly proceeds towards the light. Her hair is covering her face and she is hunching over as she is limping, which turns her into a grotesque figure. Her arm is reaching out, as if begging for something. The limping continues as she engages in an angular and faceless solo. She starts to laugh in an almost whispering tone. The neurotic laughter of a lunatic. Her movements appear restrained and her presence is haunting. She has turned into a shadow of her former existence, reduced to an essence of hopelessness. The lights dim and she falls down as her suppressed laughter continues.*

*One by one the others rejoin her. Crawling, running, sliding. The laughter faintly persists as the scene gives off to a frantic chaos. Bodies are being carried, pushed, shoved, directed, pulled, abused, dropped. The franticness reduces them to an animalistic state. Sometimes the neuroses that had been developed earlier resurface. All and any sense of direction, security, trust and composure has been lost.*

The lights fade to utter darkness. I can hear people twitching around me. Their seats are creaking as they are all (just like me) probably wondering: “is it over?” I seize the chance to stretch out briefly, when the door at the side of the stage reopens and the light emanating from it forms the same familiar diagonal.

*The dancers reenter and a faint light is discernible under their clothes. Almost forming an ark with their bodies, as one visibly bears the weight of the other, they slowly cross the diagonal. The door closes and the glowworm lights attached to their skin are the only traces left to indicate their trajectory in the darkness. That, and a sense of trust as they partner each other in intricate acrobatic movements.*

My eyes are sore from the light when I exit onto the foyer. “Now it is over!” As soon as I step out of the theatre a cold breeze causes me to shiver again and the muscles running up my spine clench momentarily. No, it is not...

The decision to describe the entire performance based on the mood that each scene emitted, as opposed to conducting a detailed movement analysis is already an act of interpretation in itself. One that I deem necessary as it facilitates the process of peering through the cracks of the crisis and viewing the interrelations that manifest between the performance and the new formulations of Greekness that are emerging.

In this subjective rendition of the performance the gender and oftentimes the number of the dancers performing certain actions are deliberately blurred because it was the choreographer's –Chrysiis Liatziviry –intention to focus on the human condition and subjectivity as these are being reshaped during the crisis, rather than follow the progression of relationships that develop amongst 'characters'. In her own words:

[W]e were interested in investigating the crisis, as it manifests and is represented by contemporary Greeks. While we were working on it through improvisation a lot of times it led to several relationships being formed between the dancers. I however, did not want that at all, because I believe that the contemporary man<sup>100</sup> no longer has meaningful relationships. He is not actively nurturing them and thus it is easy for relationships to fade. Every time a relationship started to form we were cutting it down. I did not want to allow the audience to attribute familiar labels to any situation. It would have been a very clear statement within a very fragile nothingness and this would have functioned in a self-negating way. (my translation from interview with Liatziviry, 03/05/2014)

As reflected in my description, the piece also deliberately lacked a narrative structure. Instead it comprised fragmentary images of the everyday experience. Some of them I recognized, while some eluded me due to my absence during the most critical periods of the crisis. In order to structure these images both the choreographer and the

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<sup>100</sup> In these translations I have preserved the format of the original using gendered nouns and pronouns. In Greek it is common when someone is referring to people in general (i.e. the equivalent of the English 'somebody') to use masculine nouns and pronouns (his / him / man etc.)

dancers (Sophia Kyriazidou, Yannis Polyzos, Christina Sagou, Eleni Lagadinou) engaged in months of meticulous research and observation. They attended public services and observed the behavior of people, sat in public spaces and observed people's routines, but also exchanged experiences with their friends and families and then brought all of that material to rehearsals in order to mold it into performed representations.

In contrast to the images that I presented at the beginning of this chapter of civil unrest, *Indignant* citizens, protests and occupation, their research led them to uncover a contradictory aspect, which Liatziviry explains in the following excerpt:

We worked on how contemporary Greek people in crisis experience this situation and what are the reasons that lead them to be accepting of this dead-end situation and to want to close their eyes against it, in order to preserve a state of inertia. I don't know, according to our research we found that since the beginning of time, man would always react against anything immobile sooner or later. The contemporary Greek however, passionately seeks to maintain this state of immobility. I mean, they kill him (literally and figuratively), they whip him, he is negating himself, becoming suicidal and yet he remains immobile. Substantially inactive. That is why we decided to frame the performance as a house on the move. Not because we are moving out, but to indicate this state of being in flux. His soul is in flux, his life, everything he took for granted, his mother, his father, his child. Because a mother sees that her child's health has been affected, its education; art has been affected, and she doesn't do anything. She is not defending her child, she lets it become victimized and sits it in front of the TV to watch programs that are neither educating, nor entertaining. And we did touch this part, of the individual that stays in his house being afraid, and reacts in the confines of his home. Reacts soundlessly. Such a reaction equals no reaction at all, that is why I have been talking about inertia. He is inactive. He lets out his rage in his home, to his loved ones and is stepping over his loved ones so that he can get through one more day. (my translation from interview with Liatziviry 03/05/2014).

These observations and their severity certainly attest to a subjective experience of the crisis, but they still nonetheless capture important aspects that can operate in a more general framework. It is very clear that the crisis has had a vast impact on the level of education, health insurance options, and of course cultural and artistic policies. It is thus a

reasonable aftermath that these shifts in the environment will cause shifts in behavior, which are mostly expressed through anger, rage, and, as I have also observed in public spaces, frequent and violent outbursts.



**Image 5:** A still image from the performance showing the moment of the silent screams and the soundless reaction that Liatziviry mentioned in the above quoted interview excerpt. (Dancers -from left to right- Sophia Kyriazidou, Eleni Lagadinou, Yannis Polyzos) Photograph taken by Elpida Tempou, permission to use granted by Chrysiis Liatziviry

All these affective economies are further intensified by a hovering sense of fear, caused either by professional uncertainty (unemployment rates especially amongst the youth remain high<sup>101</sup>), inability to cover fundamental needs (nutritional, health, or housing needs) or in most extreme cases fear of violence and potential terrorist attacks<sup>102</sup>. As Sarah Ahmed observes, fear causes the body to shrink: “it restricts the body’s mobility insofar as

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<sup>101</sup> The unemployment rate in 2013 was 27.5% and in 2014 26.7%. In the age group below 25 years old unemployment in 2013 was 57.1% and in 2014 56.7% (countryeconomy.com 2014)

<sup>102</sup> In January of 2014, one of the members of the Greek terrorist organization “17<sup>th</sup> of November” escaped from prison and a few weeks later broadcasted a threatening manifesto thus fuelling rumors for an upcoming terrorist attack.

it seems to prepare the body for fight” (Ahmed 2004, 69). As such, fear works to contain bodies in smaller spaces, “aligning bodily space with social space” (ibid.) thus furthering Liatziviry’s remark on isolation and confinement. An example of this constriction and the alignment of bodily with social space can be found in the figures of two of the female performers who at the beginning of the piece are confined to separate corners of the stage. One appears to engage in practices of self-harm ‘whipping’ herself with her seemingly limbless arms, while the other is occupying the small surface of a table at the opposite side periodically laughing on her own, without turning to face the audience. Both performers are isolated and occasionally open their mouths in silent screams thus alluding to the aforementioned sense of inertia that is choreographically portrayed through isolation and silent intensity.

In these terms, while the crisis has contributed to a sense of isolation, alienation, and confinement between people, if seen from a macro perspective, it is this very sense of *collective* isolation that ends up bringing people together. It is the shared experience of ‘fighting’ against the same ‘enemy’ (which may take the form of the State; uncertainty; the banks, or the authorities) or fearing the same “force” that unites people under a common cause. The observed immobility or inertia that served as the inspiration for *Fragile Nothing* may thus be perceived as a form of protest in itself.

In other discussions that I had with Liatziviry about the ways that the audience viewed the piece and the feedback that she received, she said that she heard a lot of complaints along the lines of “this was a great performance, but why did you have to touch on such a gloomy issue?” In her view, this kind of feedback attests to a sense of denial and

an unwillingness to face reality, thus further fuelling her understanding of inertia. I also overheard audience members having similar discussions on my way out of the theatre, but I would like to suggest an alternative reading. What if this perceived ‘denial’ is a productive site that bears potential to generate a fruitful reconsideration of the present condition?

In his 2010 book *Living in the End Times* Slavoj Žižek parallels the collective responses of people to the capitalist crisis as corresponding to the five stages of grief: ideological denial, explosions of anger, attempts at bargaining, depression and withdrawal, and finally acceptance<sup>103</sup>. All of these stages are mirrored in this performance in one way or another and they become an overarching parallelism to acquire an even deeper understanding of people’s responses to the crisis. Thus if the process of coping with the crisis is theorized as a process of mourning a loss –the loss of a more prosperous time that existed prior to the economic collapse –then the audience’s perceived denial may be just one of the stages in the process of coping. Of course the question that occurs then is “but it has already been four years, why still encounter denial?” This is where my alternate reading, suggested earlier, factors in.

Taking into account that the people represented in *Fragile Nothing* are already in the stage of withdrawal, and that their isolation *is* their uniting factor, I argue that this unification against an external force (perceived perhaps as a threat, or an enemy) is exactly what prompts and motivates the introspective reconsideration. The production of the piece

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<sup>103</sup> It should be noted that the order that the symptoms are listed above is just a suggested succession as varying individuals may experience these stages in a different order, or not go through all of them.

in itself has been a fragment in the overall process of reconsideration and the scenes that comprise it are the tools that slowly (but surely) clear up the blurred lens through which the societal structure is examined.

Such an instance of introspective reconsideration is the scene of the lulling diagonal line towards the end of *Fragile Nothing* that serves multiple purposes. In a literal sense it represents a queue formed by people at the public service sectors, thus hinting at the dysfunctional aspects of bureaucracy. Metaphorically, it depicts the “tail of the system”<sup>104</sup> (Liatziviry, interview 03/05/2014) paralleling the people that wait at the long lines with the tail of an animal. This comparison is based on the premise that animals do survive even if you cut their tails off, thus commenting on the vanity of some of the established bureaucratic procedures. “Nothing will happen to the system if you cut its tail off,” Liatziviry observes, and then she moves on to comment on yet a third level of analysis inherent in the oscillating image of the dancers in the diagonal.

It is also like a lullaby, in the sense that through long hours of waiting and inertia you become lulled and enter a deep sleep. This for me was the subversive point of the performance, because while waiting at the queue and being lulled we found a door, that up to that point we had never opened before. The audience doesn't know if we did that consciously or not, but that is what brought about the change. (my translation from interview with Liatziviry 03/05/2014).

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<sup>104</sup> In Greek language there is one word to signify both ‘tail’ and ‘queue’, which is ουρά (*ourá*) and this makes for a linguistic and semiotic word-play.





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**Image 6:** A still of the lulling diagonal. The last person (Sophia Kyriazidou) chooses to separate herself from the routine of the group, while the other three (Eleni Lagadinou, Christina Sagou and Yannis Polyzos, who is not visible in this picture) perform a synchronous movement sequence. Photograph taken by Elpida Tempou, permission to use granted by Chrysiis Liatziviry

The opening of the door as a result of the hypnotizing diagonal signals yet another chance for reconsideration and presents the dancers with two possible options. Either follow the light that has just been revealed, thus interpreting it as a new opportunity, or fear it and avoid it by mistaking it as a source that can cause blindness (justifying the faceless solo where the dancer performs with her hair covering her face). Eventually however, the one who initially chose to differentiate herself from the group and was not immediately drawn to the light, also ended up being carried away by it in the end.

This once more alludes to the ‘collective isolation’ noted above, which can be further unpacked in the distinction that Hardt and Negri (2012) pose between singularity and individuality. According to Hardt and Negri, individual suffering, such as the one

witnessed in the solo of the woman who chose to stay behind, “alludes even in its solitary resistance to being together” (2012, 32). Such an example of individual suffering, or indignation was what brought the *Indignants* together<sup>105</sup>. It appeared collective and massive, but it was the result of many singularities<sup>106</sup> –and not individualities –because as Hardt and Negri further observe, “becoming singular, in contrast to becoming individual, means finding once again the subjective force in being together” (2012, 33).

A sense of togetherness achieved through singularity and solo movement sequences was indeed observed in the piece. Even at the very beginning, when there was hardly any communication between the dancers in terms of them coming in physical contact with each other or acknowledging each other’s presence through their gaze, relationships still manifested through interchanging movement sequences that were being passed on from one person to the next like invisible batons. Thus there is a sense of flow and interconnectedness that unites them even when they appear to be lost in their individual tasks.

Returning to the point made earlier about the possibilities for reconsideration that are hinted at, or sometimes even clearly stated throughout many different parts of the performance, attention should be directed to one of the key questions that appear in the

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<sup>105</sup> An example of how a state of individualization eventually turns into being together is noted by Hardt and Negri as follows: “When you bend under the weight of debt, when your attention is hypnotically glued to your screen, when you have made your house into a prison, you realize how much the capitalist crisis individualizes and strains human passions. You are alone, depotentialized. But as soon as you look around, you see that the crisis has also resulted in a being together. In the crisis, indebtedness, mediatization, securitization, and representation designate a collective condition.” (2012, 32)

<sup>106</sup> Here the distinction between individuality and singularity is situated in the fact that individuality alludes to a state of isolation, whereas singularity recognizes the potential of many individuals to come together and form a singular collectivity.

program notes and that Liatziviry also pointed out during our interview: “Which one prevails? Life or habit?” This inquiry factors in both as an overall issue encompassing the entirety of the piece, but it also becomes particularly pertinent in certain moments during the performance; for instance every time one of the dancers yells “STOP”. Hearing the command everyone obeyed and momentarily stopped, but the one who voiced it kept going. This attests to the prevalence of habit and of obeying some commands almost mechanically. The only resistance shown against the command came from the person who gave it, thus indicating another possible manifestation of habit turned mechanical. As Liatziviry mentioned in our interview, it was deliberately only one person giving the command throughout, and having it be heard more than once signified a kind of ‘addiction’ to the sound of it. The person giving the command had gotten so used to it after repeating it so that its meaning and its intensity had started to fade. The others, however, still perceived it as a very clear command and responded to it with immediacy.

It is in this process and the distinction between reacting habitually –thus not being able to let go of the known past –and making a new choice that I locate a latent potential for reconsideration. Every time the female dancer yells “STOP” she gives them a choice; either obey and go on as usual, or resist and create a possibility for change. Seen in a wider sociopolitical framework, habitual reaction and acceptance of changing structures, especially when they have threatening undertones (such as the rise of Golden Dawn and their overt use of violence) is at first sight interpreted as inertia but if explored in more depth, it uncovers fear.

As it has already been established, fear appears to be inevitable at a moment of crisis. It can manifest as professional insecurity<sup>107</sup> (fear of losing one's job), financial anxiety (not being able to pay off debts and thus fearing to lose one's home), but also fear of verbal or physical abuse. Guy Standing (2010) and Hardt and Negri (2012) identify fear as both a generalized social phenomenon and a motivating force in the era of uncertainty. Standing characteristically observes that “[p]eople who fear losing what they have are constantly frustrated. They will be angry but usually passively so. The precariatized mind is fed by fear and is motivated by fear” (2010, loc. 599-600 from 5416). The observational research conducted by the SYNDRAM dance company led them to the conclusion that this fear of uncertainty has indeed resulted in a kind of passivity. However, interestingly enough, it is precisely this very observation that motivated them to engage in this production, demonstrating how passivity can actually inspire action.

The closing scene of the piece, where the dancers exit the stage with faint lights glued on their skin illuminating the fabric of their clothes is a faint glimmer of hope in this unpleasant situation. It corresponds to the last sentence of the program notes (*Fragile Nothing* 2014), quoted from a poem by Nazim Hikmet that reads “if we don't burn how will the light vanquish the darkness?” In the context of the piece and the overall situation that the performance is commenting on, I perceive of this quote as an encouragement to

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<sup>107</sup> It is worth mentioning here that when Liatziviry first conceived of the need to create a piece that would critically engage with these topics, she had no budget and no external funding to support the production. It was very clear to the dancers who attended the auditions that “there is no money, we had informed them from the beginning that they may get paid if we make something from the ticket sales, but of course other needs would have to be covered first (such as tech-support, theatre expenses etc.)” (my translation from interview with Liatziviry, 03/05/2014) Lots of dancers still attended the auditions knowingly engaging in a project that was the epitome of uncertainty and precarity.

let go of (burn) the things people used to take for granted in order to allow themselves to adapt to this new order, which in turn echoes the sentiment that the crisis can be treated as an opening; an opportunity for a new start.

The critical reconsideration of the human condition as an emerging artistic practice of the present showcased in *Fragile Nothing* opens up room for critical reflection on certain aspects of contemporary Greekness and provides a glimpse into the current landscape of recession. The themes of agony and uncertainty for the future, the sentiment of managing to make ends meet for one more day, the fear and indignation against forces that are beyond individual control, the need to participate in artistic endeavors even if they do not provide any sense of certainty, the need for a change and the inability to make it happen; all of these could very well be listed as traits of Standing's *Precariat* and are recognized as common occurrences in the new global order. What Liatziviry perceived and portrayed as a state of the contemporary Greek human condition, Maria Gorgia elaborated further in her work *On the Seesaw* as she followed the four main categories proposed by Hardt and Negri in *Declaration* (2012): the securitized, the mediatized, the indebted, and the represented, to formulate her characters' interactions.

Treating Gorgia's performance as a parallel investigation to Liatziviry's *Fragile Nothing* the next section deepens the exploration of precarity and its impact on framing understandings of contemporary Greekness by drawing on a careful choreographic analysis of *On the Seesaw*.

## 2.4 Precariats *on the Seesaw*

Maria Gorgia's latest work *On the Seesaw* (2014) is the last piece in a trilogy of works initiated in 2011. The two works leading up to this production were *The Mattress* (2011) and *Hidden in the olive groves* (2012) each respectively revolving around a male and a female solo protagonist, while exploring different aspects of Greekness alongside the construction of masculinity and femininity in the modern Greek State.

*The Mattress* explored the history of the Greek State from 1827 and onward and revolved around the relationship between a man and his country, which was metaphorically represented by a sleeping mattress that stood for the physical space of the nation state. According to a performance review by Natalia Koutsougera, the performer in this piece oscillated between adopting "proper Western manners [...] thus momentarily forgetting his former raw qualities" (Koutsougera, dancetheatre.gr 2013), which acutely comments on the oscillation between Hellenism and Greekness. Slowly progressing towards the present day, this piece vividly conveyed not only the internal struggle of contemporary Greeks, but also their search for Europeaness (in the sense of a 'higher' Western culture more directly related to Hellenism) which can be understood as contradictory to Greekness (a sense of identity that acknowledges peasant elements and a more provincial mentality; not as refined as Hellenism).

*Hidden in the Olive Groves*, was initially produced for the 2012 Athens and Epidaurus Festival, one of the biggest performing arts festivals in Greece, that runs every summer. Revolving around a female protagonist, this work similarly spans from the constitution of the Greek State to the present and explores the history of enfranchisement

of Greek women. The performer inhabits a multitude of stereotypical roles attributed to females, while recorded voice-over commentary of actual narrations contradicts the stereotypes and points to the ironies inherent in them. The characters tapped into include the mother figure engaging in reproductive labor; the maid, engaging in manual labor; the peasant, uneducated woman; the overly sexualized female; the female authoritative figure, and the rebel. Interjected with the narratives of women who either partook in the revolution of 1821 (such as Mando Mavrogenous), the civil war, or the movement for the emancipation of women (such as Kaliroi Parren) the piece follows the trajectory of the development of female equality in the modern Greek nation state and as such it can be seen as a parallel investigation to *The Mattress*.

*On the Seesaw* is composed with two performers (Stavros Apostolakos and Sania Strimbakou) and picks up where the other two left off, both in terms of chronology and narrative, as it is concerned with the present and the construction of the self during the crisis, through the eyes of both genders. Similarly to Liatziviry's performance, the choreography of Maria Gorgia weaves a variety of characters and situations that the dancers temporarily tap into rather than following a linear narrative structure. There are continuous plays and shifts of balance in the relationships that form as the scenes progress. The organizing premise of the entire performance is a choreographic investigation of the four emergent subjectivities that Hardt and Negri describe in the first part of their 2012 book *Declaration*, as these manifest and interact within the Precariat (borrowing Guy Standing's work perceived here as a tangible social framework). The subsections that

follow have been organized so as to correspond to the four subjectivities<sup>108</sup> and thus for the most part they mirror the progression of the performance, but sometimes they interrupt it to facilitate the theorization of it.

#### 2.4.1. The Mediatized

Upon entering the theatre the performers are already on stage lying on their sides on self-made pieces of ‘furniture’ that consist of old computer equipment, such as printers, hard-drives, monitors, laptops, cables, keyboards, and other computer-related hardware. They are positioned on opposite sides and are taking turns criticizing and reviling people in authority, the bureaucratic system, public administration, unemployment, and the dysfunctions of the State. Whenever their turn is over, they continue to silently mouth their indignation and complaints as they rearrange their hardware to create a new setting for them to sit in. Most of their verbal commentary attests to frustration caused by austerity measures, work conditions, taxation and deteriorating human relations. At first they do not seem to be aware of each other’s presence, but as the tension and the anger keep escalating they start to turn against each other. While they are directing insults to one another they slowly build pedestals with their computer monitors which they climb as they continue to swear and turn the scene into somewhat of a competition; the price to be won being who

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<sup>108</sup> In the beginning of their book *Declaration* Hardt and Negri identify four subjectivities that have emerged as an aftermath of the neoliberal crisis. In their words, they sum up these figures as follows: “The triumph of neoliberalism and its crisis have shifted the terms of economic and political life, but they have also operated a social anthropological transformation, fabricating new figures of subjectivity. The hegemony of finance and the banks has produced the *indebted*. Control over information and communication networks has created the *mediatized*. The security regime and the generalized state of exception have constructed a figure prey to fear and yearning for protection –the *securitized*. And the corruption of democracy has forged a strange, depoliticized figure, the *represented*. These subjective figures constitute the social terrain on which –and against which –movements of resistance and rebellion must act. (Hardt and Negri 2012, 9)



gets to have the upper hand, who gets to win the verbal fight. The confrontation grows more vulgar when the man finally climbs off the pedestal to confront the woman face to face.



**Image 7:** Image from the opening scene. The dancers (Sania Strimbakou at the front and Stavros Apostolatos in the background) are lying on pieces of hardware as the audience is entering and they take turns reviling the authorities. Photograph taken by Angeliki Svoronou, permission to use granted by Maria Gorgia.

As soon as they are facing each other on the same level, they both freeze and their postures admit that they are ready to fight and defend themselves.

- “Have you seen my hard-disk?” the man asks, while the woman remains frozen. He locates it through the debris and runs off to his initial corner at the back of the stage to build a new fortress for himself. Several monitors discarded around the stage lighten up and make it possible to follow the dancers’ trajectories. At the same time the woman is responding to the music that has just been introduced with small spasmodic twitches and repeated movements highly reminiscent of the neurotic sequences seen in *Fragile Nothing*. Her movements slowly expand in space and she appears to be drawn to many different

directions led by her fingertips that imitate the act of typing on an invisible keyboard. On the back wall a series of images from social media and other internet sites is being projected. In the opposite corner, the man has finished piling up the equipment that surrounds him and engages in a demanding multitasking sequence of talking on the phone, tangling some cables and navigating a mouse with his foot. He is struggling to balance all the different actions until the lights dim and he is swallowed by darkness.

The use of all the computer hardware as stage props and the multi-tasking movement sequences evidence an overstimulation caused by technology, oftentimes to the point of being ‘hypnotized’ by the media (such as the clicking of the invisible keyboard that draws the female dancer to various different directions) and thus introduce the character of the *mediatized*. Hardt and Negri define the subjectivity of the mediatized as one that is “paradoxically neither active, nor passive but rather constantly absorbed in attention” (2012, 16). The woman being drawn to all the different directions as if pulled by invisible strings attests to this oscillation between passivity and action that is also highly reminiscent of Liatziviry’s lulling diagonal sequence.

In regard to the relationships formed with the media, and in particular social media, passivity occurs as the result of the subject’s absorption with that medium. The mediatized is a passive subject in terms of engaging with the events from a remote perspective, by ‘liking’ them on Facebook, commenting under a pseudonym in a forum, or ‘sharing’ and ‘pinning’ them on their personal profile. At the same time however, this minimal engagement with whatever the event may be in each occasion is a minuscule form of action. On a larger scale, such minuscule actions can spark a substantial engagement on a

socio-political level, as had been the case with the organization of the *Indignant* movement that was primarily coordinated via social media. Beyond a commentary on absorption and the hypnotic effect of media, Gorgia also explores the relationship to it as an erotic one, and constructs a scene, where the performers are having sex with each other, through their computers. As such, while there are clear points of contact between the performers, their genitals are constantly covered by their laptops, almost as if being censored.

This mediated representation of an intimate moment between a heterosexual couple and the placing of the devices in such a way as to distract them from each other and present obstacles in the physical contact, introduces the notion of alienation witnessed amongst people and its intensification by the media. An underlying antithesis is also evidenced in this statement, since social media claim to provide a means for people to connect with one another and maintain communication, but at the same time, such a connection moves beyond the corporeal phenomenological level, to an immaterial, cybernetic one. Furthermore, in this choreographed encounter of the couple the exploration of the impact of the crisis moves beyond the politico-historical level of analysis into the tangible frame of human relations that are also being put to the test as they interact with the changing environment that envelops them.



**Image 8:** A still image from the acrobatic contact improvisation sequence leading to the sex scene. Even though the points of contact are continuously shifting between the performers their attention is constantly directed to their laptops, rather than to each other. Photograph taken by Angeliki Svoronou, permission to use granted by Maria Gorgia.



**Image 9:** Still image from the sex-scene. Photograph taken by Angeliki Svoronou, permission to use granted by Maria Gorgia.

Delving into a deeper exploration of human relations Gorgia, similarly to Liatziviry, takes on the issue of alienation and the inherent tension that characterizes contemporary interactions. Contrary to *Fragile Nothing*, Gorgia's choreography employs a couple's relationship, and allows the viewer to identify it as such so that in turn she can use it as a vehicle for her investigation of the crisis. In our interview she notes that she is paralleling the crisis in the couple's relationship (portrayed through all the fighting), to the crisis experienced by this new social class. She notes that "in both occurrences there are the issues of power and seduction" (personal interview with Gorgia, 05/02/2014), and moves on to associate these two characteristics with the subjectivity of the *represented*.

#### 2.4.2. The Represented

The lights dim and the performers take off one layer of clothing. The man inserts his shirt on the back of his pants so that it hangs off like a tail. The woman takes off her blue woolen sweater and turns it inside out to reveal a red fabric which she ties on her head in an imitation of little Red Riding Hood, thus metaphorically rendering the man into the Wolf of the famous fairy tale. They meet at one side of the stage and the man slowly creates a path for the woman by lining up pieces of equipment in front of her. He supports her during each step as she is carefully making her way over old printers, PC towers, keyboards, and other devices, all forming a straight path towards the Wolf's den, which the man had constructed in the previous scene. A hard disk with tangling cables becomes a purse for Red-Riding Hood, which she carries as she continues her path. The path grows narrower (at the end it only comprises cables) as she moves further down along it and

eventually leads her to the Wolf's den. As Red Riding Hood is navigating her way through the path she sporadically stops to collect pieces of computer hardware (e.g. RAM memory) and puts them in her 'purse'; some of these she finds lying on the floor, while others she struggles to get from the Wolf.

Once they are both in the den she begins to feed the RAM sticks to the wolf who seems to get an energy jolt every time he is fed one. One of the RAMs sends him off to a gathering frenzy. He collects several pieces of equipment that formed the path to his den as if trying to erase any traces of it. He uses the cables to tie the limbs of Red Riding Hood, thus making it harder for her to move on her own and requiring his assistance and support. The woman is so tangled with the wires that she can barely balance herself while the Wolf runs to the den and brings out a wired plank that forms a seesaw structure at the middle of the stage.

The 'feeding' continues as the performers balance on the seesaw. Now the wolf is roaring as he goes back and forth to stack equipment on Red Riding Hood's side of the seesaw. When he climbs on his side he takes a momentary pause and raises his hand in the air in an imitation of a politician in the middle of a speech, then roaring he pulls down his weight and proves that he is still strong enough to weigh down the seesaw in spite of the added weight.

The scene concludes with both performers stepping off the seesaw; the lights grow brighter and the woman starts yelling at the top of her lungs, swearing against "the vampire State sucking out the souls of its citizens" and the people responsible "for sinking the

country to this dirt”. The yelling continues as both performers rearrange the props on the stage to prepare for the next scene (see 2.4.3).

In the line of progression of the choreography, the narrative of seduction that underlines the relationship developed between the Wolf and Red Riding Hood serves as the prelude to the erotic scene between the couple discussed in 2.4.1, and at the same time it points to a metaphorical seduction and dependence inherent in the categorization of the represented. In an allegorical sense, seduction is located in the power exercised over the voter who adheres to the ideologies of one party and thus chooses to be represented by it. Gorgia views this relationship as seductive and notes that in her choreography the represented “is being seduced, but also *wants* to be seduced” (interview with Gorgia, 05/02/2014). This notion becomes particularly evident when Red Riding Hood willingly accepts to be tied up, to the point that she has to cross the stage only by hopping on one leg, and then continues to ‘support’ the Wolf, by providing him more and more food.

In parallel to the feeding scene, a series of images is projected in the background, which like puzzle pieces slowly compose an image of the Wolf and Red Riding Hood. The video concludes when the fairy tale characters are replaced by an image of a ballot box inferring that the wolf’s mouth<sup>109</sup> is a metaphor for the ballot box. This parallelization, alongside the negative connotation of the idiom of the wolf’s mouth, converts the existing power relation between the represented (Red Riding Hood) and the one in power (Wolf) from a seductive one, to a potentially deceptive one.

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<sup>109</sup> This points to a Greek idiom “στο στόμα του λύκου” (*sto stóma tou likou* – in the wolf’s mouth) which is used to imply that someone is heading towards a direction that will certainly prove to be harmful. In English it could be loosely translated as “go out looking for trouble”.

Gorgia argues that upon establishing the wolf's mouth as the ballot box, the continued feeding of the memory sticks (RAM), which stand for the votes, attests to this voluntary act of seduction and in turn deception<sup>110</sup>. Red Riding Hood willingly allows herself to be allured and keeps nurturing this relationship almost to the point that it gains a hypnotic hold on her. To willingly engage in such a dependent cycle, such as the one that Gorgia is manufacturing in this scene, is a choice that occurs beyond the sphere of mere seduction, in a state of hypnotization. The reference to voting as a misleading or deceptive act is also a very common rhetoric in the Greek elections. Opposing party candidates often accuse each other for misleading voters with their fake promises and deceiving political agendas. On the other hand, the established system of representative democracy leaves no other choice but to align with one party or another thus falling into this trope of dependency.

Noting all these nuances, the fairy tale parallelism serves to provide a very critical commentary on the electoral scene in Greece and the subjectivity of the represented. To explore this category in more depth, I turn to Hardt and Negri's discussion of representation as a notion that "is in itself, by definition a mechanism that separates the population from power, the commanded from those who command" (Hardt & Negri, 2012, 27). The narrative of separation and the realization of this chasm between the population and the ones in power has been one of the major motivators beneath the series of protest movements that have emerged since 2010. So many of the movements (with Occupy and

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<sup>110</sup> The move from seduction to deception is an effort to capture the transition from *απο-πλάνηση* (*apo-plánisi*: seduction) to *παρα-πλάνηση* (*para-plánisi*: misleading / deception) that Gorgia noted in her interview.



the Indignants being the most characteristic ones) direct part of their critique towards political structures and forms of representation. In particular, pertaining to the notion of hypnotization that was latent both in Liatziviry's and Gorgia's performances, the juxtaposing narrative of realization (in terms of *being awake*; being fully conscious of the situation and ready to react) has been significantly present in the Indignant citizens movement in Syntagma square in 2011. As reporter Ioanna Fotiades noted in an article that appeared in Kathimerini Newspaper in May of 2011, a banner written in Spanish read "We are awake. What time is it? It's time for them to leave" (Fotiades 2011), thus noting the awakened state of realization that sparked the protest movement, while also hinting at a sense of solidarity with the Spanish *Indignados*.

Following up on the ongoing analogy drawn to Žižek's work and the correspondence between Liatziviry's view and the stages of denial and withdrawal as responses to the capitalist crisis, the subjectivity of the represented furthers the discussion into two other stages; *anger*<sup>111</sup> followed by attempts at *bargaining*<sup>112</sup>. As previously established, protest are being fuelled by the inadequacies of the system of representation. As such, anger can be distinguished as the primary motivator for the organization of a

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<sup>111</sup> In psychological theories *anger* is understood as the explosion that occurs when one can no longer deny the fact that has initiated their grieving. In Žižek's theorization concerning the crisis of capitalism, the anger is expressed at the "injustices of the new world order". (Žižek 2010, xi) In the book, the section titled "Anger" is an exploration of Fundamentalism, which Žižek perceives as the greatest threat to social order in this crisis.

<sup>112</sup> *Bargaining* in the context of the capitalist crisis is related to the issue that market rules define many levels of people's lives apart from just governing the flow of products in the markets. As an aftermath, some corporations are selling a product that is *nothing* at its core, but consumers perceive it as a *thing in itself* and seek it to attain a certain "lifestyle". Žižek thus poses the question of whether people should still continue to believe in the market's potential to provide them with a certain lifestyle. That is where the notion of bargaining is present, in questions such as "if we change things here and there, life could perhaps go on as before". (Žižek 2010, xi)

protest, and the performative act of protesting in this case becomes the medium for bargaining –in the sense of making demands heard and thus having the potential to influence, or cause a renegotiation of certain measures, putting pressure on those in power.

In Gorgia's work, *denial* (in the sense of not having come to a realization yet) is evidenced in the seductive and highly interdependent relationship between the voter feeding more and more votes to the one in power, while the latter's bestial nature in the piece clearly signifies a threat and a deceptive imbalance in the relationship. The separation between the represented and the one in power is made even more clear in the final moments of the scene, when Red Riding Hood and the Wolf balance on the seesaw; the Wolf becoming stronger and beastlier with each vote-bite. The regression to an angered state at the end of the scene and the sudden change of atmosphere, from the dimly-lit ritual of feeding to the demystified raw image of an angered woman could signify a transition from a hypnotic state of *denial* to a wakeful state of realization that inevitably leads to *anger*.

In Gorgia's choreography, this anger manifests as a verbal form of violence which is simultaneously directed against her male counterpart –who has by then gotten rid of his animalistic features (i.e. tail and the roaring) –and an immaterial intangible force encapsulated in the words *system*, *state* and *κράτος* (*krátos* – state and public sector). The angered swearing functions as a choreographic motif, in the sense of being a recurring element that ties different parts of the performance together. At the same time, it also becomes a signifier of transition from one scene to the next. In its transitory function it gains an additional dimension as it signals the immanent separation in the dynamics that form between people, or people and the State.

Upon realizing the separation inherent in the system of representation, one also inevitably becomes attuned to the chasms between differing population groups (either in terms of class hierarchies, political orientation, or ethnic/racist grounds to mention just a few), which have intensified during the crisis. There is now a coiling in opposite extremes of the spectrum. Some acute examples to support this point include the weakening of the center parties (e.g. Nea Demokratia and PASOK)<sup>113</sup> in favor of a polarity between the extremist right wing party Golden Dawn, and the radical left party SYRIZA.

I perceive of these new balances in the political sphere both as a state of realization as well as a way of bargaining (in terms of changing the voting habits that had been established in the last few decades<sup>114</sup>). This shift of orientation was interpreted by newscasts and media as a reaction to austerity. This recent shift in the electoral dynamic is closely related to the rise of populist rhetoric which sways people to opposing ends of the spectrum. For a definition of populism and populist rhetoric, I turn to Ernesto Laclau's book *On Populist Reason*, where it becomes clear that populism embraces such a diverse range of ideologies that it often encompasses contradictory political beliefs. At the beginning of the book Laclau uses Gino Germani's (1978) characterization of populism to introduce the dichotomous nature of the concept:

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<sup>113</sup> Of course this is not to say that the 'center' has been completely eradicated as Nea Demokratia (a center-right) party, still ranks second (between SYRIZA and Golden Dawn). PASOK however, the socialist party of Greece that used to be one of the two ruling parties has significantly dropped as it is now ranking fourth, falling below the Golden Dawn as recent polls evidence. (This claim was made after consulting multiple sources. All polls were conducted and published before July 2014)

<sup>114</sup> Following the fall of the junta in 1974 it has been common for two parties to receive the highest percentages of votes; the socialist (center-left) party PASOK and the center-right party Nea Demokratia. Until 2012 it was either of these two parties that was elected in government. Following 2012 however, the percentages of the two previously leading parties dropped and were divided across more parties including the radical left SYRIZA and the extreme right Golden Dawn.

Populism itself tends to deny any identification with or classification into the Right/Left dichotomy. It is a multiclass movement, although not all multiclass movements may be considered populist. Populism probably defies any comprehensive definition. Leaving aside this problem for the moment, populism usually includes contrasting opponents such as a claim for equality of political rights and universal participation for the common people, but fused with some sort of authoritarianism often under charismatic leadership. It also includes socialist demands, (or at least a claim for social justice), vigorous defense of small property, strong nationalist components, and denial of the importance of class. It is accompanied with the affirmation of the rights of the common people as against the privileged interest groups, usually considered inimical to the people and the nation. Any of these elements may be stressed according to cultural and social conditions, but they are all present in most populist movements. (Germani in Laclau 2005, 4)

Indeed, in Greece political parties, regardless of ideology and orientation, emphasize selective aspects of populism to enhance their rhetoric and attain mass appeal. For instance, the direct address of the issue of illegal immigration by Golden Dawn and the proposed measures (albeit inhumane) to ‘deal’ with it, appeal to certain groups of people who feel threatened by the influx of large numbers of immigrants and see the radical measures proposed by the party as the only solution to the problem. Greek political theorist Yannis Stavrakakis discusses the rise of populism as immediately related to the global financial crisis:

Today, this reverberation [of populist rhetoric] intensifies and maybe even reaches its peak. Its central point is chronologically situated in the period following the outburst of the 2008 global financial crisis, whereas geographically it is situated in Europe, and especially in those countries that are subjected to monitoring by a board of trustees, such as Greece. (my translation from Stavrakakis in Sevastakis and Stavrakakis eds. 2012, 44)

Following Germani’s theorization of populism, the correlation between the rise of populist rhetoric in Greece and the global financial crisis derives out of the intensification of the inequalities amongst different population groups that fuels a need to establish a common ground that everyone can identify with and relate to. Depending on the political orientation

of each party, this common ground is pursued through various routes, two of the prevailing ones being: claims to equality and universal participation, as opposed to an emphasizing of nationalist components that automatically cancel out the population groups that do not adhere to the given 'standards' (i.e. non-Greek citizens).

As such, this shift in the electoral voting habits is reaffirming a polarity between the Right and Left, but at the same time it also offers a redefinition of what *Right* and *Left* stand for in this revised order. It no longer corresponds to the established dichotomy between liberal-conservatism (Nea Demokratia) and democratic-socialism (PASOK) that was characteristic of the past three decades (roughly from 1980 to 2010) but it has now given way to extremes<sup>115</sup>.

#### 2.4.3 The Securitized and the Indebted

The polarity discussed above is choreographically translated as isolation of the two characters in separate 'microcosms' on different sides of the stage. Their posture has evidently changed as they are hunched over and demonstrate an internal focus. Their movements alternate between being slow and cumbersome and being-fidgety and restless pointing to a consecutive transition from a worn out state of fear to a state of panic. The hardware objects lying around on stage gain new symbolic meanings as a computer monitor is taken for a walk in an imitation of being a dog named Jack, some cables become

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<sup>115</sup> Even though Nea Demokratia is still ranking second, I refer to it as an extremity, because I find it remarkable that roughly 25% of the population adhere to the radical left, while 13% is residing with the extreme right. In other words, the extremity is identified between the first and third party rather than the first and the second one due to the significant ideological chasm noted between the two.

a sack thrown over the shoulder of the male dancer who is hunching resembling the image of a beggar.

Some dialogues occur between the characters and other people who are not present on stage, such as the mother of the male dancer, whom he contacts over the phone, and a friend of his that he reaches over Skype, called Maria. The themes recurring in their conversations once more revolve around issues of precarity, such as unemployment, or not being able to afford proper food. In the dialogue with Maria, the fictional character appears to be at work having just been interrupted because as the male performer remarks “I saw you online and thought you were available”, thus attesting to the evasive and invasive use of technology that renders individuals accessible anywhere, anytime, often attenuating any sense of privacy.

Further building on this lack of privacy, another scene that temporally occurs right after the erotic scene, discussed previously, finds the dancers creating a network built of wires that spread outward like a star and divide the stage in six segments. The dancers find themselves separated and isolated in different segments as they travel from one section to another trying to find each other. When they finally meet in the same segment and stand side by side, looking at the audience, there is a discernible sense of discomfort. They appear as if they are not sure how to interact in such close proximity.

Instead of travelling in the negative spaces created between the wires, the dancers’ bodies become an extension of each wire, their spine attaching to the wires like a train to a railway system that transports them from one point to the next. In this process, every time they arrive at what in previous scenes had been the Wolf’s den they take off a piece

of clothing and exchange it with a piece of equipment that they strap on themselves as if it were an alternate piece of fabric.



**Image 10:** Still image of Sania Strimbakou weighing down the seesaw after having exchanged all of her clothes for computer hardware equipment. Behind her, wires divide the stage and also act as 'drying racks' for the clothes that the performers have taken off. Photograph taken by Angeliki Svoronou, permission to use granted by Maria Gorgia.

They detach themselves from the wires and proudly parade their new possession to the audience imitating a walk down a fashion runway. They pose at the end of their walk and showcase the newly acquired piece of equipment. This process repeats itself until they are both left with only their underwear and everything else has been replaced by hardware pieces. This transformation into cyborgian figures progressively also affects their

movements that become more and more robotic at each turn and escalate to an inability to move in any way that resembles human poise.

Both of these moments described here comment on different facets of the subjectivity of the securitized in terms of discussing the intensive permeation of technology and the intrusive surveillance mechanisms that monitor human interactions, behavior and life progress. By ‘surveillance mechanisms’, I am metaphorically referring to the increasing popularity of social networking and other social sharing sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Skype and many more. The goal of most of these websites is to facilitate human interconnectedness and communication by ‘bringing people closer’ and dissolving any geographical distance that may exist between them. At the same time, however, they are also the means of collecting, sharing, and recording people’s personal data. The easy access to this wide array of information and the increasing sense of interconnectedness, in spite of the lack of physical interaction, often interfere with the development of direct interpersonal relations and communication. Thus the scene where the performers are anxiously travelling from one segment to the next in order to meet each other face to face, concludes in discomfort and puzzlement as they realize that they do not know how to interact with one another in an embodied, physical way.

Hardt and Negri open the section on the ‘securitized’ by observing that “[i]t’s dizzying to think about all the information constantly being produced about you” (2012, 19). Their frame of reference is not limited to the information produced (*about* you, but also *by* you) online. They go on to address other instances where personal data is being



monitored, to add to the accumulation of individual information that is being recorded, such as airport body and possessions scans, fingerprinting services at border controls, as well as other inspection and disciplining regiments such as those existing in health care services, schools and government offices. Paralleling this constant cycle of watching and being watched to prison systems of surveillance Hardt and Negri argue that there are two “dramatis personae in securitized society: inmates and guards. And you are called to play both roles at once” (2012, 20). Further building on this prison analogy, they claim that it is precisely the various stages of metaphorical incarceration that are the key to the functioning of the securitized subjectivity and more importantly of all, *fear* as the primary motivator. Fear, and I would also add, a sense of indebtedness that traverses over to the last type of subjectivity to be discussed; the indebted, whose “unhappy consciousness [...] makes guilt a form of life” (2012, 10).

Fear is the primary motivator for the securitized to accept not only its double role, watcher and watched, in the surveillance regime but also the fact that so many others are even further deprived of their freedom. The securitized lives in fear of a combination of punishments and external threats. Fear of the ruling powers and their police is a factor but more important and effective is fear of dangerous others and unknown threats – a generalized social fear. (Hardt & Negri 2012, 24)

This generalized social fear is precisely what is being exploited in the rise of the populist rhetoric. Moreover, to the extent that this relates to the subjectivation of Greekness and post-bailout Greek identity, I think that the analysis of the securitized should be paralleled to the analysis of the indebted, since fear appears as the key characteristic in both subjectivities.

The fourth subjectivity is introduced in the exchange witnessed in the last scene where the dancers trade off their clothes for equipment. The latent observation of

prioritizing technology over other basic needs, such as clothing, that leads them to bargain their belongings, is not just an acute commentary on the nature of capitalism, but it also simultaneously attests to the inherently voyeuristic nature of social media; literally rendered through the nakedness of the dancers, but metaphorically also captured in the laying bare of ones' self. The accumulation of more and more equipment to cover up, or substitute, body parts attests to over-information and the effect that this ends up having on the dancers' movements could potentially be read as an overwhelming pressure created by the over-accessibility and circulation of data. As such, once more, what was meant to facilitate communication, ends up becoming the key alienating factor that renders agents inhumane (in terms of hindering interpersonal communication, or turning them into cyborgs).

The beastly nature of the Wolf is revisited as the scene concludes with his return, this time a more cyborgian rendition of the beast, who once more loads the seesaw in an attempt to prove his strength by still being able to weight it down. The female performer assumes an animal role as well, clucking as she admires the strength of the Wolf. Monitors in the background project fragmented images and in one corner there is a screen counting the debt of Greece, the number rising with the passing of each second. All these visual stimulants rendering the subjectivity of the indebted, and more specifically the indebted Greek, clear beyond doubt.



**Image 11:** The rising number of the debt projected on the clothes hanging from the wires. Photograph taken by Angeliki Svoronou, permission to use granted by Maria Gorgia.

#### 2.4.4 Balancing on the Seesaw

In the closing scene the performers start taking off all the pieces of hardware as they engage in a singing dialogue exchanging various melodies of national anthems instead of verses. Sometimes the male dancer uses lyrics, especially when he sings the German anthem, but most of the times they just render the melodies as *ta-ra-ra-ra-ra-ta*, which turns this scene into somewhat of a guessing game for the audience trying to figure out which anthem each melody stands for. Maria Gorgia explains her conception of this scene as follows:

All states have an inherent component of power. So while the scene opens with the anthem of the French Revolution [La Marseillaise], as a liberatory anthem, they start gradually taking off all the hardware equipment. Other melodies are introduced and what was initially seen as a liberation, now turns into a game, and the game then becomes a power play when they step on the seesaw. For that particular part, very specific anthems have been chosen; the French one, the anthem of the European Union, the American anthem, the Greek and the Japanese anthems. [...] (my translation from interview with Gorgia 05/02/2014)

Once the performers are freed from all hardware bonds they clear the seesaw of any remaining debris and step on it directly gazing at the audience. The board is weighted down by the female performer while the male, who soars slightly above her, sings the German national anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, über alles in der...* (Germany, Germany, above all, above all else in the ...). Shortly before finishing the verse he weighs down the seesaw and now it is the female's turn who loudly proclaims the melody of the first verses of La Marseillais *la-la-la-la-la-taa-ra-da*, only to be overpowered by another 'rise' on the seesaw of *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*. When it is her turn to rise again, she responds with the melody of the Greek national anthem. The seesaw starts to tremble, thus causing her to fluctuate her tonality producing a cacophony that sounds like a slowed-down cassette-tape. Eventually the trembling ceases and the seesaw finds balance, leveling the dancers, who sing the European Union anthem (Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*) in unison. The lights dim in orange shades and the performers join hands as the seesaw finds a moment of complete stillness. The serenity of the scene is disrupted as in a sudden drop the seesaw brings one above the other and each time either of them 'rises in power' they regress to yelling and swearing at each other by verbally attacking their co-protagonist until the lights fade to utter darkness.

The rich symbolism of this concluding scene, and the politics of power that it addresses point to the variety of ways that Greekness and contemporary Greek identity are being challenged in the post-bailout landscape. Before I delve into a more careful analysis of the constructs that this scene is stirring up, however, I would like to turn to Maria Gorgia and make space for her choreographic intentions in this richly symbolic segment.

The person at the highest point of the seesaw at each turn enforces his/her power and then the European Union balances it out, which is why I framed it as a sunset [referring to the dimming of the lights in orange tones]. It is a beautiful and romantic idea, but at the same time, the romantic idea is the setting [i.e. going down/ sunset] of the European Union. So, what will happen next? This is where all the symbolisms are rendered very overtly on my behalf. Very overt, almost to the point that it could be considered militant<sup>116</sup> art. [...] Right before the lights turn off, they return to the initial verbal fighting. Whoever is at the high point of the seesaw starts swearing, which of course is not leading anywhere, and is emphasizing the power struggle. Additionally, the part with the nations and their anthems is not just a reference to power, but also to markets, and to how globalization has seemingly rendered nation-states' borders meaningless. In the sense that they [borders] no longer have the significance they used to, because now it is the markets that matter; they are the prevailing element, not the national borders. Artistically, this [scene] was the result of some improvisations and I used it to create an image, but it resulted in a question-mark. It is almost like a net (a digital network) hovering over in the air, a question-mark. It is the precarity, so to say, the prevalent element of today – at least in the terms that the media have created for us –asking what is going to happen in the end? (my translation from interview with Gorgia 05/02/2014)

While an answer to this closing question can only be given in time, all the symbols that Gorgia is constructing certainly point at some shifts in the contemporary body politic and assist in an understanding of the layered tensions that compose contemporary Greekness. The 'battle' of the national anthems concisely summarizes the transition from a national identity and orientation to a transnational one, as the seesaw only finds balance once the European Union anthem is being sung. However, even within the context of the EU, imbalances still occur as the power struggle between Germany and France in the first series of balance struggles reveals, and the consecutive antithesis between Greece and Germany

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<sup>116</sup> 'Militant' art is the closest way to translate the Greek term στρατευμένη τέχνη (*stratevméni techne*) which refers to art that has a very specific political agenda, is affiliated with a political party, or that directly derives from adherence to specific political beliefs and ideologies. Στρατός (*stratos*) which is the etymological root of the word means "military", however in this instance the term is metaphorically used to indicate a strong sense of commitment to a cause. It should be noted that στρατευμένη τέχνη tends to be a characteristic attributed to personal artistic choices and not state driven initiatives.

that has become particularly pertinent in the last few years. The trembling of the seesaw that occurs in the effort to balance the two performers singing the Greek and German anthems respectively attests to the utopian nature of transnational solidarity and the so called ‘integration process’<sup>117</sup>.

The fighting and arguing that disrupts the EU anthem is not just a return to the power and sovereignty struggle, but for me it also served as a trigger that urged me to reconsider and come to terms with the multiplicities that comprise Greekness. The tensions between the national and the supranational (EU); the layered identifications as ‘Greek’ and at the same time ‘Balkan’, and ‘Mediterranean’; all labels bearing different sets of standards, connotations and narratives, yet all being collapsed in one. The inherent struggles to adhere to all these varying identifiers, or to negate them, justify the emphasizing of national aspects and the revisiting of the distant Hellenic past in doing so. In these revisitations Ottoman cultural influences from the four centuries of coexistence in the same geographical space are mostly also overlooked in the pursuit of national ‘purity’. But to what extent can any nation have any claim to purity? Isn’t the negation of cross-cultural influences a denial of an already transnational identity?

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<sup>117</sup> The European Union integration process refers to the alignment of policies (legal, social, political, cultural, industrial, financial amongst others) either wholly or partially, between EU members. It is pursued primarily through the signing of treaties, and the commitment to multiannual programs. More information on the current state and agenda of the integration process can be found in the *European Website on Integration*: <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/mandate.cfm> (accessed 07/06/2014). Given that the first EU members had been Western European nation states, and the newer members include Central and Eastern European countries, the process of integration started out as more Western-oriented, but attempts are being made to transition to a Pan-European orientation. As political scientist Neill Nugent observes: “until recently the European integration process was essentially a *Western* European integration process. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe that have become members of the EU have joined an organization made by countries of Western Europe.” (emphasis in original, Nugent 2006, 10) This ‘incoherence’ in the integration process that attests to a rupture in the Pan-European orientation is precisely what motivates the in-text characterization of the integration process as “utopian”.

Keeping all these questions in mind, and following the established Andersonian (1983) model for understanding nationalism, it starts to become clear that the construction of Greekness as a derivative of Hellenism is more than just an “imagined collective” based on a shared cultural heritage and lineage. It is as literary scholar Stathis Gourgouris argues a process of imaginary signification, a *Phantasiebildung*, “the enacting of an implicit social fantasy within a specific historical realm [...] a complex process of formation akin to what Freud called dream-work” (Gourgouris 1996, 261). Following the common trope of viewing Greece (ancient Greece / Hellas) as the ‘cradle’ of Western civilization, an acceptance of *Phantasiebildung* as indeed lying at the core of Greek nation-building would jeopardize the stability of ensuing European and Western ideals. As such, many Western ideologies could be viewed as a process of mimesis, where the initial image is a ‘phantasmic projection’.

In a discussion on Philhellenism, a Eurocentric movement that occurred at the dawn of the nineteenth century, Gourgouris argues that:

[a]s fantasy, Philhellenism always constitutes a desire –the desire for civilization, and particularly for civilization as the anthropocentric dissolution of myth, which the enlightenment retroactively discovered to be its historical project. [...] However, as *object* of desire, the Hellenic cannot exist, or rather it can “exist” as a phantasmic projection posed once the desire has been articulated. (emphasis in original - Gourgouris 1996, 127)

If we were to substitute Gourgouris’s use of the term ‘Philhellenism’ with ‘Hellenism’, the above quote would perfectly explain the Greek insistence for attaining the Hellenic (the desire for civilization) as the prime national signifier. Continuing this exercise of substitution, I would like to focus on Gourgouris’ mention of *desire*, since he later parallels Philhellenism to Orientalism, observing that the former:

engages in the like activity of *representing* the other culture, which in effect means *replacing* the other culture with those self, projected images of otherness that Western culture needs to see itself in the mirrors of itself. (emphasis in original - Gourgouris 1996, 140)

As such, utilizing Hellenism as an approach for constructing national identity serves to eradicate any traces of non-Greek otherness, such as Balkan, Mediterranean, and most importantly of all: Ottoman influences, and insists on a mirroring of a representation of a phantasmic apparition of glory.

The recent financial crisis has thus uncovered a deeper ongoing crisis of the Greek self, manifesting as a constant underlying anxiety to prove oneself worthy (either of a Hellenic legacy, or worthy of being a member of the EU). Tzartzani very accurately captures this sentiment in the following quote:

[w]ithin a society that had seemingly moved away from its ‘primordial’ past towards a more promising, ‘Modern’ postnational future, its relocation within the Third World appears as the materialization of its greatest fear. (Tzartzani 2014, 41)

This fear of losing our (the Greek) narrative has only intensified during the crisis and it has consecutively led to a desperate clinging on fragments of the past. Naomi Klein echoes a similar sentiment as she notes the following:

Greeks have this particular fear that is being exploited, around the fear of becoming a developing country, becoming a third world country. And I think in Greece there has always been this sense of hanging on to Europe by a thread. And the threat is having that thread cut. That fear plays out in two ways: One that you can’t leave the Eurozone, because that will be the end of your status as a developed country, and then attacks on migrants and in the anti-immigrant backlash. (Klein, Eleftherotypia 2013)

All these fears are mirrored in contemporary dance performances, such as the two discussed here extensively as well as the ones that follow in the next chapter that address Klein’s second point on the anti-immigration rhetoric. The performed manifestations of



these occurrences signify a fraction of the overall move towards a critical engagement with the distant, as well as the recent pasts, in a sincere attempt to contextualize and gain a deeper understanding of the present.

## 2.5 The Final Stage of Grief

Choreographing the last section of the chapter in analogy to the stages of grief, the concluding phase would be that of *acceptance*. In the introduction of Žižek's *Living in the End Times* (2010) he briefly contextualizes this final stage as a chance for a new beginning (xii), when the subject no longer perceives the situation (i.e. the cause of grief) as a threat but sees it as an opportunity<sup>118</sup>. The analysis of the two productions in the preceding sections of this chapter has suggested a reconsideration of the human condition and subjectivity in post-bailout Greece and as such an opportunity to redefine Greekness. As far as Greek contemporary dance as an overarching category is concerned, I would argue that the crisis has also created an opportunity for contemporary dance to redraft its narrative and aesthetic orientation and that it has led to a flourishing of the genre.

In the first few years of the crisis (roughly between 2009 to 2012) Greek contemporary dance did not undergo any significant shifts in terms of the topics that it addressed, which corresponded to what in the first chapter was described as 'conceptual

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<sup>118</sup> In the section of the book titled "Acceptance" Žižek (2010) notes how in the aftermath of an economic collapse, totalitarian ideologies tend to gain ground. Even when the ideologies that surface are not fascist, there is still a latent sentiment of domination and gaining control. He also addresses and problematizes other movements and potential fallacies in regards to the connections to the ideologies they stand for, such as the New Age movement, which as he argues: actually obscures real issues with environmentalism. Thinking about these observations in the Greek context of the crisis, there is certainly an analogy that emerges between the financial struggle and the rise of the totalitarian / ethnocentric ideology of the Golden Dawn.

dance', rather than issues revolving around social and political action. As dance anthropologist Natalia Koutsougera observes (interview 03/23/2014), the artists seemed to be in shock during the early stages of the crisis, yet recently (end of 2013 and throughout 2014) they seem to have finally accepted the situation and have started to engage with it critically and reflexively. As a writer in [dancetheatre.gr](http://dancetheatre.gr), one of the most famous blogs for dance news, performance reviews, and dance articles in Greece, Koutsougera frequented contemporary dance performances and noted a narrative reorientation that has intensified in the second half of 2013. Her observations follow below interspersed with my personal remarks from my fieldwork in 2014.

There has been a turn of interest in recent histories that previous generations avoided to address. A lot of performances are concerned with *memory* and more specifically its function in regards to selectively illuminating some aspects of the recent past and invisibilizing others. As such there are performances that revolve around the Greek civil war and contemplate memories that are constitutive to Greekness. Two characteristic examples are the works of Jenny Argyriou *Αφανής Μνήμη: Γρεβενά* (Memoria Obscura: Grevena – October 2012) and *Memorandum: A mechanism for Reminder* (June 2014 at the Athens Epidaurus Festival) that combine video installations and live performance to breathe life into latent memories of the civil war, the December events (see Appendix), the military junta and other events that have significantly shaped the recent history of the Greek nation-state. *Μόνο* (Only – premiered May 2014), a structured improvisation solo piece by Konstantinos Mihos in collaboration with musician Antonis Stavrinos weaves personal and collective memories in a recollection of the civil

war and the concentration camps, by embodying the struggles of the laboring leftist class that was persecuted during that period.

Such critical reflections of historical trajectories were also at the core of the two preceding projects in the trilogy of Maria Gorgia *Το στρώμα* (Matress – 2011) *Κρυμμένη στους Ελαιώνες* (Hidden in the Olive Groves – 2012; restaged in 2014), which, as mentioned in section 2.4, span from 1830 to the present investigating what led Greece to this point. A similar question was explored in an earlier work of Mihos at the 4<sup>th</sup> Athens Bienalle in 2013 in his performance titled *Εξηγώντας τη κρίση σε μια νέα χορεύτρια* (Explaining the crisis to a young dancer), where he interweaves fictional personal narratives, economic theories and task based improvisations, in an attempt to historicize and contextualize the crisis.

As demonstrated in the chosen case studies in sections 3 and 4, the label of the crisis has often also been metaphorically used to signify a crisis in human relations. Some examples that stand out in this regard include *Don't let me down* (March 2014), a contact improvisation duet between Panagiotis Andronikidis and Demetra Sofou revolving around the question of trust. As such, the title moves beyond the metaphorical realm into the literal, as Sofou is constantly supported and lifted by Andronikidis in order to avoid 'being let down' and coming in contact with the ground. Pieces exploring the fragmentation of the self, such as Athanasia Kanellopoulou's *Έρμα* (Ballast -2014) or *In lo(e)verland* (2013), a solo that focuses on female subjectivity and loneliness, as well as Hermes Malkotsis' and Yannis Karounis' *Αταφοι Νεκροί* (Unburied Bodies – video dance 2013), which explored

the metaphorical cannibalism in human relations; all address different challenges in human interactions. As Koutsougera remarks:

Greek choreographers engage with the topic of the crisis indirectly, through narratives that are concerned with the ‘crisis’ in general, but are presented with the gendered body at their core, or the transformation of the body in various representations. There is an emphatic play with allegory, the genderless and the gendered body as well as the abstraction of movement. (my translation from interview with Koutsougera 03/23/2014)

Indeed, at the risk of overgeneralizing I would argue that there has been an evident emphasis on the performing body and its materiality in most (if not all) of the performances that I have attended during my fieldwork. The focus is not so much on rendering clear a narrative, as it is on exploring the limits of the body. Tzartzani notes a similar shift on the level of people becoming more and more involved in physical activity, such as cycling and running, as a trend that has been “launched during the crisis years” (2014, 43). I cannot help but relate this intensity of the embodied experience to the corporeality of a protesting body and the phenomenology of the embodied engagement that such an act requires.

It should not be overlooked that the emphasis on the performing bodies may very well be an aesthetic aftermath of the budgetary cuts, as are the reduced numbers of performers in many productions (many duets and solos). I would nevertheless still like to consider this emphasis on physicality for its value as social commentary, because I believe that such choreographic and aesthetic choices attest to a heightened awareness in regards to the significance of the body in this shifting environment. A body that as some of my interviewees have also remarked (see pages 133-136) is often being debased, at risk (health or physical), violated, and abused. On the bright side, however, it is also the only instrument one has to make oneself heard, make an impact, or bring about change.

Furthermore, I perceive of the attention and emphasis on the body as an opportunity to shed light on previously marginalized bodies, such as those of immigrants (and in particular illegal immigrants), asylum seekers, homeless populations and other equally vulnerable groups. Such examples include Panagiota Kallimani's *Contreplonges* (February 2014, Festival of new Greek choreographers), which is a French photographic term translating as worm's eye view (from the bottom looking up), centering on a study that she conducted with homeless populations in Athens. In this work Kallimani explores the notions of fear, violence, and fragmentation (either by interrupting movements or by playing with light and showing only certain body parts in motion). A series of interactive projects called *PassTressPass* (2009, 2011, 2013) organized by Despina Stamos and a dance troupe called *ELANADISTIKANOUME* (Come see what we do), engages immigrants from a variety of countries and backgrounds into improvisational games and provides a space for them to narrate their stories. Some of these projects have been presented as site specific performances, or at anti-racist festivals, while others have also been recorded and rendered into documentaries, or video-dance performances (see also *Bodies of Resilience* in chapter three, section 3.2). Other such initiatives involving immigrants include Ermira Goro's *A Quiet Voice* (presented at the Athens and Epidaurus Festival on July 2014), which is the other case study of chapter three comprising a large group (57) of performers, some professionally trained and some not, both immigrants and natives, revolving around questions of homeland, belonging, borders and the distinction between "us" and "the Others".

Site specific performances around neighborhoods frequented by immigrants, or ‘through the eyes of immigrants’, are similarly on the rise, and are starting to be hosted by established institutions, rather than constituting personal and marginalized initiatives. An adaptation of Dries Verhoeven’s *No Man’s Land* (2014) for the Onassis Cultural Center Fast Forward Festival (FFF) paired up one immigrant –who took on the role of being a tour guide –with one audience member and gave audiences a peripatetic tour around downtown Athens complemented by an audio recording of a story of one of the participating immigrants. In a similar vein, Konstantinos Mihos directed *Bacchae* two years earlier (2012) that also took audiences on a site specific night-walk performance in the midst of an immigrant-frequented neighborhood. (see also chapter 3, section 3.3.1)

This renewed engagement with the urban landscape and its dwellers is oftentimes contrasted with performances that reminisce a rural utopia and utilize the discourse of nature as an alternative tool in the search for happiness, such as Konstantinos Rigos’ *Arcadia* (Athens Epidaurus Festival – June 2014) or Yannis Karouni’s *Nature Exists Near* (2012). Returning to the urban landscape, class struggles and precarity also come at the forefront of narrative choices, as in the latest work of Dimitris Papaioannou *Still Life* (May-June 2014), which offers a very picturesque representation of the laboring body. Precarity and the process of dealing with the aftermath of a severe shock are investigated in Artemis Lampyri’s *Μετά* (After – 2014 Arc for Dance Festival), which through its unique movement vocabulary manages to acutely capture the numbness and alienation characteristic of a society recovering from shock.

Of course not all choreographers have partaken in what I have here characterized as a shift in narrative and aesthetic orientation, and certainly the examples above also include some artists whose performances have always had a stronger political and social agenda. What I hoped to demonstrate through this exercise however was the intensification of the process of choosing themes that are concerned with the socio-political sphere, as well as the substantial number of performances that have been produced in spite of the circumstances and financial predicament laid out at the beginning of this chapter.

The turn of interest and the critical engagement with all the topics laid out above could actually even be a result of the economic difficulties. Since the funding for contemporary dance no longer comes from governmental sources, there is a freedom of choice as far as narratives are concerned, that are no longer determined by a state mechanism. Being emancipated from the state, however, implies associations with the agendas and ideologies of other institutions and programs that now take on the role of the sponsor (in the instances that choreographers pursue this route and do not have the means for an independent production). Such sponsors include European Union driven programs for arts support, or large private institutions such as the Onassis Cultural Center (OCC). The OCC promotes intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue and part of its mission is to host performances that “negate taboos and stereotypes and inspire dialogues on issues of social concern” (my translation from interview with Katia Arfara, the Program coordinator for Dance and Theatre productions at the OCC 06/16/2014). Other such institutions include the Athens and Epidaurus Annual Festival, which includes a variety of

performing arts and provides a subsidization for parts of the production costs of the performances that it is hosting.

On the other side of this spectrum lies a completely different venue, known as the EMBROS theatre (*Θέατρο Εμπρός* – translating as “Onwards”)<sup>119</sup>, a free self-managed theatre that is organized horizontally, with a monthly rotating operations team of 10-12 people. In November of 2011 the site was occupied by a group of artists known as the *Κίνημα Μαβίλη* (the Mavili movement) and it has been operating under occupation ever since. It is a site for “alternative cultural and social action at the center of Athens and at the heart of the crisis” ([www.embros.gr](http://www.embros.gr), accessed 09/07/2014), and it organizes workshops, performances, talks, festivals and even demonstrations that always have a very clear social and political agenda and aim at promoting constructive discussions on sensitive or pending social issues. The entry to any performance is always free and most of the time the doors are open constantly so that people can come in and out whenever they like. Numerous attempts have been made by the government to shut down this initiative, including an attempt that resulted in the arrest of two actors in October of 2013, but none have been effective thus far. On the contrary, it seems that they have only served to strengthen the enthusiasm around this initiative and the support that it receives from artistic circles.

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<sup>119</sup> The building hosting the EMBROS theatre is of historical significance as it was built in 1933 and until 1985 it hosted the central offices of the EMBROS newspaper. In 1988 it was turned into a theatre by Tasos Bantis and since 1989 it has been declared a historic site. Following the death of Bantis in 2007 the theatre ceased operations and remained closed until 2011. (The short history of the EMBROS theatre was taken from the official website of the theatre [www.embros.gr](http://www.embros.gr) accessed 09/07/2014)



I would argue that EMBROS has slowly turned into a socio-political and artistic movement, as it is a space that everyone has access to for the purpose of presenting work and especially experimental work, or works in progress. It thus is a unique opportunity not offered in many other cultural sites in Athens, which usually demand a finished product. Of course one drawback to this approach is that oftentimes, the productions hosted at EMBROS appear unfinished or not polished (even when they are finished productions), because the venue does not have the resources to support them and is operating on a voluntary basis.

The enveloping of such endeavors in the aura of a leftist social activist movement, such as the one developed in EMBROS, seems to serve as a legitimizing factor attributing value to the performances that take place there. As such, controversial practices pursued by some of the rotating organizational committees are hushed up. For instance, one of my informants was narrating a story about a festival that was going to be organized at EMBROS, which aimed to further dialogue between performance and critical theory through performative improvisational responses to varying stimuli (e.g. respond to an art piece through a dance-back, or an impromptu monologue amongst other things). My informant had been invited to be one of the respondents, but was given the guideline to avoid reacting in an overly critical or negative way to any of the given stimuli. Given the nature of the event (critical theory and performance) such a request is rather oxymoronic.

I have also witnessed some moments charged with contradictions as an audience member. The first time I attended an assembly meeting that concluded the events of a weeklong anti-fascism/anti-racism festival, even though the setting was indeed extremely

democratic and each and every audience member was given time to express their opinion and reflect on the progress of the festival, the rhetoric that some people employed to express their ideas against fascism and the pertinent neo-Nazi discourses of the Golden Dawn bordered the totalitarian absolutism of the discourses in question. Rather than being a constructive discussion on the topic it seemed more like the preaching of an opposing ideology that once more inevitably led to distinctive binaries of racial discourses of “us” (the people at EMBROS / leftists) versus “them” (rightists and Fascists/Racists).

Despite these dynamics that are difficult to avoid in highly politicized artistic circles, I view EMBROS as an artistic social activist movement and thus refrain from idealizing and idolizing this initiative as it sometimes seems to be the case in Greek artistic circles. Furthermore I view EMBROS as a significant milestone in the education of Greek audiences, since it has greatly contributed to viewing performance as a political act capable of initiating social change as well as assisting in the raising of awareness on socially pertinent topics.

In parallel to EMBROS, other alternatives have also arisen as a response to the crisis. Some dance classes and performances are organized on a ‘pay what you want / pay what you can’ basis, which was not available in the past, performance tickets for theatre and dance venues have dropped from the 20EUR range (approximately 27USD) to 10EUR and below (approximately 13USD), while most theatres offer tickets at a reduced price for the unemployed (whereas in the past, reduced prices were only available for children, students and seniors over 65 years of age). All these small changes signify a multilayered shift in the value that the arts hold at times of social distress, a fact that is especially

evidenced in the decentralization of performance venues and festivals, as there has been a significant rise in regional events in the past five years.

Specifically in dance, most of the artistic activity used to be centered in Athens, with most of the professional dance schools being there (the National School of Dance being at the heart of Athens as well), the most significant festivals taking place in or around Athens (Dance Month; Athens Epidaurus Festival; Festival of Greek Choreographers; Athens Video Dance Project; Arc for Dance) and the majority of choreographers, dancers, and teachers also residing there. Of course this is not to imply that there were no regional centers of equal significance. The Annual International Kalamata Dance Festival -now running for two decades- for instance, is organized in Kalamata, in Southern Greece, whereas two of the most well-established companies reside in Thessaloniki (Northern Greece): the ΚΘΒΕ (*Κρατικό Θέατρο Βορείου Ελλάδος* – State Theatre of Northern Greece) and Χορευτές του Βορρά (Dancers of the North), to mention just a few. Recent initiatives however have decentered the activity even further from major rural cities to smaller islands and villages such as ‘Dancing Days’ (in Naxos, since 2009), ‘One small step’ (in Corfu, since 2010), ‘Dance Days Chania’ (in Crete, since 2011), ‘Dance Fest Akropoditi’ (in Syros, since 2013), and R.I.C.E.<sup>120</sup>. (in Hydra, since 2013).

While the reasons for the rise of regional initiatives cannot be pinned down with absolute certainty, I would argue that a possible explanation for this recent shift is tied to

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<sup>120</sup> According to the festival’s homepage, R.I.C.E. is “an acronym of endless meanings Raw, Relevant, Real, Radical, Instinct, Institute, Inquiry, Choreography, Civic, Commonwealth, Cybernetic, Engagement, Enquiry, Epistemology, Elbow”. (<http://www.riceonlydra.org/index.html>, accessed 07/16/2014)

the move of a lot of people from the urban centers back to their homes at the countryside<sup>121</sup>. This move has been primarily motivated by unemployment and the fact that the cost of living is significantly lower in rural Greece, as it is a lot more common for people to be relatively self-sufficient (growing their own vegetables and/or raising animals for dairy and meat).

It is also likely that some of these regional initiatives sprung out of a need to boost artistic activity during the crisis and create new opportunities for performers and choreographers to meet, network and exchange ideas. This precise statement however, reveals a latent discourse, which is that the label of the ‘crisis’ is often being treated as a token that has the potential to add value to an artistic endeavor. As such, the commodification of the ‘crisis’ and its fetishization in contemporary Greek rhetoric should not be overlooked. What I have hereby argued for as the stage of acceptance of the crisis, has oftentimes been treated not just as an opportunity for a new beginning, but also as a marketable opportunity where the use of the label “crisis” can bring about profit and wider audience appeal.

The commodification of the crisis and its use as a selling point manifest in a variety of contexts, from advertising, to TV-shows, and from visual arts exhibits to performances. During my fieldwork quite a few galleries organized exhibitions centering on works that explored the new order, or contrasted the past to the post-bailout present. At the same time, quite a few of the performances that I attended were marketed as debating a ‘crisis’ and in

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<sup>121</sup> While a large percentage of the population lives, works and resides in Athens, or other urban centers, most people have families or were brought up in rural areas before moving to the city. It is thus extremely common to either have a ‘country-house’ or relatives to visit in rural Greece.

the program notes drew analogies to the financial crisis, but then upon watching the performance it became clear that the framing of it as pertinent to the crisis was just one abstract narrative strategy, because the central issues addressed in the performance were in fact different.

A counterargument would be that these examples are not an instance of commodification or exploitation of the ‘crisis-label’, but a reasonable way of engaging with the sociopolitical sphere through art and entertainment. My argument on commodification and fetishization, however, further builds on the socially mediated rhetoric of the ‘crisis-label’ as an opportunity to regain a sense of *uniqueness* in the stage of the global financial crisis. A kind of uniqueness that has nothing left of the glory and luster of the Hellenic, but it nevertheless revolves around a similar sense of heroism that makes the Greek case distinct from others that preceded or followed it (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Argentina), because Greece is regarded as the first country of the EU to experience this.

Overall, I would argue that the crisis has certainly created an opening, as it has ‘pushed’ choreographers and artists to re-envision their practices in many different ways. For instance, the lack of financial means to support their productions has led many choreographers to rely more on symbolism in order to communicate complex socio-political issues. The overarching shift in thematic content also corresponded to a need to substantially engage with the present landscape and take a political stand in it. This thematic shift also revealed a heightening of explorations of dark aspects of human nature and dysfunctions in human relations. In regards to the body, I have observed an emphasis

of its physicality and materiality, which is directly related to both the intensification of physical activity observed during the crisis, but also possibly to the limited numbers of dancers that choreographers have the means to employ. Furthermore, as the example of EMBROS demonstrates, the practice of re-envisioning performing practices has also given rise to alternative modes of artistic exploration and has facilitated unprecedented relationships between artists and audiences. Through fostering an alternative etiquette in the seemingly solidified and distinct relationship between performers and audiences, EMBROS contributed to the popularization of participatory or improvisational performances, as well as increased the popularity of site-specific settings, such as those discussed in the coming chapter.

## 2.6 Concluding Thoughts

Having been absent from Greece during the most turbulent years (2009-2013) upon my return in late 2013 I found myself in a peculiar position. In some way all the histories that weave the landscape of this chapter are also part of my narrative as a Greek, yet my absence is an alienating factor that does not allow me to fully identify with them, or be able to account for them. The close to ten months that I conducted fieldwork back home seem like the peering through a window into a life that is no longer mine. When I left to study abroad, I ‘paused’ this part of my life, yet it was only me who pushed that button, everyone else kept going. Unlike fieldwork, or the performances described here that both have a beginning and end, the issues that this chapter has tackled are ongoing. They will not cease when this dissertation ends, instead they will keep molding into new shapes and remain in

a constant state of flux. Therefore I perceive of this chapter as an opportunity to capture some of these moments in time and construct an image of this constantly evolving and fragmented landscape right before it transitions.

Having reconstructed the initial stages of the crisis and the progression of people's responses to it, and engagement with it as the years went by, this chapter has captured a shift in the national body politic in this new order. In contrast to the themes, narratives and aesthetics discussed as central to Greek performance in the first chapter, there is now an evident turn of interest towards more politically oriented performances that directly engage with issues pertinent to Greekness, rather than Hellenism.

Hellenism is still a point of engagement and the aesthetics of classicism have not completely evaporated from contemporary performances, but there is a shift in regards to the ways that Hellenism is visited, which in recent productions becomes a critical tool, rather than a glorifying point. The overall atmosphere of critical reflection and reconsideration brought about by the social conditions of the crisis also allows for a critical view of neo-liberal policies and their impact on the contemporary Greek psyche.

Beyond allowing for a reconsideration of Greekness, contemporary dance in post-bailout Greece serves as a window that allows one to peer through and view the revised structure of society. Its glass often has a reflective purpose, as contemporary dance in the recent years more often than not mirrored all the definitive aspects of the changing socio-political sphere. In the case studies discussed here it engaged with the sentiments of isolation, alienation, fear, anger and denial; the reluctance to cope with the new situation, and finally the acceptance of it and the seizing of an opportunity for a new beginning. Its

trajectory of development not only engaged with all these affective economies that inform the present, but it also moved beyond that, as choreographers put these affects to use and turned attention towards contemporary dance as a form of advocacy and activism in the era of precarity.



## Chapter Three

# Migrant Narratives: Negotiating Greek Racial Construction and Redefining Citizenship

*“In short, the Other is welcomed insofar as its presence is not intrusive, insofar as it is not really the Other.”*  
(Žižek, *Violence: Six sideways reflections*)

04/18/2013  
To Vima Newspaper<sup>122</sup>  
by: Dimitris Galanis

### **Strawberries, blood and profits in Manolada**

*The dreary aspects of the drama experienced by thousands of immigrants in our country.*

It was approximately 6pm when 200 immigrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan, most of whom resided legally in our country, asked their supervisors to be paid the wages for six months' work that the company owed them.

Following intense arguing the supervisors took off and returned to the place, where the immigrants had been gathered, shortly thereafter holding shotguns.

According to reports, at least two of the supervisors shot blindly against the immigrants, injuring

07/31/2014  
The Guardian<sup>123</sup>  
by: Helena Smith

### **Greek court acquits farmers who shot 28 Bangladeshi strawberry pickers**

*'Scandalous' verdict condemned by politicians and anti-racist groups after case that revealed migrant workers' plight.*

A Greek court's decision to acquit farmers who admitted shooting 28 Bangladeshi strawberry pickers when they asked for months of back pay has sparked outrage in the country.

Politicians, unions and anti-racist groups condemned the verdicts, describing them as a black day for justice in a case that had shone a light on the appalling conditions in which migrant workers are often kept in Greece.

Scores of migrants, many sobbing in disbelief, protested outside the court after magistrates cleared two of the attackers, including the farm owner.

At a time of unrivaled crisis in Greece, where living standards have deteriorated

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<sup>122</sup> (my translation from Galanis 2013) It should be noted that all texts presented here are not complete articles but selected excerpts from newspaper articles in order to provide a summary of the events that each full article is addressing.

<sup>123</sup> (Smith 2014) Excerpts of the article as they appear in English.

eight of them severely and slightly wounding another 20.

08/04/2012

To Vima Newspaper<sup>124</sup>

by: Dionysis Vithoukas

### Operation "Xenios Zeus"<sup>125</sup> has begun

*"Sweeping" operation against the illegal immigrants in Evros and in downtown Athens.*

The "sweeping" operation, under the name "Xenios Zeus" has been initiated by the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection since Thursday.

The plan to depose illegal immigrants from the borderlines and the town center has been in motion since the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, in Evros<sup>126</sup> and since Friday night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August in downtown Athens.

In parallel, according to reports, the timeframe given to immigrants, entering Greece illegally, to collect all the necessary paperwork to legalize their stay in our country has been significantly

dramatically after six years of recession, the case had triggered widespread indignation. Media investigations showed the migrants to be working in subhuman conditions without access to proper hygiene or basic sanitation.

02/06/2013

Kathimerini Newspaper online<sup>127</sup>

Author Unknown

### The results of operation "Xenios Zeus" of the past 6 months have been announced

#### In Attiki:

77.526 foreigners were detained

4.435 foreigners were arrested due to not fulfilling the legal requirements to remain in the country.

#### In Evros:

The influx of illegal immigrants has significantly declined, by a percentage exceeding 95%. In fact in the timeframe between August 2012 and January 2013 1.710 foreigners were arrested, as opposed to 35.258 during the same time frame (August 2011 – January 2012) the previous year.

08/14/2013

Naftemporiki.gr<sup>128</sup>

Author Unknown

### The foreigner detention centers have been transformed into atypical prisons

<sup>124</sup> (my translation from Vithoukas 2012)

<sup>125</sup> The name of the operation is inspired by Greek mythology where Xenios Zeus (Ξένιος Ζεὺς / Δίας) is one of the epithets often attributed locally to Zeus (the father of all Gods). Xenios Zeus (also known as Philoxenos or Hospites) was the patron of hospitality and protector of foreigners. Etymologically 'xénos' (ξένος) means foreigner and *Philóxenos* is the 'friend' (philos – φίλος) of foreigners. For more information see (Burkert 1991, 125-131).

<sup>126</sup> Evros is the North-Eastern land border of Greece. It is one of the most commonly used entry-points to Greece for illegal immigrants.

<sup>127</sup> (Unknown 2013)

<sup>128</sup> (Unknown, Οι χώροι κράτησης αλλοδαπών έχουν μεταβληθεί σε ιδιότυπες φυλακές (The foreigner detention centers have been transformed into atypical prisons) 2013)

shortened. From 30 days, they will now have only 7 days.

Even though the code name "Xenios Zeus" connotes hospitality, the operation aims to dissuade the entry of immigrants from Syria and from other countries and to once more "cleanse" the capital.

According to the media representative of ΕΛΑΣ (the Greek Police Force) Mr. Christos Manouras, the operation is being carried out by 2.500 police officers in Evros and 2.000 in Athens. According to his report, there are three main objectives:

1. The repulsion of illegal immigrants from Evros and the closing of the borders.
2. The return of illegal immigrants to their country of origin.
3. The reconstitution of Athens as a metropolis of legality characterized by good quality of life both for its dwellers as well as for its visitors.

The need to reduce the administrative detention of aliens "to the strictly necessary time pending deportation" was highlighted by the Ombudsman, in his speech on the recent incidents in Amygdaleza<sup>129</sup>.

The Independent Authority notes that "the severe restriction of personal freedom of aliens with an uncertain expiration time has by now been established as the norm" and continues that following the inspection of three mass detention centers of aliens the findings were sent to the Greek Police Headquarters, requesting an improvement of the conditions of detention and the streamlining of the mixed migration flows and asylum management.

All of the above newspaper excerpts provide glimpses into varying commonly encountered narratives in the media concerning the conditions faced by immigrants that openly circulate in the public sphere. Attention should be paid to the language employed in these texts and the 'othering' vocabulary that is used to address the migrant population, which contrasts 'immigrants', 'foreigners', and 'aliens' to 'us' Greeks and talks about them

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<sup>129</sup> Amygdaleza is the name of a province, where a detention center for immigrants has been established. The "incidents" mentioned in the article refer to a massive uprising where approximately 1,000 detainees went on a hunger strike protest demanding their release.

being in ‘our’ country<sup>130</sup>. All chosen excerpts report moments of violence, inequality, or injustice and paint an image of the life conditions that many immigrants and refugees presently experience in Greece. The binary structure between a hegemonic local *we/us* and the cultural otherness of *them* is reproduced in the coming sections not in order to reassert this problematic divide, but in order to engage with the practices and mechanisms that produce it. This process thus provides a direct path to tackling questions such as ‘who is a Greek?’, or ‘who belongs to Greece?’ that are central to the investigation of migrant subjectivities and the liminality of immigrant experience.

In this chapter, public narratives, such as those circulating in the media intersect with the personal narratives of the migrants. The latter derive from the performances that will be discussed, as well as the interviews I have conducted with the choreographers, who are also migrants themselves. The embodied narrations intersect with oral histories (in the form of voice-overs in one of the performances that will be analyzed) shared by some of the participants. All these layers are brought in conversation with the newly established genre in Greece of immigrant literature<sup>131</sup>. Together these elements comprise and inform a

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<sup>130</sup> The Greek newspapers mentioned here (*To Vima* and *Kathimerini*) are ranking amongst the top five in national circulation. *To Vima* (Το Βήμα) has a center-left orientation, whereas *Kathimerini* (Καθημερινή) is affiliated with the center-right. *Naftemporiki* (Ναυτεμπορική), one of the other sources mentioned, is a financial newspaper, whereas *The Guardian* is a national British Newspaper.

<sup>131</sup> According to literary scholar Georgia Gotsi (2012), immigrant literature is an emergent genre in contemporary Greek fiction. Interestingly, it is primarily written by Greeks rather than immigrants, who “pose questions of identity, belonging, and democracy from the perspective of migrant characters, who articulate in their first-person narratives the experience of discrimination and victimization suffered in the host society” (Gotsi 2012, 155). Gotsi observes that these narratives are most often than not written from a female perspective which attests to a narrative trend of feminization of migration in Southern Europe (Gotsi 2012, 158). While there are very few direct references to immigrant literature in this chapter, I have relied on the kinds of narratives reproduced in it to delineate my discussion of issues commonly encountered by economic immigrants in their host country.

methodological approach characteristic of Precarious Theatre, which Katharina Pewny (2011) has identified as *Selbst-Erzählung* (self-narration). *Selbst-Erzählung* or “das Selbst als Rolle” (the self as a role) compose a dominant trend in immigrant performances and are employed in this chapter in order to structure an analytical framework through which to approach the racial construction of Greekness.

In this process, the nuances between European understandings of race (informed by a recently observed rise of nationalisms and fascism across Europe<sup>132</sup>) and their North-American counterparts are fleshed out in an attempt to justify a recent transition from a previously ethnic-driven understanding of race to one that increasingly revolves around skin color. Investigating these tensions, the two performances that lie at the core of this chapter address issues of belonging, the construction of Otherness based on religious or cultural differences, the notion of “home”, displacement, migration, borders, resiliency and lastly but most importantly, the acquisition of agency.

All these narratives and their inherent tensions are brought to light through careful analysis of two case studies. The first case study is a live performance that I witnessed as part of the Athens and Epidaurus Festival in July of 2014. *Quiet Voice* choreographed by

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<sup>132</sup> In his 2002 book (*Politics and the Other Scene*), Étienne Balibar remarks the following in regard to the notable rise of nationalist sentiment in Europe since the early 2000s: “[T]he racism we are seeing intensify and spread throughout the European continent has deep roots in our history. [...] [R]acism and fascism in Europe today are the conjunctural effects of the insoluble contradictions into which, despite their apparent triumph, the neoliberal economy and in, particular, the so-called representative political system (which in reality ‘represents’ fewer and fewer of the electors) have sunk.” (Balibar 2002, 40-41) Balibar’s observation in this book that was written a little more than a decade ago, mainly concerns countries such as Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Hungary and Poland. I would however confidently argue, that following the rise of Golden Dawn, and the racist outburst against immigrants that has been taking place in Greece in the past few years, it is justifiable to include Greece in this list as well.

Ermira Goro, a DV8<sup>133</sup> dancer and artistic assistant to Lloyd Newson, was created in collaboration with the fifty-seven performers partaking in the production. The piece offered a platform for cultural exchange between immigrants and natives through dance.

The second case study is a screen-dance piece that premiered in the 2014 Athens Video Dance Project<sup>134</sup> titled *Bodies of Resilience*, a film by Jill Woodward, choreographed and instigated by Despina Stamos. The piece interweaves voice over narratives of political refugees in Greece with site specific performance excerpts of them interacting with Athenian urban landscapes. It thus investigates the relationships that occur between migrants and their new spaces of dwelling and parallels the harshness of their migratory experience to the act of physically performing on raucous terrain, such as rocks and dirtroads. Both pieces explore the delicate balances between the self (us) and others (them) and draw extensive attention to the body, its materiality, physicality and its limits.

Moving away from the close choreographic analysis practiced in the second chapter, the two performances here are broken into sections, which are examined side by side to offer a dialectic opportunity for their inherent discourses to surface. The focus thus becomes the issues that the performances bring forth in regards to the racial and the national construction of Greekness. Some of the topics explored include: social inclusion/exclusion, visibility/invisibility, violence, resilience, cultural heritage, universalism and difference, marginality, and lastly memory. While I have had regular access to the video dance performance and was able to watch it repeatedly, I did not have access to a video of the

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<sup>133</sup> DV8 Physical Theatre is a British dance company directed by Lloyd Newson.

<sup>134</sup> The Athens Video Dance Project Festival took place from the 19<sup>th</sup> of February until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2014 at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

live performance and thus chose to rely on my memory of it and my fieldnotes as I watched it unfold on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2014. In doing so I am purposely emphasizing the contrast between the ephemerality of a live performance and the relative permanence of a screen dance to draw an analogy between the fleeting nature of dance and the similarly transient nature of immigrant experience<sup>135</sup>.

The trajectories of illegal immigrants, economic immigrants, asylum seekers, or political refugees are usually tainted by a sense of displacement and, as most of the narratives that will be examined attest, they are also often motivated by a need to acquire a sense of belonging in the new host country. In this process *memory* constitutes the primary means to approximate a sense of belonging and contrasts with the ephemeral nature of the day to day experience of the aforementioned kinds of immigration. As history of migration scholar Emilia Salvanou points out, recent migrants –most of whom are undocumented and thus live under the constant fear of deportation- are in a liminal position “marginalized both by the natives and by their longer settled co-ethnics” (Salvanou 2014, 349). In this liminal state of existence, *memory* (in its widest sense involving cultural memory, a common language, or a religious belief) becomes one of the few stable identifiers that can be shared between the communities of co-ethnics to organize a social network and to slowly transition to a state of accessing political agency in the host country.

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<sup>135</sup> I acknowledge that there are two opposing schools of thought in American dance scholarship: one treating dance as a piece of writing created by the dancing bodies (indicatively see Foster 1988) thus focusing on the traces left by and on the performing body, and another emphasizing the ephemerality of performance (see Phelan 1993). The sections that follow have been informed by both of these discourses, but ephemerality appears to be highlighted because of its close correlation to the precarious and fluctuating state of existence that is characteristic of the subjects in question in this chapter.

My recollection of the live performance –with the inherent risk of possible omissions –thus stands as a metaphor for the impermanence and the transient nature of immigrant experience. It also serves as a reference for people’s reliance on memory as a tool for constructing their positionality in the host country. The video-dance performance, on the other hand, represents the ‘permanence’ of dominant narratives, which, although still to an extent subjective, are more likely to withstand the passing of time, because they have been ‘fixed’ by the film medium, or in the case of newspaper articles, the print medium.

Lastly, attention should be paid to the notion of *voice*. As noted in the Introduction, Marcus (1998) reflects on the role of voice in ethnography as a tool that structures power relationships between the researcher and the subjects. My primary goal is to subvert this stereotypical power balance and use *voice* in order to create a space for the agency of migrants, a practice that is also shared by the choreographers of the works discussed. As they (interviews with Andronikidis, Goro, Stamos, and Woodward 2014) have noted, immigrants tend to become soft spoken upon arrival in the host country. They suppress their voice in order to comply with the process of acculturation, and ultimately become silenced. Thus, following the choreographers’ lead, my transcription of the voice overs and the close description of the performers’ embodied narratives aims to facilitate the unraveling of their stories with immediacy.



### 3.1 Constructions of Race and the Role of Culture

Historically, discourses of racial discrimination were initiated on the basis of biological differences and then transitioned to social or cultural inequalities<sup>136</sup>. The multiplicities and complexities of the discourse of racial discrimination range far too wide to capture in a few pages, so I will only focus on a few selective and highly specific aspects of critical race theories that are pertinent to the racial construction of Greekness and Hellenism. To very briefly sum up the historical trajectory of the concept of *race*, I turn to David Theo Goldberg's *Racist Culture* (1996), where he argues that the concept first entered European social consciousness in the fifteenth century (21). Since then it has taken on a variety of shapes and has relied on a multitude of approaches<sup>137</sup>. The widely established understanding of race as a marker of individual identity is, as Goldberg observes, a trait of modernity since it emerged with a "specific set of socioeconomic, political, legal and cultural relations that have no correlate in premodernity" (Goldberg 1996, 77). Accordingly its connotations and associations have continued to expand in post-modernity through to the present era and have taken on various shapes across different parts of the Western world.

It could be argued that in the case of racial construction in Europe biological differences –which were the primary discriminatory agent –soon gave way to *culture*, which lies at the center of identity construction and can (just like biology) lock individuals

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<sup>136</sup> For a more detailed and comprehensive historical trajectory of racial discourse see (Goldberg 1996).

<sup>137</sup> Some example of what is hereby meant by 'approaches' regard *environmentalism* (explaining similarities in terms of shared physical environment), understanding race as social status; as a synonym of 'ethnicity', or as 'heritage' and thus as the basis of nation building.

and collectivities into a priori genealogies and narratives of origin. As Balibar observes, “*culture can also function like nature*” (italics in original; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 22). Culture in this case signifies both *Bildung*<sup>138</sup> and *Zivilisation*<sup>139</sup> and mostly draws on Western influenced ‘norms’ and criteria.

Following the theorization of European integration from chapter two (section 2.4.4. *Balancing on the seesaw*) the European conception of *Zivilisation* was heavily influenced by Hellenic ideals, as were European conceptions of whiteness. However, as race theorists Richard Dyer and David T. Goldberg remark, the link between Hellenism and whiteness has been constructed. In more detail Dyer notes,

[t]he Aryan/Caucasian myth established a link between European and a venerable culture known to pre-date Europe’s oldest civilization, ancient Greece. It is Martin Bernal’s thesis<sup>140</sup> that the myth’s function was to provide a white (that is, European-like) origin for ancient Greek society. Before the early nineteenth century, it was widely accepted that Greece had been conquered by the Egyptians and Phoenicians, from whom the characteristics of ancient Greek culture derived. However, argues Bernal, in an age of imperialism, such an idea was intolerable. Greece was seen as the cradle of Europe, but something had given birth to Greece, and that had to be compatible with the European sense of self and could not therefore be located in Africa. (Dyer 1997, 21)

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<sup>138</sup> A German term, *Bildung* translates loosely as ‘education’, but in regard to culture it is connoted with the ‘cultivation’ of one’s intellect and signifies the process of social (and cultural) integration.

<sup>139</sup> Also a German term, *Zivilisation* translates as ‘civilization’ and encompasses the social and cultural rules by which the collectivity defined under the term abides.

<sup>140</sup> Martin Bernal’s work being referenced here is *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1991), which had caused a great critical uproar at the time of its publication. In a similar vein and also utilizing Bernal’s analysis Greg Thomas notes: “Bernal’s ‘Ancient Model’ refers to the widespread recognition in Western historiography before the end of the eighteenth century that ‘Ancient Egypt’ was the predominant force in ‘Greek civilization’. His ‘Aryan model’ refers to the subsequent disavowal of this ‘African Origin of Civilization’, to quote Mercer Cook’s trans-Atlantic translation of Cheikh Anta Diop (1974), by the prevailing myth of an Indo-European or white progenitor of what’s now called ‘The Greek Miracle’” (Thomas 2003, 242).

A similar sentiment is echoed by David T. Goldberg, who develops the notion of *cultural race* and suggests that the “ancient superiority of Aryan sagacity was to be inherited linguistically rather than biologically, via the classical grammar of the Greeks and the Romans” (Goldberg 1996, 71). As such, the bearers of civilization were to be relayed via linguistic acquisition. Following this trail of thought it starts to become clear that racial lineage in Greece in particular, and more generally in Europe, is understood as cultural continuity. Cultural continuity thus becomes a political issue of major importance, especially since Europe claims its place as the generator of Western culture and positions Hellas as the cradle of it all. Discussing the idea of Hellas as the cultural exemplar of Europe, Herzfeld posits that “to be European was in ideological terms, to be Hellene. [...] ‘Europe’ like ‘Hellas’ was a symbol of cultural superiority which could and did survive innumerable changes in the moral and political order” (Herzfeld 1982, 5).

The notion of cultural superiority has its roots, according to Goldberg, in ancient Greece and in the distinction that ancient Greeks had established between Hellenism and barbarism.

There is considerable evidence of ethnocentric and xenophobic discrimination in Greek texts, of claims to *cultural* superiority, yet little evidence that these claimed inequalities were generally considered to be biologically determined. [...] The primary objects of Greek discrimination and exclusion were slaves and barbarians, indeed relatedly so. *As a general category of discriminatory sociological exclusion, barbarianism was the invention of fifth-century Hellenism.* A barbarian was one of emphatically different, even strange, language, conduct, and culture and lacking the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. The principle distinction was political. (emphasis added Goldberg 1996, 21)

Having followed this line of reasoning, it is particularly fascinating how the ties between Hellenism, whiteness, and cultural superiority have been naturalized and have

seeped through the centuries to still inform binary conceptions of culture as ‘high’ as opposed to ‘popular’, and categorizations of the world as First or Third. Beyond these relatively outdated –yet still frequently used –structural categorizations, such as the aforementioned conceptions of culture create frictions even within the ‘European space’ itself. The 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the European Union<sup>141</sup> as well as the menacing financial crisis of the Eurozone<sup>142</sup> are indicative of the inequalities and the cultural disparities that are encompassed in the EU space.

Seeing the significance of culture (both as *Bildung* and *Zivilization*) in the European context and following its manifested roots in Hellenism, it becomes clear why establishing and preserving a cultural lineage to Hellenism has been of such political importance for Greece. As Herzfeld notes, “cultural continuity *is* a political issue and in Greece it was never anything else” (Herzfeld 1982). In this context, culture becomes synonymous to race and oftentimes the modern construct of heteronormative values<sup>143</sup> as it results in similar

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<sup>141</sup> Up to 2004 the EU consisted of 15 members (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom). The largest enlargement happened in May of 2004, when the EU acquired 10 new members (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) followed by the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and lastly Croatia in 2013. The EU currently (March 2015) consists of 28 sovereign member states.

<sup>142</sup> The Eurozone is a European Monetary Union (EMU) and encompasses all countries that share a common currency (Euro). It currently (as of March 2015) comprises 19 members: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

<sup>143</sup> In an article concerned with the Greek rhetoric of identity Sulochana Asirvatham draws a connection between barbarism and non-heteronormativity. Observing the fluidity of the terms Hellene and barbarian in antiquity she notes: “Also, as with *Hellen*, not only was it often unclear who counted as a barbarian, but unclear also on what ground someone was deemed to be a barbarian.” (Asirvatham 2008, 11) She moves on to explain how the Persians, who were considered effeminate were perceived as barbarians, as were the Thracians who were violent and polygamists. She also mentions the Egyptians who were perceived as barbarians due to “their bizarre social customs (such as reversing the roles of males and females)” (Asirvatham 2008, 11). Drawing on these examples, connotations between barbarism and non-heteronormative standards begins to emerge.

exclusions and discriminatory practices. The particularity of the situation however resides in the fact that Hellenism, in its wide appropriation and utilization of cultural norms and philosophical or political ideals, has been at the core of the construction of Western universalism, which attributes even greater rhetorical power to claims of such heritage.

I find that the most characteristic example illustrating the projection of cultural heritage as a means to assert racial claims to whiteness has been the early twentieth century economic emigration of Greeks to the US. Even though this occurrence took place outside of Greece I think that it provides valuable insight into the processes of constructing ethnic-whiteness and will thus take a short deviation to briefly look into this instance. As Yiorgos Anagnostou discusses in his 2009 book *Contours of White Ethnicity*, Greek immigrants to the US during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were not inherently viewed as white, but had to undergo a process of linking their past to the Hellenic cultural heritage (with the assistance of an organization called AHEPA<sup>144</sup>) to establish themselves as white-ethnics. As such, in order to have any claim to whiteness they had to institutionally inscribe themselves into American whiteness; a project undertaken by the AHEPA. As Anagnostou argues in a journal article focusing primarily on the function of AHEPA in this regard:

The “American Hellenic” identity [...] stood for choice, progress, and political allegiance to America. It served as an alternative to hyphenated identities (i.e. “Greek-American”), which were stigmatized as un-American at the time, while retaining a claim to the cultural capital of Hellenism. Furthermore, in a host society positing the ideals of Classical Greece as its cultural and political foundation, AHEPA positioned itself to capitalize on the reigning discourse of biological determinism: as racial descendants and therefore cultural inheritors of classical Greece, Greek immigrants were not only endowed with the potential to embrace “Americanness;” they had access to “ur-Americanness”. (Anagnostou 2004, 38)

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<sup>144</sup> AHEPA is an acronym standing for American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association.

Constructing and fabricating cultural descendancy seems to be a practice all too common, in both Europe and the United States especially in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As it has been discussed in previous chapters, it has been a common practice even within the borders of the Greek nation-state<sup>145</sup>. Most of the time such practices focused on the cultural purging of ‘foreign’ (i.e. Ottoman) influences, as is the case of *katharévousa* (see Appendix) or the resurgence of folk practices as an embodied and practiced link to the past.

Continuing to view racial exclusions from the perspective of their cultural dimension and slowly transitioning to the topic of economic immigration and the rising xenophobia in Europe, I once more turn to Balibar, who very vividly captures the ‘cultural’ reasons behind the rejection of foreigners. In his argument, the rejection of *foreignness* is “the passionate, hysterical denial of its cultural and historical function (in the sense of both *Bildung* and *Zivilization*)” (Balibar 2002, 45). Serving as a motivating force, the affective economy of fear against a foreign ‘Other’, fuels ethnocentric rhetorics of cultural superiority and the need for cultural preservation and provides a possible explanation for the intensive rise of (extreme) nationalisms throughout Europe.

### 3.1.1 From the Rise of Nationalisms in Europe to the Greek Scene

The rise of European nationalisms<sup>146</sup> has been an observed phenomenon since the early 2000s. It has been during the past few years however, that the xenophobia associated with extreme nationalistic outbursts has intensified, along with racist violence and

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<sup>145</sup> James Faubion refers to this practice as “Historical Constructivism” (Faubion 1993), see also pg. 10-11.

<sup>146</sup> Examples attesting to this point include the Hijab (Islamic headscarf) controversy in France, or the discrimination faced by the ethnic minority of Turks in Germany.

collective manifestations of racism. The targets of this violence have generally been the populations of ‘immigrant workers’, economic migrants, and refugees. As Balibar pointedly observes, “in particular those [immigrants] in from Southern Europe and Africa, but also a part of the foreign population –if not, indeed, of the national population –which shares the same social characteristics (essentially the status of *displaced, de-territorialized* persons)” (emphasis in original Balibar 2002, 42).

The extremities and violence against immigrants have further intensified during the financial crisis, because the rising rates of unemployment provided an occasion for populist forces (of both rightist and leftist orientation) to become aggressive and gain votes in the elections<sup>147</sup>. While the economic insecurity has certainly contributed to European xenophobia and the rise of nationalism, this phenomenon actually has its roots in the early 1990s, when the first massive influx of immigrants took place from Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. It should furthermore not be overlooked that this is not only a phenomenon observed in Western European countries, but it has also been noted in former European communist countries. Adding to the external influxes of people has been the ‘internal migration’ (between members of the EU) which presented a new multi-ethnic reality that challenged the newly founded infrastructure of the ‘borderless’ EU and exposed its structural inconsistencies. Such inconsistencies hail from the lack of realization of European integration that has inevitably led to the surfacing of differences between cultures

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<sup>147</sup> For more information on the resonances between the crisis and nationalism, xenophobia and populism, also see the following articles in Reuters (Barker and Adler 2013) and the Guardian (Roubini 2014): <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/30/us-eu-parliament-elections-idUSBRE99T0YZ20131030> (accessed 08/08/2014) and <http://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2014/jun/02/economic-insecurity-nationalism-on-the-rise-globalisation-nouriel-roubini> (accessed 08/08/2014)

and their symbolic structures and has thus rendered visible inequalities *within* the European space.

The rise of nationalism in Greece similarly reflects the aforementioned tendencies as it also has its roots in the early 1990s. The borders between Greece and Albania opened in 1992, after the fall of the communist regime in Albania, which led to the influx of large numbers of immigrants and economic refugees to Greece. As has been the case for other EU states, people from many Eastern European countries (such as Bulgaria, FYROM – Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia) entered Greece at that point as well. The decade of the 1990s had been one of prosperity for Greece and, as such, there were plenty of employment opportunities for the incoming populations at the time, as chapter one has more explicitly discussed.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric surfaced in the early years of acculturation of the incoming population and in its early stages it was ethnically driven. It became integrated in political rhetoric in September of 2000, when a former Nea Demokratia party member, George Karantzaferis founded a populist right wing party by the name of LAOS (ΛΑ.Ο.Σ. – Λαϊκός Ορθόδοξος Συναγερμός - Popular Orthodox Rally). Advocating for national sovereignty and patriotism, the popular addresses of the party leader openly blamed immigrants for a rise in delinquency rates and suggested measures for the prevention of further population influxes. LAOS rose in popularity in the coming years and in 2007 it entered the Parliament with 3.8% of the votes (10 seats in the Parliament out of 300), which rose to 5.6% in the elections of 2009 (corresponding to 15 seats in the Parliament out of 300).



The most significant rise in xenophobic rhetoric however has been the 2012 entry of the extremist right wing party Golden Dawn (Χρυσή Αυγή – Chrysi Avgi) that was met with a startling rise leading to its entry in the Parliament with a 6.9% (18 seats)<sup>148</sup>. The immense popularity of the Golden Dawn during the years of the crisis was partially motivated by the ‘good deeds’ of some of its party members, who ‘offered protection’ to vulnerable groups of Greek citizens, such as the elderly, or the unemployed, living in poorer neighborhoods that were also frequented by immigrants. The ‘protection’ offered included walking them to ATMs to ensure their safety, providing them with food and ‘cleaning out neighborhoods’ by illegally prosecuting and exercising violence on immigrants. All of this was enacted for the price of a vote in the coming elections. The atrocities and the overt use of violence were of course no secret and the lack of action by law enforcement has fuelled rumors about the cooperation of the police forces with Golden Dawn members. Following the latest developments such rumors have mostly been put to rest, since several Golden Dawn members, including the party leader, are currently imprisoned and awaiting trial for several charges ranging from the constitution of a criminal organization, to illegal weapon possession and murder.

The introduction and popularization of Golden Dawn rhetoric<sup>149</sup> in the political discourses of race and nationalism has, I believe, contributed to a transition from a formerly

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<sup>148</sup> The parliamentary elections of 2012 were conducted in 2 rounds due to the inconclusive results (no clear majority) during the first round. In the first round Golden Dawn gained 7% of the votes (corresponding to 440,966 votes and 21 seats in the Parliament).

<sup>149</sup> In more detail, the mission statement at the party’s main website lists the following: “GOLDEN DAWN is a Popular and Nationalist Movement, with structures, principles and positions. Its active action in the political life of the country starts from the mid-90s, participating in the European Elections (1994, 2009) and in the National Elections (1996, 2009). [...]The Popular Nationalist Movement of GOLDEN DAWN is at

ethnic-centered understanding of racism in Greece to one that increasingly revolves around skin color. As a result of this transition, violence on the grounds of someone's skin color has seen a rise. I locate this shift of attention towards visibility at the core of perceptions of national unity. According to extremist reasoning, the entry of racial others threatens to 'contaminate' the racial profile and purity of the country, and difference is thus persecuted on the basis of appearance. In turn the ethnocentric rhetoric of the Golden Dawn emphasizes national unity and purity and organizes populations against what is perceived to be an external threat, which comprises the racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse population in Athens.

Such beliefs and public statements fuel discrimination on the grounds of ethnic background and, as sociologist and political theorist Athena Athanasiou observes, give rise to a demographic anxiety. According to Athanasiou (2006) discourses of 'population decline' (such as those forwarded by Golden Dawn and formerly by LAOS) are organized around fantasies of endangered national sovereignty and have come to haunt individual and collective imaginaries in the public life of Greece since the 1990s. The 'demographic anxiety' as Athanasiou characterizes it, spans beyond the level of national sovereignty and identity and seeps through to the social sphere as it also impacts gender politics and brings to the surface discourses of heteronormativity. According to Athanasiou:

demographic anxiety over the imperiled national future works to stabilize discourses of national and (hetero-)sexual normalcy as timeless structures of cultural intelligibility at a variety of levels of social life, such as those of embodied

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the forefront of the battle against the Memorandum and the sinful system of the parties of the political establishment. Against the population distortion, because of the millions of illegal immigrants, and the dissolution of the Greek society that is promoted by the coalition parties and the so called Left. It proposes a National policy for exiting the crisis imposed on our country. It fights for a Greece that belongs to the Greeks." (Unknown, Popular Association GOLDEN DAWN: Information 2014)

self, kinship affiliation, and national belonging. The exposition of the nation as vulnerable to “loss” becomes a scene for establishing the nation as an object of desire and social actors as subjects of and subjects to, a hypostatized and idealized nation state. (Athanasίου 2006, 231)

Heteronormativity has always been at the core of modern Greek identity<sup>150</sup>, and to the extent that it concerns gender performance and sexual orientation it has also often determined the acceptance or marginalization of staged dance (in this instance ballet, and contemporary). Greater pressure was applied to men who engage with dance, rather than women. Even though this observation is only based on anecdotal evidence, I have the sense that the involvement in ballet of Eastern European men within Greece has always been accepted and embraced as positive, because it served to affirm two stereotypes. First, the fact that Eastern Europeans were always admired for their discipline in the art and their advanced technique, and secondly, the fact that allowing ‘foreigners’ to hold soloist positions at the Greek Opera (National Ballet company) did not pose any threats to Greek masculinity<sup>151</sup>. As such it could be argued that xenophobia manifests selectively and completely flips to its counterpart, that of xenomania<sup>152</sup> in the instances when it serves to ‘protect’ Greekness and its fundamental pillars.

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<sup>150</sup> The reason for this is to a great extent related to the prevalent role of the Greek Orthodox Church that opposes homosexuality.

<sup>151</sup> The context in which masculinity is referenced draws on the work of James Faubion, who remarks: “If the Athenian women are still expected to remain ‘women’, some of them at least have greater liberty than ever to ‘be themselves’. Athenian men do not as yet have quite the same measure of liberty. They are still expected to act like *ándres*, ‘real men’, who for all their urbanity have much in common with their rural prototypes. Women may or may not any longer manage the home, but *andres* should still provide for it. Barring monastic retreat, they should still marry, still become fathers; stern but intimate with their sons; doting with their daughters. (Faubion 1993, 218-219). Even though Faubion’s observations were made twenty years ago, these stereotypical gender roles are still in place and to this day greater pressure is applied to the gender performance of masculinity rather than femininity.

<sup>152</sup> Xenomania is the opposite of xenophobia and translates as admiration of the foreigners and their practices. Faubion perceives it as a ‘mania’ for “foreign goods, and foreign services, and especially foreign styles”

Thus the involvement of ethnic-others in staged dance practices has generally been met with indifference, if not welcomed, because they filled in the ‘gap’ of male participation in dance<sup>153</sup>. While ballet and contemporary, as it has briefly been established, have generally been more inclusive of ethnic-others, most of the times the inclusion of ‘otherness’ has remained within the confines of whiteness (Eastern European rather than non-Western). In recent years, however, since the population moves caused by global events have increasingly led to the migration of people from Africa, Asia and the Middle East, the ties between Greekness and whiteness have started to become blurred. Especially during the past five years, initiatives involving immigrant performances have further illuminated such issues.

Contemporary dance practices have moved beyond the trope of whiteness in attempts that truly embrace multiculturalism and diversity and thus more accurately reflect and portray the richly diverse urban landscape of today. Some, such as the work of Panagiotis Andronikidis or Konstantinos Mihos, even go so far as to challenge deeply rooted histories and institutionalized folkloric conceptions of nationalism by having, for instance, African men perform *zeibékiko*, the epitomic solo dance of Greek masculinity (for more see also section 3.3.2). When performed in such a context, the symbolic structure of *zeibékiko* becomes redefined and recodified as it turns into a vehicle for the expression

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(Faubion 1993, 15) Another term for this fascination with the foreign would be xenolatreia (*latreia* meaning worship).

<sup>153</sup> As it has been established in the first chapter, staged dance has to a large extent been understood as a primarily female pursuit. In the field, many people (teachers/dancers) refer to the lack of male participation as a ‘gap’.

of ideals of freedom<sup>154</sup>, thus also allowing for alternative definitions of masculinity that encompass the present reality rather than a fixity on past values and ideals.

The two performances that comprise the coming section delve even further into these issues of how the dislocated immigrant bodies racialize and redefine Greekness. What new elements are the instabilities of these migratory moves introducing in the remaking of Greekness and where does Hellenism fit in this revised order? How do the personal narratives of the immigrants intersect with the migratory histories of the choreographers? How are their hyphenated identities challenging the acclaimed universality of Hellenism? And finally, how is the marginalization of immigrants and their rendition to bare life<sup>155</sup> subverted through such performance initiatives that are (re)writing these ‘margins’ and rendering them visible?

### 3.2 How to (re)Write the Margins ~~when they Have Been Unwritten~~

When I first sat down to write this section, I scrolled through my emails to find the link that one of the collaborators had kindly provided me with to access *Bodies of Resilience*, the video dance piece that comprises one of the case studies for this chapter. It was a Vimeo link with an access code, because the film has not yet been publicly released on the internet. I had watched the video through the same link numerous times before, but this time as soon as I clicked on it an error page appeared claiming that the page could not

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<sup>154</sup> The *zeibekiko* as an expression of freedom has also been discussed in chapter one, section 1.3.2.

<sup>155</sup> While the connotations between immigrant experience and bare life will be further explored in the coming sections, I would like to take this chance to introduce the discourse following an observation made by literary scholar Georgia Gotsi. Gotsi draws an analogy between the precarious nature of the immigrant experience in Greece and the biopolitical distinction of *zoe* and *bios*, or in other words “bare anonymous life” and “political existence” (Gotsi 2012, 158). The engagement of immigrants in the performances that will be discussed attest to their political existence and the negation of their anonymity.

be found. The message read: “Sorry there is no video here. Either it was deleted, or it never existed in the first place. Such are the mysteries of the internet.”

‘How fitting’, I thought. I am sitting here getting ready to write about marginalized and invisibilized histories and then an automated website response is almost taunting me by stating that what I am looking for has either been “deleted”, or “never even existed” at all. “Such are the mysteries of the Internet”... Such are the mysteries of how being on the margin works. A dislocated, displaced body may find itself on the margin, yet it still exists, right there, *in* that margin. The very word “margin” is a result of privilege, an aftermath of established hegemonic rhetoric that overlooks anything not adhering to its description. What is perceived by the majority as ‘marginal’ and is being invisibilized is any given ‘minority’s’ whole world. It is still there, very much present, regardless of who chooses to acknowledge it or not. Commenting on the reciprocal relation between the categories of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ (or alternatively between ‘us’ and ‘them’), Arjun Appadurai notes that in liberal social thought, this imbalance leads to what he terms *anxiety of completeness*. In more detail:

Numerical majorities can become predatory and ethnocidal with regard to *small numbers* precisely when some minorities (and their small numbers) remind these majorities of the small gap which lies between their condition as majorities and the horizon of an unsullied national whole, a pure and untainted national ethnos. (Appadurai 2006, 8)

Following this observation, the presence of economic immigrants and refugees and the immanent fragility and precariousness of their transient existence serve as a constant reminder of a new era of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism that threatens the previously established integrity of Greekness. The presence of these immigrant bodies

prompts a reconsideration of Greek identity in new terms. Marginalizing these minorities alleviates this “anxiety of completeness”, as Appadurai termed it. On the other hand, it could be argued that this marginalization is a result of the ephemerality and precarity encountered by these people, who by having only a few days at their disposal to gather all the required documentation to issue a permit to stay in the country, they enter Greece one day and need to move on the next. Based on these circumstances, they seem to have no choice than to just pass through, and not dwell; it is almost as if they never existed in this space to begin with. But can they really?

As the following case studies show, the answer to this question is *no*. Many of these people enter Greece to move on to other EU countries, and quite a lot of them avoid engaging in the asylum process in Greece because being granted asylum would hinder their mobility and prevent them from moving to another country. Some of these struggles are evidenced in the choreographies and voice over narrations that follow. The act of writing down these narratives (either oral or embodied) aims to introduce the reader into the sphere of immigrant experience ‘presentness’. An exercise prompting for such an engagement with the ‘other’ can, as Georgia Gotsi notes, not only challenge racist and conformist behavior, but it also has a destabilizing energy (Gotsi 2012, 174). Destabilizing in the sense that it has the potential to subvert self-complacent views of the national subject, because it invites the indigenous readers to view themselves through the eye/I of the migrants.

In order to facilitate the side by side discussion of the chosen works, I have divided their presentation into four Acts and a Coda, organized around the thematic axes

forwarded in each segment of the performance. The first description under every Act refers to *Quiet Voice*, the work of Ermira Goro, and is based on my recollection of the live performance that took place in July 8<sup>th</sup> at the Athens and Epidaurus festival. The description of *Quiet Voice* is followed by a two-column rendition of *Bodies of Resilience*. This account of the performance is much more meticulous and precise since it draws on a video dance documentary that I had the chance to view repeatedly. As such, the textual intermingling of the two performances aims to draw attention to the series of issues experienced by immigrants in Greece and thus create space for an in depth discussion of such complexities. In the description of *Bodies of Resilience* the left column reflects the voice over narratives accompanying the performance, thus capturing the auditory aspect of the video, whereas the right column corresponds to the visual aspect by describing the choreography and the images captured by the camera.

**ACT I**  
**Inside / Outside**

Quiet Voice:

In the industrial setting of space D at the Festival of Athens, the cement floor of the stage is filled with children playfully teasing each other and playing various games such as hide and seek or tug of war. Their laughter is barely audible over the voices of the large audience that are swarming to their seats. I find my place by the corridor and fold the A4 piece of paper with the program notes that I hurriedly grabbed on my way in into four and rest it against my knee to test my pen. I position it, ready to write, as more and more people find their place with the help of the theatre staff. The lights dim and I begin to take notes. The children gather to the middle of the stage and sing a chorus piece in harmony. The audience falls silent, to



absorb the song, but a deafening buzzing sound interrupts it and the children hurriedly make their way out of the stage.

For a few moments, the stage remains empty. Its grey floor is only dimly lit by the streetlights illuminating the horizontal series of windows on the back of the room. I can hear the people around me twitching and stretching their necks in efforts to discern whether there is something happening somewhere in this vast space swallowed by shadows. Nothing. Nothing, until the figure of a black man<sup>156</sup> appears in one of the windows. He is standing outside, looking in. Looking at us. I can see him manically knocking on the window, his mouth opening in what I can only assume to be a cry for help. He appears anxious; his body language emanates an urgency. The crowd has fallen completely silent again. No more twitching. All eyes are fixated on him. More people enter next to him, some of them shading their eyes with their hand as they are peering through the windows, some of them also knocking on the windows in agony. In spite of the silence and the stillness in the theatre, nothing is audible. Not one of their knocks or cries can be heard. More and more performers are now appearing, filling up the entire row of windows. “There must be at least two dozen of them out there”, I think to myself as they disappear from the window and enter the stage space holding hands, like a long human chain.

Their backs are turned to the audience as they slowly begin to make their way to the front of the stage, moving like a concrete unit. Every once in a while one of them stumbles

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<sup>156</sup> In the descriptions that follow whiteness sometimes goes unmarked, whereas blackness is always acknowledged. This is a strategic and deliberate choice that mirrors what I presume to be the average perspective of audience members, since interracial and racially diverse performance groups are not a common occurrence in Greece. This approach is not meant to reinforce the common trope of whiteness being seen as the norm, but to reflect what I have observed to be the common reaction in a country that has not been in a position of dealing with difference in its recent past.

forward as if having been pushed out of the line. They look back, and rejoin the others as they continue to proceed closer and closer to the audience. Eventually the ‘chain’ breaks and the performers begin to inscribe individual trajectories on the stage space. They are mingling and looking around; some are still randomly collapsing to the floor, while others are whispering in each other’s ears.

The indefinite individual paths become narrower and narrower, as the performers begin to form a cluster on one side of the stage. Slowly all but one are gathered in a cluttered circle. They are chatting animatedly, while on the opposite side of the stage a black man is dancing leisurely to an inaudible tune. At times the cluttered group notices him, their chatter abruptly seizing, and they turn to look his way. With every gaze he freezes in place. His immobility renders him invisible as the others seem to be looking right past him and carelessly return to their conversations.



**Image 12:** The “human chain” formed in front of the windows. Photography and permission to use granted by Anna Psaroudakis.

Bodies of Resilience:

<Blackout>

Despina Stamos (USA)<sup>157</sup>: “How do bodies live in the environments and the situations they find themselves in?”

How do they find softness and resiliency when they are surrounded by harshness?”

A man sings a nostalgic song from his homeland. *Ee laka shea...*

Alphonso Thiaby (Senegal): “I’ve been stuck here for eight years and I don’t know whether I will go forward or back. This has narrowed my perspective.”

A woman picks up the song and continues melodically in words that are unintelligible to me.

*A breeze gently shakes a pair of leafless thorny bushes springing out of a rocky hill.*

*A fallen pine cone rests on a bead of dry earth.*

*Colorful sheets hanging off a balcony are blown by a gentle wind.*

*A group of people crawling through a pebbled path; interacting with each other and with their surroundings lifting a handful of gravels and tossing them away.*

*Five people facing a graffitied wall; their arms raised high above their heads almost as if signaling surrender. They slowly rotate around themselves moving to the right, leaving the frame one by one.*

*On the ground, two women are lying on their side. Their feet are touching the wall as they begin walking on the horizontal plane gradually making their way to the left, thus momentarily intersecting paths with the people standing.*

<Blackout>

In these opening segments of *Quiet Voice* and *Bodies of Resilience* respectively, the narratives introduced are affectively charged with a sense of agony and immobility. Immobility in the sense of not having the option to leave, as Alphonso Thiaby’s voice over narrative attests, and agony in terms of witnessing the calls for help of a group of people

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<sup>157</sup> It should be noted that in the film the names corresponding to the narratives and the country of origin are not immediately available. Only the voice overs are heard and then at the end of the documentary the names of the narrators are credited. For the purpose of writing this section and providing clarity on the identity of each narrator, I have decided to list the names and country of origin along with the quote. It should also be noted that since I do not know the languages heard in some of the songs, the renditions of the melodies in the text are based only on the way that they sound like and do not correspond to actual words.

behind the windows and not being able to really hear them, or help them. Both instances have the effect of creating a distance between the performer and the viewers, which is one of the key aspects that enables marginalization.

In *Quiet Voice*, choreographer Ermira Goro purposely contrasts the screaming grimaces of the performers behind the windows with utter silence to comment on the separation between audience and performers, by forming an analogy between *us* –the audience as the urban population of Athens– and *them* –the performers, a group of richly diverse people, representing multiculturalism and thus a shift in the demographics of Athens. This spatial separation in turn allows for the surfacing of discourses of Otherness and challenges the audience’s awareness by providing them with a choice: ‘Do you want to listen?’

In our interview, Ermira Goro comments on the opening scene as follows:

In the beginning there is this notion of always seeing other people from the other side, you know, as if they are elsewhere; they are *Others*, as if they don’t exist at all. I read somewhere [in a review] that they are in their country and enter ours. That could be a possible explanation. [...] It gives off a sense that it is something that is far removed and you have put your armor on –which is the window glass –so you see it, but it is blurry. You are aware of it, but don’t care about it. [...] At first I had tried it with music, but then I took it out and it was so much stronger without it; with the silence. This way there is yelling and screaming and it is as if you don’t want to hear them. Indeed, I emphasized this aspect of someone yelling, saying something, and then not being audible. I don’t know whether the audience *wanted* to listen. (the italics reflect the oral points of emphasis – my translation from interview with Ermira Goro, 08/27/2014)

As is the case with any artwork, its interpretations can be as numerous as its audience members, so regardless of whether the windows were representing a country’s border, an inside/outside dichotomy, an audience/performer, or self/Other discourse, it is indisputable that it revolved around a sense of *distance* and *separation*. This physical separation

between audience and performers facilitated by the wall of windows, which hindered the sound from coming through, also signifies the silencing of minorities indicated earlier. Even the name of the performance (*Quiet Voice*) references the muting of immigrant subjectivities that is also a common occurrence.

While *Quiet Voice* in its opening invited us (the audience), or perhaps even bluntly challenged us to reconsider our choices and attitudes towards diversity and our propensity (or lack thereof) to really listen, *Bodies of Resilience* immediately positions us within the performers' experience. It breaks the barrier caused by the windows and directly introduces audiences to the auditory aspect. The language that can be predominantly heard is English, but beneath it, if one were to pay close attention, the voices of each individual narrator are clearly audible. Some speak in broken or fluent Greek, while others narrate their stories in accented English. Very few people speak in their native language, but in either case the translation of their statements into English (a dominant and widely recognizable language) is a way of attributing agency to these stories and making sure they will be accessible to wide audiences.

The opening voice over, by Despina Stamos, invites us to consider 'the other side', that which lies behind the windows. "How do bodies live in the environments and the situations they find themselves in? How can they find softness and resilience when they are surrounded by harshness?" Serving as improvisational tools these questions both guide the performers through the experience of physically interacting with harsh environments and also metaphorically enable their personal narratives to unfold in response to the actual

hardships that refugee experience in Greece entails. Alphonso Thiaby's expression of being stuck is a fragment of this experience also shared by many others in the segments to come.

A similar feeling is also reflected in Goro's piece, and is especially evident in the transitions from one scene to the next. As the following sections will demonstrate, the way the scenes succeed one another in *Quiet Voice* is by drawing the focus to different performers each time, while the rest of the group is either patiently awaiting for their turn in the margins of the stage or simply frame the performer with their quiet presence. In a review of *Quiet Voice* these transitions are being perceived as directly pertinent to the daily routine of these people, which is characterized by "the never-ending process of waiting that does neither lead to a future, nor a present, but forces them to live in this constant state of suspension" (my translation from Koukoutas 2014). A Serbian anthropologist, Jelena Vujanovic, working at the Migrant Protection Center in Thessaloniki echoes this sentiment and notes a shift since 2011. In her words:

Since 2011 things started to change. Greece start [sic] to become dangerous for asylum seekers, for refugees. First of all, smugglers started asking for more money, because they saw that more people were coming. Secondly, migrants began fearing attacks by the extremist right-wing political party Golden Dawn, whose leaders are currently facing murder charges over the death of an anti-fascist musician. Golden Dawn have huge propaganda [against] all these refugees, migrants. They are saying that they destroyed this country. It's not their fault. It's the fault of the system, because there is no system, no lawyer for them, no one who will translate for them. When you are a refugee in Greece, it is just a station for you, because it's not a country where you want to live. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees stuck in Greece face stark choices. (M.P. et. al. 2013)

Indeed the alarming rise of the Golden Dawn, has popularized overtly discriminatory rhetoric and has thus led to increased fear and isolation of such vulnerable groups<sup>158</sup>. One instance of that can be inferred from the second scene of *Quiet Voice*, where the group of performers turns to look at the isolated man who is dancing away from the group. Every time they turn his way he freezes until they look past him and then he can start again. In a context infused with Golden Dawn rhetoric, such an instance is representative of the need to perhaps remain in the margin or make oneself invisible in order to survive.

## **ACT II** **Labor and Class**

### Quiet Voice:

The cluster of people contrasting the lone dancer slowly broadens and all performers begin roaming around the stage. Individual snake-like paths are inscribed in space and slowly a rhythm emerges as some of the performers stomp their feet on the concrete floor. The rest respond with ululations and unintelligible shouts. The stomping and the yelling become more and more synchronous as the scene progresses. The lights fade to darkness and a transparent lightbulb is lowered down from the ceiling, vertically hanging from a string of cables. It is hardly moving or oscillating, yet it immediately attracts the performers to it, who swarm around it like moths attracted to flame.

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<sup>158</sup> Some very informative videos that capture the terrorizing effects of the Golden Dawn on Greece's immigrant population are reflected in a short documentary featured by *The Guardian* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afZbNBiMpHU> (accessed: 09/02/2014) and an excerpt of the documentary *The Cleaners* created by Konstantinos Georgousis, featured on British television (Channel 4): <http://www.channel4.com/news/racist-anti-semitic-violent-the-true-face-of-golden-dawn>(accessed: 09/02/2014)



**Image 13:** The cluster of people forming underneath the lightbulb. Photography and permission to use granted by Anna Psaroudakis.

Their bodies are in close proximity as they form two concentric circles progressively developing a monorhythmic stomping pace around the bulb. Their shadows are tightly squeezed on their bodies since the limited light does not allow them to grow, and their heads are bowed to each other's shoulders. Their rhythmic pacing is complimented by a song. Their rotating movements alternate from clockwise to counterclockwise, and they remind me of old black and white movies where people engaged in mining or other kinds of manual labor are shown singing at work. It also has a ritualistic element to it, the steady and even rhythmic pacing complemented by the song performed in unison by so many voices; it's almost hypnotizing.

Bodies of Resilience:

<Blackout>  
**the crisis**

The female song faintly continues in the background.

*An image of an ancient Greek pillar  
graffitied with a sad, skeptical face fills  
the screen.  
In a split second, the scene shifts and we  
are taken to a rocky hill occupied by three  
people. A man and a woman are slowly*



Sedat Hayta (Turkey): “The system is a system of and for money. It’s a system for big banks, not a system for people. Everyone looks elsewhere, how shall I say? The leaders, the wealthy... whoever works for them is told, ‘look look! There’s a little bird. Meanwhile they steal from our pockets whatever we have’. The immigrants are the little bird now. They say look at those little birds, it’s *their* fault.”

A song, this time in Greek, is audible coming from a male voice. *Μην απελπίζεσαι, και δε θα αργήσει, κοντά σου να’ ρθει μια χαραυγή...*<sup>159</sup>

*rising from a crouched position while another male conceals the lower left of the screen with his motionless body. Behind them the Parthenon reflects the warm yellow light of dawn.*

*The camera zooms in on the performers’ faces, limbs, hands. Focusing on the ways that they caress the rocky landscape.*

*Gently resting on it, using it to help themselves get up, exploring it with the sense of touch. Beyond the landscape they are also exploring each other and each other’s bodies, leaning on one another, bearing one another’s weight.*

The references (either inferred or direct) to labor in both of these segments allow for additional dimensions of discrimination to arise, such as that of class-based racism. The rhythmic pacing of the large group in *Quiet Voice* and their synchronized singing are reminiscent of slavery and automated labor and involuntarily give off an aura of exploitation, which is the sentiment highlighted in the parallel section of *Bodies of Resilience*. As it occurred in my discussion with Ermira Goro about that particular scene, it should be noted that perhaps connotations to labor take place with such ease because of the pre-existing knowledge that the bodies on stage are those of migrants. During our interview, Goro acknowledges the tendency to make such correlations and reframes the scene in a different light as she clarifies her intentions.

In that scene with the light [bulb] in the middle, at first when we tried it out it looked like slaves laboring and that was not my intention. Maybe it still looked like that a

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<sup>159</sup> In translation the words of a Greek song called Σαν Μετανάστης (*san metanástis*- Like a migrant): *Do not despair, and it won’t be long until a new dawn comes...*

little, but what I wanted was to demonstrate a dynamism, a flow, a sense of continuity. [The circle] was moving to the left and then to the right; it was an empowering ritual. [...] Yes, the idea of labor is there, but it is latent, it was not my primary goal, because they are migrants and you immediately tend to think that. It is a ritual, through which people can create light. They had a stand, and a voice that showed how when they come together they can have tremendous power. I did not want [this scene] to give off a sense of suffering. (my translation – interview with Goro 08/27/2014)

Even though it was not amidst her direct intentions, Goro captures one of the most common stereotypes relating to immigrants, that of the ‘immigrant worker’, who is mostly understood as ‘cheap labor force’, or as a manual laborer, and is thus discriminated against based on her/his position in the class hierarchy of the work force, where intellectual labor is always of more value. In an essay titled “Is there such a thing as European Racism”, Etienne Balibar takes on the topic of racism against immigrant workers and their position in Europe as it has been deteriorating.

[W]e should stress that racism, in so far as it *first and foremost* targets populations of workers from the ‘underdeveloped’ – generally ex-colonial or semi-colonial – world (even potential workers, the category to which refugees belong), is a phenomenon which goes back a very long way in Europe, and this includes its violent forms. Immigrants in Europe have long been the ‘lowest of the low’. The phenomenon has merely become more visible since it has emerged from the main arena to which it was previously confined –the workplace, that is to say, the site of exploitation –and its more or less ghettoized immediate environment. But we must say right away that the visibility or spread of the phenomenon is in itself an aggravating factor, in particular when it contributes to sustaining a sense of mass insecurity, and to making criminal acts seem banal and commonplace – something it does with at least the passive assistance of major media. (Balibar 2002, 43)

Indeed, the spread of this phenomenon in Greece has already been inferred at the beginning of this chapter, and has intensified following the rise of Golden Dawn populist rhetoric. Likewise, the media’s treatment of immigrants in Greece is highly discriminatory and only serves to perpetuate such distinctions. For instance, it is very common on live

coverage of crime scenes to immediately ask, “Is there any evidence on the perpetrator’s ethnicity?” and then proceed to subtitle the news by referring to the perpetrator not by name (even when their name has been publicly announced) but by their ethnicity. In contrast, I have repeatedly noticed that in instances where the perpetrators are Greek, they tend to always provide their full name, regardless of the nature of the crime. The same unfortunately holds true in other kinds of reports, where they interview people on the streets. There, it is quite common to mention at least the first name of the Greek interviewees but no identifying elements for the non-Greek people. Of course this is not to overlook the possibility that in some instances the lack of names may be to protect witnesses or the identity of the person, but the consistency of these occurrences still nevertheless attests to a discriminatory treatment of aliens.

Acknowledging that Balibar’s essay was published in 2002, it is important to note its eerie timeliness and clarify that in spite of the crisis, the influx of migrant populations to Europe has intensified rather than declined<sup>160</sup>, as civil conflicts, such as the ongoing war in Syria, force people to move. The conditions that force these people to move, along with the lack of infrastructure in the host country leads them to pursue manual labor in order to survive. Such labor is oftentimes organized illegally, especially since some of the migrants do not hold the required documentation. This vicious cycle of exploitation of workers from the ex-colonial or semi-colonial world, serves to perpetuate associations between manual

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<sup>160</sup> While it is difficult to find comprehensive evidence of the number of immigrants entering Europe, I have come across a study noting the increase of illegal immigrant influx to Greece from the Aegean Sea (where many immigrants enter Greece from Turkey). According to the study, in 2012 the relevant authorities arrested 3.345 people in East Aegean Sea. Their number rose to 10.508 people in 2013. By the end of August of 2014 17.639 people have already been arrested and it is estimated that the number will rise to 31.000 (in total) until the end of the year. As the study notes, most of the people come from war-stricken Syria. (Onisenko 2014)

labor and racial otherness. The view of ‘others’ as cheap, yet effective and readily available, labor is precisely what also renders them as an easy target (as Sedat Hayta notes in the voice over: “They say look at those little birds, it’s *their* fault.”)

Having observed this line of reasoning, I cannot help but note the connections between the rendition of immigrants to easily accessible laboring bodies, and the labor inherent in the act of dancing. I would argue that the act of directly challenging these aforementioned associations through dance, in a way that requires the very bodies that experience this discrimination to also embody it for artistic purposes, is a subversive one. In the theoretical framework of precarious theatre provided by Katharina Pewny, such a direct encounter with the ‘Other’ and their vulnerability (*Verwundbarkeit*) raises issues about the ethics of the encounter. Albeit abstract, it yields a sense of responsibility for the audience, who become aware that this is not just a performative act. While in the context of the performance immigrants are embodying a precarious condition of existence, outside of the performative context many of them *are* in that condition of existence.

### **ACT III**

#### **Migrant Subjectivities**

##### Quiet Voice:

The door at the back of the stage opens and a group of women dressed in long shiny silver dresses enters. They come in in a disciplined line and the fabric concealing their feet makes them appear to be rolling on the floor, as they proceed with small steps across the stage. Their heads are partially concealed with hats accompanied by long white veils flowing on their backs, while long braids are resting on their chest on either side (see image below). They pass

through the large group of performers, their presence as elusive as a ghostly apparition since they exit as quietly as they have entered.



**Image 14:** The Georgian dancers making their way through the other performers. This image is from a dress rehearsal. Photography and permission to use granted by Anna Psaroudakis.

Two men single themselves out from the group and engage in a movement dialogue reminiscent of capoeira, which gradually turns into a fight. The men give way to a group of African women who separate themselves out from the rest of the performers and call each other through ululations. A woman that had been sitting on the sidelines knitting puts her needles aside and joins them. Gathering at the middle of the stage their communication slowly turns from vocal to embodied as they all engage in a contagious shoulder shake that turns into a circular earth-centered<sup>161</sup> performance.

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<sup>161</sup> The characterization of this performance excerpt as ‘earth-centered’ refers to the quality of the movement and the weight of the performers as going down towards the ground rather than away from it (upwards).

One short segment succeeds the next as the performers continuously break out in smaller groups presenting fragments of folk dances or other cultural dance forms. Two females mirroring each other perform a short piece that bears elements of Indian classical dance fused with contemporary, a black male presents a solo with his hands 'tied' behind his back, the emphasis being on his seemingly limbless torso, a white girl enters the stage with acrobatic back-flips... Every now and then the human chain introduced at the beginning of the piece comes together again and becomes a recurring pattern: a way for people to connect, and a way for performance fragments to come together. Walking shoulder to shoulder, the chain of people progresses forward. Someone starts laughing, and the laughter interrupts the chain. It is contagious and people scatter.

The group of women performing the traditional Georgian dance, dressed in the long silver costumes, enters again and causes everyone to pause as they progress through them. A dancer begins to shiver and drops to the floor shaking uncontrollably as if entranced. The rest of the performers keep moving and two more women fall to the floor shaking. A siren echoes in the atrium and the lights fade. When they turn back on, I can sense commotion around me, someone is frantically descending the stairs of the theatre. A group of performers holding flashlights are making their way down, shining the light under the seats of the audience as if they are searching for something. I was overcome by a sense of sudden embarrassment and quickly hid my folded piece of paper and my pen. They shone their flashlight right past me and descended the stairs to the stage.

The pace at which one scene is interrupted by the next accelerates and the next scene finds all the performers lined up in the back of the stage progressively walking forward. Their collectivity is in stark contrast to the solo taking place on the front of the stage. A man is on a

stool, in an evident struggle with himself. He uses one arm to whip and slap himself until he eventually falls from the stool and remains motionless on the floor, lying there lifeless until the line of people has surpassed him so that he can gather himself up and join them again.

Bodies of Resilience:

<Blackout>

**before Greece**

...καινούρια αγάπη, θα σου ζητήσει, κάνε  
λιγάκι υπομονή.<sup>162</sup>

*The Parthenon high up on the hill hovers  
over the ancient theatre of Herodes  
Atticus and the ruins of the ancient  
marketplace. The whiteness of the marbles  
contrasts to the pale blue sky and the  
green leaves of the limited vegetation in  
downtown Athens.*

Anwar Hossain (Bangladesh): "I am an official political refugee. I came three and half years ago to Greece for my safety. We saved ten to twelve thousand Euros to pay the agent to come here. We sold the fields and house to gather the money."

*The bodies of a man and a woman rest on  
a rocky surface almost lifeless.  
A multi-ethnic group of people crossing a  
sidewalk. Back and forth, again and  
again. The full body shot zooms in to a  
narrower scope. Fragmented body parts,  
legs and shoes continuously crossing the  
streets.*

The man's song becomes faintly audible again. ...στη δική σου γη. Μέρα  
νύχτα...<sup>163</sup>

*Cut. They are still walking but now on a  
dirt road. All that is visible is the back of  
their legs as they make their way down the  
road leading to...*

Name and country of origin withheld:  
"The problems started when the borders opened, when the government changed. Men became very aggressive. Meanwhile, the rape and abduction of women to abduct them to other countries, where they sell women's bodies..."

*Two performers (male and female)  
engage in a duet. The female is clinging  
on to the hands and clothes of the male  
who slowly helps her get up to her feet.  
They are not looking at each other and  
thus their movements breathe an air of  
trust, but at the same time reluctance and  
unwillingness to be helped.  
The woman is now on her feet reaching  
out to grab an invisible desire. The man*

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<sup>162</sup> In translation the words of the Greek song: ... a new love, will ask you to have a little patience.

<sup>163</sup> On your land. Day and night...

... that became an everyday occurrence.”

*holds her back. A third performer passes through, and brushes by the arm of the woman but keeps moving.  
A fragmented image of a hand lying on the dirt; a palm that slightly opens in an unheard plea.*

<Blackout>  
**the journey**

Another unintelligible song, its melody by now somewhat familiar.

*A hand peeling off the stump of a tree. Bodies oscillating back and forth in the dirt-road. Walking with a purpose and backing up, going nowhere. It is already dusk and all you can see are shadows and their clothes.*

“I trusted two people who said they could help get me to Italy and I would pay them. During the journey I realized it was a lie, a trap. They told us clearly ‘we took you so we could use you as a prostitute’. All this causes pressure on the mind. You start to have insomnia, your head begins to buzz incessantly, and slowly, you are unable to think properly. The mind fogs and you lose yourself. It’s a chaos. You’re lost.”

*A game of trust. People falling and others being there to catch them.*

*Hanging from a tree in fruitless attempts to climb it.*

*Hugging the stub.  
Lying on the ground resting against it.  
The dirt.*

The male song is audible once more.

*Lying in the dry dirt.  
Silhouettes is all you can see. Dark silhouettes illuminated by the street lights accompanied by their shadows.*

<Blackout>

The fragmentary nature of *Quiet Voice* in this segment paralleled to the collage of fragmented images in *Bodies of Resilience* allows for multiple narratives to surface. Stories from the performers’ past, their journeys, their present, all unravel simultaneously requiring heightened attention to be able to discern them and follow them all. The monologic speeches accompanying these improvisational sequences allow for the interjection of opposing elements such as those of the past and the present, departure and



arrival, or the inner existence contrasted to the stories of survival thus carefully structuring the complex subjectivity of the uprooted person.

Commenting on the reasons guiding her choice to present scenes as fragments, Ermira Goro noted in our interview, that some of the performers did not have previous stage experience and as such it was challenging to find a way to bridge their diverse backgrounds. The constant shifts of attention from one group to the next managed to highlight the strengths of each individual and at the same time allowed each of them to be expressive in a way that felt comfortable to them. Their diversity is further evidenced through the recurring folk dance references, such as Georgian, classical Indian, African, and Balkan amongst others. Paralleling these references to the performers' cultures this segment is juxtaposed to "before Greece" and "the journey" from *Bodies of Resilience* as both excerpts provide a close look at migrant subjectivities and allow individual narratives of migration to unfold.

Opening the discussion on migrant subjectivities, it is appropriate to first look at the term 'migrant' (or emigrant/immigrant<sup>164</sup>), and discuss the ways that this word is 'charged' in Greek vernacular as well as the sets of prejudices that accompany it. As we were preparing for our interview with Goro, I offered her an explanation as to why I was interested in pursuing the topic of migration in this chapter based on my individual migratory path. In doing so I reluctantly characterized myself a migrant, for lack of a better

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<sup>164</sup> Greek language does not allow for a distinction between 'migration' as an overarching category, and 'immigration' / 'emigration' as more specific descriptions of the type of movement that takes place. Instead all terms are captured under the word μετανάστευση (*metanástefsi*). As such, in the translations that follow I have adopted the English terms according to the context in which the term μετανάστευση occurs.

word to describe my choice to live and study abroad. When I asked about her story of migration, she began by explaining that there are different types:

It is easy to call everyone a migrant, but there are various categories and levels of migration. You are an emigrant by choice, but these people have no other choice. [...] When someone is forced to abandon everything and does not want to leave, it is a different situation; people are dying around them. I left Albania when I was 14 and came to Greece at the beginning of 1991 when the Communist bloc collapsed. Then after I finished my studies, I lived in New York for eight years and I was an immigrant once again, and now I spend most of the time in other countries. I am not sure if I consider this immigration. I was a true migrant when I left Albania to come to Greece, all other instances were my choice to pursue, but that one was not a choice. (my translation – interview with Goro 08/27/2014)

Indeed the use of the term ‘migrant’ in Greek (μετανάστης - *metanástis*) tends to have the connotation that external circumstances have ‘forced’ someone to leave their country. In Greek vernacular *metanastis* (μετανάστης) also immediately bears a lower-class connotation which facilitates the treatment of migrant-workers and refugees as bare life<sup>165</sup>. With these connotations in mind, my privileged migration of choice and access made me extremely self-aware of this word selection. It also reminded me how and why I was all along reluctant to take on the identity of the migrant.

Interestingly though, there seems to be a double standard in place. Immigration has been a constitutive element of Greekness especially during the early twentieth century and has recently been revived during the crisis. In the history of Greek emigrants, most of the

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<sup>165</sup> The above remark draws on an observation made by Athena Athanasiou, an Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at the Panteion University in Athens, who argues: “From the horizon of contentious contemporary biopolitics, the ‘illegal immigrant’ (emblemized in Greece by the figure of the backward, delinquent, and over-reproducing Albanian) has emerged as a ‘limit-concept’ of exclusionary discourses of recognition, along with a fragmentary multitude of other limit-representations of the human—the homosexual, the transgendered, the HIV-positive, the poor, the elderly, the mentally ill, the displaced, the dispossessed, as well as the populations of the so-called Third World that the current capitalist biopolitical sovereignty turns into ‘bare life’.” (Athanasiou 2006, 241)

massive moves have been motivated by shifts in the political regime, while it is also rather customary for people of the 1980s generation and after to move abroad for study. The monetary implications of either move (to work abroad, or to study) vary widely, but a Greek emigrant hardly ever runs the risk of being regarded as ‘bare life’ neither in a domestic context, nor internationally, primarily due to their ability to claim ownership of the cultural capital of Greece. Of course this is not to say that discrimination is completely eradicated in Greek emigrant experience, but that there are ways to alleviate it, as the example of AHEPA has demonstrated in the first section of this chapter.

Continuing the process of interweaving the migrant narratives inherent in the works discussed, I turn to the story of Despina Stamos, who left Greece for the USA with her family in 1969 during the military dictatorship.

I was born here in Greece and I moved to the United States when I was two and a half. I can definitely say that I had an immigrant experience. It was a time in the United States when being different was not exactly a positive thing. (Stamos in *passTRESpass* (2011 Documentary) 2011)

In this quote, the presupposition of immigration being a negative experience is once more relevant. At the same time however, it is precisely these personal experiences that have motivated these choreographers to engage with such issues and shed light to the nuances of migration from the perspective of a refugee, rather than the more widely accepted viewpoint of the migrant by choice, which is relatively popular in Greece. In doing so, both Goro and Stamos open a much needed dialogue between natives and refugees through performance, which takes place not only in the interaction that occurs between performers and audiences, but also amongst the participants of each respective group as well. Their

works are community projects and apart from inspiring awareness for such sensitive issues, they also make a strong political statement. As Stamos noted in our interview:

I was dancing in the theatre and at a certain point I thought that only reached a certain socio-economic part of the population, you know? I wanted to reach a different audience. And I started looking for projects that had more of a political stance, but also in terms of the audience as well. Reaching a broader audience. (interview with Stamos and Woodward 07/05/2014)

Stamos' work in its site-specific nature certainly opts for a different audience than a certain privileged socio-economic part of the population that has access to theatres and festivals. In regards to Goro's work, however, a counterargument could be made that it was not in a position to make as strong of a political statement, because it was presented in the frame of one of the most prestigious festivals in Greece (the Athens and Epidaurus festival), which would immediately elevate it to a culturally elitist status. Yet the political statement lies precisely in the hosting of the performance at this festival.

Having attended numerous performances during my fieldwork and at a wide range of venues, I can attest to the fact that Goro's performance had the most diverse audience and as such she managed to transcend the fourth wall and actually create a space of peaceful coexistence with the 'other'. A performance review of *Quiet Voice* by Tasos Koukoutas notes:

Goro's approach lies in the humanistic character of a multiethnic meeting on stage; through the personal narratives of the participants and their testaments she comments on the need to coexist with the Other, a meeting that we rarely attempt in our everyday life. (my translation from Koukoutas 2014)

This, in my view, is precisely what characterizes the uniqueness of Goro's work and in extension Stamos' work as well. Not only do they address the notions of coexistence,

collectivity and belonging through performance, but the very event of their performances fosters the environment where this meeting between the self and the ‘other’ *can* happen.

In discussions that I had with Koukoutas, he brought to my attention that this approach to multiculturalism has been unique for the Festival as well. While the festival has been known for hosting renowned dance companies from all over the world, in previous years, multiculturalism was approached through inviting folk dance troupes or other cultural dance companies. In the case of folk ensembles, it is not easy to foster genuine dialogue, because the genre reproduces a very static image of a culture and distances the subjects by presenting a stereotypical identifier, which does not allow room for personal narratives or subjectivities to emerge.

In Goro’s piece each participant had a chance to ‘tell’ their story and through this individual exercise, collectivities formed and dissolved as the performers were incessantly moving and progressing through metaphorical paths of migration, personal development, and life. As such, the collectivities that manifest could only be understood on the basis of their individual components: the personal narratives and embodied histories that each of the participants brought forth. Folk dance was a reference point of these personal histories but its performance by individuals, wearing everyday clothes rather than costumes, is more representative of the humanistic approach that Koukoutas described in his review.

Individual narratives are the main focus in Stamos’ and Woodward’s piece as well. There, however, while the sense of collectivity is absent from both the auditory and the visual components, it is inferred in the subtitles and captions of the video, that provide context and attribute a label to the kinds of experience that these people share in common

(e.g. migration to Greece, being political refugees, seeking asylum, or the life conditions that they faced upon arrival). Summing up, all the narratives, either embodied or spoken, in these segments approximate one of the *Taktiken* (tactics / techniques) that Pewny (2011) identifies as an element of precarious theatre: *Selbsterzählung* (self-narration). In the practice of *Selbsterzählung* the self becomes a role and personal narratives become the performance.

#### **ACT IV** **Fear, Racist Violence, Universalism and Difference**

##### Quiet Voice:

All performers are being pushed off the stage by a woman. Only a black male remains and resists every push. The white female persistently attempts to force him to leave but all she manages is to slightly take him off his track, as he constantly recovers and continues to occupy the stage with his presence. He doesn't appear to be bothered by her forceful pushes and in the end she seems to succumb to him as she jumps on his shoulders and he calmly carries her off the stage. He 'drops' her to the ground at one edge of the stage and reenters to lie down. Everyone else joins him and they similarly scatter around and lie on the concrete floor.

Two women start running and jumping over the motionless performers, playfully chasing each other. They catch up to one another in the middle of the stage, step closer, and appear to be exchanging a kiss. The proximity between the performers that gave the initial impression of the kiss is growing apart as it becomes evident that one of the women is blowing air into a balloon, while the other is attaching her lips on the opposite side of it holding it in place. The balloon grows bigger and bigger until it pops. A sensory explosion of sound fills

the theatre and momentarily deprives the audience of both auditory and visual sensors as the lights mimic the explosion and rapidly turn off engulfing us in complete darkness.



**Image 15** The women ‘nurturing’ the balloon. Image taken from rehearsals of the piece. Photography and permission to use granted by Anna Psaroudakis.

The darkness is distorted by a female figure entering from the back carrying three candles. Balancing one of them on her head, she holds the other two, one in each hand, and slowly makes her way forward. During the moments of darkness, all the performers have stood up and taken out a handkerchief. One by one, they hold it up to the candle flames and light it on fire. Crossing the stage horizontally, each performer lets their lit handkerchief fall as soon as the woman with the candles has walked past them. Floating like little fireflies, all handkerchiefs slowly succumb to the pull of gravity and turn to ash on the ground. The woman exits and everyone else follows her out, revealing one man who has stayed behind.

The man performs a solo that resembles an abstracted version of a Balkan folk dance. His focus is internal and he seems withdrawn. His movement shifts from having an internal focus to an external orientation. He moves his arms in circles slightly crouching forward in a gesture reminiscent of someone trying to blow wind to fuel a fire. Growing progressively bigger his movements become a calling heralding the others, and are contagious as everyone begins imitating him until they are all clustered in the middle of the stage. Popular club music blasts from the speakers and the cluster of performers turns into an upbeat party complemented by flashy lights that flicker and attribute a slow motion feel to the scene.

The children that opened the performance with their playful demeanor are seen sneaking from the side holding up water hoses with gun-shaped regulators. They shoot water at the performers causing them to stop and quickly run out of the stage laughing. Soaking wet, the performers take off their shoes and exit the stage leaving them behind.

Bodies of Resilience:

<Blackout>

**fear of fascism**

*An African male leans against the wall of a house. His eyes are closed and his head rests on the colored window sill.*

“Most people don’t like the Golden Dawn. They are a very dangerous party. And they say ‘go back to your own country’, but we cannot go.

*A black male and a white female engage in a tender contact duet. The next shot transfers us to another fragmented image of commotion. People moving and interacting, constantly shifting the negative space left between them.*

I can’t go anywhere. I go to work, then come home.

*An iron door locked shut with a thick chain becomes the center of the next shot. A man lifts his arms and holds his wrists together as if restrained from invisible handcuffs. He presses his body against*



Just like I'm in a cell."

Panagiotis Andronikidis (Greece):  
"Something that frightens me is the moment I encounter a situation, like when some fascists have beaten up immigrants for example. How to react appropriately? From what I know about fascists its not enough to try and scare them with yelling."

Abdoul Nazari (Afghanistan): "Last year, I was assaulted. We were surrounded by 10 people from two sides. They didn't say anything and they attacked us with a knife and clubs. I was hit in my head and kicked in my stomach. And all I remember is falling down.

We're afraid. We're really afraid, also of the police. If the police catch us, they might deport us. If we get deported, if someone is sent back, it's over, it's the end! The entire family will be destitute.

We have a problem. We can't work. They beat us and they chase us. I don't have permission to work. I can't go back

*the door and his hands struggle to slide through the chains.*

*The frame shifts again and the same man is now situated in a narrow rectangular alcove. He occupies it by diagonally leaning against its walls gazing out.*

*The performers enter from the left side leaning forward until they fall to the ground, some are shown kneeling down, resting against the pebbled path.*

*A black male and a white female interact on the street in a duet. They walk and stop, sharing a moment of stillness.*

*A half demolished building with two people resting against its ruins.*

*Four people are shown holding on to the protective railings guarding off a field of ancient pillars.*

*A group of people walking. One of them stumbles and falls face down to the ground. The others drag him up. Contracted bodies curving in the cavings of a rocky surface.*

*A woman falls with her back on a wall as if forced there by an invisible hand. She recovers but is 'pushed' again. Every time she hits the wall her arms are lifted above her head in a complete metaphor of surrender.*

*Shadows balancing on the railings. In the background, beyond the illuminated marble ruins lurks a nightly image of Athens. Some of its houses dimly lit.*

and I can't leave, because I don't have papers. I've been waiting here for six years and they haven't answered. I want an answer: Yes or No?"

*A man climbs at the top of the railings and effortfully balances reaching with one arm up to the sky; the camera slowly rises to follow his reach.*

<Blackout>

The common element in these closing scenes of *Quiet Voice* and *Bodies of Resilience* is the discussion of violence. The harshness of the physical experience of violence is in both instances juxtaposed to aesthetically pleasing and tender imagery, such as the blowing of the balloon, the lighting of the handkerchiefs, or the shadows of the performers balancing on the railings against the backdrop of a panoramic view of Athens. At the same time, these images are painted with a sense of nostalgia and longing, thus providing a glimpse into the daily experience of immigrant workers and refugees.

In Goro's piece, the handkerchiefs become a metaphor for the passing of people. 'Passing' both in terms of 'passing through' and moving on, but also in the sense of 'passing away'; a reminder of the people they have lost in the process. In Stamos' and Woodward's piece, the sense of longing is mirrored in the shadows of the people balancing on the railings. Their balancing stillness is a statement for their liminal experience and their pending citizenship status ("I want an answer: Yes or No?").

The rhetoric of discrimination and exclusion also manifests in both pieces, and is vividly portrayed in Goro's choreography through the act of a white woman pushing a black man and forcefully insisting that he gets off the stage. In *Bodies of Resilience* it becomes evident in the voice-overs directing attention to the rise of the Golden Dawn. Through these references that question the acceptance of otherness, both works inspire a

dialogue around latent issues pertaining to the supposed cultural superiority of Hellenism fuelled by Golden Dawn rhetoric.

It is in such discourses of acclaimed superiority that I locate the binary between universalism and difference. Such an instance can be found in the latter part of the video where the performers are climbing the fences of the archeological space in downtown Athens. The picture below provides a still image of this captivating moment. As this image lingers on the screen, the voice-over narrative talks about fear of the police, deportation, and the violence experienced in an attack by Golden Dawn members.



**Image 16:** Still image from Bodies of Resilience – fear of fascism. Permission to use granted by Jill Woodward.

The railings as seen in the image become a metaphor; they represent both a cell and a border. In their symbolism as a cell they take on the function of keeping individuals confined in one place, or in this instance, on the outside of the archeological space. In their symbolic iteration as a border however, they take on the role of the divider and the unifier

at the same time. A border *can* be transgressed. Traversing borders has already been the case for the migratory journeys of these people. The constituting factors of difference often rely on people's access to borders, and their fluency and affluence in the very act of crossing them. So in this instance the railings determine who is on the inside and who is on the outside – and is thus an 'Other'. Biases of any sort in turn determine the way that public and private lives are organized and influence public perceptions of ethnic, national, cultural, and social otherness.

To enrich this discussion on the function of borders and their relation to discourses of difference I turn to Susan Ossman's latest work *Moving Matters*, where she suggests:

[i]nequalities among [...] migrants arise because of the passports they hold, and yet their stories show that for even the least endowed in citizenship, *borders can act not only as barriers and enclosures but also as dream catchers*. To travel across them is to notice consistencies of social life that point to the way states seek to conjugate social worlds systematically, favoring certain forms of movement and styles of settlement as part of their striving to consolidate themselves, their work with space and image and the land conceived through strategic allegiances with one another. What one might call the politics of direction is not only a matter of international migration; it is a work in practices of sequestration and exile, in the way illiteracy or gender inequality or ethnic bias confine or expand one's range of motion or one's ability to join collective deliberations and forms of self. (emphasis added - Ossman 2013, 142)

The issues that Ossman brings up here along with the constitution of difference also concern a particular Western way of constructing the self and subjectivity that adheres to established hegemonic practices. Access to borders and to their traversing is relative to ethnic biases and as such also to racial and cultural biases alike. Biases of any sort in turn determine the way that public and private lives are organized and influence the public perceptions of ethnic, national, cultural, and social otherness. In an article published during the early years of the crisis (2010), when the anti-immigrant rhetoric was just beginning to

be incorporated in public discourse social anthropologist Ioanna Laliotou theorizes the emerging cosmopolitanism in contemporary Greece and remarks:

As native Greeks became gradually accustomed to the presence of foreigners amongst them, they also internalized, and accepted as natural, various discriminatory and racially/ethnically hierarchical forms of organizing public affairs and private lives.

As part of this process, the actual life histories of migrants and the historical background of contemporary migration movements are completely silenced and erased from public debate. As they are overlooked, *the migrants are often presented as people without history, culture, traditions, and subjectivity*. It is as if the non-native people who live in our neighborhoods have no present or past history, but just happened to be there, a bizarre historical accident. (emphasis added - Laliotou 2010, 249)

Echoing a point made earlier about the rendition of immigrants to bare life, Laliotou's observation accurately captures the marginalization of immigrant populations. At the same time, this erasure of other people's histories and cultures points to an intense anxiety to preserve and uphold one's own histories and practices.

To briefly revisit the still image from the video, an additional layer of interpretation that can be applied to it is that of 'intrusion'. The act of climbing on the fence of a guarded property hints at the possible motive of entry without permission. The rhetoric of 'intrusion' is all too common in populist anti-immigrant addresses and thus its cinematic placement in the context of an archeological place makes the symbolisms of the image ever so clear. The dark shadowy silhouettes of the 'foreigners' juxtaposed to the whiteness of the ancient ruins; the perpetual binary of blackness opposed to whiteness threatening the purity and exclusivity of Western civilization. The performers' unknown intentions for climbing the fence are open to misinterpretation, due to preexisting stereotypes, fears, and notions of privilege such as First or Third World categorizations.

It is precisely in these intersections between ‘otherness’ and the core of Greek identity (Hellenism) that I locate the theoretical challenge to Western notions of universalism. The act of denying other cultural histories is the first step to protect one’s cultural integrity and purity. Revisiting the argument forwarded in the previous chapter (see 2.4.4. *Balancing the Seesaw*) about the construction of Greek identity and its Hellenistic core, it goes without question that Hellenism secures a certain level of exclusivity in Western culture in terms of valuing cultural roots. At the same time the whole structure of Hellenism and its ties to Western universality and whiteness are constructed. Critical race theorists, such as Richard Dyer (1997) and Greg Thomas (2003), have challenged the indisputability of Hellenism’s whiteness by bringing attention to the fact that the characteristics of ancient Greek culture derived from the influence of the Egyptians and the Phoenicians. As Thomas observes, the creation of linkages to whiteness served the purposes of European Empire and were the result of sociopolitical needs in the process of ensuring the perpetuation of European (or more generally Western) hegemony. He writes:

This shift from ‘Ancient’ to ‘Aryan’ was determined by sociopolitical rather than ‘purely epistemic’ factors, of course. With this exploitation and effacement of our so-called ‘Dark Continent’, ‘Classical Greece’ becomes the Aryan matrix of ‘Rational Philosophy’ and ‘Universal Culture’ which will climax, supposedly, millennia later, in ‘European Modernity’. (Thomas 2003, 242)

The evolution of the racial construction of European modernity out of discourses of Hellenism positions classical Greece at the center of Western conceptions of universalism. As such, any metaphorical or literal ‘intrusion’ of a foreign (non-Greek / non-European / non-Western) element poses a threat not only to the stability of national identity but to the entire concept of Western universalism. While this holds true for the general rise in anti-

immigrant rhetoric in Europe, it is particularly pertinent to Greece, which is viewed as having the added ‘responsibility’ of preserving the ‘cradle’ of European heritage. It is precisely this line of reasoning and its inherent anxiety for upholding a sense of cultural purity<sup>166</sup> that initiates rhetorical, and in the most extreme instances, physical violence. The emergence of either kind of violence manifests clearly in ethnocentric and nationalist thought, as the rise of the Golden Dawn attests, but, beyond that, it also challenges culturally specific norms of sexuality.

To follow the links that occur between whiteness and heteronormative conceptions of sexuality, I once more turn to the work of Greg Thomas (2003), who explores these connotations in his article “Erotics of Aryanism/Histories of Empire: How ‘White Supremacy’ and ‘Hellenomania’ Construct ‘Discourses of Sexuality’”. Creating a parallel between racialization and sexualization he argues:

Critically, if we define “racialization” as the cultural-historical process by which “race” is conferred, at both individual and collective levels, then we must define “sexualization” as the cultural-historical process by which “sex” or “sexuality” is conferred, both individually and collectively, *as if* this social identification is “natural” and not in fact normative; *as if* social processes of “racialization” and “sexualization” are not in fact one and the same. (Thomas 2003, 239-240)

As such, the influx of non-Western immigrant populations is not only causing reconsiderations of national identity construction, but of sexual identity as well, since it extends to a challenging of heteronormativity, which is a deeply rooted cultural and religious value in Greece.

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<sup>166</sup> ‘Cultural purity’ is, in this instance, referenced as an equivalent of racial purity following the discussion on ‘culture’ being at the core of national and racial construction. This connotation should not be perceived as applicable to any racial construction, as it is pertinent to the case study of Greece.

The challenges to heteronormativity are also fleetingly present in Goro's piece, but there they quickly give space to other discussions. For instance, the scene of the two women seemingly kissing gives way to a discussion on violence and loss. There is a stark contrast between life and death latent in this segment, as the women playfully chase each other amongst a plethora of motionless performers lying on their backs, reminiscent of a sea of corpses. The kiss and the tenderness involved in that duet starkly contrasts to the cruelty of loss and signifies the potential for a new beginning, a new life. As the dancer breathes life into the red balloon, she continues to 'nurture' it, and we witness it grow bigger and bigger, until its walls become so thin that it explodes with a loud pop. Paralleling a life cycle, the turning off of the lights in complete synchronization with the balloon explosion and their slow and gradual illumination, are a further metaphor for the end of one cycle of life and the beginning of another.

The explosion and the startling effect that it has on the viewers are appeased by the soothing entrance of the woman holding the candles. Inspired by Philippine traditional dance, the trajectory that this woman is inscribing in space becomes a referent for other peoples' journeys and their losses. In regards to the people approaching the candles to light up their handkerchiefs, Goro remarks:

Each handkerchief signifies a thing they have lost, a sacred thing that is no longer part of your life. Basically, it represents a person. It is in memory of someone they have lost; and all of them have lost people under questionable circumstances. (my translation from interview with Goro 08/27/2014)

As such, the balloon can also be perceived as referencing a literal explosion thus providing a potential explanation for the 'questionable circumstances' responsible for the loss experienced by these people. The mention to war related violence is just one of the



many different forms of violence discussed in Goro's piece. Especially in this last segment every scene addresses a different manifestation of it. The man being pushed off the stage is an iteration of physical violence inspired by anti-racist rhetoric; the explosion is reminiscent of war violence, whereas at the end of the piece the children playing with the gun-shaped water-hose make room for discussing children's violence that is often accidental, but has fatal consequences nonetheless. In Goro's words:

Children may perceive this [playing with guns] as a game, but they can unwittingly cause harm. For them it is still a game. In the performance, the people were attending a party and were having fun until all of a sudden the water made them stop and their movements shifted to slow motion, as if they were being shot. It was as if they were being shot by the children, yet the children still saw it as a game. In many countries children have guns, and it is a game for them, they are not aware of what they are doing, that is why [in the performance] they run out laughing. (my translation from interview with Goro 08/27/2014)

Beyond these connotations that Goro intentionally portrayed, there are latent references to police violence, as water is often used to subdue popular uprisings. Extending the discussion to the last segment of *Bodies of Resilience* sheds light on further manifestations of the phenomenon of violence as the voiceovers narrate encounters between the performers and Golden Dawn members. The paralleling of their words to the abstract images on the screen provides a haunting visualization as bodies are being dragged and mistreated.

Aside from these rather overt references to physical violence, however, I would like to direct attention to less tangible iterations of it, such as what legal anthropologist Heath Cabot (2014) references as "legal" or "political" violence. What Abdul Nazari admits in the closing voiceover of *Bodies of Resilience*: "I can't go back and I can't leave, because I don't have papers. I've been waiting here for six years and they haven't answered", is what

Cabot terms a “legal limbo<sup>167</sup>” or “political violence” in terms of the gray areas inherent in the asylum granting process that hinder political refugees from acquiring protection in their host country. This sense of ‘limbo’ is also latent in Goro’s piece, as the transitions from one scene to the next and from one group of performers to the next are organized as ‘taking turns’. This requires the rest of the performers to ‘wait’ on the margins of the stage, thus mirroring the ‘limbo’ identified by Cabot as intrinsic to refugee experience in Greece.

Tying all these observations back to the initial discussion on marginality, an additional layer occurs as the investigative lens shifts from the examination of the liminal experience of immigrants and refugees to how dysfunctions in the asylum granting system end up marginalizing Greece in the context of the European Union. In more detail, Cabot explains the ways that this marginalization takes place:

The EU relies on techniques of governance that keep unruly member states in line through legal, political, and –especially– moral forms of marginalization. The crisis of asylum in Greece, much like the current financial crisis – is not just a national predicament affecting a state of Europe’s geopolitical and economic peripheries; it is also seen to undermine the EU’s *moral* integrity as an area of “freedom, security, and justice.” Such narratives of crisis in turn grant moral legitimacy to Greece’s continued political, legal, and financial marginalization within Europe. (emphasis in original Cabot 2014, 24)

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<sup>167</sup> As Cabot explains in her book *On the Doorstep of Europe: Asylum and Citizenship in Greece*, “limbo” is implied in the juridical formulation of asylum seeking. “Asylum applicants occupy positions precariously between undocumented, paperless illegality and ‘refugee’ status. While recognition as a refugee conveys the right to protection in a host country, the category ‘asylum seeker’ connoted a temporary relationship to a nation-state in which the right to stay is itself highly transitory. In seeking asylum, one has asked to be granted the status of refugee, but one has not been ‘recognized’ as such. Asylum seekers thus occupy a neither fully legal nor illegal position of non-belonging, suspended in limbo between multiple bureaucratic stages conveying possible acceptance, rejection, or appeal. If an asylum claim is approved, one is ‘recognized’ as a refugee, but if the claim is rejected, temporary permission to stay is revoked and one is rendered, *de facto*, an undocumented migrant; in Greece, one must leave voluntarily, attempt to employ other methods of regularization, or risk arrest or deportation.” (Cabot 2014, 56-57)

Following the discussion initiated in the second chapter, the situating of Greece on the margins of the EU exercises even greater pressure to assert its position as the cultural core of Europe. According to Herzfeld (1982) in its early years of independence from the Ottoman Empire, Greece was established as a kind of “Ur-Europa”. Yet even in its occurrence as the font of European civilization, it was still perceived to be subject to Orientalizing tendencies. This delicate balance between the East and the West and the constant need to validate Greece’s positionality as Western, or in this instance as a rightful member of the European Union, have further intensified during the crisis.

One of the reasons is that unlike other European countries who had a history of colonization (i.e. being colonizers, such as France, Britain, or Spain) and negotiated the aftermath of their colonizing through immigration, Greece has a history of *being colonized* by the Ottoman Empire and thus it underwent an entirely different process. Emigration on the other hand has been constitutive of Greekness since the beginning of the twentieth century, with the most frequented destinations being the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. These factors attest to the difficulty and perhaps even ‘immaturity’ of Greece in dealing with the issue of immigration as it has extensively intensified since the early 1990s.

Having briefly discussed the inefficacy of the legal and social infrastructure for dealing with immigration, I would now like to bring attention to a different kind of negotiation happening between Greece and the rest of the EU, which not only reflects the aforementioned discussion on marginality, but also adds another layer for understanding the delicate power balances that are in place. This added layer is what Herzfeld has termed

*cryptocolonialism*. According to his description, “an off-shoot” of the phenomenon of colonialism, the term connotes:

the curious alchemy whereby certain countries, buffer zones between the colonized lands and those yet untamed, were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models. Such countries were and are living paradoxes: they are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a sometimes humiliating form of effective dependence. (Herzfeld 2002, 900-901)

Greece has been part of this category as the aftermath of the establishment of Independence from the Ottoman Empire suggest, (for more examples of instances of economic dependence see also Appendix) and has once more fallen into this category following the recent austerity measures and the close monitoring mechanisms that it has been subjected to as part of the bail-out plans. The financial dependence thus becomes one more factor leading to Greece’s marginality within an EU context.

### **Coda**

While Greece’s marginalization in the EU is different than the kind addressed in the performances, both revolve around issues of displacement, discrimination and difference. *Quiet Voice* works to expose these discrepancies and suggests possible ways of co-existence, whereas *Bodies of Resilience* emphasizes the experience in the margins. Overall the auditory aspect of the short film comprises narrations of displacement, experiences characterized by harshness, and concerns for the present. These fragmented narratives provide glimpses into multiple facets of the immigrant/refugee experience as they express their fear (of the authorities, of violence, for their lives), mistrust, mistreatment and discrimination (the blaming of the immigrants), a feeling of entrapment,

and the harsh reality of exploitation (trafficking and prostitution of immigrant women). The tone of these interviews and of the songs that intersect with the auditory excerpts inspire a sense of nostalgia and the need to hold on to one's heritage and culture by engaging with it through music or the use of one's native language to attain a sense of belonging. A similar sense of belonging and nostalgia is explored in *Quiet Voice*, where the performers are reviving appropriated folk dance vocabulary thus hinting at their past and a possible life prior to their migratory journey.

The fragmented nature of my description of these pieces (in four acts) mirrors the fragmentary nature of immigrant experience, but also serves to isolate the inherent narratives and organize them thematically. Additionally, the act of paralleling the excerpts of the two performances hints at the multiple layers that are in place and illuminates the similar concerns that exist for migrants as the same issues and concepts are being addressed in both of the performances discussed here, as well as other contemporary performances involving immigrants.

### 3.3 Other Contemporary Migrant Performances: A Look Behind the Scenes

Some of the performers that participated in *Quiet Voice* and *Bodies of Resilience* are also members of a group called ELANADISTIKANOUME (Έλα να δεις τι κάνουμε / Come see what we do), a performance ensemble largely comprising migrants and refugees from non-Western countries who reside in Athens. Some of the members hold official residence permits, or citizenship, whereas others are still experiencing legal limbo. The founder of the group is Panagiotis Andronikidis, who collaborated in several projects with

Despina Stamos and the Modern Dance Awareness Society based in New York. The collective was established in 2009 and since then it continuously addresses issues pertinent to life in the Greek capital and to national sovereignty. Performance studies scholar Hypatia Vourloumis writes about the group's critical engagement with the aforementioned topics and summarizes their mission statement as follows:

Informed by its experiences of dispossession, illegality, and the constant interrogation of borders, the group's call is for belonging-in-difference within an always-already ambiguous sovereign demarcation. Instigated by the necessary imperative to resist current global forces governing migrating bodies, ELANADISTIKANOUME's cultural enactments can be seen as refusing those powers that, in Achille Mbembe's words, 'dictate who may live and who must die'. (Vourloumis 2014, 241-242)

Having interviewed Panagiotis Andronikidis as well as Despina Stamos for the purpose of this research, I utilize this section to shed light on the processes that these choreographers engaged with in order to render migrant subjectivities visible. I take this opportunity to discuss other topics that their work brings forth in relation to migration and in doing so I also turn to Konstantinos Mihos, who has likewise produced works in collaboration with migrants, to provide further complexity to the narratives pertinent to contemporary migrant performances in Athens. The title of this section as being a look 'behind the scenes', is used to signify that this section primarily focuses on the choreographers' recollections regarding their creative processes and other experiences that occurred during their productions, as the choreographers have shared them with me during the interview process.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> The quoted excerpts closely translate the transcribed interviews, but for the purpose of preserving a continuity in the narrative of this section I have often edited the oral histories to allow for flow of speech.

ELANADISTIKANOUME's primary purpose of formation in 2009 had been to create a forum, where immigrants would be able to come in contact with Greeks and expand their networks. Other reasons that sparked its creation had to do with a need to bring the arts to an underrepresented part of the population, as well as the political responsibility to engage with immigrants and allow their voices to be heard. This process was facilitated through performance initiatives such as a series of works titled *PassTresPass*<sup>169</sup> presented as a site-specific work at the Kypseli market, or in various anti-racist festivals in Greece.

One of the first productions of the group had been *Xenitia* (*Ξενιτιά* – a Greek word with no direct English translation describing the experience of being a migrant and living abroad), where they drew a parallel between the experiences of the immigrants comprising the group and the Greek experience of emigration. Andronikidis talks about the inspiration behind this production and how the founding of ELANADISTIKANOUME coincided with the crisis and the popularization of anti-immigrant rhetoric.

In 2009, we started the preparations for a performance called *Ξενιτιά* regarding the stories of Greek *metanástes* (emigrants) from Belgium and Germany. We ended up having 24 images from the lives of emigrants; some were at the cafes, others at the doctor's, at the passport issuing service, the train station in Munich, narrations from letters that they would send to their parents... The reason why I chose stories of Greek people is that *xenitia*, regardless of ideological beliefs, is something that every Greek family has experienced. It is thus fair to engage with it/talk about it, as it is not tangled in political issues of the right or the left. That is why we did not use the term *metanástis*<sup>170</sup> (im/emigrant), but preferred the Greek word *xenitia*.

The founding of the group happened to coincide with the beginning of the crisis, but it was mostly sparked by the parliamentary rise of a hostile stance towards immigrants (popularized first by LAOS and later intensified by the Golden Dawn). For me, one of the reasons why I wanted to facilitate a performance group

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<sup>169</sup> *PassTresPass* is the overarching title for a series of documentaries, performances and video-dance projects produced sporadically by Despina Stamos and Jill Woodward in collaboration with ELANADISTIKANOUME.

<sup>170</sup> *Metanástis* (μετανάστης) is the singular form of the noun, whereas *metanástes* (μετανάστες) is the plural.

of immigrants was because I wanted to grant them a voice. Every chance they have to speak their own language as part of a performance, I ask them to do so loudly, because they don't have other chances. That is why most immigrants are very soft-spoken, they speak in very low voices, very quietly. This may also have to do with a sense of shame, in terms of not speaking Greek so well, but I also think it is social, because they cannot say how things are. (my translation from interview with Andronikidis 04/09/2014)

Providing immigrants with a voice is an additional reason why most performances of ELANADISTIKANOUME happen on the street. It is a matter of making their art accessible to other immigrants and at the same time raising awareness on the issue of immigration. While the objective of raising awareness is shared amongst many of the collectives working with immigrants, the means of achieving it often differ. Konstantinos Mihos, whose work has been presented in diverse venues, ranging from the street to the Megaron –one of the most prestigious performance platforms in Athens –explains:

Already since 2004, we [Lathos Kinisis dance company] had planned to present the audiences with the issue of migration but not by focusing on what good people are the immigrants, or how much we are harming them. In 2005 I worked on a performance with children of political refugees from non-Western countries and children from Gerakas.<sup>171</sup> The performance was met with great success and it was hosted by Megaron and the Festival of Athens. The purpose however was not to raise awareness on the issue of migration/immigrants, but to discuss the corruption of immigrants from the Greek culture. That's what we addressed in *Battles of Marathon*<sup>172</sup> (Μάχες του Μαραθώνα). (my translation from interview with Mihos, 05/11/2014)

In *Battles of Marathon*, Mihos utilizes the historical conflict between the ancient Greeks and the Persians to create a parallel between 'native' Greeks and immigrants. The participating children narrate the history of the battle in many different languages and then

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<sup>171</sup> Gerakas is the place where one of the artistic high schools is located. In this reference it implies affiliation with the students at this high-school.

<sup>172</sup> The performance can be accessed on vimeo at [vimeo.com/33227962](https://vimeo.com/33227962) (accessed 10/14/2014).



break in two large groups, with Mihos coming between them and announcing a dance battle between Greeks and immigrants. The categorizations of the two conflicting groups vary as the battle takes on different forms reordering the division of the groups according to other discriminatory identifiers, such as “chubby kids versus fit kids”, “good students against bad”, “children in love, or not in love”, “those whose parents are divorced, against those whose parents are still together”. Every battle takes place to Greek popular music and the children often perform *tsiftetéli* or *zeibékiko* and receive a response from their ‘opponent’ through breakdance or hip-hop. Through this exercise, the hybridity of cultural influences is highlighted while it also sheds light on the ways that Greek culture is appropriating diverse cultural traits and homogenizing them.

### 3.3.1 Making Strategic Choices

Regardless of the approach taken, or the venue where performances pertaining to migration are being held, the fact remains that any kind of engagement with the topic of population movement serves to enhance the circulating discourse concerned with the shifting urban demographic and the challenges that this poses to the established perceptions of Greekness. During the crisis, the choice to perform on the street can be a strategic one that partially alleviates financial concerns, yet in doing so it raises safety concerns for the performers’ well-being, as was the case for *Bodies of Resilience* and the various iterations of *PassTresPass*.

During my interview with Despina Stamos and Jill Woodward, I asked them whether their choice to work in public spaces affected the willingness of the participants

to become involved in the project. As the quoted dialogue attests, fear of being in public was a very present concern due to the alarming rise of ethnocentrism.

**Stamos:** We ended up being less site-specific.

**Woodward:** We had that conversation all the time.

**Stamos:** Yes we talked about it all the time! We tried to take them to place where we felt they would be safe.

**Woodward:** Where they would be less vulnerable.

**Stamos:** And we ended up working with the anti-racist festival a lot, because we felt like that was a safe place for them. [...] I mean part of the original score was walking through the neighborhood as a group and that no longer was the case for future performances. [...] I feel that it is really important for people to feel safe and to be safe. That was one of the top priorities. One of the project's principles was to make people feel more comfortable in their bodies. (interview with Stamos and Woodward 07/05/2014)

The choice to have their latest project result in a screen-dance rather than a public performance was also a strategic choice in terms of ensuring people's safety. As Woodward observed "you can show a film and not put anyone in danger, immediate harm" (interview with Stamos and Woodward 07/05/2014). Yet, in live performances where the presentation is not mediated by film and thus the performers are not protected, the choreographers take different measures to ensure their safety. As Andronikidis recalls:

In any case, what we strive for is the safety of the immigrants. Now most of them have legal documentation, but sometimes the group performs and not everyone has the required documents. We cooperate with others who will protect us in case something happens. At the same time however, some of the participants have gone to jail because they didn't have papers [legal documentation of residence] and one of them had been attacked by fascists two years ago [this is the story narrated in *Bodies of Resilience*].

Being in large groups and moving around as a group is one of the ways that we can ensure their safety. We never go out on the street without being prepared. And it has happened; once during a performance someone came in and started yelling "what are you doing here with all the blacks?" and other derogatory things, and we had to make him leave by force. (my translation from interview with Andronikidis 04/09/2014)

In contrast to these accounts focusing on the dangers present for the participants, one of Mihos' street performances subverts this and challenges the safety of the audience members, who are put in the position commonly experienced by migrants.

The last piece we did for immigrants, was in 2010-2011 called *Bacchae* (Βάκχες). The performance started in the studio and was called "audition Bacchae". The audience had to move through [follow the performers] Euripides Street –that's why it's called *Bacchae*- and end up at the meat market. The topic of the performance was that this group is trying to choreograph Bacchae but does not succeed. However, what the work implied was that you cannot talk about immigration *with* immigrants, because immigrants are really something 'other'; if you go about it this way you appropriate<sup>173</sup> it. The whole experiment was that the audience had to move through this space on their own at night, without protection and they were thus called to truly experience the 'otherness' of the immigrant, who is on Euripides Street selling drugs. We went there and created a dance piece and we knew that this was where their stash was at, so they were grabbing the stash and started running, because they thought the police was going to come. The audience was truly terrified. (my translation from interview with Mihos, 2014)

At the risk of sounding as if he is essentializing the 'otherness' of immigrant experience, Mihos makes a valid point by arguing that witnessing a performance *about* migration, or performed *by* immigrants is not as effective as immersing yourself in an experience where you temporarily 'become the Other'. Of course a counter-argument would be that even this experience of taking the audience through a tour of a dangerous neighborhood, and thus achieving their temporary 'othering', cannot be compared to the actual experience of occupying the political position of the 'Other', which is a persistent reality, rather than an ephemeral occurrence that people voluntarily tap into for the duration of a performance.

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<sup>173</sup> In Greek, the term used by Michos was: το οικειοποιείσαι (*oikeiopoïisai*), which does not have an immediate English translation but is best explained as you make it familiar, or you become so familiar with something that you almost think it belongs to you / it is yours. In the context of the overall quote I made the choice to translate it as 'appropriating' because of the implications of his overall statement and the connotations of the term used in Greek.

### 3.3.2 Gender Construction

Entangled with narratives of fear, violence, and delinquency, contemporary migrant performances are also concerned with problematizing the gendered construction of Greekness and in particular of masculinity, which is one of the constituents of the Greek nation. A challenge to heteronormativity has already been discussed through the scholarly work of Greg Thomas and the remarks of Athena Athanasiou, who approach the construction of sexuality and gender through discourses of ethnocentrism and Hellenomania. ELANADISTIKANOUME proposes a different approach to engaging with Greek gender construction, by calling immigrants to perform *zeibékiko*, the quintessential dance of Greek masculinity and *levendiá* (λεβεντιά)<sup>174</sup>.

*Zeibékiko* is a very Greek dance, and to a large extent it emits this sense of being macho. The song that we used is by Loizos, from a movie that was made during the junta. I taught this dance drawing on the movie *Evdokia*, and the performance of a sergeant in a tavern. The directions that I gave them were “you are eagles, and you fly high looking at the world from the sky, with your arms open and there has to be a simplicity in your movements”.

In PASSStresPASS<sup>175</sup>, there is a scene at the beginning that looks as if they are balancing on a tightrope. From the moment that an immigrant leaves his/her country, they are stepping on a tightrope, they fall, they falter, they get up again...The way they walk on that rope is not pitiful, their arms are open and high. As if they know that where they are headed there won't be any obstacles, no matter how many walls are being built [borders], how many obstacles are being placed, the migrants will keep coming and going. It has always been that way. (my translation from interview with Andronikidis 2014)

Tying the performance of *zeibékiko* to a movie that has historical value for the political history of leftist movements in Greece and having non-Greek performers engage with it

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<sup>174</sup> *Levendiá* can most accurately be translated as valiance. It is an aspired ideal of bravery, valor, courage and fortitude that should be demonstrated by all males.

<sup>175</sup> This quote refers to the opening of PASSStresPASS as it was presented in the anti-racist festival in 2013. A documented version of the performance can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ5ErXuYkCk> (accessed 10/14/2014).

works to question the role of history in the construction of national identity, while at the same time it challenges stereotypical conceptions of Greek masculinity. Commenting on this same segment of their performance, Vourloumis observes that in citing Greek culture in relation to their own time, “the performers responded to and subverted their positioning as foreigners within the nation” (Vourloumis 2014, 245). As such, the act of opening up this aspect of Greek culture to people that were previously considered ‘outsiders’ serves to update conceptions of nationalism and facilitates a culture of acceptance.

Beyond the question of acceptance and incorporation into the local culture, however, another issue that these performances of *zeibékiko* brings forth concerns the ‘feminization’ of immigrant narratives, which is hereby being subverted. In the beginning of this chapter I noted a connection between the narratives presented as part of the performances and the narratives that occur in the emergent genre of immigrant fiction. Georgia Gotsi, who explores immigrant voices in contemporary Greek fiction, observes a “feminization of migration” (2012, 158) because most of the narratives occurring in fiction are presented through a woman’s voice. Observing this trend and its metaphorical implications, I would argue that in a patriarchal context, the feminization of migration is also a political move to confine the immigrants to a position of inferiority and present them as weaker, or as unequal. Thus in the aforementioned context, the performance of *zeibekiko*, by both male and female immigrants, is a symbolic act that challenges, and hopefully also subverts, their weakened positionality. The connotations of *zeibékiko* to freedom, enhance that symbolism even further.

Lastly in regards to the impact that such performances have on the gender construction of Greekness, I think that if they have managed to instigate a subversion in terms of the immigrants' position within the nation, as Vourloumi noted above, then they definitely have potential for unsettling long-established social notions of heteronormativity. I would like to think that the example of subverting the feminization of immigrants is one step towards that direction.

### 3.4 Rearticulating Greek Citizenship & the New Urban-Rural Divide

The discussion on migration and the specific attention paid to *immigration* and to the often-illegal influx of people has allowed many conversations to arise, concerning the racial construction of Greekness, class relations and gender politics. Since the interrelations between these discourses and the role of violence, universalism, marginality, and labor have already been addressed in the previous sections, this section discusses the ways in which the newly established rhetorics serve to re-envision and rearticulate understandings of Greekness.

I argue that the recognition of external influences, such as diverse cultural histories, music, and dance and their incorporation –and often appropriation- in the works discussed in this chapter have all been part of a process of acculturation and adaptation to this new highly diverse demographic. Beyond mere acculturation, however, as many of the refugees are gaining citizenship and we are now passing to a second (and sometimes even third) generation of immigrants, the notion of ‘citizenship’ is under regular scrutiny, as its definitions keep shifting and expanding. The first major change to the discourse of

citizenship was brought about in the early 1990s, following the entry of Greece into the European Union (1981) and the acquisition of a ‘European’ citizenship<sup>176</sup>, supplementary to the national one. The other significant change in the citizenship acquisition process was noted in 2010 with the passing of a new bill forwarded by the then ruling PASOK government.

The new bill sought to facilitate the process of naturalization and citizenship for immigrants. Up until 2010, children born in Greece to migrant parents could not apply for citizenship until they reached eighteen years of age. Upon initiating the citizenship process, they “had to demonstrate continuous legal residence in Greece for at least ten of the twelve years preceding their application” (Cabot 2014, 228-229). The amended bill reduced the required years to seven for children “whose parents had been residing in Greece legally for five or more years, or who had successfully completed at least six years of school”<sup>177</sup> (Cabot 2014, 299). As Cabot continues to elaborate, this revised legislation became a point of major disagreement and was eventually deemed unconstitutional, which led to further revisions. The legislation is currently under a process of review and as of October 2014 the major points of critique of the previous legislation regard the granting of citizenship by birthright, and the reduction of the required period of schooling to 6 years. Instead, a person needs to have reached eighteen years of age and the decision to acquire Greek citizenship

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<sup>176</sup> The acquisition of European citizenship as supplementary to national citizenship has been established following the signing of the Maastricht treaty in 1992 and has been in effect since 1993. European citizenship is granted to any lawful citizen in any country of the EU and affords rights, such as the right to free movement across EU member states, settlement and employment, or the right to vote in European elections. (This list of rights is indicative and by no means exhaustive.)

<sup>177</sup> The reference here to ‘years of school’ pertains to an ancient Greek quote by Isocrates, who advocated that a Greek citizen is he/she who partakes in Greek education. Greek schooling is one of the main prerequisites for citizenship acquisition.

is contingent on the renouncement of any other citizenship previously held by the candidate (no dual citizenship), as well as a minimum of nine years of schooling in Greece, which is the mandatory education required for natives. As I am writing this, the country is still preparing for national elections and the new government will define the direction of this bill.

This brief summary of the continuous legal revisions in regards to citizenship acquisition is a statement in favor of the fluidity and instability of Greek citizenship that is constantly under construction. In the same way that the issue of citizenship is currently under scrutiny, the racial undertones of Greekness are also being rearticulated. The acquisition of citizenship from non-Western countries challenges the long established ties between Hellenism and whiteness and introduces a previously un-encountered diversity. It is precisely this diversity that is perceived as a ‘threat’ to Hellenic purity, which fuels the anti-immigrant rhetoric of ethnocentric ideologies and extreme nationalists. The rhetoric of ‘threat’ is further enhanced by the populist discourse of ‘intrusion’ of foreigners, as both are similarly concerned with the destabilization of Greece from the core of the West, which, as the second chapter has articulated, has been a major point of anxiety during the crisis.

Beyond legal and racial understandings of Greekness, an additional layer of reconsideration regards class perceptions. The significant rise of unemployment rates in the financial aftermath of the crisis has deepened the class-divide as the financial downfall and the limited job opportunities have forced many people to explore other alternatives. There has been an increased mobility of people from urban centers to rural areas, or from Greece to other countries. This has accordingly shifted the dynamic in the urban-rural



divide, as well as between native Greeks and immigrants. Immigrants appear to be imitating this move to the outskirts of the city and to Greece's rural areas in search for employment opportunities. According to anthropologist and labor studies scholar Christopher Lawrence (2011) the class divide has not been eradicated; it has just taken another form. Instead, the perceived inequality between urban and rural Greeks has been reconfigured as a distinction between rural Greeks and immigrant laborers. As he notes in his book *Blood and Oranges*:

During my fieldwork, I was often struck by the stark contradiction between the perception held by many people that social inequality had decreased and the reality of a growing dependence on impoverished and marginalized labor. (Lawrence 2011, 112)

The Greeks' move to rural areas rearticulates the urban-rural divide and diversifies it from previous understandings. In chapter one, the urban-rural divide has been examined in terms of the value attributed to rural embodied (folk) practices, but the recent moves to the outskirts and the incorporation of immigrants in this equation paints a different image of rural Greece that had been absent from that discussion. Contrary to the chronological period discussed in chapter one, rural Greece has recently gained renewed importance because following Greece's accession to the EU there has been an extensive reorganization of the productive sector, and in particular of agriculture. These changes have had significant impact on the power balances characteristic of the urban-rural divide. As Lawrence observes they reflect a new understanding of 'freedom'.

The effects of the neoliberal production of governmentality can be seen in agriculturalist households in the widespread perception of the dramatic increase in 'equality' and 'freedom' among rural Greeks. Most Greeks feel that the 'modernization' of the countryside has freed them from the fetters of gender, age, and class distinctions that characterize the post-war era. (Lawrence 2011, 5)

The cutting of some of the pre-existing ties between rural Greece and its peasant or inferior connotations thus signifies an internal shift in the understandings of Greekness. The urban prototype becomes more and more equated to its rural counterpart, thus bridging the previous chasm between the two and gradually smoothing internal inequalities in regards to gendered and class-based distinctions. I would argue that immigrant labor has greatly contributed to this bridging process but in doing so it has deepened the native-foreigner divide as immigrants continue to be understood as ‘cheap labor’ thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of exploitation.

### 3.5 Concluding Thoughts

The inclusion of immigrants in Greek dance practices and their increasing involvement in the arts are slowly but steadily beginning to instigate and reflect the evident changes in the urban demographic. While many of these dance initiatives up to this point could be considered rather marginal based on the venues where they were held, there is a growing interest in the topic of immigration as the examples discussed in this chapter have established. In particular, there is also an increasing visibility attributed to these issues that are beginning to reach wider audiences as immigrant narratives become more popular.

My choice to follow the trajectories and narratives of choreographers who, as migrants themselves, are creating and presenting their work in Athens, has illuminated the ways in which global circulations of embodied practices from non-Greek agents inform and alter the formulations of contemporary Greekness and the national body politic. In continuing this inquiry in a future project, and to establish whether perceptions of

Greekness are indeed changing globally, it would be essential to extend the research to recently established communities of emigrant artists abroad. In this way the various re-articulations of Greekness will become clear as the comparison of emigrant and immigrant subjectivities will shed light to the global circulations of the discourse.

# Conclusion

## Some closing thoughts, and an ongoing exercise in belonging

“Other futures may require other pasts.”  
(Mark Mazower, *Salonica: City of Ghosts*)

Having reached the end of this project I would like to make a full circle and revisit a point mentioned at the very beginning of this dissertation: the fact that the driving forces for the articulation of this work have been deeply personal and fuelled by my individual desire to acquire a sense of belonging. Although this project has come to an end, my trajectory towards acquiring a sense of belonging has not yet come to a halt. The landscape of the crisis in Greece is still in constant fluctuation, as the latest political developments present even more questions about what the future holds, rather than answers.

Resisting the urge to constantly rewrite and update the chapters based on ongoing developments and newly introduced variables, I have decided to treat this project as a temporal window into a society in continuous fluctuation. As such, the main body, and in particular chapters two and three, have captured an image of Greece and of Greek contemporary dance as it manifested during 2014. As I write this conclusion in the early months of 2015, my aim is to capture a few more fleeting moments in the time that followed the completion of my fieldwork. Thus, I do not perceive of this section as a conclusion, in the sense of arriving at a closure in my theoretical explorations. Instead I view it as an ongoing reflexive process. This is mirrored in the format of this section, which is comprised of musings and some transcribed notes from my fieldwork notebook. Some of these notes

correspond to aspects of the fieldwork process that have not been extensively discussed in the main body of this dissertation but still tremendously informed my inquiry, whereas others refer to the time following the completion of fieldwork. In the process of completing this dissertation, my research has undergone various stages, such as intensive archival research during the first few months (December 2013 – March 2014), interviews throughout my fieldwork and attendance to numerous performances. The progression of the chapters reflects this trajectory and mirrors the various stages in Greece's political history. Thus my aim has been to emphasize the temporality of the project and to affirm its constantly shifting and continuously evolving nature. Especially in the political sphere, the landscape has changed significantly since I left. While it is at the moment impossible to predict the direction that these new developments will take, or the impact they will have on dance, changes are certainly underway.

***January, 2014***  
***Where is Greek Dance?***

A few weeks after I arrived in Athens I came across a six-week seminar at the Onassis Cultural Center (OCC). The title of the seminar was *The only rule: There are no rules* and it promised to explore the development of dance after the 1960s. At the time, I was still in the process of researching for my first chapter, so I thought it would be a great chance to learn about the history of Greek dance following the 1960s, especially since the advertising email mentioned that we would be looking at excerpts from the works of both Greeks and international choreographers.

It turned out that it was like an introductory dance history seminar on postmodern dance primarily as it developed in the US, and included little discussion on how it

influenced the Greek scene. The historicization of postmodernism gave way to European contemporary dance and examined famous choreographers and works such as Wim Vandekeybus, Ohad Naharin, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, and Xavier Le Roy, to mention a few. The mention of Greek choreographers came at the very end, and was limited to seven people and companies (Dimitris Papaioannou, Konstantinos Rigos, Kontantinos Mihos, Antigone Gyra, SineQuaNon dance company, Patricia Apergi, and RootlessRoot), drawing from various periods and approaches, yet focusing primarily on those that are most popular in the local scene and recognizable internationally.

I remember feeling frustrated; maybe it had to do with my expectations coming into this seminar. Given the limited scholarly sources on the topic of Greek dance history, I had entered this experience expecting to acquire an outline for the development of Greek dance since the 1960s.

*But we are in Greece, what about the local scene? Some of the choreographers discussed rarely even came to Greece, so why is it important to present and discuss their work?*

Interrogating my frustration more carefully, I realized that it was motivated by that initial desire to belong. In this instance, it manifested as a need for this project to belong, to acquire a position and to recognize the importance of the Greek contemporary dance scene in the context of a seminar targeting to educate future Greek audiences.

*The performances of the European and other international ensembles mentioned in the seminar more often than not have access to extensive advertising campaigns both on TV and in print and most of the time sell out. Many Greek choreographers, on the other hand, hardly ever experience such success (perhaps with the exception of some of the ensembles and choreographers noted in the seminar). Why not educate Greek audiences to watch and*

*appreciate Greek dance?* <sup>178</sup> *Why choose to reproduce and reaffirm canonical views of European dance rather than expand audience's understanding of the local scene?*

The hierarchies of canonization that determine whose work is hailed as 'high art' seemed to still be very much in place. It seemed to me that the anxiety to approximate a sense of Europeanness, which I have extensively unpacked throughout the chapters, also became the determining factor for dance and dance audiences alike. On the other hand I consider this initiative of educating dance audiences by introducing them to dance history principles and contexts a major and important development in the field of dance in Greece, especially since the structure of the educational system does not promote dance as an object of theoretical and academic study. On the other hand, there is still a lot of work to be done in order to decenter a potentially emergent field of Greek dance studies from canonical European frameworks and to develop an analytical structure that acknowledges and works with the local dance scene and its histories and narratives.

***September, 2014***

***The performances I did not write about***

In the months that followed, my initial frustration and the question of "where is Greek dance?" faded away as I attended numerous festivals (Arc for Dance, Athens Video Dance Project, Festival for New Greek choreographers, Athens and Epidaurus Festival,

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<sup>178</sup> In March of 2015, a new round of seminars will run at the OCC called *We are coming closer to the Greek Choreographers at OCC* (Ερχόμαστε πιο κοντά στους Έλληνες χορογράφους στη Στέγη). According to the advertising blurb, the seminar offers an introduction to the work of Greek choreographers and the techniques or approaches that they are utilizing. It also facilitates meetings between the participants and some choreographers and Q & A sessions. Interestingly, as if responding to my question posed above, the opening of the seminar statement reads: "Even though we increasingly attend the performances of Greek choreographers, many of them still remain unknown. This theoretical seminar aims to bring us closer to the works of new artists, but also of artists who have already gained the trust of Greek and international audiences." (my translation - email from the OCC listserv received on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015)

amongst others) and many independent performances in all kinds of venues throughout Athens. The overarching thematic of the performances that were being presented during that period has been explicitly addressed in chapter two. As it was demonstrated there, looking at these performances collectively, one can observe the overall direction of embodied discourse during the crisis, which moved towards a critical engagement with the shifts in the sociopolitical landscape. However, zooming in and focusing on the particularities of each of these performances, it becomes clear that there are still many productions that lack an in-depth engagement with a theoretical framework to support their choreographic explorations of such topics, or an experimental and fresh approach to movement and composition.

This category is primarily formed by ensembles that are being created ‘overnight’<sup>179</sup> by recent graduates of professional dance schools, who have had limited exposure outside the institution they studied in. I once belonged in this category myself, when as young dance graduates in 2007 we formed a group with some friends and performed for the Athens Dance Month festival. While there are increasing numbers of choreographers who study abroad and earn degrees in choreography, such initiatives still comprise an active part of the Greek dance scene and should therefore not be overlooked. Oftentimes the approaches of these groups are reminiscent of student projects, rather than being complete works. I do not intend for these lines to be read as an exercise in critiquing

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<sup>179</sup> I use the term ‘overnight’ in reference to ensembles to hint at the ephemerality of such groups being formed by recent dance graduates (see also chapter one: section 1.4.2.). It is a common phenomenon for dancers to form a group with some friends in order to apply at a venue or festival to present their work, especially if that venue requires the applicants to be dance companies. A lot of times the groups dissolve after the performance or festival is over.



such productions, because I recognize them as a phase in the process of becoming a choreographer, or establishing oneself as a performer. On the contrary, I am drawing attention to these occurrences to acknowledge them as a subsequent aftermath of the educational (infra)structure in place for dance in Greece.

Having had the privilege to experience dance, both as a performer/student and as a scholar in various countries and educational settings, I have now come to appreciate such productions. During my fieldwork, in my discussions with audiences and dance scholars the phenomenon of ‘overnight’ ensembles was often sharply criticized or devalued. I have come to realize that it is unfair to evaluate such endeavors critically and in line with respective productions of recent graduates from other European institutions and conservatories. On the contrary, they need to be evaluated in the context in which they occur and based on the means, and the access that students have had in either educational context.

I must admit that in the beginning of my fieldwork I was reluctant to engage with such works and deemed them inappropriate for inclusion in this dissertation. Having come to an end, and having chosen to include other performances, I believe that these ‘overnight’ endeavors deserve a place, even if it is amongst the “ones that I didn’t write about”, because they still significantly inform and shape the bigger picture of the Greek dance scene. The recognition and inclusion of such works also gives rise to another issue that I hinted at throughout this work, which regards the venues, where the performances take place. Presenting work at a prestigious venue often assists in establishing a choreographer in the local scene. Therefore, having access to venues such as the OCC, the Megaron, or the

Festival of Athens can boost one's career. The question thus becomes: Who has access to what kinds of venues?

In the Introduction, it was noted how dance is still to a large extent 'consumed' predominantly by dancers. This has been particularly the case for small productions, such as those of 'overnight' ensembles, which are presented in lesser known and relatively marginal venues. I argue that the venue also determines the audience, as attending performances at certain established venues (such as the Megaron, the OCC, the Odeon of Herodus Attikus, or the Festival of Athens & Epidaurus) carries connotations about the audience's wealth and cultural cultivation, and thus becomes a way of establishing status quo. Choreographers with international studies and exposure tend to be more marketable and are more likely to be invited to present work in one of the established venues, as opposed to people who have not had access to international exposure and are just starting out. This results in an unequal treatment within the Greek dance scene that continuously promotes some choreographers and works and marginalizes others. One example is the *Festival of New Choreographers*, which was first organized in February of 2014 at the OCC. Even though the title of the festival proclaims an opportunity for *new* choreographers, the four choreographers<sup>180</sup> that presented work in 2014 were already known in the Greek dance scene and had created works abroad as well.

Thus, while I have argued for an increasing sense of activism and dance as a site of advocacy throughout this project, I would also like to acknowledge that the type of activism

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<sup>180</sup> The choreographers that presented their work at the 1<sup>ST</sup> Festival of New Choreographers in 2014 were Elpida Orphanidou in collaboration with Juan Perno, Paul Blackman and Christina Gouzeli (with their group called *Jukstapoz*), Lenio Kaklea (a student of Lucinda Childs, who performed one of Child's choreographies) and Panagiota Kallimani.

and advocacy discussed in this dissertation was mostly present in works that occurred in what I referred to as ‘marginal’ venues, thus hinting at an analogy between lack of access and advocacy.

***December 2014***

***Coffee and Homework: One last encounter***

In December, as the Christmas holidays are approaching, I find myself sitting at my desk in the US looking at the light snowflakes dancing beneath the glass windows. This is the first time I will not be spending the holidays at home with my family. My computer screen glares brightly when I take my eyes off the window to return to writing. As I work through edits of various drafts, I have a browser window open playing a live stream of a Greek newscast to the side of my screen. Most of the reporting becomes a background buzzing noise as my attention drifts away from it to focus on the piece of writing in the open document on the other half of the screen. Every now and then I pause to sip on a hot cup of coffee and listen intently to the stream; it is my primary window into the current political developments in Greece. The panelists in the TV station are arguing and raising their voices, which causes me to shift my attention to them. They are counting votes and calculating the possible outcomes of the upcoming parliamentary elections for presidency.

The system of presidential parliamentary democracy in Greece requires the election of a President of the Hellenic Republic (Πρόεδρος της Δημοκρατίας – *Próedros tis Demokratias*), which is an honorary axiom similar to being the head of state. Presidential elections take place only within the parliament –no participation of the public is involved –and they were scheduled to happen on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, 2014. According to the constitutional procedure, the governing parties propose some candidates for the presidency

and parliament members vote in favor of the suggested candidates. The ruling coalition (Nea Demokratia and PASOK)<sup>181</sup> proposed the candidacy of Stavros Dimas, but did not manage to secure enough votes. Dimas was the only candidate to run in the presidential elections, as the other parties refrained from suggesting anyone. Up to three rounds of presidential elections are allowed to take place<sup>182</sup> until a president is elected with the majority of votes. Failure to elect someone after three attempts results in dissolution of the parliament and signals the need for new governmental elections. The three elections took place between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> of December and none of those resulted in a majority vote for Dimas.

I watched as the same panelists got together and argued over their calculations and speculations on the outcome before and after each round. In the meantime, various scandals concerning accusations of bribery of parliament members to vote in favor of Dimas were fuelling the ongoing unrest. Following the last inconclusive round, the governmental elections were scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2015 allowing very little time for pre-electoral campaigns to be carried out. The images on my screen changed, and were dominated by public referenda and predictions for the election of the radical left party SYRIZA, which promoted anti-austerity policies and raised alarms throughout Europe for a possible exit of Greece from the Eurozone (known as GREXIT).

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<sup>181</sup> Nea Demokratia, had been elected as the first party in the governmental elections of 2012 but due to the fact that the percentage of votes that they secured was not enough to get the majority of seats in the parliament, they had to rule in coalition with another party. They agreed on a coalition with PASOK, the socialist party that ranked third at the time.

<sup>182</sup> Information taken from the Greek Constitution (last revised 2008), Article 32: Paragraphs 3 and 4

Pondering what home would look like in the event of GREXIT, I put on my coat, packed my PC and stepped out into the cold. Two blocks from the house I entered a coffee shop and made myself comfortable in one of the tables at the back. I glanced around. Most of the tables were occupied by people intensely working on their tablets, reading leisurely, or studying. No one was there to socialize. I wasn't either. The barista announced that my coffee was ready (one 12 ounce cappuccino) and I made my way to get it. Settling behind my computer screen and warming my palms around the hot coffee mug I smirked and opened a new document to write the *Introduction*. "Coffee and Homework" I typed, my secret connection to home.

### ***January 2015***

#### ***Political change and revisiting the issue of illegal immigration***

The first half of January was marked by intense pre-electoral campaigns; I followed closely through online streaming programs of Greek newscasts and compared them to international headlines. The one thing that all sources seemed to agree with was that this round of elections was a crucial and definitive one that would determine Greece's position in the Eurozone for years to come. Polls predicted that SYRIZA would be the first party and that the Golden Dawn would once more secure enough votes to enter the parliament as the third party.

I watched as my social media pages swarmed with my friends' predictions and their admonitions against voting for the Golden Dawn. The anxiety for the outcome also gave fuel to a campaign titled *I cannot vote*<sup>183</sup>, which was first initiated in 2012 and

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<sup>183</sup> Details for the campaign can be found at the following website: <http://www.icannotvote.org/> (accessed 02/09/2015)

advocates for the right of expatriate Greeks to vote electronically or over post. Having been unable to vote in 2012, due to being abroad, this campaign felt very personal and instigated a sense of helplessness along with a desire to find a way to contribute to this critical moment for the country. The issue of expatriates not being able to vote from abroad has only recently received such attention, because the crisis led many people to migrate and seek work outside of Greece. While some people have the means to travel back in order to vote, the majority do not. Additionally I believe that the alarming rise of ethnocentrism has also become one of the factors that gave rise to this campaign. Expatriates felt a pressure to vote to influence the results and assist in lowering the percentages of the extreme right.

The tragic event of the Charlie Hebdo shooting<sup>184</sup> that took place in France on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 partially diverted the attention of Greek media away from the pre-electoral campaigns and refueled anti-immigrant rhetoric. Several marches were organized throughout Europe advocating for freedom of speech, and smaller scale demonstrations also took place in Greece. The Greek prime minister at the time, Antonis Samaras, attended the Charlie Hebdo march organized in Paris in solidarity with other European prime ministers and chancellors. Upon his return, he continued his electoral campaign and made sure to incorporate his experience in Paris into his public addresses. In one of his speeches, I recall him noting the following: “You saw what happened in France! Here, some people are welcoming more illegal immigrants and giving away citizenship.” His words were a

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<sup>184</sup> Charlie Hebdo was the name of a French satirical newspaper that was subject to a terrorist attack on the morning of January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. According to news-sources (such as CNN and BBC) the attackers were two Islamist terrorists who killed 11 people and injured 11 others. The reasons behind the attack were deemed to be religious, which re-instigated discussions across Europe on the integration of immigrant populations and their acculturation.

targeted comment for SYRIZA, which as part of its campaign advocated for citizenship for second generation immigrants living in Greece. In my recollection, the political rhetoric of Nea Demokratia party members had up to that point not targeted immigrants as clearly as they did after the Charlie Hebdo incident.

This shift in rhetoric contributed to a clearer polarization of the two most highly ranking parties (SYRIZA and Nea Demokratia) and distinguished them as left and right accordingly. In the past, Nea Dimokratia was recognized as a central-right party and now it was adopting a slightly more ethnocentric approach. The binary of right and left between the top ranking candidates has been common since the fall of the junta (1974), but it was mostly observed between self-proclaimed center-right and center-left, or socialist parties, rather than (center) right and radical left, as was the case in 2015.

On January the 25<sup>th</sup>, the day of the elections, the time difference worked to my advantage as the vote counting continued well past midnight in Greece and slowly painted the image of the new government.<sup>185</sup> The rise of SYRIZA as the governing party received support from the Spanish leftist political party (Podemos) but the rest of Europe was alarmed as speculations about GREXIT intensified.

The morning after, international headlines were filled with references to the new political order. Some expressed solidarity, whereas others expressed concern. Greece was the first country in the European Union to have a radical left government and international

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<sup>185</sup> The percentages of the 2015 governmental elections were shaped as follows: SYRIZA 36.3%, Nea Dimokratia 27.8%, Golden Dawn 6.9%, Potami (a party founded in 2014 described as centrist or centre-left) 6.1%, KKE (Greece's Communist Party) 5.5%, ANEL (*Independent Greeks* a national conservative and populist political party) 4.8%, and PASOK 4.7%

media seemed to be treating this as a point to further marginalize Greece in the European space.

*February 2015*  
*A new wave for dance? & Some reflections on popular culture*

The first days of February were marked by an intense media buzz instigated by the appointment of the new government and the new ministers. Most attention has been given to the Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, who met with several members of the Eurogroup<sup>186</sup> within the first week, and declared the official position of the new government, which is based on the premise of non-cooperation or implementation of any further austerity measures.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> Alexis Tsipras, the newly appointed prime minister of Greece, publicly announced the new directives of the government. His statements included a raise of the minimum wage, proposals to counter unemployment and facilitate equal treatment of the work-force regardless of age or gender, reforms in education and the aforementioned promise to provide citizenship to second generation immigrants, who in his words “have partaken in Greek education.” While it is impossible at this point to make any predictions about how things could potentially turn out if all these changes will indeed be implemented, the one thing that is certain is that people’s demeanor seems to have shifted. One recent example is a public gathering at Syntagma square in support of the government. Even

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<sup>186</sup> Eurogroup refers to the meeting of finance ministers from all the EU nation-states that have adopted the Euro as their currency.



though the anxiety about the future is still present, popular culture representations such as TV series and magazines suggest a shift towards a more optimistic direction.

I have been keeping up with performance reviews and social media online and following the new projects and classes of the people I interviewed and met in this process. To this point, the Greek dance scene seems to be moving along the same lines that it was in 2014: the same festivals are being organized, and classes and workshops are offered on a regular basis. It seems, however, that compared to 2014 there is now an awareness that dance is undergoing a period of development and is flourishing as an art form. Even though dance critics and newspaper reporters had stopped writing about dance during the crisis, an article that appeared recently (Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015) in Kathimerini Newspaper seems to be drawing people's awareness to this boost. With the title *What it means to be a new dancer in Greece in 2015* the article comprises interviews with two of the choreographers that are partaking in this year's *New Choreographers Festival* at the OCC, and closes with an optimistic note by one of the participants: "I believe that dance in Greece is in a period of flourishing, at least as far as the artists who continue to work and insist on creating in spite of the difficult conditions are concerned" (Lampiri, in Voulgari 2015).

Another shift I have noted as a distant observer concerns the boost in the production of TV series, which had significantly declined in the past few years. A lot of the new series are feel-good sit-coms with rather simple productions (two-three sets, not many outside shoots, primarily revolving around interactions between the main characters rather than an ongoing plot) that mostly reproduce existing approaches to comedy and overly exaggerated

character stereotypes. More and more productions, however, have started to engage with diversity and the social landscape in more depth following the crisis.

There are a few new TV series that engage with the Athenian landscape and reality as it is being formulated following the recession. The cast of characters appearing in popular TV shows are becoming increasingly more diverse, thus pointing at a recognition of the changing urban demographic. Furthermore, current productions are working to visibilize political violence and the tensions between the left and the extreme right<sup>187</sup>. Contrary to past representations of immigrant populations, the new series treat them with more respect and no longer present them as caricatures<sup>188</sup>.

I perceive of this shift in representations of diversity as an emerging trend that is prompting for a more realistic and down to earth engagement with the shifting urban

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<sup>187</sup> For instance, a series titled Εθνική Ελλάδας – *Greece's National Team* (which first aired in January of 2015) stands out as it most accurately paints the landscape of contemporary Athens. It comprises a diverse cast of characters, some of whom are Greek, whereas others are families of immigrants from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Compared to representations of immigrants in the past, this series portrays them in a more realistic light, treating them as regular people rather than caricatures of racial and cultural stereotypes. One of the leading female characters, realizes that she is in an abusive relationship as she comes to terms with the fact that her husband and son are followers of the fascist party and engage in violent acts against immigrants residing in their neighborhood. This character lives under constant fear of her husband, and is friends with a group of immigrant women from China, India and Africa who own small businesses in her neighborhood. What made this example stand out to me is that it is the first series to so respectfully engage with the issue of racism, discrimination, and racist violence and to avoid an exaggerated and caricatured depiction of Athenian life in 2015.

<sup>188</sup> In the past, the incorporation of immigrants in Greek series was conducted in a rather racist manner and ethnically diverse individuals were presented as less intelligent (e.g. the only black male in *My name is Vangelis* (2011-2012), the Greek spin-off of the US production *My name is Earl*), or holding servile positions (e.g. *Εκείνες κι εγώ* (1996-1997) – *Them and Me* where there is a black female maid who speaks very broken Greek, which usually leads to comedic misunderstandings). Depictions of Asians in popular Greek TV shows are less common, and whenever they occur the characters are mostly mute and in the background presented as maids or nannies. One exception to the stereotypical depiction of Asians was seen in one of the few new productions during the height of the crisis, a series called *Με τα παντελόνια κάτω* – *With the pants down* (2013-2014) where one of the main characters had a fleeting relationship with a Korean woman and was raising their daughter. Yuki, the character of the Korean daughter, was a good student, yet rather aggressive and often found herself in trouble, thus again being presented in a negative way that suggests a slightly transgressive behavior for non-Greek characters.

demographic, similar to the one observed in contemporary performances. It is impossible at this point to make any predictions about the kinds of changes that the new government will implement on the issue of citizenship and how that will further inform popular representations, but I am optimistic that the occurrences mentioned will contribute to an increasing engagement with issues of racial and ethnic discrimination and a gradual effort to appease them.

**March, 2015**  
**Postscript / My Narrative**

Going over all the histories and narratives encompassed in this dissertation, some of which have been given to me on first account, while others through books and visual materials, I begin to realize that many of these stories are entangled in times of social or political turmoil and violence. To the extent that these stories reflect various stages in Greece's national and political history, I acknowledge them as part of my narrative as a Greek. Being aware of them has provided me with a deeper understanding of the fragile balances that are in place (between right and left, Greece and the EU, Greece and the East, Greece and Germany and many more). Being in the final stages of completing this project, I keep watching as these balances are constantly being reconfigured, renegotiated, and challenged in the post-bailout landscape, which in itself is a representation of a very fragile state.

In this precarious state, in the midst of a revival of GREXIT scenarios, Greece is evidently in the process of reassessing its past constantly, in order to predict its future, and thus seems to be entertaining a new approach to dealing with history. Besides the various examples of renegotiations of the past found in artistic and performative practices, similar

approaches have started circulating in the socio-political sphere. The act of publicly<sup>189</sup> re-opening the discussion of the Second World War compensations demanded from Germany, pursued by the new government attests to this shifting relationship to the past and to the darker times in Greek history. The constant fluctuation and restlessness of Greece's sociopolitical landscape attributes an open-endedness to this project and proposes more questions for future research than concrete conclusions.

For instance, drawing on the various infrastructural changes suggested by SYRIZA, some questions that arise concern the role of the arts in the coming years. Will sponsorship from the ministry of culture resume again, and if it does, what impact will that have on dance's current function as a site of advocacy and political commentary? In regards to the proposed measures to change citizenship laws, how would such a legislation inform and affect multicultural and multiethnic representation in non-immigrant specific performance initiatives? When will the aesthetic of precarity subside, and what is it going to mold into?

Even though these pages serve as a closure to the lifecycle of graduate studies and the process of acquiring a doctorate, they also serve as a window of possibility into a future project. One that will potentially span beyond providing a glimpse into the Greek dance scene during a critical point in time to paint an image of Greek embodied practices before, during, and after the crisis and the framework of precarity. On a personal level, even though I may still not have acquired a concrete sense of belonging, I have come to terms with my

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<sup>189</sup> Informal discussions in internet forums and newspaper opinion columns about the possibility of demanding the Second World War compensations and using that money to pay the country's debt had been circulating since 2010, but were not endorsed as an official governmental proposition, until SYRIZA brought up the issue in March of 2014.

need for it and have come to realize that writing has all along been my substitute way of nurturing my connection to Greece. Thus, in a truly circular fashion, I conclude this thesis the same way that I started it: inspired by Ursula Le Guin's suggestion that "one can return home after realizing that home is a place never before seen". Thus, as I am preparing for my next return to Greece, roughly nine months after the completion of my fieldwork, I cannot help but wonder *what will home be like this time?*

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## APPENDIX

### Historical Timeline (1821–1990)

This timeline has been created in order to be read side by side with Chapter one; the periodization established here corresponds to the chapter's sections. The timeline is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Historical turning points and events here included have been selected considering their relevance to the development of Greek dance (including both folk or 'traditional' and contemporary). My intention is to offer readers unfamiliar with Greek history a quick reference to the various stages of the complicated process of Greek national identity construction, highlighting national political events as well as international artistic movements that have played a pivotal role in shaping the Greek dance scene<sup>190</sup>.

#### 1821 to 1910

Although this era is not part of the historical analysis taking place in the first chapter it is a significant period in the formation of the independent Greek State and as such it is pivotal in contextualizing the relationship between Greece and the Ottoman Empire and in understanding the process of deorientalization.

Greece had been under the rule of the Ottoman Empire from **1453** (the Fall of Constantinople) until roughly **1821**, the date officially recognized as the beginning of the

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<sup>190</sup> Sources consulted in the construction of this timeline: (Alkalai 2002); (Antzaka-Vei 2010); (Brewer 2012); (Χρονικό του 20ου αιώνα (Chronicles of the 20th century) - Encyclopedia 1992); (Clogg 2002); (Fournaraki 2010); (Loutzaki 2010); (Panourgia 2009); (Stamatopoulou-Vassilakou 2005)

Greek revolution, which led to the formation of the first independent Greek state in 1832. The revolution went on as numerous battles to reclaim territories from the Ottoman Empire followed and this process lasted until the first decades of the twentieth century. The Greek State initially comprised the Peloponnese –which is now recognized as Southern Greece – and Central Greece. The early years of independence mark the emergence of what later came to be known as ‘national dances’ which include *Kalamatianó* and *Tsámiko*, two ‘traditional’ dances that bore close relations to the recently liberated territories. More specifically *Kalamatianós* originated in Kalamata (a region in the Southern part of the Peloponnese) and *Tsámikos* was an alternate name for *Kléphtikos* (meaning “of the Klephts”, the vernacular name used for the guerilla fighters who are given credit for initiating the 1821 revolution against the Ottoman Empire). As such, both dances were incorporated into national mythology and immediately gained historical significance by reaffirming the ‘heroic’ aspects of Greek identity and thus becoming signifiers of the newly established independent Greek identity. These dances are still to this day considered ‘national’ and are incorporated in the curricula of elementary schools across the country (the first formal incorporation took place in the early 1830s and has remained unaltered ever since).

The process of the territorial reclamation and the overall struggle for independence inspired intellectuals across Europe and the US and resulted in a movement known as ‘**Philhellenism**’ (etymologically deriving from the words *philos* [φίλος] and *Hellene* [Ἑλλην] translating as ‘friend of the Greeks’) that included a wide array of interests and activities. The activities ranged from the organization of funds to support Greek warriors

(klephts), to men volunteering to join the armed forces and fight for Greece, as well as intellectual movements interested in reviving aspects of the Greek classical tradition.

### **Important dates and events:**

**1827:** Ioannis Kapodistrias (a Greek Foreign minister of the Russian Empire) is elected as the first head of the state of independent Greece and is considered the founder of the modern Greek State until his assassination in **1833**.

**1832:** Othon (Otto) prince of Bavaria becomes the first modern King of Greece under the convention of London. He was the second son of the philhellene King Ludwig I of Bavaria. He reigned until **1862**.

**1844:** The first constitution of the Kingdom of Greece: establishment of Constitutional Monarchy.

**1863:** King George I becomes the King of Greece and reigns until his death in **1913**. His nomination was suggested and supported by the *Great Powers* (i.e. Great Britain, the Second French Empire and the Russian Empire).

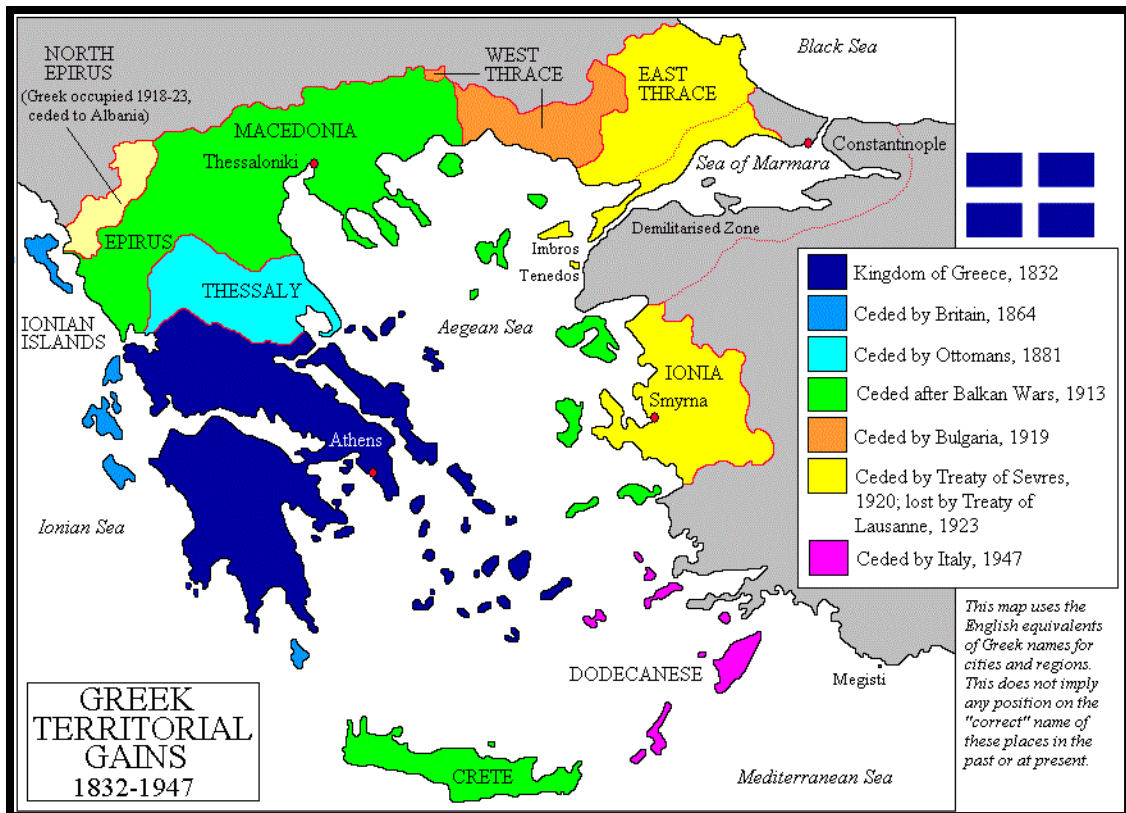
**1864:** The second Greek constitution is signed and marks the transition from Constitutional Monarchy to Crowned Democracy.

**1892:** Beginning of a severe financial crisis due to the inability of the Greek state to pay off external debts.

**1893:** Charilaos Trikoupis, the Prime Minister at the time, declared bankruptcy / severe currency (drachma) devaluation.

**1897:** Greco-Turkish War (also known as the Thirty Days' War).





**Image 17:** This map providing a visual representation of the timeline of Greek Territorial Gains was taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greekhistory.GIF> (accessed on 02/23/2014). The copyright holder provides permission for free use.

## 1910s – 1930

### Key Concepts:

**Katharévousa** : In the early 1900s *katharévousa* was established as the official language of the Greek nation-state in juxtaposition to demotic Greek. *Katharévousa*, literally translating as “cleansed”, was a hybrid form of language that purged any residues of Ottoman influenced vocabulary and revisited the ancient Greek roots of the language. This endeavor has been theorized by Babiniotis, the most prominent linguist in Greece, as ‘deorientalizing’, since at the time of its establishment it was perceived to be beneficial to public education and vital to the “Hellenic regeneration” (Herzfeld, 1982, 18).

**Megali Idea:** (*Μεγάλη Ιδέα – Great Idea*) The territorial reclamations of the early 1900s intensified in the framework of a political movement known as *Megali Idea*; an irredentist movement aspiring to restore Hellas and reestablish the pre-Ottoman borders of the Greek nation state. *Megali Idea* was first elaborated by Ioannis Koletis in 1844 and advocated for a reclamation of all the lands of Classical and Byzantine Hellenism. Even though irredentism was the main directive of the movement, it comprised other philosophical and ideological aspects, such as the advocacy for unity and homogeneity. *Katharévoussa* was also implemented in this framework as a tangible means towards achieving unity. The Greco-Turkish War that started in 1919 was the aftermath of the Greek expedition in Turkey to reclaim the territories of Asia Minor. The expedition ended with the Asia Minor Disaster, which put an end to the *Megali Idea* and the Irredentist movement.

**Asia Minor Disaster:** The *Catastrophe of Smyrna*, as the events of 1922 are known in the Greek vernacular refer to the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor at the end of the Greco-Turkish war. According to Richard Clogg (Clogg 2002) the occupation of Smyrna by the Turks was at first rather civilized, but on the night of September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1922 they started looting the city and slaughtering the Christian and Armenian populations. An estimated 90.000 people died in a fire and thousands of Asia Minor Greeks fled and sought refuge in Greece and other neighboring countries.

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>1911:</b> Kalirroï Siganou Parren founds the Lyceum of Greek Women (Λύκειο Ελληνίδων – Lykeio Hellenidon) - The first “Anthestiria Festival”</p> <p><b>1912:</b> The Lyceum participates in the festivities celebrating the 75 years of the University of Athens that coincided with the International Conference of the Orientalists. Isadora Duncan participated in the festivities as well and the Lyceum contributed with traditional dances and tableaux vivants. <b>1914:</b> The Lyceum hosts Loie Fuller and showcases Greek dances for her. (Fuller was visiting Greece for a performance at the stadium to help fundraising for the families that had been affected by the war) – Fuller prompts them to tour Europe and the US</p> <p><b>1915:</b> Dora Stratou’s first performance as a background dancer in a performance where her mother was amongst the protagonists</p> <p><b>1915:</b> Lyceum festivity at the Royal Theatre. It consists of tableaux vivants that bridge three significant periods of Greek history <i>Daughters of the Parthenon</i> (antiquity), <i>The little savant</i> (neo-Hellenism) and a Byzantine procession</p> <p><b>Between 1915 - 1925:</b> Eva Palmer Sikelianos gives a series of lectures about Greek music and attire to the Lyceum.</p> <p><b>1922-1933:</b> Dora Stratou migrates to Germany with her brother and mother after the execution of her father in 1922. There she meets Polyxeni Matey and teaches Greek dance to German students</p>	<p><b>1903:</b> Duncan’s first trip to Greece <b>1908 – 1911:</b> Duncan’s “Greek Period” according to (Daly 2002)</p> <p><b>1923:</b> Koula Pratsika is invited to spend a summer in Leipzig with her aunt – She visits Hellerau for the first time</p>	<p><b>1912:</b> First Balkan war (Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece against the Ottoman Empire) <b>1913:</b> Second Balkan war (Serbia and Greece against Bulgaria) <b>1914:</b> The Balkan countries join the First World War</p> <p><b>1914 – 1917:</b> National schism between those who supported Venizelos and those who opposed him</p> <p><b>1919:</b> Greek expedition to Asia Minor <b>1919 – 1922:</b> The Greco-Turkish war <b>1920:</b> The Greek army marches into the interior of Turkey / Greek defeat at Eskişehir and Afion Karahisar <b>1922:</b> Asia Minor Disaster /Dora Stratou’s father is executed for his role in the Asia Minor Disaster</p>

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>1925:</b> Antiquity is revisited as a theme in the festivities of the Lyceum and this time the dancers are not only wearing tunics to perform traditional dances, they also present “rhythmic” dances pertaining to ancient Greece (choreographed by Marie Raymon)</p> <p><b>After 1925:</b> During this period the Lyceum gains a new sector or “rhythmic dancing” (At first the teachers are eurythmic teachers from abroad, but later the Lyceum collaborates with Polyxeni Matey, Mary Vryakou and during the post-war period Maria Hors (one of Pratsika’s students)</p>	<p><b>1926:</b> Pratsika begins rehearsing with Eva Palmer Sikelianos for the Delphic festivals</p> <p><b>1927:</b> (May 8<sup>th</sup>) First Delphic Festival with the dancers from the Lyceum of Greek Women and Pratsika as the protagonist / (May 15<sup>th</sup>) Following the Delphic Festival the Lyceum organizes another festival that now takes on international character and involves several other physical culture and international institutions</p> <p><b>1927 – 1930:</b> Pratsika studies at the Dalcroze school in Hellerau</p>	

### 1930s – 1950

#### **Key Concepts:**

**Dekemvriana:** (Δεκεμβριανά – ‘The December Events’) This term is used to signify a series of armed conflicts that began in Athens on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, 1944. The clashes were between leftist organizations, the police, and the British army. The events followed the retreat of the German occupant forces that left a power vacuum. Papandreou, the Prime Minister of Greece at the time was in exile and until his return ΕΛΑΣ (Εθνικός Λαϊκός Απελευθερωτικός Στρατός – National Popular Liberation Army), the military arm of the communist front was slowly taking control. Thus the *Dekemvriana* signify the full scale conflict following the return of Papandreou (Democratic Socialist party) and ΕΛΑΣ.

**Greek Civil War (1946 – 1949):** The attempts to fill in the power vacuum left by the tripartite occupation (Bulgaria, Germany, Italy) continued into the latter half of the 1940s,

and intensified to the point that they evolved into a civil war. The Greek government army (supported by the UK and the US) and the military branch of the communist party (backed up by Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria) were the two contending poles. Thousands of communists were arrested and exiled to concentration camps in isolated islands, such as Yaros and Makronisos, in order to be “reformed”.

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>1930:</b> The Lyceum is assigned the role of organizing a ceremony for the celebration of a century of Independence of the Greek State. The festivities are extremely complex and involve the collaboration of Military Units, the Presidential Guard, the band of the Athenian Guard, the Navy and several choirs amongst various other institutions.</p> <p><b>1936:</b> The Lyceum is officially recognized as a ‘National Organization’/ Following the occasion of the Olympic flame ceremony, it organizes another festivity in Athens that revolves around the most important periods of the Hellenic Civilization</p> <p><b>1937: 4<sup>th</sup> of August Festivity</b> involving people from rural areas of Greece dressed in their local costume. Koula Pratsika coordinated the activities. (She was the appointed coordinator and artistic director for all the 4<sup>th</sup> of August Festivities that came after 1937-1940) The Lyceum also asks to get involved and they participated with around two hundred young women dressed with ancient Greek inspired costumes</p>	<p><b>1930:</b> Second Delphic Festival/ Pratsika returns to Greece and opens her school</p> <p><b>1932-1934:</b> Construction of Pratsika’s school (the building continues to house the National School of Dance to this day)</p> <p><b>1935-1937:</b> Rallou Manou studies dance, music and eurythmics at the Günthers Schule in Munich. She acquires a dance teaching diploma</p> <p><b>1936:</b> Pratsika organizes and choreographs the ritual of the lightning of the Olympic flame in ancient Olympia for the Berlin Olympics – Rallou Manou is amongst the participants</p> <p><b>1937:</b> Pratsika founds a professional division in her</p>	<p><b>1933:</b> Elections in Greece / Hitler becomes the chancellor of Germany</p> <p><b>1935:</b> King George II returns from exile and reclaims to the throne</p> <p><b>1936:</b> Ioannis Metaxas imposes dictatorship with the support and encouragement of King George II</p> <p><b>1936 – 1941:</b> The Metaxas Dictatorship</p>

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>1940:</b> Lyceum’s Publication of H. Sakellariou’s <i>Fifty Greek Dances</i> that becomes the “bible” of Greek dances (methodologically relies on research in the rural areas and places emphasis in parallelisms between the dances perceived as “ancient” and the ones that were being performed rurally).</p> <p><b>1941:</b> Dora Stratou helps Karolos Kuhn (a well known Greek theatre director) found <i>Theatro Technis</i>- an organization that hosts an acting school and organizes performances in several theatres – Since 1954 it is permanently housed in Orpheus theatre</p> <p><b>1946:</b> Pratsika’s performances resume: She co-choreographs <i>Dances Antiques</i> and <i>Le Belle et la Rose</i> with Manou (These performances also tour in Paris) The third part of the performance includes traditional dances <i>Danses Populaires Grecques</i></p> <p><b>1946:</b> In the midst of the civil war, the Lyceum establishes a new series of events that became an ‘institution’ during the coming decades. They are called <i>Hellenic afternoons</i> (ελληνικές απογευματινές) and the goal is to popularize and highlight dances that had thus far been unknown to the general public</p>	<p>school / Manou teaches dance to the royal family</p> <p><b>1937 - 1946:</b> Rallou Manou is teaching dance in Pratsika’s professional division</p> <p><b>1938:</b> The professional students appear in the ancient theatre of Herodes Atticus (it is the first time that this theatre holds a dance event)</p> <p><b>1940 – 1944:</b> The classes In Pratsika’s school seize and the students offer help to the wounded soldiers /some classes are taking place sporadically</p> <p><b>1941:</b> Manou founds a School of Gymnastics, Eurythmics, Dance and Music in the Tennis Club / She choreographs <i>Oedipus</i> for the National Theatre</p> <p><b>1943:</b> Pratsika’s professional division gives out the first diplomas</p>	<p><b>1937 – 1940:</b> The Metaxas regime is organizing the so called 4<sup>th</sup> of August festivities that assimilate Laban’s movement choirs</p> <p><b>1940:</b> Italian forces attack Greece and Greece enters the second World War</p> <p><b>1941:</b> Greece is under tripartite occupation: German, Italian and Bulgarian</p> <p><b>1943:</b> Italy collapses and Germany assumes occupation of the whole of Greece</p> <p><b>1944:</b> Athens is liberated / December events</p> <p><b>1946:</b> The right wing wins the Greek elections</p> <p><b>1946 – 1949:</b> Greek civil war</p>

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>1947:</b> <i>The return from the Harvest</i> is presented by the Lyceum and the main attraction is the <i>Zervos</i> dance from the island of Karpathos (one of the islands in the Dodecanese) The dance is presented under the name <i>Geranos</i> that has a more “ancient Greek ring to it” (Atzaka Vei 2010, 260).</p>	<p><b>1947 -1948 :</b> Rallou Manou travels to New York, for postgraduate studies at the Dance Department of NYU and takes classes at the Graham school, and the schools of Hanya Holm and Doris Humphrey  <b>1949 – 1951:</b> Manou becomes the permanent choreographer for the productions of the National Theatre</p>	<p><b>1947:</b> The Dodecanese Islands are ceded to Greece by Italy</p>

### 1950s – 1970

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>1950:</b> The Lyceum’s winter festivities are hosted at the Olympia Theatre (the theatre that belongs to the Greek National Opera, which also hosts a ballet company) Collaborations between the Lyceum and the National Opera become a commonality  <b>1952:</b> The Yugoslavian dance troupe <i>Kolo</i> performs in Greece and this motivates the Lyceum to reconsider the structure of their institution. It is also considered as having inspired Dora Stratou to create the first folkloric performance group in Greece  <b>1952 – 1959:</b> Stratou organizes research trips across Greece to document music and dance traditions (approximately 25 trips in total)  <b>1953:</b> The Dora Stratou group starts touring professionally</p> <p><b>1957:</b> The Lyceum presents <i>The Hellenic Panygyri</i> that has been choreographed and directed by</p>	<p><b>1951:</b> Rallou Manou founds the <i>Hellenic Choreodrama</i> / She also founds a professional school of contemporary dance and ballet for teachers and dancers  <b>1952:</b> Manou is invited to Great Britain by Ninet de Valois and gets a scholarship by the British council to view and study dance productions in England. She teaches Greek traditional dances in London and also gives a lecture on Greek traditional dance.</p> <p><b>1956:</b> Manou collaborates with the National Opera and choreographs Ballet productions (she choreographs several other ballet productions until the early 1960s)</p>	<p><b>1952:</b> Greece and Turkey join NATO</p> <p><b>1954:</b> Mass arrests of communists in Greece  <b>1955:</b> Karamanlis (head of the the Nea Demokratia party: center-right) forms government / The founding of the Festival of Athens (now known as Athens and Epidaurus Festival)</p>

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p>the National Opera director Frixos Theologidis. This performance adheres to the standards of a socialist folkloric company. Once more the prologue consists of ancient Greek inspired rhythms and dances.</p>		<p><b>1957:</b> Formation of the European Economic Community (EEC)</p>

**During the first half of the decade of the 1960s:** Significant increase of tourism to Greece. Movies such as *Never on Sunday* (1960) and *Zorba the Greek* (1964) also assisted in the popularization of Greece as a tourist destination. These factors create a new “market” for Greek dance and there is significant boost in the creation of local festivals, and dance associations. Ethnographic research also gains popularity as more and more dancers and dance teachers become interested in documenting and reproducing dances from remote areas that had not been part of the festivities up to then.

<p><b>1960 – 1961:</b> Stratou’s company takes part in the Greek festivities of NATO</p> <p><b>1962:</b> The Lyceum performs in the ancient theatre of Herodes Atticus for the first time</p> <p><b>1963:</b> Stratou publishes her first book: <i>A tradition...an adventure</i></p> <p><b>1964:</b> The Lyceum is invited to participate at the festivities of NATO</p> <p><b>1965:</b> The Dora Stratou Theatre is founded in Philopappou Hill (daily performances for tourists)</p> <p><b>1965 – early 1980s:</b> The Lyceum collaborates with EOT (National Organization of Tourism)</p> <p><b>1966:</b> Stratou’s second book <i>Folk Dances: a living link to the past</i></p> <p><b>1967:</b> Stratou is arrested and imprisoned for hiding a fugitive newspaper publisher Christos Lambrakis in her home. Melina Mercouri (political activist and internationally renown actress who later became Minister of Culture) created an uproar abroad and succeeded in having Dora Stratou released.</p> <p><b>1967:</b> The Lyceum travels to Canada and USA for performances at the Expo ’67</p>	<p><b>1961:</b> Rallou Manou edits and publishes her book <i>The Hellenic Choreodrama: 1950-1960</i></p> <p><b>1963:</b> Manou collaborates with the National Theatre Company (Εθνικό Θέατρο)</p> <p><b>1965:</b> The biggest tour yet of Manou’s <i>Hellenic Choreodrama</i></p> <p><b>1966 – 1974:</b> The first period of Zouzou Nikoloudi’s <i>Choriká</i> company</p> <p><b>1968:</b> Due to financial difficulties the <i>Hellenic Choreodrama</i> temporarily closes</p>	<p><b>1962:</b> Most political prisoners are released</p> <p><b>1963:</b> Georgios Seferis is awarded a Nobel Prize for Poetry</p> <p><b>1966:</b> Greek TV channels start broadcasting and the number of households that have a Televisual device starts increasing</p> <p><b>1967:</b> Beginning of the junta / Yaros (one of the concentration camp islands) reopens and thousands of communists are imprisoned</p>
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Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p>(Montreal), the town hall and the United Nations (New York)</p> <p><b>1969:</b> A TV show titled “The Lyceum of Greek women presents...” airs biweekly in <i>Diavlos 11</i> (public broadcasting channel)</p>	<p>and another smaller dance group emerges in its place called <i>Ergastiri Chorou</i> (i.e. Dance Laboratory)</p>	<p><b>1968:</b> Revision of the Greek constitution by the ruling military regime. Amongst other regulations, the '68 constitution retained monarchy, aspired a return to a parliamentary system and reserved a regulatory role for the Greek military.</p>

### 1970s – 1990

Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece	Contemporary Dance in Greece	Greek Political History / Important Events
<p><b>Dec. 1973 – Jan. 1974:</b> Dora Stratou company tours to India</p> <p><b>1975:</b> Stratou’s third book <i>Traditional Dances: a living link to the past</i> is published and distributed to Greek schools</p> <p><b>1977:</b> The Ministry of Education conceded a building on Scholiou 8 to Stratou, which nowadays still holds the Dora Stratou company</p> <p><b>1979:</b> Manou co-produces a 5 hour color-film for the National Broadcasting Channel (ERT) titled <i>Greek dance of the past and the present</i>, which traces the connecting threads between Greek traditional Dances and ancient Greek practices.</p> <p><b>1980 – 1983:</b> Stratou retires. (some sources place her retirement in 1980 while others mark 1983 as the accurate date)</p>	<p><b>1970:</b> Manou initiates the publication of a Dance magazine titled <i>Χορός = Dance</i> which only publishes 2 issues</p> <p><b>1971 – 1973:</b> Manou collaborates with the Sofia (Bulgarian) Ballet Company for several productions (e.g. <i>Medea, The Apology of Clytemnestra</i> and <i>Marsyas</i>)</p> <p><b>1972:</b> Manou is invited to Dallas, Texas at the Central Theatre in order to choreograph <i>Lysistrata</i>. In parallel she also holds a lecture at the University of Dallas as well as dance classes.</p> <p><b>1982:</b> The Academy of Athens honors Rallou Manou with a Bronze Medal for her</p>	<p><b>1974:</b> Turkish invasion of Cyprus/ The Greek junta falls</p> <p><b>1975:</b> New Constitution establishing Presidential Parliamentary Democracy</p> <p><b>1981:</b> Greece joins the European Economic Union (EEU – now</p>

<b>Traditional / Folk Dance in Greece</b>	<b>Contemporary Dance in Greece</b>	<b>Greek Political History / Important Events</b>
<p><b>1983:</b> Alkis Raftis takes over as artistic director at the Dora Stratou company</p> <p><b>1988:</b> Dora Stratou passed away at the age of 85</p>	<p>contribution to the Hellenic Civilization / Culture</p> <p><b>1983:</b> The Ministry of Culture approved the program of the National School of Dance with a legislation</p> <p><b>1987:</b> Manou publishes her second book <i>Dance: "not an easy art-form"</i> ("Χορός 'ου των ραδίων ούσαν την τέχνην")</p> <p><b>1988:</b> Manou passes away</p>	<p>known as EU: European Union)</p> <p><b>1985:</b> Borders with Albania open for the first time since 1940.</p>