

C. NADIA SEREMETAKIS

SENSING THE EVERYDAY

DIALOGUES FROM AUSTERITY GREECE



SENSING THE EVERYDAY

Sensing the Everyday is a multi-sited ethnographic inquiry based on fieldwork experiences and sharp everyday observations in the era of crisis. Blending sophisticated theoretical analyses with original ethnographic data, C. Nadia Seremetakis journeys from Greece to Vienna, Edinburgh, Albania, Ireland, and beyond. Social crisis is seen through its transnational multiplication of borders, thresholds and margins, divisions, and localities as linguistic, bodily, sensory, and performative sites of the quotidian in process. The book proposes everyday life not as a sanctuary or as a recessed zone distanced from the structural violence of the state and the market, but as a condition of im/possibility, unable to be lived as such, yet still an encapsulating habitus. There the impossibility of the quotidian is concretized as fragmentary and fragmenting material forces. Seremetakis weaves together topics as diverse as borders and bodies, history and death, the earth and the senses, language and affect, violence and public culture, the sociality of dreaming, and the spatialization of the traumatic, in a journey through antiphonic witnessing and memory. Her montage explores various ways of juxtaposing reality with the unreal and the imaginal to expose the fictioning of social reality. The book locates her approach to ethnography and the 'native ethnographer' in wider anthropological and philosophical debates, and proposes a dialogical interfacing of theory and practice, the translation of academic knowledge to public knowledge.

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SENSING THE EVERYDAY

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To those who re-member the present



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PART I

Interfaces



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1

ON BOARD/ON BORDER

This book is composed of diverse, self-reflexive ethnographic explorations that capture transitions in and of contemporary Greek everyday life and culture, transitions that occur imperceptibly and often remain unmarked in macrological analysis.

Today's socio-economic crisis and the co-occurring fracturing and intensification of insecurities, are comprehended and over-discussed on the level of the macro. This book focuses instead on how such fractures are transcribed and translated within the micrological structures of everyday life. These fractures also serve as a reserve space for critical commentary on the normative organization of those formations that are customarily seen as superstructural. In this immersion of the quotidian there will always be gaps, silences and dead spaces opening between the insignia of the everyday and the sign systems of the macrological. Consider that from the point of view of the latter, the everyday is predominantly a dead space, a space of non-signification. As a result, the gaps and silences that lie between the micrological and macrological are ultimately structural effects and a political technology of the superstructure.

I am interested in an ethnography of the everyday that lacks the securities, facilities and utilities of a homogenizing and synchronizing context. In the agonistic interplay between the macrological and the everyday, time, space and the body are intrinsically disjointed; such ruptures are refracted in language, visibility and the senses. This excavation of the historical experience of fracture, of discontinuity or nonsynchronicity, at the level of Greek urban everyday life seeks to repoliticize the micrological dimensions of the quotidian.

The turn to the micrological as a pool of alternative perceptions of reality is an ethnographic project. But, in an era of globalization that homogenizes and totalizes human society and culture, and routinizes human existence, it is also a political task. It acquires an added importance in neocolonial cultures which have long been characterized by an acute formalism that renders the quotidian nonvisible and the present devoid of cultural meaning.

4 Interfaces

In contrast, however, to other ethnographic projects that address modernity at the level of the quotidian (see for example Veena Das' work), I do not propose everyday life as a sanctuary or as a recessed zone distanced from the structural violence of the state and the market. Rather, I see everyday life as a condition of im/possibility, unable to be lived as such but still an encapsulating habitus. There the impossibility of the quotidian is concretized as fragmentary and fragmenting material forces.

This fragmentation is mirrored in the book's stylistic aesthetic. *Sensing the Everyday* is not a story-shaped ethnography, but rather an assemblage of the impossible whole from a series of partial complexes, the constellation of which produces specific ethnographic affects. This is a multi-sited inquiry, and the various explorations, which weave together old and new ethnographic experiences, aim particularly at capturing the Greek social crisis as a crisis of borders: cartographic, somatic and psychic. These borders are in turn interfaced with the crises of translation of the Other in anthropology proper as both theory and practice.

Sensing the Everyday is thus a reflection on ethnography as the study of the quotidian in process. It explores border spaces, spaces of trauma, in a journey through antiphonic witnessing and memory. The focus on the borders of the everyday allows one to see macro-transformations in-the-making. The taken-for-grantedness of the everyday, instead, is responsible for an after-the-fact response to crucial events in and of everyday social and political life by academics and politicians alike.

★

The border marks transitions in space and time. It is the shared topos of the historian, the anthropologist, the archaeologist, the artist and the poet, all of whom are translators of the past and future to the present, of the inside to the outside, of the particular to the general. Borders are the meeting points of mind and body, ideas and senses, science and literature. Borders are points that release vision.

A discourse on the border is thus a discourse on dialogue. Silent or vocal, communication requires the mastery and exchange of linguistic and extra-linguistic codes. For dialogue is not simply a talk between equals, nor is it necessarily a talk with an external other – as dialogue is customarily understood and promoted by modern media.¹ Any communication on and from the border is a dialogue that is meant to decenter, and in taking place at a limen, it is already decentered.

Knowledge from the borders, then, can decenter and reshape everyday life; it allows new forms of life and social relations to emerge. It is in this sense a decolonization of conventional time, freeing history from evolutionist perceptions that locate Greek identity either in the archaic past or the European future, thereby rendering the present nonvisible. The recent focus, moreover, has not been on futurity so much as it has centered on catastrophic pasts, thematizing war-memory or experiences of natural disaster. The political implications of the macro-structural inattention of the present have recently become evident in Greece with the immigrant crisis. An archaeology of this present would reveal history and culture as a polyphonic process, demanding dialogical relations between histories, cultures, human and nonhuman species and objects. Such dialogical archaeology would

transcend and liberate dualistic constructions, such as nature and culture, mind and body, language and affect. Our present is marked by traumatic events. We experience physical disasters and violent vivisections of our social and personal bodies that foster a growing realization of our vulnerability. These traumas lead to a reconsideration of what constitutes the human now.

Knowledge from the borders constitutes a counter-discourse to legal realism and to the growing biologization of culture. By extension, border knowledge combats renewed or new configurations of racism. True, developments in life sciences and new technologies increasingly allow for a perception of life as amenable to human intervention and as infinitely flexible. But in the era of individualism, alternative models of everyday social relations are needed even more, relations governed by sensory and affective reciprocity between humans and nonhumans, the living and the dead – social relations grounded on democracy.

The ethnographic miniatures

The micrological ethnographic sites explored in the book are diverse. They trace, translate and analyze cultural phenomena and practices as performative dynamics of and in everyday life; yet, they are cross cut by recurrent themes. These include the spatialization of sensory experience and memory, an archaeology of vernacular language, the relation of experience to commensality, the antiphonic structure of social communication, the individual body collapsing into a mass body politics conceptualized as a nervous system or a sensory infrastructure, and the border as that porous line between *eros* and *thanatos*, or life and death.

The montage of these fragments explores various ways of juxtaposing reality, the unreal and the imaginal in order to expose the fictioning of social reality; for the truth about social reality, as Brecht would agree, can be conveyed in various forms and styles. These narrations of fragmentations and bordering are supplemented by a meditation on the decontextualization and mediation of Anglophone anthropology in areas like Greece where the field has undergone rather arbitrary expropriation and fragmentation in its own right. In this context, I recognize my own antinomic subject position as a so called ‘native’, or ‘indigenous’ ethnographer and also as a diasporic, American-trained, post-Boasian anthropologist. The indigenous practice of verbal performativity, antiphony, is remediated as framing the dialogic at play between my projects and the wider discipline. Such projects include the gender poetics of premodern and contemporary Greece and extend to comparative discussions with other cultures and areas beyond Greece, such as Vienna and Edinburgh, Albania and Africa, among others.

★

My ethnographic explorations in this book begin with the massive spread of little street memorials for the dead in the Greek urbanscape during the current socio-economic crisis but before the global refugee crisis. These memorials, erected outside of cemeteries and enjoying no official church ritual, interrupt the quotidian space. They stand as austere homages to the reintegration of death into life, the sacred into

the secular, the cities of the dead (cemeteries) with those of the living. A Situationist inspired analysis here speaks of a ‘democratization of death’, and points to the *détournement* of these residual boundaries as an emerging *third stream anamnesis*; that is, memory focused on the postsecular historicity of the everyday which is marginalized by the dominant public culture, split as it is between European cosmopolitanism and the Greek archaic. By claiming the ‘citizenizing’ of both the dead and their bereaved survivors, these memorials point to an alternative form of citizenship. This is also attested to by the victims of massive fires and their efforts to defy homelessness and a forced condition of post-disaster flexible citizenship. This ‘new’ evidence of public death in everyday Greek life and culture is further discussed by rethinking Eric Wolf’s idea of the sacralization of the Mediterranean domestic space as a sanctuary space, Giorgio Agamben’s notion of the profanation of restrictive institutional semiologies, Philip Aries’ privatization of the dead, De Certeau’s pedestrian speech acts, and Nigel Thrift’s urging for a spatial politics of affect.

This discussion of the eruption of death in the city is followed by one on the eruption of the earth and the death of the city itself. The rebuilt habitus of the city of Kalamata after a devastating earthquake and its struggle with the anamnesis of the natural disaster are discussed in relation to another habitus, beyond Greek borders, the built environment of Vienna (as a mimesis of death state, recalling Adorno). This discussion is extended to the massive fires that deadened the region of Ilia later. Here the antinomy of the archaicized (Vienna) and the emergent (post-disaster Kalamata/Ilia) is played out again.

Shifting to the literal border, between Albania and Greece at a time that Albanians were frequent economic migrants to Greece and the EU in the 1980s and 1990s, Europe appears to be besieged by its own borders. Cultural identity shifts from the metropole and from conventional cultural heritage sites to the frontiers. Today, the various contaminating others – Albanians, Pakistanis, Eastern Europeans, Africans – in the recent experience of massive immigrant and refugee flows threaten the political rigidification of borders between nations and within nations. These population flows are discussed with the recognition that health and disease do not obey national boundaries. When it comes to public health issues, the borders of nations are as permeable as the borders of the body, and attention to these political boundaries is as crucial as medical attention is to bodily boundaries. Indeed, the crisis also expresses the reconfiguration of the nation as a medical metaphor, a body biopolitic in which risk and threat are cast as unhuman and virological. The generic and initial response to dangerous viruses in popular mentalities around the world is to construct an imaginary boundary that encloses ‘risk’ within particular communities of the margin, such as ethnic and racial minorities. Immunity or security seems to require a boundary, a wall of defense against the attacker. This enclosure has inhibited trans-communal and trans-national awareness of the scope and nature of such viruses and inhibited the internationalization of skills, tools and resources.

Borders can be places where things and people are walled off and excluded, but they can also be sites of dynamic and productive transactions, bringing together

cultural diversity and difference. Cavafy,² in his poems *The Walls* (1896–7) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1898), spoke early of such exclusions of society's Others in the context of Greece, and Wendy Brown (2010) in her book *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* transfers us to the contemporary international scene and the need and desire to raise walls to mark national borders for protection, even amid proclamations of extroversion and global connectedness. Both authors, from different socio-historical contexts, are critical of the nation-state and its institutions and the idea of state sovereignty for, amid its decline, state power and national identity continue to persist and the Other continues to be walled out.

Among those institutions of the state, the Greek university in particular is discussed in the last chapter as a space of trauma, to the extent that it can wall out those who resist an unquestioned assimilation in an institutional culture that in practice defies what it claims to safeguard and promote, which is to say, democracy. The response lies in Cavafy's ironic verse 'these people [the barbarians] were a kind of solution', by which he marks the necessity of the invasive other as contributor to political self-definition.

Extending my discussion of the glocal, I track, with the advent of globalization, everyday practices and processes that point to the crossing of bodily boundaries between animal and human, such as food poisoning, 'mad cow' disease or avian flu. These practices point to the closing, penetration and violation of individual and national bodily boundaries, as do other cases considered here: aesthetic surgery and anatomical exhibits, where death is walled out through plastination; as well as evil eye infliction and coffee cup reading. But these practices also point to the opening of the body by forensic or vivisectionist ethnic violence, and to the leaking of borders, borders in pain, as in the case of the recent flows of immigrants and refugees, dead or alive.

These explorations reveal post-secularity in the era of globalization – the simultaneous mythification of and exit from modernity, the trans-nationalization of embodiment, and attempts to remediate technicity, as in telephone evil eye exorcisms, which open the body. Telephonic intervention for diagnosis and cure, very much like computer intimacy, magnifies the ability to act on the body at a distance, this time in service of the afflicted. Here the optical as the source of social negativity (evil eye), is countered by the tactile and the auditory.

Sensing the Everyday is thus an experiment on ethnography as the study of the traumatic in everyday life and an attempt to write the sensorium that emerges from this fracture. This is a sensorium of trauma as an everyday practice, rather than one that refracts a state of emergency or a state of exception. The everyday is revealed as extra-ordinary as we traverse spaces like the road, the wall-boundary, the natural disaster site, the university as a public secret, and the interruption of quotidian space by little street graves. This sensorium refracts a crossing of the senses and of bodies, and points to the intimate relation of *eros* and *thanatos* in Greek thought and culture.

The erotic themes discussed here include food consumption, aesthetic surgery, desire through advertising, and the medicalization of art, which is linked to the medicalization of *eros* in modernity. They all reveal a distrust of the body's surface

and an urge to get below the skin. This is a new configuration of the body that is not limited to the grotesque war-site alone, but can be found in everyday life practice. In turn, the inter-ethnic violence that Greece experiences today, the flexibility of the dead beyond biological death – as the little ‘street graves’ indicate – and the thanatopolitical scenography of the modern urbanscape capture an ongoing historical mutation of *thanatos*.

Several examples speak as much about death as about desire and pleasure. Violence and death, as in the case of ethnic violence, is about a failed erotics of social life which degenerates into *thanatos*. Gunder Von Hagens’ famous anatomical exhibition of aestheticized corpses is a case in point. This exhibition, posing as art around the world, is about *thanatos* and desire: the exhibited corpses with their interiors exposed become desired and eroticized. Similarly, the vivisectionist reading of the Mona Lisa, Da Vinci’s painting, by medical experts is the death of a figure of *Eros*, emblem of mysterious femininity, of the enigmatic other. Thus, an older *eros* known as the fluidity and exchange of bodies, is now under suspicion; a suspicion also expressed in the contaminated food, for food is *eros*.

A traumatized sensorium responds by involuntary movements of the body. Some involuntary gestures of the body, human and environmental, include the infliction of the evil eye and earthquake tremors. What is expressed on the level of the individual body is scaled up to the level of national boundaries and identities, as they both try to preserve integrity through the very interface that places them in a transnational community. The implosion of global space in such forms as the geopolitical project of European unification, and recent migration and refugee flows, is registered in social nervous systems as a violation of both corporate and individual bodily integrity.

But I do recognize that involuntary gestures also aim at redressing and repairing the traumatized sensorium, the body pained in involuntary partition; they become embodied exchanges by opening the body and the senses to exchange messages with others (human or natural), exchanges that create links of shared substance over time. The eye and tongue inflict – they stand as open transgressive orifices that produce and internalize evil as an outside – but they also invest, ‘dress’, the other with language, artifacts of feeling and performative aesthetic interventions in everyday life. This is revealed here in my discussions of modern music and lyrics, tactile lamentation, coffee cup reading, tele-diagnosis and prophylaxis, and street performances that surround the rural and urban scapes – a *theatrokratia* in antagonistic exchanges with voluntary and involuntary violent gestures of destruction.

Involuntary and voluntary gestures such as the above, including warning dreams, which were once routine practices of the everyday, have become complicated in urbanity. The intensification of national, cosmopolitan or transnational involuntary social intimacy in the globalized nation-state has become the impetus for a turn to divinatory reading and interpretation of the social milieu. This is testified to by the pervasiveness of spontaneous vernacular cultural codes that are replicated outside of institutional frames and dominant forms of knowledge.

I renew my focus here, therefore, on divinatory dreaming and the anthropologist's involuntary immersion in it, a gesture that serves as an additional critique of the Cartesianism of social sciences and contemporary technology, which stress a panoptical, centered, autonomous subject. For what is revealed here is a Mediterranean subject decentered, immersed in a trans-individual counter-infrastructure, a *nervous system* as Taussig called it, one that remediates this Cartesian model of sovereign control.

Taussig's critique of Western metaphysics, and of the epistemology of rationalism and scientism that resulted in a visual reductionism, was preceded and followed by Paul Stoller (1989) who also directed our attention to the independent force of the media through which ethnographic information is gathered in the field. This affected my own discussion of the 'involuntary circuit of the senses' (Seremetakis 1996). My general approach to the senses, informed by ethnographic experiences, was born and cultivated at the juncture of a number of events that have marked my academic life and cross-cultural experiences in the course of my perpetual 'conscious' and 'unconscious' fieldwork. This approach took its first written form in and with my ethnography on death rituals, *The Last Word*,³ and it became increasingly fused after this book's completion and even much later, as I distanced myself from it enough to 'recall' it in and out of classrooms in the two continents that divided my life for more than twenty-five years. My interest in the senses is extended here to the discussion of undermined surfaces of everyday life and the growing distrust of the surface of the body. These developments coincide with a turn to a new model of vernacular truth, a medicalized, vivisectionist model in which truth must be brought to panoptical light through the penetration of surfaces thought to be deceptive and a focus on their hidden interiorities. This, as Foucault would say, becomes the metric of modern veridiction.

Further, the opening ground for a special focus on touch and taste, material and affective, which I cultivated by my earlier thesis of the 'translation and transcription across the senses' (Seremetakis 1996), is complemented here by a discussion of 'tactility' as an English simplification of a complex Greek concept that links the sensuous, the emotional and the aesthetic. The haptic is revealed as gender-specific knowledge connected to women's practices of labor, care and commensality.

This sensory exploration is complemented throughout this book by linguistic analysis that diverts from false dichotomizations between language and affect. For the articulation of the sensorial with the affective, complicit with my previous studies on the senses, involves also a cross-cultural 'philological archaeology' of vernacular language (most fitting also in Greek culture and *Paedeia* (formal education) that have long been preoccupied with the structure of the national language). This 'archaeology' incorporates here a soundscape analysis that centers on pain (*ponos*) and *parapono* – an affective exchange that expands to social critique.

Theory in practice

The explorations continued in this book have been coupled with my design and organization of experimental public, polyphonic, educational events. These events preceded and followed the idea of a sensorial approach to history and culture that

recognizes a tactility of eye and mind. This kind of organization is simply the implementation of principles of cultural translation. The main goal of these public events was to bridge commodified knowledge and everyday experience, to translate academic knowledge and ethnographic method into public knowledge. For what ultimately matters is *the dialogical interface between theory and practice*. This is part of the dialogic nature of ethnography and its performance, where performance is understood as the intervention in everyday structures that release meaning hidden within social and material relations. For example, the little street memorials I discuss in this book, or the Greek mourning performances I studied earlier, do not only address death, but also use death as a material experience that facilitates the visualization of social experience and institutional structure itself. Performance as a practice of everyday life is *poesis* because it departs and embarks from the socially constructed sense of a naturalized present. It denounces the routine, the structural facticity and the self-evident in everyday existence, and aims at rehistoricizing, resymbolizing and repoliticizing experience in this era of the cult of realism.

One site where the gap between official history and everyday experience can be bridged is the human body, both the experiential body and the symbolic body, the body proper. This site is here encountered in performance art practices in Vienna, in various structures and relations with the built environment, the architectural surround and the spatial order of the city, and in the debuilt habitus of Greek cities struggling with the after effects and the memory of a city-destroying earthquake or fire. In the middle of ruins, survivors of natural disasters used scattered artifacts in search of threads through time to lead them out of the labyrinth of destruction and forgetfulness – a project that today pertains to all citizens, the anthropologist alike, of an indebted Greece.

My public interventions, then, have included *The City Remembers*, a commemoration of a devastating earthquake, ten years after the event, in the city of Kalamata (South Peloponnese). Such public events might appear at first as a completed accomplishment, and certainly as pertaining only to the region. But the earthquake, initially perceived as stigma for the area, was intimately tied to the more widely spread devaluation of the present, then and now. The sites of cultural production in Greece have been bouncing between the archaic or rural world of the dead and dying, and the world of fine arts that are supposed to stand for our European future. What appears as devoid of cultural meaning is the present. The particular event then aimed at offering an alternative view and model of cultural history and its transformative potential in the present. One of the reasons why this devaluation of the present is generally of social importance is that it is exclusionary. Consider, for example, the historical experience and presence of the Diaspora that has no existence in either the archaic or the future-cosmopolitan sites of cultural production; it thus remains walled.

Along the same lines, a public multimedia educational event, *Taste and Memory*, was designed and organized as a response to the global economy's massive efforts to homogenize, discipline, cosmeticize, and functionalize Greek food and eating cultures through massive instructive cooking programs in the media at a time of

extreme austerity politics. This public event too was inspired by my abiding concern over bringing to consciousness *the uninherited: that is, any part of culture that has become nonvisible in the sphere of what is officially designated as inheritance or heritage.*

Both events, which were based on ethnographic field research, stand as an anti-phonetic response to dominant models in the media, which are based on the division between reportage and evaluation. The latter are also adopted by state institutions, academia included, and international fora active in the domain of Culture and exemplified in the 'new' popular field of cultural management, or management of cultural heritage, or preservation of tangible and intangible culture.⁴ This was in fact the feature of early ethnography, namely the division between theorist and fieldworker. Early theorists placed agents in their field just like governments sent representatives and corporations sent business agents – one type of agent insured the production and transfer of economic resources, the other the production and transfer of data. This is an economic model of knowledge accumulation based on the organization of the nineteenth-century mercantile enterprise. The fieldwork ethic, instead, as established by Boasian anthropology, ideally abolishes the division between theorist and fieldworker. In a dialogical anthropology, ethnographic fieldwork presupposes theoretical knowledge, and theory is derived from fieldwork. This interfacing between theory and practice also turns ethnography into a valuable public pedagogical tool. I contend that an ethnography re-grounded on a spatial relation – residence – and on a temporal relation – long-term fieldwork experience – would transform tourism into historicism.

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In the context of anthropology proper, the events I organized to make ethnography a public resource involve a rethinking of what came to be known as 'public anthropology', and suggest an alternative approach based on the discourse and knowledge of those who dwell at the border of social and historical disaster (see Appendix II in Chapter 2). Cultural otherness is thus defined by the experience of traumatic history, the experience of radical displacement in terms of time and space, whether one is a migrant to a new country, has become part of a diaspora that has been created through traumatic history – war, famine, forced removal, ethnic cleansing, austerity – or experiences disaster and death as terrorism or natural disaster, such as an earthquake or fire.

Thus, an event history of academic terrorism and trauma is, by way of an epilogue, the last part of the book. Faithful to the fragmentation and montage effects that the book has attempted to capture, in both analysis and narrative aesthetic, this part is far from a totalizing conclusion of the previous sections. Shifting in focus and data sources from the preceding discussions of infrastructural materialities of the urban habitat, it addresses the superstructure of austerity and regimes of debt and corruption, deceit and duplicity that are pathologizing Greek public culture. It explores the nervous system of public discourse, the violence and the mediology of cultural bankruptcy that is complicit with the collapse of the nation-state – thus opening up the micrological terrain mapped out in the previous chapters to a superstructural contextualization.

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It follows that the presentation of these studies, or ethnographic ‘miniatures’,⁵ does not adopt a developmental time sequence for either their conception and publication or their writing styles. This book is not a story-shaped text but a multi-sided ethnographic inquiry, a constellation of a series of partial complexes cut across by recurrent themes. Each one of these self-reflexive fragments weaves new and older ethnographic observations, experiences and writings, including the unfolding of the background of academic and socio-cultural debates and circumstances that have shaped both my theoretical and methodological predilections – as well as their transgression. This is reflected in the writing styles of the essays, which may range from the scientific, encyclopedic, and/or didactic to the literary and poetic, and move between complex and simple. This *code-switching* was partly dictated by the time and place in which these studies were originally conceived and realized, the audiences they were targeting for dialogue, and, in some cases, the demands of academic or non-academic publishing in two continents. Different realities, different modes of representation. A post-Boasian cultural translator is trained to face both directions.

These experiences sensitized me further to the performance of intercultural translation, and concretely to the crucial issue of the (mis)translation and dissemination of key anthropological concepts and terms in other languages and cultures. In unreflected translation, the act and practice of translation simply becomes the unconscious consumption of one language by another. I contend that translation for the academic and the intellectual must be part of a conscious, creative process, and a core component of intellectual production, not only a consumption experience. Translation is a process of bringing two or more cultures and societies into dialogue; it is a dialogue between open, leaking and unfinished cultural realities. Thus, bidirectional translation is informed by the image of the ‘border’, and of the translator-anthropologist as the crosser of borders who retains the margin of difference in the very act of crossing it.

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The assemblage of these related ethnographic miniatures that mirror the fragmentation of Greek modernity and its acceleration by the violence of austerity was decided at a moment when the so-called ‘Greek crisis’ could no longer be considered a local problem or one internal to a particular area, but rather emerged as an issue of global concern and interest.⁶ In this sense, the corpus of this book sheds light on cultural processes and cultural practice in ‘the era of crisis’. A central issue remains: how is memory used in everyday life to respond to social crisis?

Notes

- 1 ‘Harsh, sharp language’ (*skliri ghlossa*) is the mediatic expression that reporters use to characterize critical discourse and argumentative dialogues between people, politicians or scholars, and implies the creation of polarization. The same language would be considered natural, if not soft, in older times.
- 2 Cavafy, Constantine (also spelled Kavafis) (1863–1933), Egyptian-born Greek poet and one of the most important early twentieth-century writers.

- 3 *The Last Word* was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1991, in Greek by Livanis Publishing Organization in 1997 (4th edition 2008) and from 2017 on by *Pedio* publishing.
- 4 In the case of ‘Learning from Athens – Learning from Documenta’, for example, organized in Athens in 2017, anthropologists presented themselves as theorists and artists generally stood for fieldworkers. Documenta, an international exhibition of contemporary art founded in 1955, occurs every five years in Kassel, Germany. In 2016–17, Documenta, for the first time in its history, was organized outside of Germany; it aspired to engage in a dialogue with Athens. The meeting–conference ‘Learning from Athens – Learning from Documenta’ was initiated by a few Greek anthropologists in the context of this dialogue with Others and aimed at exploring the intersection between anthropology and the arts in the context of local and international politics. Though the concept and intent of the meeting was sound, the outcome revealed the inadequate field research and knowledge of Documenta’s activities in the city by both Greek and invited foreign anthropologists (‘the theorists’) and the limited ability of the invited artists (‘the fieldworkers’) to theorize about their own role in these activities. In general, there has been a growing predilection for ‘art’ in and beyond the field of anthropology in Greece, which resonates with the ancient Athenian democracy as exclusionary and ‘confined to the arts’. Critical presentations/evaluations of the overall project of Documenta in Athens appeared by various other scholars and in the media. For example, www.avgi.gr/article/10812/8301992/ena-ateles-lexiko-gia-ten-documenta-14 by George Tzirtzilakis. *Avgi*, August 17, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/382407/lgbtq-refugee-rights-group-steals-artwork-from-documenta-in>. *Hyperallergic*, May 21, 2017.
- 5 The term ‘miniatures’ stems from Andreas Huyssen’s term ‘modernist miniatures’, meaning reflection on the fleeting experiences of modern city life (see *Miniature Metropolis*, Huyssen 2015).
- 6 I could not agree more with Jean and John Comaroff that the global South offers today insights into the workings of our world (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012).

2

DIALOGUE/THE DIALOGICAL

Dialogue is a particularly Greek cultural form. Whether referring to Plato and Socrates or to the Tragic Poets, we speak about dialogue. The freedom to ask questions and give or receive answers is the way by which social and political enculturation, *paedeia*, is achieved. While, however, the Platonic-Socratic dialogue is a monological reflection occurring in private space, the dialogical performance of tragedy is public, collective and participatory. Tragedy performance, then, is a technique that aims at interrogating the Polis itself, impelling it to develop a self-reflexive relationship to its own ethics, politics, and history. The Greek tragedy is a critique, an example of freedom of expression, and it stands in a dialectical relationship with notions of citizenship.

The focus of my ethnographic work has been on the dialogical. Yet, the dialogical not as a communication of the moment or of the present, as it is said to be for Tragedy, but rather as a technique for critiquing, historicizing, and remembering, and as the foundation for freedom of expression. This has been a theoretical and methodological stance that developed out of my ethnographic encounters in various locales and times. Starting with my long fieldwork on death rituals in Inner Mani (which culminated in my ethnography *The Last Word*), the process or *poesis* (making) of dialogue and the formation of historical consciousness was revealed to me as a social-material process where affective, sensory and gendered memory provided the building blocks for improvised poetry – the ultimate example of freedom of expression and an act of reconstitution of women’s subjectivation. Later, in *The Senses Still*, enculturation, or *paedeia*, was revealed, in contrast to the Platonic-Socratic tradition, as a sensory-affective economy that involves *aestheses* (senses) and haptics, tied to the acquiring of form, and drawing its imagery (color, shape, texture) from the body and the handling of food. Thus, no rigid dichotomy could be maintained between enculturating processes and the natural processes that transform the body.

Freedom of expression is contingent on dialogical contexts. When such contexts are unequal, as in the Bakhtinian sense of the dialogical, the dialogic can become a covert critical address of authority. In this case, expression is free but it is hidden in dense cultural codes, such as parody, and it often goes underground. Examples have been the Carnival, as discussed by Le Roy Ladurie (1979), and, in the context of modern Greece, the satirical Shadow Theater (*Theatro Skion*).¹ More recent expressions include graffiti and the flexible little graves that I discuss in this book.

The Dialogical is often reduced to and conflated with dialogue, as a kind of talk between equals. Yet, the performative dialogics of Tragedy, as well as the Bakhtinian notion of the dialogical, presume conditions of hierarchy in which the dominated develop forms of address and critique that indirectly challenge authority by code-switching and detouring dominant discourses. And this is done in performative conditions where authority tends to be often absent. Kristeva (1986), like other formalists, has identified dialogical elements, such as polyphony, antagonistic discourses, divergent discursive genres and compelling value systems, within a single narrative, discourse or text. Although the other is not physically present, there is a linguistic presence of that other. This dynamic first became apparent to me in the lament improvisations of Mani, where singers borrowed imagery and made inter-textual references to other compositions. Dialogical, thus, does not simply mean dialogue between the self and an external other but also the self and its internalized other. This is also evident in contemporary popular music and lyrics² (discussed in Chapter 8).



FIGURE 2.1 'What you remember never dies'
Source: Graffiti by Skitsofrenis.

What are the techniques for the production and dissemination of dialogical discourse?

Under what conditions has the dialogical existed in contemporary Greece, in the context of hierarchical relations as in state or in androcentric pre-state cultures in the past? And how does it exist, if it does, in everyday life today? Drawing from my ethnographic experiences in Inner Mani, for instance, the central site for the production and reproduction of discourse, for the dialogical expression of contrasting views, and for the construction of oral history, was the mourning ritual of women, known as *klama*.³ *Klama* was not simply an expressive and momentary (of the present) practice, but it had an interventionist role in public life. It was the site in which gendered logos was legitimized; it was the site where the eight-syllable improvised poetic discourse of women, the laments, was produced, reproduced and disseminated as oral history by the dialogical technique of *antiphony*. Thus, antiphony or dialogics was not just communication of the present or the moment, but it constructed memory.

The *klama* narrative process was not tied to the nationalist paradigm, it did not have its origins in a nation-state, but in an individual and the kin networks the individual belonged to. This is the context in which the oral historians of the area, women, claimed truth with memory and pain. But do Greeks today claim truth this way and in the same context? Rather not. Today, in the male dominated public space of modernity, truth is claimed without either.⁴ On the other side, women today claim their right to public-political life. The question is how they claim it. Do they fight to enter the public sphere ahistorically, in terms of legal frameworks alone? Put differently, as they fight to make truth-claims in male-dominated public space do they question the structure and organization of that very public sphere? And do they alter its constitution by making claims with a memory that exceeds male-dominated public sphere, or do they make truth claims by merely repeating what is permitted as sayable and thinkable in those spheres?

Here historically actual models would be inspiring. Maniat women, for example, entered social interiors from an outside, and, although their logos originated from the outside, it was a logos that opened borders rather than confirmed them in their rigidity. It is for this reason that they historicized from the position of death, which is historicizing at the limits of the inside from a site of absence and the without. They used marginalized and heterotopic memory of shared substance and reciprocity and of the imprint of women's labor on agricultural space, as mnemonic space, to challenge the public order of space itself. Like Antigone in the ancient tragedy, they had to decide between two conflicting laws, the one required by the state and patriarchy, and the other required by shared substance and emotional reciprocity. Antigone's law too, was based on memory, it transcended death and forgetfulness brought by *xenitia*, absence, and stood against the law of the powerful king Creon when he and the Polis barred her brother's body from burial and implicitly from the city.

The centrality of shared substance, reciprocity, and care and tending ethics within and beyond the household points to the pivotal role of non-agonistic female exchanges. In women's performances agonistic and nonagonistic modes of

exchange co-existed. This counters models that founded the ethos of performance solely on agonistic relations, such as Michael Herzfeld's approach in the context of rural Greece. In his agonistic cosmos, performance is social structural segmentation (see also Bauman 1975), and semantic segmentation, or deformation of collective 'texts', by the individual (a segmentary unit). The accomplished performer poetically links other segmentary units, agnatic descent, regional separatism, and national honor (Herzfeld 1985, 11–16). The discussion of shared substance, instead, built a model of gendered performance as a transgression of both segmentary kinship and androcentric social structure.

Moreover, this discussion of the particular ritual performances expands the notion of performance by challenging the idea of beginnings and ends and the separation of audience and performance (as in theatrical performance—see Appendix I). These ritual performances emerged from everyday life and returned back into it. They emerged from the reading of the physical world and the body, and of dreaming – all had their own temporality and place and they constituted the various phases of the ritual performance. Thus ritual is shown to be a living experience, not a schematic event. Prospective dreaming, in particular, is one of its origin points leading to its intense aim, antiphony.

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In Greek, the concept of antiphony (*antifonisi*) possesses a social and juridical sense in addition to its aesthetic, musical, and dramaturgical uses. Antiphony can refer to the construction of contractual agreement, the creation of a symphony by opposing voices. It also implies echo, response, and guarantee. In Greek, the prefix *anti-* does not only refer to opposition and antagonism, as in English, but also to equivalence, 'in place of', reciprocity, face-to-face. My understanding and treatment of antiphony, thus, departs from the Platonic monologue, where voice is possessed by the educated ones – those who can have their own voice, speak, and listen in orderly turn. As it also departs from the conventional understanding of antiphony as a literary aesthetic and dramaturgical device.

Antiphonic dialogue was also revealed to me in the field as a social structure for the production of juridical discourse. Greek lament performances and death rituals were identified as having jural functions, as components of a tradition of customary law in so far as antiphony is fundamental to an entire cultural system of witnessing and social verification. But here the use of law did not rest in textual codification but in linguistic performance, enactment and exchange. My core focus, thus, was the etymological analysis of antiphonic witnessing, as performance and text.

The concept of 'juridical truth', in particular, the identification of the jural functions of the death rituals and lament performances, as components of a tradition of customary law, was a critique of legal realism. This was later exemplified in a different context by Allen Feldman in his analysis of the human rights representations of Truth Commission in South Africa.⁵ By adopting this model of antiphonic witnessing, he demonstrated that all antiphonic components were left out in the trials. In Africa, he stated, a significant number of witnesses were women of color who represented not just themselves:

They did not take the stand as atomized traumatized victims, but as representatives and embodied signifiers for the disappeared and the dead. In addition to the acoustic and gestural antiphonal dynamics between these women's accounts and the community-based audience's powerful response, the entire call and response performance existed in an emotionally powerful relation to absence – to the silenced and the dead who would never testify.

(Feldman 2004, 176)

The witness (martyr), thus, aside from a historian, that is witnessing for those present and absent, is also an agent of communication; she/he comes out of the space of death with language, poetry, memory, emotion and social connectedness. This is in direct contrast with the modern martyr, the suicide bomber, who is an agent of destruction of social ties. This modern martyr directly suffers and inflicts pain, a pain reduced to physical pain and endurance, thus moving beyond language and communication.

Connecting the pain–truth relation to antiphony, a form of discourse going back to archaic Greece, establishes the prechristian origins of this relation. Talal Asad (1983), in another context, had located, instead, the origin of this correlation in Christian concepts of testing, confession, trial and ordeal by inquisition.

Thus, an ethnological comparison with the linguistic, ritual and theatrical practices of antiphony in Greek antiquity was facilitated and important historical connections were made possible between Maniat death ritual, ancient Greek dramaturgy, gender identity, and customary law. This ethnological and interpretive approach, partly grounded also in historical philology, points to long-term structural and semantic continuities and discontinuities between ancient and modern Greece. However, this analysis, unlike historical and philological approaches, is not simply linguistic history archived in texts, but a textured and critical description of living practices of everyday life, accessed through oral/aural history, visual culture analysis, soundscape analysis, and dissections of local rhetoric of social suffering (connected to death and mourning and to gender identity).

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A (re)turn therefore to established ethnographic studies enables us to also export theoretical models that respond to and expand prevalent notions of performance in Greece and elsewhere, offering an anthropological view on contemporary social phenomena – as it is attested to in the following chapters. A (re)turn also to established ethnographic practices may offer insights, if not solutions, to current theoretical debates on such issues as subjectivity and affect, debates that in Cultural Studies and Media Studies tend to center on Western, modern, urban societies and cultures and predominantly on the domain of literature and the arts.

Consider, for example, that in this historically actual example, subjectivity and emotions were constructed through ritual performance; a large part of it was linguistic for emotions and language were inseparable. There was no pre-given subjectivity; a person occupied multiple subject positions in relation to what discourse one was involved in (e.g. in and out of the ritual). Unlike the Western conception of emotions

and subjectivity as separate from law, there pain had a jural character: it had to be witnessed and validated by an audience in order to be true. Subjective pain thus attained objective social character, a juridical value, by the chorus and it was returned to the individual singer as such. The jural and affective were not separated by division of labor or social stratification. Nor was religion from law (objective language) as a matter of fact. The mourning song was both religion and politics (Seremetakis 1991). Moreover, as in the rest of non-urbanized Greece, there was no ethic of getting rid of pain, of attaining catharsis. Pain was a form of continuous labor and as such it had social value. For death was not perceived as a biological termination. Death was a historical concept; its primary medium of representation was not medical termin-ology but rather the lament, a publicly performed historical narrative.

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To what extent is dialogical interaction valued in or removed from everyday life today?

Under conditions of European integration and trans-national processes, there is no longer an inside and outside. Earlier relationships of dialogue apparently have vanished. We rather exist in a pseudo-culture of sameness, much of which is simulated by the media. The problem, therefore, today is to re-establish new terms of the dialogical that presuppose difference and discontinuity, not uniformity and continuity, globality and the transnationalized. Dialogicity runs counter to the totally administered society of the EU and the protocols of the internet. But what are the grounds for the new dialogic? What position can be assumed? For some it is ethnic nationalism; but that is only the creation of a walled difference that actually prohibits any dialogue. No change of identity can occur from engaging in such a dialogue – unclear ethnic fetishism is not dialogical, for the latter ideally should be transformative. The issue, therefore, is whether Greece can develop self-representations that do not lock out the world, as in Serbia for instance, for this precludes the dialogic.

In the current epoch of massive socio-cultural and transnational economic shifts, what type of ethnographic and dialogical relationships does Greek society have to have with its own cultural identity and history? In the crisis of modernity, how do we establish dialogical relations with ourselves to access our hidden or damaged cultural memory as the building blocks of Greek freedom of expression? Or is this history inherently structured by a Platonic Ideality/Democracy, Hellenic/Romeic,⁶ Archaic/Modern, Nationalist/EU dialogic? In short, how can Greece establish a self-reflexive relationship with its own past that changes the positioning of the present? Besides, the situation of late modernity and transnational conditions also permit new dialogical relations with the dialogic past since the present is altered. What is the ethnographic dialogue in modernity then?

To answer some of these questions, while others remain rhetorical, I draw on my ethnographic encounters, examples of asymmetrical and disjunctive dialogics that address also the issue of memory and its materiality. These examples, that expand the terms and content of dialogue, are opposed to the ahistorical rigidity of any border, to the nationalist narrative or that of an event history, both of which

limit the terms and content of dialogue. I focus, instead, on a dialogue based on the fractured conditions of everyday life that do not form closed unities but unfold as dialogical terrains in being mundane, below, devalued, normalized and an-archic simultaneously.

This is particularly salient in globalizing modernity where media – one of modernity’s principal constituent forces – displace and monopolize all possible dialogue that a society can have with itself. The media simulate dialogue in monological forms and leave the audience as passive spectator of the process, or dialogue is sold as a commodity to be consumed by those who are barred from it (as in the case of TV talk shows, mimetically reproduced in Greece from American television). The transformation of dialogue into monological spectacle is the antithesis of Greek tragedy, and confirms the extent to which dialogue has been removed from the *zoon politikon* as the zone of everyday life.⁷ Dialogue is commodified as spectacle to the extent that dialogical interaction has been devalued in or removed from everyday life. Modernity does not come to terms with the tension between media-technological domination of information and lived experience, which is where the dialogical emerges from. The gap between official commodified knowledge and everyday lived experience widens.

Alternative memory must be salvaged. But the role of anthropology is not simply to salvage. Ethnography, as both method and text or ‘beyond text’, must provide alternative affectivities. One must look for and into cultures or social groups that have developed indigenous, self-reflexive practices that cultivate rupture and discontinuity in everyday modern life, practices that have been ignored or unconsciously rendered ‘collateral losses’. It is such Greek cultural practices, etymologies and sensory-affective orientations as examples of alternative perceptual epistemologies and affectivities that I have been mostly interested in. Greek tragedy and contemporary Greek mourning rituals, for instance, are about dialogue from below based on performative media that allow for communal participation not just passive reception. They present alternative and historically actual models of space-claiming and teach the history of public space and truth-claiming in public space, as well as women’s history. They inspired my later ethnographic explorations of contemporary Greek culture and urbanscapes that appear in this book, where I point to new modes of understanding politics, of belonging and membership and new ways of citizenizing or practicing citizenship rights in public space, which emerge today in the era of austerity. Some of the issues raised in these explorations revolve around the limits of different notions of public space in Greece today, of male-dominated space, of the civil space of the nation-state, and of the transnational public sphere of the EU, but also their remediations by the ethics of reciprocity and of care and tending. For any exploration of cross-cultural and historical difference leads inevitably to a reflection on our present. And this is politically important for it points to an alternative mediology of everyday life that is today experienced as colonized by public media.

These issues also speak to anthropology's recent concerns about its public performance, its general interface with the public for broadening its audiences beyond academic space. The question arising, how is this to be accomplished? For any designing and organization of public dialogical terrains is but the translation of one's socio-cultural theorization. Does broadening of our audiences imply an insertion of the discipline into the dominant politics of generalized consensus? Or will ethnographers remain reporters in 'disagreement?' As Jacques Rancière would say: 'political subjects are not representatives of parts of the population but processes of subjectivation which produce a disagreement, a dissensus ... Politics occurs only when political subjects initiate a quarrel over the perceptible givens of common life' (Rancière 2004, 6).

There have been three basic goals highlighted and pursued for broadening our audiences and publicness by leading scholars and institutions (see Appendix II): anthropologists need to: be intellectuals speaking in the public sphere addressing the nation through the media and other fora; affirm at all times their solidarity with the oppressed engaging in a form of action research; establish themselves as policy advisors to the state apparatus and civil society.

I contend that these rather optimistic formulas would benefit from a fourth alternative rarely mentioned. It originates in Stanley Diamond's maxim that 'anthropology is the study of people in crisis by people in crisis' (Diamond 1969, 401): anthropologists are people who exist on the margins, who learn through and from other folks who dwell at the border of social and historical disaster. In short, anthropology is not a comforting discipline. It is the discipline of historical disaster, the knowledge that emerges from disaster. As Emmanuel Levinas reminds us, 'If the other could be possessed, seized, and known, it would not be the other. To possess, to know, to grasp are all synonyms of power' (Levinas 1983, 91).

Ethnography has always focused on the traumatic dimension of historical experience because ethnography does not focus on events per se, like the declarations of war, but on everyday life experiences, and the first casualty of traumatic history is everyday life as a stable, predictable structure. Traumatic history gives rise to new forms of everyday life, documents people making meaning and identity in the aftermath of displacement, violence, separation, exile. Anthropology is the discipline that theorizes the traumatic as everyday life. And the Greek understanding of trauma or wound – historically conceived as *xenitia*⁸ – is far from a mere symptom of an underlying pathology or a visible injury caused by an external force, which demands a therapeutic catharsis. It speaks about long historical experiences, open wounds that travel through time and via bodies, individual and social, national and global, and congeal into a collective memory. The recalling of this memory in action was what we witnessed recently in the streets of Greece where locals and invading others, immigrants or refugees, met in affective exchanges. These outsiders, like ghosts from the past (re)emerged from the borders, awakening unconscious history into traumatic consciousness.

The dialogical embodies repetition, for it is not linear. In this sense, any recycling here of previous ideas and works of mine, reshaped in and by their new context, is conscious, overt and strategic. It replicates the recursive dynamic of ethnographic inquiry and dialogic; it simulates the unexpected juxtapositions of prior ethnographic field experience, in the present moment, in text or in classroom. It is complicit also with the traditional storytelling mode in Greece, which builds on repetition, allegory and ellipsis. Deleuze (1994) would agree that repetition is not resemblance, nor a duplication of the same, it is never about fidelity, it speaks to difference. Paraphrasing Kierkegaard, the only repetition is the impossibility of repetition. And closing with Beckett, ‘ever tried, ever failed, no matter, try again, fail again, failed better’ (*Worstword Ho*).

Here repetition is thus meant to counter the pretense that one must present ‘brand new’ ideas, having left older ones behind.⁹ This derives from the logic of commodification which is invested in the eternal return of the new. After all, any ‘shift and turn’ to the history of specific ideas and concepts is motivated by the application of established ethnographic practices.

On the other side, this creative recycling, in neocolonial mimetic contexts, is an urgently needed paradigm on how we (re)read our everyday life and experiences in order to produce theoretical ideas – rather than passively reproduce and consume those of others, ‘new’ or ‘old’.¹⁰

Notes

- 1 In an interview in *Kathimerini* (February 3, 2008, 8), Tassos Konstas, the successor to the creator of *Shadow Theater*, Evghenios Spatharis, spoke about this tradition and warned about its future museumification.
- 2 For a different treatment of the dialogic in Greek traditional music see Kavouras (2006).
- 3 *Klama* translates in colloquial Greek as crying; in Mani though, *klama* was not a psychological category as in urban Greece or elsewhere, but a social category. Similarly, the terms *lipi* or *hara*, the former referring to the state of mourning, the latter to festive events, e.g. a wedding.
- 4 I am thinking of arenas of confrontation like the assassination of a NATO officer by the terrorist organization ‘November 17’ some years ago, or the representation in trans-national bodies like EU, UN, NATO, or, as a matter of fact, the more recent terrorist killings in Paris in 2015. Are all these adequate in their dialogue? Is there a real confrontation between *eros* and *thanatos* which was the driving force for remembering in traditional Greek society? French culture shares a similar notion of *eros* as *thanatos* – the ‘internal death of the self because of and for the other ... the self as both the self and a memory in the other ...’ (Seremetakis 1996, 5). No coincidence, Hollande’s discourse after the Paris attack stressed the ‘assault’ on French *eros* by Islamic death drive.
- 5 For other discussions of this concept of antiphony applied in different contexts see Julie Taylor (2012), and Allen Feldman (2015), among others.
- 6 See Herzfeld’s discussion of Hellenic/Romeic sides of Greek identity in his excellent books *Ours Once More* (1986) and *Anthropology Through the Looking Glass* (1989).
- 7 See also John Chioles (1993).
- 8 *Xenitia* ‘encompasses the condition of estrangement, the outside, the movement from the inside to the outside, as well as contact and exchange between foreign domains, objects, and agents. *Xenitia* is a basic cognitive structure within which life and death are thought. *Xenitia* is reversible and situationally contingent. Inserting the logic or imagery of estrangement into

any social situation, life event, or discourse immediately organizes the contingent into relations of the inside and outside, the same and the other. Xenitia then is a foundational taxonomy, and its imagery informs dreaming, death rituals, kinship systems, marriage, geography, history, ethnicity, and politics' (Seremetakis 1991, 85).

- 9 The internalization of this idea of the 'brand new' in academia by younger scholars is also exemplified by a recent accusation of the renowned author and thinker Zigmunt Bauman for self-plagiarism! That is, according to the recent laws on copyrights one could be accused for repetition of and from one's own words in more than one of one's own texts. The young scholar, instead of critiquing and resisting the current exploitative publishing regime and legal realism, chose to accuse Bauman for not obeying it. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/zygmunt-bauman-accused-serial-self-plagiarism>
- 10 The turn to something, e.g. affect, implies move away from something else, such as the rational mind. No doubt this foregrounds the body and the senses in different ways. But both of these have a long history in anthropology and the humanities – something which is often conveniently ignored. In a recent conference on emotions in Greece (see *Historein*, vol. 8, 2008), for example, anthropologists and historians (followed by archaeologists later), catching up the trend, dealt with emotions, the senses and aesthetics as their invented 'new sites' ignoring earlier studies, some of which have been quite influential, and/or works considered as forerunners of an 'epistemological turn' in their fields and of their time.

APPENDIX I: ON PERFORMANCE: THEATER, FILM VERSUS RITUAL

Ritual and ritual performance is classic anthropological territory, and one that decenters both scientific perspectives and conventional representations of the other. There is an intimate relation, though, between theatrical performance and ritual, which has facilitated the absorption of the study of rituals and ritual performance in and by Theater Studies and/or Folklore proper in the context of Greek Studies particularly. The prevalent sociologicistic academic environment, on the other side, has contributed to the relegation of rituals and ritual performance to the domains of metaphysics and the Church.

The intimate relation between theatrical performance and ritual is detected in the same elements they share. Both ancient drama and comedy maintained the mask, the lament, the messenger speech, even after the emergence of legal rationality and discourse as the basis of democracy in the *Polis*, leading eventually to the twentieth-century realist trend in theater. Given the pseudo-realism later imposed by the media – e.g. the reality shows on television – critical voices in Theater urge for the inclusion of ritual forms in theatrical productions.

These tensions are detected in the understanding and translation of the term and concept of performance. Performance has been identified with theatrical performance (*parastasi*) and this in everyday life implies a play of imagination, separate from reality. Performance studies is transferred as *Theatrology* or *Theater Studies* in Greek academia. (See also Chapter 13, regarding the translation of the term 'performance' in Greek.)

In the spirit of clarifying the ongoing dialogues between anthropology and theater, consider the following two wider schisms in the theory of performance. The question being 'Is performance an enactment or reenactment? And what is enacted or reenacted?'

A structural theory of performance claims that the theater form is the content that is interpreted in a history of forms, and this is the history of modernism. Modernist theater rejects realism and seeks to create an autonomous theatrical reality that is self-enclosed and self-referential. This corresponds to the performance theory thesis that performance is not simply a symptom of social structure but it can create its own structure and reality. Thus, modernist performance practice moves away – or thinks it does – from the idea of reenactment of preexisting texts, whether they are social or theatrical texts. The analysis that emerges from this type of theater critique is descriptive, since the forms are supposedly new and are the terrain from which the content of the theater piece arises.

In this case, the rejection of realism becomes the premise for the recreation of premodern theatre, for theater directors and authors believed that ritual as opposed to debased realist theater has the capacity to create autonomous separate realities divorced from externalities. Thus, the theory of performance of modernist theater is based on an erroneous theory of the relations between ritual and social context. Rituals in nonmodern and precolonial societies are not static formalist acts but interact with changing social contexts and realities; the old form is reworked to accommodate new content. To a certain extent, therefore, the form is not the stable bearer of social content or meaning as much as the modernists may claim; it bends and folds in response to new historical experience; it has authority due to its historical associations, but it remains historically valid only to the extent that the premodern ritual form can continue to relate new stories and narratives.

This is the reality captured in Jean Rouch's *l'Maitre Fou* that documents the Hauka ritual of Niger and Mali in which the performers in states of trance reenact colonial figures and role-plays of their former white masters (see also Stoller's (1992) study of Jean Rouch). Here the theatrical possession-trance is itself a social commentary insofar as the possession by the spirits of dead white colonizers can be seen as a powerful metaphor for colonial penetration and conquest. But, further, the ritual shows the medium in trance dressed or acting as colonial governmental and military figures; so there is an explicit reenactment of an external historical reality. However, the mimesis here is not passive – in the Aristotelian mimesis people are mechanical agents of larger physical powers – but subversive, for the body movements in trance capture both the strangeness and the machine-like or automata-like quality of the colonial ruling apparatus and particular indices of the bodies of the person of color who is caught up in the colonial machinery.

Rouch's film when shown in Paris in the 1950s scandalized the modernists, particularly those of the negritude movement, who saw it as focusing on the primitivity of Africans while they saw trance as a debased form of consciousness. Later, theatrical modernists would valorize trance and previously, the Surrealists had practiced and praised such practices, along with automatic writing, as accessing the Freudian unconscious.

Rouch's film lifted automatism from the parlor game and the linguistic text and placed it in real sweaty bodies and concrete historical situations. Modernism instead was aghast and scandalized, calling the film racist. Thus, for a return to

pure theater via pre-modern theatrical form, the ethnographic had to be sterilized. One could say that Rouch's gritty cross-cultural realist theater is rather influenced by Ariane Mnouchkine's,¹ Peter Brook's,² and Richard Schechner's³ pallid intercultural borrowings which filter the historical violence of cultural production in the very gesture of expropriating and re-aestheticizing the collector's artifacts of exotic theatrical and ritual practice.

The erroneous or ethnocentric notion of ritual is responsible for Mouchkine's, among others', borrowing from multi-cultural sources of ritual and theater to create a pure theatrical mythography. In their very modernist rejection of realism they still indulge in reenactment, in this case imperial reenactment, the pillaging of other cultures, which is a classic Western gesture. Thus, modernist theater does not escape social externality but repeats it by its expropriation of exotic theatrical musical and rite-related performative forms. In addition, the descriptive tendencies of modernist theater criticism, which seeks to deal with the play in its own self-referential terms, cannot avoid referencing other modernist theater projects; this descriptive criticism references a history of theatrical forms and poses this history as a purely aesthetic genealogy. Thus, it begs the question whether this history of the theatrical forms has any connection to a social history, a history of perception, the senses, or agency itself.

Another school of performance analysis recognizes that the performance can create an autonomous reality, but, at the same time, it alters the actor's and audience's relationship to existing social contexts; thus, performance accesses an external reality but also resurrects that reality by injecting new or different meanings in social experience that were officially rendered devoid of meaning.

Karolos Koun,⁴ a leading critical theatrical director in Greece, called for a turn to traditional ritual to free theatrical performance from language and logocentrism and allow for an affective performance, one based on senses and passion. In *The Last Word*, for example, the mourners take the void of the dead and resurrect death through performative intensities of language and the body, the dead live on in a different semiotic form and also the performer critiques society from the quasi-autonomous social space of the ritual. This type of theater actually views all social institutions as performative, be these political, cultural, medical or the performance of everyday life, and the theater becomes a performance space capable of entering into dialogical relationships with other performance spaces. This approach, without being necrophiliac like the others, attempts to reenact the ancient *Agora* and the *Polis* by making theater the market place of ideas and dialogical interaction, crisis and emotional-sensory intensity.

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In anthropology, performance is the intervention in everyday life structures, which releases hidden meaning from social and material relationships. Performance, then, as a practice of everyday life is *poesis* because it departs and embarks from the given, the perceived as 'natural' and thus rendered nonvisible and left unexamined.

Since performance in everyday life departs from the residual texts of social relationship and normative routine, it may carry the routine into different semantic spheres as the ethnography translates and transports an inherited theoretical edifice into the field to witness its mutation, if not its disintegration. In turn, it accounts for the possibilities of the emergence of novel narratives and stories and interpretations, which emerge from the performance – be that field-work or ritual observance. In this sense, performance ethnography effects a major break with the tacit philosophy of history of the type of social organizational analysis that had pervaded European ethnography and any analysis grounded on objectified categories (see also Chapter 11).

Notes

- 1 Ariane Mnouchkine is a French writer, director and founder of the Parisian avant-garde stage ensemble Theatre du Soleil. She holds a Chair of Artistic Creations at the Collège de France.
- 2 Peter Brook is an acclaimed English theater and film director who lived in France till the 1970s and was influenced by Antonin Artaud and Joan Littlewood.
- 3 Richard Schechner is Professor and founder of the Performance Studies Department at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, and the founder (in 1967) and artistic director of the Performance Group of New York.
- 4 Koun was a well known, acclaimed and Sorbonne-educated Greek theater director. He gave premiers of the work of avant-garde European playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht and Luigi Pirandello, and was best known for his innovative staging of Ancient Greek plays. He died in 1987, aged 79.

APPENDIX II: THE PUBLIC FACE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The recent trend in anthropology to move ‘beyond text’ is intimately tied to its earlier concern about the discipline’s dialogues and general interface with the public. The latter probed discussions among leading scholars that revolved around three definitions and options concerning the translation of academic knowledge to public knowledge and action:

- Anthropologists need to establish themselves as policy advisors to the state apparatus and secondarily the civil society through NGOs – this is a definition held by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and not excluded by the European Social Anthropological Association (ASA).
- Anthropologists need, at all times in their research and practice, to affirm their solidarity with the oppressed and anthropology should be a form of action research – a position first promoted by the anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes – pointing to missionization.
- Anthropologists need to be public intellectuals, speaking in a public sphere of analogous intellectual and political dialogues addressing the nation through the media and other large fora – a position supported by Jean and John Comaroff.

These definitions of the practices of anthropology both overlap and differ significantly. The first approach seems to harbor the idealism that anthropology has overcome the blindness to political and cultural relativism of the 1950s and the Vietnam era, and can now enter ethically into the field of Public Policy without replicating oppression. The question remains, won't political policy change anthropology as it once did during the Vietnam war era, rather than public policy being changed by anthropology? Moreover, do academics really care for anything else beyond academic privileges? And when the latter are sought after in other socio-political contexts, are these contexts considered or transcended in the name of a totalizing globality?

The second definition idealistically overrides any structures of difference, of otherness, in terms of a universalistic program against oppression; it thus harbors the danger of foregrounding the anthropologist as sacrificial hero or missionary in his/her own right, rather than unifying the anthropologist with a somewhat diffident research subject. Does the sharing of solidarity with the anthropological informant mean also assimilation of that informant into Western political agendas? The AAA model, for instance, seems to assume this assimilation as its starting point. Are we then inserting anthropology into a politics of generalized consensus?

The third option presumes that there is a public sphere in American life, or Greek life as a matter of fact, where intellectuals are respected enough to be listened to. And if we suppose they are, then the anthropologist must become the primary subject of his/her writing and the center of attention in the public sphere.

I argue that these models have to be rethought in the context of the anthropological discourses of the 1980s (discussed also in Chapter 11), which centered on an iconoclastic stricture against objectifying the other. The result of these discourses was to de-exoticize the other, make the other less different, and thus more assimilable to universalizing precepts, theories and politics. Sharing solidarity with the anthropological informant was the ultimate assimilation of that informant into Western political agendas.

I contend that a more careful look at the study of actual research and policy advisement praxis is required if we are to avoid certain naiveties that characterize the above proposed models for achieving a public face. The AAA, which exoticized policy applications and the ethic of the public anthropology – this ethic is not reducible to the public intellectual of the Sartrean type, who never did any consulting – would benefit from Stanley Diamond's critique of professionalization and its illegitimate conflation with the public intellectual. Diamond lived himself as a philosopher, poet, ethnographer and reporter in 'disagreement'. His maxim that 'anthropology is the study of people in crisis by people in crisis' (Diamond 1969, 401), that anthropologists are people who exist on the margins, who learn through and from other folks who dwell at the border of social and historical disaster, is a fourth alternative.

Sensing the Everyday builds on all the above proposed ideas to foreground a dialogical performative anthropology of the everyday as both theory and practice.



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PART II

Death drives in the city



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3

THEATROCRACY AND MEMORY IN AUSTERITY TIMES¹

Awakening

It is sometimes strange how something unexpected can interrupt our normal routines. Consider my usual morning walk from my Athenian apartment down the street to catch the bus. On that routine walk, a few months ago, I noticed a little stone construction looking like a miniature church on a short pillar, permanently fixed on the sidewalk. It stood peacefully a few steps away from my home, right at the corner of a busy avenue close to the center of the city. Flowers surrounded it. Its interior featured the picture of a young man and a lit candle. A name and a date, engraved on its outside, signified the death of that person – a car accident, right there and then. For a moment I was struck. This little ‘decoration’ had transformed a habitual space into otherness. The colorless street corner that had passed unnoticed in the flow of the routine daily movement of hundreds of pedestrians had emerged like a submarine in front of our eyes. It precipitated a mixed sense of pleasure and pain. At first the little construction gave the pleasant impression of a children’s toy; as soon as we read its message, play turned to pain. This was death in our place.²

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From that moment on, I began to notice dozens of these new fixtures of the urbanscape, on sidewalks, on street turns and corners, next to schools, next to official statuary and monuments, and most interesting, attached on stone or concrete fences of private houses, in urban and rural places alike. These objects defy all state interventions and spatial surveillance – even at a time when policing intensified due to anti-austerity protests, violent terrorist attacks, and influxes of illegal immigrants.

What are ‘little graves’ doing in the city of the living? I wondered. The dead are normally located outside; state and church ideologies have agreed that the dead



FIGURE 3.1

inhabit the Other World, far from our place and our time. Is this once privatized outside now leaking back into the inside? Or is this the leakage of everyday life into a *thanatology* informed partly by the violence and terror of the austerity regime?

The dead, perhaps tired of their pilgrimage into theological oblivion, are now clandestinely returning one by one, like smuggled refugees, back to the city they once inhabited in life. There, they can stare at the passersby and blend with their colorful noise. In their little street graves they are free of cemetery regulations, they elude all state, legal and bureaucratic discipline. They point to the possibility and existence of tactical sideways and byways inside the strategic realism of urban planning; a sideways that escapes disciplined and panoptical control and therefore claims for the dead a right to a place among the living.

The seepage of death from the cemetery back into public thoroughfares is certainly a democratization of death; yet it also polysemically figures the death of democracy in an everyday life that now includes the museumification of the classical era and the attrition of democracy, as the Greek parliament falls under the control of the austerity autocrats in Brussels. The museumification of democracy turns Athens into a cemetery of classical Greece: a fossilized exilic legacy of contemporary Europe.

Third stream memory

Greece's entrance into the European community brought about paradigmatic changes in the urban landscape, its image and everyday use. It has intensified an older emphasis on the permanent structures, museums and public statuary, that safeguard institutional memory. One could think that, in the present crisis, now that the social body, individual and collective, is experienced in total dispersal, solid matter is sought for anchorage. The authenticating ancient world in its visible form, the statuary, stands as a paradigm of wholeness, of national and universal unity, and signifies a common humanity. It is the epitome of rationality and harmony, beauty and skill; in short, it is the epitome of European civilization as exemplified in the body – human, built, and environmental.

One consequence of this stance has been a gradual literalization of Greek everyday life. The symbolic, or the act and process of symbolizing, which in Greek is known as *metaphora* (metaphor),³ began to be the opposite of modernization as exemplified by Western European secular society. Secularization is intimately tied to realism, the cult of the thing itself. Indicative of this trend is the slow receding of the old emphasis on language as the fundamental connection between modern and classical Greeks.

After all, it was through language and those institutions dependent on language (church, school, courts) that Greek formalism was intensely expressed for decades. This long emphasis on language has been gradually replaced by an emphasis on the ancient relics discovered by archaeologists. And archaeology, with the hardening of disciplinary boundaries, has been relegated to a positivistic model of science.⁴

Performative lamentation in this context is rendered anachronistic and has died out, but the appearance of the little graves in the space of the living city stands as a silent *antistixis*⁵ to the dominance of official statuary, whether the latter are enclosed in museums or released out in public as an eternal didactic presence of official history.

The long cultivated belief in Greece that archaeological finds and folkloric registration of rural culture authenticate national identity, at the same time that the high arts, mainly imported from European metropolises, authenticate Greece's cosmopolitan European identity, has contributed to the devaluation of the present. For decades Greece has been running either to catch up with the cultural present of Europe or to secure its national identity and historical experience to its remote past. It is as though the Greek present lies outside of time for it is neither historical nor modern; as though it is devoid of any cultural meaning. This notion of the present also implies that people are denied any cultural agency, they can play no role in the cultural process and development; public cultural events and dynamics are thus experienced as divorced from their everyday life.

Agamben warns us of the museumification of the world:

One by one, the spiritual potentialities that defined people's lives – art, religion, philosophy, the idea of nature, even politics – have docilely withdrawn

into the Museum. ... The term [Museum] simply designates the exhibition of an impossibility of using, of dwelling, of experiencing.

(Agamben 2007, 84)

There is a causal relation, though, between this lack of dwelling in and on places, objects and emotions and the sensorial deadening of the museum. Memory is rendered intellectual, a sheer pool of ideas, and whole biographies, memories, speech acts and emotions become inadmissible. They cohere to what Allen Feldman has called 'the museum of historical and sensory absence' (Feldman 1996, 104). Yet, memory can be found in the emotional connection to particular spaces that have their own biographies and carry biographies within them; memory is embedded and miniaturized in objects that trigger deep emotions and narratives. We should re-hear the late Stanley Diamond, that 'anthropology is the study of people in crisis by people in crisis',⁶ to search for the ways memory is used in everyday life to respond to social crisis. For as illness, pain and death become part of the medical and economic establishment, the streets are taken over by drug dealing and violent ethnic killings, suicide rates and missing people increase, and the displacement of local memory becomes a visible threat. The social need to create memory spaces, to protect domestic history, the inside, becomes evident in increasing deprivatizing, profanatory gestures like graffiti, selfies, and the street memorials, the flexible little graves.

Whether or not the latter are definitive, they express (or are symptoms of) a search and desire for a *third-stream of anamnesis*⁷ that can address the complexities of the contemporary everyday that escape classicism and cosmopolitan assimilation.

The aperceptual present

I asked about the street little memorials in a couple of places that specialize in making and selling them. They referred to them as 'little churches'. A young woman who had been mourning her killed son stated: 'Now I have two graves [to tend] ...' Their cost ranges from about 150 euros up, depending on their size, I was told. Most of them though are of the same diminutive size. I asked if a permit was required for installing them in public spaces and the response was firmly 'no'. 'Even when attached on someone's fence?' I hesitantly asked someone who had installed one of these 'little churches'. After all, we live in a country where you are taken to court if you even imagine stepping over your neighbor's land or property boundary by half an inch. He responded positively, 'I talked with the owner of the house on whose fence I'd attach it, and he agreed immediately.'

I then asked friends and colleagues in the social and political sciences about the little memorials. Most of them had not noticed the objects. Others admitted they had seen them but did not pay attention to their presence. Some media had mentioned their multiplication by dealing exclusively with their visual aspect. All seemed to agree that these little memorials, old and new, were multiplying imperceptibly.⁸

Roundabout roads or linear streets and highways feature many new little memorials, often side by side with older ones. The media report a street now called ‘the street of 101’ after the number of ‘little churches’ it features. A recent newspaper article counts 68 of them in 31 kilometers along a road to the north of Greece, and another counted 104 within 70 kilometers in Crete. As I was discussing the matter in class, a student from central Greece mentioned an area there now referred to as ‘of the dead’ (*ton pethamenon*), where, in a very short distance, one can count more than 60 of them.

What would the explanation for such inattention by the academy and the media be? Perhaps it is these formalists’ contempt for the idiosyncratic and the particular, the apparently insignificant yet recurring detail. Or perhaps, as the Situationists would say, blindness, unconsciously or consciously-chosen, is peoples’ effort to escape or adopt a stance of indifference to the controlling grasp of the city, its scenographic organization. Most likely it is a combination of both.

Yet, I think the explanation for this inattention lies also in the conception of the street as a utilitarian, transitory, or nowhere space – a space devoid of symbolic, allegorical meaning. The street, like the neglected present, simply transfers one from A to X, from past (the point of origin) to future (the ultimate destination, civilization). It represents the everyday, the quotidian and the transient; it is thus rendered nonvisible.

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My premise is that Greek culture is not reducible to its museumification nor is it exhausted by high art performances. It can also be found in everyday experiences and practices. Though this is more difficult to claim as sovereign indebtedness wipes away the stability and continuity associated with quotidian life in urban modernity, culture is discoverable not just in the ancient past or in the vanishing rural traditions; it exists in the aperceptual present. And once the present is seen as a process, the street (re)emerges as a performance space of its own.

The little grave assemblages, as a necrogeography on and of the street, reveal the emergence of new forms of *anamnesis* (reminiscence); forms that are disjunctive with the formalized archaization of memory promoted by the historical monument, the museum or the archaeological site. The latter exhibit death as a legible permanence attached to clearly defined cultural-civilizational metrics and values. The informalized tourism of the small graves, rather far from being accidental, presents an archaeology of a decommodified death that rewrites the master narratives of both euro-centric origins and integral or transnationalized urban modernity that segregate the dead from the living, the ill from the healthy, the uncanny from the familiar. As Greeks struggle with economic attrition by turning to informalized microeconomies, death itself now circulates within an informalized micro-economy of affective space. Rehearing Italo Calvino, ‘The city ... does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the grating of the windows, the banisters of the steps ...’ (Calvino 1974, 11).



FIGURE 3.2 Next to an official monument

Theatrokratia and citizenship

Political assassinations, killings and terrorist acts have always been officially commemorated on or near the places they occurred, and people often contribute with flowers and other offerings to honor the memory of the victims. The everyday street killings by car or motorcycle, though, are silenced and quickly

erased as ‘accidents’. The victim is designated in public official language as ‘*atihos*’ (unlucky, unfortunate). But the extempore little memorials now appear as an ironic reminder that the so-called ‘unfortunate’ ones are not to be quickly disposed of. Rather, like all ‘matter out of place’,⁹ death relocates itself in unpredictable spaces and moments, unfixing the normative structure of our built social environment. The little graves are, at the present time, a populist reclamation of an institutionalized sacred space. Their presence aims at exposing and publicizing privatized injurability and resacralizing the public sphere apart from official religion.

Their ornamentation is also the ornamentation of a functionalist and outmoded modernist landscape of geometricized urban streets. Streets, like bodies, are interiorized. Short and humble – in contrast to the official panoptical statuary that safeguards institutional memory – the little graves re-symbolize the street from the bottom up, challenging the totalizing eye of the city and forcing it to look down, at the murky daily affective realities.

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Giorgio Agamben in a 2013 lecture in Athens, drawing on history, presented the thesis that in fifth-century Athens a transformation occurred in political conceptuality. The citizens of a democracy considered themselves as members of the polis, only insofar as they devoted themselves to an explicitly political life; their membership in economic or religious communities was secondary, unpolitical. Agamben, quoting Meier (1990),¹⁰ stated that citizenship became

a form of life, by means of which the polis constituted itself in a domain clearly distinct from the *oikos*, the house. Politics became therefore a free public space thus opposed to the private space, which was the reign of necessity.

Citizenship remained the decisive element throughout Western European states. Yet, Agamben proposed, this fundamental political factor has entered an irrevocable process of depolitization. That is, ‘what was a way of living, an essentially and irreducibly active condition, has now become a purely passive juridical status, in which action and inaction, the private and the public are progressively blurred and become indistinguishable’ (Agamben 2013, 4).

Perhaps. But the struggles between the two in the ruined house of modernity can be witnessed by walking in the streets of the Athenian polis in the present, where and when one can engage in Michel De Certeau’s (1984) pedestrian speech acts and Situationist-style *détournements*,¹¹ of and between rural and urban scapes, to sense and feel political maneuverings and dislocations in the same spatial arena. De Certeau would assert here that the pedestrian street act, such as the erection of death memorials, points to another form of citizenship that is not categorical, juridical or procedural, but performative: the ‘citizenizing’ of both the dead and their bereaved survivors.

Here death itself acquires a *theatrokratia* and a citizenship in the sphere of the profane, a profane that carries with it the surplus of the sacred that is ghettoized in the official cities of the dead we call cemeteries.

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Dying in the street, that is, outside the domestic environment, is often expressed in colloquial Greek as ‘dying like a dog’: dying an unmediated death. This is an experience that pervades the everyday life of the current austerity regime – from public suicides, to the increases in psychiatric treatment, homelessness and street panhandling. In state and media languages, however, this structuration of the everyday is still translated as the ‘accidental’, not systemic, and implies a rupture of everyday life for which the individual victim is held partly responsible. Any death crisis embodies a judgment (crisis in Greek also means judgment). In the case of car or motorcycle accidents the victim is judged careless, a violator of laws, a bad driver, unintelligent. The victim is *atihos* (unfortunate) or *amoiros* (lacking a good *moira*, or fate); *moira* is thus an individual affair. (*Moira* instead as historicity is encountered and discussed in the context of divination in Chapter 9.) The little graves invert this atomizing stigmatization, for both the dead and his kin, by exposing injurability as a social and political issue – an exposure that has been enabled by the social suffering under imposed austerity. The little graves are rejections of an imposed exiling or deportation (*xenitia*) by the state onto the deceased’s family, an exiling that renders both dead and kin an exteriority within the community through the onus of ‘bad death’.

The cartographic order

The space officially allocated to the dead on Earth is the cemetery. Originally located inside Greek villages, towns and cities, cemeteries eventually moved outside, to the borders – usually for sanitary reasons and as part of strategic urban planning for achieving sanitary modernization. This transformation of space coincided with the effort to remove the dead and death as a *miasmatic presence* in everyday experience. It also led to the privatization of the dead and death itself, leaving both dead and living into their respective *xenitia*.

Urban cemeteries, ‘cities of the dead’ as Philippe Ariès calls them, are labyrinthine and hermetically silent, like traditional museums marked by the sense of ‘drowning in silence’ (as one’s experience of aloneness is often characterized). *Xenitia* – the move to the outside – is described with these characteristics and often sensed as colorless (*mavri xenitia*). Graves in Greece are traditionally made of white marble, a combination of material and color that is sensed as cold, past. In the church’s perception, cemeteries are places of peaceful eternal rest where the dead repose in God’s warm arms. But in a casual conversation, Lela, in her eighties, exclaimed, ‘No way I will be buried here.’ She comes from and lives in a large city, Piraeus. ‘I’d rather go to my husband’s village.’ The gesture accompanying her words was the one used by people when feeling chilly. Aside from entrapment into a silent anonymity, cemeteries foster anxiety that the dead person is ‘submitted to

foreign hands', as the saying goes. The reference to foreign hands here has a double meaning: being apart from significant others, and also having one's body and persona exposed to the rational, nonaffective, 'cold touch' of the managerial experts that handle the dead body as polluting waste product. This intuition also metonymized popular verbal and emotional reaction to the surrendering of the Greek body politic to German hands, ensuring its second life as euro-corpse in the European Union.

Exhumation of the dead, the placement of excavated bones in an ossuary, is mandatory after three to five years. In the context of an increasing de-ritualization of death, exhumation rituals were the first to lose their ceremonial efficacy; even in rural areas they are now relegated to strangers, professional handlers, be they funeral parlors, local churches or (un)documented immigrants. The dead occupy the lower extremities of the body politic and their families are not positioned that much higher. Exhumation was once a family affair, but is now conducted by unknown impersonal specialists assigned by the cemetery officials. Yet, cemeteries are officially considered transitory places, stations that a body passes through on the way to the Other World, that of forgetfulness. The cemetery space allocated to the individual dead is temporary, like a rented home or a hotel room, and subjected to spatial and temporal restrictions¹² – restrictions that have intensified in the era of austerity. The social death of eviction/homelessness converges with death's desocialization.

Silent détournement: from cities of the dead to death in the city

Philippe Ariès (1981) has documented that in medieval Europe the ideological separation of the dead from the living was enacted and advanced in the physical confinement and concealment of the dead body. Nicole Loraux (1986) also has shown in ancient Greece that the exclusion of lament and its replacement with more restrained civic ritual were tied to condemnation of the 'pothos of the dead', that is, the desire of the living for the dead; a desiring machine¹³ that Margaret Alexiou (1974) testified to in the context of Byzantine Greece and that I described myself (Seremetakis 1991) in the context of modern Greece, where such practices as the self-inflicted violence upon the bodies of women in mourning are seen as the protraction of improper relations with the dead, that were condemned by church and state:

Pothos is semantically equivalent to ... *ponos* (pain) which also carries the sense of desire and lack. The suppression of *pothos* [and the display of pain] is a variant of and a historical anticipation of later institutional/religious attempts to create insurmountable barriers between the living and the dead ... The social construction of the dead by legislative, religious, and medical proscriptions is dialectically tied to and may even alter the social/institutional ordering of the living. This focus on separation and confinement of the dead inadvertently discloses the role of the dead as a crucial component in a contra-institutional social imaginary.

(Seremetakis 1991, 171)

The removal of the dead person to the city cemetery meant the erasure of a most important moment in a life cycle, the moment of departure, of the passage into *xenitia* – the exile of the dead. This diffusion of portals of migration across the urbanscape marks much of contemporary Greek society which has been undergoing the existential experience of internal economic exile/migration and/or concrete emigration to foreign shores in search of sustainable economies.

In Greek thought and culture, the road is one of the central signs of *xenitia*. Travel, journey, passage to a foreign land and exile are central metaphors of death, perceived as *xenitia*. It encompasses the condition of estrangement, the outside, the movement of the inside to the outside, as well as contact and exchange between foreign domains, objects, and agents. (Seremetakis 1991). These antecedent transgressive figures on the road and to *xenitia* personify the border.

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The spontaneous little graves are ‘planted’ on the spot where a death occurred. They fix the ‘last scene of the acted play’ – as the end of one’s life is often metaphorized. They re-presence the last encounter, as if the living were there to properly greet the departing one before the ‘long trip’ into *xenitia*. This encounter is a prime moment of exchange of both matter and affect. As a middle aged woman mourning her killed son stated, ‘This is the spot that last touched him [his body] and that he last touched, that’s where he left his last breath. When I pass through here I think I see him.’ Loss of breath – breath is equivalent to soul – is the movement of the self from the inside to the outside, from *oikos* (home) to *xenitia* (the foreign outside); the locus of death, the eventual space of death, becomes a portal of transmigration. The little street memorials are ‘planted’ on the spots where the deceased left their last impression in order to restore the lost sight/site of those absent ones. That place, thus, harboring both presence and absence, becomes an affective topos that allows *ponos* (pain) and *pothos* (desire) to be gestured, performed, and witnessed.

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The walking crowd passing by the little memorial is like the moving body of a tragedy’s chorus in a mourning ritual; the chorus witnesses the lament of the *corypheus* (chief mourner), and authenticates the former’s bereavement as both valid and true. The little memorials are gaps in the usually anonymous but continuous fabric of urban space; they are filled in by narrative and the imagination. Women especially often stop and talk, as they read the short biographical note of the event or of the dead person whose figure is engraved on the body of the little grave. They recount the details of the accident and the loss, dramatizing, historicizing and disseminating the eventual locus of occurrence. They discursively craft a moment of stillness or stasis in the flow of street movement, forcing urban time to run backwards in the eddying pools of the grieving and the dead.

★

The anthropomorphization of the little memorials is similar to that of the actual graves in modern Greek cemeteries: both are subjected to caretaking analogous to the caretaking of the living and their domestic space. The ‘little graves’ are regularly tended and ornamented by the deceased’s relatives. The candle is kept lit,

and most are surrounded by floral bouquets. Caretaking and ornamentation of the grave with material objects and language are the gift of giving time to the dead, who are outside of time. Memorialization thus means bringing back the individual dead into time, into events with stories about the dead, the quotidian attending, standing in attendance by the grave, and curation. Memory is intertwined with vision, recognition and identity. Loss of vision is equated with death. So is loss of hearing. Vision is continuous with hearing. Both are forms of witnessing. ‘Listen to see’ as people say when demanding your attention in everyday conversation.

The little graves in the space of the living reveal a sensory crossing of bodies as they materially cross life and death. Their ornamentation reverses the divestiture of the self that came with death. The dead are reinvested and adorned with emotions and artifacts of feeling. There is a metonymy in the care of gravesites with that of the house, which representing the inside, and the street, which figures the public sphere. The care and tending of trees on one’s land in rural Greece was both their adornment and their interiorization. These acts endowed them with affective value. The word *kormos*, ‘tree trunk’, and the corresponding *kormi*, for the human body, point to the iconic resemblance of trees and people, and the care, tending, and adornment of trees connects them to a household and collectivity. Their adornment generates tangible emotions. Fields (e.g., olive groves) or houses with overgrown weeds signify death, the subtraction of space into the outside, into *xenitia*. The little graves planted in the urbanscape are analogous to the trees planted now by ecologically minded groups and citizens in parks and mountains destroyed by repeated fires, insofar as they inadvertently reinvest the environment with mnemo-gestures, such as caring by touch. This is a mark of the one on the many.

Space profaned

The public space of Athens has suffered multiple violent assaults by anti-austerity protestors, police, and terrorists. All these attacks have targeted public property, the property of a state that disciplines and controls the very space people traverse. The various ideologies and derivations of violence have become irrelevant in the day-to-day process of navigating what has become a space of ruins. In the middle of these ruins of marble squares, statuary, and monumental buildings, the little memorials are juridical and cartographic anomalies: they do not claim space as property. Rather they emerge as a speech act of death and a space of transience that, through its sheer dysfunctional excess, re-endows the space of the living with a use value that it has lost in favor of the exchange value prevalent in commodified space.

The little micro-mnemes are a *dérive*¹⁴ reclaiming a symbolic use of the space. And their toy-like appearance points to the ability of people to still retain the child in them, that is, to (re)construct by *playing* with the street grid, what a rational order had attempted to sublimate if not kill.

The effects, though, of the recent appearance of the dead in the cities of the living – in their ‘little graves’ for some or ‘little churches’ for others – can be better understood if contextualized in the process Agamben calls profanation. Agamben

distinguishes secularization from profanation. The former is a form of repression; it displaces theological concepts with that of the mundane, thereby guaranteeing the exercise of quotidian power. Profanation, however, is a process in which the unattainable and separate, the sacred, 'loses its aura and is returned to use'. It 'deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized' (Agamben 2007, 77).¹⁵ If official cultural-economic apparatuses prescribe limited forms of circulation, the little graves profane the sacredness of the city of the dead (the cemeteries) by recirculating death into the city of the living.

However, the little graves also profane utilitarian space through their *dérive*, and rather than a mere pedestrian street act, they are a thanatopolitical street act. Looking at life through the optic of death can offer new insights on life itself through the (bio)politics and counterpublics of the dead; the dead can never congeal into Michael Warner's (2002) mass subject, which sees itself only through the unifying body of the Other.¹⁶ The returning dead exemplify the fragmentary, the absent, the incomplete and the unfinished in the postsecular public sphere.

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One might ask, do the names 'little churches' (*ekklisakia*) and 'little graves' (*tafakia* or *mmemata*) indicate, respectively, a revival of the religious or the affirmation of secularization, the un-churching of the religious? Do they signify a simple syncretism of religious and popular belief? Are they what Agamben would call profanation of the sacred, that is, the passage from the 'religio that is now felt to be false or oppressive to ... a new dimension of use?' (Agamben 2007, 76).

According to Greek law, when and if a regular small church (which usually fits one or two persons) is installed in any location, that location and the building itself become immune to any state intervention. This in the past led to installations of this type of small church on land that owners had reasons to 'protect' from the state, thus avoiding legal consequences. Prefabricated churches of the sort are now readily available for use, just like the little graves in streets. The latter are about the same size, and the rationale for any minor differences in appearance is obscure and personalized. They are not a formulaic response to death, as church ritual is.¹⁷ Whether their modern dwarf-like appearance – as miniature churches – and their multiplication in the urban spaces is a sign of growing religiosity, or whether the religious symbol is a camouflage to ensure their survival in a hostile public urban environment, is open to interpretation also in this legal context.

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A flashback brought to mind a recent television report on the holy ceremony of the burial of Christ on Good Friday held on the island of Karpathos. The women were silently following the church procession, as the ornamented bier passed through the village of Olymbos, but as soon as the bier was placed on the ground by the men who carried it, right before it was returned to the church, where it usually resided, they rushed pictures of their own dead out of their pockets, stuck them on the bier, and engaged in intense lamentation – thus relocating their dead within a space of visibility.

★

The word *makaritis* (late), which always accompanies a dead person's name in state and church language, is to this day angrily opposed (especially by women) and never used in everyday speech when referring to the beloved dead, nor does it appear on the little street memorials. Naming someone *makaritis* inserts that person into a system of exclusion/inclusion and it is the violence of exclusion via a legal-medical and precise language that is opposed here. For ultimately the issue for any system or act of representation is who controls the means to represent and how these means may be undermined.

The church-like architecture of the new little memorials points to a symbol that has been emptied of its religious content and is used instead to expose injurability and warn of the ephemerality of everyday life and death. Church-like architectural aesthetics are duplicated, but they are too small in size to be a habitat for the living. In the living city, the dead occupy a space the living cannot.

Gendering the sacred

Two young policemen on motorcycles stalking criminals who had stolen a car were shot dead with Kalashnikov rifles in Athens in 2011.¹⁸ Their killing provoked outcries against the austerity measures and released in public emotions held privately, allowing new social relations among citizens to emerge. The streets were flooded by hundreds of people who created and visited a spontaneous memorial spot for the 'sacrificial victims' (the public's term that was adopted also by media), and participated in massive protests against the state and European Union imposed austerity measures. Media discourse, following the 'public sentiment' shifted slowly from the usual dramatization of left/right wing political party divisions to focus on what was seen as the anaestheticization of the state 'now killing its own children'. Discourses revolved around both the literal and metaphorical killings. The former version dealt with the dramatic underpayment of young policemen, and decried their being thrown out in the streets against armed criminals and terrorists without basic protective equipment such as bulletproof jackets or efficient guns, cars and motorcycles. The latter centered on the austerity measures that have forced young people to seek state jobs for a living only to end up losing their lives for pennies. This outcry against the inability of the state to protect its citizens and, in this case, to ensure proper working conditions for its youth, be they policemen or anyone else, left politicians and state officials numb. An emergent language of affect also challenged the propagandistic rigidification of such polarities as policemen/citizens and public/private in the discourses of politicians, media, and left-wing ideologues alike, in which policemen tended to be reduced to an undifferentiated, homogeneous body, the cops. This new public language of communication, previously relegated to domestic interiors, was transformed into a public collective scream: 'The state throws our children out in the street to die', as people often stated.

This scream intensified a couple of years later when members of the rising fascist party, Golden Dawn (*Hryssi Avgli*), killed the anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas. Left-wing media reported on the killing by launching the usual critique of state

violence, that is, the alarming increase of suicides, state killings, poverty, and a secret shadow government (*parakratos*) acting out ‘with the tolerance of the police’. Yet, it was also noted by the public that the killer was finally arrested by a young female police officer. The spontaneous memorial created on the spot for the killed-on-the-street musician was visited by hundreds of people. And, again the media, shifted their gaze to foreground the mother of the victim, who was taken to express the ‘epitome of pain’.

Fyssas’ killing was not a collateral loss, an ‘accident’; it was a political assassination and as such it was also officially commemorated. His family’s immediate declaration that politicians and media would not be allowed to attend his funeral, and especially his mother’s dramatic appeal for them to stay away, was a clear statement of opposition to any state, political party and media appropriation of his death. This was something that could not be avoided later, as there were repeated defacements by fascists of the statue-like memorial erected by his friends on the spot of his assassination.¹⁹ The little street graves, by contrast, are not defaced because they are seen to exist beyond what is considered to be political. The common point of intersection, however, between the two is the deinstitutionalization of the burial ceremony. The privatization and deinstitutionalization of rituals refract a crisis of legitimacy of public institutions, order and reason.

The next killing of youth occurred soon after. It involved two men in their twenties outside the offices of Golden Dawn. The killing was attributed to a new terrorist group known as *the Fighting Peoples’ Revolutionary Power*. In media interviews the families of the young victims claimed that they were not official members of the fascist party, that is, loyal to its ideology, but had been recruited at this time of high unemployment with the promise of a job placement.

As in the previous case, the families of the victims declared, speaking through the media, that all politicians and corresponding political party members were unwelcome at their children’s funerals.²⁰ Later, it was reported that one family filed a lawsuit against Golden Dawn for appropriating their child’s death for political gain. The mothers of all the above victims, coupled with others whose children had been killed or raped by criminals, were pleading in the most dramatic and dignified tones for ‘stopping violence in the country’. They repeated in various tones their shared wish for ‘no more pain in the streets’. Their pain, like *pharmako* (therapeutic medicine), dripped into the poisoned body of society, and at the same time it revealed an unbridgeable rift between institutional and popular memory.

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Eric Wolf (1969) long ago demonstrated that, in the Mediterranean, gender categories and actions emerge within the historical context of an ongoing conflict between the state and local communities. Concretely, the inability of the state to centralize political control generates a high level of disorder and instability in public life, that is, in the arenas of economy and politics. In contrast, the local community and the domestic space are perceived as stable structures that should be maintained as sanctuaries against the instability, violence, and conflict of the public sphere.²¹ The little street memorials of today’s Greece, by bringing the sacred into the

profane, open up new types of movement in space and strategies of spatial manipulation previously thought of as superseded by secularization. They take a place in public space, traditionally defined as male, and they inject that open-ended anaesthetized space of sociopolitical life with affective value, with pain; they thus resacralize the domestic space and domestic history (traditionally identified with the female).

This allegorical expression of pain exists side by side with, and challenges, the realists' view, which finds such expressions of affect offensive to secular civilization and its aesthetics. Put differently, the little graves are like malignancies, and – whether caused by excess or lack, surplus or deficit – they disorder the rational body, the objective cartographic order, of the city. Yet, malignant or benign, they have multiplied imperceptibly.

The pre-secular modern

My close encounter with one of these street little memorials close to my Athenian apartment triggered memories. A flashback to my childhood travels to the country, when roads and streets were not mere functional spaces, nor arenas of bare violence, brought back images of other little memorials. Perched on high hills or at the edge of a ditch or ravine, always outside of the city, and closer to nature, there were simple, square-shaped tin constructions hosting a candle light (*kandili*) symbolizing one's life, and an icon of a protecting saint, often the Virgin Mary holding her child in her arms. These older little memorials signified someone's meeting with *Charos* (death personified) – a meeting that is conceptualized as a battle resulting in winners and losers. In this case, because of the mediation of one's good *moira*, or that of a saint, Charos did not win and the person survived. One's spared life was thus a 'gift' and any such gift-giving involves reciprocity of long duration. Passersby were witnesses of this exchange and they often granted it as valid and true by lighting the little candle inside the memorial. Here memory is tactile.

The road was not a utilitarian space, nor was being on the road a neutral act.²² Being on the road meant being a messenger, that is, both a recipient and a donor. Blessings, physical gestures and goods, all detached parts of the inside, are given to this day to the traveler when leaving home, the inside, to go to the outside, to the road. Transition or separation here does not imply significant geographical or temporal distances, but rather a shift in classificatory domains; you send someone 'to the good' even if he goes across the street. There is a direct parallel between the endowment of the traveler as messenger and the role of the dead in Greek mourning rituals. The blessing for the dead, in both colloquial and official language, is 'go to the good', and people refer to one's death as 'departure for a long trip'. Messages used to be given to the dead for those significant others he/she would meet in the Other World (Seremetakis, 1991).

Although roads and streets used to be a male domain, the tending of the little memorials has been the domain of female labor. The other day, one of my students told me her grandma's story: 'Together with other women, she often took afternoon walks across town to light the *dhiakoniarakia*,²³ as some called the little



FIGURE 3.3

memorials. Often they would find small coins inside, which nobody ever touched despite the fact that those days were days of poverty’,

she stressed. An ‘expenditure without return of a gift that forgets itself’, Jacques Derrida might say (Derrida 1992, 47).

To mind comes the ancient Greek belief that the dead embark on a long trip to Hades (the Other World). On the way the crossing of the river Styx mandated the use of coins. Another student recently in a casual conversation referred to little memorials as ‘little candles’ (*kandilakia*).²⁴ It seems these memorials of nonagonistic exchange, of exchange ‘in kind’, were not known by one name only, yet they shared the same signification.

Grave selfies

Photographs of the dead on the graves in Greek cemeteries are habitual – usually provided by the family and left in the hands of funerary experts to engrave on the marble grave or enclose in a glass fronted compartment on top of the grave; a matt

brass frame around the picture completes the petrification of the person and his or her fixation in the bounded space of the rectangular horizontal grave. These have mainly been facial portraits, serious or smiling, and, as in the old temples of high art, only black and white is allowed.²⁵ No dead should look as if alive. The blurring of the boundaries between this and the Other world is always disturbing.

A recent commentary on the web points to this transformation of the real person of the present into a statue with 'sightless eyes' of the past: 'Where is your warmth and sweetness grandma? ... lost behind these awful frames ...' wonders a female commentator. Her words reveal her disenchantment as her habitual search for facial clues led to no sensory and affective antiphony.²⁶

The photos on the new little graves in the streets, though, catch the eye. Most of them are in color, 'realistic' pictures of the dead person, and they do not fit the moral paradigm expressive of religious, political and aesthetic order. In fact, some may strike viewers as 'offensive': for example, one photo displayed a young man with an unbuttoned shirt revealing a manly chest as he speaks on his cell phone; and in another photo, a young man with no top leaned next to his big motorcycle smiling back at the passersby. A young commentator on the web, disturbed by the latter type of representation, critically attributed its choice to Greek mothers' irrational desire to want their sons to be remembered as sensual and manly, 'even if these very attributes caused their death ...'

Popularized psychological interpretations for this emerging mode of representation are rather inadequate, though. The words (often little poems) engraved on or placed in some of these little memorials make clear that concepts of guilt, sin and moral impunity or rectitude are inverted. The little grave in the street is people's final attempt to state that the dead did not lose a space from which to address the world without shame.

To mind comes instead the Bakhtinian notion of the hegemonic statuesque classical body as a smooth contoured surface without orifices, over against the classical body's other, the carnivalesque body, the scatological, orificial body in its full senses, the body that leaks and ruptures and cannot be posed; the everyday body. This is a deviant body that challenges the authority, the monological prevalence of standardized forms of representation – visual, somatic, linguistic – and the production of standardized high-performance bodies (performance as in Marcuse 1987).

The modern little graves in the unruly Greek urbanscape might offer a surrealist note for some, but they are far from mere chance objects. Rather, in both form and content they open up an otherwise 'dead' space to profanatory uses. The issue remains, will the apparatuses of power, as Agamben would say, divert them from their profanatory intention?

★

These thoughts were intensified after my recent visit to Edinburgh, where I was invited to present part of this material at a conference.²⁷ Walking through the city to listen to its rhythms as I usually do before I give a talk, I ran into 'The City of the Dead', an open-air museum of old graves. In its clean green grass atmosphere,



FIGURE 3.4 Street memorials, Edinburgh

people enjoyed their walking and picnicking. Stepping back into the streets, I noticed the hundreds of well-kept wooden benches lining sidewalks, each one carrying a sign 'in memory of a dead individual, signed by his or her family. This orderly public coexistence of living and dead impressed me as a typically Western European harmony. I pondered: were these benches, memorials of domestic history, originally private gestures that were transformed into state public property? Are the little Greek street-graves then perhaps a moment of transition in a process of a wider cultural and historical change?

The second life

As collateral damage, 'accidents' increased dramatically in the context of a generalized disorder, even the warmest supporters of European unification expressed, at some point, their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with 'Greece's dismemberment' in the name of resolving economic crisis. The European apology for the 'accident' does not close the matter. Greece, like the famous painting of the *Mona Lisa*, which was pathologized and dissected by international medical experts (discussed in Chapter 6), was turned from a civilizational familiar, a cultural intimate to a pathological Other; from a houseproud person to a dying, homeless one.

Even if Greece survives the ‘accident’ of austerity and enters the happy road to development, as the European dream promises, this will be a slice of history in which Greece will be remembered as an impending cemetery. The little street graves of the present stand as a reminder and a warning that in a second life, if Greeks have been devoured by living Europeans, they may revamp themselves as European zombies.

After all, flexibility does not end with biological death.²⁸

★

I have no news of you.
 Your photograph static.
 As it rains without raining.
 As shadow gives me back body.
 And as one day we will meet up there...
 Love me when you are no longer among the living.
 Because I have no news of you.
 And what are we to do if the irrational gives no sign of life.

(*Unexpectedness by Kiki Dimoula [1996]*,
trans. D. Connolly)²⁹

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Notes

- 1 A different version of this study was earlier published under the title ‘Death Drives in the City: or, On a Third-Stream Anamnesis’ in *Social Text*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 49–72. Copyright 2016, Duke University Press. Republished by permission of the rights holder.
- 2 Taussig calls ‘first contact’ the ‘direct hit with the realness of reality’ (Taussig 2009, 64), leading to the ‘second contact’, that is the (electro)shocking experience of losing the polarity of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as they begin to ‘swim in and out of focus’ (Taussig, 1993, 247). Stoller (1995) also discusses the ‘second contact’. See also Chapter 7.
- 3 *Metaphora* (metaphor) consists in ‘giving the thing a name that belongs to something else’ (Aristotle, 1457 b).
- 4 See the excellent works of Yannis Hamilakis on and about archaeology and its role, published in both English and Greek.
- 5 In music *antistixis* refers to the simultaneous sounding of different melodies; they combine with different rules in different epochs. In this polyphonic writing each voice retains its melodic autonomy.
- 6 Stanley Diamond, ‘Anthropology in Question’ (1999, 401).
- 7 *Third Stream* in music describes a musical genre that synthesizes classical music and jazz, based mainly on improvisation. The term was coined by composer Gunther Schuller in 1957.
- 8 The phenomenon of roadside memorials, sanctuaries or shrines, most marking the space of death due to a car or motorcycle accident or violent death is also met in the northeast US highways (Santini 2006; Owens 2006), New York (i.e. Street Memorial Project) as well as in Latin America. Yet, despite their increasing presence, their cultural and social significance has not been fully analyzed.
- 9 For the concept ‘matter out of place’ see Douglas 1966. Also, Seremetakis 2017.
- 10 See also Arendt (1979).

- 11 *Détournement* translates as rerouting. Developed in the 1950s by the Lettrist International, it consists in turning expressions of the capitalist system against itself.
- 12 Street graves, memorials without bodies, point out, under a debt regime, that some Greeks also can neither afford church ceremonies or an institutional disposition of the body. See also www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06p35, 'Greece No Place to Die'.
- 13 Desire as a production force. See Deleuze and Guattari (1977).
- 14 *Dérive* translates as drift or drive. The Situationists or 'Situs' 'opted for the murky intertwining behaviors'...With the city as their 'theater of operations' their primary tactic was the *dérive* (drift or drifting), which reflected the pedestrian's experience, that of the everyday user of the city ...' McDonough (1994, 73).
- 15 A significant difference between Agamben's profanation and the historian Peter Linebaugh's (2007) concept of commoning is that the latter drifts to the psychological while profanation is more performative and allows for subversion, not just readjustment in commons. Profanation also places as much stress on the agency of consumers as of producers.
- 16 The defamiliarization of social order through the optic offered by death is a thesis I first proposed in 1991 (Seremetakis 1991, 15).
- 17 The little street memorials are non-institutional. This does not imply anti-ritualistic, that is, subjective, affective expressions (singularization). In Greece, there has always been an iconography of death which is not based on the church.
- 18 This event was under-reported in foreign media but in Greece it brought an unusually large crowd out on the street and had extensive coverage in the media. See for example: www.greekalert.com/2011/05/blog-post_8177.html: The sign to the right of the little memorial states 'we are all targets'. Also see www.protothema.gr/greece/article/455642/trisagio-sti-mnimi-ton-duo-astunomikon-pou-dolofonithikan-stou-redi/
- 19 Photo of Fyssas' memorial. www.loutrakiblog.gr/2014/09/blog-post_543.htm
- 20 www.newsonly.gr/article.asp?catid=36808&subid=2&pubid=129543152
- 21 The rising cult of Mary over that of Christ from AD 1000 onward formalizes the symbolization of the experiences and values of the village community and the domestic space in terms of female iconography which stands for affective, emotive kin relations, thus sacralizing the domestic space (Wolf 1969). Franco (1985), in the context of Latin America, identified similar divisions between the inside and the outside, private and public, family and state, sacred and secular, and claims that, in response to the instability and violence of the public domain, Latin cultures developed specific feminized refuge areas of stable social relations that counterbalanced the masculine domain of public violence. She sees these spaces as sanctuaries which, however, were not apolitical. In fact they were dangerous to the repressive totalitarian states because they harbored utopian values of reciprocity, solidarity, motherhood and family that could be expanded and mapped onto society at large. Davis (1975), would add that death and related rituals of role reversal in the Mediterranean, historically contain the possibility of political disobedience, the expression of social criticism that cannot be aired in more formal arenas of society and as possibly sanctioning popular violence against hierarchical systems. What later De Certeau (1984) called the tactic of the weak.
- 22 See also Stoller in the context of the Songhay peoples of Western Niger: 'life is seen as a series of winding paths ... If one chooses the wrong path and walks off in a dangerous direction, one will invariably suffer the consequences: ... a truck accident resulting in injury, a lingering illness ... or perhaps, one's own death' (Stoller 2002, 176).
- 23 *Dhiakonizo* means I do work or serve by order; *dhiakoniaris*, beggar, used to be one that is given food in exchange for his good words/blessings.
- 24 Panourgia (1995) mentioned them as *proskinitaria*. She detected the presence of these constructions in various sites during her fieldwork in Greece, but her synchronic perspective did not allow her to provide an adequate cultural interpretation of the phenomenon, past or present.
- 25 See Taussig 2009.
- 26 Taussig (1999) has discussed the face as the composer of affect declaring presence.

- 27 Annual Conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA), 2014.
- 28 'Flexible' had a positive meaning in Greek. It described something that is not stiff and rigid like a corpse. It implies agility and free movement, life. As agile is also described 'a good mind' (brainy). Since its association with 'flexible labor', the word flexible has acquired a negative meaning, signifying delocalization, deterritorialization, insecurity, homelessness and ultimately punishment.
- 29 Reprinted by kind permission of Nostos Books.

4

MODERN CITIES OF SILENCE

Disasters, nature and the petrified bodies of history

The city of statues

Known as a capital of European civilization, Vienna impressed me with its tall, dark, old buildings, over-ornamented in the usual hyperbole of the Baroque era, which lay heavily on green wide roads and spacious paved public squares. Walking through these ample spaces that alternate in slow motion, I traveled through an elegant city immersed in built history. Whether in the streets among the numerous old buildings, in the old university, or the museums proper, I was stared from above by dozens of eyes of petrified angels and human figures of monumental proportions that informed the sense of everyday life as the theater of the 'unknown' dead. In this city of stone-staring angels and famous but generic dead, public history seemed to be featured as a permanent display of an outward looking past, a collective memory made for the eye.

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Walking through this open air museum, invited at the Vienna Festival 2000, the scopic power of the historical monument struck me. Examples of historical statues as hieratic figures, and models of culture and history that can be tied to the practices of a scopic regime, to the ordering and control of public space, came to mind. Those figures seemed to surveil the city with a blind gaze as if enforcing the cultural attention that must be paid to them. Does the scopic power of the historical monument necessarily imply passive memory? I wondered. Rather, does it extract the daily tribute of active recollection from the people who move under the shadows of the statues? Or can we perhaps say that all statuary and buildings constitute a vast laboratory of public memory as legacy and inheritance, and thus are meant to persist and persevere as an active force in the present? In Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire* the angels who monitor the events, lives and thoughts of Berliners tend to roost and to congregate on the heights of the



FIGURE 4.1 Coffee in Vienna

monuments that overlook Berlin; they surveil the city space as they recite to themselves the entire history of the city from neolithic times to modernity. We could say that in Vienna too, as in many other European cities, statues mark out the topography of the corporate body of the city, identifying its crucial intersections and centers. By their positioning in the city they demarcate where and when public remembering should occur, they index what is culturally central and what is not. Was not the destruction of Lenin's and Stalin's statues in Central and Eastern Europe, with the abdication of communist regimes, or the gathering and storing of public statues in an obscure park on the outskirts of the city in Budapest, an example of this? By their topographic exile, their lack of any truth claims on history was sealed.

Intellectual history in Vienna seemed to be embodied as much in the modern primitivism of the cult of the professorial head as in books and lectures. The decapitated bronze or stone heads of centuries of professors in the old university were mounted on the walls of a 'sacred' place, set aside for their observation and appreciation. Apparently, in the eighteenth and nineteenth and a good part of the twentieth century, no other part of these thinkers' and writers' bodies required recognition or visibility. Grafted into the historicizing corporate body of the city, the bodies of these intellectuals were historically invisible below the head. Their cultural memorialization was identical to that part of the body where all their thought was assumed to take place. The normativity of such statuary, thus, does not seem to be limited to the marking of public spaces or the recall of historical events, but it encompasses entire anthropologies, that is, notions of what it means to be human.

Walking through the clean, orderly public squares, I enjoyed numerous spontaneous cultural happenings. In the middle of crowds, visitors and passersby, political demonstrations and campaigns, the 'personification of the statue' caught my eye. Young people played at and emulated the isolated statue – posing as a tall, immobile body frozen in mid air and mid gesture. Was this an attempt of the living to elevate themselves from the flux of everyday life to the realm of statuary, the realm of public history? Or perhaps these poses humanized the entity of the statue by integrating the latter into everyday life? Was this mimesis meant to enable one to remember the lonely statue that could no longer incite among the crowd the historical memory it was intended to perpetuate? Or was petrification the primary cultural and environmental mode of the city to such an extent that even the living needed to emulate and simulate the dead and the immobile?

Was this tendency for the monumental pose only performance art? Perhaps, rethinking Adorno (1973), it could also be seen as a tactile imitation of an intimidating and possibly aggressive historical other, the monument, by which the potential victim imitates, like a chameleon, the very negation which is possibly threatened by this other. This is how Adorno explained the imitation of inanimate objects (such as stones or leaves) by animals under inferred physical threat, as well as the phenomena of reification by which humans transformed themselves into things and objects in a world that identified reason with the aggressive control, usage and administration of things (see also Cahn 1984 on subversive mimesis). Statues and historical monuments, in this case, are things that are meant to administer urban space and environmental consciousness.

Perhaps also the performance artists in Vienna imitate the statues, not to come under the power of the monument but to appropriate the cultural authority of the ritualized and petrified pose for themselves – a subversive mimesis which is polysemic, implying homage to the statues while undermining their authority through parody.

Perhaps these artists were making statements about the public history inscribed into the very body of the city, in its buildings as inhabited monuments, and in the anthropomorphic monumental statuary that marked crucial sites. By establishing a mimetic relation to the statue and the monumental, then, performance artists were elevating themselves to the enforced memory that the collation of statues represented, and at the same time, by being historical non-entities themselves, they indicated the actual anonymous generic quality of many of these ornaments in urban space. They either emptied the statues of the rhetoric of their historical content, or confirmed the current lack of historical specificity in the statues; in either case, they pointed, not to what each statue recalled, but to the fact that, irrespective of historical content, and even in the absence of any historical information whatsoever, public memory is intended as enforceable memory; and it was the statue's function to do just that, despite the defacement of its historical actuality. Statues, in this case, were icons of mnemonic enforcement even though the details of what they enforced had been lost, or were never really necessary.

In *Lost Words and Lost Worlds*, Allan Pred addressed this dimension of statuary as public memory. He documented how the nineteenth-century Swedish working class re-coded all the royal squares and much of the aristocratic statuary of Stockholm with scatological terms, that, like modern day graffiti, linguistically defaced the historical and usually royal personages and battles these edifices and topographies were meant to commemorate. Perhaps Vienna's contemporary pose artists, much like Pred's Swedish workers and their scatological topography, indicated that beneath and beyond the supposed solidity and permanence of public memory run other cross-currents and counter-memories that relativize and place in cultural parenthesis the event histories and aristocratic biographies that people are told to remember.

Among the popular postcards sold in the local stores of Vienna, my eye stopped at those featuring a statue, such as an image of a young woman in a café drinking her coffee with the company of a male statue sitting at her table, or one juxtaposing the heads of two statues frozen in a tender posture in a window display, their lips almost touching in a smile of contentment. Was this perhaps another attempt to humanize the statue, to integrate it in everyday life? And, in turn, to socialize humans to these effigies through the sharing of intimate social space?

The benign facial expressions of these statue-images brought to mind again Bakhtinian notions of the hegemonic statuesque classical body as a smooth-contoured surface without orifices, and the classical body's other, the carnivalesque body, the scatological, orificial body in its full senses, the body that leaks and ruptures and cannot be posed. The nineteenth-century Swedish workers, mentioned earlier, transformed the classical corpus of Stockholm's monuments into a subverting carnivalesque body that refracted their real urban experience to a much greater extent than famous and distant battles and monarchs.

Imagine if an earthquake were to set all these frozen bodies in motion, I thought. Those of us who have experienced earthquake can sense motion in every stillness. We can see impermanence in every human achievement. A flashback brought me back to Kalamata, the lovely coastal city of Greece's Southern Peloponnese, which was completely destroyed by a devastating earthquake in 1986. I re-experienced that earthquake ten years later, when the city, long being rebuilt anew, decided to commemorate the past and celebrate the future.

Excavating private memory

We could say that there are two ways of looking at the social production of the past. A sense of the past is produced through public representations. This involves a theater of history, a public stage and an audience for the enacting of dramas. This stage is occupied by many actors who often speak from contradictory scripts, the agents and agencies of memory that construct this public historical sphere and control access to the means of publication. They constitute the historical apparatus that represents history.

In thinking about the ways in which such official representations affect individual or group conceptions of the past, we might speak of dominant memory. The term points to the power and pervasion of certain historical representations, their connection with dominant institutions and the part they play in winning consent. But the dominant memory managed by public institutions can also generate forgetfulness and inattention, for these public sites of memory select what is to be remembered and how it is to be remembered. But are there alternative memories of collective experience other than those archived by public institutions and the public media?

Another way of looking at the production of the past is through private memory (which also may be collective and shared), and it draws attention to quite different processes. A knowledge of the past and the present is also produced in the course of everyday life. It is embedded in place and artifacts that are stratigraphies, palimpsests, of personal and social experience. Memory is far from a mere resource pool of ideas; it has material and sensory coordinates that are part of the living membrane of a city. Memory can be found in the emotional connection to particular spaces that have their own biographies and carry biographies within them; memory can be found embedded and miniaturized in objects that trigger deep emotions and narratives; memory is linked to sounds, aroma, sights. We take this enmeshed memory for granted until the material supports that stitch memory to person and place are torn out from under us, when these spaces suddenly vanish under debris, when interiors of buildings and persons suddenly become devastated exteriors, and when the past itself is buried under the weight of destruction occurring in the present. Then we are not only given events we prefer not to recall, but we are separated from the material of memory that enables an entire city to remember what it was before the disaster.

If memory is sensory and embedded in matter, it comes in pieces, not as a totality. The excavation and assemblage of these fragments is an archaeological process; it does not show all at once, it is a peeling away of layers, the identification and exploration of a multiple stratigraphy. Public and personal memory invest various locales of a city with sensory capacities and powers to revoke, recall, animate, mobilize, calm, impress, order and rationalize. A city-destroying disaster, like an earthquake, results in the loss of such sensory organs. The urban space dismembered by disaster becomes a body without organs.

Bodies in ruins

This became apparent to me in Kalamata in 1996, as, ten years after its traumatic earthquake, I began searching for the other city, the now silenced earthquake city that still coexisted with the city rebuilt and restored since the 1986 catastrophe. The authorities of the city and region (Messinia) had decided to commemorate this catastrophe and rebirth, and I was invited to propose and create a public event for the occasion.



FIGURE 4.2

The earthquake was perceived at the time as an isolated event that stigmatized the area, and, as usual, the intent of official commemorations was catharsis and ‘resolution’. But I had something else in mind. I began conducting a field-based urban ethnography of the memories of the quake as inscribed in the city’s topography and the consciousness of its inhabitants, which was meant to culminate in a public ethnography – a participatory process and a public exhibition of the social memory of Kalamata before, during and immediately after its earthquake.

I began to stumble upon fossils of the disaster, a hidden memory layer of the city itself frozen in limbo, which became sensible to me as I visited cemeteries, abandoned schools, and closed-down ruined factories, sites of urban amnesia. At the same time, citizens brought me objects full of memory, fragments from domestic interiors, such as ancestral photographs, curios and bric-a-brac from shelves and cabinets, an antique phonograph or an old photo of the city square, objects that they had saved all these years, objects of the heart that in themselves represented small triumphs over the attack on memory and identity afflicted by the disaster. These generous donations for the event were the outcome of a long process of cultural mobilization; it was preceded and made possible by creating relations of trust, dialoguing, providing on-the-ground, rapid education with the citizens and discussing over coffees their emotional ties with these objects. Between these excavation visits I began to remember a different city, a double of the city rebuilt, a twin city that harbors both its own death and resurrection, a city that bears witness to the birth and rebirth of the contemporary city of Kalamata, a city in a transitive state.

These objects, hidden in private space and private memory, collected and curated by the citizens themselves, when brought out from their isolation in their respective homes and linked and presented together, created public history. They were private objects embodying private experiences, memories and emotions, previously not represented in public, which were now placed and staged in the exhibiting hall next to the official public record of the earthquake, such as scientific instruments, reports, films, recordings of mediatic and of scientific and governmental institutions.



FIGURE 4.3 Objects of memory (the exhibit)

During the event, the donors visited their objects at the exhibition, several times, and hundreds of school kids observed, touched and dialogued with these objects and the accompanying oral histories. The re-remembering of the '86 earthquake in the drawings of the visiting school children transformed the exhibition into a learning space. A special children's space had been prepared with objects, such as desks and chairs, collected from earthquake-hit schools of the area. There, in over 700 spontaneous drawings, children portrayed their re-imagination of the quake and the commemoration itself. This material too became part of the videos, slide projections and touch screen technology that were created on the basis of visual anthropological principles and featured during and after the exhibition. Citizens and kids in particular, were among the first in Greece to be introduced, as early as 1996, to learning history by touch.

The miniature objects or parts of objects of the citizens were supplemented by larger objects collected and rescued from public buildings by municipal employees and technicians, architects and civil engineers. Further mobilization of institutions and media to excavate their own materials for the exhibition made the event a participatory museum of the present; that is, a museum in action, one that was not presenting finished cultural objects from the distant past or foreign parts. This mobilization of memory, the creation of a participatory museum of the present, bears witness to culture in process and to participants as social actors in this process. Participants used the exhibition as a vehicle to recognize their relation to a traumatic and silenced past.

The photographic record of the city in ruins was another eloquent statement. The pictures had been taken by local amateur photographers and professionals¹

who lived in Kalamata in the wake of the earthquake. They revealed parts of buildings detached from each other, skeletal buildings, buildings turned inside out, and the exiled people like the edifices' flesh, cut off and separated from the ruined building. This was an exposure of the devastated interiors of both the people and the environment they once called home. A pair of glasses lying on top of some scattered papers in the middle of a ruined home gave a freeze-frame snapshot of a private life, now vanished, in the moment before its death in the earthquake.

The skeletal building, in one of the photos, struck me as an ironic image. It was a spontaneous historical monument documenting the action of the seismic violence. It is also the petrified image of the impermanence of human achievement and effort, of its erasure by nature and the vanquishing of modernity. For Walter Benjamin, modernity was always already ruins since its meat-narrative was the eternal return of the new and the incessant creation of the outmoded. But in Kalamata after earthquake we witnessed briefly modernity's replacement – the post-disaster city was the post-modern city par excellence, one where the ruins themselves were an outdoor museum without walls or modernity's limits, that is, apocalypse, death and fragmentation. Here Baudrillard's argument (1968) about the museumification of social reality prevails. The apocalyptic cannot be rendered into a museum exhibit, whether it be the Shoah or nuclear holocaust, for we are in the midst of our own living museum as we drift among the debris of modernity. Beheaded and broken sculptures scattered in cemeteries, squares, art spaces, added to the allegorical ambiance of the post-earthquake ruin. A photograph of a beheaded sculpture turned sideways with the ocean and sea cliffs as backdrop made me turn the picture right side up. But the nature in the background indicated immediately the right position. The headless body evoked the destruction or incompleteness of human identity after the earthquake while nature, the ocean and sea cliffs, remain whole, complete and indifferent.

Ruins such as these confront us with an image of the present suddenly and unexpectedly mutated into past. The event of destruction exiles its victims from their own present. The ruined and abandoned buildings are that present slipping into the past, to otherness; they can never be recovered and lived in quite the same way. Even if we return to re-inhabit these buildings, they will be restored buildings, thus altered buildings. The edifices shown in the photographic record of the earthquake were buildings in pain. They were the wounded bodies of our collective life, bleeding memories of the past and of that 1986 present that the earthquake interrupted.

Ruins give a snapshot of a present as past and force us to take a different stance on time. They freeze the present and we are confronted with a petrified world, a city full of hieroglyphs that speak our past lives in a new language we have yet to decipher. We read the cracks in the walls as the earthquake is rewriting our once present lives; we stare at the hollowed out spaces for traces of the activities and relations that once made them intimate parts of our existence. We try to read the message that we must now live a present without these intimate counterparts of ourselves, without this familiar stage for our actions, without these environmental shadows of our persona and embodiment.

Our response is to heal these buildings in pain as a way of healing ourselves and the body of the city. We provide them with new supportive scaffolding, new exoskeletons that are meant to keep them alive, we amputate dysfunctional parts to save the whole, and often execute buildings, thus sealing the destruction begun by nature. We rescue elegant and beautiful fragments of the vanished buildings in the hope that they can be refitted to a future city that is still in the making. We seek a place for the past in the future.

And as these interventions long continue as acts of remembrance that try to recover and revitalize what made the city a breathing body and a membrane for our lives, the scattered shards and fragments of burial stones and grave memorials in the Kalamata cemetery reveal that not only the present is fractured or lost but also the vehicles by which we remember the past. An old photograph was abandoned with the cemetery debris. The photo, from the first decades of the century, showed a man with a long mustache dressed in a suit with a boutonnière. It had not been reclaimed by his descendants. Had the person been forgotten with the picture, now that the place that marked his death was lost?



FIGURE 4.4 Defacement

Entire histories and identities were buried with the earthquake, and at the same time, previously buried pasts were suddenly thrown up, objects appeared that had been lost, items that reminded us of earlier inhabitants of this site, or revealed a present that was hidden away. Walking through the fallen walls of the local army camp, we stumbled across fine graffiti covering whole previously unseen interiors unknown to most, written by unknown and anonymous draftees as private ruminations that were now exposed to the public eye.

The urban environment was transformed into an archaeological stratigraphy and forced us all to become excavators of our lives and past. Like Wenders' angels, we could surveil the entire history of the city in the form of its entrails and innards vomited up and exposed in disarray. Like his angels, we whispered the history to our selves, we strove to locate these displaced artifacts in order to re-situate a memory and an identity that had also been torn asunder.

The city without walls

The city after the earthquake was replaced by a tent city. Thousands of tents in rows made these encampments a city within a city. The instability and provisional character of the tents stood in sharp contrast to the heavy ruins, expressive of past permanence. The solidity of the walls of the ruined city, which once guaranteed a private life of discretion and propriety, was replaced by the tents, sections of which were made of semi-transparent nylon, through which the people could be viewed. If the ruined stone-enclosure signifies the termination of private and domestic life by the catastrophe, the transparency of the tents speaks to the fact that the private is an ongoing casualty of the disaster and the last area usually to receive rehabilitation and restoration. The hierarchy of human needs that emergency relief recognizes and implements, such as medical care, food, water, clothing, sanitation, most likely does not include the recovery of private life; earthquake victims are irrevocably public persons.

Recollections of people, but also collections in the pictures of local photographers portrayed the people of the tents trying to reinstall in these conditions some aspects of past normalcy of their lives. The most mundane acts became crucial and resonant. Consider for instance the image of two women shampooing each other. Actions that partake of the conventional and yet, because of their setting, were marked all the more as strange for they bespoke a normalcy that no longer existed. It is as if people by engaging in the day to day activities of living and surviving in tent city, silently and slowly erected their own habitat by an accumulation of gestures of miniature normalcy – cooking, eating, shopping, dressing, conversing. They lived both in the tent city and in a city of the imagination – the imaginary normal.

The recollections and images that made the most forceful impression were those of the elderly and the children. The elderly mostly appeared lost in space. A man looking from the small square 'window' of the tent appeared like an isolated face in the midst of a vast canvas desert. Elderly women stood next to cooking pots with body postures that showed the extent to which they were exiled from the customary spaces of food preparation. An old couple in the supermarket surrounded by empty shelves and



FIGURE 4.5

vacant food baskets went hand in hand with an elderly man who was sitting with his head bent resting on his crossed arms in the midst of the abandoned market – signifying the absence of the rich life and activity, the color and aroma, that was once there. The elderly, with their body postures, faces and discourse, expressed most eloquently that they remained violently unreconciled to the tents and to what they had lost; they were angry with memory.

The children also despaired but their bodies adjusted and adapted more easily both to the loss of space and the space that replaced it. They entered the provisional and transitory character of life after the natural collective disaster and familiarized themselves with the surprising and the unexpected. They used play and their imagination to create new places in which their bodies could relax, rest and find a habitat. The children discovered permanence and stability in the spaces of their imagination and in their capacity to imagine. They played with the tents, transforming them into something other. The image of children playing hide and seek or peek a boo was commonplace: in one photo three children crouch, one lower than the other, so that three heads appear in a vertical line peering out of the opening of the tent – the children turned the tents into a carnival mask, a costume and a play-space. The Bahktinian body of the disaster city was a fertile landscape. Children can take the most unexpected spaces and transform them into playgrounds and sites for the imaginary. In other photos kids stood on the roof of a building that overlooked the devastated city blowing up balloon – in a city that had been thrown down they played with what floats. Others turned their tent into an imaginary mountain to be climbed or a tree-house on which one could sit and look down upon the world. Children can exploit the very precariousness of built structures.

The lack of solidity and the impermanence after the quake were naturalized as the children walked around balancing on ruined walls or balancing debris on their heads.

Children in Greece always used their bodies and imaginations to explore and insert themselves into spaces of ruins, abandoned or unfinished buildings in their neighborhood. After the quake in Kalamata, through spatial play and exploration, they investigated what new identities this space of ruins could offer. The ruins mediated by play pass through the children's bodies as building blocks of new spatial and topographic identities. The children rebuilt with the tools they had at hand and constructed a city of the fantastic – the space of alterity, the city of tents, was remade into a second alterity. They transformed the strange and made it stranger, and thereby rejected the given conditions of post-disaster existence that were arbitrarily imposed on them and inaugurated their own rehabilitation.

At first they played, but once they had remodeled their bodies and selves to the new space, they also read and studied; they cultivated a seriousness of their present state, which was different than the seriousness of despair and mourning of the elders. It was as if once they had remodeled their bodies around this new space, they got busy with the task of re-memorizing the present.

There was that single powerful image of the girl who stares quizzically at the photographer as she sits assertively on the stone banister of a ruined building with one of the central scenes of destruction behind, her legs carelessly crossed, declaring with body and face 'this is still my place', 'still my city'. She, at least, had returned with a determination that hints at the inevitability of the future reoccupation and restoration of the city and its many lives by the others who will follow in her tracks.



FIGURE 4.6

The object(s) of memory: managing the uninheritable

The problem in the pursuit of ‘popular memory’ is to explore what are the means by which social memory is produced. The exhibit I planned and designed with the involvement of the citizens attempted to answer this by examining the popular and spontaneous ways in which the people of Kalamata recorded the events of the earthquake; what strategies, practices and materials they used to preserve or to recover the past and the immediate present of Kalamata in 1986, both of which were destroyed by the earthquake. So this exhibit was less a commemoration of the disaster than it was a commemoration of the popular memory of that event and more particularly of the struggle for memory in wake of the defacement of the earthquake. In this context, the acts, forms and vehicles of popular memory were and are integral elements of the post-earthquake reconstruction of the city: popular memory was as much a collective contribution as the clearing and rebuilding work. The exhibition sought to explore the city of the imagination built and recollected by popular memory.

Thus, memory was the site of excavation in this exhibit. And memory, as I defined above, is embedded in sensory experience, in matter, which made this exhibit an archaeology of memory. The assemblage of these fragments is not their aestheticization, but it re-enacts the process by which the people of Kalamata reassembled their lives and their city from the fragments made by the earthquake – a process we could term the poetics of fragments because it focused on how the people restored meaning, order, pattern and aesthetics to their lives in the aftermath of disaster.

This exhibition sought to make a space and opening for the memory of the city before disaster and of that moment when all that housed the city’s memories were put into crisis. That moment of memory under threat was an episode of disaster that should also be recalled. For until we appreciate what was taken away from the city in 1986, we cannot fully acknowledge what has been restored and what still needs restoration. Thus, the exhibition proposed that Kalamata was not rebuilt as an act of forgetfulness, but was rebuilt with multiple memories of all that existed before the quake and with the memories of the quake itself.

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We must understand that archaeological process does not happen all at once; it is a peeling away of layers, the identification and exploration of multiple stratigraphy. This exhibition was like an archeological dig, and we only penetrated and exposed to public view some layers of the history and memory of the 1986 quake; other layers remain to be uncovered. Once the exhibition began to cohere into a meaningful whole, people and institutions contacted me declaring they did not want to be left out. In fact they were saying ‘I want to be remembered.’ They saw the exhibit as an event that they had to reclaim for their personal and institutional memory. They often interpreted this event as one that will write definitively the public memory of the earthquake. Yet, this exhibition was mounted in opposition to any closings-off of memory and history or any final monopolization of the past by a single memory, narrative or institution. It was structured to accommodate many narratives and memories.

Cultural documentation as a form of archaeology takes time. It needs research, careful ethnographic research. Ethnographic documentation frequently deals with experiences, histories, practices that have been devalued, abandoned and forgotten; this pertains to much of the popular memory of the earthquake, thus the recovery of these abandoned memories and experiences becomes a long process of recovery. Too often we delegate to public institutions and specialists the task of archiving our history, and thus many things are left out and forgotten. Cultural documentation, particularly of popular memory, is sensitized to the process of official forgetting and works as a counter-memory to this inattention to everyday experience and lives; but memory, like an entire city, can vanish overnight and the rebuilding of city takes time and has to be done brick by brick, fragment by fragment. The 1996 commemoration challenged the distinction and the hierarchy between public and private memory and history and sought to re-articulate that which has been silenced. A public space was created for presentation of both official public memory and alternative memories.

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The exhibition, by blurring the distinction between public history and private memory, transformed the latter into a particular type of poignant public history, a public chronicle of everyday life prior to, during and immediately after the earthquake. This transformation of private memory into public history occurred through the material vehicles of objects. Some survivors by chance or intent had rescued the old as if such an antique object could replenish the temporal continuity and stability that the quake had ruptured. They used these artifacts to search for threads through time to lead them out of the labyrinth of disaster and destruction. There was the antique oil brazier, that the contributor stated was originally from his grandmother's farm: 'I had transferred it to our home in Kalamata that afternoon before the earthquake. The night after the earthquake (after electricity had been shut off) we needed it. We were under the light of this brazier.' There was the frame needlework, given by a middle-aged man: 'My mother's last needlepoint. She was embroidering it when she died and left this life. It is incomplete.' A woman contributed a kerosene lamp of the last century, a decorated windup clock and a tea saucer:

I remember we were a company of twelve all happy (the night of the earthquake) talking at the harbor as the passenger ferry was sailing for its first trip. That was when the misfortune came it was 9 o'clock at night. Right in front of me was the doctor's young child, with his little hands trying to reach out with his arms spread screaming 'Earthquake', but our hands couldn't reach each other for we were moving left and right and back and forth and staring at his little feet I saw the earth splitting open. A few steps down was the ocean, 'we will drown' I thought. Bad experiences, I don't want to remember them, yet I must in order to be careful, all of us, especially young people.

From then on, I go around with a little flashlight in my handbag, and the matches are still by my bedside. We had no electricity after the earthquake. We were lighting up this little lamp. It is very old, my grandmother's from those days when there was no electric light in Kalamata. When I look at it and the flashlight I recall the days of the earthquake. What I do not want to see any more are tents, any kind of tents.

In one corner of the exhibition, among nineteenth-century window shutters and wooden doors that had been rescued from now-vanished houses, there was a framed, turn of the century family photograph with these comments: 'A photograph of my family. Here my father is 30–35 years old, he died when he was 86 in 1968.' An elderly woman contributed a shuttle and card from a loom, a wooden spigot from a wine barrow saying 'A few tracks I kept, remainders. I will give you these (for the exhibition) but no other objects; I cannot separate from all of them for that long.'

In my attempt to assemble a public exhibition, I discovered that some citizens had assembled their own secret museums. A middle-aged man contributed a broken wooden tobacco pipe, a shard of a ceramic vase, a china coffee cup minus its saucer, a glass bottle stopper minus its bottle:

These objects tell their own story. I have them on display in a cupboard at home, I call it 'the earthquake display'. What can we say today! The earthquake was a shattering event. Do you know what it means to be looking for your own wife in the dark when she has lost her voice!

Perhaps the most startling image of absence and loss was the contribution of brass keys by an elderly man: 'the keys to our home' [now destroyed]. And there was the chair that arrived from a middle-aged man with the note 'This armchair is made out of the fragments of three others that the earthquake rendered useless.' I received a painting from a bank clerk that featured a draped coat and hat as if the body that had worn these items had suddenly vanished: 'I had painted him in 1984, it appeared from under the ruins of my house that the earthquake piled up, the "Invisible Man".'

The public display of these objects of the heart could only be but a materialization of affect, that is, follow the local aesthetics of archiving, as witnessed in their original private places. This entailed a transformation of the exhibition hall itself in terms of its aesthetic appearance, from a cold, naked museum-like space to a dressed up place – just as a home is customarily 'ornamented' when expecting visitors. The specific spot I chose for the staging of the objects in the building was the sanctuary of fine art (*pinakothiki*), a space most locals had never visited before. Thus the rescription of the archive space as a space of death.

Re-memembering the present

This public event might appear at first as a final accomplishment and certainly one that pertained only to the region. But is it? Earthquake perceived as stigma for the



FIGURE 4.7

area was intimately tied to the devaluation of the present – the sites of cultural production in Greece have been bouncing between the archaic or rural world of the dead and dying and the world of fine arts that stand for our European future. One of the reasons why this devaluation of the present is of social importance is that it excludes the historical experience and presence of the Diaspora. For the Diaspora has no existence in any of the above sites of cultural production. As if it is confined to the road.

Besides, the European fine arts presentation and the archeological and folkloric presentation treat culture as a finished product fit for consumption. Whereas to engage the experience and history of the Diaspora and other crucial components of the Greek present, requires treating culture and the present as processes and Greeks as cultural actors and not merely as cultural consumers.

The earthquake event thus proposed a model of how the regional could enter in dialogue with the national and the transnational. The same dynamics – the presentation of private memory as public history, citizen participation, the museum in action and culture in process – could be applied to a special event and exhibition on the Messinian Diaspora. This would expand and enlarge our notion of the scope and gauge of regional history by showing the implication of the regional in the international and the mutual impact on each other.

Are the members of the Diaspora, I wondered, to only be educated, in their visits back home, in the archeological history of the area, while their own historical narrative remains untold from both sides, that of the emigre and that of the family and friend who remained behind? Can we even begin to conceptualize the lost

objects, the ignored artifacts that secretly bear within them private history which is pregnant with a public history of the area and the Diaspora?

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As I was writing these thoughts, various parts of Turkey, Greece, and Taiwan were shaken by earthquakes – following Kobe, Los Angeles, and many more. It was just the beginning. So many more followed. As also proposed by the particular public event of 1996, writing history from the point of view of such devastating events may no longer be the writing of the history of exceptional events as previously assumed; rather it may offer us a different perspective on social experience, opening up a field of social relations and exchanges within and among cultures.

To a certain degree, in Hapsburgian Vienna there was an attempt to write history through structures of permanence. The same holds true in Greece with its attachment to classical antiquity. Except that now this type of memorialization and the entire ideology of the monument has been rendered especially problematic, for the history of our present is marked by national and international disasters. History can no longer be written with structures of permanence alone. It has become more apparent than ever that history emerges out of precariousness, contingency and self-organizing randomness; there is no hidden rationality or directional spirit of history. In the face of all these processes, we will either end up living without history or subsist without long term memory, in the succession of recent events, each one erasing the preceding. It is no wonder that certain nation-states hold on

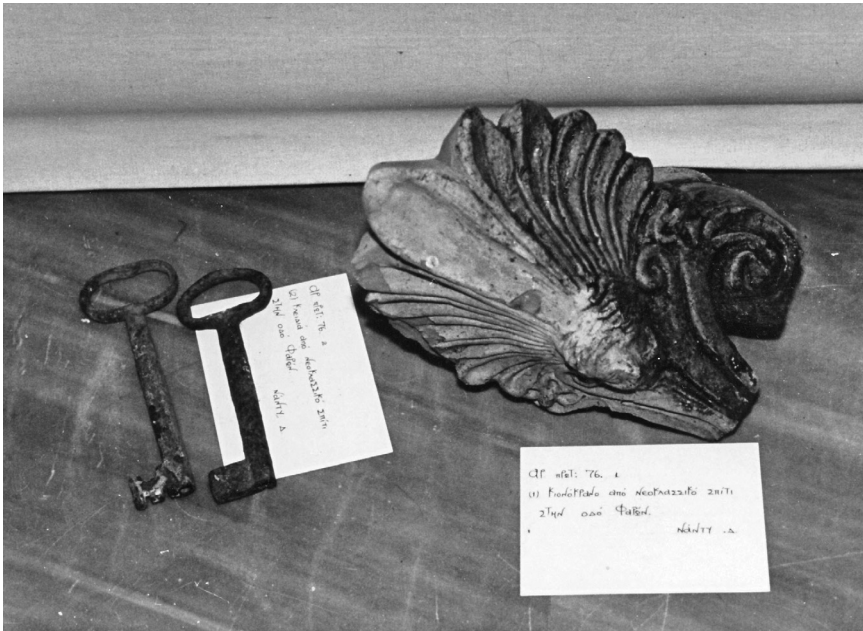


FIGURE 4.8

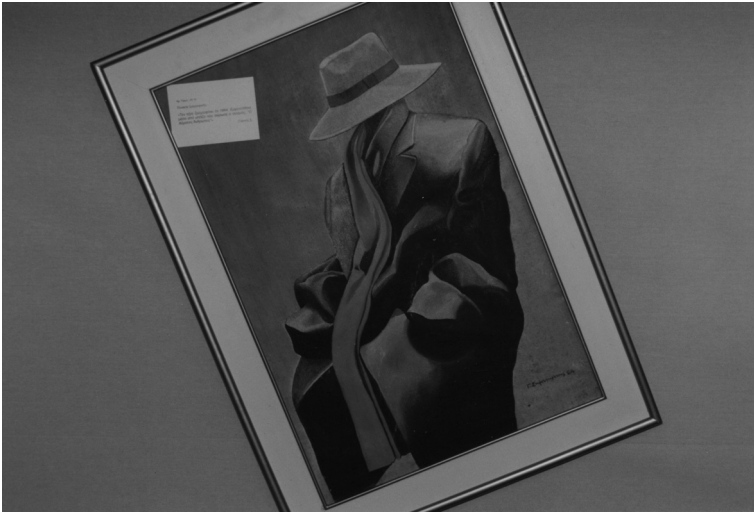


FIGURE 4.9 *The Invisible Man* by Yanis Simandirakis ('Objects of Memory' exhibit)

desperately to archaic, authenticating history and seek to renew their modern legitimacy with the reconstructed past. Yet, both responses bring dissatisfaction.

We need different methods for capturing historical experience and for transforming it to public knowledge. The commemorating event of the '86 quake is perhaps partly an answer. The intervention of the Viennese artists is perhaps another part of the answer, but others are needed. The commonality between the earthquake commemorative event and the performance artists of Vienna is the emerging need to bridge the ever-enlarging distance between official history and everyday experience. One site where this gap can be bridged is the human body, both the experiential body and the symbolic body. This symbolization can be encountered not only in the body proper as in performance artists' practice, but also in various structures and relations with the built environment, the architectural surround and the spatial order of the city.

The lessons of Kalamata and the implicit critique performed by the Viennese artists pointed out that the built environment and architectural space has to abandon much of its monumental aspirations and tendency for petrification and permanence, that the built environment has to become more of a living membrane and empathic skin upon which citizens can write and capture the flux, immediacy and indeterminacy of everyday life. We must learn to cultivate and to live in unfinished cities and cities of polyphonic history. And that is perhaps what the current state of our entire eco-system can teach us. Here geography and history reflect each other; the shifting tectonic plates are geological correlates of the ever shifting foundations of historical consciousness. And as my hand tried to freeze this last thought on paper, my feet sensed another tremor from the depths of the earth.



FIGURE 4.10 Moments of the event

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Ruins and ashes: re-witnessing the natural

Physical disasters have now become habitual in Greece, as across the rest of the globe. They invade the everyday as both experience and information. One can talk of a catastrophic complex that includes earthquakes, unusual hurricanes, tropical storms, tornados, flooding, volcano eruptions and massive fires. By some weird coincidence economic austerity favors natural ‘accidents’.

Visible or invisible, natural destructive forces announce their arrival and departure with specific sounds, smells, motions, colors. Some are sensed as coming from above, others from below, and all from the outside. They are material entities independent of intervention by human agency or activity, involuntary movements of the natural body personified, hence they become metaphors for decentering. Earthquake is metaphorized as 'the dancing of the earth' or 'of the Richter scale', pointing to an involuntary movement, a disorderly dance like tarantella, a ritual of inversion. A sensorium of trauma is here revealed as an everyday practice.

Earthquake is also expressed in vernacular Greek as the 'waking up of Enceladus'. In mythology, the giant Enceladus, son of Uranus (Sky) and Gaia (Earth), was trapped under Mount Etna by his opponent Athena, during the epic war between Giants and Gods, and as he tries to free himself, the living sense his movements. Similar expressions in vernacular Greek are: 'this event or piece of news or new scientific discovery provoked an earthquake' or 'the revealed secret caused a strong earthquake', which point to the shaking of a settled consciousness, individual or collective. A good sense of the everyday as extraordinary.

In history, Neo-Platonism ensured the survival of paganism in the Christian world for centuries, 'not as a religion but as a poetic language that enabled this world to talk about nature' (Hadot 2006, 76). In the medieval world, the Gods of mythology were metaphors for material realities. In the Renaissance, the pagan gods were metaphors for the incorporeal forces that animate the universe. According to Habot, there are two possible responses to the idea that nature hides: either nature's secrets are impenetrable and therefore the study of nature is pointless; or one should try to unveil the secret. Of the former option, Habot has little to say beyond claiming that Socrates and the ancient skeptics held this view. Of the latter option, he identifies two variants. One pertains to a voluntarist or Promethean approach that, through magic, technology, or mechanics, forces nature to reveal her secrets – sometimes the language of force and even torture is used.² There is, however, another less violent version: to command nature by obeying her (as in Philo and Francis Bacon). Hadot in this category discusses Hippocrates, Philo,³ Roger Bacon, Francis Bacon, Descartes, and Kant, among others. He documents the ambiguous boundary between magic and science in the early modern period, and makes the strong claim that 'the Christian character of the mechanistic revolution cannot be overemphasized (ibid., 129). Scientists were encouraged by their faith, not by the institution of the Church: God's artwork is the machine called nature while humankind, through science and technology, can intervene to fix it. Thus, Descartes explicitly rejects the Aristotelian art/nature distinction, while Voltaire writes: 'I am called nature, yet I am all art' (ibid., 127).

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The natural force known as earthquake is invisible; it announces its arrival by sound – starting as a deep moaning and bursting out like a loud outcry. It is the

sound of the earth, which in the past was pre-announced by the warning howling of the dogs, or the warning call of a bird, and other natural signs. Today, in previously afflicted areas people sense an unusual heat in the atmosphere as a warning of new possible shakes.

Modernity's avoidance of invisibility and its predilection for the visual lies in the fact that visibility is verifiable. The impossibility of a scientific prognostication of earthquakes, of a fixation of the phenomenon in time and space, increases anxiety. Endless have been the debates on the possibility or accuracy of prediction in the Greek media, especially television. The main question revolves around whether seismology is a science, for 'if it is, how come it cannot foresee a seismic activity?'⁴ Antagonisms among experts as to who predicted the latest quake are always at play. One of the experts interviewed on TV once mentioned in passing that he evaluates quakes by also 'listening' to the sound of the earthquakes. His study was quickly dismissed as scientifically un-sound.

The earthquake gains visibility only after its departure. It is perceived as a blind attack, that leaves visible, solid matter behind, ruins. Solid matter can be uncovered or recovered to (re)create the past in the future. People after an earthquake and in between tremors tend to rush into the ruins to rescue fragments of their lives, objects that will be tracks of the past in the present. As a middle-aged woman exclaimed: 'Wouldn't you go pick whatever you can from the course and work of a lifetime? Would you leave just like this, empty handed?' Ignoring warnings and taking the risk, others returned to sleep next to their ruined house, in place.

The invisible onslaught of the quake is contrasted by that of fire. Fires make a visible appearance. But instead of ruins, fires leave behind a blind landscape, a black desert that hides all tracks. The lack of solid ruins to recreate the past turns the present into unmarked infinity. No coincidence the word *ἀπειρος* implies both infinity and a person lacking experience. Fire victims have nothing solid left on or under the ground – 'everything turned to smoke' as the saying goes. This is most dramatic in Greek culture, where history rests in the solid bone.

Yet, both earthquakes and fires communicate with a number of other natural phenomena, all components of our world. It is in this complex communication occurring within nature and between natural and human bodies, collective and individual, that the signs for prediction lie. To decipher them, to translate them into scientific knowledge, one has to know and recognize the codes. Do recent ecology movements, environmental sciences, green politics that now address the issue of human agency in the natural world as often a destructive force, recognize this complex sensorial antiphonic witnessing?

To mind comes that wonderful 1970s Akira Kurosawa film, *Derzu Uzala*. A Russian explorer, Valdimir Arsenyev, on an expedition to the snowy Siberian wilderness meets and become friends with a local (Nanai) hunter, Dersu, who then accompanies him in his expedition as a guide. Yet, during one expedition, he ignores Dersu's warning when the latter suddenly whispers, 'I am scared.'

Confident of the efficacy of his scientific instruments, Arsenyev sees no reason to be scared. A deadly windstorm that hits the area a moment later, threatening their lives, betrays him. Dersu's instantaneous reaction to crisis in the specific natural environment, saves their lives: they fall flat, body and land in touch, sensing each other's involuntary movements, till the storm passes. Dersu's sensorial reading of the invisible, and his experiential coping with the local threat, decenteres the Western scientist as well as the film's viewers, causing them to relativize any beliefs in the superiority of Western over local science and experience.

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The Greek fires of 2007 in Ilia, a region of the West Peloponnese, just like the summer fires of Spain and Portugal earlier, were facilitated by meteorological conditions such as strong winds, low humidity and high temperatures that cause spontaneous ignition and fast spreading. Flames overcame the entire region, which was thoroughly destroyed, and trapped more than thirty-five people who were burnt to death. The impact of destructive fire on one's body, as on the ecology, depends on the heat of the fire. A light blaze may leave root systems unscathed but a major conflagration can kill them off. The image of burnt trees is particularly disturbing to people for whom tree trunks carry an iconic association with human bodies (*kormi* means body and *kormos* tree trunk). A black-ash upright statue of a mother in a close embrace with her three children, which was revealed after the disaster in between dead trees, became the emblem of the catastrophe, an emblem that was meant to reappear in 2018 during the devastating fires near Athens.

Consuming fire (*fotia*) is thus identified with thanatos. The latter is best exemplified in the massive fires that often burn the insides of the national body. Fires are part of Greece's traumatic history known as *xenitia* (exile), and Greek culture perhaps more than any other in Europe has explored the aesthetics of *xenitia*, in its literature, poetry, music, and everyday language. A landscape in black after a destructive fire is the personification of *xenitia*, a move to the outside. Internal *xenitia* is visualized as blackened heart and external *xenitia* as desert, a landscape that carries no mark of human hands, of labor; that is to say, a landscape in which people have no place, an abstract space, a space with no memory.

Losing place

During the fires of 2007, as well as those following ever since in Greece, citizens lost their place. Place, defined by its human and nonhuman content and activity, is crucial in and for the dialogical process. To engage in an antiphonic dialogue, to address the other, one has to have an address, a place. The creation of a separate space, a place, is a prerequisite for witnessing, witnessing others and being witnessed by others. Such is the case of the little flexible graves on the urban streets, or the traditional death rituals in which Greek women spoke

from the space of the corpse. In both cases, that place is staged in the public space. Reauditing Foucault (1986), indeed the present epoch will be above all the epoch of space.

In the devastating fires of Ilia, what was lost was precisely the place from which the victims could address the state. They lost it on several levels. The government, local and national, abandoned any responsibility for the disaster of the fires, and promoted a neoliberal model of citizenship based on the notion of private property, a nineteenth-century model. The victims were but victims of an accident that afflicted their private property. There was no other public or legal space from which the victims could address the state, except their private place that was now destroyed. Consequently, these people underwent a condition of flexible citizenship; they became internal refugees in their own nation-state. They turned infra-political, liminal (stuck in-between structures), homeless; a process now completed by austerity politics.

I recall one of those most dramatic evenings that a major TV channel assumed the role of a national collective space during the evening news broadcast. Given the lack of government presence, people turned to media to manage risk. Massive were the calls by terrified citizens who were asking for witnessing, pleading in dramatic tones ‘do not forget us’. The reporters’ promise ‘we will be there, we will not stop standing by’ seemed unconvincing. In some of these calls people were confronting TV ethics of witnessing. People had come to know well the media’s fragmentation of time into discrete episodes, and feared that this event too would be next day covered up by another. Reportage is witnessing. But mediatic witnessing is not antiphonic; it is appropriative. The media do not witness to archive, for they are not interested in creating public memory. This is contrasted with the traditional death rituals where there was a need to archive, to create collective social memory out of the singularity of each death and pain. Modern media fixate on singularity, on the idiosyncrasy of the event to report gaps in everyday life, for the event is crisis, rupture in everydayness.

In the Greek mediatic vocabulary, the word ‘thriller’ characterizes most events. We live in a series of disconnected thrillers, each one covering up the previous, for media focus on alternating between rupture and continuity. And every rupture returns to everyday. As people emerge into the post-disaster state, the latter is reclaimed by everyday life; it is integrated into it. Yet, the victims remain infra-political in a post-disaster era. While in the traditional Greek death ritual the dead move from inside to outside, from social collectivity to the Other World, the disaster victims undergo an internal *xenitia*; they live in an exteriority that remains within the nation-state.⁵ And this is routinized, normalized and ultimately erased. This state of internal exile actually affects the whole nation-state and not the victims alone. Yet, neither the victims nor the Greek nation at large have a public space within which they redress the crisis and the consequences. Both government and media fail to give afflicted people a space of publicness.

The only compensation for this lack and for effecting forgetfulness on the part of the state is financial compensation. Given the fact that the Greek government at the time failed to promptly offer such compensation, it suffered constant criticism for what was attributed to bureaucratic inadequacy. To avoid further social turbulence, once a new disaster, a 6.5 R earthquake, hit the Peloponnese (the Achaia and Ilia regions) in the summer of 2008, it rushed to announce immediate compensation for the victims. But as soon as these victims went to collect the aid, they found themselves in competition with the angrily protesting fire victims who had yet to receive their own compensation. Earthquake ruins were threatening to cover up the ashes of the fires.

Lack of collective space from which the nation can remember together, and lack of antiphonic memory where pain can develop a dialogue, led the experience and memory of the fires to become privatized. Perhaps the major symptoms of this were: The public silence which was only broken by some sporadic media follow-ups; the compensation program which was actually the use of money to create active forgetfulness; the absence of NGOs, and if they had a limited presence at some point, the question remains whether they managed to create a public space; and finally, the relegation of fire victims to private (religious and other) charity. For philanthropy is destined to rescue the moment. Similarly, in another context, Indonesia, the failure to create public space after the tsunami-earthquake remains paradigmatic.

A most dramatic symptom, though, in the Greek case was the government's attempt to contain memory by nationalizing and archaicizing it through the use of the ruins of Ancient Olympia. The ancient site and the museum in the area had also been threatened by these fires. The losses of individual disaster victims became subsumed under the possible loss of cultural heritage. Ancient Olympia neutralized the crisis and rendered the post-crisis marginal.

What happens when a culture loses its mnemo-techniques? I wondered. The public erasure of memory of the fires has been anticipated in the gradual erasure of landscape. Previously landscape was a bearer of memory – this is something my field experiences taught me well. Earth withholds, tends, cultivates and releases memory as sound, touch, aroma, sight and language. Thus, losing the landscape of memory means sensory and aesthetic transformation. It means also losing the archive of human labor, as well as losing 'home'. The gradual literalization and economic-utilitarian view and use of landscapes transforms them into no place. The latter task was complemented now by the government's effort to replace these landscapes with Ancient Olympia, Classical Greece. Public and media discourse shifted to the ancient site threatened by the fire and the successful recuperation of its damaged part. After all, by promoting the salvation of a past that is unreal ensures the possession of a real space in which the state feels most vulnerable: the everyday.

Local people's response was eloquent. Anticipating perhaps the usual post-disaster installation by local authorities or the government – an official all-encompassing monumental plaque in memory of the victims – they rushed to

state publicly their own view of memory. Their immediate and spontaneous response was to ‘plant’ thirty-five individual little graves in a row on a sidewalk of a main road for the burnt-to-death victims. This collective appearance resembles a dissenting chorus, a chorus intended to expose an unjustifiable injury and demand a third stream *anamnesis*. The accompanying large sign states ‘35 dead in a day, why? Two years passed, no trial, we do not forget, we do not forgive, we demand punishment of those responsible for this murder’.

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What fire victims claimed was their lost rights as citizens. The customary notion of citizenship lies on the premise that one is bearer of rights and entitlements that are universal. Yet, what they realized is that rights are flexibly accorded to people based on specific conditions. People with disaster experiences lose rights, just like people with disabilities or AIDS, for instance. I am thinking also of the victims of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans: the population was portrayed as victims or criminals by media when reporting looting and violence. The status and character of their citizenship was affected – they became flexible citizens. Thus, when people were interviewed on TV, they attempted to restate their American citizenship, refusing the status of refugee. People appealed to common human rights and risk in order to destigmatize and depathologize the victims. That is also what the fire victims of Ilia were demanding: justice at home.



FIGURE 4.11 The 35 of Ilia

Fires make bodies disappear into thin air; the dead, like vagabonds, move away leaving no roots on the ground. The little graves planted in the street bring each dead down and all of them together into a settlement. They are back in place. This is the place where eros and thanatos can intersect, the place that defies homelessness.

Notes

- 1 The photographers Mihalís Modaldos and Nikos Bouzianis in particular contributed with a significant number of documentary and artistic photographs respectively.
- 2 See also *Torture and Truth* by Page duBois (1991).
- 3 The philosopher Philo of Alexandria, also known as Philo Judaeus, or Julius Philo, lived in Alexandria, Roman province of Egypt (c.20 BCE–40 CE). His works, strongly influenced by Aristotelian-Stoicist thought, represent a syncretism of Hellenic and Hebrew cultures.
- 4 To recall Foucault, the interface of the scopic and the body enabled an uninterrupted continuity of a power/knowledge apparatus.
- 5 Vernant (1983) observed that in ancient Greece the memorialization of the dead is one mode of obtaining a positive stable social status. But Vernant's observation also indicates that since this is a status constructed by the dead's kin and internal to the kin group, memorialization also points to the reconstruction of a stable social status for the kin collectivity, whose prior social condition was disrupted by death. Yet, this task of restoring the status of the kin in death crises was mainly relegated to women, and women symbolized the 'inside', the domestic domain, as opposed to the outside, the male public space. The depoliticization of gender relations in the domestic space is symbiotic with the gendering of political relations in the public space, particularly on the level of territorial symbolism: inside/outside, polis/home.

5

WOUNDED BORDERS

The arrival of the 'Barbarians'

Walking around with my video camera in the north of Greece near the border, I was trying to get a sense of where Greece and Albania interconnect, where the 'mobile populations' so much discussed in the media in the early 1990s, 'run' back and forth. I was videotaping the mountains, the entry way to the border, when, all of a sudden, instead of clusters of trees in front of my lens, there were young men with backpacks, walking out of the woody depths. The local friend who had driven me there nudged me with his elbow: 'This is a group of Albanians who have just entered Greece illegally.' They passed across my lens and, heading down to the towns and cities, vanished into the mountain crevices. So did the illusion of the total visibility of the border.

Traveling down to the nearby Greek towns myself, I heard about Albanians killing Greeks, Albanians being killed or being fed and sheltered by Greeks, and Albanians being betrayed by Greeks or other Albanians. Endless narrations, an ongoing oral daily newspaper. Albanians and their tales were everywhere, yet every time I tried to locate one of those narrated Albanians, he or she was always absent. Albanians, myth and reality.

The visitations of Albanians found Greeks at the cusp of history. Greeks locked their homes as dangerous borders crept towards their private spaces. Greek identity those days was nationally and internationally played out, defined, and sought after at the borders. Questions are debated in the public culture: Who are the Greeks, and who are Greece's minorities? Where are Greeks themselves a minority? Where do the boundaries of the Greek diaspora in Eastern and Western Europe and the United States begin and end? Where do we draw Greece's boundaries in land, sea, air, and time? Cultural identity and capital seemed to move from the metropole and conventional heritage sites to the frontier that now became the center and anchorage of national identity.

The Albanians, meanwhile, continued spreading throughout Greece as far as the southern Peloponnese, where I met them as migrant labor – together with Poles, Romanians, or ex-Yugoslavians – picking olives for my relatives. The men popped up as construction workers and the women as maids inside Greek households, or else as hired companions for the elderly. They have reached as far as Crete and the islands. On Crete I heard about a compound rented to Albanians, but when I visited it, I found Serbs, Croatians, and other ex-Yugoslavians, Poles, Filipinos and Albanians. They were all ‘Albanians’ to the local Greeks.

Then of course there were the northern Epirotes, that is, Greeks of northern Epiros. Many of them who worked in Greece were Albanians who, after adopting Greek first names and acquiring residency papers in the appropriate town in Albania, identified themselves as northern Epirotes to facilitate their survival in Greece. So, who are the Albanians? Where do you locate them? Where is violence performed on them and by them?

The popular imagery of border violation is extended to immigrant women. Just as Albanian men are characterized as thieves and violators of property, women become violators of the domestic space and, through sexual and medical imagery, of the male body itself. To understand the embryonic violence directed at Albanians, male or female, we have to bear in mind the interdependency of myth and fact. For this imagery has its partial footing in social fact. There is a gender mythology, that is, which was enabled by a feminized informal economy. Perhaps the irony of late transnational capitalism is that the ideological superstructures are no longer thrown up by the official and central economic base, but by the informal economy which has its own particular mythic associations. Alain Corbin, in his discussion of the popular bourgeois imagery of nineteenth-century prostitution, links it to a sexual economy of waste and sewage disposal, and points to the fact that prostitution was the site of surplus economic energy in France. Informal economy as the excess, surplus and illicit counterpart of the official economy, and as it penetrates the domestic space recruiting women into the free labor and to a transnational market, can in turn carry gendered associations.

Albanian and Eastern European women have been imported into Greece as sexual and labor objects in a variety of ways. For instance, some were brought in to live with lonely elderly and/or disabled men in rural areas and towns. They used in turn such positions of ‘domestic labor’ to stage their entry into the new society, that is to acquire some linguistic skills, accumulate some financial resources, build basic social networks and when ready, to move on to nearby larger towns and cities as strippers in night clubs. In another instance, a legally hired male Albanian worker in a charcoal-making business in northern Greece asked for the help of his employer to obtain a visa for his female cousin to work in the village. It was not long before the rumor spread that he kept on bringing a new ‘cousin’ every month or so in the village, ensuring this way a variety for his customers. A middle-aged Albanian woman, a physiotherapist in her country, complained to me that she was forced to leave her job taking care of an elderly widower in Crete, for he was gradually indicating that she would be expected to provide him also with sexual

services and stay with him permanently; he was proposing a form of 'marriage'. At some point and while the numbers of immigrant women were increasing, rumors spread locally that Albanian women are carriers of hepatitis. The above patterns of migration decreased.

In the meantime, in Crete and later in Athens, a middle-aged woman and her sister working in agriculture and house-cleaning had created a network of residential and land-job placements for her Albanian fellow countrymen and women, thus preventing newcomers from entering into illegal and harmful situations. Although the flow of male border crossers was bidirectional until then, when I first entered Albania with Greek truckers the sight of me, a Greek woman moving in that direction, stirred up questions in amazement: 'With a woman to Albania?' the truckers were asked. Soon, Greek female sex workers began entering Albania, particularly those who were not marketable in Greece.

In urban centers the trajectory of the male immigrants was different. They hung out in main squares, markets, or special spaces of immigrant concentration where health conditions are often rudimentary. There were concerted attempts to fix Albanians in time and space by drawing them into a televisual border in the mass media. They had emerged like a submarine, becoming visible in the media almost exclusively through their criminality. One of the early sightings of Albanians was reported by a popular journalist who attempted to track them by identifying the residential spaces they occupied in Athens. These were mostly abandoned hollow spaces or dilapidated buildings, haunted spaces where Albanians were reviving the ghost of early Greek modernization. Houses once inhabited by Greeks and abandoned because of growing affluence were perceived as emblems of an earlier and outmoded poverty.

Ironically, it was in a decayed villa, a mansion, that the television reporter and his crew located some Albanians. Blaming the state's tolerance or laxity for the fact that this abandoned treasure had now 'fallen into the hands of the Albanians', he led his crew on to the main floor of the villa with cameras and lights.

No Albanians were there, only their objects, talking objects, numerous traces of their presence – coats, shirts hanging on nails on the wall, vacant shoes laid out on the floor. The reporter reached into coat pockets, pulled out documents, and displayed them for the camera in order to demonstrate that the absent owners were in Greece illegally. He explained that he was attempting not to police the immigrants or discriminate against them, but rather to remind the state of its duties and obligations. I flashed back to that shocking moment, years ago, when three American immigration officers patrolling the area knocked at my door at 7:30 a.m. in New York City and searched my briefcase for my legal papers.

Now, as I think back on that television scene, I am reminded of my visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp earlier, during a trip to Cracow. The most disturbing moment was not when I faced the barracks, the bunks, or the ovens, but when I saw the vast warehouse of everyday personal items. There were eyeglasses by the thousands. Their volume made the difference. Their voice was so loud that it shattered my heart. It was these talking objects that brought

home the violence of extermination through the massive signification of absence – the absent immigrants and their speaking objects.

Later, when I accepted a position as adviser to the Minister of (Public) Health in Greece, I was concerned that my research on the borders would be suspended due to intensifying political tensions. Implicit was the fallacy that one has to go to the border to encounter it. Ironically, my first assignment was to attend the European Regional Meeting of National AIDS Coordinators, held under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO). I was appointed official representative for the section of the meeting concerned with cross-border public health issues affecting Bulgaria, Albania, Romania, Turkey, and Greece. This was a first regional attempt to establish future interstate collaboration for disease prevention among mobile populations. At almost the same time, there appeared a series of mediatic panic stories about waves of infections crossing Greek frontiers: AIDS, hepatitis B, cholera, Ebola, and the list goes on. Borders were leaking not only people but also contaminated and contaminating substances, old and new viruses. The border now represented an infection. This medicalization of the border and of mobile people pointed to new forms of violence emanating from this space.

During the WHO meetings the connection between borders, disease, and death was encapsulated by gender in the figure of the immigrant prostitute: the personification of moral and physical leakage and transgression. Sex workers were depicted as spreading hepatitis B, AIDS, and other diseases. Food from Albania, such as meat, fish, and vegetables, was believed to be spreading cholera.

Europe besieged by the border

Albanian women, thus, as sex and agricultural workers, and Albanian meat products were the bearers of infection, disease, and contamination. What a coincidence! These images medicalized the border in both popular and medical imagination. Klaus Theweleit in *Male Fantasies* (1977) has described water images as part and parcel of the iconography of feminine substance that threatens the 'hardened and armoured male body'. Think, for example, of bodily fluids, such as blood. The water imagery of disorderly floods and fluids is frequently found in public health pamphlets describing Albania's public health sector as pathogenic, written by Western Europeans. Mary Douglas comes to mind and her notion of pollution as matter out of place. Shall we add: matter out of place is gendered material?

I would say it is rather dangerous to locate the genealogy of violence only in the literal. The spatial and gendered building blocks for the ideological metaphysics that rationalize and legitimize acts of violence, particularly as acts of catharsis, are crucial. As if in response, the Albanian delegate to the meetings, a microbiologist, rose and began speaking about viruses that cannot be recognized and thus properly treated in Albania, for Albanians sent back to their homeland by Greece and Italy are often the carriers of new viruses. Borders are bidirectional.

I recall Lévi-Strauss (1961) and his well-known essay 'A Writing Lesson'. He discusses his census-taking expedition into the Amazon to examine the impact of epidemics like influenza and specifically the numbers of Indians left alive. Given the fact that they were nomads, that is, a mobile population, they could not be counted, they could not be fixed in time and space. The first Indians who were countable were those who died from the imported epidemics (Seremetakis 2017). Curious, I think, is the relation between writing and death. Writing, death, and disease create conditions of visibility for the Other.

South American Indians, as Lévi-Strauss portrays them, were passive victims of epidemics during their first contact with Europeans. But can the Albanians be depicted as passive recipients? They have been a mobile population, legal and illegal, crossing European geopolitical borders all too often in the past years. Death, disease, and the horrific stories of previous emigrants do not seem to stop them. Their constant movement across frontiers simply cannot be laid to naivety, lack of knowledge, or fatalism. They know well, from those sent back home, the conditions of immigration. They take the risk. Their movements point to an alternative concept of risk, one that renders problematic any medical intervention, since the latter carries its own specific paradigm of risk. Alternative concepts of risk and safety point to the borders as processes and not solely as geopolitical literalities. These are wounded borders, borders that ache and leak.

Next came the trip to Cracow, for the annual meeting of European schools of public health. The goals of this conference included the establishment of a unified public health language for Europe and the building of collaborations between the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe through the ongoing language of public health. Serious questions gathered at the borders: What would a unified public health grammar be for Eastern and Southern Europe? Is unification simply a euphemism for such things as colonization, the imposition of order, and the prevention of contamination? How does medical rationality, universalized and at the same time monopolized by particular political geographies, intersect with the politics of ethnicity, race, migration, and transnational economies? At a time when the European Union is busy erasing its internal borders and rigidifying its external ones, I wonder what fictions and stigmas will attach to the borders that lie to the east and south? Will there be a fair exchange, or will some societies dominate others by means of a technical transfer of medical skills and resources?

The field site of the border slowly defined itself for me as a stratigraphy, with different layers unfolding in front of me: everyday-life worlds and their spatial transactions during my travels to the north of Greece and my repeated cross-border trips with truckers into Albania as far as Tirana; the public culture of rumors, myths, and mediatic depictions of mobile populations that encoded spatial transformation; governmental attempts to grasp the border through medical metaphors as a prelude to intervention; and the efforts of non-governmental organizations and academic institutions such as schools of public health to transcend the limits of the nation-state, creating a regional continuum of cooperation, exchange, and transparency in order to erase borders in the name of medicalized notions of public

safety and risk. These strata subject the border to a culture-bound projection while at the same time ignoring the fact that the cultural specificity of borders such as that between Albania and Greece is being forged on the ground, within the structures of everyday life, in black economies, and with restless and exploitable Albanian labor reserves.

The identification of new viruses mentioned by the Albanian delegate to the WHO meetings and the delegate's request for external training point to the importance of all concerned agents acquiring knowledge and tools that would enable Albanians to initially survive the Other and to subsequently develop their existing public health infrastructure. Yet their Western European partners operated under the assumption that the whole Albanian medical edifice should be reconstructed in an accelerated program of modernization. These different cultural codes, development strategies, and interests caused frequent non-communication and tension. The Western European side did not grasp the fact that we are at a point where borders leak in both directions. They leak bodies, viruses, infections. An exchange is in play. The question is, will it be fair?

These issues concerned me, calling into question whether I could either study the situation as an ethnographer or act upon it via my position in the Ministry of Public Health. But prior to being either an ethnographer or a representative of a government office, I was an immigrant in the United States for more than twenty years. I have taken my borders with me to the subject, more than anything else. How do we, in the discipline of anthropology, visualize or classify a border crosser who enters our discursive terrains with foreign content? Is the border crosser seen as pathogenic and troublemaking for the discipline? Is this even more the case when the border crosser originates from a place that has long been subjected to analytic objectification and has mounted its own guards to watch disciplinary gates? And how does anthropology visualize a border crosser who moves back and forth between the observer and the observed, blurring the distinctions between the inside and the outside? Is this, too, comprehended as violence? If so, then 'the anthropology of Greece' has got an Albanian. Or, as Cavafy would say in *Expecting the Barbarians*, if we go to the frontiers we will discover that 'there are no longer any barbarians. And now what shall become of us without any barbarians? Those people were a kind of solution'.

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New space of flows

Indeed, in the 1990s, Albanians, myth or reality, were conceived in Greece as national violators and often stigmatized as carriers of deadly viruses. But as numbers of legal and illegal immigrants increased, the anti-Albanian propaganda receded gradually into the background and a Pakistanphobia took its place. Immigration has been like a sea of human waves, each wave a different ethnic group that rises to surface only to be washed out and followed by the next wave.¹



FIGURE 5.1 Photograph by Eleftherios Partsalis

Flooding the roads, these people, just like the little street graves that crossed borders, were transgressive figures. Yet, realists would now classify those years as the Age of European Innocence. For in the following decade, the unpredictable flows of illegal immigrants grew beyond control and numbers lost their referents. The urbanscape, public squares and streets, were besieged by foreign bodies from the frontiers. The term immigrant, applied to them as an equalizing term, became synonymous to violator, enemy. For years, incidents of immigrants killing, raping and robbing Greek citizens dominated the media and the state was blamed for inaction. The rising vivisectionist violence among ethnic bodies (see Appadurai 1998) contributed to their polluting image. At the same time, incidents of immigrants being beaten up, killed, robbed and ripped off by Greek fascists and often the police itself, served as didactic anti-racist clichés. Distrust, conflict and violence between so-called social intimates was on the rise.

Legal immigrants of the second generation and up suffered the same stigma and treatment for a long time. For a slow realization that a diasporic nation was born and growing below the national level increased uncertainty concerning national identity and local space. As soon as the next door foreign or black faces that spoke impeccable Greek, people that had lived in our country for decades or all their lives emerged to consciousness, the first vague talks on the necessity of instituting immigration laws began on the part of the state. The debates on whether these others had the right to be called or considered Greeks dominated the media. Who are the Greeks?

This question has often been repeated in modern Greek history. I recall the derision aimed at Greek Americans for their ‘offensive Greek’ years ago; it took very long for that language to be accepted as a dialect and by extension its speakers as non-defective Greeks. Consider also the following events that revealed to me socio-economic and cultural transitions in the making: Returning from a field trip and revisiting an old familiar restaurant in Astoria years ago, I was greeted and in fluent Greek introduced to the daily specialties by a new waiter. I asked him which topos of Greece he came from – the usual identifying question among immigrants. ‘I am Mexican’, he replied quietly. Mexican immigrants had imperceptibly taken the place of Greeks who were gradually elevating from restaurant workers to restaurant owners. Back in Greece, years later, in a coastal tavern in the Peloponnese, I heard my father asking the young waiter who looked very local, ‘whose son are you?’ He was left speechless at the waiter’s response that he was Albanian but had lived in Greece for more than fifteen years. Today, there are critical voices in Greece that ask the question whether Greeks are becoming the ‘waiters of the Europeans’.

The gradual realization that the borders are permeable, that borders leak human bodies, viruses and information bidirectionally, probed ideologically-grounded responses to close the borders by means of fences or other solid barriers. Yet they soon dissolved as massive flows of illegal immigrants from non-solid borders – the seas – became daily news. This moved problem away from the Greek borders and elevated it into the European political context. Who are the Europeans?

Europe’s belief in the unidirectional movement between central European states and peripheral others, from place-bound to homeless immigrants, was irrevocably questioned. Greece, traditionally known for its outflows, was now accused for lack of know-how concerning massive inflows of immigrants. Crossing all borders, these transgressive others from far away war zones escaped social and biological death and, like an unforeseen tsunami, claimed a place among the living. Place was turning to open space.

One of Angelopoulos’ early films, *Landscape in the Mist* (1988), pops up in mind: Greek children are journeying to find their father, imagined to be in mythical Germany. A journey without discovery, for Germany was never to be found; their long journey was but an initiation to life and the cultural other, marked by both joy and terror. The film was an allegorical reading of Greek history in a dialogical relation with its Other, a reading that has now proved to be a divinatory vision, the vision that comes from journeying on and from the borders. Angelopoulos was himself killed by the road years later and Greeks became immigrant kids of Europe.

While writing these ruminations, my eye – some coincidence – caught a recent short documentary film showing on TV, *Sunflower Seeds* (2013): Refugee children clustered in Athenian parks, selling sunflower seeds for a living while waiting, together with thousands of others, to see their dream be realized, to cross borders to discover Germany.

Are these people mindless? Some prudent neoliberals wondered about illegal immigrants and refugees traveling alone or with families, risking their lives. Sedentary worlds have a hard time comprehending concepts of risk emanating

from spaces of ruin. People whose place turns to ashes and who embark on a wooden boat to an imagined destination, do not move from a topos to heterotopia. They simply switch heterotopias. And these heterotopias exist in the present. Rational calculations of life and death, past and future, matter to the settled ones.

Yet, a child's unfulfilled desire harbors the potential of changing history. The little refugee child who desired a mythical topos but was washed ashore dead on a Greek island brought to worldwide visibility the modern massive drowning. And left us reflecting: Who are Europeans?

Old Greek fairytales come to life. The sea has been one of their material emblems: Outside invisible forces, bad and good, pirates and brigands pop up in waves to crack its surface, to unsettle, disorder and repatch the reality of the physical world, the natural and the human body and the body of the world. The sea is no longer a flat surface for play. In the child's new, stereoscopic vision it is also a surface cracked by the unexpected and the incongruous that appear suddenly from the casual and the everyday. It is where the invisible becomes visible, the past (time and space) meets the present as a transformative force.²

Countless boats carrying foreign bodies are popping up in the Mediterranean Sea in recent days. Thousands of these bodies of unknown identity are buried in its clear blue waters transforming it to a 'wet grave', thus polluting for a while or long the touristic fantasy of an exotic summer destination. As if looking for witnesses, these dead bodies escape to the surface and head for the shores, disturbing the joyful quiet bathing of the living. These floating corpses, like the contaminated fish washed ashore, are quickly collected and disposed of en masse. These no-bodies, people who die unmediated deaths, that leave behind undifferentiated traces, the lifejackets, complete a scenography of street-sea thanatopolitical acts.

The semiotic conversion of the sea frightens. Our life-giving, joyful, cathartic, blue sea whose salt and sunshine 'baked' a whitish flabby body (baby, adult, or the northerners' body), giving it color, shape, taste, is now changing.³ There was a future then awaiting, worth to prepare and to endure labors for. Now 'entering the sea' is no longer an initiation to one's future life; it rather parallels a visit to the Other World among the dead. It defies the idea of the Odyssean struggle for returning from *xenitia*, a bodily resistance that has shaped Greek thought and culture over the centuries.⁴

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Any border violation or intervention caused by nonhuman forces has traditionally been relegated to natural history, usually treated and contained as a physical catastrophic or epidemic 'accident'. But now this growing violation, with victims that have exceeded any statistical control, could not be dismissed as accident by either state or media. People's screams were eventually directed at Europe, more concretely against the ideals and goals of European civilization, which Greece has long been striving to reach. And as the issue of closing borders between European countries re-emerged, the idea of European unification was threatening to crack.

At the same time, the renewed shift to the preservation of the ancient world was coupled with an emerging culture of underwater museums of human statues

around the world (see Mexico, Spain and Greece following).⁵ Another attempt to fix identities, in a boundless sea world? I wondered. Or perhaps an effort to turn the previously uninheritable into a new heritable archive? After all, exhumation of ‘junk spaces’, the melt down of modernization,⁶ has always been archaeologically interesting and the museumification of the present a promising tourist attraction.

As I was pondering on these thoughts, a short video hit Facebook to remind us that for some everyday life is a journey through traumatic events and wounded habitats along with the dead. The video, entitled ‘Cemetery in the Middle of the Sea’, featured floating graves on the sea and a Syrian refugee, living witness, Khaled Alkhamis, speaking for himself:

I used to dream of one day seeing the sea and sitting on its shores. I hate the sea now. I wish I had stayed under the bombs in Syria so I did not have to face this [these deaths] and this sea.⁷

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Staring myself at those piles of life jackets on seashores, I flashed back again to that other impeccably staged museum, the Auschwitz gas ovens. A weird sensation overtook me. Those piled up human eye-glasses on display, the only traces left behind by those that had been forcibly migrated in and out of Auschwitz, were as if now staring, like a silent chorus, at these massive, undifferentiated dead bodies floating on an open air gas oven. The mediatic repetition of this massiveness threatened to normalize this violence, to routinize death, to anaesthetize pain and suffering, to give form and systematize once again in history what Arendt (1964) eloquently called ‘the banality of evil’.

Yet, it was the numbers of these corpses that rendered ethnic differentiation meaningless to people, and fear of the Other gave way to compassion. After all, the massive bodies coming from the sea arrive dead harmless. Early on a dramatic picture circulated on the web, which depicted numerous hands emerging on the sea surface waving ‘do not worry, we won’t arrive, we just drowned.’ It was the people’s response to the xenophobic propaganda of fascists against the arrival of the ‘barbarians’. But, these bodies, dead or alive, are now officially named refugees – do they want to be called refugees? I wonder – in order to be differentiated from ‘economic immigrants’, thus allowing compassion for the former and stigmatization of the latter. At all times, some bodies must be instantly rendered obsolete – this job is left to legal realism.

But do everyday people differentiate between bodies when generously offering their help and any goods they can afford to those who they perceive as exiled others? Rather not. *Xenitia* is an open wound in Greece. Wounds are weird things, they have a life of their own; they can be hidden in one body and cause pain in another. Blankets, water, clothes, food, warm embraces and toys flood the Greek streets, the donations of anonymous citizens. Equally moving is the picture of 65-year-old Ed from Irving, California, returning ‘to pay off an old debt’, as he said – to the same seashore where his parents, arriving from Asia Minor as children, were rescued from

drowning by local people, and from where they left for the USA in 1949.⁸ Affective action versus realistic inaction at play. Legal matters are left to be endlessly discussed and debated higher up. Emotions and objects are recirculated and exchanged down below in the functionalist, use-less public spaces, turning the latter into participatory theaters of memory.

Notes

- 1 Vargas Llosa, in the film *Tune In Tomorrow* (1990), also captured this tide. The film was based on Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*. Director: Jon Amiel.
- 2 See also Donald Carter (2010) for the African Diaspora's experience of invisibility, in his study of immigrant communities in Turin, Italy.
- 3 Sunbathing in Greek is called sun therapy (*iliotherapia*). Sea water was similarly thought to cure illnesses of both body and soul.
- 4 Noam Chomsky, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Michel Foucault among others, based their thinking on the idea of struggle, while Jean François Lyotard, for instance, claims it is a notion deriving from the Enlightenment.
- 5 www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1124141/ypobruхийo-mouseio-me-glupta-apo-to-panepistimio-thessalias accessed in April 2016.
- 6 See also Rem Koolhaas (2002) for 'junkspace' as a critique of modern urbanism and city building.
- 7 *The Sea Cemetery Project* was created by the Support to Life NGO. Accessed in May 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/735778156563694/?pnref=story>
- 8 enallaktikos.gr (Panagiotis Samaras), accessed in January 2016: www.enallaktikos.gr/ar22017el-o-ed-apo-tin-kalifornia-poy-kseplirwnei-ena-xreos-100-etwn-stilesvo.html#VojMNIcf9ek.twitter

6

EROS AND THANATOS IN TRANSNATIONAL EUROPE¹

Since the 1990s, globalization has been over-discussed in terms of socio-political and economic processes. It slipped into everyday language as an abstract term, missing a texture. This overinflation pointing to a self-referentiality, indicates the inadequacy of the concept. An anthropology of everyday life, instead, could bring process to visibility by excavating the quite unexpected niches where many profound effects of globalization, before and during the era of austerity, can be accessed.

Extending my previous discussions of the glocal, I am here visiting, in the Greek and wider European context, diverse sites such as food consumption, social aesthetics, disease imagery and medical rationalities as registers of and for viewing globalization. These sites anticipated the effects of globalization as developed and experienced today. I propose that the social imaginary that has developed around the transformation and transubstantiation of national food supplies and palates is reflexive of the transformation of the nation-state, and of the crisis of nation-state identities, in the face of globalization.

If, as Ernst Bloch (1986) once asserted in reference to German nationalism, the modern nation-state is a medicalized 'unit of blood', then a core notion of the nation-state, as composed of stable identifiable homogeneous bodies, is under challenge in Greece by the dissemination of new medical technologies and new transnational commodity/consumption networks and migrations of Balkan refugees, and Asian Pacific and African labor reserves. I identify, contrast, compare and montage a diversity of social discourses and practices that speak to the mutation of the body, the permeability of the body, the transformation and re-stabilization of embodiment, as symbolic sites where the relationship between nation-state identities and globalized experience are being worked out, fantasized, contradicted, and occasionally reconciled.

Medicine, information and body consumption: Gioconda

An early glimpse of increasing authority of the medical discourse in Greece – its imperial expansion into the empirical structure of recent modernity – arrived in the form of a series of articles reported in the Greek media on Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting the *Mona Lisa*. The work of art was interrogated by medical forensics to get at historical truth; the acquisition of history entailed the opening, the vivisection, of Gioconda.

The medicalization of Mona Lisa moved her from the aesthetic into the historical. It constituted her secularization and her repositioning into the everyday life that we all negotiate and traverse, a life that the medical discourse on Gioconda metaphorized and indexed as disease progression and diagnoses. To the degree that Gioconda is an icon of European humanistic civilization, this dissection could have ramifications for the Greek public's sense of personhood, embodiment, social memory and European identity.

Gioconda, 'the eternal beauty' of Western civilization, ever present for centuries, was subjected to multiple re-examinations, pushing the painting's aesthetic value back to what realists have termed 'the Age of Innocence'. Concretely, and as reported in the Greek Sunday paper *To Vema* (Caumer 1991), Alain Rosse, professor at the School of Fine Arts in Lyon, disturbed by the position of her hands, in 1990, contacted an authority in the microsurgery of hands and a physiotherapist specializing in ailments of the spinal cord so they might provide their expert testimony.

Observing that her right hand did not rest on the left hand but laid 'indolent, inactive and flabby', they explained that she either 'suffered from tetanus', or the right hand 'was shorter than the other hand'. They concluded that there is an atrophy of the right part of her body. In other words, Gioconda was a paralytic. The one hemisphere of her brain was atrophic and her smile is nothing but an expressive outburst, which comes from a numbing of the face. To support their thesis, they observed an anomalous bump on her right hand, between thumb and forefinger. So, how has the image of this woman stayed in fashion for four centuries? They explained: 'She does not belong to her epoch, she is eternal ... People change morphologically but anomalies win over time'. In other words, what was eternal and unchanging of Gioconda, once we medicalized her appearance, were her pathologies.

In 1975, a Danish doctor supported a similar thesis, diagnosing a hereditary paralysis of the face. Gioconda was a cripple! From the right side she is smiling, from the left side she is grimacing. This asymmetry led him to suspect a serious emotional and even mental inadequacy. Mona Lisa was showing all the symptoms of retardation, especially with her swollen and heavy fingers. Since 1961, a London photographer had supported the retardation thesis by applying on Gioconda his method of visual rotation which permits the transformation of a full face photo into a profile or three-quarters photo. The result was that Gioconda appeared to be affected with Down Syndrome.

Another authority in science and renowned member of the Medical Academy of Japan, dealt with the famous little bump on the inner corner of Gioconda's left eye. He claimed that this bump was caused by high cholesterol. Gioconda was in danger of a heart attack; in addition, she likely was suffering from angina and from asthma, which explains her grimace. According to an Australian professor, the famous enigmatic smile of Gioconda is caused by a pressure of the neurons. While examining the mouth of a female patient, he solved the mystery: Gioconda's smile is due to a small accident that occurred to a muscle of the upper lip during a not so very respectable 'oral exercise'.

The fact that Gioconda was not a virgin is confirmed by a British doctor. After thirty years of research, he concluded in 1958, at a Yale University conference that 'the expression of the smile reveals the peaceful satisfaction of pregnancy'. This theory was attacked by Dr. A. Johnson, who claimed that 'the sly smile signifies that Mona Lisa has just been informed that she is not pregnant'. Specialists on Leonardo da Vinci claim that the period during which he painted his masterpiece (between 1503 and 1507), he was fascinated by the particularities of pregnancy and he was interested in the mysteries of anatomy. This reinforces the view by Dr. L. Goldman and colleagues supported in 1969 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology, that all of Gioconda's physical problems originated with her hair. Mona Lisa was suffering from alopecia (part or total loss of hair). They noticed the alarming detail that Gioconda has almost no eyebrows! Alopecia thus is an indication of a generalized fatigue, and Mona Lisa, tired of her hair falling out, smiles in a restrained, contained fashion. In turn, her eyes inspired a Parisian doctor who had no doubt that Gioconda had strabismus (that is, was cross-eyed). In 1962, he explained: 'in cross-eyed and one-eyed people the one side of the face becomes less expressive'.

This medical dissection of Gioconda transformed her into a disabled person. She was a civilizational familiar and cultural intimate who was now rendered Other. Leonardo may have been a Renaissance humanist who saw disease and decay as integral to the human condition. But this historical insight is irrelevant to the contemporary medicinal eye that divides the body into the normal and the pathological. Through the revisionist realism of medicine, she becomes pathogenic and as such a social metaphor. Gioconda is pathogenic because her facade conceals disease and decrepitude and her essential identity; she is therefore deceptive. The humanist portrayal of these disease-ridden and malformed women is equally pathogenic for it prescribes acceptance of their deficits and even aestheticizes these particularities rather than eliminating them through medical rationality. For the diagnostic penetration of the medical spectator is meant to be a prelude to prescription and cure.

One could say that this medical optic is an anticipatory form of plastic surgery that has altered Gioconda's historical identity. The convergence of historicization and medicalization of Gioconda de-aestheticized the painting, and revealed the outmodeness or pre-modernity of Leonardo's humanistic vision. And his gaze is now superseded by the globalized medical gaze of international experts who have removed the assessment of the painting from erudite art history circles and

resituated it with the popular media reading public where medical diagnostics and depiction – with its focus on the pathogenic rather than on any obscure aesthetic discourse – proved definitive, authoritative and more culturally comprehensible.

The medicalization of Gioconda signaled the consequences of ongoing and recent transformations of everyday life experience in Greece and in Western Europe (where much of the reportage on the painting originated). The medicalized gaze and its attendant diagnostic discourse have begun to leak out of specialized domains of clinical practice and have been established in the public sphere, particularly by the media, as a depictive power that tracks and identifies the slippery and elusive career of the body and personhood in an unstable, deceptive and poisoned modernity.

Fascination beneath the surface

The Gioconda dissection was a story played out in the Greek media, but it was reported all over the world and predictably engaged a transnational coterie of medical experts making their contribution to the autopsy. It was a transnational triumph of medical realism that anticipated the general diffusion of medical forensics into a grammar of social representation and for the fixation of identity in late modernity. The Gioconda dissection was medicine functioning as a more truthful representation of human identity.

In the last several years, there has been a proliferation of anatomy exhibits in Europe, also played out in the Greek media, which function as aesthetic spectacles, i.e. of medicine performing as anthropology. The work of Gunther Von Hagens (2000), professor of anatomy in Germany, is paradigmatic in this new cultural phenomenon. In his now famous and controversial exhibit, seen already by more than 5 million people around the world, Von Hagens postulates his preserved and plastic sealed cadaver sculptures as triumphs of medical realism and as a stark confrontation with the remaining taboo of modern society about death. Yet, the latter claim is rather neutralized by his tendency to display his skinless and organ-exposed bodies in a variety of dynamic action poses such as the ‘swordsman body’ or the ‘lassoer’ (as in the cowboy roping technique), ‘the chess player’, ‘the runner’; for these bear little resemblance to the putrefaction of the cadaver in the grave. If this is death, it is death reanimated as aesthetics and action; it is the appropriate afterlife of the body of the late-capitalist consumer, where even in death the dead participate in consumption activities.

But neither are Von Hagens’ statues a tribute to diagnostic realism – for instance, one statue with its muscles, sinews, organs and skeleton exposed, holds its skin casually over its shoulder as if indicating the sheer disposability and superficiality of the body surface in contract to the ultimate truth of the body’s exposed and posed interior. Von Hagens’ appeal to death is an appeal to support the final truth of the body’s interior in relation to its disposable surface. The subtitle of his exhibition catalog is ‘Fascination Beneath the Surface’. Yet, it is not simply a matter of the truthfulness and authority of the body’s interior versus its surface, but rather that each structural aspect of the body has its distinct personality and fractured truth.

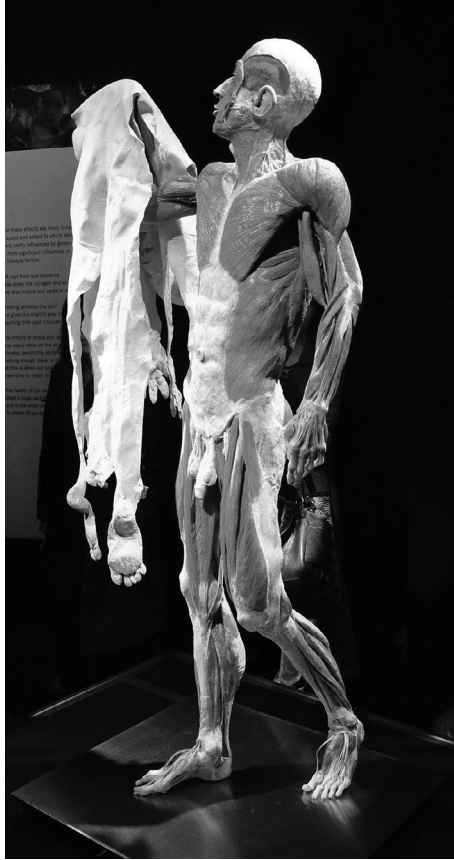


FIGURE 6.1 *Cadaver sculptures*

Source: © Nick Webb CC BY 2.0.

Thus, he has made sculptures where one body is divided into the multiple or plural bodies of layers, thus forming a cubist body – far from any conventional notions of medical realism. Each body potentially contains its alternate, ‘orthopedic bodies’, ‘surgical bodies’, ‘drawer bodies’ (where various sectors of the torso are pulled out for closer inspection by the spectator), ‘sliced specimens’ (vertical versions of ‘the drawer bodies’), the ‘nervous system body’, the ‘totally exploded body’.

Von Hagens has also assembled a series of congenital deformities, which seals the fact that he is not presenting a medical anthropology but a freak show, one that is closer to the carnival sideshow of the nineteenth century than to twentieth-century forensic and diagnostic dissection. The spectators stare at the exposed body as the inversion of their own relationship to the body surface; they identify the self with the body’s interior rather than its surface, and the exposed, exhibited body, opened and eviscerated, is the site of stripped-down truth contrasted to the lived body as

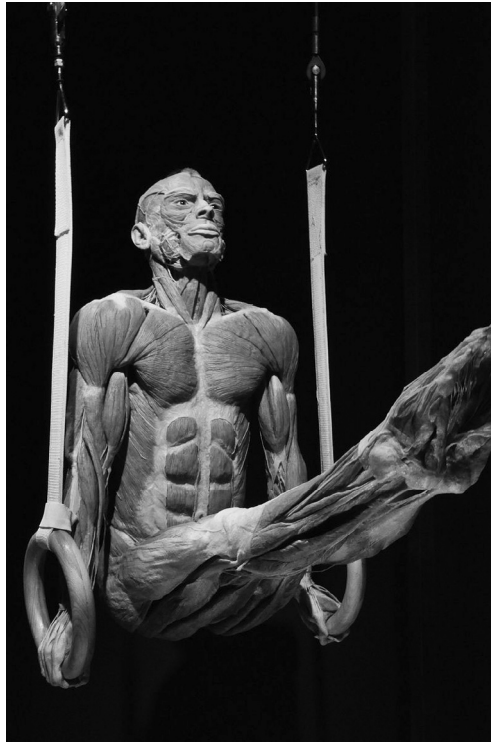


FIGURE 6.2 *Life as usual*
Source: © Nick Webb CC BY 2.0.

the site of the anxieties, invasions and permeable boundaries I described above. These plastinated bodies, however, have their own, non-medical signifying powers, something that Von Hagens seems to implicitly recognize, for the exhibit and catalogues are accompanied by technical texts that ensure the medicalization of these artifacts. Medicalization, in turn, establishes these preserved and distorted corpses as the site of anthropological truth.

Von Hagens and his many supporters link his creations to transvaluations of norms in modernity where the church and other collective authorities must give way to individual choice. The church and cultural critics have criticized this usage of the dead as exploitative and disrespectful. Thus, the perceptual transgression of these plastinated bodies enables the spectator to become an individualized consumer of his/her own embodiment, outside of religious norms. As for human dignity, it is preserved in his exhibits, he claims, by 'their impeccable aesthetic explanation', a standard he shares with many plastic surgeons.

Anatomical cannibalism emerges as a representation of the truth of the body in a world of deceptive and uncertain material surfaces and appearances. Anatomical cannibalism is the aesthetic system of globalized market economy since it offers up

the interior of the body as a commodity-object and use-item whether this occurs in the anatomical exhibit or in the practice of medical organ harvesting, or in the media's repetitive projection of invisible viral violations of the somatic boundaries.

I propose that there is a connection between this deeper penetration into the interior of the body, its socio-cultural elaboration as entertainment and spectacle, and the growing uncertainty of bodily borders, community margins and nation-state boundaries under regimes of globalized immigration, environmental pollution and the transnational contamination of food supplies meant to sustain the body.

The transnationalized body

Can we speak of the transnationalization of the body? And where can we locate it? At which social sites, at what level of discourse and symbolization? What are the effects and mutations that globalized informational, cultural and economic forces have wreaked on the body?

At first glance, globalization – with its expansion of consumption opportunities, factual archives and the promise of unending virtual realities – appears to promise a prosthetic expansion and spatial liberation of the body whose ontology was once so closely linked to identity-forming bounded spaces. The loss, however, of discrete bounded spaces seems to anticipate the loss of discrete and secure bodies with definable boundaries.

The flexible body, the technological, aesthetic and labor correlate to the flexible accumulation of a global neo-capitalist economy, is also a body in fragmentation and dispersal. For the actual transnationalization of the body seems to mix contradictory somatic fates and histories; as much as one can point to technological prosthesis of the body, there are new consumption experiences, new experiences of space/time compression associated with advanced geographical and informational mobility, and new flexibilities that are reforming the image and presentation of the body – such as the transnational diffusion of advanced cosmetic surgery and the emergence of an inequitable trade in the harvesting of medical organs. The Third World's poor sell their organs to elites in their own countries and to the more developed nations. Here bodily integrity is violated by the extreme commodification of body parts and frozen organs, which now travel around the world with the conspicuous absence of their owners. The pressures and geographical incursions of international medical markets have made parallel incursions into the identity and integrity of the individual body as a now outmoded artifact of once-local space.

Another indicator of this fragmentation of bodily integrity under the pressures of globalization was the internationalization of seemingly enigmatic viruses and diseases that ignore national borders such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis A, B and C, mad cow disease, hoof and mouth disease, ebola, etc; not to mention the association of many of these ills with particular transnationalized social categories, such as refugees and immigrant groups, ethnic and racial minorities and altered food consumption patterns. The implosion of global space in such forms as the geopolitical project of European unification, the breakup of the Yugoslavian

nation-state, or the escalation of Third- to First World migration is registered in the social nervous systems as a violation of both corporate and individual bodily integrity. Internationalization itself becomes a form of disease progression in the very transition of the nation-state from a collective or corporate body to a fragmented trans-national entity.

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Many of these contradictions can be observed at the level of an anthropology of everyday life in the contemporary Greek public sphere. These markers of globalization have appeared in diverse, discontinuous and unexpected social sites. The modern globalized Greek urbanscape, before the so-called ‘Greek crisis’, was gradually characterized by a schizoid oscillation between the inflation of consumptive acts versus the utopian desire of the disappearing consumer. Greeks were inundated with fatter and fatter newspapers – inflated media artifacts offering more and more information for readers to consume in competition with the increase in fashion magazines and private television channels and programs. Coincidentally, many of these papers display numerous ads for slimming. Establishments once known as ‘institutes of beauty’ have been renamed ‘weight loss centers’ and more recently ‘centers of aesthetic medicine’. These human factories, prominent in the urban scape, could be more properly called *adhinatistiria* (*adhinatizo* meaning ‘I lose weight’) for they remind me of *apoprasinistirio* (*apoprasinizo* meaning I ‘de-green’), the fruit and vegetable factory that I encountered once by accident on my way to the Peloponnese, about a decade ago (both the term and the process is still unknown to most Greeks), where food arrives green (*prasino*) and comes out next morning red and ripe through accelerative chemical procedures. In media, photos advertising city weight loss centers often show the whole body of a female or male entering huge specialized machines from which it emerges transformed – slimmed, as an icon of the consumer consumed.

As transnationalized information transfers grew huge, the bodies of information consumers were instructed to shrink. Greeks were more and more exposed to fatter newspapers, but these prominently featured new anxieties over food consumption, particularly the infected foods related to mad cow disease and genetic manipulation. Toxic and altered transnational food substances functioned as powerful and self-evident allegories of the dangers and risks that accompany permeable national borders. Yet, this everyday terror of transnational food consumption is in stark contrast to the apparent lack of anxiety concerning the over-consumption of globalized information which has permeated Greek public life. Collective cultural bloating on toxic information was effectively displaced onto anxieties over the consumption of diseased and genetically altered substances from foreign parts.

Poisoned and foreign foods are received in the public sphere as both food and information. Globalized information as consumable substance, newsflashes depicting the condition of being global are translated and transmuted into migrating food as tangible and toxic substance. A case in point is the ownership and/or festive consumption of pigs, once an almost universal symbol of bourgeois-peasant contentment and wellbeing (pig-shaped candy was consumed in Switzerland, Germany, Austria

waiting for them, with no sign of any official, which was in stark contrast to the impressive and demonstrative departure ceremonies orchestrated by the government that had previously accompanied the peacekeeping troops. The returning volunteers were under a clear order from the military chain of command to make no public statements on the 'Balkan syndrome', as the illness associated with the discarded and unexploded bombs and their radioactive by-product is known. The soldiers and military officials responded to media queries with the same uniform and terse answer: there the situation is okay and the Greek government has taken all necessary safety measures. They then proceeded to their medical examinations as rapidly as possible. They had embarked for Kosovo with an ahistoric optimism and an unquestioned belief in technological and organizational ability of the military to effect the easy removal of all geopolitical pathology. But soon the media reported the first soldier who was a victim of cancer, triggering restlessness among volunteers and their families.

Not long after, the bad news began to pour in, spreading like cancerous cells throughout the social nervous system: more soldiers became ill with Balkan syndrome. The state and its ministry of defense were put on the spot in 2001 as Greek students and soldiers submitted massive requests to return home. But there was no refuge at home. It was just disclosed that NATO weapons had previously been buried in Greek waters, and had contaminated seafood, while fruit and vegetables from Serbia, which had been imported since the beginning of the bombing, likewise were contaminated. It was as if the polluted regional ecology, the depths of the oceans and the guts of the earth, was firing back the residue of discarded NATO weapons, and contaminated fish, fruit, and vegetables infiltrated the bodies of those at and outside the battlefields. In the meantime, news broke about the first confirmed Greek victim of mad cow disease.

Myth or reality, globalization entered Greek consciousness as panic and catastrophe. Such panic waves have been witnessed before: after the radioactive rain of Chernobyl and with the sudden influx of immigrants and refugees from the Balkans and Eastern Europe, immigrants who were reported as carriers of new diseases such as AIDS. These mediatic scares had a common motif: the degree to which social surfaces, taken for granted eco-systems like the ocean and the earth, and everyday items like the food we eat, all are contaminated both by poisonous substances and by foreignness. The dynamics of contamination entails the delocalization of regional ecology through pollution and the contamination of consumable substances, causing us to question our own hold and ownership on local space – including that of our own bodies, which are now threatened by that which comes invisibly from the space of the Other, such as radiation, mad cow virus, AIDS. Medical diagnostics have been elevated by these panics into a wider social grammar and discourse that has apparently a profound grasp on the truth of deceptive socio-historical surfaces, experiences and identities. And there is a wide-ranging and receptive media market for these medical panics.

One can associate the collective panic, for instance over mad cow disease, with the micro-panics of being overweight and possessing a defective appearance; the

latter being addressed in the commercial breaks between news reports on the former by the self-improvement advertising messages that have taken hold of Greek public culture. Aesthetic surgery has been presented in the media in the most natural, nonchalant way despite the many risks associated with some of these procedures. At one time the birth mark on a Greek woman's cheek was a natural symbol of beauty, a spot of desire named 'olive', painted, poeticized and sung about. Today the same beauty mark – once cosmetically simulated if it did not come naturally – has become a sign for caution and an evil spot for surgical removal; it is or can be cancerous. In Greece the new century was advertised as the epoch of aesthetic surgery; an abundance of plastic surgery and laser clinics appeared.

The promotion of a perception of the body as plastic and changeable and its parts as medically exchangeable through organ transplantation preceded and has perhaps facilitated this recent popularity of aesthetic surgery in Greek public culture. In a TV show on lifestyle, a popular singer revealed how she fell in love with her recent husband, a popular plastic surgeon: she went for one intervention on her nose, then he proposed another 'correction' of her lips, and then another, etc, so the doctor and his patient developed a relationship; the mediatic moral being that intimacy is no longer predicated on a fixed identity but on a mutable and flexible body.

The new cultural currency of aesthetic surgery echoes the recent proliferation of dozens of fashion magazines, most of them Greek editions of foreign counterparts, and the opening of foreign cosmetic businesses, including beauty parlors, which like TV, promote certain norms of the body and beauty. These are forms of globalized aesthetic colonization and commodification of Greek women, 80 percent of whom have become artificially blond and red-haired. Through hair coloring, dieting and aesthetic surgery, Greek women emigrate from the national imagery of Greekness and womanhood. Cosmetic alteration is a backgrounding of ethnicity and an Europeanization of appearance. These changes implicitly render the body with visible but correctable 'defects', such as ethnic markers as the inbred body of the familial structure of the once enclosed nation-state in contrast to the body emancipated from locale by the diffusion of new globalized medical technologies that convert Greek women into European and American icons.

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This constructed homogeneity of bodies coincides with the general tendency of routinization of everyday life (as exemplified also by the new term *kathimerinotita* – see Chapter 13). Routinization is predictability. The media use medical semiotics to create truth. But somatic phenomena, signs emitted from the afflicted body, stand for something else in medicine, that is, they are read by doctors in order to identify disease. In popular, everyday culture, instead, they have come to be read as signs of the self-evident, they are the final point of reference, they become automatic. Popular TV programs on aesthetic surgery, for instance, like *Extreme Makeover*, are an example of this process of a society turning to the self-evident body.

Uncertain bodies

I have been describing some social effects of what Aggar (1989) termed 'fast capitalism' – which promotes an encompassing dissolution and fragmentation of residual meaning in social life. 'Fast capitalism is an austere cultural phenomenon that degrades moral claims, subverts social consensus, and challenges various forms of political authority ... resulting in a ... flattening and devaluation of social meaning' (Holmes 2000, 9–11).

Fast capitalism, in as much as it promises new embodied flexibilities, has also inscribed new forms of uncertainty and insecurity in the experience of embodiment expressed as fears of transnational disease and body defects and the utopian hopes of aesthetic surgery.

Foucault's famous discussion of panoptical objectification and surveillance of the body by various institutional regimes foregrounded the modernizing role of medicalization in the social production of the body. But Foucault theorized this process in conjunction with the enclosed space of the total institution. Under the emerging transnational order, however, enclosed space becomes a structural uncertainty, and panoptical penetration of the body now occurs in a post-institutional and open-ended space. Thus, today, the fixation of bodily identity makes use of medically derived optics and deploys medical perspectives in decidedly nonmedical contexts, terrain and situations, to the degree that one can now talk about the medicalization of culture and the culturalization of medicine.

Medicine is the discourse par excellence of fast capitalism because it lies beyond social debate despite its reflexive relation to market forces, and because its diagnostic powers provide the medical scopic regimes with a high degree of identity-endowing power in a world of rapidly traversed socio-cultural surfaces. I must point out that *I am not referring here to a discrete institution such as the medical establishment, but rather to a cultural process, to a symbolic membrane that registers transnationalized experience in disease and embodiment and violates boundaries, both national and personal.*

It has been suggested that a regional response of postcolonial and other social and economic peripheries to the compression processes of globalization has been a crisis of social intimacy and of the surety of collective identities among the social categories of a nation-state; that is, between ethnic groups, between majorities and minorities, and even within previously homogenized groups (Appadurai 1998, Malkki 1997, Feldman 1991). Thus ethnic differences between social intimates emerge as antagonisms when transnational processes weaken nation-state identities. Inter-ethnic violence then becomes the vehicle for re-establishing identity by fixing difference in the violent inscription of the body. The emergence of a new uncertainty in reference to coherent identities within the nation-state has been credited with the rise of distrust, conflict and violence between so-called social intimates, that is, coexisting racial and ethnic groups.

Real bodies in history betray the very cosmologies they are meant to encode. So the ethnic body both of the victim and the killer is itself potentially

deceptive. Far from providing the map for a secure cosmology, a compass from which mixture of indeterminacy and danger can be discovered the ethnic body turns out to be itself unstable and deceptive ... that might best explain macabre patterns of violence directed against the body of the ethnic other ... The specific preoccupation with particular body parts is an effort to stabilize the body of the ethnic other, to eliminate flux ... and evict the possibility of further somatic change or slippage ... that the killing torture and rape associated with ethnocidal violence is not simply a matter of eliminating the ethnic other, it involves the use of the body to establish the parameters of the otherness ... in the intimacy and intricacy of preoccupation with body parts and wholes, with penetration and with consumption these forms of violence are methods of assuring that some bodies are – without doubt – real persons.

(Appadurai 1998, 232, 240)

The globalization phenomenon of the permeable border and the enhanced mobility and geographical flexibility of goods and information has been transferred from geographical categories and terrains to the human body and to visible, individualized, embodied personas. Residence and place used to determine identity and authorize identity claims; this has been subverted by the relativization of local place by transnational space and its transfers of persons, goods, information, social groups and even disease across geographic, political and somatic borders. The vulnerability of geopolitical space to fast capitalism produces a flattening and devaluation of local identity (Bauman 1997). For fast capitalism is a system of production and exchange that degrades moral claims and subverts social consensus to the degree that ideologies of market exchange are (or are brokered as) overriding ethical imperatives, superseding other moral frameworks or political programs.

We have seen this in cases where market medicine assumes an ethical function through an aesthetic project. Fast capitalism slips into a society, by-passing public sphere debates. Market medicine also exhibits this facility due to the authority of diagnostic realism and its grip on the authoritative disclosure of the invisible. This flattening of social identity, its subversion by the degradation of the local, is theorized by Appadurai as inflecting the modes of violent ethnic conflict. Inter-communal violence between former social intimates takes on a forensic investigative vocation and intentionality where violence is deployed to designate, stabilize, objectify and uncover identity by opening and eviscerating the bodies of former social intimates (Appadurai 1988a, Malkki 1997, Feldman 1991). And yet, as discussed here, the opening and evisceration of bodies does not only belong to the domain of political crisis, but inhabits the mundane terrain of everyday social life and the search for secure identity through a fusion of aesthetics and medical diagnostics.

Grotesque and mutilating ethnic violence may very well be an extreme case of the emerging need to fix the locus of embodiment rendered malleable, mutable and unstable by globalized socio-economic and informational forces. But there are less horrific and dramatic, yet equally profound, expressions of this, which are also

reflexes of fast capitalism and of the flattening of social life into disposable surfaces of consumption. The use of the word *forensic* by Appadurai to characterize inter-communal atrocity points to a decided medical inflection, to the fixation of somatic identity under a new globalized order. In short, medicine is supposed to heal, but the metaphysics of catharsis, of purification – ethnic and racial – exploits medical metaphors to commit harm. If medicalized optics and rationalities perversely inform the commission of atrocities of ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia, where does it appear and how does it function in so-called non-violent societies, societies that are developing less or more aggressive but equally disturbing forensic strategies for ascertaining identity?

Older dramas

It is not insignificant that in Greece the main counter-discourse to popularized medical rationality has been theology, with its own notion of human limits, its notion of wholeness and integrity. The theological perspective stands for embodiment as a moral-symbolic experience, while medicine is associated with technological opportunism, profit-making, eroticizing aesthetic surgery, transnational novelties and threats. Medical rationality implicitly positions the theological as defender of the symbolic body to the very degree that it is medical realism that claims for itself the ultimate de-symbolizing secularized truth of the body. And yet medicine in the Gioconda debate and the anatomy exhibition is used to colonize the aesthetic in order to occupy an allegorical dimension in the true spirit of fast capitalism where there are no insides/outside and consequently, no limens or boundaries requiring experiences and rituals of transition. Indicative of this is the convergence of contradictions over the experience of the limen, the border, the margin. Thus, as I pointed out, it is curious that the re-occurring fears over mad cow disease or other epidemic viruses can be contrasted to the apparent lack of anxiety for the over-consumption of globalized information in the media. Facts remain neutral and food becomes radically normative in the transnational continuum.

This distrust of the surface – the bodily surface as deficit – is what connects medical optic to the fetishization of plastic surgery in Greece, the atrocities of Balkan interethnic violence, the Gioconda dissection and Von Hagens' plastinated cadavers. However, these eviscerated bodies are themselves expressions of a post-Holocaust embodiment. The Holocaust was a vast industrial-military and medical experiment in the forensics of discovering true identity hidden beneath social appearance in the name of the nation-state. It was an attempt to acquire racial and ethnic truth beneath the diversity of the bodies in order to discover the typified Jews, the Gypsies, the homosexuals, and to eliminate these social defectives and toxins – just as Mona Lisa was a defective who was aesthetically eliminated.

The authority of the medical rationale of national purification was deployed by the Nazis to elevate disability and difference into a political discourse irrespective of whether that disability/difference was racial, ethnic, or physical and mental impairment. It was the other side of the medicalization of German racial identity

that required purification, social hygiene, natal programming and other forms of biological engineering and cleansing. And it was no coincidence that the body, whose borders were to be protected, was the proper body of the nation-state whereas the bodies that were opened and eviscerated, the Jew, the Gypsy, the communist, and the homosexual were perceived as cosmopolitan and internationalist bodies, alien to the discrete and bounded nation-state. The new world-order is replaying older dramas and roles, occasionally as postmodern farce and in miniature, and in this light the forensic violence of the Balkans, Rwanda, and other locales is not as othered and alien to so-called stable democracies as they might imagine and declaim.

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Postscript: *Eros* and *thanatos* re-covered

Around the time I was writing the above ruminations, I received an invitation to participate as a key note speaker at a Greek-Swedish academic conference on Eros and Thanatos held in Athens. The theme inspired me and brought (self-)reflexions.

The cover of the printed program and fliers of the conference featured a picture, probably from a classic painting, of a young blond female embraced by a naked, brown-haired male baby with bird wings, *Eros*. On the next page were listed the contents of the event, the paper presentations. They all focused on the literality of sexual behavior; sexuality was taken as an assumed concept to be either about gender roles and their violation or about sex and health, or sex added to existing subjects like transnationalism and globalization.



FIGURE 6.4

Oh dear, I thought, Gioconda's story all over again! An aesthetic surface and underneath lies the site of truth. The cover presents an aesthetic, sensual version of *Eros* and the content behind the cover, the various papers, are the scientific decomposition of *eros* into its various rationalized and objectified components. The sequence from cover to content is but an evolutionary sequence from myth to science, from popular concepts to academic analysis. The cover as surface appearance is about allure, and *is not* the sight of truth; just like sex. The scientific papers, instead, circumscribe the site of truth beyond and below the allure of the sensual. A Platonic cover for the Greeks and a puritanical abnegation for the Swedes? I wondered. Put differently, is it a usual attempt by the Greeks to see in our cultural legacy-mythology the anticipation of rationality and a typical Swedish puritanism? No doubt Foucault would have trouble with both.

We need to change the frame of reference of the discussion, I thought to myself. We must challenge this literality of sexuality by reaffirming what we all know but none of these theoreticians here does: we first have to have an historically contextualized anthropology of the body before we talk of the practices of that body, to identify the forces that are shaping the body, or as Foucault would say, the body is a volume in perpetual disintegration. What is the status of the body in the era of globalization? And this question methodologically precedes the positivist assumption of sexuality, and presumes that bodies are no longer the same. The concept of the flexible body, as discussed earlier, is a concept that precedes sexuality and determines it. What sexuality are we to talk about when nothing is stable and all sites are floating free? The question then remains, how do we conceptualize sexuality and within which contexts?

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As I was pondering these issues, a public debate re-emerged in the media concerning the name of *Eros* and the possible hellenization of the imported celebration of St. Valentine's Day. At issue was the name. The alternative names proposed were drawn from two pools: ancient Greece and Christian church.

If we only listened to the Grandma of *The Senses Still* I thought, we could have a third steam *anamnesis* of *eros*. Her sensory reading of the body speaks of *Eros* as it has been conceptualized and celebrated in Greek everyday culture, rural, urban, past or present, and still sung in popular music. For that Grandma, whatever her name, as much as she has been a real figure in Greece, is also a metaphor for the ethnographer-historian or artist, with us being the child waiting to have memory awakened via the senses:

he tongue, rotating, moistens the bread with saliva till it becomes a paste, 'clay' ... She takes the bread from her mouth and places it in its ... mouth ... The substance transferred from the mouth of the grandma to the mouth of the child is her saliva, her taste or flavor, that becomes its own taste. It is food baked within her, with parts of her, her substance which is then transferred... By naming the child's gaze 'my eyes', the grandma exchanges body parts and establishes vision as a social and sensory reciprocity. She calls the child 'my

heart' for the emotions in this awakening are as sensual as the senses are emotive. This act of sharing and naming parts and senses constructs one heart for two bodies, as one food was baked with saliva for two mouths, as one soul is raised for two persons, as one pair of eyes is imprinted on two bodies. The grandma gives her parts to see them inscribed on the child over time. This is what she receives back from the child: the memory of herself in parts.

... Awakening these points as sensate is opening the body to semiosis ... Semiosis here is inseparable from interpersonal exchange. The child is not only exposed to substance but to shared substance ... The transcription of self onto substance and then into the child's body is inseparable from the transmission of emotions as a fuel of this exchange, which is why this is understood as 'one heart for two bodies ...'

(The Senses Still, Seremetakis 1996, 30)

Eros thus in Grandma Valentina's model, is the fluidity and exchange of bodies. (We encountered also the sensory crossing of bodies earlier in the case of the little street graves.) *Eros* is tied to passion, a strong, intense, overwhelming feeling – something that extends beyond the sexual, the biological act. It engages the imaginary. Passion is longing desire and longing means deferred satisfaction. It is an endless reading and exchanging of visible and invisible signs, multivalent symbols that defer, prolong and cultivate dreams. This type of reading of the body is based on reciprocity, shared substance,² and the senses as media for each other. This witnessing – for representing the Other means witnessing – is inseparable from emotions and pain. Witnessing, usually taken as verbal discourse alone, in fact deals with the body. And there are different readings of the body.

Strong emotions are understood and felt as pain; *pothos* is an aching desire. Pain is external (physical) and internal (emotive). Internal pain is contained, withheld, carried on, held within (as a baby in pregnancy). Passion, thus, is far from an instantaneous thing; something you acquire naturally or triggered on the spot. Rather, it is a pool of feelings, created and cultivated over long periods and cycles of exchanges – exchanges of visible and invisible signs (pumping out of body parts), readings and interpretations. It is an archeology of feeling. Externalized pain as an involuntary gesture of the body was skillfully shown in the popular Greek film *Politiki Kouzina* (2003)³: The grandson, grown up now, feels an unexpected pain in his shoulder. 'Just where your grandfather had it', says his companion. 'But grandpa had an old wound there, and I don't', he pondered, to receive the answer that wounds are uncontrollable things, they are living organisms.

Passion thus is both mute and externalized – both codes coexist. It requires a space of silence only to burst out. This silent or mute spot is but an extension of externalized 'voice'.

The mother/son silent (pre-speech) communication, for instance, in Christy Brown's passionate life – the famous Irish painter and writer portrayed in the film *My Left Foot* (1989) – was not due to a mother/son biological bond based on instinct, but to a common reading. Christy suffered from a neurological disorder

that left him almost entirely spastic in his limbs, able only to write and paint with the toes of his left foot. Growing up he fell in love and his mother, worrying about him being hurt, pointed to her husband: 'his voice has too much hope in it'. The father responded 'He is much better now for we can understand him' [Christy had gained some speech ability]. But to her, it was the voice that spoke, not what he said. The speechless voices were exchanging (emotive messages). Pain was the language of the crossing bodies.

A flashback to the scene before my own elderly mother died, leaves me still wondering. She had been sinking slowly into her senile dementia and, in my unsuccessful effort to communicate one day, tears came to my eyes. Her look suddenly cleared up and staring straight to my eyes 'I don't want to lose you', she said. Was it my voice or hers?

Anger also is tied to passion as pain. This often turns passion to a creative force, therefore potentially subversive. Yet, passion is often understood as passive and/or romantic. Passion is *eros* that emerges in the absence of the bodies (by death or mutilation). There are different levels of absence, such as the literal death as in Inner Mani, loss of a loved one through exile (*xenitia*) as in the films *Cinema Paradiso* (1988) and *Politiki Kouzina* (2003), mutilation as in Christy Brown, or removal and repression of the body in a political, economic system. There the patch substitutes for the absent body or parts of the body that are absent. This is done with and in passion. That is perhaps why passion is often mistaken as romanticism. For passion as *eros* is materialized in the absence of the body or emotions are materialized in the doubling of the body (one proceeds and acts as if the body is there). This can appear as romanticism to those outside. (But are the little street graves really romantic?) Divination, which is tied to passion, is a case in point (discussed in Part IV): When the dream sign or coffee cup sign is mediated, inverted through sensory experience and emotional value or affect, this too is a process of passionate substitution. Since the divination sign is in the present, this fragment substitutes for what will happen to bodies (currently absent bodies) in the future. Future is absence. It is a mute space for projection, where the patch will be inserted. Here divination is also political vision.

Eros, then, a complex sensorial concept and experience, historically differentiated from love and sex, is far from romantic. The binary construction romantic/logical aims at justifying the rationalization and medicalization of the body and the senses. The elevation of Western medicine as a universal system determining concepts of death and disease is reducing death to a single paradigm as much as Christianity had done in premodern Europe.

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Turning from cultural to historical difference, a different reading of the body we encountered in da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and in Von Hagens' anatomical exhibition. *Mona Lisa*, a representation, was subjected to an expert male discourse; a medicalized discourse of an absent woman. The representation of an absent other and a contestation of representation is the point of intersection between high art and traditional lamentation for example. Lamentation is a biography, a moral characterization of the

dead other, and it has been contested by modernizing elites, men, priests, scientists, realists. *Mona Lisa's* scientific reading is a presentist discourse; the medical reading collapses history. Exemplary of the latter was Von Hagens' famous anatomical exhibition, 'The Bodies' featuring as scientific art – here death was domesticated by visual penetration, the medical gaze, and walled-in through plastination.

These examples, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, speak as much about death as about desire and pleasure. *Mona Lisa* is a figure of *eros*, emblem of mysterious femininity, the mysterious enigmatic other. Von Hagens' exhibition and inter-ethnic violence are also about *thanatos* and desire: the exhibited corpses with their interiors exposed become desired and eroticized by Von Hagens. (Death eroticized is the German disease.) The discussion of ethnic violence is about failed erotics of social life that degenerated into *thanatos*. Violence is failed *eros* and failed sexuality; reproduction shifts from infants to corpses.

In this context, Grandma's model, in which *eros* is the fluidity and exchange of bodies, is under suspicion. This suspicion is first expressed in the contaminated *eros* (for food is *eros*). Transnationalism, which links economic exchange with commensal and thus erotic exchange, has become a source of disease and death. The question therefore that precedes any positivist assumptions is what is the status of *eros* in the era of globalization – which is to ask what is the status of the body. This question presumes that the body is no longer the same, that historical mutation has been under way. Thus, the transfer of desire from *Mona Lisa* to medically fixed bodies leads to the discussion of the flexible body – the contrary desire for flexible bodies as sites of consumption and certain or fixed bodies as the site of truth. And these to the erotic project cannot be reconciled, or if they are, this takes the form of ethnic violence where consumption of bodies produces truth. Bosnia with its sexual vivisection of bodies, its attempt to manipulate ethnic identity through rape, is an example. There is a distrust of the body's surface and a need to get below the skin. This new configuration of the body is not limited to the grotesque war site alone but can be found at everyday life practices.

Notes

- 1 A short version of this essay was published under the title 'Toxic Beauties: Medicine, Information, and Body Consumption in Transnational Europe' in *Social Text*, vol. 19, no. 3, 115–130. Copyright 2001, Duke University Press. Republished by permission of the rightsholder.
- 2 To paraphrase here Christos Yanaras in one of his interviews: Can the 'liberated children' of today feel *eros* if they have not learned sharing? <https://www.tilestwra.com/ch-giannaras-an-ypirche-politikos-me-orama-tha-evaze-sto-dimotiko-archaia-kai-ellinikoys-choroys/>, accessed July 1, 2018.
- 3 *Politiki Kouzina* means literally 'Cuisine of the Polis' (referring to Constantinople). The English title appears as *A Touch of Spice* after the Turkish translation of the film (*Bir Tutam Baharat*). Written and directed by Tassos Boulmetis, it was released in 2003, and was one of the most popular films of the decade in Greece.



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PART III

Senses revisited



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7

TOUCH AND TASTE

Touch /tactility – a backstage

Tactility, in the sense of haptics, refers to the sense of touch/affect.

As both material and affective, touch encodes a multiplicity of meanings, literal and metaphorical. The vernacular understanding of touch has to do with the sensing of contact on the skin and/or what one feels with hands, limbs or other parts of the body. The scientific predicate *haptics* extends beyond cutaneous senses to muscle, joint, and tendon sensing to include what is now termed kinesthetics (sense of limb motion), proprioception (sense of limb position relative to the body and forces of gravity) and the vestibular system (sense of balance), leaving tactility to mean only skin sensing.

Tactility in English is thus a simplification of a complex Greek concept that links the sensuous, the emotional, and the aesthetic.

The word haptics derives from the Greek *aptesthae* (noun: *aphe*), referring to the act of touching (by hand or feeling) as well as the act of lighting up (as in the Olympic flame) and setting on fire. In passive voice, it means 'I am involved with, implicated in.' For Aristotle, all sensory materiality and affect, fell under the rubric of haptics. Different prefixes add different meanings to the Greek root, such as *pros-apto*, meaning I attribute, *anapto*, I light up, *hirapto*, I greet by touching hands, and *epaphe* (noun), meaning contact. Touch, though, in colloquial Greek, is described by various terms that differentiate touch in terms of its intensity and also signify the 'sensitivity' of the receiving object or subject: for example, *psil-aphezo* means I search (with fingers) lightly; *agizo* means I touch very lightly (with a body part), or I am moved deeply by someone or something; *piano*, that is, I lean on, I catch, I capture (if one gets suntanned, the sun 'has caught' or 'baked' him, *ton epiase*, *ton epsise*). Touch transforms all abstractions/intangibilities (e.g., language and thought) to tangibility; thus an idea is described as *apte* or *hiro-piaste* (*hira* is hand and *piaste* means



FIGURE 7.1 *By touch.*

Source: Photograph by Vassilis Constantineas

caught by) when it becomes ‘clear, actualized, real’. The scientific term haptic has now been popularized via haptic technology such as touch-screen mobile phones named ‘mobiles of aphe’ (*kinita aphe*).

The difficulty in treating these complex sensations as distinct perceptions and to delimit sensuous dispositions within a self-enclosed, individuated body space is revealed in the lack of consensus in terminology in Western medicine, psychology, and the humanities. Existing terminology reveals a split between social and biological perspectives on perception,¹ and the history of touch remains largely unexplored.

Philosophical interest in the workings of the senses began as early as Plato and even earlier, continued all the way to Baudrillard, Debord, Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin and Foucault, to mention just a few luminaries. Similarly, the concept of affect, encompassing passion, emotions, moods and feelings, has occupied the history of philosophy since the Hellenistic philosophers, Descartes, Spinoza, Hume and Kant, and continued through Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, and many others. On the part of anthropology proper, it was after the decisive critique of scientistically oriented ethnography by Clifford and Marcus in 1986, and in close dialogue with the above philosophical traditions, that the interest in the workings of the senses and emotions intensified and continues to this day.

Thus, I contend that recent claims of new ‘turns’ in Cultural Studies since the 1990s, such as ‘the affective turn’, preceded by the turn to the senses in the 1990s, can only be understood as a re-turn to philosophical and ethnographic texts and authors to (re)discover and (re)interpret, from the developing perspectives of phenomenology, psychoanalysis and critical theory, their notions of corporeality, emotions and the senses. And further, what ultimately matters is the translation of this academic knowledge and ethnographic method into public knowledge in order to bridge commodified knowledge and everyday experience. For the dialogical interface between theory and practice is part of the dialogic nature of ethnography and performance.

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Although philosophical interest in the workings of the senses started as early as Plato, it is Aristotle’s ideas on the senses and sense perception that have shaped and continue to influence the conceptualization of the senses in general and touch in particular in the Western world. For Aristotle, touch is ‘the primary form of sense’ for three reasons: it belongs similarly to all animals, it works by direct contact, and it provides nourishment. In this sense, taste is a form of touch. Human beings are of higher intelligence than other animals because of their greater sense of tactile discrimination. One’s ability to discriminate between soft and hard, cold and warm determines his/her intelligence; intelligence thus is determined by physiology.

Yet, in Aristotelian thought, which seems often contradictory, there is a hierarchical order of the senses: ‘sight is superior to touch in purity and hearing and smell to taste’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1175b–1176a). Echoing Plato’s distinction between senses-emotions and reason, Aristotle links touch to affect and sight to knowledge; by extension touch is relegated to practical and vision to theoretical sciences – the former pertains to the workings of the hands, the latter to those of the head. The skin is both the organ and medium of touch. Tangibility then passes through the skin to get to the heart (the warm and emotional part) just as hearing and vision end up in the head (the brain being the cool, rational part).

These Aristotelian ideas followed different trajectories within and between the human sciences and the humanities. Throughout the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, touch in both the humanities and sciences remained secondary, used mainly for a better understanding of vision. As Foucault has eloquently stated:

Natural History is but the nomination of the visible ... The sense of touch is very narrowly limited to the designation of a few fairly evident distinctions (such as between smooth and rough); which leaves sight with an almost exclusive privilege of being the sense by which we perceive and establish proof and, in consequence, the means to an analysis *partes extra partes* acceptable to everyone ...

(1970, 132–133)

An interesting exception in the eighteenth century was the French philosopher Denis Diderot, whose encounter with a blind person directed his attention to tactile sensibility. In his *Letter on the Blind* (1749), Diderot asserted that the blind

person's memory and imagination is formed by a series of tactile experiences rather than by visual images. Yet, the idea of sensory substitution was first applied in an effort to help the blind to read (Louis Braille's haptic reading system). Diderot's thesis could be seen as representing the first critique of ocularcentrism, to be followed by Merleau-Ponty in the twentieth century and carried on by a number of anthropologists (see, for instance, the works of Paul Stoller, Michael Taussig, Allen Feldman, David Howes, and C. Nadia Seremetakis).

Up to the early nineteenth century, touch remained secondary but it was treated as a singular, unified experience. The nineteenth-century German physician Ernst Heinrich Weber located touch in anatomy (Killen 2003; Parisi 2011), thus contributing to the separation of touch from vision. Although the advent of anatomy in the Western world meant the challenging of metaphysical conceptions of the body and space, previously conceptualized in terms of left and right asymmetries, it also led to a new spatialization and categorization of the body and its senses; it opened up the way for the compartmentalization of touch, its division into discrete component parts of the biological system. Affectivity and pain were treated as purely biological-physiological phenomena, or remained absent, in the scientific literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The intimate relation between touch and electricity that developed in the late nineteenth century, due to the interest in temperature discrimination and the belief that light has an impact on the human body, is exemplified in the (electro)shock – a routine cutaneous shock occurring at the time in an enclosed space, the scientific laboratory. This development opened the ground for the future use of electricity through touch in medicine, but it also led to the instrumentalization of the tactile via the anaestheticization of the affective.

Later, Charles Baudelaire, Georg Simmel, and Walter Benjamin in their critical accounts of modernity introduced and developed the idea of perceptual shock in the twentieth century – the threat of overstimulation in the modern city – and thus contributed to the detachment of the history of the haptic from physiology. Yet, the detachment of touch from physiology did not probe attention to tactile experience. In Baudrillard's, Debord's, and Foucault's works, most references to touch were aimed at critiquing visuality (see also Jean Luc Nancy's [1998] critique of phenomenology). In media studies there have been very few, if any, accounts on tactility from experience with television, film, radio, or print to date – despite the fact that most media theories recognize the potential of new media technologies to destabilize presumptions of ocularcentrism. Similarly, in the arts the tactile was eventually subsumed under the visual, and the affective reduced to the intellectual, while in anthropology touch, due to its intense corporeality, remained at the intersection of physical and cultural anthropology (Gilman 1993; Montagu 1971).

Marshall McLuhan (1994) attempted to re-embody touch by differentiating between the film and television image and rendering the latter a tactile medium, one promoting synesthesia rather than a mechanical, linear vision. His ideas are found in some later theorists' work that attempted to enfold touch and kinesthetics into encounters with images, such as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Marks

(2002), and to treat the visual as inseparable from the tactile and the kinesthetic-proprioceptive (Fisher 1997). McLuhan's attempt, though, remains problematic because touch was treated by him, and many of his followers, as a lost sense in the West that must be recuperated within the experience of an ocularcentric modernity; a reunification implying a reversal of time.

More recently, David Parisi, acknowledging this general 'lack' in the history of the haptic in both philosophical and anthropological traditions, (re)wrote a history of touch in the context of media studies. His thesis being that touch was not left behind by modern media, as they extended the sensorium; rather, by examining the science of touch one can demonstrate 'its thorough implication in the modern regimes of perception that developed in the nineteenth century' (Parisi, 2011, 193).

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In the context of anthropology proper, after the critical work of Clifford and Marcus (1986), anthropologists, in an effort to extend ethnography beyond text, began exploring the inclusion of visual technology in the field and at the same time developed a critique of visual realism.² It was, however, Paul Stoller's (1989a) pioneering work on the senses that set the stage for a multisensorial anthropology. Stoller built on the work of the historian Alain Corbin (1986) who reintroduced smell into the historiography of everyday life and on Susan Buck-Morss' (1989) study of Walter Benjamin's 'Arcades Project'. In his study of sorcery in the Songhay of Niger, Stoller demonstrated how people can think in a medium other than the verbal or visual. He thus called into question Western metaphysics and the epistemology of rationalism and scientism which resulted in a visual reductionism. He further turned the ethnographer's attention to the independent force of the media via which ethnographic information is collected in the field. This idea affected also my own discussion of 'the involuntary circuit of the senses' (Seremetakis 1996; 2017): In Greek culture, the sense organs can exchange with each other independently of the volition of the self – an idea I also discuss and extend in this book. Thus, the interpretation of and through the senses becomes a recovery of truth as collective, material experience.

Michael Taussig (1993), who also dealt with an anthropological territory that decenters both scientific perspectives and conventional representations of the other, the territory of ritual, magic, and divination, showed that human perception is fundamentally sensuous and mimetic. Discussing the curing figurines in Cuna Indians' healing rites (in San Blas, Panama), and building on Benjamin's idea of the perceptual shock, Taussig linked sensuous perception to the power of mimesis, the capacity to copy perceived reality, and its relationship to socially constructing otherness. As Stoller (1997) commented, miming something entails contact, touch. We copy the world to comprehend it through our body. Thus copying a thing is electroshocking. But the experiencing of electroshock, of a 'second contact', is a shocking disruption 'to the neat and tidy categories of European conceptual hegemony' (Stoller 1997, 69). For Taussig, 'To become aware of the West in the eyes and handiwork of its Others ... is to abandon border logistics and enter into the "second contact" era of the borderland where "us" and "them" lose their polarity

and swim in and out of focus ...'(Taussig 1993, 247). To this discourse on the Eurocentrism of the sensory, Feldman (1996) contributed with his discussion of 'cultural anaesthesia': 'The banishment of disconcerting, discordant and anarchic sensory presences and agents that undermine the normalizing and often silent premises of everyday life' (Feldman 1996, 89).³

Earlier, in response to Clifford and Marcus's call for a 'dialogical anthropology', David Howes (1991), had stressed the missing 'sensory dimension' in the ethnographic encounter. According to Clifford and Marcus (1986), a cultural poetics would allow an ethnographic interplay of voices, of positioned utterances, away from the observing eye toward expressive speech. Yet, this shift from the ocular to the oral had to be accompanied, as Howes commented, by a further shift to the interplay of the senses. Howes's call for multisensoriality was successfully followed by Steven Feld (1982), Stephen Tyler (1987), and Michael Jackson (1986), who produced significant ethnographic works. However, they were also influenced by McLuhan's idea that cultures consist of contrasting 'ratios of the senses'. Howes (2003), drawing on Melanesian cultures, claimed that all cultures organize the senses hierarchically; thus we simply have to consider the sensory order of the culture under study. Yet, a good bit of the sensory turn in ethnography took the form of a recourse to literary poeticized prose rather than the recuperation of regional ontologies and existentials of the sensory. The new ethnography of science laboratories and biomedicine has tended to focus on objectified categories rather than sensorial dimensions.

The idea of sensory ratios has been critiqued by a number of scholars from different contexts. See for example Sarah Pink (2009), and earlier myself (Seremetakis 1996), both shifting attention back to people's practices and everyday experiences. Drawing on my ethnographic encounters, I argue that enumerated sensory capacities and the corresponding segmentation of material experience into specialized semantic domains freezes the actual fluidity of cultural crossing and mutual 'metaphorization of one sense by another' that can be encountered in Greek culture among others (Seremetakis 1996, 126). This thesis of 'the transcription and translation across the senses' certainly moves the idea of multisensoriality in a new direction.⁴ Moving away also from the Platonic-Aristotelian perspectives and adopting instead the dialogical performance of Greek tragedy, the entanglement of perception, memory, and emotions with each other and with the senses is revealed. The semantic circuit that links the sensorial to agency, memory, finitude, and therefore history in Greece is contained within the etymological strata of the senses. Consider the words for senses, emotion-feeling and aesthetics, which are respectively *aesthis*, *aesthima*, *aesthitiki*, all deriving from the verb *aesthanome* or *aesthisme* meaning I feel or sense, I understand, grasp, learn or receive news or information, and I have an accurate sense of good and evil, that is I judge correctly (Seremetakis 1991; 1996).

The senses are not static. They are constructed and reconstructed. Any sensory reorganization, according to shifting historical situations, does not only

occur through the imposition of new sensory hierarchies but also through the way a society is allowed to talk about the senses. This talk has to be understood in its widest sense of narration, which includes not only language but also the talking objects of the signifying material culture. As discussed in earlier chapters, sensory memory is encapsulated and stored in artifacts, spaces, and temporalities of both ‘making and imagining’, of sharing and exchange. This is *poesis* in Greek culture; and the primacy of touch has been revealed since Diotima’s response to Socrates:

Any action which is the cause of something to emerge from nonexistence to existence is *poesis*, thus all craft works are kinds of *poesis*, and their creators are all poets. ... Yet, they are not called, as you know, poets, but have different names ...

(Plato, *Symposium*, 976, 150)

This understanding of *poesis* is complicit with modern Greek women’s everyday practices and experiences such as embroidering, the (re)ordering of relics, and cooking. Women embroidered series and sequences that cohered into a visual, tactile story. It was their form of writing which, spread on clothes, ornamented and named people and spaces, within and beyond the household.



FIGURE 7.2 *Poesis*

Likewise, the exhumers, by hand collecting and ordering the bones, creates the 'second body' of the dead. Adornment and ornamentation, cleaning, ordering, divination and narration of the bones generate tangible emotions. The grave's contents being 'burnt' by time and humidity historicize the bones from the perceptual angle of the present, and solidify the senses of the exhumers onto the affective object (Seremetakis 1991).

A number of other scholars also stressed the relation of touch to the imaginary. For Sarah Pink (2009, 39) 'imagining is a more emplaced everyday practice carried out in relation to the multisensoriality of our actual social and material relations'. Later, Mark Paterson (2009, 782) agreed that 'the ability to touch and be touched at a distance concerns more than mingling ... indicating a larger tactile-spatial imaginary that accommodates poetic insights of memory and material proximity, further extending the repertoire of haptic knowledge as a result'.

This extension of repertoire in anthropology came along with a turn to self-reflexivity in ethnographic practice. Consider, for example, the significant works of Favret-Saada (Favret-Saada and Conteras 1981) and Okely (1994), among others. On my part (Seremetakis 1991), I offered an analytic account of prospective dreaming in Mani and reflected on my own unconscious ingestion of the other's physical and sensorial experiences; waking after a warning dream often entails tasting, smelling, and hearing the dreamed event which is to be realized in time (see Chapter 10). Thus the tactile is extended beyond the borders of the individual body and the future is made tangible (see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Taussig 1993). This discussion of divinatory practices is here expanded through an analysis of everyday practices such as coffee cup readings and evil eye exorcisms in globalizing urban settings (see Chapter 9).

The above theoretical explorations of academic knowledge and ethnographic experiences set the ground for my design and organization of a number of public multimedia participatory events – some of which are discussed in this book. They preceded and followed the idea of a sensorial-affective approach to history and culture that recognizes a tactility of eye and mind – tactility that Taussig (1991), following Benjamin, theorized about very early on. One such public educational event is the symposium 'Taste and Memory'. It was inspired particularly by Benjamin's model of tactile knowledge, as that which intervenes to overcome distance in commodity cultures, to foster dialogicity, and it was informed by my ethnographic experiences that reveal the tactile power of shared substance in everyday life, before and during the years of crisis.

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Touching taste and memory – the play

Greek everyday experience, in the past few years, has been bombarded by innumerable TV cooking programs coupled with massive advertising on Mediterranean dieting and delicious exotic recipes. Curiously enough, these instructional performances multiplied as austerity increased and its pains deepened. The bodies of information consumers that were previously instructed to shrink through dieting, are now also forced to virtually cook and eat.



FIGURE 7.3 Students' paintings and ceramics for the symposium

These cooking performances initially featured as information exchanges where women from various Greek locales exchanged recipes displaying their expertise in cooking. Traditionally, popular cookbooks were authored by women. When male chefs displaced female cooks, TV cooking was combined with in-land traveling to locate 'authentic' recipes. The cooking process was staged indoors and was performed by women themselves. These male mediatic chefs functioned as directors or cultural managers who recovered and collectivized feminine domestic culture. To retain its allure, this performance was later transferred outdoors, in open spaces closer to nature with the kitchen acquiring the aura of an open-air museum. As cooking programs multiplied to cover most of the daily TV programming, they took the form of male touristic expeditions where chefs traveled the viewer out to foreign places for consuming the cultural other by cooking and eating the exotic

ingredients of its food culture. Whether you watched one channel or switched channels, day or night, you could indulge in a continuous consumptive experience via successive virtual cooking programs.

In a globalizing cosmopolitanism, the historical Other could not be exempted from virtual consumption. Museums in Athens, catching up with this sensory modernization, began to offer food and drink in their spaces. The Acropolis Museum, for instance, was advertised on TV as 'now offering traditional food' from various parts of the country, inviting Greeks to visit the site. On my first visit to the museum, I noticed my dishes were served on place mats featuring the Parthenon. Drinking coffee and eating with a statue may no longer be a Viennese particularity, I thought to myself.

This consumptive euphoria, *La Grande Bouffé* reincarnated, was alternating with mediatic 'thrillers' of increasing starvation in the population. Mediatic panics about toxic and altered transnational food substances, which, as discussed earlier, functioned as a powerful metaphor of the dangers and risks that accompany permeable national borders, have been remediated by panics of starvation. The mediatic pursuit of 'thrillers' shifted from toxic ingredients and contaminants brought in by outsiders to the plight of hunger-stricken school kids and homeless insiders, Greek and other. This mimetic replication of the American mediatic culture of catastrophilia, posing as concern for public affairs, is what Hal Foster (1996) would call 'traumatic realism'. The sensationalization of the historical through the aesthetic of the 'thriller' would be enough to advance the attrition of Greek commensality, to open the deterritorialization and consequently the transnationalization of the literal body, including the body politic.

On the other side, the efforts and interests of local authorities to counterbalance this foreign invasion in food culture remained in the domain of economics and trade, mostly export-oriented, and aiming at protecting local and national business interests in the context of commercial internationalism. Thus, as trade networking with the outside world became more active, what and how was imported and consumed in the inside as both food and information was rather left to the unconscious. Indicative of this was the successful effort by media, businesses and medical experts during the years of the economic bubble to socialize people to 'lighter oils' than their locally produced olive oil. Olive oil, 'the life and identity' of areas such as the Peloponnese, became guilty of high cholesterol levels causing death.

The increasing crisis and consequent austerity politics has probed some reflection on this deterritorialization, as well as on its impact on the individual body and the body politic. As efforts to reclaim territorialization are often metaphorized on the level of food and food culture, olive oil has (re)appeared in everyday life as a metaphor of an emergent *topophilia* (love of place).⁵ The previously neglected practice of extracting oil from 'your own olive trees' now promises to restore touchability. Olive trees were once handled like one's children and olive groves had an identity, that of their owner and caretaker whose hand prints were inscribed on the tree's body. Touching care endowed them with affective value. Lack of care signified death, their abandonment to 'the outside'.

Everyday people, particularly older women, seemed to have held all along a different perception and reception of this sudden invasion of their daily reality by dozens of virtual cooking programs and sites that provide culinary tours and instructions on how to cook

and consume food and information with foreign ingredients and mimic recipes and aesthetics of unknown origin. I asked older ladies if they liked these instructional TV programs and if they would cook the performed recipes. All responses revealed that the mediatic shift in performance from product to process is no neutral act: 'Never! what kind of cooking is this, done anywhere and in no time?' some grumbled. The double meaning of their words pointed to the fact that these recipes have no history, they are copies with no original and their ingredients foreign and untranslatable, but more important, they cook 'in no time' on TV. Cooking for them is a journey of maturation, an experiential process that cannot be captured by television time. Nor is cooking a totally public affair. It is *poesis*, an act of tactile-affective creation that embodies self-reflexive 'secrets', which cannot be sold out; they take place inside, long before they perform outside in a meal. And each dish acquires its meaning within an antiphonic combination of shared dishes that make up one's meal in this culture that favors tidbits over single, individually consumed dishes. Eating is a shared taste.

★

Cooking and eating in Greece had been but one part of a complex set of practices and experiences linked together in a single experiential continuum by the ethic of care and tending of and for significant others, be those dead or alive people, trees, animals or foreign immigrants. In the recent immigrant crisis, the image of old ladies holding in their arms and feeding washed-ashore immigrant babies and kids of unknown origin, became viral. *To ponesa*, I felt sympathy for it, as they would say for the baby, meaning that pain (*ponos*) is the language of their crossing bodies. What was simply 'natural' to these old



FIGURE 7.4 *The Nobelists.*

Source: Photograph by Eleftherios Partsalis

ladies, the interiorization of the other, became emblematic in the Western world in its quest for feminized refuge areas of stable social relations to counterbalance the present public violence. These island ladies were proposed for a Nobel prize, the name and purpose of which they ignored. For them, cooking and feeding others is the translation of multiple affectivities to a final product that carries their mark, the mark of the one onto the others. This is their meaning of personal pleasure. And these acts are far from apolitical, for values of the inside can be expanded to public, social critique.

The invasion of their space is an appropriation of their concrete experiential values, their lifting from their local context and their abstraction into political and/or religious utopian norms, now manipulated rhetorically by state and media. At the same time, there is very little, if any room, left for them in zones of Western modernity where sensory experience is translated and stored by mediatic, scientific or medicalized terms. The replacement of these local cooks by modern male chefs aiming at the re-education and modernization of local cuisines to fit the new transnational context, transformed these women, along with local food varieties, into matter out of place. This sensory cosmetic re-education of the domestic masses often involves the handling of food with modern utensils and surgical gloves – a medicalized, one-use touch. As a 70-year-old lady, known for her good home cooking, confessed in a casual conversation: ‘I feel left out.’ These women poised at an historical cliff that they will not cross are destined for catharsis. The recuperation of their (food) culture is socially important and personally relevant.

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In academia, on the other hand, information and knowledge dissemination rested securely on a Platonic-Aristotelian split between body and mind, the sensible and the insensible, the inheritable and the uninheritable. In fact, in the world of formal education, *Paedeia*, the prevalence of this perspective, is not unrelated to the acute formalistic bias in the production and dissemination of knowledge. Taste and touch, thus, officially designated as the uninheritable, have been unconsciously and consciously suppressed.

In the era of globalization, we witness an inversion of this Aristotelian mind/body hierarchy, which aims at the re-biologization and literalization of the body – the body has come to signify with its physical functions alone, e.g., eating, sleeping (classic examples of this have been TV reality shows, such as *Big Brother*). This facilitates a homogenization, discipline and functionalization of food and eating cultures. The separation of the senses has also fostered the gradual identification of taste with food and its consumption, and with the social organization of food and drink consumption. The result is the banality of individual pleasure – a pleasure whose constant pursuit, however, becomes in itself the experience, performance and visualization of mass identity – as exemplified in the massive domestic cooking.

In this context of gradual cultural attrition, could we provide an alternative to the Platonic-Aristotelian paradigm and an antidote to the current literalization of the body and senses? I wondered. The public event-symposium ‘Taste and Memory’ attempted to answer this question by experimenting on a dialogical, performative anthropology and resting on the premises that planning and design has a pedagogical mission to orchestrate bodies, objects and environment to a dialogical

performance; and that *organization is but the implementation of principles of cultural translation, which often involves historical translation.*

I am thinking of the term symposium. The mutation of the word in academia from the original Greek meaning of *symposio* has always troubled me. It is a term that today has come to be used interchangeably, as synonymous, with ‘conference’ – a meeting of people who confer about a topic. Yet, *symposio*, transferred through the centuries, from antiquity to Christian society to modern times, points to drink and food intake as a complex act and process that by far exceeds the biological, the scientific, and economic, or the functional. A philological archaeology here would contribute in re-articulating the sensorial with affect: *symposio* means drinking and eating with others (the prefix *syn* means co- and *pino* means I drink) while exchanging ideas, (self-)reflexive narrations of everyday life events and pains, poetry, games and often music and dancing. These experiences are realized and granted as true and memorable when witnessed by others; they require a *syntrofia*, a company, human or other. The etymology of the word *syn-trofia* is insightful. *Trefo* means I feed, cultivate, raise, as in raising a child (*ana-trefo*), but also as in raising and cultivating hopes, dreams, desires. Echoing the grandfather in the film *Politiki Kouzina* (also known as *A Touch of Spice*), the word *onei-revome*, I dream, hides in it the word *revome*, I belch.

Yet, the Greek term *symposio*, transferred also to other languages, has suffered mutations in the process. Symposium has ended up meaning a sheer mechanism of exchange of ideas. What has been eliminated from the exchange is the sensorial-affective dimension. It seems that the part has taken the name of the whole. Diotima’s reminder to Socrates, though, echoes in the background: *poesis* is both making and imagining in Greek thought and culture. Complying with her definition have been modern Greek women’s practices and experiences such as cooking. Like the series and sequences women embroidered, which cohered into a visual-tactile story imprinted on cloth to ornament people and spaces, the elaborate preparation of olives and the cooking of food was to nourish others within and beyond the household.

The clipped meaning of *symposio* of course is also discerned in Greek academic and state language. Etymology captures the uneven shifts of semantic history that may be present at any given moment in a society. Modernization has an uneven character and in many cultures, Greece included, commensality in everyday life, more so in rural areas, retains its character as a reflexive institution that produces and reproduces social knowledge and collective memory via the circulation and exchange of affective material forms of shared experience.

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The planning and organization of the symposium *Taste and Memory* initially involved field expeditions to elementary and high schools of the area of Messinia (Southern Peloponnese), and was followed by meetings with local cultural organizations and clubs. I embarked on this trip in 2011 with the nagging questions: Could we (re)sensitize young students and local citizens to the Greek meaning of *symposio* and the relation of commensality to memory in an era that fosters atomization and deadly forgetfulness? Could we connect *Paedeia* (*formal education*) to the education of the senses?

A team of volunteers, two students (one graduate and one undergraduate), a young cameraman⁶ and myself, took up the challenge. We held repeated meetings with teachers and students, gradually acquainting them with the concept and theoretical presuppositions of the prospective event as they discussed their own experiences in exchange. The recipe, an uninherited archive, became our medium of sensory communication with history. Anne Frank's diary with the description of meals cooked and consumed in her culture became an entry point to the texture of a modern memoir. My own personal archive of my late mother's handwritten recipes received by mail during my early years in the States, intrigued and triggered dozens of self-reflexive stories, of personal and familial recollections. An orchestration of bodies, senses and memories was well on the way.

In the schools for the handicapped, in particular, discussion and exchange of experiences were generated via the storytelling of the eighteenth-century French philosopher Denis Diderot: his attention to and interest in tactile sensibility was motivated by his encounter with a blind person. This opened up a moving exchange of long suppressed experiences in a social environment where the handicapped body has been perceived and treated as a visible display of disorder. The historical interaction of art and sign language, discussed by recent scholars (Mirzoeff 1995) in nineteenth-century France, enhanced self-esteem and trust, and reinforced our dialogue, silent and vocal. The subjection of taste and touch/tactility – familiar means of exploration of the handicapped – to some historical and theoretical contextualization, as presented above, became the impetus for further learning by reading on the subject for most teachers and older students. To deepen our knowledge and theirs, a list of topics was prepared for teachers as a guide aiming at engaging students and older generations in further dialogues. An exchange of habits was soon at play, or as Benjamin would say 'play and nothing else is the mother of every habit' (Benjamin 1928, 120).

On a later visit and as we videotaped their narrations and experiences on the process, they expressed an enthusiasm that revealed also their need for educational programs that lift their everydayness off its formalistic routine.⁷ Ethnographic fieldwork was thus proven to all an invigorating journey and an unparalleled educational tool – a tool though that remains unexplored in and by EU-promoted cultural programs.

As one of the female teachers exclaimed,

The magic of it was that both students and teachers discovered food differently, food as *history!* [her emphasis] At first we thought this project was to be another one of those TV cooking programs that we had no desire to join. But now, we talked with grandmothers, grandfathers, and through their narrations and those of their own ancestors, we ended up cooking ourselves recipes, some previously unknown to us; it was indeed a journey of embodying history...

'Shall I tell you my mother's favorite dish?' Another teacher jumped in the conversation. 'If you eat it, you'll flip, it's a *poem!*' (her emphasis). While a third teacher interjected, 'we [teachers-students] did not just get recipes, we wrote poems, stories ...', I sensed Diotima emerging smiling from the guts of history: 'Any action which

is the cause of something to emerge from nonexistence to existence is poesis ...' (Plato, Symposium, 976, 150).

'It was some journey', noted a music school teacher, 'to search for the note that best echoes each ingredient and its taste'. For sound tastes. Fruit and vegetables for example have their own speech sounds; watermelon, if tapped by hand, or touched by ear on the right spot, confirms 'I am ripe.' Its color complements the dialogue. Sound, color and taste compose music, or paintings. Sometimes texts too.

'We also traveled out, to other areas', a younger female teacher added, 'as we contacted seniors for recipes, we blended Asia Minor, Mani, Messinia ...' 'Oh, yes', a young female student rushed to confirm, 'I called my grandma in Yannena (northwestern Greece), and she gave me the recipe of her favorite dish. But she did not reveal the secret of its success [laughing] ...' There is always a secret hidden in each recipe. A touch of a herb can be one of these secrets.

Herbs, the invisible spices in food, signify specific emotions, some bring people closer, they open the bodies to communication, while some close them up. Personal names in this context signify people's sensory identity. Several students brought out female personal names that were once popular in their area and in local fairy tales, such as Cinnamon (*Kanela*), Lemon Tree (*Lemonia*), Sugary (*Zaharenia*).

In these journeys, herbs also triggered smells and reconfigured geography, turning it to a magical olfactory field in motion: roses grew in Delphi, oregano in Acropolis, sage in the Peloponnese. They were paralleled to the stars of the sky for 'the word gastronomy hides in it the word astronomy' as grandpa pointed in *Politiki Kouzina*, and by his fairytale lessons of the invisible worlds, the child learns to translate taste and touch into drawing: 'Pepper for Sun, it is hot and burns. Cinnamon for Aphrodite, the most beautiful woman, bitter and sweet ...'

'Our talking and interacting with children', a male teacher pointed out emphatically,

led us to the ingredients: where various ingredients come from, what they looked like in the old days, how they were cultivated and used ... It was difficult for children to comprehend, for instance, that there were no sugar, candies or pastry available in rural areas in the old days ...

Listening to 'The Stone Soup' (*Petrosoupa*), musical performance of a traditional fairytale, modified and performed for the occasion by the 70-children choir and the symphonic orchestra of the public music school of the area,⁸ I had a weird sense that Emilie Carles in *Une Soupe aux Herbes Sauvages* (1977), or BKG (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett of NYU) might be appearing on stage. But here food preparation became the allegory for a musical composition, and music calls for dancing in this part of the world. A short modern dance piece 'In the Shadow of the Olive Tree', took turns – choreographed to order and danced for the event by an ensemble of a female adult dancer and a young girl of the Municipal Dance School.⁹ It was the first choreography on and inspired by olive tree culture in Greece.



FIGURE 7.5 *Bodies.*

Source: Photograph by Vassilis Constantineas

Olive trees, ‘the life and identity’ of the Peloponnese, are always closely observed, for their appearance speaks of their sensorial and affective relation to both time and weather. They are old and young, they dance to the wind, lament in drought, wash in the rain, sing via countless cicadas in the summer, and display anger to negligence and deprivation of proper care by ‘swiveling’ the fruit. If abandoned they turn wild

(*aghrievoun*). Urban directors and choreographers hired by state and local administration institutions have long been struggling to transform and establish this periphery as ‘a city of the high art of dance’, unsuccessfully. If they only learned to ‘take’ form and content from the local context, they could both come up with inspirational modern ballet compositions and make modern dance relevant to people’s experiences. It takes two to tango in cultural translation.

All these explorations made publicly visible a whole world previously thought of as strictly domestic. As a grannie exclaimed to the granddaughter who was asking her for her favorite recipe, ‘does the university truly want to talk to me?!’ Feeling ‘left out’ by higher-up chefs and others, she eagerly participated in a video taken by her granddaughter; allowed to proudly speak for herself, she narrated the history of her recipe while cooking it.

A very young male student reminded us, though, that today food is not necessarily in close knit with the family. It can be a medium of self-determination and personal enjoyment. Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir and her favorite borscht: ‘chief delight was in doing as I please’ (in *The Prime of Life*). Nor is food and its preparation an unvarying, mechanical or natural, mundane practice of survival or bodily pleasure.¹⁰ He cooked secretly his own favorite dish one day, leaving his mother stunned, for aside from his young age, in her eyes it was far from natural for a male child to cook.

Twenty-five schools were gradually engaged in the project. Young students contributed with over 300 improvised paintings that ‘dressed’ the large exhibition hall during the event. When asked what they felt while painting their dish, one of them responded shyly: ‘I salivated!’ Salvador Dali would confirm that all his own ‘experiences are visceral’.

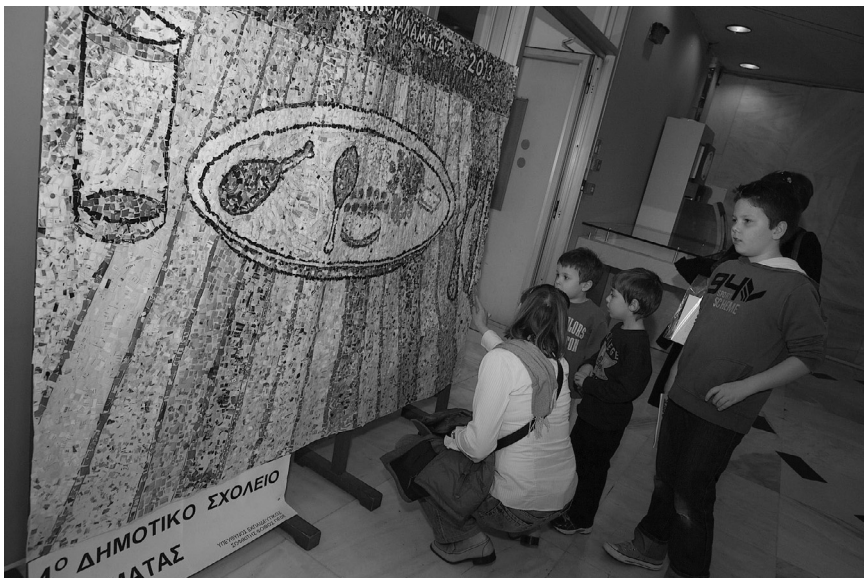


FIGURE 7.6 Self-reflections

These paintings were complemented by dozens of ceramic constructions featuring favorite dishes of food, fruits and vegetables of the area, which were designed by students of the Municipal Ceramics Department for children. This tactile exploration of taste stood side by side with the explorations of advanced high school students in ancient texts, popular music lyrics, classic and modern poetry for gastronomic metaphors in language. Long forgotten expressions emerged from their historical sleep: 'You ate me' is the common saying from mother to child to express fatigue, torture; or 'the eye eats' expression which points to my idea of the 'translation and transcription of the senses', as much as it extends taste and touch beyond the borders of the individual body. Some examples of the sort brought laughter while others raised serious questions pertaining to corporeal ideals and images, violence and *eros*, modernity and overconsumption. In this spirit, a theatrical play on eating, a humorous but poignant critique of overconsumption (of food and information) in our era, was prepared for young and old by the Municipal Theater Company.¹¹

Different age groups, different modes and media of sensing everydayness. Older students contributed with their own little video and photography productions based on their mini field researches with 'the oldies'. Their videos on others and ours on them, featuring the event in process, were later discussed in terms of editing issues in and after the field: the tendency to privilege one's aesthetic perspective at the expense of documentation on the one hand and, or on the other the tendency to treat ritual performances as raw visual material. These were contrasted with examples where attention was paid to the other's modes and means of representation as brought up by teachers and advanced students in their oral and visual explorations.

The performance of food could not be missing from the polyphony of this event that blended artistic expressions, popular films and academic lectures. The preparation of a celebratory table allowed local social aesthetics to perform in public. It featured tasty dishes resting in a particular order on hand-embroidered tablecloths, touches of imagination. Taste is both gustatory and aesthetic – despite Kant's disagreements. 'Show me how you eat and I will tell you who you are', as the saying goes. Appadurai (1986) would claim for Indian aesthetic theory what also applies to Greek aesthetics of taste: a rather complicated concept, taste, in contrast to the simplified English term, engages aesthetic, emotional and sensuous appreciation. Paul Stoller, drawing on his ethnographic experience with the Songhai of Niger (1989), confirms this, as do plenty of others from the borders of the Western worlds.

Recalling Goffman, the performance of food leads ultimately to the performance of self. A person behaving in a detestable way is 'an ugly person', and is metaphorized as disgusting food. By naming 'inedible' the ugly person, students unconsciously brought home, down to context, abstract philosophical ideas and debates on disgust and the distinction between aesthetic pleasure and physical pleasure (as in Derrida, Bourdieu, Kant). The example of the disgusting sauce with which Stoller was treated by the Songhai (Stoller 1989) to express anger, was brought to the table of discussions next, to reveal taste and smell as sensual and subjective and, echoing Montaigne, as central ingredients in the recipe of Greek social relations. This triggered anamneses of old Greek rituals, such as the sprinkling of salt behind the seat of an undesirable guest – an

extra-linguistic communication familiar to them, for which, however, they lacked a translation.

The sensory performance of the particular *symposio* was complemented with the participation of the constituents in designing the exhibition of the materials they had created and collected themselves. For design is not limited to the world of high fashion, the museum, the high art gallery or the boutique. Everyday life is a 'world of ubiquitous design', Ben Highmore (2009, 5) confirms. Their concepts of (re) ordering the exhibition space, the City's Cultural Hall, and the very objects in it, brought home 'the raw and the cooked', 'the hot and cold', 'wet and dry', 'down and up', and my own trajectory in the discipline's paths, 'bitter and sweet'.

Taste is anything but static. It is often perceived as walled in a specific *topos* (Aristotle's definition of space) which renders both immutable. But isn't one's relation to food (re) formed by one's biographically determined situation in space and time? The question arose, as my college students reflected on their experience of living themselves now far from home, and they explored 'traveling tastes'. At this point of their lives, bus terminals become a favorite spot in the city, for there arrive their favorite dishes cooked, packed and sent by mothers or grandmothers from various cities. Border locations can indeed be sites of dynamic exchanges. When received in *xenitia* (a foreign land), these affective tastes are never consumed in isolation. In fact, in *xenitia* one comes to like and share dishes never liked before. The recipient calls all friends to join the table, to eat the food in company, a *symposio* that seals the memory of past and future moments. Food sent afar travels as a pact to fulfill an unfinished dish with others.

Their moving narrations of such moments of sharing, of transforming feelings of isolation to a 'symbolic family', awakened for me a taste I had unconsciously suppressed: the taste of those chocolate bars sent to me as letters from friends or family during my early years in the States.

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Local cultural organizations of the region, comprised of several hundred members each, joined eagerly when they heard about the idea of reenacting a *symposio*. Such organizations have a long tradition in this culture. They connect everyday people with occasional feasting and various engagements in public local affairs. Could they be an equivalent of modern urban dinner parties or Futurists' banquets and Dali's dinners? Women's preparation and organization of buffets with ambrosia, the most delicious local varieties of homemade food and desserts, was a memorable gift expecting no return. Commensality is but an exchange of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling. 'We remember well those days we worked together for that memorable public event on earthquake in the 1990s', several of them rushed to mention, pointing to a shared history. Our silent affective bond that released the good old local hospitality lay in those women's need to reclaim their culture and history. The re-cognition of their culture by 'one of their own' and a representative of a higher institution, the university, which reached their doorstep for the first time, mattered.

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The project, which mobilized a whole region – it was attended by hundreds of citizens including the schools of the area – attracted attention beyond the local. It

was later invited to and hosted by a national research center in Athens (though of different theoretical orientation and approach to organization), and was presented as a model to UNESCO state members for the preservation of intangible heritage by the Greek Ministry of Culture. But in this rare dialogue of the local with the national and the global, there was one part of the event that was not transferable: the abundant inflow of homemade dishes by locals (as individuals or collectively as members of cultural organizations). That tactile donation, gesture of pride, care and affection, that had extended to the aesthetic preparation-decoration of 'their public cultural hall' itself, could only occur in places of shared memory. Abstract spaces, spaces of no lived history, could only be perceived and treated as museums or high art galleries. For objects, substances and scents are in themselves histories of prior commensal events and emotional-sensory exchanges. It is these histories that are exchanged at commensal events and spaces and that qualify the latter as commensal to begin with. It is these memories of food(s) that nourish the celebration of group identity, as Sutton (2001) would agree. This was in sharp contrast to the various TV cooking shows, as well as other events restricted to the manual preparation of 'non speaking' substances.

To mind comes Lisa Law's (2001) study on the interplay of smell, space and race in the context of the global postcolonial labor of Filipino domestic workers in urban Hong Kong. Those women congregated in the underpasses of the city to recreate the smells and tastes of 'home' by cooking, thus eventually transforming the surrounding, alienating urban and labor spaces into place. No doubt, if the history of the Diaspora Greeks were ever to be written, I thought, this could be done from the perspective of its taste and memory. It would reveal new theoretical and methodological media for understanding identity and the writing of history, for it would recognize embodied and sensual material practices as foundational. It was no coincidence that representative organizations of the Diaspora in the area wholeheartedly embraced and supported the idea of this event.

Aftertastes

Conferences traditionally present ideas, and occasionally archive them in published volumes, with a beginning, middle and conclusion. This symposium aimed at linking sensory fragments together and theory to open-ended action. For given our present state of world affairs, conferences seem to be a rather outmoded tool of knowledge transmission. Multi-tools are needed that also translate knowledge to action. A dialogue among academic disciplines and arts and among so-called peripheries and centers, must ultimately lead to a questioning and reshaping of our public space itself, including our built and environmental space, for this reshapes our idea of citizenship by expanding it beyond the private. Acting in academic space is intimately tied to the democratization of knowledge and its open access.

Thus, 'Aftertaste', the last part in this *symposio*, proposed reflective actions on the university space. The eating hall of the university, resembling all other liminal, disciplinary, sensorially sanitized, public institutional spaces, was re-perceived. For university spaces in Greece, as an old professor critically stated once, are perceived

and treated by their inhabitants ‘as old bus- or train-stations for passing by’,¹² or places where you leave your consumables behind. Just like the street, they are there only to be crossed. Just like urban streets they are frequently vandalized.¹³ In this context, the city cultural hall that hosted the public event and its aesthetic transformation, by both organizers and citizen-donors, problematized and released cultural energies long walled in the taken-for-granted everyday. Inspired students came up with imaginative ways of reshaping the university’s public-ness, of turning functional space into affective place by dressing and ornamenting it with colorful objects, artwork and music, and every body and mind went to work to find ways to actualize them. It was an imaginary rescription of a functional space into a place of *eros*. For food is *eros* actualized in place.

‘Back spaces’ or ‘junk spaces’, relegated to garbage or food waste, spaces of death, emerged also as spaces of creative and productive use. Recycling had been an unknown field of action then. Raising awareness of what our culture chooses to exclude led to the exploration for a possible installation of hand-made compost bins on campus.

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Whether definitive or not, such ground-up initiatives, joyful plays which foster imagination, collective identity, and bridge institutional knowledge with everyday reality, point to the fact that history is not just materialized in the fossil as frozen trace or writing in suspension. Rather, it is in living traces of alternative sensibilities long walled out of the sensorially numb public academic scape, one that has allowed too little transgression of its naturalized and outmoded spaces; spaces that, in the current austerity times, like cemeteries lying in ruins after an earthquake, have been left to their fate, to concretize the ruination of the historical.

Notes

- 1 Marx attributed such partitioning of the senses to the division of labor instituted by capitalist modes and relations of production. Touch still remains a puzzle for both the science of touch and the new technology. Touch has no presence in communication technologies, except a metaphorical presence (for instance ‘keep in touch’ refers to meeting of thoughts and minds in the absence of the physical body). Haptic interface technology in comparison to audio-visual technology is lagging behind and mechanical reproduction of touch is still a challenge – though computer gaming technologies have developed haptic feedback channels through the sending of minute shocks to first-person shooter players.
- 2 One of the first works that delineated crucial issues pertaining to both problematics was ‘The Eye of the Other’ as early as 1984. The critical analysis of an anthropologist’s ‘optic’ and a photographer’s anti-anthropological, realist gaze in their collaborative documentation of death rituals in central Greece represented the first critique of the then developing subfield of ‘visual anthropology’ in the context of European anthropology (see Seremetakis 2017).
- 3 In combination with his later discussion (Feldman 2006) of the consequent stratification of the communicability of sensory experience by race, class, gender, and ethnicity within formations of power and privation, he developed a political anthropology of the senses.
- 4 Multisensoriality was also pushed in a new political direction by Taussig (1987) who brought together technology, power, and postcolonial studies and pioneered the ethnography of embodied violence. On the other side, Valentine Daniel (1991), studying

the Siddha medical practitioners of South India, was among the first to focus on 'touch per se' by focusing on their training in tactile involvement versus the visual detachment of the Western doctor. Constance Classen (2012) followed by discussing (1998) the historical embodiment of gender ideologies through sensory codes (feminine touch/masculine gaze). In general, medical anthropology has given studies in different areas that explored touch, such as Desjarlais's study (1992) on healing and diagnosis, and Lock and Farquhar's (2007) on the body. Most of them agree that in Western modernity sensory experience is stored in and exclusively narrated by scientific, legalistic, and medicalized discourses, all modes of realism. Therefore, as Crary (1990) has argued, all prosthetic instruments that aspire to extend the senses in modernity, such as the camera obscura, do not exist independently from, and must be understood in, their given social and political contexts in which they are produced and deployed. In the same spirit, Rajagopal (2001), from the border of anthropology and media studies, discussed technologies of perception as pointing to both the form and the content of experience through its reference to the tactility and materiality of technologies.

- 5 The term stems from Jean Franco (1985), referring to Latin cultures and their forming of specific feminized refuge areas of stable social relations, such as the church and home, that counterbalanced the masculine domain of public violence.
- 6 The aforementioned graduate student, Alexandros Argyriadis, is now a colleague, teaching in Cyprus; and the cameraman, Nick Sfakianakis, is executive producer of the International Ethnographic Film Festival (EthnoFest) in Athens. Nikos Katsos, the undergraduate student, left this life early.
- 7 Videos can be accessed at culture.uop.gr or www.seremetakis.com
- 8 Director: Ivan Matzaris. Music: Stathis Giftakis. Lyrics: L. Triandari.
- 9 Choreographer: S. Stribakou. Dancers: Sania Stribakou and her 7-year-old student S. Ksipolitou. International Center and Dance School of Kalamata.
- 10 See also Farquhar (2002) in another context.
- 11 *Gluttony*. Theatrical play. Public Theater of Kalamata. Actors: Al. Koliopoulos, Evi Giannakopoulou. Adaptation of *Inside News* by Marios Pontikas.
- 12 Investigative report, P. Tzimas, Mega Channel 2006.
- 13 Recently it was announced that an Athenian university's public spaces have been fixed and prepared for the sake of an international show, the hosting of a sociological association of 3,500 participants. The latter certainly left impressed by the state and appearance of Greek universities at large!

8

BORDER ECHOES

Turning on the radio the other day, a modern Greek popular (*laiko*), diachronic song caught my ear: ‘The Mountains Echo, when I Cry at Sunsets’ (*‘Anti-laloune ta vouna, san kleo eghe ta dhilina’*).¹ Music and songs (*laika*) like this, composed and sung by legendary figures of popular music in the 1970s or earlier, continue to be ‘interpreted’ (sung) to date by numerous singers. ‘The ravines echo when I cry, eyes and hearts tear when I sigh’, echoed another song around the room – the singer calling the loved one, now living far away, to follow the tracks that his ‘black tears’ leave to meet him in his exile, at the border (*se kapia akri*).²

The word for echo in vernacular Greek is *anti-lalos* or *anti-lalia*, where *lalia*, a synonym of *phoni* as in anti-phony, means voice and language. But echo here does not signify reflection of one’s own voice. *Echo is the creation of a chorus*, where the sound from afar is the presencing of the absent others. The individual absence, by death or exile, has to have echoes in the natural world or distant events and a variety of sign systems such as warnings, dreams or readings of the landscape. Witnessing and being witnessed by all sorts of signs and extraneous events reveals the cosmological meaning of an individual pain or death. The interlocking of these sign systems with the individual event through discourse (lament, songs, poetry, music) is the creation of publicness.

Crying thus is a performative and not a psychological category; it demands a chorus to transfer it across borders – natural, geopolitical, individual or collective – to witness, validate and seal it as true and powerful. It is through the hearing of the chorus that discourse is disseminated. Hearing thus in antiphonic relations is not external to speech but metonymical to it. It is the other’s discourse doubled.

One such witness, ever present also in Greek folk songs, has been the warning call of particular birds. There is a strong semantic link between death and that which comes from the outside, be that nature or another land. In Mani, for example, the bird of the dead, *nekropouli*, was a migratory bird. The bird throws its

call in the direction of the forthcoming dire event. Its call thus introduces sound as the paradigmatic sensory medium that organized the experience of death in that historical margin. The imagery of its open mouth points to what Julia Kristeva (1986) theorized as the orifice. Orifices are ‘points’ of the bodily threshold, the boundaries between the inside and the outside. As dynamic sites of exchange, they transfer and convert moral and material substance. This is attested to in folk and old popular songs. Reauditing a well-known rebetiko song of the German occupation (in World War II), ‘The Mountains Echo and the Crying Birds Sigh Heavily’³ warns of the impending death of the celebrated hero of the Greek resistance movement, Aris Velouhiotis. *Thanatos*, as the passage from the inside to the outside, signifies loss of place and time. The bird’s voice here gives an affective reading of history as it alerts us to our future.

The lack of chorus, of witnessing, signifies deafness. In colloquial Greek, the loss of hearing, that is the condition (or *pathos*) of deafness, is known as *kofotis* (κωφότης). The dictionary definition of *kofotis* (deafness) is deprivation of voice or sound, in general deadening (obtuseness) of the senses, metaphorically idiocy. Hippocrates, for example, referred to the weakening of the vision as *ofthalmon kofosis* (οφθαλμών κώφωσις, literally meaning deafening of the eyes) where *ofthalmon* means ‘of the eyes’ and *kofosis* is to make one deaf or mute or in general senseless, numb or miserable. The adjective *kofos* (κωφός) characterizes someone (or something) deaf, mute, or hollow as in *kofos limin* (literally ‘deaf harbor’) that refers to a site where there is no lapping of the waves. (Swimming pools, seen as motionless water, were not desirable when first imported to Greece.) Vision and hearing are continuous and their loss means loss of memory. The inability to see and to be seen, to hear and be heard, implies darkness. As the saying goes ‘Eyes that don’t meet, soon forget each other.’ Death and *xenitia* (exile, movement to a foreign land) take one’s eyes away and in exchange they bring sensory and linguistic silence. For vision, hearing, affective memory, and recognition are all intertwined and cross each other in a bodily exchange: ‘eyes and hearts tear when I sigh’, as the song echoed.

A non-crossing of the senses is expressed by the relative term *koufios* (κούφιος). It signifies anything hollow, empty inside, like a grain or nut or tree trunk; metaphorically, a person of no content, that is possessing no emotions and senses to exchange, thus dead – a carcass, corpse, is referred to as *koufari*. Empty words are also characterized as *koufia* (as in *koufia loya*). Today, this is a colloquial expression that often characterizes politicians’ discourse as a discourse that can no longer be witnessed as true.

The sob

Sounds travel across the body and through bodies. A sound that is sensed ‘as if coming up from deep down the body’ is characterized as *ipokofos* (the prefix *ipo* means sub or under; *kofos* is deaf). The same adjective *ipokofos* refers to a subtle pain. Pain, like

sound, travels. Whether from the 'depths of one's heart' or the guts of the earth, mute-deaf pain (*vouvos ponos*) journeys to its maturation: the sob, the sigh, the scream.

'My voice burst forth like thunder/to reach my Nico's ear/to come back from America ...' shouted a lamenter, and her internal pain coming to a seismic explosion unveils to the witnessing public the hidden undercurrents that connect her son's body and her own. In another space and time, urban modern media, a TV comedian commenting on a popular female singer's performance, exclaimed: 'Oh, that sigh of hers! As if it travels through a century's pains ... As you hear her singing, she lifts up your own pain and takes it away.'⁴ Pain as bodily communication is plural. It refers to cycles of pains that at the moment of death cohere into a metaphor for the life of others as well as the singer's own life. For *thanatos* here is internal: the infusion of the self in the other as both self and memory.

Most rebetika, early popular (*laika*) songs, and folksongs, just like laments, are characterized by an antiphonic movement from nonlanguage (sob) to language. This seals the truth of one's speech through nonlinguistic expressions of pain. It has been documented that there is an analogy to the acoustic and bodily techniques by which the audience-chorus confirms and memorializes the juridical value and authenticity of the entire performance of the soloist, in both Greek tragedy and in contemporary Maniat death ceremonies. In this movement from nonlanguage to language to nonlanguage, the sob is critical. It is far from a sheer stylized weeping, an affective ornamentation of linguistic discourse, as a simple ethnomusicological analysis would have it. Nor is it a conventional sign or trigger for the representation of induced affectivity, according to a Durkheimian perspective or a stylized technique for taking a breath preparing for the next verse, as a performance analysis would claim. For an in depth ethnographic encounter reveals that the technical dynamics of breathing communicate with the moral connotations of breathing in everyday life (Seremetakis 1991). In everyday conversations, the body signifies disorder through heavy breathing and breathlessness. The latter gestures symbolize urgency, anger, crisis, struggle, and personal dissolution, in short, emotions that can move the self from the inside to the outside. The sob simulates one's death when experiencing personal loss and pain. Yet, nothing is mono-functional in everyday culture. On other occasions, the sob simulates joy and satisfaction. Burping, as a deep sob, after a good meal was traditionally received as the body's gesture of satisfaction.

In either case, the sob incrementally subverts language as emotional-sensory power increases. This is what makes linguistic affectivity a potentially subversive medium. In the case of mourning rituals,

This penetration of language by stylized sobbing takes the acoustic form of microtonal variations and accidental harmonics which infiltrate each note and each word of the song or lament. The singer, through the sob, fractures the musical tone, propels it into 'outer' space in a polyphony of pain.

(Seremetakis 1991, 118)

The gradual disappearance of sobbing in modern song and everyday speech performances is intimately related to the undermining of the allegorical, transpersonal paradigm of pain/pleasure via rationalized, medicalized concepts, and the accompanying models of the privatized body. Performative sobbing has gradually been psychologized and stigmatized as irrational and old fashioned. To Plato's pure delight, sobbing acquires a rural or low-class ambience; it is offensive. Similarly, breathlessness in everyday conversation signifies one's inability to control emotions within – which equals with lack of cultivation. Such bodily, affective signs are today considered to run contrary to the development of a modern, rational European subject.

From the borders of the inside

The above popular music and lyrics originated in urban centers. Together with the instruments that accompany them, such as the bouzouki, they are positioned between east and west. They are associated with the Ottoman tradition and refugees from Asia Minor, and are identified with the lower classes. It was in the 1960s that this type of music gained wider popularity and is currently enjoying it again. Inner Mani, on the other side, exemplifies Greek pre-technological, non-modern, rural areas.⁵ Both cases represent long neglected, walled surfaces of modernizing life.

Yet, one still finds fresh lyrics created for this traditional music. They resonate a concept of pain that is also encountered in rural Greece, in ancient Greece, and in modern urban areas as in the case of *rebetika*. This transitive and transpersonal model of pain is therefore not only a carrier of residual meaning from non-modern rural society. We encounter it in some poetry that uses narrative strategies that transmute personal experience into meta-narratives of wider socio-political realities. We encounter it in the electrification of evil eye exorcisms that now take place also by phone or Skype – here the communicative metaphorization of pain is crucial to the divination process in urban centers, in making sense of everyday life experiences. It is also part of today's public expressions of alternative forms of *anamnesis*, which have intensified in austerity times (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 9). Finally, we encounter it in the lyrics of Greek popular music, where a pre-modern metaphorical system remains, albeit revamped in modernistic mass communication, musical and performance frameworks.

A most recent case in point is the young popular singer and composer of low-class background, Pantelis Pantelidis, who emerged spontaneously via the Internet. His sudden popularity was attributed to his drawing on the above urban tradition of 'low-class' people's music and singing rising from the ground up. Most interesting is one of his compositions, 'Mihani tou Chronou' ('Time Machine'),⁶ in which he dialogues with those dying in street accidents in the present times of austerity politics. Pantelidis died himself in a street accident soon after. 'As if sensing' the invisible future, people remarked. His lyrics and music speak of his journeying 'between two worlds', thus he left 'without saying goodbye' for he 'only journeyed to see how is out there and return back in'. Words and sounds, tongue and ear, are intimately tied to divination. His sudden death as well as the attendance of his funeral by a huge

crowd, consisting of both those who knew his music and those who had never heard of him until his passing, was metaphorized as ‘the happening of an earthquake’ (*eghine sismos*). The murmuring of the gathering crowd in the streets, his chorus, echoed like a hybrid music bordering on sob.

Tactile sounds

A few years ago, an older popular bouzouki player and composer, Yorgos Zambetas, in an interview on his life and music, vividly described his own inspirational dialogues with natural others. Once sitting outdoors, a frog popped up and greeted him with a sound. He responded with a note by striking his bouzouki and the conversation continued. For Zambetas music was ‘taken’ rather than composed. The same could be claimed by metal musicians today. Taking demands the ability to ‘hear the other’ in an exchange. *Composing, in contrast, is a psychological act of creation.* Maniat women too expressed the alternation of singers in lament performances as ‘taking’ the lament from one another. These people’s creativity is contingent on the presencing of a chorus, be that frogs, nightingales, objects or humans.⁷ It is to these others, human or non-human, they express their *parapono* – a meta-commentary, as an exchange and sharing, of the cycle of pains, emotions and joys, death and *eros*, of everyday life.

In another popular musician’s lyrics, for example, the only devoted companion and chorus left to him ‘to sweeten this fake life’,⁸ is the instrument itself, his bouzouki. Pain is bitter or sweet and often bittersweet. As the common expression goes: ‘You [know how to] make the bitter sweet.’ The metaphor here is culinary; all traditional sweets in Greece (*ghlika tou koutaliou*) are wild, bitter fruit or vegetables preserved in syrup. Pain is tasted with others in commensal exchanges. The singer’s relation to the instrument is analogous to that of company (*sindrofia, paraia*); it is the only thing left (in one’s *xenitia*, in wilderness) that can ‘hear and taste one’s pain’ (*parapono*) and disseminate it. It is the chorus and the double. The instrument’s rounded ‘belly’, like a storage vase, contains the musician’s pains and its own pains, their shared history. This image and metaphor of the belly as vase, earth, and place for cosmological storage is common in Greek thought and culture.⁹

The musician’s tactile relation to his instrument is not a technical striking of chords and notes, a touch on a surface. It is a dialogical relation between the self and an internalized other. He talks to the object and it responds to him; its sound-voice coming from deep down in its guts echoes the musician’s pain intermingled with joy – the inseparability of the two feelings, pain-sadness (*lipi*) and joy (*hara*), in Greek culture is captured by the term *harmolipi*. A bivalent concept that would also describe well the ethnographer’s feelings during an excavation and re-composition of a cultural site, old or new.

This type of music has been the highest aesthetic expression of the experience and culture of the border, and the expressed pain and *parapono*, the affective borders and limens of the embodied subject. With his lyrics, the musician reflects with

dignity on his border experience and that of his instrument. The bouzouki and its music lie between east and west, for years associated with the Ottoman tradition and Asian Minor refugees, the Romeic as opposed to the Hellenic.¹⁰ All the above mentioned songs and lyrics embody this border experience, the experience of being poised at a historical threshold between two worlds, life and death, past and present, low and high – where witnessing is not only for one's self or those present but also for those who have gone. This logos is granted as true through the externalization of a long withheld pain, for pain was to be withheld as a form of labor. There is no ethic of getting rid of pain in that culture. The need to get rid of pain, to get relief (catharsis), is a Western concept and speaks to the medicalization of pain. Today, the bouzouki with its music (*laika*) of pain has been rescripted and recodified into an eloquent reminder of our cultural and historical unconscious, a tactile medium of social memory and cultural resistance.

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In today's Greece, thus, one still meets divergent paradigms of pain. What is at stake in the cross-cultural encounter between the emergent and the residual is the personal and social historicization of everyday experience. A scientific-medical perspective that anaesthetizes pain can certainly inhibit a cultural capacity for encoding material culture and experience. Along with the anaesthetization of pain, modernity fosters a separation of the senses, and renders sound a secondary medium or no medium of communication. In the past, all major and significant news and events in one's life were preceded by a discrete sound, such as a telephone or door-bell ringing. The conditions and media of dialogue have been changing in everyday life. So has the history of the performance culture of vocal and instrumental music. But it is commonly admitted that modernity develops unevenly, leaving cultural pockets that 'hide in them' a past in the present. This allows history to harbor the unexpected. Austerity politics in Greece today have brought back to memory the death and pain of other times and places. Is this a reflexive turn that may foster dialogicity? In the seismic times we live in, the future appears predictable; what is unpredictable is the past. That's what I think the lyrics of 'Akou' ('Listen'),¹¹ a recent popular song (*laiko*), confirm with *parapono* that expands to social critique:

It may be that my leaves are falling on the ground,
 It may be that my soul has reached up and into my mouth, [to leave the body,
 die]
 Yet I have not said goodbye. Listen, I am alive ...
 I am fire, thunder and lightning, the storm that brings rain,
 I am a sound that lives in silence. Listen, I have a voice.
 It may be that you too left from my life, taking away
 the sigh from my breath,
 Yet, I still feel you within my touch. Listen, I am alive.

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Notes

- 1 'The Mountains Echo', lyrics by Vassilis Tsitsanis, sung by Stelios Kazantzidis. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzbzpUFZb6o>, accessed in December 2017.
- 2 'Take My Tracks', lyrics by Kostas Virvos, sung by Stelios Kazantzidis. www.stixoi.info/stixoi.php?info=Lyrics&act=details&song_id=1472, accessed in May 2016.
- 3 This song is of unknown title, lyrics by Nikos Mathesis, sung by Manolis Chiotis. It also underwent several modifications by later singers. <http://altpressfthiotida.com/%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%AF%CE%B1/%CE%BF-%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%8E%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%87%CE%B9%CF%8E%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%BF%CF%8D%CE%B4%CE%B9-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%BF/> accessed in May 2016.
- 4 *Stin igia mas re pedhia* (English: *Cheers!*) – TV program, special episode dedicated to singer Pitsa Papadopoulou (April 17, 2010).
- 5 For centuries Inner Mani was a stateless society, devoid of any codified laws or specialized juridical and administrative institutions. The two kin-based institutions that assumed those political-legal functions currently assumed by the state were the all-male council, and the women's mourning ceremony (*klama*) which was the central site for the production and reproduction of discourse in that society.
- 6 See 'Time Machine'. Written and sung by Pantelis Pantelidis. <http://lyricstranslate.com/el/pantelis-pantelidis-mixani-tou-xronou-%CE%BC%CE%B7%CF%87%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%AE-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%87%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%85-lyrics.html>, accessed in 2016.
- 7 http://ofisofi.blogspot.gr/2014/01/blog-post_25.html (an interview on Zambetas by D. Glinos, January 24, 2014) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdtFxOPF8ts> (Christakis's song 'The Frogs'), accessed in 2017.
- 8 'My Double-chord Bouzouki', lyrics by Markos Vamvakaris. www.stixoi.info/stixoi.php?info=Lyrics&act=details&song_id=4811, accessed in 2016.
- 9 Page du Bois (1988) has also discussed this in the context of fifth-century Athens.
- 10 For a discussion of the Hellenic/Romeic sides of Greek identity see Herzfeld (1989).
- 11 Excerpt from the song 'Akou' ('Listen'). Lyrics and music by Takis Mousafirris, sung by Dimitris Mitropanos. www.stixoi.info/stixoi.php?info=Lyrics&act=details&song_id=1225, accessed in 2016.



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PART IV

Sensing the invisible



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9

DIVINATION, MEDIA AND THE NETWORKED BODY OF MODERNITY

Over a cup of coffee and our usual exchange of ‘interesting stories’, a female folklorist of rural background, exclaimed, ‘Listen to the following scene! A relative of mine is watching a soccer game on TV with her friends. As soon as she sees her favorite national soccer player tripping in the field, she starts performing evil eye exorcism to him on the spot. She then turned to her friends, co-viewers of the game, looking for their confirmation that he must be inflicted, thus attributing to evil eye his missing some good moves.’

As if following his movement with her magic hand, the woman watching the game crossed the player several times while reciting her spell silently. Given that he did not know her and had not asked to be blessed by her, she did not expect a call back of reciprocity; the antiphonic relation of witnessing and receiving healing and exorcism was with her friends, the co-viewers of the game. The player, behind the prosthetic glass, was but a member of a silent chorus.

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Telepresencing theodicy

Practices of divination, such as evil-eye exorcism and coffee-cup reading, have been habitual in Greek everyday culture. Visualizing the above scene, Walter Benjamin’s voice began to echo in my ears: ‘A philosophy that does not include the possibility of soothsaying from coffee grounds and cannot explicate it cannot be a true philosophy’ (Scholem 1982, 59). I got busy thinking.

These practices once alleviated the claustrophobia of involuntary social intimacy in small-scale Greek rural life, with its panoptical surveillance. Yet, they still persist in the urban and increasingly transnational setting. What deserves special attention in these practices is the extension of the body along a social nervous system as

reparation of the sensorial body. Divination rescripts involuntary social intimacy into a new experience of bilocality by which

[Divinatory practices] register the impact of large-scale transformations on local worlds. Indeed, [their] very durability stems from a genius for making the language of intimate, interpersonal affect speak of more abstract social forces ... Because witches distill complex material and social processes into comprehensible human motives, then, they tend to figure in narratives that ... map translocal scenes onto local landscapes, that translate translocal discourses into local vocabularies of cause and effect.

(Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 285)

I contend, however, that we can fully comprehend how 'cause and effect' is transformed into power and social control and resistance to them, if we contextualize it within the social nervous system. The social nervous system is the sensorial registration of both everyday life and the effects of social structure. The concept originates with Michael Taussig (1992) in his examination of the cultural elaboration of fear and terror in Colombia, but it certainly is not limited to that. I here attempt also to add a dimension: The involuntary gestures of the body refract and register the impact of the social nervous system on the individual and become a medium for reading the social nervous system.

According to Taussig, the nervous system is a structure of control, hierarchy, and intelligibility that creates a social system of the sensible and the insensible. Taussig's concept is based on Walter Benjamin's notion of mediatic innervation of the sensory apparatus by experiences of commodification and consumption and the industrialization of human attention (see Buck-Morss 1989). But Taussig also recognizes the tranquilizing power of the nervous system, particularly as aided by biomedicine that seeks to reintegrate those in biomedical nervous breakdown into the totalizing system. Yet, the nervous system is not reducible to hierarchical organization; thus, in Taussig's thought, magic becomes a vehicle for recognizing the systematicity of the arbitrary, the nervous system becomes a purveyor of mystification and sensory colonization, and redressive magic becomes a rewriting of the social nervous system. This is the case in the Greek divinatory complex, as manifested in the patterns of coffee residue in the cup and in the involuntary gestures of the body and exorcism practices, in which the transcendental-invisible nervous system is re-scripted into the local and the personal (via the medium of the afflicted), the tangible and the exchangeable (through shared substance and reconstitution of the body). Healing practices that redress the violence of the transcendental nervous system are, for Taussig, practices that counter distracted visuality with media of tactility, that create touchability in a social web structured by visual distantiation and virtualization. And, as I have shown myself, tactility extends beyond the hands.

Several popular television serials in Greece feature divination. One of the top hits of the last three decades was based on a novel entitled *The Witches of Smyrna* (Meimaridi 2002), whose author claimed it to be a true story; it dealt with witches manipulating marriages and, thus, determining many lives in old Smyrna, like a magic hand. The protagonist was young Katina, the author's aunt, who had been protected since childhood by one of the witches, for she was chosen to become a witch herself. She was socialized by the witch, in a maturation process. As the story unfolds, battles between witches occur when the same prospective groom is desired by two women. Scents, food, herbs, and magic items are used and tricks are played out in strategies of seduction to achieve goals. The invisibility of these means is key because social intimacy eludes everyday perception and is embedded in objects, as bearers of shared substance and as carriers of the senses. It is via the senses that the volition of the mind is mobilized and enters the body of the other, thus controlling it. One episode about treating a schizophrenic child involves the use of Katina's body by the mother witch, both as a medium and as a double for the body of the child to be cured.

Apprentices are called 'daughters' (spiritual ones) and are led to acquire power and knowledge, always connected to the mother witch and guided by her to overcome the obstacles put between them and their goals. When they eventually discover their own power, if they use it to harm or engage in 'illegal' (*anomes*) activities, they are warned and even punished by her; for example, Katina was at one time abandoned by mother witch 'till she understands her mistakes and proves she does', and another time she was punished by losing her own child.

The story of the witches of Smyrna, turned into a movie for popular consumption, became a medium of visibility, and its protagonists turned to and were used for witchcraft commodification. The author eventually opened a store selling all the paraphernalia used in the serial, such as the special cards used for reading one's *moira* (fate), the scents, and all the related gadgets, at rather expensive prices. As the popular television serial on the witches of old Smyrna ran, advertisements appeared in the popular press for telecard readings 'by authentic predictors of Smyrna', one of whom had the same name as the protagonist of the TV serial, Katina.

The TV series and its spin-offs represent a partial colonization of a non-commodified vernacular divinatory complex, which includes evil-eye exorcisms, coffee-cup readings, and dream interpretations. This divinatory complex constitutes a network of deceptively informalized practices in modern Greece. Given their semiotic and performative density, these divinatory practices complicate the status of Greek modernity in terms of Western European models of progress and socioeconomic evolution.

These practices have not been mere curiosities that occur occasionally but are routine practices of reading and writing the historicity of the everyday. This divination of the present involves the opening of the body and its senses to exchange: to exchange messages with others (natural, human, and cosmological), messages that are signs of the past and the future in the present. These embodied exchanges create links of shared substance over time in a modernity in which the material and the sensorial are partitioned, segmented, and circulated as discrete commodity

units. I contend that these practices point to the incomplete articulation of current Greek everyday life with neoliberal globalizing processes, media, and structures of communication.

Divination in Greece is strongly associated with *moira* (fate); *moira* is the individual's share or allotment of positive and negative events and the expenditure of these qualitative units in the course of a life. *Moira* is tied to historicity, that is, the capacity to make history, and to the notion of *poesis* – which in Greek means both making and imagining. *Moira* as historicity, whether from the perspective of the past or the future, always shatters the uniform surface of the present. Divination is mastery, although not an instrumental mastery, over the events that occur in time and that are structured by time. One cannot avoid the *moira*, or qualitative time one is assigned, but to undergo a fateful event without knowledge and recollection of *moira's* foretelling is to experience time in a state of dispossession, as loss.¹

To engage in divination, one has to be able to comprehend and register *multiple temporalities*. The inscription of heterogeneous time into the divinatory dream sign, for example, facilitates the penetration of the present by future alterity.² Linear, compartmentalized time advanced by modernity precludes any interpenetration of the present and the future. The present remains a distinct, commodified unit of time. In the case of modern Greece, because the official periodization of time both promotes the archaic and promises the future as European, the present is a nebulous moment between the non-European past and an assumed Europeanness to come.

Arjun Appadurai (1998) ironically defines social intimacy as the spatial and interactive impingement of social strangers in discrete but shared cultural-economic spaces marked by fault lines of ethnic, religious, and gendered difference. Social intimacy, then, is a structure of affect and perception in which wider historical and political fissures converge and become visible. Crisis in social intimacy can take the form of violence, material and symbolic, and culminate in what Appadurai describes as forensic exploration of the body – the body being the site in which social fault lines, transitive unstable identities, can be troped, imaged, and even stabilized. In Greece, in the context of an expanding urbanity with its transnational cultures and economies of scale, norms of social intimacy have shifted to the increasingly technovisual organization of the metropolis. The latter is now characterized by somatic penetration, fragmented experiential shock, displacement, image saturation, and the atomization of the individual in a variety of networked environments at work and at home.

Yet, the idea that cultures move progressively from the rural to the urban, implicit in the conflation of spatial with historical distance and vice versa,³ locates the modern Greek divinatory complex within norms of social intimacy stereotypically associated with small-scale village life. This renders it a primitive or picturesque relic of the past and silences the presence of social norms and linguistic codes of social intimacy in everyday urban life. Divination, however, like any other aspect of Greek everyday culture, demands understanding and registration of the rural in the urban and vice versa – not as a surface transposition of one on the other but as an excavation of their

historical depth. Divination takes the form of perceptions of the somatization of social conflict, of illicit bodily penetration and manipulation at a distance, which requires divinatory diagnosis and even purification or exorcism. Such symbolic violence can be the result of involuntary gestures of the body (both individual and corporate) and deliberate optical and verbal aggression. Both the intentional and the involuntary gestures of the body that produce violence index the structural character of social intimacy; social intimacy exceeds psychological classification and intentional face-to-face interaction and thus is easily resituated and translated into faceless urban encounters.

At the same time, divinatory practices have also been moments of voluntary intimacy, shared substance, helping, and witnessing and have been governed by reciprocal relations – or what I have termed ‘antiphony of the senses’.⁴ If, in ocular aggression, the evil eye takes, that is, inflicts violence, in other instances, the eye also ‘dresses’:

Dressing with the eye involves close observation of the other to see ‘from whom he/she took after’. This is a genealogy of shared substance, a genealogy of detached parts. For shared substance leaves marks on the body, marks transferred from body to body in time ... Ocular appropriation of others, social power and hierarchy ... are interconnected categories ... Yet, visual cognition is divided into two aspects: the instrumental, which is concerned with the control of immediate situations, things and events, and therefore with the surface organization of the present; and the divinatory, a mode of knowing that looks beyond the immediate and the apparent to absence and the invisible. What one chooses to look at influences one’s character formation.

(Seremetakis 1991: 216, 220)

Involuntary social intimacy, as the force that drives the turn to divinatory interpretation of the social milieu, has, indeed, become complicated in urbanity. How, then, is involuntary and impinging social intimacy registered in the modern urban? How do people in everyday life cope with or attempt to counter the metropolitan and cosmopolitan or transnational expansion of involuntary social intimacy in the globalized nation-state? How do involuntary and voluntary gestures such as evil eye, coffee-cup reading, and warning dreams read the semiotics of globalization as impinging social intimacy?

The answer lies in the pervasiveness of informalized vernacular cultural codes and grammars that are spontaneously replicated outside of most institutional frameworks and dominant, sanctioned forms of knowledge, such as biomedicine, social sciences, fiscal prognostication, and weather and physical disaster reports. The divinatory practices of perception, reading, and socially produced knowledge I discuss here exist like the informal economies of goods and services, as a spectral or shadow presence at the edge of official versions of Greek modernity and globalization.

Evil eye and somatic witnessing

In Athens, as in all Greek cities, telephonic exorcisms have become habitual, although they are not commodified, as those, for instance, inspired by the *Witches of Smyrna* television series were. Telephonic exorcism is mediatized divination and, by inference, theodicy, the perception of evil and negativity.⁵ These informalized media networks serve as a counter-apparatus to the dominant news channels that are publicly mandated to report evil in contemporary culture. Phone exorcisms also mediate the loss or fragmentation of social networks predicated on a geographical adjacency that no longer pertains in the city. Exorcism is now performed by phone, and the healer expects a call back from the afflicted verifying that the symptoms have vanished and to receive the subsequent blessing.

During one of our casual telephone conversations, an elderly lady in Athens told me about evil-eye experiences. Her narrative attests to the articulation of the practice in contemporary everyday life:

On Paros island once, me and my sister rented a place for vacation from a young woman, she ... had wonderful skin. Your eye was falling on her immediately [you paid attention to her]. One evening we invited her to join us. 'Sorry, I am not feeling very well', she said. 'Are you evil-eyed?' I asked. 'Come and I will exorcize you on the way.' ... Both her and me almost died from yawning [i.e., the exorcism]. After I returned to Athens, she called me to exorcize her by phone all the time.

Yesterday, I felt rotten myself, I got chills and dizziness. I was about to take my pill – I am on medication – but I tried first to do an exorcism to myself. I telephoned also my friend who uses the method of water and oil and asked for help. She soon called back: 'What evil eye is this!?' The oil kept on disappearing in the water and in its place a huge bubble was formed. 'Who tongue-eats you like this!?' she exclaimed. 'I see it's a woman's eye ...' I called immediately my relative K. [a middle-aged woman in Athens] who also uses water-oil techniques. She called back saying exactly the same thing. Next to her was her young niece who had come to Athens for her college studies. She tried too and called me back saying, 'We went through hell to cleanse you!' I was fine a few moments after. Of course I did not take the pill ... I do not know how they find out if it is a female eye with the oil technique. I myself find out as I recite the secret words and say, 'If it is a man ...', But I cannot tell you any further or reveal the words to you now.

At another point, the same narrator expresses a strong dissatisfaction that one of her 'patients' never called back after an exorcism. People who view exorcism as an instrumental task involving no antiphonic exchange of any sort are seen as offending the very code of communication. The telephone, originally located inside the house, was always popular among women for intensive communication as it ensured a virtual spatial and gendered boundary. In cases of a long busy signal,

a common saying was 'X has caught the phone and it's set on fire' [*topiase ke pire fotia*] or if someone could not get off the phone, 'She took my ear' [*mou pire to afti*]. The phone receiver, in addition, was attached to the ear and thus secured a feeling of privacy in conversation, and, almost touching the mouth on the speaker that represented the ear of the other, simulated contiguity. It gave back space to the body. Approaching very close to someone's body to whisper into his or her ear was a very common gesture in the past, a gesture of regular communication, of bodily participation in talking. In this case, it meant familiarity, intimacy, and care by controlling pollution. It gave time to the body.

Exorcism over the phone does not erase the antiphonic ethic of divination. Exorcism requires witnessing, verification, and, thus, establishing a reciprocal relation over time.⁶ Most exorcists assert that self-exorcizing is not as effective as receiving exorcism by another (and the former is often impossible). Divinatory practices have been governed by antiphonic relations. They are an inscription of intimacy, based on shared substance, the ethic of 'helping', and witnessing.

After exorcism, the healer may ask someone to 'move around a bit', that is, to leave his or her previous position (*kounisou, sisou apo ton topo sou*). One also 'moves around a bit' in normal conversation, as a prevention exorcism on the spot, after hearing about a bad intuition or a piece of bad news from another. This dislocation speaks to the one caused by the involuntary movement of the earth, the earthquake.

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Unlike dreaming and coffee-cup reading, evil eye has been extensively discussed in the anthropology and folklore of Greece since 1955.⁷ However, all three practices share common cultural codes of the visual. In this disciplinary privileging, evil eye is posited as a form of ocular aggression, which also reflects the predilection of the urban researcher (as much as the local practice of informants). The emphasis on 'being seen' characterizes most studies. The object of evil-eye afflictions or ocular aggression is that which becomes visible and, in doing so, causes envy.⁸

Vision is also theorized in psychoanalytically inflected social theory as expressing concepts of ego boundary and fears about personal integrity and bodily intrusion. The 'seer' visually incorporates the object, consumes it, and dominates it; as Duvignaud put it, 'In these parts [of the world], to look is to steal' (1977, 228). The act of visual appropriation, as discussed so far in Mediterranean societies, links the individual in a dependent cognitive relation to the everyday physical presence and weight of a panoptical social order associated with closed village environments. Ocular aggression reduces the visual to one dimension as a form of social control and status suppression; further, that which is not represented or objectified by language or optics is considered invisible and desocialized.

Anthropological studies of evil eye have mainly relied on a Durkheimian reductionist individual/collective polarity and related socio-psychological interpretations attributing cultural belief and practice to individual envy and collective social control; more recent studies rely on ahistorical models of communication, mental or embodied, located within community boundaries and dissected from a gendered and ecclesiastic 'outside structure' or from an Enlightenment 'culture

above'. As a result, these studies cannot account for divination in modernity, let alone critically describe modernity, as non-anthropologists have already done by using the very classifications (i.e., involuntary gestures) that anthropologists ghettoized in the rural or premodern. Linking divination with modernity is one concern of this study.

The Greek Orthodox Church has accepted the belief in evil eye and prognostic dreaming, although it has its own method of exorcism-cleansing and interpretation. Just like most anthropological and folkloric studies, the church attributes evil eye to envy. It holds the 'Prayer-blessing on Vaskania'. The term *vaskeno* means 'I harm by vision, I look with envious eye, slander'. Here, envy is caused by the devil, as evidenced also in the official church blessing, by which the one blessed is protected from the 'harm of eyes' of evil people. Some believers (mainly women) move often between 'traditional' and church practices of dealing with the evil eye. As they often claim, 'The church also believes it' – something attested to in most studies of evil eye. This, however, does not necessarily reveal a synthesis, but rather a means for women diviners to continue using their separate codes in separate times and spaces; traditional evil-eye exorcism is still mainly a female practice.

Years ago, I documented a similar syncretism in the context of Maniat death rituals, *kidhia* and *klama*, the official church ceremony and women's mourning ritual, respectively; they coexisted but never merged (Seremetakis 1991). Yet another example of this syncretism was that which I described earlier about the television report on the holy ceremony of the burial of Christ on Good Friday on Karpathos island. The women following the church procession, as soon as the bier was placed on the ground by the men who carried it, rushed pictures of their own dead out of their pockets, stuck them on the bier, and engaged in intense lamentation. My eye froze on that dramatic scene, whereas the eye of the camera passed over it quickly.

Shadow modernity

Coffee-cup reading is strictly related to the body and the senses and to a material substance, coffee, with an anti-Christian history associated with the Ottoman occupation of Greece. It has thus been stigmatized and censored by the church as witchcraft (which does not coincide with women's discourse). Syncretistic elements that cross-cut church and lay practices of purification-exorcism (ocular, verbal, and gestural) have attracted particular attention in the anthropological and folkloric literature (see also Stewart 1991; Stewart and Shaw 1994), but coffee-cup reading, although practiced throughout Greece, remains apart from church practices and has been comparatively unexplored. One reason for this inattention is that divination is a women's everyday practice tied to feminized space and time: the private and the imputatively premodern. Rigid dichotomies of the public/private, institutional/everyday culture, and modern/traditional enforce the gendered marginalization of the coffee-cup rite. It is not a coincidence that *moira*, as the object of divination, from the view of an 'outside structure', has been relegated to an *ex post facto*

rationalization of the vernacular and the popular, in which every misery is justified as one's fate – which, by extension, translates to individual and collective passivity. (*Moirai* reduced to an individual affair by state and media discourses was also discussed earlier in the context of the multiplication of little street graves in the urbanscape).

In contrast, I claim that those involved in visually centered divination circumscribe within their own practice and discourse the play of presence and absence that bridges the public and private, and that the rural and urban are not reducible to the polarity of individual and collective. The person who chooses to invest in visual objectification and power assumes a masculinist position, and this visibility is not identical to the visibility of the divinatory subject; the latter focuses equally on the invisible, a predilection that is frequently associated with women. To engage in the socially dominant gaze is to become visible, to acquire social presence and enter into, and to maneuver within, the webs of social intimacy. To choose not to see, by contrast, means to look elsewhere, to the outside, toward that which is not present but subsists at the threshold of the visible and invisible, just like the poet who is concerned with the absence in the word and the dreamer who looks for the absence in divinatory dream sign. Thus, invisibility lies with the person, the person who cultivates it for others in presencing the edge of the socially nonvisible.

Divinatory subjects are considered to be ever present to the degree that they cross-present time with a time to come. The dreamer, for instance, interprets the dream sign on the basis of the absence of what has not yet happened. The coffee-cup reader reads in the cup the imprinted shadows of real people, places, and events. Shadow in Greece has always had a texture; it has never been a flat, photocopied image. Sadness or worry, for instance, is often detected as 'a shadow in one's eyes'. Walking through Greek villages, even today, one can find 'steps' painted in front of yards and doors. As an American friend of mine remarked years ago after observing the white marks on dirt and cement, 'So! If you cannot have stairs here, you simply paint them'.

According to Pliny, gazing at and then outlining shadows on rock is the origin of art; representation begins as the depiction of absence.⁹ Pliny tells how the shadow of a departing loved one was outlined on a wall as a trace of the soon-to-be absent other; the shadow represents death, and it depicts the absence of the sensation of the other rather than being simply an attempt to duplicate the other. In this context, the lyrics of a classic Greek love song are evocative: 'Your window remains shut. Just open half the shutter for me to see your icon',¹⁰ meaning to see your shadow or to see you as a fleeting shadow.

As a Maniat exhumer said to me during my earlier fieldwork, 'Exhumation? You open the coffin and for a moment you only see a shadow, the whole dead.' The shadow is the brief re-presencing of the now absent flesh. The bones that appear immediately after do not carry the iconic association with the previous identity of the dead, nor does their re-ordering afterwards that forms the new body (in contrast to the restoration of the previous order, for example, by the archaeologist).



FIGURE 9.1 Stairs

Divination and the involuntary body

Involuntary gestures of the body are not limited to evil-eye beliefs. In one of my return visits to Athens some years ago, when I lived in the United States, I called a close Greek friend of mine on the phone as soon as I arrived. To my question ‘How come you do not sound surprised I am calling from Athens?’ she replied, ‘When you are about to come, I catch my body often gesturing the way you do. Then I know the phone will ring soon.’ As I entered my apartment building, the cleaning lady, a

Greek, looked at me and exclaimed, ‘Oh, welcome, my sweet lady! I knew I was going to see someone unexpectedly today, my eye was twinkling all day!’

‘Listening’ to the involuntary gestures of the body has been integral to divination. Greeks ‘listened to their ear’: When the left ear buzzed, good *hamberi* (news) would be heard soon, and when the right ear buzzed, the person anticipated bad news and would bless him or herself as prophylaxis. This bifurcation is an antiphony of body parts and senses and demonstrates that the body signifies through or is signified by more than just the ocular (see also Hirschkind 2001; Stoller 1987). The ear translates visual markers and the ocular transmutes into auditory affects. Like the re-readings of the coffee-cup diviner (see below), the body reads and dialogues with itself as an entangled part of the world that requires interpretation.

In the film *Out of Africa* (Pollack 1985), a young African speaks on behalf of his ill foot. Body parts talk or, more concretely, exchange messages with other body parts, both internal and external. To do so, they ‘interiorize’ the ‘voice’ of the mimicked part. If a subject sneezes or feels itchy in some part of the body during or following divination, the diviner takes it as a sign of verification of her divination. Hiccoughs are translated as ‘someone is talking about you’ (*kapios se meletai*; *meletao* means ‘to study, observe, take care, think of, talk about’). In evil-eye exorcisms, the healer takes on the evil, which causes her or him to compulsively yawn. When the afflicted person begins to yawn too, the evil leaves his or her body and, through the body of the yawning healer, is released. Bodies talk, and their antiphonic dialogues mobilize and exchange emotions and senses (see also discussion of *eros* in Chapter 6). In this context, involuntary gestural divination and directed divinatory reading are forms of witnessing.

Evil eye is an English translation of what Greeks literally refer to as ‘bad eye’ (*kako mati*) or simply ‘eye’. The terms evil and exorcism point more to a religious/ecclesiastical vocabulary. Coffee-cup readers translate evil as ‘enemy’ (*ehtros* or *ohtros*). In Greece, evil eye is the eye that ‘eats’; the tongue also eats. Both stand for the opened transgressive orifice, the bodily limen that either produces or internalizes evil as the outside. A misfortune, an accident, or an illness is attributed to *ghlossofaghia* (*ghlossa* is tongue, and *faghia* eating). ‘Someone eats you with the eyes’ is a common expression referring to evil-eye infliction or simply to persistent looks of admiration. A related saying, ‘The village’s buzz is God’s anger’ (*horiou voui theou orghi*), points to the sound of tongues talking – an uncontrollable orificial aggression, in the form of casual comments. Envy, rumor, and gossip cause misfortune, such as punishment resulting from God’s anger, of transcendental origin. ‘Evil tongue’, known as *farmakoghlossa* (poison tongue), is another form of affliction. Such forms of acoustic violence are often sensed as an earthquake, which is preceded by noise from the outside and followed by shaking and disintegration.

During our casual exchange of news, after a routine medical examination, my doctor in Athens recollected the story of an old lady in his home village:

Every single time she met a gorgeous young woman admired by all, she greeted her with a derogatory word [*ghia sou plakoutsomita mou*, hi, my flat-nosed one], till she was confronted by the [woman's] brother. She was doing it to avoid inflicting evil eye on the beautiful woman, he concludes instructively.

Silencing and 'low voicing' as self-surveillance of the orifice, verbal or optical, are techniques for controlling pollution. The old lady's words aimed at warning as much as preventing. Spitting also is a preventative method: 'Let me spit at you so I do not inflict you' is a saying that used to follow almost all encounters. Yet one can inflict oneself. Self-infliction causes the same symptoms as infliction by others.

The act of evil-eye exorcism is known as *xematiasma*. *Xematiazo* is a verb that means literally 'I take one's eyes out.' In this sense, it is used also in everyday conversations to threaten punishment or hardship. To 'take one's eye out' (*vghazo to mati*) metaphorically means 'I hit someone behind the back', that is, slander someone. A similar expression of punishment is 'I will take your tongue out' or 'I will pull your ear out', implying 'so you do not talk badly again' or 'so that you listen next time'.

I remember the evil-eye exorcism performed on me in Mani in the late 1980s: During a usual women's afternoon coffee session, I felt suddenly ill. I asked for an aspirin, and one of the women stared at me. She started an exorcism by silently reciting the proper secret 'words' and, then, yawning constantly, tearing, and feeling out of breath, exclaimed, '*xestomiastika*' (losing my mouth-chin; *stoma* is mouth); 'My child, you are really supped up by someone', she said. She called for help; an old lady from next door took a long handkerchief, stretched it to a straight line, and, as she engaged in silent recitation, moved her open palm over it from beginning to end, as if measuring its length. She identified the cause of my discomfort as 'male eye' (caused by a male), and the exorcism ended with blessings and a crossing of me. I felt fine.

In a house visit later, I witnessed a similar event but the technique changed to dropping olive oil into a glass of water, with the vanishing oil interpreted as a sign of evil eye infliction. The exorcism continued silently until the oil stopped dissolving in the water. In some cases, during the spell-blessing the exorcist goes through each of the body parts, recounting those that must be cleansed of evil eye, a process known as *xemetrima* or *sarandisma* (see also Veikou 1998); the former means 'counting out', the latter brings to mind the *sarandisma* (*saranda* means 40) of the woman after giving birth, that is, the 40 days of her liminality before she could go out to 'circulate' freely again.

In some areas, exorcists also burn herbs, such as olive leaf or bay leaf. The olive tree is ever present: The leaf is used for burning, the oil is used for testing and for blessing (e.g., in church rituals also, the priest crosses one's forehead with oil), and the expression 'the water drank the oil' describes oil drops absorbed by water during exorcism. In colloquial Greek, the expression 'he took (squeezed) the oil out of me' means he tortured me, drained me of my energy, like the oil is pressed from the olive. Just as the olive is compressed, crushed (*sinthlivete*) to liquefy, so is the human body: Someone can be crushed, *sinthlivete* (note the passive voice), from too much sadness (*thlipsi*).

Similar exorcisms and blessings occur for houses as well as plants and animals in modern times. They too can get ill or die from evil-eye infliction. A medical doctor and acupuncturist in Athens entrusted me with the following story, asking for an explanation from the anthropologist:

Running in the fields, I see a prickly pear bush full of fruit fallen down blocking the path. I pass around it and I see ahead an old lady known as an evil eye inflictor, traveling slowly on her donkey. 'Hi grandma, did you just see the prickly pear?' 'Oh, my child, I did, I admired it for its ripe fruit and it fell', she said sadly. At another point in my life I see a neighbor's horse falling sick suddenly. It is there lying on the dirt, and all veterinarian doctors from the surrounding towns can do nothing, till the evil eye exorcist of the village comes and the horse stands up shaking its head, being fine in a second.

The spell

As I was writing this piece, my ear suddenly caught the radio playing in the next room, an informal talk on the persistence of evil-eye belief today; I smiled at the coincidence. The program¹¹ opened the subject to discussion, and phone calls began to pour in from listeners, mainly women, all over the country, 'sharing' experiences and verifying the effectiveness of exorcism. Some, eager to 'help' others, to alleviate discomfort caused by evil-eye infliction, also recited their spells. My phone rang and an elderly, remote relative of mine who has continued to 'bless me' often since my childhood, yelled from the other side of the line: 'They speak truth, but who on earth heard of giving your spell (*ta loyia*) out in public! What do they think it is, an aspirin? What value do these spells have now?'

Her reference to aspirin set the record straight. Aspirin is a medicine of a different therapeutic system; it is also cheap, not only because it costs very little money but also because it can be easily found anywhere by anybody. Giving or receiving it is not a valuable exchange, a meaning creating bond, but a routine transaction involving an item for functional use. Far from a substance of sharing and reciprocity, aspirin alleviates symptoms and, after it is swallowed, leaves no marks on one's body for others to observe. It is not a gift (e.g., that the gifted exorcist extracts from the self to offer to another) but a utility item, and utilitarian objects have no symbolic meaning, they do not 'speak'. I could not avoid flashing back to those anthropological studies of evil eye that cite abundant spells as socio-anthropological evidence.

I personally was given 'the words' (*ta loyia*) by a male neighbor in my country home. Of rural origin, he is now a civil engineer in town. 'I was taught by my mother long ago. I do it all the time and I see [feel] the effect immediately', he said. He gladly agreed to tell me the 'secret words' but only on a Good Friday. He rushed to give me a rational explanation for the evil eye, the kind of scientific explanation one would expect from a civil engineer speaking to another urban-educated person: 'It is transferring of magnetic waves

that unbalance people, thus afflicting some.’ But he admitted he had no explanation for how the exorcism worked. The only thing of which he was certain was that it worked; it did so despite the ‘incoherent’, rather ‘irrational’ content of ‘the words’.¹² He volunteered to perform an exorcism for me anytime I needed it, over the phone from Athens. Cellphones ensure immediate contact, which has made them particularly popular in Greece.¹³

In one of my casual conversations with a young academic, she mentioned frequently phoning her mother, a pediatrician practicing and living in Crete, and asking her to perform evil-eye exorcisms for her young son whenever she suspected he was inflicted. I asked her if she has received ‘the words’ herself from her mother. ‘No, I prefer to call her, but when I asked her once what are her secret *loyia*, she claimed she just recites seven times the Lord’s Prayer’, she replied. And she added emphatically, ‘If you only saw her when she does it, she is so concentrated as if she goes to another world.’ The importance lies not just in the words or in reading signs ‘accurately’, ‘with precision’. Likewise, my elderly friend who could no longer read printed text without glasses often chose to read coffee cups without them.

The two women just mentioned are both trained in modern science, one a medical doctor and the other a German-educated neuropsychologist, yet both switch from one code to the other in everyday life, pointing to the syncretism of two different cultural codes, two modes of cognition. The spells themselves reveal the syncretisms between traditional practices and church practice. The spell I was entrusted with mixes rural imagery (animals and open markets) and natural forces, such as deep-sea waters, with Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saint healers and calls for a reciprocal donation (as in the excerpt ‘St. Anargiri, first doctors of the world, donation you gave, donation you received’).

★

Cup: a cosmological interior

Coffee in Greek is known as *kafes*. The word coffee, however, comes from the Turkish word *kahveh*, which, in turn, comes from the Arabic word *kahwa* or *qahwah*. When various kinds of coffee beans and ways of making coffee penetrated Greek social life, *kafes* acquired a distinct name. Thus, the debate about whether coffee is Greek or Turkish intensified a couple of decades ago and eventually led to the replacement of the name ‘Turkish coffee’ (*tourkikos kafes*) by ‘Greek coffee’ (*elinikos kafes*) in everyday life. (The debate reoccurs on certain occasions as shown in Chapter 10).

Greek or Turkish, coffee has always carried an exotic aura. Indicative of this are the trademarks of coffee companies in Greece. One of the oldest and most popular brands, Loumidis, for instance, features a parrot, symbolizing faraway places, in particular, Brazil, a most exotic referent in Greek culture. As one historical account attests, ‘Numerous colporteurs that plow the streets of Europe by carrying on their backs the glittering tools of their work – coffee pots, trays, cups, spoons and sugar – transferred the steaming, intoxicating sermon of coffee’ from the East to the West (Banks et al. 2005, 37).

Originally, coffee was consumed in religious ceremonies, restricted to the mosque, or taken by medical prescription (for kidney stones, arthritis, coughs, etc.). Muslims were convinced that the drink was a gift from Allah (ibid., 15). The incorporation by the Greek Church of evil eye and dreaming but its exclusion of coffee-cup reading may be related to coffee's association with Muslim religious belief and practice.

The reading of the coffee cup has been associated with Turkish culture, a left-over of Turkish colonialism, and thus is seen as anti-Christian and sinful by the Greek Church. It persists as a women's practice and therefore is covertly performed in private spaces. The reading involves one drinking the cup's liquid contents, which reveals a thick layer of sediment at the bottom (*katakathi*). Then the cup is surrendered to the reader who turns it over, emptying the sediment into a saucer. This sedimented matter, coming from the bottom up, writes one's past, present, and future *moira* on one's cup.

The coffee cup in Greece is read when the 'writing' inside has solidified. While the residue is still wet and soft, 'the cup' is still forming. It is solidified when it has dried out, that is, the residue has acquired its final shape, color, and texture. It is then ready to communicate. The coffee cup is read just like the pregnant body, cooked food, and baked bread were read in the past. Cooked food and bread represented the body of the person for whom they were prepared (Seremetakis 1991, 68; 1996, 26–28). A person did not cook for just anyone. Likewise, Greek coffee is 'baked' in various ways (coffee is 'baked' until it rises to form a top, *kaimaki* – the top implying sedimentation, texture in taste), and each signifies a particular personality and mood. It was a sign of affection, intimacy, and shared substance to remember how one drank his or her coffee and to 'bake' it accordingly.

Preparing coffee involves its proper 'baking' to form *kaimaki* and the addition of the proper amount of sugar. No other substance or liquid is added to the coffee, for that would dilute its texture; filtered or other foreign coffees have been seen as tasteless 'boiled water' (*nerozoumi*). It was the very texture, the 'thickness' in taste, and the anticipated sediment at the bottom that satisfied. Who wanted to leave an empty cup? Sounds also accompanied the sipping of coffee in the old days, as the lips and tongue collaborated to withhold grains while swallowing the liquid. Associated with rural areas, this way of performative drinking, with its various connotations, was the subject of urban jokes and stigmatization. Traditional coffee cups carried a handle that had the shape and look of a human ear. Holding the cup, the reader holds both the ear of the person being read and the ear of time. Older women used to place their half-opened palm behind their ear in conversations to indicate they did not hear something well – as if the ear were coming closer to catch the voice of the other, or as if to say, 'Speak into my ear.'

The cup represents the body (*soma*); it is read by its various parts (i.e., heart, mind, eyes, and ears).¹⁴ Body parts are transposed onto the cup as symbols. These 'points' (*semia*, sing. *semion*) of the cup represent feelings, thoughts, senses. Reading the cup is a process of exchange of these parts between the reader and the one



FIGURE 9.2

read. Individuals can carry the signs of *moira* on their bodies, in their speech and acts. These signs function as advance tokens of the *moira* to be fulfilled or paid. They are semiotic loans from the future that are given to the present as tokens, as informational credit. ‘The points of the body once awakened are not merely marks on the surface but are an active capacity ... The senses, the “points” of the body, are the sites where matter is subjected to signification. Semiosis here is inseparable from interpersonal exchange’ (Seremetakis 1996, 27).

The arrangement of ‘objects’ (*pragmata*) in the concave cup marks difference and guides the reader. The reader’s recombination of the dispersed objects and arrangements is her interpretation, which she feels, senses, and communicates. It reminds me of the traditional reading of the sky as space (‘the roof over our head’) and the marks of its parts, that is, moon and stars, and their contextual position in foretelling the weather (*kaeros*). *Kaeros* means both ‘weather’ and ‘time’ in Greek. The cup is divided into bottom and top, left and right, outside and inside. Its reading moves clockwise or counterclockwise. It also has a center and peripheries, front stage and back stage. The spatial separation of the cup, front and back and left and right, represents time. Time, then, is represented and represents through space and the objects (parts) in that space. The middle of the cup’s bottom is considered one’s ‘center’, one’s home. But, at the end of the reading, one marks the cup by placing one’s finger there – one point, one rupture, opening to the deep imaginary: the

mark of one's *moira*. That part of the cup now represents the deep future. As an experienced Maniat coffee reader, looking into her cup, said to me in 1992,

Look! exactly at the center, my home; from the side of my heart, you see two figures and tears all around them, meaning that for two people of my heart I shed tears. How can you not believe in the cup? On this date and hour, as if now, my husband died years ago; an hour earlier and some years earlier my father died. [Pointing into the cup for me 'to see'] Here they are! The one figure slim, taller like a column, the column of my home, my husband; the other heavier shorter, my roof, my father. You see?

Yet, she claimed, as most readers do, reading one's own cup 'is not the same [as effective] as when someone else does it'¹⁵ – pointing thus to the necessity of 'witnessing' and 'helping', as well as my inability yet to see.

Symbols, *semia*, in the cup are relational; tears and money are represented almost identically, as many tiny dots. If the dots appear next to or around a (bad) sign indicating anxiety, sadness, trouble, and so on, they are seen as tears. A similar symbol in different context may mean 'accumulated, clustered events'. The cup reader sees multi-dimensionality. The cup is like a cubist painting. One encounters the same complexity in dreams, in which one code captures two or three events. During a cup reading by a younger woman I was told, 'You will receive an important object': I soon received, by mail, my close friend's book, which had just been published. Soon after, I received my own book. Space and time are imprecise, always to be negotiated. Readings, then, are repeated often.

The traditional antiphonic reading required a slow exploration of one's insides – going back and forth in the cup, returning to the same *semion*, point ('I will return to it', as readers say) and, at the end, a combination of *semia*, or *semadhia*, flesh out the puzzle. Space and time in divinatory emplotting are narrative and iconic palimpsests, superimposed on each other; there is no linear, continuous narrative but, rather, analeptic and proleptic interpretation that is rooted in the absence of synoptic plot. *Divinatory narrative emerges as a social and sensory negotiation of a constellation of fragments. That is why readings are always, in effect, re-readings of prior readings.*

Divinations I have encountered do not presume the world is inherently story-shaped but that narrative is assembled in a sequencing of successive divinatory interventions – divination reads itself and thereby mediates and reads the real, past and present, in the divinatory medium and artifact, much in the manner that the different senses of the body read each other in involuntary divinatory gestures.

The moral economy of reading and witnessing

Involuntary movements of the body, such as sneezing or itching during or following the reading, are given verbal verification by the sneezing or itching person or the reader – 'Hi, and I am telling the truth' (*ghia sou ke tin alithia leo*), that is, by

responding 'hi' to the body and translating its sneezing or itching as confirmation of the truth of the reader's discourse.

An antiphonic relation is established between the two bodies. The reader who sneezes or itches takes onto her body the cup, that is, the body of the other, and through the semiotic nerves that connect people, food, language, and objects, travels to the invisible.

The reading of a newcomer usually started with his or her emotional life, that is, if there was or would be marriage, who the husband would be, if enemies were close. The slow weaving of significant events in the person's life was a way of entering the other, interiorizing, and thus inserting the other in a relation of exchange of insides, parts of selves.¹⁶ Urban visitors who considered the practice superstitious or an attribute of backwardness and illiteracy simply remained distant and unrelated, waiting to hear the 'prediction'. Taking the silence of the reader as inability to predict, they left disappointed for 'the reader did not find anything'.

There are different conditions and means of dialogue. A person's inability to enter into reciprocity compels most traditional readers to refuse to read that person's cup, thus indicating that they cannot communicate with a 'closed body' (also referred to in colloquial Greek as a 'closed book').¹⁷ No doubt, for some people, globalization renders human bodies closed. Transnational shared-substance lacking a structure of exchange and voluntary intimacy is perceived as sheer violation of personal space. One's relation, for instance, with the coffee-cup reader presupposed one's 'surrender' to being touched internally while receiving the reader's intimate 'confession' – a prime moment in self reflexivity. This presupposed and established a long and maturing relation. In exposing the self to the other, one engaged in an exchange that could be dangerous, for interiorizing the other to the space of the imaginary presupposed the opening of the other to this space.

The coffee-cup reader, very much like the dreamer, did not guess but perceived. Reading engages all senses; the Greek verb *dhiaesthanome*, in English, 'to guess, to have intuition, to sense', points to the exchanging senses – vision, smell, hearing, tactility (*aesthanome* means 'I sense, feel', and the prefix *di-* means 'cross-', 'inter-'). Thus, the impending or past event is transmitted and transported onto the reader's body parts. The body opens like the earth. An excavation in process. The body to be read is initially incoherent and pre-symbolic, and, by identifying points of the body, the reader reorganizes it. At the end, the reader has moved the decentered other into a new center. The cultivation of and playing with the absent intensifies non-precision in divinatory communication and exchange. Imprecision here is not imposed by the 'culture from above'. It is best considered a negotiation from below; the divinatory coffee-cup reader, for instance, gazes multi-dimensionally.

The reader as witness, like the evil-eye exorcist, takes on the role of the confidant who will 'help' move one to the center of communication again. So does the ethnographer. They are the mediators that take a person from a state of excommunication back to one of antiphonic exchange. Wounds, like illness, for instance, are not to be displayed but confessed. And confession here, unlike a religious or psychoanalytic confession, speaks to cultures of shame and not of guilt.

Shame is not a private concept; rather, it is performative, it requires an audience.¹⁸ As a Greek saying goes, ‘I walk with my forehead clean.’ The body writes on its parts one’s internal feelings and can communicate with other body parts independent of one’s volition. Coffee-cup reading, then, can also be a warning of a future shame.

Illness (and death), a pervasive theme in coffee-cup readings and dream interpretation, is understood as something that invades a person inside and that one resists. One ‘fights a battle’ (*dhini ti mahi*),¹⁹ as the saying goes, which puts one in exile, an internal exile from which one emerges as a winner or loser, thus pointing to a performative concept. If the person loses this battle, that is, dies, he or she embarks on a trip, ‘the last trip’ or ‘the long trip’, as it is said (in both colloquial and public, official language).

An acquaintance in Athens revealed to me at some point that she ‘could tell the coffee’ (meaning, read the cup) and went on to tell me that in the past she often read her own cup as if it were the cup of her friend, who was abroad at the time: ‘I did this when I felt the need to communicate with her, like good old times when we were drinking coffee together.’ If a serious issue came up and the friend from abroad was anxious to know what to expect, the two discussed this mimetic cup over the phone. Senses and bodies across borders.

The reader exhibits a tender protectiveness toward the one read when the signs are bad, in an attempt to redress the ill fate at the same time that it is revealed. This is done with little exorcisms, ways of controlling pollution, such as ‘low voicing’, omission, underemphasizing, and even silencing the ‘bad’ signs.²⁰



FIGURE 9.3

Gendering the invisible

Coffee-cup reading is still practiced today but is not as common as in the past. Given the invasion of Greece by foreign brands of coffee and foreign cafes and restaurants, Greek coffee has been marginalized and, in urban centers, is mainly drunk at home, but it is still prevalent in rural areas. Globalization transforms taste. The space in which coffee readings occur varies. It is usually the kitchen or some imaginatively created on-the-spot 'right space' for an intimate, protected communication. It is definitely a private space, a feminized space.

Public versus private is a dichotomy that structures all vernacular divination practice. In contrast to regular coffee houses in rural areas, which were located outside, in the public square, the women's cafe was usually inside. 'Professional' cup readings developed eventually in the urban centers and used to be very popular. They were very profitable too. Clients usually waited to hear the 'prediction' or 'finding' – a relation of test of accuracy of intuition (intuition as mental abilities to foresee the future). Slowly, these readings were replaced by more 'scientific' means of predicting the future,²¹ like astrology, whose practitioners found television a useful medium for maximizing profits from a distance. Thus, traditional practitioners such as coffee-cup readers were increasingly pushed out of the market. Coffee-cup reading returned to its original space, the inside.

The social nervous system via involuntary gestures

One can suggest that the increase in networked communication, virtual reality, and transnational economies of scale increases action at a distance on the body. I am thinking, for example, of such events as Chernobyl and the spread of mad cow disease, SARS, environmental pollution, global terrorism, and generic urban stress.

Telephonic intervention, diagnosis, and cure, just like computer intimacy, magnify the ability to act on the body at a distance, this time in service of the afflicted. The mediated body is transferred as shared substance, as repository of symptoms, through an electronic network from the afflicted to the exorcist, who internalizes the symptoms, that is, yawning, hearing, empathy, through her open orifices, in much the same way she would if she were physically co-present.

Evil eye is a recognition that social life always unfolds as a symbolic metaphorical network, in which the body is simultaneously the object, the registrar, and the conduit of virtual action and experience. The telephonic healing episode, with the instrument attached prosthetically to the ear and mouth, extends the afflicted self into a networked space as a virtualized shared substance; there, the afflicted is rejoined mimetically by the virtualized ear and voice and senses of the healer-auditor. In many ways, this healing performance returns the earlier medical agenda of telephonic technology, as documented by Jonathan Sterne (2003). For Alexander Graham Bell, widely believed to be the telephone's inventor, the telephonic instrument enabled a writing of the voice that was stored in machinic space only to be re-transcribed on the other end in a re-audited virtual presence. He

experimented with telephonic transcription as a corrective to the disability of deafness. In telephonic divination, the hearer re-audits the pain and disease of the afflicted through a telephonic body that re-presences and transcribes the symptoms and their cause onto the healer's senses and orifices – a virtual reenactment that is structured as rite of exchange.

As is apparent from a review of the existing literature on Greek evil eye and other divinatory practices, largely positioned within rural or archaic contexts, evil eye is readily culturalized and ahistorically circumscribed by ethnographers because it resonates with their own cultural habitus. Ethnography as participant-observation is largely positioned as ocular appropriation and objectification aided and abetted by etic categories such as kinship and rigidified gender binaries and, with respect to evil eye, in particular, by psychoanalysis as a pathologizing diagnostic discourse.

These epistemic apparatuses constitute the canonical divinatory apparatus of Western neo-Enlightenment social science that renders the murky particularity of cultural and historical peripheries visible and ascertainable social facts. Thus, evil eye and theodicy-related practices are seen as hypervisual and as inhabiting a Durkheimian somatized individual/collective dichotomy in which both the perpetrator and the afflicted victim are treated as individualized isolates, divorced from the collective and attempting reintegration through the medium of supernatural aggression or divinatory redress. Categories such as envy, visibility, aggression, and evil are psychologized and reified and deployed as vehicles for dehistoricizing the societies and communities in which such practices are found.

One of the goals of this book is to show the degree to which evil eye and coffee-cup divination are practices of holistic, embedded multisensory exchange; in fact, they are practices aiming to redress the body that is fragmented and sensorially turned against itself by the shock structures of modernity. Via the semiotic tendrils of the coffee cup or the network of telephonic divination, the body is transcribed onto a post-divinatory sensory and somatic web, in which intelligibility is recuperated by reading, semiosis, and exegesis.

Remediations

The above practices of sensory and somatic reconstitution respond to a new occultation and re-enchantment of the neoliberal transnational economy. Jean and John Comaroff (1999) and Peter Geschiere (1997), in the African context, have described the degree to which neoliberal economic penetration is experienced as the workings of clandestine invisible techno-economic and communicative forces, aided and abetted by magical technologies of risk and enrichment. The cultural presentation of transnational capitalism and fiscal risk aligns economic accumulation and media experience – a potent combination of invisible causation and hypervisual effects in consumer economies.

Rather than scarcity and envy in a Hobbesian world of binary negation, one must think of the eye of the modern consumer as both filled with and colonized

by the enchantment of trans-local commodities moving on and off the stage of the local, rendering the latter a permeable reality, a reality in which the loss of social place and embodied emplacement intersect. The commodity form in this framework is not exhausted by use value but, rather, becomes a conduit or pathway of desire, a means without ends, an unending horizon through which individual identities can dissipate or be siphoned off by invisible forces. As Jean and John Comaroff (1999) write, this process constitutes a crisis in the capacity to control economic production and social reproduction, such as the reproduction of self and society through embodied and sensorial practices.

Witchcraft and divination in this process constitute a ground-up technique and sign making that remediate the seemingly transcendental pleasure-endowing media of neoliberal economies. Remediation here is both the reoccupation of terrains of communication and sense-making carved out by existing media regimes, but it is also their defamiliarization and repositioning.

The notion of 'remediation' was launched by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999), who restricted it to the visual domain. Their focus on media (how media remediate other media) at the expense of mediation practices, thus masking power relations, has been effectively critiqued by Birgit Meyer (2005) in the context of Ghana. Susan Buck-Morss (1989), via Benjamin, has shown how remediation is a citational operation that colonizes the residual media regime to redress the failed utopian promises and violence of that regime. It is a rewriting of the wish images and promissory notes of existing apparatuses of desire into a structure that remediates the very body that resulted from the failed redemption of prior media eschatologies.

By stepping back from an overwhelmingly visual orientation, one encounters the Greek coffee-cup reading, which, in an increasingly consumer-oriented culture, ritualized an act of consumption, transforming it into an act of shared substance, that is, social reproduction between the reader and the read client. The cup sign readings spin out tendrils that connect disparate persons, places, and events formerly experienced as excommunicated; through these tendrils, the one read reconnects to a social-corporate body, a socialized flesh through which the individual is reproduced. In this sense, the act of consumption in the coffee-cup reading stands as a counter-practice and critique of individualized and atomizing acts of commodity consumption.

The cup's disclosure of the invisible stratigraphy of the present and the future remediates desire staged by the mass-commodity form, particularly in its visual presentation. Likewise, I would say, telephonic and telepresented divination and evil-eye exorcism exist in a remediated and citational relationship with the regimes of mass communication, which the networked subject frequently experiences as forms of invasive penetration and excommunication. The sheer act of divinatory redress by telephone places the afflicted into communicability, in a socialized nexus of reciprocity, a dialogic of bodies.

To the degree that both the evil-eye experience and the quotidian densities that are clarified in the coffee-cup reading are registered in the medium of involuntary

experiences and gestures of the body, urban Greek divination constitutes a renewed and renewable volunteerism of the body. It is a redressing of the pained body in involuntary partition, its re-appropriation as a metaphor of social reproduction, and, further, the extension of the body and senses along a social nervous system as a reparation of the sensorial body. Benjamin posited the model of tactile knowledge as that which overcomes distance in commodity cultures, and I have encountered this tactility in the ritualization of shared substance, in bodies' spontaneous exegesis of everyday life, in involuntary gestures and the reincorporation of the telephonic, and in the somatization of technology in telephonic divination.

Indeed, the involuntary gestures of the body, which, for social scientists, are emblematic of the rural or archaic, are, in the cinema of Charlie Chaplin, the dramaturgy of Berthold Brecht and Samuel Beckett, and the literature of Franz Kafka, the exemplary representation of failed subject formation. This theme is also at issue in the Greek urban divinatory complex. The progression from the Enlightenment subject to the subject of the post-Enlightenment crisis of modernity is a progression from subject formation to subject deformation. In the former, subjects affirm themselves through reflexive speech and dialogue, in which the mouth is foregrounded and the body of the subject gradually disappears (the professorial busts in Vienna's university campus come back to mind). In the latter, the body no longer represents anything outside of itself; it is, indeed, incapable of sustained coherent representational intentionality. There the self is represented as body, a body at war with itself, a body in a state of nervous breakdown, that is to say, a body divorced from the nervous system.

In Brecht and Beckett, in the theater of cruelty and the absurd, in the cinema of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, and in Bakhtin's notions of the carnivalesque body pitted against transcendental hierarchies, one encounters the body as involuntary puppet, as a compendium or archive of involuntary gestures, emerging as body that stumbles over itself. The body of modernity is clown-like, uncoordinated, and overinflated; it trips and falls and inflicts injury on itself.

Modernity, with its violence, expresses itself through the theater of the body as failed subject, as split into object and subject. The scene of globalized modernity is represented through the body and, in urban Greek divination, through involuntary gestures, through the invasive penetration of another's gaze but also through the body's tangible shared substances, surrogates, and extensions. These are the substances that are deployed to represent the body in a state of self-distantiation in the coffee-cup and evil-eye readings – substances that are deployed to reassemble the body in interpersonal divination.

On the other side, the Greek television series based on *The Witches of Smyrna* stands as a televisual mass-market appropriation of divinatory magic, of interpersonal divination. It presents a virtual experience of magical power that media technology has promised but never delivered. It is now delivered in what is presented as anachronistic magic.

Notes

- 1 For an extensive discussion of *moira*, see Seremetakis 1991; for a different perspective, see Herzfeld 1981.
- 2 For a fuller discussion of warning dreams, see Seremetakis 1991.
- 3 In anthropology, this idea has mainly been linked to the project of colonial domination of non-Western cultures and has received critical examination by a number of scholars; see, for example, Asad 1975 and Fabian 1983.
- 4 For discussion and analysis of 'the antiphony of the senses', see *The Senses Still* (Seremetakis 1996), which also addresses the social estrangement of the structural intimacy of urbanity.
- 5 The term mediatized stems from the phrase 'the mediatization of war' coined by Allen Feldman (2005) to define the mutual absorption of the media and the military and its consequences in everyday North American life. Jean and John Comaroff (1999) also discuss mediatized sorcery.
- 6 The semiotics of the telephone here put into question the idea of the individualization and atomization of the technology user.
- 7 A literature review and the contribution of each one of the numerous studies, in Greek, English, and French, that have sparingly or in detail, implicitly or explicitly, dealt with the evil-eye belief and practice (see, e.g., Dundes 1980; Favret Saada 1980) is beyond the scope of this article. One of my main concerns here is to contribute with a framework that 'inserts' divination practices squarely in modernity, because the persistence of evil eye, for instance, in modernity has yet to be accounted for in the context of the Mediterranean, let alone Greece. Via the concept of the 'social nervous system', I provide here both a description of divination in modernity and a theory of modernity.
- 8 Veikou's (1998) book-length study (originally her dissertation) is a recent example of this perspective. Herzfeld (1981, 1986) also focuses on that which is 'being seen', but unlike other studies of evil eye from 1955 to date, he adopts a semiotic approach that does not attribute the cause of evil eye to envy but, rather, to bad luck, as one's 'failure to satisfy those membership criteria' (Herzfeld 1981, 560) and norms of social interaction that ensure his or her village inclusion; evil eye, in his perspective, is a symbol of social marginality, of inclusion and exclusion – those inflicted are protected, whereas those inflicting are not accepted, based on an ours/foreign (*kseni*) dualism.
- 9 Gaius Plinius Secundus (23–79 CE), better known as Pliny the Elder, recounted a Greek myth: A Corinthian maid traced her lover's silhouette on a wall to remember him when he went abroad. In Pliny's story about the origin of representation, the object of the young woman's love was the shadow of the other. It must be noted that the 'shadow' is a central conception in West African cosmologies as well.
- 10 *To parathyro klismeno to parathiro klisto, anixe to ena filo tin ikona sou na idho*, lyrics of a traditional song (of unknown writer) interpreted by many contemporary popular singers.
- 11 *Antenna network*, January 16, 2007, 10 p.m.
- 12 See Tambiah 1994:117 on irrationality, inconsistency, and contradiction between one's actions and objectives.
- 13 For a critical discussion of facile oppositions such as technology and belief, media and authenticity, see Birgit Meyer's (2005) study of video movies and Pentecostal views of the invisible in the context of Ghana.
- 14 On the coordination of the flesh, soul, heart, and senses and its externalization as performance in the context of Egypt, see Hirschkind (2001).
- 15 See African parallels in Stoller (1987): One is not supposed to read his or her own shells.
- 16 Catherine Lutz has also shown in the Pacific that 'emotion words ... [constitute] statements about the relationship between a person and an event' (1982, 113).
- 17 This relates to what Stoller calls for: 'remain[ing] open to the world' (2009, 157).

- 18 Gilmore has stated that 'shame differs from guilt in that it requires an audience; shame is visual' (1982, 198). I contend that it is performative and that performance is not just visual.
- 19 Pain is the embodiment of this battle. A transpersonal and allegorical paradigm of pain can also be found in Greek contemporary popular music, as shown in Chapter 8.
- 20 For a discussion of 'low voicing' and 'high voicing' in this context, see Seremetakis 1991, 56–77.
- 21 See also Stoller (2009, 15) on rationality in the pursuit of truth via the precision of language and logic.

10

A LAST WORD ON DREAMING

The above discussion of divination in modernity aimed at shedding light on links among neo-liberalism, technology, modernity, post-modernity, and cultural practice. Divination and involuntary gestures of the body are practices of holistic, embedded, multisensory exchange in Greece. Involuntary gestures refract and register the impact of the social nervous system on the individual and become the media that, in turn, enable the reading of that social nervous system. The concept of the 'nervous system' originated with Michael Taussig as the sensorial somatic registration of both everyday life and the effects of the social structure. In this book, it is descriptive of involuntary gestures of the body as a form of inter-subjective communication that is not part of the mass media apparatus or dominant public culture.

In the context of ancient Greece, Vernant (1983) has discussed the dream image, the shadow (shade) and warnings as belonging to the same semantic system that also included the Colossos – a mortuary effigy associated with the psyche (soul) and representing the world of the invisible. The double shows strong continuity between archaic and modern beliefs concerning the dead: one can have social relations with the dead mediated by acts and language. The lament, for instance, is the most articulate form of the presentation of the double of the dead for it builds a verbal biography of the dead and at the same time functions as a medium for conversing with the dead. So is dreaming.

Prospective dreaming in Greece is part of an operant divinatory complex. It was first revealed to me during my early fieldwork in the Peloponnese; thus, the notion of embodied practices of re-interpretive action opened the key position of divinatory dreaming in my ethnography. Contrary to the understanding of dreaming as subjective, psychological and irrational, I draw on the anthropology of dreaming that treats the oneiric as rooted, in-depth cultural structures. This perspective is developed further by looking at divinatory dreaming with its focus on encoded temporal

transformation as a privileged channel into surplus unvoiced, under-represented historical experience of everyday life. In this sense, dreaming becomes another form of historicization and thus a theoretical language of analysis and depiction formally and semantically equivalent to the tools of the Western ethnographer. In my first long term fieldwork it became for me a medium of ethnographic insight and expression. Thus, I identified connections between dream logic and the historical experience of economic transformation. These issues echo the following self-reflexive excerpts from *The Last Word*, which like the exhumed bones of a cherished significant other, are released to re-surface a present preoccupied with novel biological-scientific predilections and based on the assumption that the ethnographic particular has long been exhausted.

Dreaming is a territory that most eloquently challenges scientism; in fact, it is the territory of divination, ritual and magic in anthropology that reinforced the discipline's discontent with realism and marked the self-reflexive turn in and of the field. It is no accident that this is the territory least developed in European anthropology. Dreaming presents a challenge to the taken-for-granted voluntarism in the ethnographic practice, as much as it confronts the therapeutic or cathartic ethic proposed by psychological perspectives for the dreaming or mourning experiences in non-Western others. It problematizes the notion that detachment of the self is a preliminary necessity for the setting up of object relations, for creating text. Discourse always presupposes the indirect presence of the other; it is not a before-and-after relation. And as Paul Ricoeur would agree, text or performance has its autonomous trajectory; its witnesses subject it to multiple appropriation that exceeds the intentionality of the actor. Meaning emerges in this excess beyond intentionality. To translate this into the fieldwork situation, the interpretation of culture is always a performance of the cross-cultural. For culture becomes visible only in cross-cultural decentering.

In dreaming also, the emotions and senses are refigured as a social text. Finally, dreaming detaches the material world from the strictures of the literal, opening it up to allegorical reception. Thus, dreaming speaks to the social construction of a submerged counter-memory that runs in a discontinuous fashion alongside sanctioned official public memory. For culture is a representation of historical experience. This approach is contrasted with that of Freud, who identified certain stereotypical dream signs that are multiple, individual and private, but their subtext was unitary or monosemic, such as the Oedipal. In this case, dreams are retrospective. I (re)presented, instead, a culture where the signs were public, collective and conventionalized but their significance was polysemic, they were subjected to multiple interpretations, and in this case dreaming is prospective.

The salience of these Greek data for European social theory could be further appreciated by simply considering the close parallel, for instance, in Castoriadis's writing on the social imaginary. Castoriadis treats the social imaginary in a Durkheimian fashion, as a holistic collective representation – a symbolic apparatus that underwrites the pragmatic activity and commonsensical reception of

institutional life. He does not account for the historical reality that more than one social imaginary can develop in a social field – which can no longer remain a closed totality. My ethnographic encounters, instead, revealed that the sheer asymmetry of gender representation, the strategic manipulation of death and divination ensured the impossibility of social closure, of a holistic ideology of totalization.

The embedding of the imaginary and processes of *poesis* in material artifact and relations in the specific culture poses further challenges to dominant theoretical edifices of European metropole and sets an agenda that should have been pursued in other locales across Europe. Several reasons that this has not happened are also discussed and contextualized in the history of (native) anthropology in the next chapter. The re-presentation of dreaming is complicit with my demonstration of ways of extracting theory from the contextualized particular, the micro and the paranormal, and fostering in-depth cross-cultural dialogics.

In the human sciences, linguistic and mental representation has been the dominant depictive model. Integral to the dialogical tendency in ethnographic perception is the relativization of such customary channels of depiction – this goes hand in hand with the resituating of local concepts as methodological channels. Foucauldian, Frankfurt School, and Durkheimian perspectives are founded on an ideational model of language as the paradigm of social relations and structure. However, linguistic representation (of death and gender) is a component of a much wider material culture of depiction that includes geography and weather, food, colors, direction and somatic artifacts. In turn, a non-commodified or post-commodified dimension of the material world is opened up by the material culture of death and divination. Particularly in pre-technological areas where there was absence of specialized institutions of transcription and recording, people deployed the full resources of their material surround in a fashion that constitutes an active resistance to the dominance of commodity culture and its built-in norms of utility. The most metaphysical dimensions are pre-metaphysical, already embedded and inseparable from material artifacts, sensibilities and their relations. Sociological approaches often fail to comprehend and tackle *the difference between metaphysical and pre-metaphysical or primitive cultures. The metaphysical originates in modernity.*

The anti-Cartesianism of such non-modern cultures speaks to a rehabilitation of everyday life structures, which is relevant to the Greek experience of modernity. In modernity, instrumental rationality reduces everyday life to utilities, functions and restricted semantic economies. The material surround is desymbolized by the fetishism or prescribed utilities and robbed of its symbolic capacities. However, in rural and urbanized Greece, the economy of emotion and divinatory reception was embedded in communities of communicative objects that are bearers of history and stratigraphic experience. This semantic sedimentation of and dialogical relation with the material world renders everyday existence into an ongoing allegorical reading of experience.

Intangible culture

Thus, dreaming also speaks to and challenges recent trends to salvage or safeguard everyday intangible cultures – a concern also of institutions and organizations such as UNESCO. Intangible culture, which has mostly been part of the uninheritable, is now becoming central to the project of recuperating, of inheriting the uninheritable by modes of transmission of that which was deemed to be devoid of inheritance value. Europe, tied to the archaic in terms of art, philosophy and forms of government (democracy), has been the model for Greece that has been a Europeanizing nation since World War II. Now people are questioning both. This opens up the space for intangible culture. Unlike the archaic, intangible culture is not tied to the past; it is inheriting the uninheritable, bypassing the institutional. As an invited member of the National Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Greek Ministry of Culture, I witnessed again this inherent institutional difficulty to comprehend everyday culture as anything beyond the archaic and/or folkloric documentation dedicated to the salvaging of old rural customs and practices – where performers are seen as the bearers of worthy traditions, transmitters of culture from one generation to the next. But inheriting folklore is not inheriting the uninheritable. Dreaming, for example, defies any formalization. How does one inherit dream interpretation?

UNESCO, having established World Heritage status for major monumental sites of heritable value, has recently turned to the archiving of old but still living and/or emerging cultures around the world.¹ The nineteenth-century definition of civilization is thereby broadened to encompass everyday practice. This was also exemplified in the 2017 New Year Vienna Philharmonic performance telecast I watched: a visual-acoustic performance of classical music-ballet extending to and blending everyday scapes, objects and sounds. Vienna had also earlier attempted to archive its everyday coffee culture as intangible heritage in need of safeguarding.

Although the signs for this turn to the quotidian passed unnoticed by the Greek Ministry of Culture,² the name and identity of coffee did not. Thus, as soon as Turkey responded to Vienna's claims over coffee culture by reclaiming the name of coffee ('Turkish coffee'), Greece raised 'property rights' after the fact: coffee is 'Greek coffee!'

In this context of a non-existent concept of everyday culture and practice, a non-exploration and understanding of the present quotidian, the main goal, stated or unstated, remains the archaicization of the Greek cultural landscape and its elevation into touristic mono-functionality.

In and out

My self-reflexive understanding of dreaming occurred early in the field. In the local 'women's cafe' one afternoon I nonchalantly spoke of a nightmare I had experienced. An elderly lady didactically corrected my word when I recounted the dream. What I called a nightmare, was for them a vision.

As my understanding of the performative culture of those women deepened, I began to construct a context for that system of dream denotation which at first lacked a reference. This certainly entailed a voluntary dimension, but the experience of dreaming was arbitrarily imposed on my consciousness. This initial realization was traumatic. Within me there were now symbols, culturally constructed and conventionalized, that spoke a language for which I had no translation. I had to come to terms with the distance of my dreams from Western and 'northern' paradigms of psychologization, and, more specifically, with the total irrelevancy of Freudian logic to my dream symbology. I also learned soon that such deep wounds stay with you. In the States, some years later, I had a recurring dream: I was walking in Mani's narrow paths flooded by dirty water and scattered stones, with houses on both sides, which suddenly resembled the streets and buildings of Kalamata. I entered a house in which women dressed in black talked of 'those who died abruptly and will never be seen again'. A few days later I heard in the news about the devastating earthquake that hit Kalamata. The dream 'came true' or 'was paid off', as they would say. It was only the beginning. Similar symbols in warning dreams, or 'visions', keep on reappearing. More recently, while I was in Greece they centered on the sea. They 'spoke' of the devastating Indonesian tsunami which followed in 2004, and later the mass drowning of immigrants in the Mediterranean sea. No doubt, old wounds have a life of their own.

Debts and payments

My experience and initial discussion of prospective dreaming opened up an indigenous system of symbolic logic as it was indexed by and indexing economic practice and mortuary practice. In the case of Inner Mani, dream symbolism was linked to precapitalist cognition of money. When women interpreted warning dreams, they speculated on whom the dream 'targets'. The process of locating the target is one of territorialization, an attempt to anchor the signs of the dream in their proper place. The dreamer witnesses fate in a mediated form, receives the message by overcoded, emotionally charged signs. Divination of the warning dreams converts these signs into material events and persons; it is the montage and (re)interpretation of a constellation of fragments.

Dream interpretation in Greek is known as *oniroskopia* – *oniro* is dream and *skopia*, *skopos* mean target, aim, objective, goal, watcher; *skopia* is also part of the word *kerdhoskopia*, which means profit making. Women referred to the realization of a dream as 'the dream has been paid off' (*xoflithi*). In the rest of Greece too, a colloquial phrase is *vghike to oniro*, meaning 'it came true'. A common expression that describes a dying person, an individual dead, the extinction of a household or an area, is *xoflise* ('was paid off'). In its present tense, *xoflao* means to pay off a debt, to fulfill an obligation or task. The completion of a person's life is compared to the closing of an account ledger:

Seal your account book
 that you are holding
 in your hand
 and leave it on the ground
 for the unskilled to read it,
 the teacher and the student
 May a lawyer be found
 To give you the proper help
 For I'm only a rural woman ...
 (*lament excerpt*)

There is an economy of dreaming formed by a relation of debt and payment that links the message of the dream (the sign) to its actualization in social life (the referent). One factor that structures the nature of the debt is the belief that the fulfillment of *moira* (fate) is a payment of a predetermined debt.

Individuals can carry the signs of *moira* on their bodies, in their speech and acts. These signs function as advanced tokens of the *moira* to be fulfilled or paid ...

They are semiotic loans from the future that are given to the present as tokens, as informational credit. This implies that dreams and the general signs of warning are analogous to the semiology of money. Money and dreams circulate between people, places, and temporalities. The signs of the dream, the signs of the warning, like currency, are tokens, language of general value equivalence ... Money encodes economic value in an abstract, detachable free-floating form. Currency and capitalization have been described by Deleuze and Guattari (1977) as deterritorialized value codes. The signs and symbols of the dream and the warning are provisionally free-floating, deterritorialized tokens ...

Dream signs, like currency, are polysemic. Two or more values are encapsulated in the same vehicle. It is this encapsulation of polysemy in a single form that allows both money and dreams to function as languages of value equivalence, which bring events, people, and meanings, previously separated in time and space into a fixed relation. The belief that dreams are 'paid off', that the abstract symbols, signs and tokens of the warning can be decoded and converted into real event replicates all economic logic that is based on precapitalist cultural codes. In a fully commodified society, the inscription of value onto abstract forms such as currency, does not create a relation of lack between the token and its referential value. The circulating currency is accepted as a pertinent substitute of material objects and their value. In contrast, in economies that are not fully commodified, money has a limited autonomy in reference to other economic media. In precapitalist systems of exchange, the token is directly connected to its material reference, author, or site of origin.

(Seremetakis 1991, 61–63)

In contrast to Ariès, (1981), who identified the disappearance of warning beliefs in Europe with the commodification, rationalization, and linearization of time, the warning in Inner Mani was rooted in the non-linear temporalities of dreaming and divination. The inscription of heterogeneous time into the dream sign facilitates the penetration of the present by alterity.

Divination precludes any linear transmission of information for divination is never linear. The warning dream, as one component of a divinatory complex, makes the invisible (future) visible (present). Thus, divination is a visualizing space, just like rituals where things that are invisible become visible. Both can function as meta-commentaries on society and how people communicate, prior to or after technology. (This idea also expands the notion of technique and technology in reference to cultures of communication.)

Moreover, they both run no risk of turning the visible into visual by emplacement, as perhaps a photograph or painting might do, and as Tim Ingold (2007) warns us about. (This was also attested to by the wide-awake dreaming of musicians and poets who dialogue with an absent other as they stand on the border – discussed in Chapter 8.)

★

In the above lament excerpt, composed decades ago, the mourner used the metaphor of the account ledger (*dhefteri* or *tefteri*), the closing of the book, to express the sense of termination. The double meaning of her words speaks of both the literal death of a person and the social death of an indebted living person who is unable to pay off his or her debts and obligations (expressed by the same term *xoflise*). *Dhefteri*, an informal notebook of debts (buying from local stores to pay later), was rendered obsolete in the era of affluence. In the new political era of austerity, it has re-emerged as both word and practice in everyday life that to many resembles a nightmare. In her divinatory lament, the old mourner ironically disclosed her vision of the future.

Notes

- 1 See also Arizpe and Amescua (2013). Also, David Berliner (2013).
- 2 It should be noted here that earlier, Kostas Tzavaras, Minister of Culture at the time, captured the turn to everyday culture on time and set in motion the long dormant Greek National Committee for the Preservation of Intangible Culture.

PART V

Borders of translatability



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11

ON 'NATIVE' ETHNOGRAPHY IN MODERNITY

In this part of the book, by way of conclusion, after the ethnographic fragments in the preceding chapters, I locate my approach to ethnography in relation to wider disciplinary debates and more particularly locate in them the 'native ethnographer'.

To locate this hybrid figure in the discipline's wider context and history, I must step back to the critical decades of the 1970s through the 1990s. At issue then was the nature of ethnographic practice and its textual or narrative forms, strategies and genres; specifically the extent to which modes of representation, styles of narration and depiction were unconsciously entangled in, if not the products of, ethnocentric pre-suppositions, relations of domination, racial and gender hierarchies. The critiques associated with the term 'new ethnography' that began to appear in the late 1970s to mid-1980s stemmed from the late 1960s experience of the anti-Vietnam War movement and constituted a final effort to decolonize American anthropology. American anthropologists became fascinated in the limitations restricting and animating the writing of the Other. Starting with the crucial theoretical work of anthropologists George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1986), the very construction of anthropological objects in ethnographic theory and practice was challenged. Yet, drawing rather superficially on French deconstructionist theory, they questioned the very theoretical and political possibility of performing field research that would not be another futile exercise in imperial objectification and domination. They also challenged the political credibility of other critical discourses like Marxism and structuralism, as well as more traditional perspectives such as British structural functionalism, from the vantage point of their strategies and modes of representation. Thus, economic determinism and binary opposition were seen as culturally specific artifacts and expressions of ethnocentric and logocentric relations of domination promoted by the West.

Europe, from the other side, experienced an incremental discrediting of Marxist frameworks on both the theoretical and political level, which should have inspired a new cultural and historical self-reflexivity. Marxism was seen to offer economic

reductions that were too clumsy for engaging in with the problems of autonomous cultural politics, resurgent ethnicity and the multiple structures of everyday life, all of which are dominant concerns of the ethnographic perspective. However, deconstruction's challenge to inherited Western modes of representation remained primarily a philosophical and literary idiom in Europe and rarely penetrated the social sciences. The work of Foucault was a little more successful in this area, but, upon entry into the social science arena, Foucauldian thought regressed into a renewed functionalism, a 'happy positivism', as Foucault (1972) stated ironically. This renewed positivism reinforced much more conservative and older perspectives. Thus, in Europe we can see a return to, or reaffirmation of, quantitative social science methodologies and sureties reminiscent of those of the 1950s. Questions of self-reflexivity, the socio-political positioning of knowledge systems, the relations between discursive form and power, are once again rarely considered, thus marking most social science research, from and within the European context, with a neo-colonial tinge.

This is particularly valid when social science is used to represent socio-cultural peripheries of Eastern and Southern Europe, new immigrant populations and refugees. Although the Frankfurt School had been engaged with these issues, it showed little understanding or tolerance of cultural difference and discontinuity and displayed a corresponding tendency towards evolutionist theorizing. The Frankfurt School looked ethnocentrically to psychoanalysis as the model of democratized and emancipatory model of dialogue, and in doing so ignored indigenous social institutions in European peripheries and non-Western societies where other dialogical rationalities operate.

The emergence of the critical discourse of 'new ethnography' also coincided with the effervescence of feminist perspectives in anthropology. While most feminist theory still retained faith in the capacity of history to adequately represent women's experience, it shared with the new ethnography a concern with how the positioning and perspectives of the anthropologist replicated relations of domination (in this case that of gender). In tandem with this, feminist theorists in anthropology searched for the hidden convergences of political and personal agendas between their lives and those of their women subjects in other cultures. Where such commonalities were absent, this was usually attributed to the totalizing success of androcentric domination. The specificity of female gendered experience was rarely seen (with the exception of Marilyn Strathern) as promising the existence of alternative modes of resistance and expressions of gender identity and politics (see also Seremetakis 2017).

Despite their concern with the development of autonomy among women at home and abroad, American and Northern European feminists and gender specialists in anthropology showed little interest in women intellectuals from other cultures, and even less interest in the narrative genres, discourses and cultural politics practiced by these women. Symptomatic of this was the ambiguous reception of transnational women intellectuals who went to study anthropology in the United States. Frequently they were discouraged from conducting research in their own

peripheral societies, and presumed to have little to contribute to current debates among American and Northern European feminists and in Women's Studies abroad. Like the advocates of the 'new ethnography', feminist and gender specialists in American anthropology were immersed in universalist presuppositions and global political agendas that tended to mute and downplay modalities and agents of difference and cultural discontinuity that were off the official feminist mental map.¹

Hovering at the edge of these discourses and haunting their theoretical debates was the dim, anomalous figure of the so-called 'native' or indigenous anthropologist. The new ethnography critiques were in part animated by the emergence of literate elites in the very Third World zones that had previously been the focus of anthropological research and theorizing. These literate elites were rhetorically invoked by the advocates of 'new ethnography' as figures that would politicize, contest and enter into cross-national dialogues over the validity of studies produced by Western elites. These new Third World literati were theorized as actively resisting the imposition of ethnocentric imagery on their societies and cultures, whether this iconography originated in the media or academia.

Europeanist anthropology, however, both in the United States and Europe, largely shied away from this figure because of a resolute distaste for a particularist ethnography which, given the current political climate, could be smeared with the charge of nationalism and separatism. Instead, universalist paradigms either on pseudo-scientific methodological grounds or via neo-evolutionary arguments of a contemporary transnational, pan-European homogeneity or modernity were dominant; the cumulative effect being the negation of any specific internal content in European particulars.

This optic worked itself out, on the one hand, in tensions between universal feminist paradigms versus local women's perspectives and realities, ignoring alternative native ethnographies residing in local literary and even cinematic practice; on the other hand, it is expressed in the British school's epistemological colonization of ethnographers from the cultural margins of Eastern and Southern Europe. These ethnographers were professionalized to the extent that their writing was confined to prescribed formats that are deeply implicated in the culture of the metropole. This denial of internal content, and the stigmatizing of such content as nationalist or separatist, must be seen as a political action aimed at the aesthetic-discursive control of what is written from Greece, the Balkans, the Basque area, Ireland and other European "margins." This type of hierarchical and stratifying textual move has a long history in anthropology and beyond.

The current version of this hierarchical perspective is usually advanced through a critique of the ahistorical, synchronic bias of the community studies of the 1950s and 1960s or/and with the neo-evolutionist fetishization of the so-called collapse of boundaries and of the transnational character of European social experience. The asymmetrical and uneven terms of semantic trade between metropolises and peripheries, North and South, men and women, and between classes that characterize this transnational dimension were rarely discussed.

If there was a first issue to be confronted, it was the transnational effacement of local cultural and particular frames of meaning and reference. The cultural depth of this asymmetry of transnational experience can only be assessed from the vantage points of those who cross borders the other way, from those whose historical experience can best be expressed by internal critiques of modernity rather than its uncritical celebration.

However, within American anthropology, the emergence of this new voice, 'native' or 'indigenous' anthropology, has not occurred with the scope and force first expected, and one could question the fact whether the voice of the now literate Other could really be heard with full force and depth in this discipline – although today's concerns on the 'extroversion' and public status of the discipline seem to be moving it to a new direction of self-reflexivity. After all, the lesson is that the inherent ambivalence of the new ethnographic critique towards radical difference led anthropology to a new narcissism, a confessional turn, where theoretical focus shifted to the self and by implication the natal society of the anthropologist. This confessional turn, a fascination with the psychological-cultural self-reflexivity of the ethnographic author, left little room for either the transcribed or unmediated voice of the Other. The devaluation of fieldwork experience in favor of textual mediation also diminished the epistemological force of existential encounter with the cultural Other. This becomes particularly evident today when the cultural other is crossing borders en masse, legally or illegally; yet this encounter remains largely unmarked in Greek and overall European anthropological studies.

The crucial notion of self-reflexivity in anthropology, instead, aimed at exploring the epistemological dynamics of the researcher's own cultural background when confronted with cultural and historical difference in the fieldwork situation, be that next door or far away. It is in these cross-cultural situations, which decenter identities and break down social and historical presuppositions, that culture as form reaches its highest visibility. Confessional displays of the ethnographer's self, as Geertz (1983) pointed out, functioned as preliminary hesitations before the act of objectifying the Other in research and writing; these confessions culminated in a literary catharsis that ultimately sanctioned the act of object making. Geertz characterized this as a ritualized process that effected objectification in the very process of moralizing against it.

The restricted opening given to 'native anthropology' in the new ethnography was determined by its universalistic presuppositions that mediated its conception of cultural difference. The Derridean-derived demonization of representation was tied to the imputed periodization of postmodernity; a historical condition that the new ethnographers projected outward from their own socio-cultural situation onto the rest of the world. Postmodernity, in their view, was tied to the new global character of discourse, knowledge systems, image making and economics which supposedly erased the local and the particular. They never inquired into whether or not 'modernity' was a uniform and monolithic experience on the global level. If the current epoch contained multiple modernities, pre-modernities and non-modernities that were contemporaneous, the postmodern as imagined by French or American

intelligentsia was a limited socio-cultural and geographical moment; a moment tied to a very specific historical context and not global in the slightest.

The challenge to received conceptions of universal modernity and post-modernity, which retroactively formulate notions of tradition, might be more successful if it came from the so-called 'native anthropologist', in so far as that figure embodies in his or her person the heterogeneity of alternative cultural experiences of the contemporary epoch. The phenomenon of the 'native anthropologist' first problematizes older sacralized notions of classical anthropology that saw the cultures it studied as self-enclosed holistic entities or gardens. The very syncretism of 'native anthropology' which, in writing style and thematic focus, challenges the notion of hermetically sealed culture, foregrounds the incompleteness and the unreconciled elements of historical experience as they work themselves out in cultural formation and fragmentation.

The shift from classical anthropology to the new ethnography in American discourse also put into crisis rigid divisions between the subjective and the objective. In fact, this dichotomy had only been unambiguously accepted by British and French neo-Durkheimian and functionalist theory that tended to work with pre-objectified structures such as kinship systems or culture/nature binaries. In the American scene, since Boas and his challenging of the synonymy of civilization and culture, an emphasis was placed on the constructed nature of inherited historical realities.

Culture becomes the process by which historical experience is reinterpreted through thought, action and object relations (material culture) and thus it is mediated and internalized as everyday life by social actors. The historical perspective of Boas was continued and developed along with his interdisciplinary approach known as the 'four-field approach' well into the 1990s in the US (Seremetakis 2017). Anthropology remained a 'cover name' for a family of linked disciplines that study humanity self-reflexively, from a variety of perspectives and methodologies, such as archaeology, socio-linguistics, biological-physical anthropology and ethnology, which became a meta-discourse on the anthropological disciplines. In this process, anthropology in the US was thus distinguished from the positivist, ahistorical British and French anthropologies modeled after sociology (ibid.).

'Native anthropology' was in many ways an offspring of Boas's anthropology and its principle of self-reflexivity. The native ethnographer is by definition that hybrid figure that traffics in exotic and foreign cultural theory only in order to witness its mutation and alteration once it was exposed to the local semantic landscape. These changed theoretical forms are then reintroduced back into their site of origin in order to wreak havoc with received representations of Otherness and the ethnographic project itself. This process in miniature encapsulates the larger cultural dynamic by which local systems of knowledge internalize wider historical experiences, narratives and structures.

This dynamic was foregrounded by Clifford Geertz (1973) and Victor Turner (1974) who emphasized how social actors constantly inflect everyday experience through visible acts of interpretation; acts that contest, negotiate, alter and construct

agreed upon realities. This intervention is most visible in the fieldwork situation where the ethnographer's self, society and function are visibly assembled in acts and displays that are met with and reciprocated by analogous constructive acts and displays on the part of informants.

This model blurred rigid distinctions between narrative and action within a culture, as well as ethnocentric divisions between the factual and the fictive, since local interpretive practice refracted the historical force of the cultural imagination. In the symbolic anthropology of the late 1970s, culture became 'acts of interpretation'. Extrapolated from this theoretical context was the subsequent insight of the 'new ethnography' that the practice of fieldwork and the writing of ethnography were themselves acts or performances of culturally mediated interpretation that implicated more than one society (see Rosaldo 1980; Geertz 1973; Clifford 1986).

Moving from Boas to Geertz to Rosaldo, each one belonging to a different generation of anthropologists, we see the search for a common ground that includes the anthropologist with the informant (rather than excludes him/her) in terms of shared experiences and cognitive capacities. Boas focused on the common characteristics of the processes of abstraction, language and folklore in his own society and in American Indian societies. Geertz centered on the process of how people represent themselves to each other through stylized and systematic techniques and genres (forms of representation). Rosaldo refined Geertz's notion of representation and focused on storytelling among the Ilongots – how people when telling stories construct their identity and that of others and how the practice of storytelling and the memory of stories constitutes society. Rosaldo also showed the extent to which storytelling involves social relations in its actual performance. He describes the co-narration of a story as two or more Ilongots by dialogue construct a single narrative. This again is a process that not only occurs between natives but also between the anthropologist and the informant. (Seremetakis 2017).

In contrast to ethnoscience that assumed there is a direct, one-to-one relation between words, names and signs and the things and experiences spoken of, named and signified, there is a disjuncture between representation and experience in Ilongot hunting that is the source of its creative transformation from a purely functional to a symbolic act, or what we can term a performance.

It is through in-situ allegorical readings and interpretations of the material world, as practiced by both informants and ethnographer (and self-informant as in my case), that we can best understand the centrality of culture and ethnography as the performance of interpretation (that is, interpretation as a material and efficacious act or praxis), as *poesis*, and not as dramaturgical artifice. Yet, as I show in the next chapter, it was my spontaneous ethnopoetic² re-composition of *The Last Word* as a single lament in the local context much later, an unconscious inversion of my intentional styles of communication, that allowed me to speak, and express dissent, in the internalized codes of the absent other – that is, engage in a dialogical performance par excellence.

It becomes hard to simply dismiss the 'native ethnographer's' writing as ethnocentric projection of subjectivist impressionism if the text, its writing style and the data presented are re-enactments, at the level of both form and content, of the historical experience of cultural bifurcation via the act of ethnography on the part of the authors themselves. This becomes evident in my original discussion of divinatory dreaming, part of which is re-discussed here (in Chapter 10).

The ethnography by the native anthropologist has to be taken seriously as an artifact of the very culture that has been written about as well as an expression of the historical tensions that culture faces and which are present in the very act of ethnographic writing by a 'native'. These are objective conditions that possibly find their most eloquent expression in subjective, yet historically informed experience.

These dynamics can be seen in the narrative organization, narrative modes and content of ethnography. *The Last Word*, for instance, appeared to begin as a text deploying the objectifying protocols of classical anthropology with its discussion of kinship, economy, social history and geography. But subsequent chapters actively subverted the primacy of this initial narrative without effacing it, through a process of intra-textual antiphony, adapted from the local performance practice. This antiphonic *agon* between narrative styles and encoding analytic grids reached its culmination in the foregrounding of mourning and dreaming narratives as analytic acts and the increasing emergence of dreaming as both a personal and ethnographic insight and empathy. Moreover, in the bivalent influence of my simultaneous keeping of a dream diary and an ethnographic field diary, which narrative has the primacy here? Which narrative provides the master interpretive code? Certainly the objectifying categories of scientific anthropology are powerful and persuasive; however, should they be fully accepted as definite descriptions of Greek realities, when the central thematic of the ethnography is the contesting by women of the categories, the norms, the historicity and scientism of Western modernity in which anthropology historically participates? How does one write objectively and scientifically of the local rewriting of Western master narratives, particularly as they pertain to concepts of the body, illness, disease, social and historical time? In reconstructing these local ideologies from within, which is the ethnographic mandate, the ethnographic optic must necessarily write against itself.

It has been my suggestion that this internally divided, antiphonic writing is best refracted in the biographical structure of the native anthropologist as it is brokered by long-term field experience. This is perhaps why *The Last Word* ended with a meditation on the intersection of the emotions, the senses and material culture as the locus where the biographical, the cultural and the historical is best accessed. This was taken up in my later writings. The templates of the senses, the emotions and the local theorist, the symbiotic experience of cosmological time and social finitude and the mixed persona of the native anthropologist have in common the questioning and the politicizing empiricist notions of descriptive adequacy; notions that are gender- and time bound, whether these be promoted by social institutions or scholarly traditions.

I have been proposing that the border is *not* to be hermetically sealed and an extremely localist native anthropology be cultivated – though this would be desired by those who would wed such inquiry to nationalist political agendas and seek the definite naming of that which is inside and that which is to be excluded or that does not merit a name. Rather, the development of ethnographic practice and anthropological inquiry in Europe, Greece in particular, should truthfully reflect on, and ponder about, the conditions of its historical and cultural possibility; this means the acknowledgement of a bi-directional traversal of borders that does not efface the margin of difference in the very act of crossing it. Ethnography, textual or other, past or present, should be an ethnographic field site in itself that stages debates on cultural modernity in which the very phenomenon of ethnographic practice is both an object and a medium of discussion. Ethnography is both a stage in the *agon* of contemporary cultural experience and a major protagonist. It should play the role of dissenting chorus, of witness and of tragic recognition, in so far as it is caught in antinomies which exceed the drama of the stage penetrating and originating in the very lives of the audience and the narrators.

Ethnographic translation

Another version of the above problematics arises when one considers the symbolically dense and experientially eloquent sets of social descriptions embedded in dream narratives, mourning songs and displays and arrangements of the artifacts of material culture, in relation to the descriptive protocols of scientific anthropology. Which way does the process of translating run? Can there be a translation that does not irrevocably alter both, that which is translated and the encoding apparatus that mediates the material to be translated? I think not.

The notion of bidirectional and equivocal translation between opened, leaking and unfinished cultural realities draws upon the image of the ‘border’ and of the anthropologist as the crosser of borders, and of the native anthropologist as encapsulating or personifying the border itself.

In an era of resurgent nationalism, of increasing rigid inside/outside dichotomies based on race, gender and ethnicity, discourses of the border are of value; particularly those discourses that call into question the ahistorical rigidity of any border and which foreground its formation by performed acts such as crossing, which emphasize its malleability and permeability. Borders leak, and the native anthropologist in his/her cognition, fieldwork and writing personifies and accentuates the historical process of leaking borders.

Ethnographic translation is a performance practice articulated in-situ in the everyday embodied action of fieldwork. Its success is contingent on the extent to which the performance practice of the ethnographer communicates with and even coincides with or learns from the in-place performance practices of the culture the ethnographer traverses. Independent of the data collected, ethnographic practice is itself a symbolic form that articulates with local symbolic systems. It is performance as ongoing creative reinterpretation of the given that arises from the cross-cultural

encounter with all of its transhistorical depth, semantic dissonance and human multiplicity. Ethnographic practice can be, in short, a personified re-enactment of modernity and of historical transformation that points to alternative modernities, counter-memories and counter-historical directions and depths. Modernity mediates the relations of the informant, or donor, and its ethnographer; it is the common tissue and bone of connection and shared trauma between them in so far as for both parties it is an unreconcilable and contradictory experience. The ethnographer and the informant negotiate modernity with the intersecting frames and distancing optics of residual, non-modern culture, counter-modernity culture and anthropological critique.

The result can be a modification of contemporary experience through a subversion that takes the ultimate modernist and anti-traditional form – the written text, the ethnography which contests the very thing it expresses in its translation and relativizing of multiple presents. This is particularly true when the translation from experience to text is mediated and internalized by the 'native anthropologist' who is anything but 'in house' – as native anthropology had been interpreted in Greece (see Chapter 13). The 'native anthropologist' dwells in the interlocking and overlapping ruins of the house of modernity and the houses of local and even national and global culture, in recognition that all such closures have experienced profound cracks if not fragmentation.

The 'native anthropologist' counters the stereotyping of the residual and traditional as ruins and fragments that are made sense of by the modernist project of scientific rationalization, and recognizes instead that the house of modernity has ruptured on its own self-definitions to the extent that the latter are contingent on certain domestications of the pre-modern and the non-modern. It is the unroofed and open space of leakage between the modern and the non-modern or counter-modernity that the native ethnography makes its territory in an effort to uncover salvageable meanings through the very practice of ethnography, from spheres of discontinuous historical experience and polyphonic narrative.

Import anthropology

The above issues are raised here because, at the time anthropology proper was imported into Greece, about two decades ago, the embryonic field of ethnography faced a crisis of borders. The internalization of ethnography entailed the collapse of all local boundaries and the unchallenged tenancy of mainly British, and to lesser degree French or American, schools of thought. This process occurred against the background of an unquestioning acceptance of an imagery of Greece as a resolutely kin-based rural society by advocates of British social anthropology,³ or the economic-bureaucratic objectification of Greek material culture, e.g., food ways and alcohol consumption, by 'ethnographic' researchers busy developing typified portraits of predominantly rural 'Greek consumers for EU marketing interests'.⁴ But even this pattern of discourse internalization has a Greek character and content that can be subjected to cultural critique and inquiry, in so far as it expresses in part the formalist methodological

tendency, promoted by the Greek higher education system, of memorizing authoritative narratives and texts.

What was absent from early studies was the very recognition of an epistemological and existential moment of border-crossing on the part of the above schools of ethnographic practice; that crossing the border with a theoretical apparatus alters the contextual comprehension of 'exotic' theoretical tools as much as it may alter the pre-ethnographic social reality. The British-inflected school wrote as if Greeks had not been busy constructing identities that both exceed and reposition residual kinship forms in modernity, state culture, and transnational realities, and as if categories that originated in colonial African situations could be exported to Greece without profound cultural-political implications. Likewise, the early discussions of material culture and particularly of food ways assumed that the latter is founded on Cartesian subject/object, consumer/consumed dichotomies without first examining the in-place sensory densities and non-Cartesian concepts of the body in Greece, and without assessing the ethnographers' own pattern of theoretical consumption of Greek food ways in the process of research.

These issues can be also recounted on the level of the iconic representation of Greece in early ethnographies. For ethnography is not reducible to a text. It has been a book and a book is a body that communicates with many languages.⁵ It has an inside and an outside, to begin with; on the outside, it is dressed with a cover. As much as a book cover can tell us something about the particular book, an ethnographic look at book covers in a particular epoch or country can tell a lot about the culture of the latter. Such a look triggered on my part critical reviews of early ethnographic books on Greece written by both Greek (trained abroad) and foreign anthropologists at the time,⁶ for they were co-constructing Greece, consciously or unconsciously, as an exotic rural other captured in synchronicity, in as much as they revealed how Greece was perceived and desired by the so-called Western civilized world. Similar critiques on the latter point were of course voiced by foreign scholars as well.⁷

It is important here to consider the extent to which 'native anthropologies' indulged in their own brand of exclusionary naming that closely paralleled the logic of the nationalist/separatist variant from which native canon-building anthropologists were supposedly displaced.⁸ In the case of Greece, this has been a case of the extension of Greek formalism from nationalist logics to the logic of disciplinary specialization and professionalization. In this context, exclusionary naming/censoring of theorists and ideas was the predominant method of canon-building. After all, there is always an exclusion by way of which the system is constituted. The Boasian school of thought in particular, and by extension significant ethnographies inspired by it, were selectively silenced, to the extent that we could talk of structural censorship.⁹

The Boasian school of thought posed two problems to this sociologistic British-oriented academic climate: first, the emphasis on ethnographic fieldwork, and second, the four-field approach which promoted interdisciplinarity, that is a dialogue between anthropology and the human sciences, especially history, archaeology,

socio-linguistics and the arts. The Boasian school of anthropology developing in the United States was classified as cultural anthropology and associated with America as opposed to the British–French lineages of Durkheimian sociology, which took the name social anthropology (differentiated from French ethnology), both distinguishing themselves from physical-biological anthropology.¹⁰

The difference between social and cultural anthropology can be summarized in the debate between stable kinship structures (social) versus the performative, symbolic, interactionist (cultural) (see Seremetakis 2017). In this context, Asad (1975) showed that the focus on the juridical, mechanistic and structural-hierarchical aspect of kinship was influenced by the British colonial administration's needs in East Africa. Through a policy known as indirect rule, colonial structures articulated with local kinship structures to transform them into hierarchical systems in conformity with Western notions of political command. Yet, these issues were ignored also in the first attempts to theorize gender relations in Greek anthropology. They were securely based on the principle of complementarity between genders – where complementarity implied different but equal – leaving out the view of critical theory that all binarism is hierarchical. This predilection can be partly attributed to the identification of Women's Studies, an academic discourse and sub-discipline, with feminism as a social movement and the prevalent stigmatization of the latter in Greek society.¹¹

Social anthropologists' distancing from literature and the arts in both theory, method and writing styles is also partly responsible for the misinterpretation and misuse of the idea of *minor canon* as advanced in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, ethnography is always a minor canon. Edward Said's study *Orientalism*¹² in 1978, applied the ethnographic perspective in the context of literature and opened up the discussion on minor canons. Minor canon is a term applied to colonial, postcolonial literature and artistic practices and posed as a critique of the canonization of European art and methods of critical evaluation of European art – particularly when the European canon was applied in paradigmatic fashion in relation to literature of the Third World.

Two issues come out of the idea of minor canon as a critical apparatus: First, the need to systematize the history and cultural conditions of possibility of that 'Third World' literature to defragment it and remove it from being monophonically evaluated from the vantage point and standards of European literature. Said's (1978) critique of Western notions of Asia was an exercise in critiquing a major canon from the perspective of minor canon. Once this is done, the minor canon could be used to foreground a critical engagement with colonialism and postcolonial reality. Second, is the necessity for the deconstruction of First World literature and art practices in order to expose the degree by which they were evading, denying or encoding in a surrogate fashion colonial experience (Said dealt with nineteenth-century experience).

Following Said, ethnographically oriented Diaspora Greek scholars in the context of literature and literary criticism – see specifically Gregory Jusdanis (1987; 1991) and Vassilis Lambropoulos (1988; 2006) – promoted the thesis that the canon of Greek literature cannot be evaluated from the perspective of modernism-postmodernity because Greece had not gone through or had the same experience

as the rest of Europe. If Greece, or Latin America as a matter of fact, had not experienced the same modernity with the rest of Europe, then Greece did not necessarily have a postmodernity similar to Western Europe. Thus, they attempted to correlate literary production and socio-historical conditions of possibility in any given period.

These literary theorists, being themselves colonial-postcolonial subjects, members of the linguistic community, could claim that their theory building was an extension of a minor canon. Said, in *Orientalism*, with his critiques of Western notions of Asia, offered precisely an exercise of critiquing major canon from the perspective of minor canon. Something, for instance, that Michael Herzfeld, an American anthropologist in the context of Greek studies, could not do. Herzfeld, thus, presented a minor canon as a version of an area studies hierarchy; it became another term for his concept of 'segmentation'. This was also conveniently adopted by most Greek anthropologists at the time, for it justified the selective exclusion of anthropological theories and methods. Herzfeld, when calling for attention to minor canons and advancing his concept of crypto-colonialism in the discipline, assumes there is enough product from Greece and, thus, any production of theory is not the issue.

This early lack of recognition and dialogue with (a) research in the human sciences that had for long explored structures of everyday life and modernity, (b) cultural anthropological theorizing and critique of colonization which had resulted in a more sophisticated 'ethnographic eye' and sensitivity for diversity, and (c) innovative research and public educational projects concerning the translation of academic knowledge to public knowledge, for a long time contributed to the self-referentiality of Greek anthropology and its consequent marginalization both at home and abroad. Certainly, it has contributed to Greece's general inability to produce exportable theoretical ideas in the humanities and beyond, for decades.¹³ The question being, will the current 'crisis' foster dialogicity?

The tendency to label anthropology by school – i.e., American, British, European, etc. – which facilitated its selective introduction to a 'native context', can be also partly attributed to a limited knowledge of the academic discipline itself on the part of 'natives' trained abroad. In most cases the journey out was a rather quick trip (i.e., for as long as a graduate program lasts) through places, times and people that bred and cultivated this discipline, which does not allow for an in-depth knowledge and experience of the discipline as a field site in itself. This has been perhaps one of the many reasons why 'native anthropology' did not take off as dialogical performance back in the 'native areas' it was transplanted. An in-depth contextualized exploration, instead, would also mean exposure of the 'native ethnographer' to different codes of knowledge transmission in a different higher education system.

The lack of this cross-cultural experience often facilitated the easy and fast insertion of anthropology into existing local formalistic academic contexts. Considering my work, for instance, it was for long categorized (if not stigmatized) in Greece as exclusively American anthropology (standing for cultural anthropology).

Yet, my long study and training in anthropology occurred in a graduate school, the New School for Social Research, which was established by a diaspora of European scholars exiled by the Nazis, such as Lévi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, and Hannah Arendt, among others, whose experience of two continents left little room for naive Europe-worship and anti-Americanism or America-worship and Europhobia in both their politics and theory. Like any diaspora they unfolded their identities and theory under multiple cultural codes. This was the perfect context for a sophisticated anthropology at the time. Thus, for instance, British, French or other schools of anthropology, as they developed in their national and imperial contexts, were known and studied in the particular university, which advanced a historicized and global understanding of the discipline in tandem with current world affairs. This was of course in contrast to European schools of anthropology that were much more defined and tied to nation-state politics and linguistic identity; borders should not leak.

Recently, under the pressures of globalization, there have been attempts at blurring the distinction between cultural and social anthropology in Europe. In Greece, this at first was mainly exemplified in the sheer addition of the term 'cultural' to the title of social anthropology departments, and in the insertion of a couple of cultural anthropology chairs usually in existing history, archaeology and music or high arts departments. This blurring of terms does not eradicate the ideological structures that gave birth to them. Not until this day at least. This becomes evident, for example, in (a) the binaries that have dominated anthropological studies (such as for instance rural/urban, everyday social life/high arts), (b) the general tendency towards a Greek centrism, (c) the specific views of written and oral history promoted or eliminated, (d) the inability to theorize about modernity as non-anthropologists have done, (e) the writing styles, and (f) the translation of basic anthropological terms (which I discuss in Chapter 13).

Notes

- 1 A characteristic example of this type of feminist approach in the Greek context was then the Women's Union of Greece (EGE) and the Mediterranean Women's Study Center (KEGME) – the latter remaining with no status or public face within Greece.
- 2 Ethnography as literary form arose as a critique of treating research subjects simply as objects of research, and out of the recognition that ethnographic knowledge is produced from dialogue, in a collective process, between anthropologist and research subjects. In the attempt to capture the dynamics of participant observation and the collective process of knowledge production, to replicate their holistic experience in another culture, ethnographers began to deploy in their own text a variety of literary genres, such as interviews, descriptive prose, verbal and visual images, polyphonic and polysemic symbols and images, and ethnopoetics. *Ethnopoetics* is the study of indigenous cultures other than those of Western literary tradition. It recognizes that different societies produce literature and verbal art in idioms and media not found in the Western written literary canon. This literature is frequently oral, embedded in ritual performance, improvised and collectively produced, and it functions as the cultural memory of the group. The literary trend in ethnographic description recognizes that writing is a culturally specific form for codifying knowledge and experience, and that writing forms can affect what can be

claimed as knowledge and as truth. The literary tendency also is a recognition of the origins of ethnographic description in travelers' diaries, missionary journals, and cartographic descriptions by geographers going back as far as the seventeenth century. Ethnology, geography and travel accounts have a common literary origin in European culture. In Greek society, ethnological description based on traveler's accounts and cartography originates with the historian Herodotus (as he describes different cultures and societies) and expands with Pindar, Byron, and the German Hellenists, among others. The literary trend in ethnography, therefore, recognizes that the history of scientific description is intertwined with the history of literature. Ethnography is at the nexus of scientific description and narrative. In this context, several studies in anthropology have integrated scientific and literary narrative description. One classic, for example, is the ethnopoetic study *Wisdom Sits in Places* by Keith Basso (1996). *The Last Word*, in its turn, was meant to be an analysis of ethnopoetics as a form of knowledge production (legal and historical), and applied ethnopoetic aesthetics to its writing style. Yet, it was my spontaneous re-composition of this ethnography as a single eight-syllable lament in the local context much later, that revealed to me how ethnopoetics really works (see Chapter 12).

- 3 Kinship was treated as the predominant formal institution of social life and as the major avenue of gender identity. See, for example, related publications from the University of the Aegean, such as *Contested Identities* (Papataxiarhis and Loizos 1991).
- 4 See, for example, the EU-funded project on alcoholism conducted by Panteion University and resulting publications (e.g., Dimitra Gefou-Madianou, ed., *Anthropological Studies on Alcohol Use and Gender in Europe*. London: Routledge 1992).
- 5 The many languages of a book emerged for me out of my publishing experiences in two continents. Consider my first American publisher's amazement when I explained that some of the Greek books listed in my bibliography lacked a date of publication not because I accidentally omitted it, but because old Greek publications did not necessarily carry one. Knowledge was then meant to be eternal. On the other hand, when later my book was published in Greek, the index was eliminated; it was considered redundant in book publications; 'nobody ever reads it', the Greek publisher explained. What matters is the main content of the book. The content-centered reading of a book is derived from the orality model of communication and thought. My notion of multiple languages is multi-graphic; it is in fact the different scripts through which a book communicates as a memory object. I refer here not only to the many kinds of writing that the author may be using but *how* these are presented, through what graphical display; how the internal structure of a book is externalized, how the body of the book is dressed, how the infrastructures of ideas are visually realized, and how does the book perform as it is performed. For ethnography is not a mere text but a collaborative, sedimented, multi-representational artifact.
- 6 See, for example, my reviews of Danforth's *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (Seremetakis 1984) in *JMGS*, Herzfeld's *The Poetics of Manhood* (1986) in *American Anthropologist*, Papataxiarhis and Loizos's *Contested Identities* (1993) featuring a cover photo by Herzfeld in *American Ethnologist*, and others. Critical dialogical texts of the sort were diligently silenced in the Greek cohorts – see, for instance, the bibliographical compilations of MGSA in early-to-mid 1990s.
- 7 See, for example, *Contested Identities* reviewed by Susan Carol Rogers, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1987): 285–288.
- 8 Today, in the era of legal realism, any attempt at theorizing is countered by the necessity of naming and/or numbering.
- 9 A classic example of the latter was the book *Civilization and Ethnography: From Ethnographic Realism to Cultural Critique* (in Greek), by D. Gefou-Madianou, published in 1999, which aspired to introduce and manage the history of anthropological discourses and methods, including the anthropology of Greece, in the Greek context. Ethnographers and historians of the French school of thought, of Swedish anthropology (the Lund school), as well as critical American thinkers were eliminated, including

Seremetakis' total body of work on Greece, published in two languages at the time. Subsequent publications, most in the form of essay collections – edited volumes being the main form of textualization – have generally followed the same pattern of selective bibliographical presentation and/or serial listing of names, avoiding an in-depth analysis of significant works in the field. There are a few exceptions to some of these rules in recent publications, such as Eleni Papagaroufali's *Δώρα Ζωής* ('Gifts of Life', 2012), earlier Penelope Papaalias' *Genres of Recollection* (2005), and most recently Athina Athanasiou's *Agonistic Mourning* (2017), which are field-based ethnographic monographs. Yet, a few exceptions do not disprove the rule. As a renowned Greek diaspora scholar of literature disarmingly responded in 2017 to my suggestion that his participation in an academic evaluation committee would be useful in Greece, 'with all the respect for your work, why would I participate in Greek committees since I have been ignored and my work silenced there for more than two decades?'

- 10 Boas's work in physical anthropology brought together his critique of Darwinian evolution and his interest in migration as a cause of change. He studied immigrants in New York to oppose innate biological differences between races and to critique the notion of a one-to-one relation between race, language and culture. His position that differences between races are not immutable was radical at the time and is still debated.
- 11 See 'Gender Studies or Women's Studies: Theoretical and Pedagogical Issues, Research Agendas and Directions'. *Australian Feminist Studies* (University of Adelaide), 1994.
- 12 According to Said, Orientalism dates from the period of European Enlightenment and colonization of the Arab world. Orientalism provided a rationalization for European colonization based on a self-serving history in which the West exoticized the East, constructing it as different, inferior, uncivilized and dangerous, thus needing a Western rescue. Drawing on Foucault, Said also stressed the productive nature of Orientalist knowledge, and although criticized for holding monolithic views of East and West, many studies have demonstrated the devastating consequences that the relation of Orientalist knowledge with colonial power has had for the post-colonial world.
- 13 The limited knowledge and understanding of public educational anthropology at the time is exemplified, for example, in the response-commentary to John Chioles' critical article on Greek anthropology (*Anthropology News*, May 2002, vol. 43, no. 5: 20) by anthropologists Bakalaki, Papaalias and Papagaroufali (*Anthropology News*, October 22, 2002, vol. 43, no. 7: 3). Their response, in defense of anthropology in Greece, revealed the conflation of practicing public anthropology with 'staging of cultural events'. The particular event on the commemoration of the 1986 earthquake in Messinia, though, as discussed also in this book, was a critique of the institutional making of culture via anthropological theories and methods. It was a mobilization of existing cultural energies through community-based education.

12

ETHNOPOETIC DIALOGUES

Performing local history

Hastily reading my mail in a taxi cab one morning, my eye stopped at an invitation by the University of Athens and the then Municipality of Areopolis (Mani) to address an international paleo-anthropological and historical-folkloric conference. It was to be organized on the occasion of the discovery of Paleolithic skulls in Mani (Apidhima) and the subsequent opening of a museum in Areopolis (locally known as Tzimova), in 1997. The program and abstracts revealed that the speakers, all male and most of them academics, were apparently ignorant of the local history and everyday cultural practices of the people. Trapped by disciplinary and areal boundaries, they had missed both the local ongoing tradition of exhumations historically practiced by women, and all related ethnographic evidence in the area – including my own ethnography on the subject published in both English and Greek at the time. I got angry.

The form and content of my public Greeting to the Conference sprang up spontaneously that moment. It was an improvised lament, the traditional style of women's poetry in Mani, claiming our silenced history back. Great poetic inspiration, some said later. Poetry and inspiration alike are usually understood as 'a good idea', something that comes from a working mind. I say my inspiration was an involuntary gesture of the body, something like a jolt that occurred unexpectedly when affect met the mind head on. A submerged sensory-affective body of knowledge was unconsciously translated into a present creative act.

My spontaneous composition was (electro)shocking to me, as much as it was later to the rest of the speakers. A conversion of the self had occurred; I had become my own ethnographic informant. I had never composed or written a lament before. This involuntary gesture brought to my consciousness, and theirs, the degree to which I had internalized the local technique of antiphonic or dialogical performance of women as a vehicle for the production and dissemination of knowledge and history. That was an *ethnopoetic moment*, a dialogue with an absent yet internalized Other in its own terms:¹

The last word

Welcome ancestor
 we welcome your 'appearance'²
 Those who escorted you
 although foreigners, coming from the outside
 to this land that bred
 the ethics of reciprocity
 they too are welcome as one of our own
 Their presence brings us joy and double honor
 regardless of our disagreements.
 Welcome home
 our old relative
 from the sunless damp
 empty land of *xenitia*
 back in Tzimova (Areopolis town)
 to bathe in its sun,
 be taken care of
 and sleep restfully.
 We will place you
 on top of our towers
 crown on our heads
 together with our other ancestors
 proud to stare from high up
 at the living below
 reminder that here
 the life of the living
 is staged everyday
 as a performance for the dead.
 Truly, do these educated men, know
 Maniats and foreigners,
 anything of ritual and exhumation?
 Did they read you by touch?
 How will you fit in written text?
 Is that why they take my voice away?
 Pardon me but I have
 a Maniat soul
 although I share their logic
 I can also code-switch
 Have no worry about
 the shackles of their chronology
 You and I, my son and husband,

Kalostone ton proghono
kalos efanerthis
afthi pou se sinodhepsan
ki an ine kseni ke ferti
edho sti ghi p'anastise
tis antalaghis tin ithiki
kalodhehoumeni ine ke dhiki
hara mas ke dhipli timi
ki as ehome antiloghi.
Kalos lipon se ferasi
palie dhike mas sigeni
ap'tin ighri ki aniliaghi
tis ksenitias tin adhia ghi
sti Tzimovas
ton ilio na loustis
sto spiti sou na frontistis
ki analafra na kimithis
Ki emis tha s'apothesome
Ston pirghon mas ti korifi
korona mas sti kefali
me alous proghonous mas mazi
apo psila ghia na thoris
perifana tous zondanous
ke na thimizis pos edho
ton zondanone I zoi
stinotane ghia tous nekrous
parastasi kathimerini.
Alithia kseroun touti dho
Maniates ke ferti
apo mistirio ki ektafi?
se dhiavasan me tin afthi?
pos tha horesis sti ghrafi?
ghi' afto mou pernoun ti foni?
Sighora me ma eghe
Maniatisa ime sti psihi
as ksero ti dhiki tous
eho ki aliotiki ti loghiki
Mi se stenohoroussi dha
ton hronologhion tous ta dhesma
Emis, ghie ki andra mou

have no age.
It is I who made Mani
the bone of History.

dhen kserome ilikia
ti Mani eggho tin ekana
to Kokalo tis Istorias

*

Later, in 2000, I was pleasantly surprised to receive an invitation from the authorities of Laconia region (South Peloponnese) to be the public speaker in a local history commemoration. I would be the first woman invited for this recurring occasion. The local celebration of historical events, most treated as secondary in official history, has been common in Greek peripheries. I took this invitation as a confirmation of my work on Maniat women's culture and history with, and since, my first ethnography. Like the discourse of the *korifea* (corypheus) in ancient Greece, the soloist lamenter in Mani must be confirmed and validated by the chorus. But who are the chorus here? I wondered. These events are usually organized and represented by male authorities of the area, with local women being a silent audience in the background. Were Maniat men granting the power of women? Rather, several dynamics were at play.

The event to be commemorated was the battle of Diros, known to the locals as a victory of women over the enemy troops during Turkish occupation at the same time that men were fighting at another location, Verga of Almyros. In official history the Diros battle has always been mentioned as a secondary battle. Reading local papers, one detects two antagonistic views of history at play. Publications from Messinia and elsewhere present the Diros battle as a male victory: for example, '900 men mainly priests led by a bishop' and 'even women helped'. The Maniat version, though, is that this is 'a female battle and victory': the enemy landed where women were threshing and they – with the help of some older men, priests and children – slaughtered the enemy.³

Male history from 1820 onward is closely identified with nation-state formation, and the battle of Verga is a metaphor for the area's participation in that process.⁴ On the other side, the battle of Diros is identified with indigenous local historical identity; regional identity and history, as independent of the history of the centralized nation state, has a gendered character. Maniat historical desire or consciousness at some point turned centripetal; it moved from the center to the local, away from the national to the regional; a tendency that has intensified and prevails throughout Greece in the recent times of crisis.⁵ At that point, pre-modern regional history became highly valued and it took on a gendered identity that is decidedly not male. This is the history that was bypassed by the nation. Maniat women's history was the missing part of an incomplete whole. In a sense, it occupied a similar position to that of the Jewish people in Poland and other Eastern European countries, where the Jews were expelled or exterminated only to be later valued as bearers of those countries' missing history, the history exiled in *xenitia*.

I decided to accept the invitation to join in the commemoration of the Battle of Diros. When I arrived at the place of celebration, the public square was properly prepared for an event open to the public that would include greetings by authorities and a speech. An impressive statue of a Maniat woman erected recently was prominent in the middle of the square. My speech was to occur under its shadow. So it happened, and at the end I was awarded an honorary plaque.

Observing and sensing my audience during the speech, I spotted local women, young and elderly, standing by on the periphery of the ceremony. The authorities occupied the center of the performance. This was in sharp contrast to the death rituals of the area, where women occupied the center and men were the silent chorus on the periphery. When I finished, women applauded loudly and, as I approached them, each one embraced me while confirming, 'Bravo, you said it the right way!' Knowing their codes, I translated it as 'You said what we would say, but in the right language, their language, which we do not possess.' I was perceived and received as a 'representative' of women, speaking in their place, just as the soloist mourner would have done for the absent dead. They went on commenting on the way I spoke, my body movements, even my 'proper' – for them – dress code. What I said, which perhaps they did not thoroughly understand, was a secondary matter, for they had sensed it as 'right'. Besides, I had opened the speech with one of their laments:

I am the Verga of Almyros
 I hold and withstand all ill-fated attacks
 For I have the rounded belly of a storage vase
 I can open the earth and bring all that is up down
 I can throw it in the deep ocean as well.

This excerpt comes from a particular lament that expresses the historical consciousness in Inner Mani. The lament begins in individual death, the biographical, and is composed in a ritual, a space of collective mourning, pain and remembering. Laments are a pre-state form of historical narrative with a narrative process that is not tied to the nationalist paradigm, that does not begin in the origins of a nation-state but in an individual and the kin networks this individual belonged to. Lament is local history, the concept in which Maniats were claiming truth in public. That public space of recollection was certainly different from the public commemoration space of Diros I was to speak *at*, though not *from*.

★

Looking back, one of my first thoughts when I received the invitation had been that perhaps I was invited as a public speaker for the commemoration of a male nationalist event just because a woman was needed to commemorate women's memory. Or, perhaps I was invited as an ethnological expert to provide a few ethnological facts (as previous and later speakers, sociologists, historians, economists, did). Am I to do the same? I asked myself. Rather not.

I decided to place this commemoration ritual into an antiphonic dialogue with the *klama* (women's mourning ceremony), invoking a local space of public remembering fashioned by women, distinct from the male and institutional rituals. In this sense, I functioned as witness for the missing ritual, the death ritual itself, and as witness for the dead and exiled – the absent historians, the women mourners. A performance of a woman in mourning over history and for a certain group of dead and forgotten chroniclers broke the performative frame of a statist commemoration. But this was not

a privatized mourning pitted against a public ceremony; it was a mourning for another type of *public space*, a space in which women had long empowered themselves.

Why have modern Greek women had no interest in recovering their lost history? I am left wondering. Why has their main concern been how to acquire rights in political-public and academic life through position acquisitions, professional mobility? The lack of historical consciousness is tied to the notion of the public sphere in which women seek to be positioned, and its ahistorical character, since it only concerns formal rights. There is no sense of cultural history to the extent that women's issues are predominately defined as legal, bureaucratic and position-oriented politics – a conceptualization that has been intensified and enforced by the European Union.

I contend that to talk of women's history one has to talk about the public sphere as having a specific history, and not as a formal set of rights to gain access to. The female *poesis* of history is part of the Greek national history. And as long as that piece is missing, Greek history has not gained its full antiphonic depth; it is a half-history. So is, by extension, European history.

★

If I were to retrospectively evaluate this local public event in relation to the pedagogical role of anthropology in general or self-reflexive public anthropology in particular, I would say that the significance of this public commemorative event lay in the fact that, when Greece was mostly an object of analysis from the outside, it honored a first effort to theorize itself in a transnational, cross-cultural context. Yet, the honoring of particular ethnographic or other work(s) that locate Greece at the center of international anthropological, or other, thought through current theoretical-methodological debates is something that the academic community itself has been thoroughly incapable of doing, and that the Academy of Athens, a generally introverted and male-dominated institution, has failed to notice.



FIGURE 12.1 Antiphony at Diro

Notes

- 1 This lament later appeared, by invitation, (in Greek) in the book *The Man of Mt. Taenaron: Anthropological Quests in Inner Mani* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2000), written by Th. Pitsios, director of the paleoanthropological research and excavation of human fossil remains at the cave site of Apidima (Mani).
- 2 The appearance or *fanerosi* of the living for one's death ritual; in reciprocity the dead appear in the dreams of the living on significant occasions. See Seremetakis 1991.
- 3 The battle at Diros took place in June 1826.
- 4 Men, from late nineteenth century onwards, functioned as a modernizing elite, thus actively forgetting or downgrading indigenous Maniat history; *moirOloi* (lament) as oral history, was gradually repressed as backward and old fashioned.
- 5 A recent conference on 'Counter Archives: Rethinking Oral History from Below' by the Greek Oral History Association (GOHA) in 2016, attests to this tendency. However, although the goal of the conference was to highlight history, this particular event and material, among others, passed unnoticed.

13

PERFORMING INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION¹

Translation has been an ongoing challenge worldwide, whether it is of ethnographic, other scholarly or literary works. The anthropological classic, Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, for example, was first translated into Greek as *Thliveri Tropiki* ('Pitiful Tropics') rather than *Thlimeni Tropiki* ('Melancholic', or 'Sad' Tropics).² For me the challenge of translation in Greece hit close to home as early as the 1980s, when I published almost simultaneously in Greek and English one of my first articles 'The Eye of the Other'.³ As I searched for available Greek translations of English anthropology and related social sciences to see how core technical terms were being glossed and translated, I realized there was no anthropological translation canon. This lack in translation made clear the fact that transmission of anthropological texts into Greek was itself a project and an exercise in cultural exploration and interpretation, and an ethnographic experience as complex as field research in another society.

As time passed, translations of anthropological terms improved in their accuracy linguistically, but most still miss the theoretical history, debates and contexts that led to the coining of the terms. The following examples are a case in point. They are also indicative of the instability of translation strategies and how anthropological theory began influencing translation choices both within the discipline and in other disciplines, and vice versa.

One term that has been more recently translated is the term 'self-reflexivity'. Coined by Franz Boas, it meant the skill and ability of the ethnographer to simultaneously read, monitor and reflect on her/his interpretive activity in the field. This is a term that centralized the interventionist and perspectival role of the culture-bound self in the field site as well as the consequent production of scientific knowledge from that field site (though some would find these two functions contradictory). The term is transferred to Greek, and uncritically diffused throughout academic disciplines as well as everyday discourse, as *ana-stohasmos*. This term means re-thinking, re-reflecting, that

is, a distanced meditation upon a theoretical object. After all, reflect captures light in Greek philosophy; reason illuminates the nature of the world. What has been eliminated, therefore, is the self as an agent in a fieldwork process. This (mis)reading eliminated the sense of a doubled consciousness or cross-cultural consciousness of the ethnographic self; the term deals with thinking in a purely internal or Cartesian framework. In short, the Greek term as translated from the English 'self-reflexivity' has nothing to do with what the original term intended, that is, the self as a cultural agent in the context of the other and not simply observing first and then rethinking about it.

The replication of 'reflective' (as opposed to self-reflective or self-reflexive) in almost all translations and eventually in media and everyday discourse from the 1990s to date, exemplifies the fact that the anthropological text is not pondered on as a multicultural field site, a cross-cultural situation in which the self is implicated, and thus ends up being mistranslated both at the level of cultural context and of language. It also reveals that translation is perceived as a mere linguistic process, therefore terms are frequently transferred passively from text to text and discipline to discipline. This posture poses particular issues for the ethnographic text placed under translation, for the latter can deface the multiple levels and tensions of cultural difference and disjuncture captured by the ethnographer when translating a field experience into disciplinary concepts and speaking to diverse audiences foreign to that field site. Yet, it is these cross-cultural tensions that we must salvage and preserve in our translation strategies.

I chose instead to translate the term self-reflexive as *afio-stohasmos* (*afio* means self), meaning the self is reflecting and reflected in the field site and in the text. I could possibly have adopted terms like 'self-knowledge' or 'self-consciousness' to approximate the anthropological term but that would be to eliminate the performative and social agency inferred in the anthropological sense and to absorb the ethnographic dynamic in all of its particularity into a more generic philosophical framework which would blur the cross-cultural tensions accessed by the ethnographic term. At issue here is *the ability to transfer the translation ethics of the field site to the level of the ethnographic text*.

These issues accounted for my earlier coining of another term, for the concepts 'performative' and 'performance' (*parastasi*). I have already discussed (in Chapter 2, Appendix I), the conflation of ritual performance with theatrical performance in Greece and the understanding of performance in everyday life as a play of imagination, separate from reality. The experimental term alternatively proposed in sociological texts at the time was *epitelesi*, which means the execution of an act or deed, but does not necessarily include the ritualistic and performative dimension that *parastasi* does. Later the term *tesesi* (adj. *telestikos*) was proposed in an attempt to capture both senses.⁴ Yet, the latter's resonances of church and state rituals known as *teletes* subsumes all rituals into state culture. I opted therefore for *parastasiaki epitelesi* when referring to the Inner Maniat rituals which are independent of church/state-frames.

Another example concerned 'native or indigenous anthropology' which was rendered in Greek by anthropologists themselves as 'in-house anthropology'

(*anthropologia oikoi*),⁵ reflecting the inability of British-inflected anthropology and its insistence on anachronistic kinship models, to handle modernity. This reading sacrificed the essential insight that the native anthropologist does not purely coincide with the interior of one's culture but is engaged in a two-part process of defamiliarization of one's own natal culture. Anthropological understanding grows and mutates with each ethnographic encounter; it is not meant to be the reduction of each field site to generic theoretical frameworks, such as kinship analysis. Particular ethnographic experience should alter the residual meanings of these analytic tools once they are deployed in novel cultural contexts.

Thus, the issue of self-reflexivity as applied to the translation of cultural context and linguistic translation involved for me the doubled movement of reframing local terms and meanings in ethnographic frameworks and the decomposition and re-assemblage of the latter in and by the local sign systems in order to produce a linguistic and semantic hybrid that in its very hybridity captures the passages of cross-cultural fieldwork.

My aim, in this immersion in cultural codes and linguistic expertise in two cultures that the ethnographic text bridges, was to capture the hybrid character of the cross-cultural translation process by combining scientific and literary-poetic diction into the Greek context. For ethnography is both a social science research method that uses fieldwork based participant observation of interpersonal linguistic communication in action, and the textual product of fieldwork based participant observation in practice. In this context, the translative act cannot be confined to the technical book production process alone. The anthropological text's intentionality, instead, complicates and expands the concept of translation through the notion of *translation as socio-cultural theorization*. Terms like 'editing' and 'translation' exhibit different meanings in different sections in a book according to where they are manifested and according to the purpose they are meant to fulfill, whether analytic, theoretical, commercial or legal.

Some theorists of poetic translation propose that the translator should select one term to capture the linguistic sense and psychological intentionality of the author, a primary literary concern. But here translation schematizes the cultural context and its multiple intentionalities, which are condensed in one word but entangle many other unstated meanings and significations. Was I to reduce, for instance, the word *kaeros* in a Maniat poetic lament to sheer 'time'? *Kaeros* (plural *kaeri*) in Greece captures both time and weather. This points to my thesis that translating ethnographic poetry and the ethnographic translation of poetry must attend to tacit cultural codes or embedded social aesthetics and not simply to the aesthetics of pure language. Thus, in translating indigenous poetry, the same aesthetics of translation should be applied as with certain literary translations. I privileged, for instance, the term *aestheterios* over *aestheteriakos*, which is widely adopted (both mean sensory), because of the former's sound quality. Similarly, in other instances, I may privilege a word whose sound captures the sound quality of the original term transcribed.

It is worth pointing out here another example from classic anthropological terms, that of 'informant', which remains as such in the discipline worldwide,

despite all critiques of scientific anthropology. The term originally reflected the dual character of the ethnographer in the field. S/he was to be incorporated in a society, a process that resembled the initiation ceremonies of tribal cultures; to gain competency in the language of the other in order to dialogue with informants; and yet the scientific training would guarantee him/her a distance from that participation in order to transform it to scientific discourse. A too intensive participation in the society was rather distrusted. I opted for the term 'donor' (*dhotis*) in my first ethnography when transferred in Greek, for it captured the reciprocities that bonded researcher and researched.

Similarly, in archaeology the term 'commensalism' is preferred over 'commensality' and has recently been transferred into Greek as *omositismos* (drawing from ecology and biology–medicine).⁶ This term reduces the multisensory embodied reciprocity I have termed *symposiakotita* (discussed here in Part III) to 'eating from the same table' (*com* means together and *mesa* means table).

Finally, the term *kathimerinotita*, everydayness, a novel replacement of 'kathimerini zoe', everyday life, established during the 'years of crisis', takes us back to nineteenth-century discussions of modernity, and the re-symbolization of everyday life and material culture. Consider, for example, Simmel, Braudel, Benjamin, Goffman, Roland Barthes on semiotics, Lefèbvre on space, among others, who denounced the routine, the structural facticity, the self-evident. *Kathimerinotita* signifies the routinization of everyday existence. It reflects our times with the cult of realism; it is a mechanical compression, a reduction of everyday experience to observable 'behavior'. It is thus also predictable.

The rendering of everyday life as routine is a dehistoricization, desymbolization and depoliticization of experience. A good example of this are the various TV reality shows and other media programs focusing on love as physiological process, on lower–middle–class ways of eating, defecating, having sex, as well as aesthetic surgery. This is the dramatization or theatricalization of bare existence, of the routine. Consider, for example, the longer-established TV show *Big Brother*. There the involuntary movements of the body became the terrain for extracting meaning. Similarly, in the American show *Extreme Makeover*, the aestheticization of the body was another example of a society returning to the self-evident body where meaning–gesture is frozen, petrified. Along the same line, the personal tattoo, currently becoming very popular in Greece, takes a signification from the outside and inscribes it on the body, where it stays. The mimetic adoption of these practices coinciding with the invasion of the term *kathimerinotita* points to a society that is losing its gestures as historical–cultural constructs and instead extracts meaning from physiological, involuntary gestures of the body. (The body and its involuntary gestures are discussed further in Chapters 9 and 12.)

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A book may appear in a provisionally final form in one language, but its origins may lie in multiple languages and cultural codes. The book has a biography and may pass through many codes and text formats before it comes to a temporary or provisional rest in a published form. Reflecting on my books, for instance, they originated in

multiple semantic interpretive and linguistic settings and communicative levels. They originated (a) in long-term fieldwork in Inner Mani and later Messinia (South Peloponnese), (b) in twenty-five years of crucial life experience in New York that was not tourism but an everyday *bios*⁷ of negotiating a multicultural society with the ‘eye and ear’ of a researcher, (c) in twenty years of sociological and anthropological training, (d) in my re-experiencing of Greek urban life through the above multicultural experiences, and (e) in translative moments where I had to bridge my fieldwork in Greece and my anthropological training in New York to produce a text that first appeared in English. The first book in particular originated also in my learning the dialect of Inner Mani, my passage through the dream language of Maniat women, and my immersion in the poetic performance and linguistic improvisation of Maniat lament, which eventually compelled me to improvise my own lament (see Chapter 12). *The Senses Still* originated also in my childhood memories in Messinia, and attempted to capture the experience of emigration and return through the language of the senses.

In ethnography, thus, fieldwork is not simply a scientific experiment; ethnographic experience becomes an intimate part of one’s biography; while the biographical accumulation that one brings to the field mediates the fieldwork experience. These are the hidden layers of one’s writings. And since ethnography is characterized by the principle of dialogical knowledge, in my case the teaching experiences in two continents also represented the primary sites for the dialogical production of knowledge. Thus, I taught and dialogued with multicultural audiences of various disciplines and the arts, such as cultural studies, anthropology, communication and media, performance studies, archaeology, social history, ethnographic film, social medicine, folklore, comparative literature, women’s studies and Greek studies in the USA and Greece.

Although the texts convey one cultural code into another code (Greek to American), the issue was to convey to anglophone social science such indigenous frameworks as the Greek perspective on the senses and the historical postures of Greek women. This process was reinforced by the many other languages of the books as much as possible and given the time of publication. The intellectual intentionality of the book does not reside in a final translative end-product in itself and its analytic conclusion, but it attempts to capture moments and acts of cross-cultural translation itself, the actual moments of transfer and transition, of crossing the body of cultural experience, a border territory in which one set of meanings and one identity become another set of meanings and identity. That process is already built into the text and the surface of the books.

Multiculturalism and legislation

The common notion of translation as a purely textual operation may be pertinent for many types of text, but not the ethnographic text. For the vast majority of anthropologists translation has a deeper and holistic meaning that is both textual and extra-textual, both within the book and before it and beyond it. Without the

extra-textual cross-cultural experiential translation no ethnographic text can ever exist or be translated from one language to another. For the anthropological notion of translation exceeds the sheer possession of two linguistic codes such as English/French and Greek; it is grounded on an immersion in the everyday life practice of two or more societies and an intimacy with the intellectual traditions of two or more societies – acquisitions that demand knowledge and familiarity with multiple, cultural codes, beyond the linguistic.

True, one could say, there is no field site or any other social reality independent of interpersonal linguistic and sensorial negotiations between self and other, which are based on rhetorics of persuasion and rely on the building of communicative trust based on mutual experiences of communicative breakdown and repair. I often recall and re-experience myself miscommunications occurring, during my early years in the States, by my spontaneous use of unexamined Greek linguistic codes in English texts or conversations, such as three dots or quotation marks. In English, the three dots in written sentences (or a pause in conversations) signify omission of something previously stated. In Greek, instead, it is an intentional gap, an incompleteness, an ellipsis, demanding the other's insertion, vocal or silent (by bodily gesture), as a confirmation or disagreement – an antiphonic dialogue that presupposes a shared inferential code. Moral inferences shared by social actors are activated by the fusion of affective forces and prescribed communicative media (Lutz 1982; Abu Lughod 1986). My English-speaking friends would politely rush to complete the exact words missing in the sentence, assuming my omission or pause was due to a linguistic slip, to my missing or forgetting the right English word. Similarly, quotation marks in English texts convey exactitude while in Greek they also signify a double meaning; that is, a word in quotation marks is read with both its meanings, literal and metaphorical, one negating the other (as in English 'so-called'). Difficult indeed to place in dialogue merchant exactitude with poetic allegories. In this sense, my ethnographic works have both been mediated by indigenous Greek antiphony, and they have alternated between incompleteness, imprecision, shared moral inferences and precision, exactitude (literality), depending on different social and textual contexts.

Anthropologists would betray their own training if they abandoned the translation of contexts overseen in the translation of their finished texts from one language to another. This is particularly true for the 'native' or 'indigenous' anthropologist trained and working in a foreign society as well as his/her own culture. The everyday notion of translation as conveyance of foreign language anthropological texts into the Greek language frequently abandons the foundational theories of cross-cultural communication in anthropology – a discipline whose main object is accounting for interpretive communication across social-cultural-historical borders and not only across linguistic boundaries.

All these acts of in-depth interpretation, therefore, far exceed the technical production of a book. Yet, the existing (or non-existing) Greek legislation and regulations on translation adopt the common everyday notion of translation. The anthropological text intentionally complicates and expands the concept of

translation as purely a book production procedure, through the notion of *translation as socio-cultural theorization*. Terms like editing or translation exhibit different meanings in different sections in the book according to where they are manifested, to the purpose they are meant to fulfill. Yet, the existing (or non-existing) Greek legislation and regulations on translation adopt the common everyday notion of translation (as a purely linguistic operation where one word is accurately exchanged for another) in prescribing how certain functions in the book production process are to be described and accredited.

But cross-cultural translation at the level of fieldwork and book production is no longer simply a matter of attending to the ethics of the anthropological discipline. The issue speaks to transnational conditions of many Greek intellectuals, writers and artists who criss-cross many national boundaries in producing scientific and literary texts in more than one language.

Greece has had an ambiguous relationship to foreign culture, multiculturalism and transnational processes that have been molding many Greek thinkers and writers. Greece is an avid importer of Euro-American cultural productions, from books to movies and music, and at the same time asserts its own cultural autonomy. It has increasingly been a multicultural and diasporic society yet still insists on its essential cultural unity. These patterns could also be seen in the legislation. At the time of the publication of my books, legislation (formal legislation on intellectual rights and/or operating regulations on translation) aimed to regulate the legal and economic conditions under which the translation of foreign material into the Greek language is conducted. It was a legislation attempting to secure labor and even authorial rights for the Greek translator working with imported foreign material. It recognized the translator as participating in a creative intellectual and even an authorial process by translating foreign material. The model for this legislation derives from the importing of foreign goods. Greeks do not want to be simply positioned as passive consumers of foreign cultural product, thus they assign a creative role to the translator of foreign literary and scientific texts. It moves Greek translators from a passive to an active and productive role where foreign material is in effect nationalized and Hellenized through the legal certification of linguistic translation.

But since Greece is multicultural, the terms 'editing' and 'translation' need to be changed. Translation, particularly of ethnographic texts, is not the passive conveyance of a text from one language into another. The issue here is *code-switching*, in which a multi-lingual ethnographer, as a person possessing two or more codes from which he or she can move back and forth, cannot be equated with one person possessing and translating one linguistic code into another. As I am often asked – like all those who have lived in two cultures and speak two languages – 'what language do you write in first?' my answer is 'depending on where I am, which context and thus which code I am operating with at the time and have the inspiration at the moment'.

Multiculturalism has entered Greece as theory but in practice it becomes the production of similarity through the erasure of difference in the name of homogenization and Hellenization. Homogenization is the reduction of cultural codes to

a linguistic operation in which translation becomes the production of similarity and does not capture the tensions of cultural difference. In the case of books written in another language but whose content is Greek, many young translators hold the illusion that they can fully master the content of the book because of their nationality, whereas they mistranslate due to an inadequate knowledge of the cultural context of the foreign author.

This is one aspect of the transnational and multicultural diversity confronting Greece since the end of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, legislation on translation while attempting to secure new rights for Greek translators, an historically exploited group, also withdraws intellectual property rights from Greek creative artists, writers and thinkers who pursue their careers on an international stage. It must be conceded that in the last decades Greek intelligentsia have fashioned careers for themselves abroad in France, Germany, England, the USA, and Australia, in literature, science, film, visual arts, etc., and in doing so they have been canny translators and conveyers of modern Greek sensibilities beyond Greece, and thereby form an artistic and intellectual diaspora. But what happens when members of this intellectual and artistic diaspora seek to repatriate their creative foreign work back to Greece? These are artists and writers who deal not only in multiple linguistic codes but in multiple cultural codes: they are expert code switchers, moving back and forth between social perspectives and perceptions, they have used their experience of particular cultures and their cross-cultural experience as an essential ingredient in their creative imagination. Any such diasporic intellectual and/or artist seeking to translate his/her creative product fashioned in *xenitia* (foreign land) back into Greek, would not simply be requiring a technical act of translation that could be relegated to a linguistic specialist; rather, they would be recreating a new work out of old work that translates and conveys their foreign cultural experience for local Greek edification and consumption.

We have a well-known example of this in Samuel Beckett, the Irish writer and playwright. Fluent in several English idioms, Dublin working-class English and British English, French and German, Beckett wrote exclusively in French. Towards the latter part of his life when he received well justified international fame, he became deeply involved in the translation of his work from French to other languages, particularly English and German. He basically created new versions of his French work in the above languages, and this has been described by his biographers as an arduous and intensive labor. Likewise, Beckett was intimately involved in the production of his plays in countries outside of France. Beckett reinvented his writing in each new language his work was commissioned to appear in, rather than simply translating French texts in different languages. Under the Greek legislation, however, if Beckett had employed a translator to assist his labors he would have had to concede some form of co-authorship to that individual. Surely the linguistic-aesthetic interventions of a Beckett in reinventing foreign versions of his French work cannot be considered equivalent to the acts of a translator. For there is both a division and hierarchy of intellectual labor here; the same difference between the scientist who invents a new computer program and the technician who programs computers with this new mathematical language.⁸

Existing laws and regulations on translator's rights in Greece do not seem to have recognized that in many cases the repatriation-translation process of foreign work by diasporic Greek artists and writers is in effect and to a large extent a creative act which is their intellectual property. 'Under the law' then, they may have to share authorial credit with an amateur or inexperienced translator who may have worked under the writer's aesthetic and technical supervision. The translator-technician will have the right to lay claim to the creative process that produced the translated Greek text. This is an ignominious fate for the diasporic Greek artist who repatriates and re-invents his/her work crafted in *xenitia* for the homeland and who, at that very crucial moment of symbolic return, is denied full creative credit. For legislation has little understanding of the intercultural creative process it attempts to regulate and codify and which treats the production of a book as reducible to the production process of a factory.

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In Greece, frameworks for entering a text and interpreting used to lie outside the book, the artifact itself. I noticed in my classes in American universities years ago, that among the other cultural groups Greeks were the first to focus on what the book does not say. Books were read by Greek students to be positioned and/or situated: where does the author fit? Ignoring the complexity of content, by labeling the author by schools of thought or political affiliation the book was fixed. With the decline of ideology, the affiliation of a book has become less important or unimportant. In a 'post ideological epoch', books are more individualized theoretically in terms of what discipline specialization they represent and are more singularized by legal frameworks, i.e., copyrights. There are changes in classificatory systems. One area in which affiliation, however, is not abandoned is perhaps translation. Translation does not reflect the transnational life of a book, which conveys a book from one readership to another. Rather, there is a nationalization of the foreign book.⁹ This process, which is a denial of the transnational character of intellectual life, has also occurred in the Greek reception of intellectual property laws imported from abroad. As I argued above, laws protecting copyrights of foreign books have been used to establish the Greek translator as co-creator of the text, i.e., producer of an original text.

One can speak of unequal terms of trade here, since more foreign books are imported than Greek works exported. The Hellenization of translation was at some point an attempt to balance this. But the question remains: why is law imposed and interpreted like this in Greece?

It is mainly some common-sense silent agreement about hierarchies in the world of translators that is operating: well-known translators versus amateurs, translators of books versus EU documents, etc., something also sanctioned in the publishing world by commensurate payment and name location on text. This pertains to the question of ethics of translators and publishers. For given the vagueness in legislation, unethical claims can be made and hierarchies can be ignored. Years ago for instance, a related case was reported in the journal *ANTI* (1998) about a book cover featuring the translator's name as that of an author. Ambiguity has also been

reflected in many academic books where next to the translator's name the indication 'with the author's assistance' was added. Such ambiguity on the part of authors often relates to their own ethics – especially if they employ students as helpers and knowing that the latter's financial compensation for their help depends on the author–professor's evaluation to the publisher.

In the past, especially in the fields of philosophy and literature, when a translator wanted to both present and problematize translation beyond the dimension of the mechanical, she/he would write an introduction to the translated work, thereby demonstrating that the act of translation responded to and was mediated by the intellectual history and theoretical frameworks discussed by the translator. In other cases, the translator would write an introduction to foreground the theoretical and/or aesthetic decisions made concerning the translated text.¹⁰ But prior to this process there has often been an informal process in which translators were in communication with the author and the result would be that of the dialogical process; in which case, the translator would acknowledge the author's contribution. In short, a division of labor was retained between translator and author. This division appears now to be rather problematic because of complex socio-historical processes, and all complexities seem to have been almost erased by intellectual rights laws when pertaining to translation.

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These days, it is no longer the few that operate in many codes. Most Greeks consume products and watch TV from different cultures as well as explore the internet. They exist in many cultural codes on the level of consumption especially. Yet unconsciously. It is then the task of the intellectual and artist to confront this multi-coded environment *consciously* as not only a consumption experience and as the given current conditions of intellectual production. Translation is a core component of intellectual production in a transnational environment.

Translation too can be allocated to processes of *unconscious intellectual consumption or conscious intellectual production*.¹¹ In most cases of unreflective translation – that is as part of a book manufacturing process – the act of translation simply becomes the consumption of one language by another. But under the rubric of translation as part of an intentional, conscious, creative process, it is a process of bringing two or more cultures and societies into communication and dialogue. It is this distinction that is and should be applied among translators.

Intellectual property laws do not account for, and therefore can erase such distinctions because laws do not recognize the *difference between intellectual property – a commodified relation – and intellectual responsibility*. This is left to the judge's perception and knowledge. But what judge accustomed to judge divorces can adjudicate a case of translation, particularly when it pertains to philosophical-literary-scholarly texts and when it comes to authors who live and think in two or more cultures? For in Greece such controversies have been handled in courts that customarily handle alimony settlements, for example. Aside from authors, this diminishes the skillful translators as well, for their work is being equated with that of a translator of parliamentary acts, EU documents and short articles. Their intellectual capacities are sanctioned by economic

formulas – i.e., intellectual rights laws. All this certainly reflects the economic reduction and the gradual commercialization and trivialization of intellectuals. And given the present legislation, the only way authors can guarantee that their role in translation is recognized, is by securing contractual rights not only as authors but also as editors, translators, co-translators, chief translators, etc. For Greece has long been analyzed by social scientists as a society where the penalization of everyday life borders on paranoia, and in times when ethics are not the overriding social concern and discourse, laws can be exploited for personal gain and opportunism and authors can be one target.

Can such laws or lack of proper laws ensure a democratic polity of social justice?

Notes

- 1 A short version of this essay appeared earlier in the *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, vols. 32/33 (2016–17): 239–252.
- 2 Θλιβεροί Τοπικοί (*Thliveri Tropiki/Tristes Tropiques*), 2nd edition, translated by Voula Louvrou, Athens: Hatzinikoli Press, 1988. *Thlivero* (singular) refers to something causing *thlipsi*, sadness, e.g., a death event or a bad state or condition in which another is found. It also refers to something pitiful and often repulsive. Here the translator's slip reveals the unconscious or conscious ethnocentric view of a developed Westerner writing or translating an underdeveloped and thus unfortunate other.
- 3 Published originally in the *Journal of Modern Hellenism* (no. 1, 1984). See also in Seremetakis 2017.
- 4 See, for instance, the insightful review of three of my books by the author and literary critic-translator Aris Maragopoulos: 'Translating the Body', *To Vema*, 19 April 1998. <http://www.tovima.gr/books-ideas/article/?aid=98507>. Maragopoulos belongs to those few translators in Greece that recognized early the intricacies of intercultural translation – those translators represented the exception that proves the rule.
- 5 See D. Gefou-Madianou, *Anthropologia Oikoi. ΔΙΑΒΑΖΩ*, 1993, 323 :44–51; also, *Civilization and Ethnography* (in Greek), Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 1999.
- 6 See, for instance, Yannis Hamilakis's excellent book *Archaeology and the Senses* (in Greek), which was translated by N. Kourkoulos. Athens: Ekdhossis Eikostou Protou, 2015.
- 7 The Greek concept of life is expressed in two contrastive terms, *bios* (βίος) and *zoe* (ζωή), discussed extensively in philosophy from Aristotle to Agamben more recently. In ancient Greece *zoe* was closer to nature and *bios* was a political construct that existed by this division of social life as *zoe* and *bios*. Immigrants and other minorities, for instance, reduced to *zoe*, that is to physical existence and out of *bios*, allowed for their extermination, their expulsion to *zoe*.
- 8 Other well-known examples of authors writing in their second language include Milan Kundera, who wrote in French, Joseph Conrad and Bronislaw Malinowski.
- 9 This is reflected also in the translation of the foreign author's name which often appears in Greek translation and/or is mispronounced (see for instance Ariès, which appeared as 'Αριεξ' the 's', pronounced at the end: www.greekbooks.gr/aries-filip.person). Interesting also here to point out that all diaspora authors see their academic name arbitrarily changed to conform to their birth-legal-administrative name (for example C. Nadia Seremetakis was re-baptized as 'Konstantina Seremetaki' in Greek academia).
- 10 Consider Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, who is best known for her introduction to and translation of Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie*.
- 11 I was sensitized to the risk of an unconscious consumption early on as I was struggling to convey in English my first field experiences in Greece. And although the overall project was seen as successful, a linguistic slip was caught by Peter Allen in his review: Although there is no ocean in Greece, I had used the word ocean instead of sea, for in English we always 'go to the ocean'.

PART VI

The violence of the lettered



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EVENTS OF DEADLY RUMOR

By way of an epilogue

The visible invisible

When Kostas Simitis, university professor in Athens and later politician, was elected prime minister of Greece, he donated his professorial salary to his academic institution for library and research development. When at some point later he asked to see the fruit of his investment in progress, no trace of his donation was found – his four-year salary contributions had vanished. The story emerged in the news, but it was generally downplayed. The case and its investigation belonged to the domain of law, it was claimed.

Funny, one might think. For here was a man elected on the basis of his managerial skills and competence only to then be ripped off by the very social institution that he supposedly knew inside out!

Simitis, founding member of the Socialist Party (PASOK), succeeded Andreas Papandreou in 1996. His election signified the end of the charismatic leadership of the post-junta liberation era and the beginning of effective management. According to Euro-modernizers, all that was needed was a rational, goal and strategy-oriented ruling that would ensure Greece's successful insertion into the European monetary system. Simitis did accomplish the latter. In fact, one can also credit his era with the leaking of the word 'management' out of politics and business and its establishment as social grammar and discourse – via the media in particular – in everyday life.

Management also emerged as a novel academic subject of study in the human sciences and cultural disciplines.

However, any optimism that Greece's insertion into the European monetary system would also transform Greek socio-economic and cultural infrastructures to resemble Western European ones, was soon proven to be unfounded if not naive. Not long after the glamour and euphoria brought by the successful organization of the 2004 Olympics had faded, discourses on loss and social crisis, which have long

characterized the languages of the Greek state, politicians, popular media, and social scientists, intensified once again. One scandal succeeded another as social institutions were subjected to mediatized scrutiny. Academia was among them, though at the very end of the list.

In June 2007, all Greek media dealt with the verdict of what was characterized as ‘the most shocking trial’ in contemporary Greek society. It involved well-known academics and administrators of an Athenian university – a public university of social and political science – who were put on trial amid accusations of their involvement in an 8 million euro embezzlement scheme, one that included ex prime minister Simitis’s donation. The trial lasted 561 days – longer than that of the terrorist organization ‘17 November’, it was noted (*To Vema*, June 7, 2007).

As reported retrospectively, the story actually started in 1998, when the newly elected president discovered that the university could no longer pay for its utilities such as electricity and water. An inspector was sworn in to start an investigation, and a lawsuit soon followed. The investigation showed that the ‘mismanagement’ of the financial property of the school had occurred between 1992 and 1998.

By some coincidence, two months after the appointment of the inspector, the offices of the investigative committee were set on fire. A bit later, the vice president of the university was beaten up badly by unknown attackers. As was reported in several newspapers after the verdict, ‘He suffered from cancer and was under chemotherapy. The hooded men who waited for him outside his office knew this well, that’s why they insisted on beating him on the head with crow-bars and brass knuckles’ (*Typos*, June 7, 2007; *To Vema*, June 7, 4–5). He died later. This was only the first death in the story. Two months after the vice president’s death, the president himself suffered a stroke and was forced to resign. He never recovered, and died in 2004, before the case reached trial. Several other academics involved in the trial died during the trial or after the verdict.

As the media tried to find out who actually ‘ate up’ the money, and how, the matter became complicated. The successor president and vice president of the university who were finally sentenced to 25- and 16-year prison terms respectively and sent to jail, were reported to be intellectuals, with significant work, who had little regard for material possessions. The latter, when interviewed after the verdict, stated, ‘I have not been told whom I deceived and what I embezzled ... I was just told I was a useless manager’ (ibid.). He spent time in psychiatric clinics, whereas the president died of cirrhosis in prison. An assistant engineer who was also involved in the scandal died of a heart attack before the case went to trial and the bursar of the university, 42 years old and in fine health, suddenly ‘burst out’ (a colloquial term meaning he had a fatal breakdown, overcome by bitterness and stress), bringing his prosecution to an abrupt end. None of these men was found to possess substantial savings or major property.

The chief accountant, on the other hand, was found to have utilized the money, like many others, for a good purpose. He bought a red Ferrari! It was the time that expensive cars, very fast cars and/or oversized jeeps became fashionable in Greece and flooded its narrow winding streets. This accountant was sentenced to life in prison. The lost money was slowly showing up. It had been used to buy expensive

cars, luxurious marble fittings, bathroom accessories for private villas (*To Vema & Thema*, June 10, 2007), and other fetishes of enrichment like a red carpet that, as reported in the media, was bought at a price that ‘if real ... would suffice to cover Greece itself’ (*Typos*, June 7, 2007). All this had been managed through forged checks, fake providers, double payments, and so on. After all, along with higher ideals, art, and better organization, the European future had also promised more material wealth.

From the 1990s on, European programs became the basic funding source for Greek universities, determining the goals, terms and methods of practicing research. But when European funds first began to pour into Greek institutions, they remained largely unused and were taken back, and any institution’s inability to ‘absorb’ these funds soon resulted in the donor’s reponse shifting from mere stigmatization to punitive action. The ‘know how’ to use them was at first lacking. It did not take long, however, for a whole mechanism to be set up within each institution to manage this virtual material wealth and magical power.

This mechanism was later reported in the media as ‘resembling the methods of the mafia’. But soon it became evident that this particular university was far from unique. The inability of governments to disburse EU money democratically had allowed its concentration in the hands of the few and the crafty. After the corruption trial, similar stories have continued to pop up in the media concerning corruption in other public universities, not to mention other public institutions, all supposedly under investigation since.

In the meantime, Simitis was not interviewed on the subject, nor did he comment publicly on the loss of his donation. But in the middle of other scandals he is known to have exclaimed in indignation what later became a popular slogan: ‘That’s who the Greeks really are!’ – thus revealing a general bias in favor of ahistorical, psychologistic theories and interpretations of Greek formalism. Self-defeating theories focusing on ‘our national character’, or the moral qualities of politicians as a group, or faulty socialization of children by family and school, or fatalism (*moira* as ex post facto rationalization), ultimately came to justify the metaphysics of catharsis. In contrast, a contextualized and historically informed anthropology would reveal that Western European institutions and advanced technology, when massively imported untranslated into endogenous cultures, could only produce inefficiency. Effectiveness was once attributed to a state bureaucracy and administration that was founded on clientelistic relations. Now, neoliberal anti-statism proposed ‘proper management’ as the antidote to the ineffectiveness of the traditional system. Yet, although ‘management’ is supposed to revitalize and move ahead old fashioned, ineffective enterprises and public organizations, in Greece management seems to start and end with mediated catharsis.

Not long after the trial, and in the middle of massive demonstrations against an attempted reform of higher education legislation by the conservative government of Kostas Karamanlis (who succeeded Simitis in 2004), the new president of the aforementioned university took the opportunity to declare on TV that, now that the school had undergone its catharsis, things would move ahead on a new basis. It remains unclear if by the term ‘catharsis’ he was referring to the legal settlement or the mysterious deaths. What is clear though is that things did not move ahead but

went back to normal. The reform bill was blocked – as several others had been since the 1990s – and university life continued as usual.

By coincidence, I heard later about an international conference on violence and education in postcolonial Europe, among other issues, organized within this university. The event – kept well within university walls – featured a transnational coterie of experts, including anthropologists, who arrived and left ignorant of the context in which they had been invited to perform. These experts eagerly spoke of and heard about violence of other kinds, in other areas, out there, far from home.

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The reaction of the academic community to the severity of the penalties for those academics and administrators judged as responsible for the 8 million euro embezzlement, which led several of them to jail and sent others to the grave, was described as ‘shock and awe’ (see *Kathimerini*, June 7, 2007, 6, and June 10, 2007, 10). It was as if an earthquake had hit the Parthenon. On the other side, economic crimes involving public institutions were not news to everyday people; mediatized economic ‘scandals’ have become habitual and verdicts, published or unpublished, are now received with comments of disbelief, indifference or sarcasm. What is verifiable (a fact) is not necessarily meaningful. What people were eager to discuss and question was, instead, that ‘other violence’, the one that ‘goes underground’, the non-verifiable that remains silent, yet ever present. Some media, tuning to this ‘public sentiment’, as often claimed, attempted to illuminate political practice and violence that often exceeds economic motives. For example, a few days after the verdicts, a national newspaper interviewed the wife of the late president, who spoke of her experience of that violence. Her narrative unveiled the sensory terror of the everyday, which crosses the borders of academia and is played out in the streets:

[My husband] was threatened and blackmailed repeatedly ... He could not take it any more, he had a stroke ... [Yes, I remember that night ...] he went to the office of the Vice President ... He used public transportation ... We knew he was followed. I went there myself by car to pick him up later. At some point, I looked out from the balcony. I saw the two students I had often seen them before; they were following us. ‘Be careful’, I said to my husband and the Vice President. I went out first, opened the door [of the car] for my husband to hurry in. The Vice President didn’t make it. They beat him ... He died ...

[No, my husband] was not afraid for his life. I was reacting to all this for we couldn’t live with this stress. I convinced him to follow them. We identified the one of them; the other disappeared. He was a ‘paid’ student, paid by the ‘circuit’ [a group of people with common interests and goals]. We did not take legal action; ‘students should not pay for their exploitation by professors’, [my husband] was telling me ... My husband died a year before the case reached trial ... No, I do not think the verdict is a moral redress for my family. In three weeks or so they will all be out claiming health reasons ... My husband in the grave and they circulate on TV channels. No, the sentences are not heavy; after all, they were educators. The worst is that there are others who knew and they are still free ...

(Typos, *June 10, 2007*; Thema, *September 4, 2012*)

It is obvious that while for some catharsis of the social body is accomplished by the extraction of malignancies, the ‘imprisonment of a few thieves’ for others is a more complex thing. Violence may be driven by an emergent culture of commodification that breeds thieves and killers, but the imprisonment of criminals does not guarantee democracy nor democratic citizens. Some academics, who decided to talk after the legal settlement and media coverage of the case, seemed to agree with the late president’s view that legal settlements leading to the penalization of everyday academic life will not eradicate the problem. Legalistic orientation for the settlement of any conflict has characterized Greek culture throughout its modern history. Mouzelis (1978) provided early a broader sociological frame than the usual psychological explanations, for understanding the phenomenon. Formalism is a cultural phenomenon in Greece that exceeds the economic domain. Translating Mouzelis into today’s European Greece, the massive and sudden importation of foreign institutions and information that could not articulate with the indigenous institutions and practices were bound to reinforce and intensify the existing formalist culture. Greek formalism has legitimized itself by being traced back to classical Greece, and the fundamental connection between ancient and modern Greeks has been language. Thus, formalism is intensely expressed in language and those institutions dependent on language, such as the church, the school and the court. Most debates, conflicts and crises are managed by personalistic and legalistic means and/or are exhausted in abstract theoretical discussions and concepts, such as democracy, globalization and catharsis, far removed from people’s concrete reality. I often recall my meeting with the president of a regional university a couple of decades ago. He was buried behind papers and dossiers piled on his desk and I could barely see his head. I jokingly commented on the scene as ‘revealing the generosity of the academic mind’. He rushed to correct me laughing: ‘These are lawsuits among faculty.’ Speaking of catharsis! I thought.

Catharsis is linked to transparency as the metaphor for visibility. Enlightenment’s preoccupation with vision and transparency, arising from the idea that reason can illuminate the nature of humanity and the world, draws on Plato’s quest for objective truth beneath the variability of the world of appearances through the mind as mirror. It is no coincidence that the term re-*reflecting* or re-*thinking* is preferred over self-reflexivity in public discourse, since ‘reflect’ captures light in Greek philosophy (see also Chapter 13).

As much as ‘transparency’ poses as a constituent element of secular democracy promising to overcome theological models and practices of secret knowledge, it often ensures instead a conformity to pre-established historical-cultural norms. It is not unrelated to contemporary banalization and repression that, like religion (paraphrasing Debord 1970) moves pseudo-gratification from the desired paradise of justice to life in the present.

Although in Greek history the link between transparency and the exercise of totalitarian power and terror – explored also by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) among others – was experienced during the junta, catharsis resulting in the achievement of transparency in economic, legal or political procedures is presently being reconsidered as a main vehicle of development. The lack of it is attributed to a

long standing clientelism, the eradication of which will also combat the (ab)use of public money for personal or familial gain. ‘What constitutes a worse crime than the theft of public money is the clientelistic system governing student–faculty relations; student members of political parties were given research money and positions in exchange for their silence’, stated a male professor interviewed by a national newspaper (*To Vema*, June 5, 2006). And another academic seconded,

In my opinion, the most serious problem is the ... corruption of the student unions themselves ... In exchange for their vote during presidential or faculty elections [the percentage of student representation has been very high], they ask for benefits, money; they blackmail; they deceive younger students ... That’s where catharsis has to begin from.

(Typos, June 7, 2007)

For most academics, thus, the problem mainly lies in an anachronistic, clientelistic administration whose catharsis will lead to more democratic management:

The mismanagement of Universities is partly due to the way Presidents run them. Instead of ... administering, they do public relations for their own show, leaving the dirty work to secretaries, accountants, and heads of offices. Worse than that, in order to be re-elected [by students and faculty], they give in to the ... appetite of ‘cliques’ that can in turn offer the majority of votes

noted another male professor, while others disagreed, claiming that a president’s job is not to ‘keep ledgers’, for after all, he is not an accountant (*Thema*, September 4, 2007), and others still, urging the ‘defenders of the status quo’ (*To Vema*, February 4, 2007, A56–57), to engage in self-reflection:

The politicians, in tight embrace with the university, collect expensive tribute for their favoritisms, allocation of funds, etc ... [they] should think of their responsibilities as architects of this introverted model of higher education, which gave birth to such monstrosities. The university should (re)think its role. Its mission calls for self-catharsis ... Most faculty members agree that universities have lost their mission ...

(Typos, June 16, 2007)

Indeed, if their mission is to cultivate and support the free exchange of ideas, dialogue and critical discussion, not just transparency in administration, then they have certainly betrayed it. Academic dialogue in today’s Greece is nonexistent.¹ External funding has become a priority and valued equally with intellectual production, if not more. Administrative work has always had an equal, if not higher, status with intellectual production in Greek academia. Now the attraction of European funds acquires an additional quality. It signifies ‘extroversion’ – a recently popularized term in official and media languages. As a new term and state of desire, extroversion has become

equivalent to the ‘modernization’ that Greece has to achieve. It implies a move away from an ‘introverted amoral familism’² and nationalism towards a modern European transfamilial, constitutional and ethical democracy. This move, however, grounded on the nineteenth-century idea of progress, implies a non-synchronicity, if nothing more; it admits a failed and deferred relation of Greece to modernity. It also implies an insularity of Greece and a primitivization in European discourses. Greece is thus returned to the margins. In this sense, one might ask, is ‘extroversion’ just another border, if not a wall?

I recall a casual conversation with an older Greek colleague of the diaspora, a well known economist and philosophy professor in France. ‘What does extroversion mean to you in the academic context?’ I asked, ‘for it has now thoroughly invaded our vocabulary’. ‘Well, you catch me uninformed’, he responded, and judging from himself, he added ‘but I assume it means the production of exportable work that can dialogue with other works in foreign contexts’. ‘Dear,’ I said, ‘times have changed, and I think we are left spaced out’.

Diaspora Greeks with internationally recognized work have long been ignored or expelled and their work often silenced, if not censored – an issue often highlighted in the media lately.³ A few exceptions prove the rule. Significant research or theoretical work produced in and by Greek academia (especially in the humanities and excluding the sciences), has been very limited, or nearly nil, and Greek universities are generally ranked low. Anachronistic methods of knowledge transmission, such as the assignment of one book per course, the distribution of course lectures by professors in the form of photocopied notes to be memorized, or the absence of course outlines, contribute to the general picture of underdevelopment. After all, ‘in Greece, faculty members are evaluated on the basis of time of service rather than their intellectual work’, stated an older male professor interviewed by the media (*To Vema*, November 5, 2006). Indicative of this devaluation of intellectual work is also the recent massive distribution of honorary titles, such as ‘Professor Emeritus’ or ‘Honorary Doctorate’ (offered to foreigners). Normally meant to designate the valorization of one’s intellectual work, such titles are now generously endowed for instrumental reasons, e.g., to meet departmental teaching requirements in austerity times, or simply to display ‘extroversion’ by expanding public relations, as mandated by external evaluations imposed by EU regulations.⁴

Extroversion in the era of globalized information transfers often assumes the meaning of diplomatic-touristic exchanges fostering decontextualized knowledge. This facilitates the rumor of a fair exchange. Without undervaluing the merits and joys of touristic experience, I must point out that this form of traveling out to consume an other, is especially amenable to absorption into local clientelistic contexts. An example of this has been the reduction of intellectual production and its valorization as an end result of an assumed universal clientelistic negotiation.⁵

At the same time, the few proponents of dialogicity are often stigmatized and occasionally psychologized as ‘verbal abusers’ for critical dialogue or comments are to be feared and avoided in this era of general consensus seeking. Speaking at a conference in Delphi once, I was warned that one of those so called ‘killers’, or ‘ruthless

critics that spare nobody', a well known philologist-historian and public intellectual, was in the audience. Subjected to his critiques, the previous speakers advised me to prepare for the battle. Old and dignified, he got up after my speech and simply stated 'for what I just heard, I would like to thank you', and left the room quietly.

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There is indeed a general consensus that a good number of professors conduct their work with dignity, never engage in illegal or unethical procedures, and produce intellectually. Yet, although they 'do their job', another elderly male professor bitterly remarked, 'they also would do nothing to denounce or report corruption incidents that occur inside' the university system (*To Vema*, November 5, 2006) – with the exception of a handful of them, I may add. As Taussig would put it, there are 'public secrets' that 'magnify a reality' (Taussig 1999, 50–51), which although generally known, it cannot be spoken of out loud. Everybody knows yet nobody knows. I would certainly agree with Herzfeld here that there are 'aspects of cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality' (Herzfeld 1997, 3).

This alternation between legal and personal settling, as represented by the recent legal cases and assassinations, is also encountered in the everyday structure and organization of the academic environment between official pedagogy and informal slander – the Greek saying 'language breaks bones', or 'language kills', is not just an old, outdated proverb. And as with any exclusionary process, this too points to a cultural-intellectual formation that develops alongside socio-economic changes.

How is this informal structure of linguistic and personalistic violence on the level of professors affecting the students, who are the everyday witnesses of this dynamic, and who are often drawn into these tensions as collaborators? I wondered. What does this linguistic violence tell us about the social construction of knowledge in the institutional environment? And how does this affect, and is it affected by, democratic ethics and ideals? As a well-known reporter for a TV series of comparative investigations on the status of higher education also inquired,

Since the beginning of EU funding programs, professors who wish to acquire status and positions enter the process of buying student votes ... So, young students learn early that participation in public affairs means engaging in a system that divides power by under the table agreements. What does this mean for the DNA of Greek democracy?

(Investigative report, P. Tzimas, Mega Channel 2006).

These are questions that have not been effectively raised and analyzed in popular media or academic studies. Nor have they been discussed in depth in the fierce debates on and around each new reform proposed by every government. The main focus of the debates has been on university administration and management on the one hand, and on the other general concepts like democracy, neoliberalism, and/or autonomy, in a metaphysical manner. This has undoubtedly contributed to a dangerous inattention to everyday academic experience. Any perspective, then, that

speaks to the latter remains contentious. Yet, it is on everyday academic culture that the success or failure of any structural reform largely depends.

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As I was writing some of these thoughts, I heard in the evening news that a petition had been circulating against the then proposed reform, calling academics around the world to defend university autonomy and freedom of thought and speech. It was reported that ‘the 900 hundred or so signatures included famous scholars, like Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler and others’. As soon as the list hit the news, concerned citizens (one of them being a lawyer) and journalists – all probably from the opposition – directly contacted some of the signatories and asked them ‘What do you know of Greek academic reality?’ and ‘What is the reasoning for saying ‘No’ to the proposed reform?’ Their responses, reported in two major Sunday papers, varied. Noam Chomsky, for example, sounded surprised: ‘It is ridiculous for my name to be first. I am not seriously involved (if at all).’ He went on to explain he couldn’t track any copy of the mentioned petition. (*Kathimerini*, August 28, 2011, 20) ‘I have signed many petitions for reforms around the world; honestly, I cannot remember the details of the particular case ... Nor am I the right person to speak on the matter’ (*To Vema*, August 28, 2011, A17). Aside from Greeks appearing as tricksters, or seducers of external guarantees for the validity and truth of their claims, the story also reveals the problematic conceptualization of and approach to context, in the era of globalization, on the part of the seduced.

In his turn, Michael Herzfeld, the American anthropologist known for his work on Greece, gave two reasons for signing against the prospective reform, and unlike Chomsky he did remember some details. His first reason concerned the issue of presidents and deans now to be externally appointed as opposed to previously being elected by the academic community itself. The second reason, he explained, had to do with the proposed ‘restructuring of various departments to form a broader unit, the school’, which ‘is bound to lead to the disappearance of disciplines with fewer faculty members ...’ These are two issues, he explained, that ‘after all guarantee the autonomy of the institution and ultimately freedom of thought’ (*To Vema*, August 28, 2011, A17).

Yet, the violent mechanisms for eradicating the academic and political Other have not only been operating within established canons – that is, the disciplines with numerous faculty members. Rather, they have been effectively adopted and ruthlessly practiced by minor disciplines as well. Both are products and producers of violent clientelistic relations and, in everyday life, freedom of speech is guaranteed via the silencing or excommunication of academic Others.

In fact, as the above examples show, the construction of the Other acquires a collective dimension because it constructs at the same time a mythical collectiveness of a department or university and/or collegiality of professors around the world – in the case of the petition, all signatories were supposedly committed to similar universal ideas and political ideals. Thus, the delusion, or ‘extro’ version, that in a globalizing modernity the unknown particular can be subsumed under the known universal.

Yet, it had already been repeatedly documented in the national Greek media, by serious investigative reporters as well as social critics,⁶ that in everyday academic life

the system of corruption and violence has long transcended political ideologies and party allegiances. This is a view that everyday people share, as is evident in their indifference or sarcasm, expressed in both social media and everyday discourse, about claims on truth and ethics in academia, since these depictions contradict their own experiences of schooling.

The international declaration or petition was but one example of the reduction of complex social dynamics to simple rhetorical social codes or a simple cryptographic coin and mediatized commitments. Decontextualization, which always diffuses responsibility, was of central importance in a process of truth-claiming by state institutions, such as Greek academia, as these, along with the state, mourned the collapse of social worthiness.

PreFace

A forensic, mediatic opening up of the academic body had been initiated earlier, in the 1990s, as a globalized modernity weakened the ability of the state to control developments in its own national territory. The national Greek media, via massive newspaper articles and TV reports, talk shows and discussions, offered a spectacle that revealed the embarrassing interpersonal relations of academics in the courtroom. We witnessed corruption, personal feuds, promotion of unworthiness and social stigmatization.⁷

This spectacle, which was presented as shockingly new, caused media and academia to interrogate each other 'How come everyone knew yet nobody knew?' Yet, this revelation had been anticipated by another event, perhaps the most dramatic in the Greek academic world at the time. A student of the University of Crete shot dead (*catharise*, 'cleaned', as the Greek expression goes) two professors in the classroom, with a rifle for wild pig hunting. The particular event was quickly dismissed as the isolated, idiosyncratic act of a paranoid, psychologically disturbed individual. It was as if the event had occurred in the private bedroom of society, a sacred space that was not supposed to be exposed to extensive public investigation. The relatively lukewarm response compared to other 'common' killings and their respective dramatization in the news reflected a sociopolitical moment during which a revealing event hits the benumbed parts of the social body. Its quick dismissal as the isolated action of a paranoid individual functioned as a symbolic anesthetic, in this way precluding any deeper search and public witnessing of the social wound of such forms of violence. This event, just like a little street grave today, was but another imperceptible, inconsequential, impermanent detail of the everyday dismissed as an incident lacking all political meaning; thus rendered nonvisible.

As a response to that dramatic event which I sensed was the kind of imperceptible everyday detail that signals what is to come, I wrote a short newspaper article⁸ proposing that such signs must be understood as extensions and visible expressions of the invisible violence that characterizes the everyday life of the academic world. My point has been that physical violence and legal settlements are but symptoms of a wider and more complex internal structure of interpersonal and linguistic aggression and insinuation. These take the form of rumor, of slanderous deformation of personality,

of forgery of academic credentials, and of the expulsion of those constructed as sacrificial substitutes – all acts that constitute the mythical character of academic oral culture or what George Marcus has called ‘corridor talk’ (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Mouzelis (1978), recounting the historical example of the attempted academic reform during the post-junta era, showed that it exhausted itself in the excommunication, the catharsis, of pro-junta faculty; thus, an opportunity to reform the ailing educational structure itself was missed.

These issues should be explored within wider comparative social contexts, rather than the usual psychological explanations. In short, what does the culture of the modern state and its social institutions do with rumor, intentional propaganda, mythology and silence? It has been well documented in zones of political terrorism and violence, as in Central America, Argentina, and South Africa, that states reconstruct social memory and perception through the production and circulation of rumors and misinformation. Rumor emerges from states that are in crisis, where the complex elements of institutional crisis are controlled and contextualized by practices of compression and coding.

In the context of Greek academic institutions, these codes have taken the form of ethnocentrism and sexism. Rumor is the narrative form by which the state forges and reintroduces normalcy in times of crisis. In real situations of crisis, rumor re-stabilizes society via the legitimizing channels of communication that transform myth into public information. Such channels can be the mass media and the courtroom. The emergence of rumor, of myth and other narratives of mystification, points to transformations of the social organization of truth claiming – something that is shown when spaces like the courtroom or the university become central sites of rumor in a society. Plenty are the examples in modern Greek history, which left us wondering how simple rumors were relegated to legal proofs in major political and other trials.

Silence is a form of rumor. It can be indifference produced and disseminated in public culture. Indifference is *not* simply formalistic, rationalized and procedural, as Herzfeld (1992) has claimed. On the contrary, it can also be a violation, taking away the ability of individuals, kin groups and communities to name themselves via their own historical experience. And this exceeds ‘minor’ or ‘major’ canon divisions. Rather, the university emerges as another space of quotidian trauma among others, like the road, the wall, the earth-shaken site, and the exhumed grave.

In Central and Latin America, human rights observers were shocked by the normalizing rumors of the state after the disappearance of political opponents and the subsequent denial of any knowledge concerning the existence or fate of the disappeared. In zones of political crisis, the state uses silence, indifference, and public denial, thereby imposing self-censorship on the masses in order to forge an everyday life. The academic sphere in Greece and elsewhere, like the dictatorial states of Latin America, regulates institutional life and forges normalcy with the disappearance or silencing of specific Others by death or death doubled. (see cases in point in the next two sections).

Rumor allows the author and the copier/transmitter of it to enter history in the form of myth and to register the moment of their entry in historical participation itself. The providers of rumor acquire identity and status by their locating and constructing of an Other. This presupposes the subsequent distortion of the real identity of that

Other. The author of rumor uses myth to consolidate identity himself and to determine his hierarchical position in the institutional context. Whatever the construction of the other as Other is, it acquires collective dimension because it constructs at the same time the mythical collectiveness and homogeneity of a department or university or/and collegiality of professors around the world – from which of course the Other is deported. This usually takes the form of a preliminary inclusion (e.g., the desire of the Other to acquire a position in the specific school or university) in order to mobilize in turn a theater of exclusion of the candidate through appropriate rumors. Thus, the department or school redefines itself via catharsis from that which it deports or ‘cleans’ (as the Greek expression goes). Plenty also are examples of diaspora intellectuals who whether they applied to a Greek university or never expressed an interest in returning home, are presented as ‘rejected’.

A recent example was the so called rejection of an internationally known Greek astrophysicist and academic, now located in the US. Rumor had it that he was judged unfit and ‘sent back home!’ I amusingly recall myself back in the 1990s, while I was residing in the States, the rumor that my application for a permanent position in one of the above mentioned universities had caused fierce fights among faculty but I was finally rejected. To my knowledge, I had never applied nor expressed any interest, written or oral, to permanently join any school in Greece, nor had I been invited to do so.⁹ A few years later, in another casual conversation, I was informed by American colleagues lecturing in Greece that the response to their inquiry about my absence from the existing anthropology departments was that I had been properly invited many times but I refused to participate!

Rumor or ‘corridor talk’, commonly known as gossip, in the university is one of the primary means by which institutional memory is constructed. Like the states of Central America, institutional memory often has to do with the disappearance and/or forging of individual identity. The individual’s identity – his/her biography – is constructed via a concrete iconography that substitutes for central social mythologies of Greek society, such as sexism, racism, and ethnocentrism.

The emergence of rumor as public culture and social discourse constitutes the common recognition that the most basic creative functions of social agents, their ability to mobilize sources of the self, relations, communities, institutional roles, and everyday life, have evaporated. Rumor aims at rewriting authorship, at practicing the privilege of the narrator. When someone cannot create meaning or a product in what one defines as his/her professional life, he/she often relies on rumor as a way of pseudo-writing. Rumor can become one’s product and in rumor is one’s life mirrored as a creative and effective praxis.

At the same time, the anonymity that rumor provides, the lack of a locatable originary source, reveals the extent to which authorship in the educational environment is either in crisis or nonexistent. Rumor in this case offers the opportunity of transient and temporary authorship. Via gossip the sense of authorship is transferred from one individual to another, and this creates cohesion in the collective ritual of a pseudo-theorization or a quasi-ideological morality. Thus, we have the collective creation of a mythical legitimizing narrative center.

Rumor, therefore, does not remain in the context of one single institution (i.e., a university) but is transmitted from one institution to another as interpersonal coin and as a substitute for academic ideas and accomplishments.

If formalism and bureaucratic procedures then have been one of the stories that the Greek university narrates, rumor or gossip has been another. And rumor has an intimate relation with lies and conspiracies, another syndrome that characterizes Greek history (and human history) since its beginning. Lies accompany and reinforce old contradictions. It follows that it would be useful, as we discover in the media, for the university to be dragged to court, to look at this other, half-hidden ugly world of insinuations and rumors.

The questions arising at the time were: What alternative solutions does one who becomes a victim of oral rape have if he/she opposes the penalization of academic life in court? To what extent do Greek laws deal with linguistic violence when there is no official prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and other forms of interpersonal and social bias? Lately, there have been some efforts at modernizing legislation against sexism and sexual harassment. In fact, in 2008, I discovered – as I had to be subjected to it myself – another modernizing improvement, namely psychometric exams. They were a prerequisite for the hiring of faculty members in academia. These exams in fact came to supplement the mandatory physical exams that included the candidates' examination for able bodiedness by a medical committee!¹⁰ To this day, when I mention these procedures to people, I am told they have not 'noticed' or 'thought about' them – another public secret, I guess, operating imperceptibly in academic commonsensical normality and everydayness.

The interrelation of management with medicine has long been analyzed in the social sciences, and more recently De Certeau (1984) has pointed to the ideological shift from therapeutics of extraction in the nineteenth century, where disorder was seen as excess, to a therapeutics of addition today where disorder becomes a deficit and has to be compensated for or replaced. Psychology, in this case, posing as the new, non-surgical medium, promises what the previous management regime failed to deliver. In the given context, we can assume that if Albert Einstein, Salvador Dali or Christie Brown applied for a university position, they would be rejected as dangerously unfit.

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To mind often comes Melina Merkouri's response, years ago, to accusations that Greeks have yet to discover and utilize psychology in their lives: 'we do not need psychotherapists much for we have our friends'. Today, these words, revealing the relative scarcity of social isolation in her time, appear anachronistic. A 'friend' was someone who was your everyday companion (physically present and on the telephone), and, better than your family, stood by you on all occasions. With friends you shared your *parapono* – an exchange and sharing, of pains, emotions and joys (in Greek pain, *ponos*, means also labor; for example, a scholarly study is called *ponima*). This narrative of everyday life did not necessarily require redress or rectification as its English translation, complaint. Yet, today *parapono* demands legal or psychological treatment. And friendship, once based on everyday affective reciprocity beyond the nuclear family, now can only be compensated and substituted by a professional therapist or your family. In academia particularly, friendship is mainly grounded on the mere exchange

of ideas, or rumors, of common interest. In the era that seeks general consensus, a friend is one who is not critical to one's ideas, and facilitates one's promotion.

Dislocations

Rumor as a form and mechanism of silence, of social death, is supplemented and facilitated by the method of 'temporary displacement' – another desperate act of nullity of the present. Best exemplified by two common Greek expressions, 'nothing more permanent than the temporary' and '*ton ethapse*', meaning someone's forced burial through slander, it constitutes another habitual everyday practice of violent excommunication, whether in or outside the classroom.

Displacement is an effective way of creating the cemetery of the future, the sacred city of the useless dead. The academic cemetery is an equalizing space – under the eye of God, the famous and the obscure are dead equal. An MIT professor for twenty years, applying for the position of Director of the Institute of Oceanography of the Greek Center of Sea Research, was one case in point picked up by the media. His story started in 2002. After lawsuits filed by two of the candidates for the job against each other regarding the decision of the electorate committee, all three candidates were re-evaluated by a new committee in 2006. Since the plaintiff who won the court case was not the one who was originally selected, this new committee decided that he was after all the one who deserved the position. The rationale given for this decision was that this way the committee had created the best circumstances for a future election of the MIT professor!¹¹ (*To Vema*, January 21, 2007).

A common story of the inside, the following case, recovered from the indictments filed by faculty against the president, involved a male candidate in Political Economy at an Athenian university. It hit the news in 2004, but it actually started in 2001. The meeting of the electoral committee for choosing a candidate for a position in Political Economy was suspended because of a bomb scare. A few days earlier, the mother of the one of the candidates received a call threatening her son's life unless he withdrew his candidacy. A new meeting was scheduled later – two different conference rooms were booked in case of a similar bomb threat – and the candidate whose life had been threatened was elected. One of the other candidates, however, filed a lawsuit against the president of the committee for its decision. In 2003, an identical position was opened up in that department and the litigating candidate applied again. A co-candidate began receiving threatening calls, and soon after he was anonymously slandered to his publisher.

Symbolic death imposed on someone by dislocating and defacing his/her book(s) is a fairly common practice. The attack involves a simple accusation, justifiable or not, concerning book's content or form, to cause the removal of the book from the public eye, the market, until the case is legally settled. This dislocation of the body of the book, which serves as a copy of the person's body in the modern world of civilized witchcraft, leaves a gap to be filled with rumor news in the seamless continuum of banality.

In 2004, the faculty received information concerning plagiarism in the Ph.D. thesis of the above mentioned plaintiff candidate for the position in Political Economy. A few days later, one of the professors, on his way to the election meeting

to submit proof of plagiarism, was beaten up outside his home by two people. The election process was suspended. The plaintiff filed a lawsuit again and was in turn sued by several of the faculty members involved. A few months later, the department's committee investigated the charge of plagiarism and concluded that indeed more than 100 pages had been copied. A meeting of the committee was scheduled for discussion of the matter next day but it was postponed due to a warning phone call about explosives in the building. A few months later, the faculty heard there was a proposal to be submitted by one professor recommending the plaintiff for the position despite the issue of plagiarism. When that professor was approached by media, he claimed he had never submitted any such proposal. Some faculty insisted that it was a specific student group that supported the particular candidate, while the president of the university claimed it was a case inherited from the previous presidency and he would investigate it (*Eleftherotypia*, October 17, 2004, 65).

To add one more of the endless dead stories, when an associate professor was elected in the School of Social Sciences in another university, his papers were never forwarded for consideration to the Ministry, as is customarily done. The president claimed some personal data were missing from the submission, causing a year's delay. According to the candidate himself, when after two months the Ministry requested a re-run of the election process, the electoral body met and concluded that there was no need for such a re-run because nothing was missing (*ibid.*)

This particular candidate seems lucky to have been delayed only for one year, if we consider that a nine-year delay was imposed on the election process of a professor in a medical school. And I myself recall a friend and colleague, a renowned archaeologist, confessing with indignation in a casual conversation in the 1990s, that his case and his wife's, an archaeologist herself, had been pending since the 1980s. They were never appointed – he died recently. There is still ample space in the cemetery.

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Still today there are academics who prefer to remain silent about their own story and keep it within university walls, even if they have won a court case, for they fear ramifications for their careers. Like the motorists killed on Greek city streets, the academic victims fear the possibility of exile imposed by stigmatization fed by atomizing rumors. The targeted academic victim is stigmatized as careless, a violator of honor codes or laws, unintelligent, uncooperative, arrogant, and/or lacking proper patrons. This renders the victim partly responsible for her/his own *atyhia* (lucklessness) and justifies punitive excommunication. The stigmatization of the victim, and often of the victim's 'family', becomes part of the 'public secret' that leaves her/him infra-academic, like the flexible citizen of a post-disaster state, while the rest of the academic community normalizes, routinizes and integrates these accidental deaths into everyday life as rumor. After all, 'scientific' thinking is reserved for macro-analyses of sensory-affective-free conceptualizations of an outside, be that the dead past or the promised future, far from the quotidian trauma of the present. The latter is but a collateral loss.

Pondering the obvious question of what cultivates and ensures such 'indifference' and obedience on the part of the academic community, I could not avoid flashing back to Bentham's inspection principle: the individual is placed in a virtually

omniscient setting – the panopticon – as a means to ensure self-discipline. And I wonder, is the threat of observation, punishment, and shame enough to create obedience? Most expulsions occur in the name of ‘defaming a university or department’, that is, for exposing its inside to the outside. One of course might wonder why this sensitivity to the defaming of an institution is not complemented by a sensitivity to enabling exportable intellectual production. Perhaps this is because silence and obedience is enough to guarantee one’s upward mobility. Critical discourse and dialogue, understood as disobedience, leads to expulsion or excommunication. Thus, ‘absolute integration’ (to metaphorize Adorno) can be effectively accomplished via formal legal procedures or the catharsis of assassination or the very common whispering campaign. They are all media for managing interpersonal and ideological conflict.

These media are often expressed in gastronomic terms: ‘they ate him/her’ is the saying. Stress, anxiety, and bitterness caused by rumor consume the person; rumor ‘eats one up’, as the saying goes. Feldman (2015) has identified the use of ‘culinary imagery’ in clandestine state violence in South Africa. And much earlier, Stoller (1997, 6) described learning in North and West Africa as understood and transmitted ‘in terms of gustatory terms of bodily consumption’. Not to forget Michel de Montaigne, it is better to eat someone after death than to cannibalize him alive:

I am not so concerned that we should remark on the barbaric horror ... but that, while we quite rightly judge their faults, we are blind to our own. I think it is more barbaric to eat a man alive than to eat him dead, to tear apart through torture and pain a living body which can still feel, or to burn it alive by bits, to let it be gnawed and chewed by dogs or pigs (as we have not only read, but seen, in recent times, not against old enemies but among neighbors and fellow-citizens, and – what is worse – under the pretext of piety and religion). Better to roast and eat him after he is dead.

(de Montaigne, On Cannibals, 1580)

The fear and anxiety caused by the nightmare of rumor is also due to a Greek understanding of rumor as prognostic, ‘not in terms of actual prediction but as a culturally mediated sense of possibility ... and symbolic projection’ (Feldman 1996a). As is often said in everyday conversation, ‘Do not talk about it much, for it will happen.’ I was often warned with this saying while I was preparing the public commemoration event of the Kalamata earthquake in 1996, ten years after the disaster. More recently, when I asked a colleague why she is not announcing her honorary invitation to speak, from an American school, she whispered, ‘I am afraid to make it public.’

Defacement

Without reflection, without shame, they have built
great, high walls around me ... imperceptibly they
shut me from the outside world.

Cavafy, The Walls

In 2006, the president of a regional university notified one of the faculty members, an associate professor of Political Science, about his referral to the Disciplinary Council of Higher Education, consisting of senior judges. The charge was 'defaming the university' and he was threatened with firing. A few days later the professor died.

A year earlier, he had submitted to the authorities of his university a report objecting to the process of student admissions to the graduate program, which he found unethical. Admission was based on grade point average, yet students with the highest average were excluded, while others with low average but with a recommendation letter from a local politician were selected. As his report was rejected by both his department and the University Senate, he publicized his critique (*To Vema*, October 29, 2006; *Eleftherotypia*, May 10, 2006; *Ta Nea*, May 17, 2006, N14). A few hours after he died of heart attack at the age of 54, his son discovered that his father's personal computer was gone from his office; it was found in the office where the faculty meeting had taken place but nobody knew how it had got there (*ibid.*). Known to be collecting data on his computer to further support his case, he was promptly excommunicated.

This time, however, a death did break the deadly silence and triggered some communication, even if only temporarily, both within and beyond university walls. Echoing Nietzsche, the issue of consciousness, of becoming conscious of something, arises when we realize just how we can do without it. A few isolated responses by academics slowly appeared; they reveal the prevailing unquestioned assimilation into institutional cultures of people defying what they claim to safeguard and practice, democracy:

I cannot tolerate ostrich behavior anymore and the pseudo-dilemma of covering up or defaming the university from the inside out!

exclaimed a professor in an open letter to the President and Vice President of Academic Affairs. And he continued,

At this time it is clear to all of us that while we are all hypocritically defending the territorial autonomy (*asylo*) of the university, the substantial ideological and academic autonomy has long been seized by internal violators of our academic rights and dignity ... There is no excuse for anyone remaining a mere spectator any more ... it is because of this indifference and irresponsibility that a fatality [his colleague's death] was not avoided.

(*Eleftherotypia*, May 28, 2006)

His courageous voice was complemented by a few more thoughtful voices coming from the deceased professor's colleagues. They echoed as a lamenting chorus granting the validity of his monologues and putting things into their constituent context. Like the friends and relatives of the victims of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the fire victims of Ilia, or the dead in the streets in Greece, they attempted to destigmatize and depathologize a victim by redefining democracy and demanding justice at home.

At a time when the academic community is trying hard to maintain the university as the site which cultivates critical thought, policing and penalization of critique are a bad sign for the future ... The disciplinary action of defaming the university was based on the publicizing of his critique ... [he informed the Ministry of Education after the rejection of his report by the university authorities]. To attract the attention of state officials regarding issues of malfunctioning of institutions constitutes an elementary constitutional right of citizens ...

(ibid.)

This critical statement coming from a female academic was seconded by another's:

But which are indeed the practices that delegitimize the university in the eyes of society? Are they the sensitivities of a colleague to worthiness, transparency, and democratic processes, or are they perhaps those mechanisms that were mobilized to culminate in his academic and moral extinction, as well as mechanisms of inaction that contributed to the isolation of the colleague and facilitated his expulsion?

(ibid.)

The issues and themes that both above academics addressed resonate with a different historico-economic context: the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, beset by economic violence and emergent fascism, and the implosion of the program of liberal democracy – which Carl Schmitt identified as technocratic neutralization and depoliticization. Issues that were also endorsed by a male colleague of theirs:

[He] was left alone. Not because the institutions did not respond ... but also because all political activist unions did not adopt a clear position ... A network that previously protected critique and debate, preventing its leading to witch hunting. This is what is revealed here: when someone stands up and his critique annoys those who have the power, he is not adequately protected by the present democratic institutions ...¹²

(ibid.)

Nor by the majority of his colleagues. Institutional changes alone would not generate or ensure democracy and democratic governance, nor democratic citizens. The question remains, why do all academic responses to everyday experiences come after the fact? Why is everyday-life-eventness left 'to the historian of the future', as the saying goes? Is the everyday and the sensory-affective outside of time and representation? Theoretical responses as statements or condemnation after the fact simply replicate the dictum 'first violence then representation'. This is the perfect justification for inaction in the present; for condemning the present and the everyday to silence. Nor can inaction be compensated by verbal distancing or by equating the latter with action or by including a theoretical acceptance of violence. Some leading sociologists at the time

proposed ‘self negation’. But is self-negation the only response to participation in a structure that forces death? Rather not.

Nor is the thanatopolitical mediology of cultural bankruptcy and the mimetic catastrophilia of Greek media, an antidote to this kind of silence and defacement. The media, by presenting decontextualized narratives of traumatic events, aim at highlighting crisis by exposing illegal procedures (economic scandals in particular, as they are easily verifiable) and means of terrorizing the people in and by social institutions. If and when they expose a ‘scandal’ to the outside, the ‘public secret’ is handed over to the law. This often completes the silencing process, for legal procedures last for years (no coincidence that the death of the aforementioned professor in 2006 is still being played out in the courts in 2018), and the media never follow up one crisis; they always look for the next ‘thriller’.

These media narratives may indeed highlight in some ways the gradual corporatism of the Greek university and its partial reduction to managerial technique; the latter, in various ways, reinforces a form of managerial corruption that exploits proceduralism. One could decipher that Greek culture has moved from amoral familism to amoral corporatism that enables and covers up procedural breaches. But what remains in crisis is the unexamined affective and sensory trauma that these procedures generate and the extent to which this trauma becomes a constituent part of the collective unconscious, or the so-called DNA of Greek democracy. The direct and indirect experiences of violence and dislocation and the resulting post-traumatic conditions and memory disorders can damage the very human resources required for transitions to democratic institutions, academia being one of them.

Cultural memory, as also shown earlier in the case of Albanian and more recent immigrants, is contingent on material conditions of embodiment and the senses. But these conditions can undergo radical change by exposure to chronic violence and its after-effects. As Feldman (1996b) has eloquently shown, in societies that are subjected to institutionalized secret knowledge and lack a stable open sphere, experiences of violence, terror and pain can be erased by ‘cultural anesthesia’:

in ... late capitalist modernity the quantitative and qualitative increase of objectification increases the social capacity to inflict pain upon the Other and ... render the Other’s pain inadmissible to public discourse and culture.

(Feldman 1996b, 90)

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My mind drifts back again to that other trauma-event that Lévi-Strauss narrates about the nomadic Amazonian Indians he had to count for his census. The first ones he was able to count were those who had died. Death and writing was then a way for creating conditions of visibility of the Other. Today, the death of the Other too often remains undocumented, accidental, rumored and objectified. Death defaces the Other. In this context, one may certainly envy the institutionalized memorialization and public recognition of professors in the form of busts displayed in the old Viennese university. Half body seems better than no body.

It seems that, although the university in Greece followed the historical path of the modern cemetery in the cartographic order of the city – relocated from the center to the back spaces of the city and from cities to peripheries – academia learned nothing from and shared nothing with the local aesthetics and practices of archiving. In this mutual heterotopic displacement, whole stories of death, of voluntary or involuntary deaths, were silenced and turned to privatized memory. But, memory is far from a mere property of an individual's mind and psyche. Cultural memory is embodied in everyday performance practices, intentionally mediated by social actors, and can thus intervene in the meaning systems of the present. Philosophers of historiography have claimed that event is not that which happens but that which is narrated; this alerts us to the fact that formulaic depictions can wall off domains of experience and thus render them dehistoricized. And I contend that memory divested from its everyday sensory-affective constituency is reduced to a sheer pool of ideas. Performance practices in everyday life, like the installation of little street graves by citizens living in austerity, or the designing and organization of the participatory public earthquake memorialization after the disaster (discussed earlier), provide only some examples of intervention performances against the divestiture of trauma-spaces and bodies, and are notable for their sensory-affective rescripting as archives of death. There *anamnesis* is not located in privatized mourning or formal commemoration, nor in confessional-psychoanalytic recollections, but in the spatialization of the traumatic as exemplified by the wounded habitat, the building, or the street and the sea. Many more interventions must be witnessed and documented in everyday life.

Forward

On a more general level, the so-called Greek crisis in the context of the EU's politics of austerity has been attributed to Greece's long tradition of mismanagement, or more accurately its inability to achieve rational self-management. The classic question arises, whether a country governed for so long by amoral familism will be able to move effectively to the 'rationality' of constitutional democracy. No doubt Greece has been trying to balance the two, and as the latter carries along the still powerful elements of the former, the present becomes an unresolved contradiction.¹³ Membership of the EU did not realize the original enthusiastic hope that the 'dark side of Greek identity' will be quickly eradicated by insertion into its beneficial transfamilial, transnational European counterpart.

One cannot but agree with Habermas that identity is not fixed, and thus far from passively inherited from past to present; it is rather an affiliation people continually create and recreate. But according to Habermas's line of thinking, in today's globalizing modernity people can consciously construct together a transnational identity, and this (re)creation is accomplished through rational public dialogues, with continuous reflection on new experiences. This rational public sphere may certainly be preferred to the terror of cathartic assassinations.

Rational discourse, however, in modern Europeanizing Greece, has left all affectivity grounded on the physiological body. Thinking becomes but a series of conscious thoughts stripped of all sensory affectivity or imagination. This is the perfect model of a managerial administrator or a schoolmaster. The negation, that is, of a tradition of dialogical performance in political and academic lives. The new Europeanized Greek subject is supposed to be 'realistic', characterized by rational, self-controlled behavior and speech, and volitional actions. An instructive slogan prevails in mediatic political talk shows, when one wants to attack or devalue an opponent's argument: 'You seem to be losing your self-control', meaning 'you are not cool', in Greek, *psihremos*, literally coldblooded, and metaphorically 'you are displaying or taken over by emotions', and this undermines or negates the validity of your words in public. Such a charge implicitly calls for psychotherapeutic intervention or treatment.¹⁴ By extension, another new mediatic term *thermo episodhio* (warm event, episode) is imported to describe a battle or war as well as an intense dialogue between people. It reveals a transformation of the positive value of warmth that referred to valued emotions and *eros* in everyday life and language into a negative, aggressive, potentially polluting, and thus dangerous quality. The positive quality is in turn transposed onto cash, whose synonym now is 'warm money' (*zesto hrima*) for immediate consumption.

The conditions of dialogue and truth claiming have certainly changed. No coincidence, any reference to or display of emotions has been quickly relegated to the stigmatized domain of populism¹⁵ as outmoded and responsible for Greece's 'retardation' in achieving democratization and socio-economic development.

This recent stigmatization of the term and concept of 'populism', by erasing its history (how about the populist Russians, *narodniki* of the nineteenth century for example, or the South American peasant populism in the twentieth century?) and associating it exclusively, in both public-political and mediatic languages, with demagogic or charismatic politics and politicians – those who invest in the manipulation of people's emotions – or rendering it synonymous with political, social or moral activism, is a convenient oversimplification in order to establish a rational, so called 'realistic' conservatism as its opposite.¹⁶ What is erased is the inherent notion of populism as a form of social relationship, our way of engaging with people dialogically. In everyday life the term populism, *laikismos*, is gradually registering in our consciousness as synonymous with, and often conflated with, *laikos*, lay, the one who derives from the people, *laos*. Sensory affectivity, associated with the lay and presenting an obstacle to rational progress, is thus divorced from knowledge production and transmission whether in text, the classroom or the street, instead of been seen as a prerequisite to self-reflexive action and as generating knowledge and action among people and academics. The Sophists here would remind those dedicated to democratic ideals that *arête* (excellence or virtue), can be taught to all.

At the heart of the concept 'populism', instead, lies that attitude towards the people that allows for dialogical relations, self-reflexive relations of exchange of

ideas and experiences for producing knowledge and mutual development – though it might also be connected to spontaneous reactions such as rioting. In this sense populism is a constitutive part of democracy. It is also a basic tenant of anthropological theory and practice.

Simplistic definitions of populism, some I have noted above, leak from politics to academia and contribute in a new way to a sterile formalism in knowledge acquisition and production. Research and analysis remain entrapped in the superstructural; endless debates on abstract concepts, such as democracy, university asylum,¹⁷ freedom of speech, globalization, modernization, objectivity, populism, and so on, are far removed from the everyday concrete experiences of the citizens. Thus, the ‘murky’ everyday, classified in the sphere of the apolitical and the uninheritable, is rendered nonvisible. Just like rumor, our intangible heritage, the everyday reality that circulates in the side corridors of academia, is what everybody knows, yet nobody knows about, or rather, we all come to know after the fact.

Stepping, however, outside the walled-in spaces of politics, media and academia, new possibilities for the dialogic seem to open up in everyday life – history’s unexpectancies emerging from the ground up, whether definite or temporary, always point to alternative directions. People’s uprisings, violent or peaceful, everyday critical discourses about a ‘dehumanizing society’, or ‘unsympathetic state’ and younger students’ gradual demands for replacing memorization with critical thinking and for including art in academia and the street: all these evoke an emergent democratization where the university and the street are transforming into spaces of the political appearing as a *theatrokratia*. This was exemplified also in the massive participation of both citizens and students in the public events on sensory-affective memory, which I discussed earlier.

Yet, the above antinomy may be dis-played again in the face of new education reform legislation announced by the recent government in austerity times. Like in all previously attempted reforms, formalistic debates on the part of governmental and academic administrators explicitly forefront right or wrong structural changes, and adherence to new procedures. Like in all reforms, debates foreground the need for investment in worthiness, merit and valorization of paradigmatic intellectual works and innovating ideas, which however are rather entrapped in the dream of ‘the eternal return of the new’ and the ‘cult of youth’, both deriving from the logic of commodification. Compensations such as faster and easier promotions of young scholars – an effective way to prevent uprisings – is actually the use of ‘titles’ to create active forgetfulness. Management as catharsis of excess or the prosthetics of aesthetic improvement has transcended all Greek educational reforms – there has been a total of four since the 1990s, each one remediating the previous one – as they fall apart, leaving everyday academic reality dead uncertain. The only certainty is forced retirement (65–67 is the default age of retirement for all civil servants), which ensures the social death of the academic and of ‘past’ intellectual work. Public memory and repetition is saved for the Ancients. I cannot avoid recalling a

Maniat lamenter describing the crisis of death as the ‘closing of the house’, leaving family and relatives in the outside to be ‘tormented in times of bad weather’ (*na douse revousi i kaeri*).

An archaeology of the present is needed that would allow the fear, terror and trauma of the quotidian to narrate itself, to expose the injuries of an unspoken past, a public secret with which academia must come to terms. It will be as if the long standing *ipokofos* (deeply buried pain), so long unnarrated and dehistoricized, bursts out like a quake from the body of the earth, like thunder across the sky, or like the scream of the mourner to publicly reclaim truth. *Alétheia* (truth) seen as non-forgetfulness, and pain as truth-claiming through the force of emotions, which activates shared moral inferences, has the potential to generate communities of pain, healing, and memory.

That moment, when all these accidental deaths, walled-in academic silences, cross the border of the cemetery and re-emerge as counter-memory to narrate the violence of the lettered to the living city, forcing its institutions to reflect on their ethics and mission, will be truly a moment of catharsis. Catharis *not* as an achievement of transparency or survival but as the research, writing and performance of rules and roles that inform dialogical politics and a culture of human rights. In this context, everyday life, the quotidian and its unacknowledged depths, will be recognized as an endless pool of alternative affectivities, sensoria and modes of truth-claiming, arriving from our historical and cultural Others. This will be the time of democracy. This will also be an ethnographic moment.

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FIGURE 14.1 *A streetway named dreams*

Notes

- 1 In fact, when dialogue is formally initiated, it can sometimes be awkward: ‘Have you written anything yourself?’ a specialist in the anthropology of food asked me politely after a conference on the subject.
- 2 The cultural code of amoral familism as a characteristic of Mediterranean peoples was introduced by Edward Banfield. It is seen as the regulator of people’s behavior and aiming at maximizing ‘the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family’ (Banfield 1968, 83); thus people are distrustful of outsiders and ‘fickle’ in their political acts. This is contrasted to developed cultures whose citizens look beyond their self-interests and those of their family and friends and can engage in collective projects. Amoral familism has been considered as responsible for traditionalist or modern religious nationalisms.
- 3 In a recent TV interview on history, Helene (Glykatzi) Ahrweiler, professor at the Sorbonne and first woman principal of the University of Paris, was asked if other academics in Greece dialogue or consult with her on socio-historical issues. ‘Of course not. They know it all!’ she smiled ironically – a reality also acknowledged, from a different context, by Professor Christos Yannaras, a well known philosopher and social critic, among others: www.palmografos.com/permalink/29512.html and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxT_mygdDSg, Mega Channel 2016.
- 4 Indicative of the lack of production of theoretical work and of academic dialogue in a highly formalistic context and how formalism gains its validity by EU regulations today are, for example, the ‘silent rules’ which prevailed in academic promotion procedures. Consider the writing of the evaluation report on the candidate’s intellectual work: In most cases, the academic evaluation committee reaches a silent agreement with the candidate to write his/her own evaluation report, which the committee, assuming the role of the audit supervisor, signs and/or presents as its own textual product. This practice has now become official under a so-called new, ‘student-centered’ approach to learning.
- 5 I recall, for instance, the comment of an older professor of sociology in the 1990s (circulating as a joke among younger scholars today), about the Victor Turner Award given to *The Last Word* at the time: ‘Oh well, you know how these things are offered there!’
- 6 See, for instance, investigative reports on the quality of higher education, by Pavlos Tsimas, Mega Channel, February 2006, also Mega Channel, evening news, 2007; report by Kostas Vaxevanis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFo4fDWcFhE> (accessed December 20, 2016); more recently in *Weekend with Action*, report by Spyros Mallis, Skai Channel, January 10, 2018; and Tassos Teloglou in *Stories*, Skai Channel, January 23, 2018; See also the regular contributions in *Kathimerini* newspaper by Professor Christos Yannaras, philosopher and social critic, among others.
- 7 Headlines that appeared in major national newspapers from 1993 to 1994 – see, for instance, *To Vema*, *Kathimerini*, *Eleftherotypia*, *Thema*, *Typos*, et al., between 1993 and 1994 – included: ‘Unworthiness in the university’, ‘Obedient candidates in venerable universities’, ‘How the election of an academic [for a position] is played out in the courtroom’, ‘University students from the back door’, ‘Unworthy? Then you are elected’, and ‘Progress, destruction and corruption in academia’.
- 8 I witnessed this event during my short stay in Greece as invited visiting professor, and while permanently located in the States. The specific short newspaper article, in which I posed some of the aforementioned questions and thoughts, was discreetly rejected by the same newspaper that a few years later exposed the above mentioned academic spectacle. The rejection, done over the phone by a known journalist, was politely didactic: this article might offend the president of the implicated academic institution, who after all is a respectable academic! I was told. I left for the States pondering what my argument had to do with the president. Things became clear much later as economic scandals subjected academic reality to multiple public re-examinations. A short version of the article was finally published later, in a popular journal (ΔΙΑΒΑΣΩ) specializing in reviewing new books.
- 9 I joined the university of my native Peloponnese about a decade and a half later, while I was (re)located in Greece for personal and familial reasons. My decision to apply to a

- Greek university at the time was in many ways determined by the numerous locals, 'donors' in my earlier field works, and by local authorities, who affectionately demanded my 'presence there'. My initial application and final appointment – as well as of several other colleagues – was frozen for about five years due to a change in governments. This change entailed the replacement of the original academic committee members responsible for the designing and organization of the university's programs of study with academics politically affiliated with the new government. The particular anthropology position was strategically re-opened at the level of Assistant Professor.
- 10 Handicapped students were not accepted in dance departments or schools till 2017. Some changes to this effect were considered recently.
 - 11 The internationally known professor of physics, Dimitri Nanopoulos, was at some point 'sent back home' to the US in a less polite fashion, with Poulantzas, Castoriadis and others preceding in a long list. Most of the few exceptions who made it in academia remained pretty marginalized. As a well known sociologist bitterly stated in a casual conversation, 'They have not accepted a single proposal of mine on any matter in my department since I came.'
 - 12 More on this event: www.iospress.gr/ios2006/ios20060528.htm (accessed November 2016).
 - 13 Plenty are the examples that reveal this confusion. What was, for instance, paradigmatically highlighted as one of the political legacies of ex-Prime Minister Mitsotakis to Greece, in public commemorative speeches immediately before and after his recent death, was his thirteen grandchildren and four children.
 - 14 The word ideology (ιδεολογία – *ideologhia*) has also been replaced in all mediatic discourse by the word ιδεοληψία (*ideolipsia*) meaning obsession with past ideas and beliefs, pointing thus to a neuro-psycho-pathological disorder.
 - 15 For a discussion on the importance of affect in politics see Ernesto Laclau (2005).
 - 16 For a good discussion of the misuse and abuse of another term, ριζοσπαστισμός (*rizospastismos*, radicalism) today, see Maro Pantelidou-Malouta's article 'Ριζοσπαστισμός, Ριζοσπαστικοποίηση, Ασάφεια και Ιδεολογία' (Radicalism, Radicalization, Ambiguity and Ideology) in *Chronos*, August 28, 2017, <https://chronos.fairead.net/pantelidou-malouta-rizospastismos>
 - 17 'University asylum' (*asylo*) in Greece is identified with the legislation that forbids the police to enter or operate in the university space for whatever reason. This 'territorial autonomy' has partly contributed to the high levels of anomie detected in university spaces. This concept of asylum as freedom is opposed to that in the USA and elsewhere where the university is the de facto place of freedom of speech and dissemination of ideas and the police are there to protect the physical space.

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