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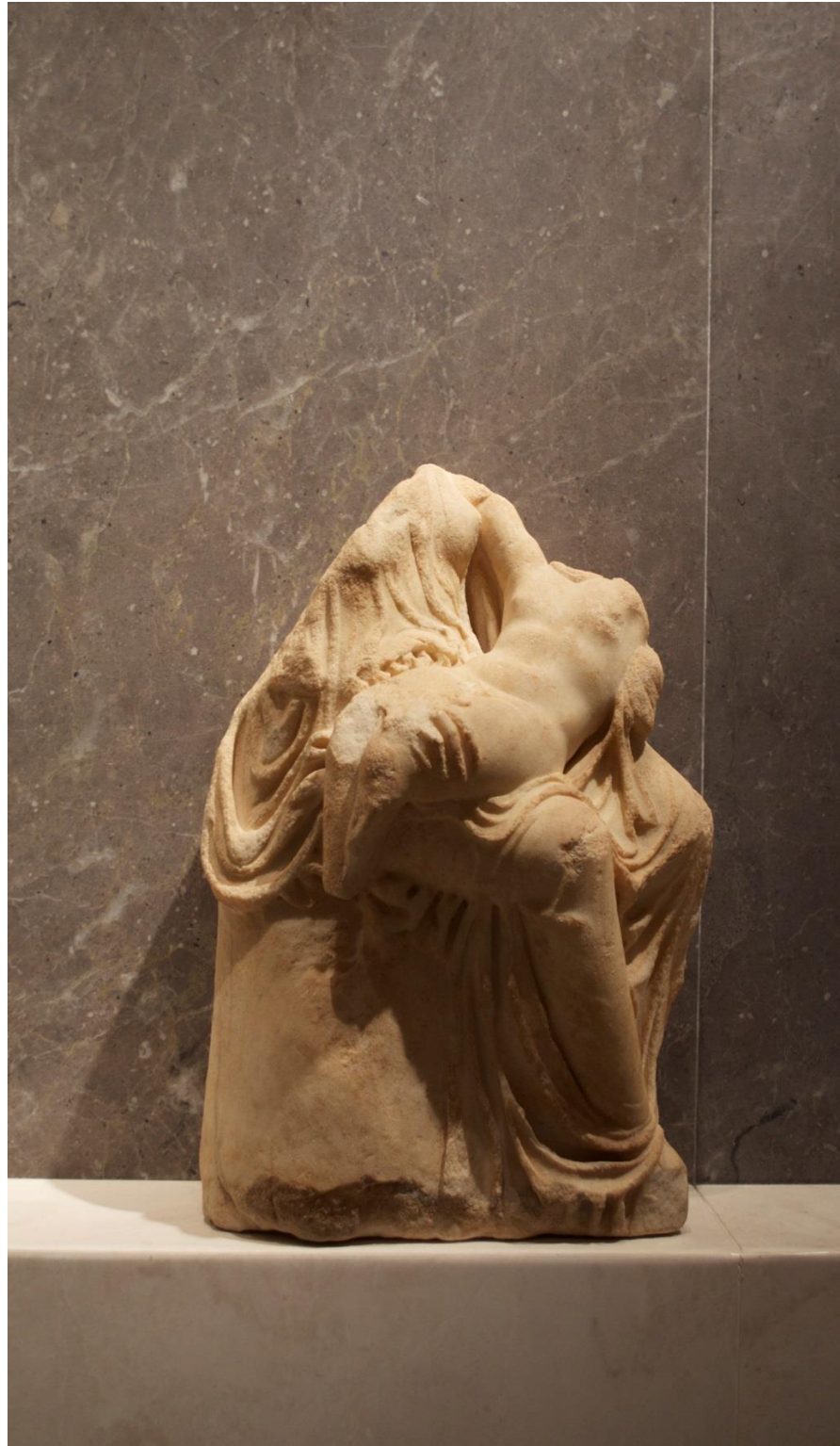
Dissecting the Barbarian

Marina Miliou-Theocharaki

Abstract

This work investigates the connections between the socio-political crisis in contemporary Greece and the lamentation embodied in Euripides's Ancient Greek tragedy, *The Trojan Women*. It suggests that the notion of the barbarian and pinpointing the other have been diachronic symptoms of Greek society. The voice of this piece is a fusion of standpoints in an attempt to mirror the blurred space between multiple perspectives and definitions of truth.

Through conducting a critique on ideology and nationalism, I describe the development of the Greek economic meltdown and its growth into a humanitarian disaster through the reinforcement of the *Golden Dawn*, a prevalent neo-Nazi party in Greece that is perpetuating violence. My voice is of an observer who is intellectually and emotionally attached to the current socially disenfranchised members of society, the othered immigrants and refugees residing in Greece. One of the objectives of this piece is to remind and reveal the barbaric acts of fascism that interlink contemporary Greek social conditions to these of the ancient world.



Proposal of the Poet

This writing is not about a heroine. It is neither about the Aristotelian conception of pity, fear, bravery or fate experienced through the observation of a tragic performance. It is a re-enactment of pathos (πάθος)¹ and a profound urge for transformation. The events I mention epitomize the persistence towards convention and how this alienates pluralism and recreates the ancient Greek notion of the “barbarian” through acts of violence. The skeleton (Ο σκελετός) of this assemblage is inspired by Euripides’s, *The Trojan Women*, a Greek tragedy that represents the act of othering by describing the post Trojan war atrocities that took place around 12th century B.C. After the Greeks won the Trojan War by means of the wooden Trojan horse, all men were murdered and the women and children of the Trojan land were the only survivors. Euripides’s tragedy takes place the morning after the war is lost and encapsulates the moment when the children are going to be murdered and the women will be told that they will either be sold either as slaves, or wives to Greek men. Their prolonged mourning is central to the tragedy.

¹ pathos [ˈpeɪθɒs]

α. the quality or power, esp in literature or speech, of arousing feelings of pity, sorrow, etc.

β. a feeling of sympathy or pity *a stab of pathos*

[from Greek: suffering; related to *penthos* sorrow]

We owe ourselves to Death

“Whether we are looking at the whole picture or just a detail, never do any of these photographs fail to signify death.²” Jacques Derrida writes in his book, *Athens Still Remains* when he was asked to consider Jean-Francois Bonhomme’s photos of the Athenian streets.



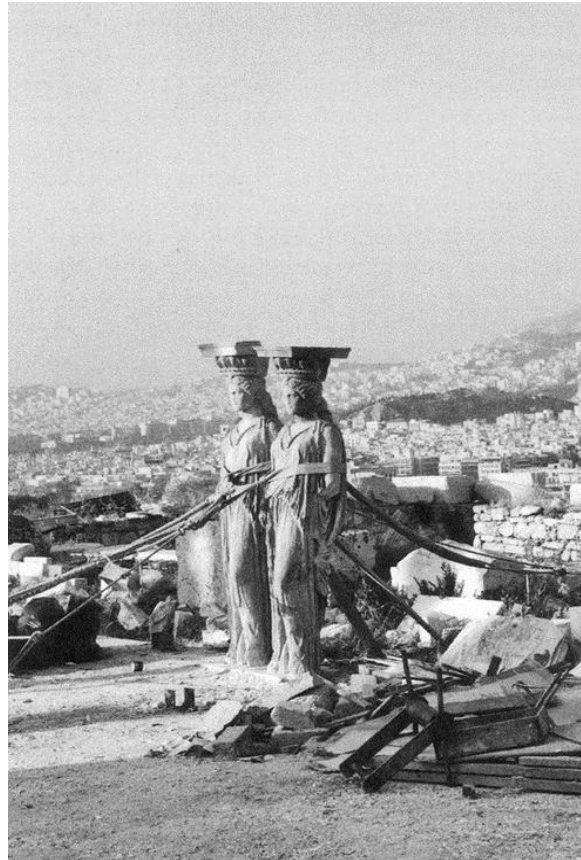
“We owe ourselves to death” he contemplates after witnessing photos of ruins piling on the ancient streets. “A book of epitaphs, in short, which bears or wears mourning [porte le deuil] in photographic effigy. [...] Yes, each photograph whispers a proper name, but it also becomes the appellation of all the others,⁴” Derrida continues. I read and respond: We owe ourselves to death every day, fighting the possibilities of an end, a permanent silence. I am

² Derrida, Jacques, *Athens, Still Remains: the Photographs of Jean-Francois Bonhomme*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, 2.

³ *Ibid*, 32

⁴ Derrida, *Athens Still Remains*, 3.

inspecting the links between the abuse in Euripides's *The Trojan Women*, and brutality in contemporary Greece. They have traced each other's shadows and are now lying flat, the one event on top of the other. Bodies become land and the land gets denser. The mourning of the Trojan women and the socially marginalized members of Greek society are of equal size and carry analogous questions. History has fallen into place and has now landed on the same soil where years ago combative seeds had sprouted on. The diachronic symptoms of violence, the other and the barbarian transmute and reign.



“Each other, in any case recalls a death that has already occurred, or one that is promised or threatening, a sepulchral monumentality, memory in the figure of ruin⁵”. Perplexed stacks of ruins have been preserving Greece’s cultural façade. A country that once was an international cultural marker is currently in the process of economic, social and humanitarian dissemination. The false monumentality of the present in conjunction to ideal historical moments that are carved in the lands’ consciousness, are now retiring from the same exodus (έξοδος).

⁵ Ibid 2

The stories of the Trojan women are built on the residues of Troy. The women are weeping over their fate, their future slavery and their bodies that will be eventually abused by the barbarian Greek men. Contemporary Greece's social minorities, including immigrant and refugee populations, are treated like expiatory bodies. An extreme rise of fascism transforms their bodies to territories where violence is exercised. They are victims of a chronic systematic oppression that carries the consequences of a currently rejected by the European Union, Greek society. You will know soon, that these people embody the most violent consequences of Greece's crisis and that the barbarian of today resides in the Greek Parliament.

Cassandra, Hecuba's daughter, and princess of Troy is assumed to be mad. "Insane" sounds more politically appropriate, more medical and credible. Nevertheless, she is treated as if she is mad, a madness found in the viler form of the term; an underprivileged human. Cassandra is given the divine gift to see the future and the curse to not be believed. She cries out her predictions but is not trusted by her community. She is debris, she is a barbarian who lives in a cave and speaks to her self, a tragic heroine, doomed with the impossibility of never being heard. She is the victim of her society's irresponsibility. Although she knows that Agamemnon's wife will murder her, she tacitly accepts her fate as she comprehends that there is no way out. Her words are spaces between uncanny poetry and mystical storytelling. She is a symbol of wisdom, a representation of queerness that perceives reality as a metaphor and reveals the barbarians by tolerating their violence.

The Trojan women are victims of harassment and power dominance due to their race, culture and gender. Their story symbolizes the abuse of social minorities who contain unfamiliarity and therefore become an unknown threat to the majority. These women embody the ancient view of the barbarian; the ones who have to be condemned, or else, they will contaminate Greek identity. They are represented as the barbarians conquered by the Greeks, but the term is loose and its definition can only be determined by actions. The barbarian is either the person who defines the term or the person who is condemned by it. Or alternatively, the grey void between these extremes. I am now questioning the term and its malleable adaptations that have historically changed by the social conditions of every era.

Confession

It is November 1st 2013 at 9 p.m. in Chicago. Your call surprises me when I see the time on the screen because in Greece it is five in the morning.

You tell me about a shooting that took place outside the headquarters of the neo-Nazi *Golden Dawn* party. Some professional shooter on a motorcycle shot two men dead who were standing in front of the building.

*"Politicians who have in the past queued up to pour scorn on Golden Dawn - still Greece's third most popular political force - united in condemning the shooting."*⁶

Your panic caught me by surprise. I question your worried voice, and I am eager to critique your concerns. My revulsion towards this neo-Nazi group momentarily justifies this action.

I will later realize that I, as well, might be influenced by ideological absolutes. The conceptual notion of the barbarian is historically transformative and its functions alter. How can I talk about the fascist barbarians without using their strategy of pinpointing? I question whether that makes myself a barbarian as well.

I remain still, cold, on the other side of the phone. Then, you start describing the effects on a macro scale and the possible revenge that this gesture might spark; you talk about a civil war, about conflicting ideologies. I then understand how this event can lead to a vast spectrum of minor or larger consequences. You are simply worried about more bodies being lost.

*Reuters: No one claimed responsibility for the attack. A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters the force suspected unnamed anti-establishment groups, and was satisfied the attack was not linked to a personal dispute.*⁷

Silence becomes thick. My mind pulls up images found from my brain's archive and I instantly compare this violent act to the one that the Golden Dawn Party's followers have been practicing on immigrant and refugee populations.

⁶ Tagaris, Karolina, "Two Golden Dawn Supporters shot dead in Greece," *Reuters*, November 1, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/01/us-greece-shooting-idUSBRE9A00WC20131101>.

⁷ Ibid

*Golden Dawn, the one which stormed into parliament last year on an anti-immigrant agenda, said it had asked for police protection at its offices after receiving threats.*⁸

I am thinking about the murder of Pakistani, Shehzad Luqman, while he was riding his bicycle to work, that one winter day in 2013.⁹ Spectators, were only the ancient ruins of the Acropolis. A murderer that still remains unknown, adding one more unmentioned disappearance to the list.

I visualize the "XA" (initials of the Golden Dawn party: Χρυσή Αυγή) slit into Sudanese immigrant Hassan Mekki's back after a long physical and verbal assault somewhere in the streets of Athens.¹⁰ The Egyptian labor worker, who managed to escape from the chains with which his supervisors had tied him to a tree, by the field, in the middle of nowhere. The newspaper read: *Egyptian immigrant Waleed Taleb demanding his unpaid wages in Greece came at a heavy price; 18 hours chained and beaten by his boss, a stint in jail and orders to leave the country he calls home.*¹¹ I envision the 200 workers in the strawberry fields in Crete who faced their superintendent's shotguns when they asked for the minimum salary raise.¹²

I reflect upon the unknown assaults and murders of immigrants that remain undocumented because of their residential status. I think about the boats filled with hundreds of runaway refugees, crossing the Mediterranean, the unidentified sea-graveyard.

Those liminal spaces that exist between national borders. I visualize the boats accumulating on the ocean floor, their rotten wood disintegrated beneath passport-less bodies.

Your voice now dissolves in the voices I've never heard.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Behrakis, Yannis, and Renee Maltezos, "Anti-racism Protesters Rally in Athens after Stabbing," *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 19 January 2013, accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/19/us-greece-protest-idUSBRE90I0DH20130119>.

¹⁰ Reuters. "Did Greece's 21st Century Fascists Leave This African Immigrant Scarred for Life Just Because of the Colour of His Skin?" *Mail Online*. Reuters, 6 Dec. 2012, November 10, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2244155/Revealed-African-immigrants-went-Greece-better-life-tortured-hands-nationalists.html>.

¹¹ Maltezos, Renee, and Deepa Babington. "Insight: Tortured, Detained and Ordered Out: A Migrant's Tale in Greece." *Reuters*. December 6, 2012, accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/06/us-greece-migrants-idUSBRE8B50Y920121206>.

¹² Howden, Daniel. "Greece Launches Manhunt after 200 Immigrant Farmworkers Are Shot at and Wounded for Demanding Back Pay," *The Independent*, April 18, 2013, Accessed August 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/greece-launches-manhunt-after-200-immigrant-farmworkers-are-shot-at-and-wounded-for-demanding-back-pay-8579140.html>.

I realize that none of these deaths can be justified. Suddenly the men killed outside the Golden Dawn headquarters acquire faces and damaged bodies. I am reminded that this ideological war is not about extremist mentalities anymore. These people are human beings whose need for revenge draws them into lethal corners.

The Economic Crisis

Something new is about to be born. We live in a period that is not at all distant from its immediate past and is yet so alien, so monstrous. The gruesomeness of the monster lies precisely in its not-quite-human form of life: it resembles something human, but it's not quite the same. In this sense, our times are monstrous, but not for the first time.¹³

In December of 2009, the Greek economy started sinking into an unforeseen economic crisis. Its direness paralyzed the government and the citizens of the country were told that there was nothing left for the government to do, than to borrow money from large international institutions such as, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) and the European Bank. The transition from naivety to a state of terror shattered the government, which was unable to rapidly fight this emergency. The government chose hostage to independence, and signed the "Memorandum of Cooperation" with the Troika.

troi•ka (ˈtrɔɪkə)

n., pl. -kas.

1. a Russian carriage, wagon, or sleigh drawn by a team of three horses abreast.
2. a team of three horses driven abreast.
3. a ruling group of three; triumvirate.
4. any group of three.¹⁴

According to the agreement, Yiannis Kaplanis writes,

Greece would borrow 110 billion from IMF and EU countries at a high rate of 5%, which was below the market rate but still quite high. At the same time the Greek government committed itself to imposing new economic austerity measures that would enable it to drastically reduce its budget deficit and restructure its economy along the lines of its lenders.¹⁵

¹³ Vradis, Antonis, and Dimitris Dalakoglou. *Revolt and Crisis in Greece: Between a Present Yet to Pass and a Future Still to Come* (Edinburg: AK Press and Occupied London, 2011), 24.

¹⁴ "Troika," The Free Dictionary, Accessed May 22, 2014,
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/troika>.

¹⁵ Vradis, Antonis, and Dimitris Dalakoglou, *Revolt and Crisis in Greece*, 24.

This decision was the beginning of an unpredicted disaster. Jobs were eliminated, taxes raised, hundreds of thousands of people fired, and many families were left homeless. The extreme rise of governmental taxes inevitably affected the poverty line, and the trickle-down effect of one negative economic consequence to the other, invaded the country and in turn, spread social indignation. The Athenian streets are in the process of losing a long-acquired monumentality and misery has transformed the oppressed to oppressors. Paulo Freire, in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, informs us about the chronic transformations that the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed undergoes.

Almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or "sub-oppressors. The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. [...] This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of "adhesion" to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot "consider" him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him to discover him "outside" themselves.¹⁶

This aforementioned relationship can be illustrated by mentioning the current hierarchical system that dominates Greece's condition. The first element of this dynamic relationship is the Troika and the European Union's reliance to Greece's economic flux. Similarly, Greece's dependence on the billions of euros borrowed from these institutions is in its turn unavoidable and therefore an interdependent monetary relationship between all parties has been shaped. Additionally, the imposed austerity measures are sustaining people's oppression and have spread national devastation. The effects of these measures on Greek citizens generate a need to filter the received institutional oppression and forcefully project it upon the socially and economically marginalized members of society. Consequently and sadly, these are immigrant and refugee populations who have either flee from another country or are Greeks who don't confirm the stereotypical Greek skin color and/or appearance.

The trickle-down effect is reigning, and its effects are currently being digested. Greece's democracy has transformed into *Debtocracy*,¹⁷ and the European

¹⁶ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum, 2000, Print, 2.

¹⁷ The production team has coined the word "debtocracy" (Greek "Χρεοκρατία"), defining it as the condition by which Greece found itself trapped in its debt.^[2] The term is coined from the words "χρέος" (debt) and the Greek "κράτος" (power, -ocracy) in a similar manner of other words regarding forms of government (such as democracy, aristocracy, theocracy etc.). The title implies that since the Greek government has been functioning mainly under the interests of the financial debt (at points superseding or even replacing the principles of Democracy and the Constitution of Greece), the debt has been elevated as a de facto form of government by itself. Source: "Debtocracy." *Wikipedia*. Accessed March 20, 2014, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debtocracy>.

Union's brutality has left the country of ruins to either latch to the beauty of its broken landscape or be represented by the remnants of a failed democracy. Fundamental sociopolitical changes are the symptoms of being the frailer member-state of a demanding capitalist European Union and of the lack of a stable infrastructure.

Resentment against immigrant populations is developing alongside with the reinforcement of a far right wing party that has mesmerized the Greek populace. One of the reasons of this emergent social *indignation*¹⁸ was the synchronization of the Arab Spring Revolutions and the immense flow of immigration. The economic devastation and the slow response of the public sectors to the urgent call of immigrants and refugees did not allow a proper support to develop. Among the rest of the issues that Greece was undergoing, this movement of immigration multiplied the need for jobs as well as a firm response to the present social conditions. Antonis Vradis, author and editor of *Revolt and Crisis in Greece* a collection of essays on the Greek crisis, explores the expansion of the economic and humanitarian crisis in Greece. Vradis talks about the social conditions of today, as an inevitable symptomatic disease that multiplies itself by its own will; the citizens of Greece remain the spectators and prey of this drastic reproduction and inevitable infection. Power relations are playing the same seductive game, being drawn in the vacuum of history and skin color.

Welcome home, welcome to Greece.

¹⁸ *'In one of the most affected countries of the Eurozone, Greece, popular resistance to the austerity measures taken culminated in the actions of the social movement that has been referred to as the "Indignant Citizens Movement"'. Source: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/eurocrisispress/2013/12/20/framing-the-indignant-citizens-movement/>*

Venus de Milo giving a one-finger salute



Venus de Milo giving a one-finger salute
German Focus Magazine Cover¹⁹

The February 2010 cover of Focus had doctored the famous Greek statue raising her middle finger to Europe and was entitled as “Cheaters in the European family” in reference to the recession-hit country. However, with their statement now, the Focus journalists and publisher dismissed the Greek state’s charges of defamation, libel and insult of a Greek symbol and rushed to express their respect and admiration towards Greece and its culture.²⁰

¹⁹ West, Karl, “Man who broke the Bank of England, George Soros, 'at centre of hedge funds plot to cash in on fall of the euro” *Mail Online*, February 27, 2010, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1253791/Is-man-broke-Bank-England-George-Soros-centre-hedge-funds-betting-crisis-hit-euro.html>

²⁰ Tsolakidou, Stella, “German Focus Magazine Explains Insulting Venus de Milo Cover”, *Greek Reporter*. December, 16, 2011, accessed December 2013, <http://eu.greekreporter.com/2011/12/16/german-focus-magazine-%CE%B5explains-insulting-venus-de-milo-cover/>

Venus de Milo flipping a middle finger to the European Union was the cover page of German *Focus* Magazine of 2010. The historical Greek statue was satirically placed in a defensive, aggressive posture wearing the Greek flag around her waist. She was standing still, with no grace or respect while diminishing the monumental historical conditions of her creation. This symbol produced by the German media represents Greek people from a standpoint of nationalistic neglect and disrespectful indifference. Although these attributes of indifference can be found in many cultures and countries, represented by individuals, and can definitely be discovered in Greece as well, the problem with this image is that it falsely attempts to represent an entire society. What a pity, to disregard the whole population of a land through the use of a simple signifier. Especially when this action follows the disastrous social and economic effects of the European austerity measures that were primarily manufactured by the superpower of Europe, Germany. This action stigmatizes a population that has no strength left to even attempt to identify its own resources. This specific use of Venus's figure becomes an exploitative symbol representing a population in need, one that is left on the periphery of the European Union to be challenged and eventually criticized for not being able to survive.

The Merkel Diamond

Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Heads of State and Government,
Members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,²¹

Sometimes I fantasize how it would be if I could sleep with, Angela Merkel.²²

Touching the source of her frustrated hormones
Empathizing with her outrage
Translating her pride
Getting my human dignity back from her insides
Follow Freire's²³ guidelines
Love her big oppressive body
With disgusting tenderness
Supersede my resentment and understand
Challenging my revolutionary instincts
Flirting with the limits of my ego
Informing her about my ancient, broken beauty

Dear Angela
I will dearly fetishize you in my touch
I will dearly tangle your hair
I will dearly dominate your fatal gestures
I will dearly hear your body's sounds faulting

Slowly_free markedly_fall into your private personhood's arms

If I were a good lover, would the event ever become a privatized scandal?
If I were a good lover, would you stop teargasing my needs?
If I were a good lover, would you stop chopping off my salary?
If I were a good lover, would you ever hang yourself, like we do, on Syntagma Square?

I am seducing your macho handling of my savings
I want to surprise Europe's xenophobic sovereignties;

²¹ Rompuy, Van "From War to Peace: A *European Tale*" *Nobel Lecture European Union (EU)*. December 11, 2013, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/eu-lecture_en.html.

²² Angela Merkel is the current German Chancellor.

²³ Paolo Freire: Author of "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

My German majesty,
Get trapped in my historical importance
Feel my refreshing marbles touching your thighs

I want to intimately tap you on the back
While the carved wrinkle accompanies my lips
It reminds me of who you really are
I am so proud to be awarded by you
I am so proud to be European²⁴



Author. 2014. Documentation of Durational Performance

²⁴ Rompuy, Van "From War to Peace: A European Tale"

Lecture of Slit Tongues

I am asked to give a lecture and my tongue crystalizes from intimidation. She does not want to cooperate and I let her exist in the space between my inherited tamed language and the one I don't truly comprehend. My tongue speaks a language made out of grey cold coffee.

Although English is present, please imagine that this talk is given in Greek. You really don't know what I am talking about because it's my own tongue that is moving manically in endless directions. I am the only one who feels its unruliness. Its identity is in the process of being lost.

I am othered by myself, and I by you, and you by me-everyday, all of us are infiltrated by cultural generalizations. I think of my history as a motherland with no horizon, a sea of boiling water. I am listening to my parts but my limbs transform into bubbles, my body sinks in the water and the scene evaporates before my eyes. How can I be the only observer of my death? This land is distant, tactile. It infiltrates my skin; it is waxing the decapitated statues, judging my stasis.

I become the ancient marble I am criticizing. The airplane is taking off; I look back to the land as it becomes smaller. Humanitarian crisis, someone tells me. Survive or immigrate. I grab the blanket and wrap myself inside the nets of a monstrous limbo. I then imagine race as a suicidal human invention and racism as the reincarnation of trauma. Their dictionary entries have long been misunderstood. My writing is boiling residue of wax, it often spills over my flesh. The redness stays stagnant and reconfigures me. At work I once heard that they wax the surface of the metal blade and that way the body slides smooth over the blade.

The Humanitarian Crisis

In the foreword of Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Homi K Bhabha describes the circumstances of countries that exist in *dual economies*. He explains how being under the wing of the major economic institutions such as, the IMF and the World Bank firstly creates a veil of concealment from the fundamental problems of the countries themselves, and secondly "divides worlds in which uneven and unequal conditions of development can often mask the ubiquitous, underlying factors of persistent poverty, and malnutrition, caste and racial injustice."²⁵

²⁵ Fanon, Frantz, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1965), xxi

Hommi Bhabha refers to Fanon's excerpt from the *Wretched of the Earth* as a "weather report on our own day"²⁶:

National Consciousness is nothing but a crude, empty fragile shell. The cracks in it explain how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic group, and from state to tribe- a regression which is so terribly detrimental and prejudicial to the development of the nation and national unity.²⁷

National unity failed for the Greek Government. Its fleeting moment lasted for some months, while Lucas Papademos was in office, and it was followed by a series of national elections. A right-wing president is the new chosen façade elected by few voters who still believe in the electoral process. Currently, the powerful money donors have transformed the Prime Minister into a political puppet who is imposing his vacant lies.

The Greek Parliament, which consists of 300 politicians from all elected parties, has acquired a fair amount of 21 seats for the Golden Dawn members, a Neo-Nazi political party.²⁸ It seems that nationalism and national consciousness have been exposing their "crude, empty fragile shell" as well as, the wounds of a crisis that has reinforced right-wing consciousness rather than a new set of political actions designed to investigate the roots of the developing poverty, rage and racism.

The Greek political disillusionment is transforming into a new beast, a greater and more authoritative. Although it is one experienced in the past, caustic memories lose their weight when they are confronted with time's desaturation. The Greek Junta, the Dictatorship, which started in 1967 and ended in 1974, was an era where the military occupied Greece and freedom of speech, movement or education was controlled by the status quo. It followed, a civil war that developed after the end of WWII and thirty years of political and social division. The country was divided between the Left and the Right and perpetual unrest had weakened most public and national sectors. There are multiple accounts that members from the Golden Dawn party were part of this recent event and greatly supported the junta and dictator, George Papadopoulos.

²⁶ Ibid xv

²⁷ Ibid 97

²⁸ Cooper, Rob "Rise of the Greek neo-Nazis: Ultra-right party Golden Dawn wants to force immigrants into work camps and plant landmines along Turkish border," *Associated Newspapers*, May 07, 2012, Accessed February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2140686/Greek-elections-2012-Neo-Nazi-party-Golden-Dawn-want-force-immigrants-work-camps.html>



Image found in *Golden Dawn's Website*²⁹

There is a high likelihood that one of your distant relatives, or even your aunt, your uncle, your grandfather, or your mother or father may be haunted by the memory of a few years in their life from whence no bedtime stories will ever arise. “Exile”, “Dictatorship,” “civil war”: these strange words ring about; yet remain lost behind the veil of the untold. You grow up in constructed utopia of being and having control, or even worse, not knowing who has control, but believing to this one invisible power that supposedly supports the present way of life.³⁰



Members of Golden Dawn Party are holding flag of Papadopoulos's Military Coup (The Junta), unknown source. [2012]

²⁹ “Catechistical minors of Communist Party of Greece and the pistol of Kanelli,” *The Golden Dawn Website*, December 12, 2013, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/enimerosi/view/kathchhsh-anhlikwn-paidiwn-kai-oplismos-se-sunenteujeis-apo-bouleutes-tou-a>.

³⁰ Vradis, Antonis, and Dimitris Dalakoglou, *Revolt and Crisis in Greece*, 1.

If we consider the example of the 70's Junta, we observe that historically the consequences of an economic catastrophe have caused sociopolitical and humanitarian extremities to rise. The rise of the *Golden Dawn* has shaken democracy and has reduced people's desire for plurality. Since economic stability has been decreased devastation and criminality have developed and the system is such that cannot aid the populations who are in need. The economically marginalized commit crimes and robberies out of desperation and these unsettle the Greek inhabitants who are more socially privileged. This sparks the rise of racism and the need to pinpoint the other. I understand that in an individual basis, this rise of criminality is be very threatening, however, what I am critiquing is the immediate extremist and fascist response by individuals to these events and the lack of critical consideration of the flaws of the system in a macro scale. People forget to be humans. Fascism is the easy way out and unfortunately, criticality and more sophisticated and analytical responses to criminality when a population is in need are rare. It takes more effort and moral intelligence to approach a problem in a holistic and critical manner.

He promptly gave the Nazi salute on his first appearance there. 'We will struggle for a Greece that is not a social jungle because of the millions of immigrants they brought here without asking us,' he said.³¹

Violence Some Reforms

The roads were empty that day, that's how my story was supposed to start but there isn't any time left for a prologue.

I was observing metallic creatures in black shirts with patterned swastikas. Their military boots were hammering her body on the asphalt. Their badges hit their shirt buttons and it sounded like a faraway wind chime. Some hours ago, the streets were whispering to me; now they were dissecting me. I was spectating her abuse, hidden in a corner. Consumed by this incapability of acting I suddenly felt my veins blowing up, my blood jabbing my body parts and chopping the air in my lungs.

Minutes pass, I look again and the group of feet was done with their doses of social terror and was now leaving. Even the stomping on the ground was painful. Sound was distorted. As if I had swum way too deep in the sea and was unable to reach the surface of the water. For a second I flashed back to the day I broke my spine. This memory itched my vertebrae. My sight was stuck on the remains of her body, which was barely moving, and her chest squeaked with

³¹ Cooper, Rob, "Rise of the Greek neo-Nazis: Ultra-right party Golden Dawn wants to force immigrants into work camps and plant landmines along Turkish border," *Associated Newspapers*, May 07, 2012, Accessed February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2140686/Greek-elections-2012-Neo-Nazi-party-Golden-Dawn-want-force-immigrants-work-camps.html>

every breath. She was touching her wounds in an attempt to pull herself together and get away from this neighborhood. She seemed estranged and the blood and dirt around her nose was flooding her nostrils.

I started running towards her. She was closer than I thought; I reached her, stopped, lost my balance and suddenly felt her breath on my forehead. She was a stranger but I could read her story, I looked in her eyes; she then let go of her muscles and collapsed on me. Our breathing was synchronized.

She passively accepted my touch and I slowly moved her body closer to mine. Her wounds were burning as I was murmuring words of comfort. Next thing I know, my mothers' image appears in my mind and I am whispering soothing lullabies that resemble the ones I used to fall asleep to.

The Nation

The "men and women in the black shirts" were always near you, they lived among you, for many years. Some of you wouldn't take them seriously, some of you were comforted in your bourgeois dream, but we said that our time would come, our age still hasn't begun because we aren't the quiet birds of peacetime, we are birds of the storm and the hurricane.³²

Roberto Bolano, one of the great Chilean poets states that "nationalism is wretched and collapses under its own weight [and] if this expression doesn't make sense to you, imagine a statue made of shit slowly sinking into the desert: well that's what it means for something to collapse under its own weight."³³

My body is made of iced olive oil; it is melting over piles of decapitated statues. I am peeling off my skin to find what resides inside it, as stains trace my movements. I thought there was breathing space between my skin-flakes and blood. I wonder what is the substance of this terrain. Are they misted memories locked in there, because they murmur at night. Thinking about how to analyze the motherland feels like licking the floor until my tongue color changes; then either the floor rots or the bleeding wastes me.

Ladies and Gentlemen! We are being informed that *the salute will be given with the vivid extension of the right hand with raised fingers and the palm on the height of the right eye, modeled by the standard Greek (Dorian) salute.*³⁴

³² "Chronicles of 3 murders (Part 2)", *Golden Dawn - International Newsroom (blog)*, November 27, 2013, <http://golden-dawn-international-newsroom.blogspot.com/2013/11/chronicles-of-3-murders-part-2.html>

³³ Bolaño, Roberto, Ignacio Echevarría, and Natasha Wimmer, *Between Parentheses: Essays, Articles, and Speeches, 1998-2003*. (New York: New Directions, 2011),41.

³⁴ "The Ancient Greek Salute," *Golden Dawn - International Newsroom (blog)*, March 21, 2013, <http://golden-dawn-international-newsroom.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-salute.html>



Ancient Greece³⁵



Adolf Hitler³⁶



Greek Football Player,
George Katidis³⁷

Monstrosities

GREECE IS NOT IN ASIA
THERE AREN'T MANY BLUE AND WHITE HOUSES

Ancient Tragedies were played by Greek men and addressed to Greek men. Women, lower classes and slaves were cut off social participation- always waiting for their men and masters to come home. The performance today takes place outside in the streets of Athens and is acted by barbarians. Forty years ago, when the dictatorship was flourishing and the silencing of ideas was everyday life, the barbarians were still Greeks. Thousands years ago, when the Trojan War ended and rape and blood conquered the land of Troy, the barbarians were still the Greeks. The political monster is embracing the social barbarian, they make love in isolation and give birth to a quintessential hybrid, a combination of life forms that is human and bestial.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Wellington, Paul Chapman in. "Pupils Facing Suspension over Nazi Salute Photos." *The Telegraph*, October 19, 2009, Accessed May 22 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/newzealand/6373798/Pupils-facing-suspension-over-Nazi-salute-photos.html>

³⁷ "Springtime for Hitler Salute, Gets Footballer Giorgos Katidis Banned For Life." – *SPYHollywood*, Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://spyhollywood.com/springtime-for-hitler-salute-gets-footballer-giorgos-katidis-banned-for-life/>.

The Trojan Women



Cassandra being torn away from the statue of Athena.
Fresco from the House of Menander in Pompeii.³⁸



Veiled African Woman Kicked in Greece.³⁹

It is not a perfect play. It lacks the structure of pity and fear; it does not aspire to catharsis. *It is only the crying of one of the great wrongs of the world wrought into music,*⁴⁰ says Gilbert Murray in his foreword to *The Trojan Women*.

³⁸ "Cassandra", *Stanford University*, Accessed February 2014,
<http://www.stanford.edu/~plomio/cassandra.html>

³⁹ "Greece Police Brutality", *News Rescue*, Accessed March 2014,
<http://www.newsrescue.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/greece-police-brutality.jpg>

⁴⁰ "EBook of The Trojan Women of Euripides, by Euripides," November 2003, Accessed May 29, 2014, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10096/10096-8.txt>.

Euripides' *Trojan Women* is a lyrical description of war atrocities, power abuse and gender oppression. It is a work that questions human nature and reveals human domination over relegated bodies. This masterpiece comments on the rawness of war and the emotional disembodiment that great authority over other lives creates. The *Trojan Women* encompasses symbols regarding to the notions of divinity, obedience, and human oppression. It is remarkable how relevant these representations are to the present Greek- and not only-political scene. There is a noteworthy comparison between the relationship of the mortals and the divine powers of the play, and the relationships of the current Greek political figures, and the "Troika". In the tragedy, Poseidon and Athena argue over the fate of Troy and they attempt to affect the country's future based on their personal preferences. Even though they have some influence, they barely act upon their will and they observe the mortal women face their lamentation. Similarly, in contemporary Greece major institutions have imposed austerity measures to the country with the veil that this is their aid to the country's collapsing economy. However, they avoid taking responsibility about the effects of this monetary deal on the social, humanitarian and political sectors of society.

I, Poseidon, God of the Sea,
Have abandoned my shoal of lively Nereides
And risen from the deep
To gaze upon this bonfire that was Troy.
Many years ago, with our own hands Phoebus
and I
Piled stone upon stone
And built the walls of that proud city;
Since then,
I have loved every stone of it.
[Pause. He looks at the ruins]
Nothing but ash will be left.
Now there are no priests in the sacred groves:
Only corpses.
Our temples bleed. The Greeks laid waste to
every one.⁴¹

⁴¹ Euripides, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Ronald Duncan, *The Trojan Women* (New York: Knopf, 1967).



Author. *They Provide Ample Storage*. 2013.
Silkscreened marble, pharmaceutical/archival jars, industrial commercial shelving.

The gods are observing the spectacle of sorrow as if it was their sadistic clandestine pleasure. In a similar manner, major institutions that have initiated the consequences of recovering Greece remain silent when the outcomes become too horrid to be dealt with. The oppressed subjects of the tragedy are women who are socially disadvantaged because of their gender. They embody the passport-less inhabitants of a country that is buried under bloodstained soil. They are obedient to the Greek invaders because simply they have no other choice. Similarly, the current refugees and immigrants who escape to Greece are coming from lands where life is unbearable and once they arrive are exposed to a violence they had not yet imagined. Fascist aggression limits their movements in the city, their participation in events, their walks home. It is the Syrian refugee who is fleeing from the war; the Egyptian woman; the Algerian, the Nigerian, the Bangladeshi, the Pakistani or Iraqi refugee. The Ancient Greek barbarians have now won the war and they are sharing the abandoned othered women as trophies to the various Greek cities, either as slaves or wives to their kings. The barbarian of contemporary Greece hides during the day. His occupation is one of a mainstream citizen; he is not in the parliament although he aspires to it. He wakes up with dawn, makes some phone calls, grabs his baseball bat and gets out of his home to commit crimes.

*Rights groups say most victims are attacked in public spaces such as squares or on public transport, usually by groups of men dressed in black and at times with their faces covered.*⁴²

⁴² Yiannis Behrakis, Renee Maltezoou, "Anti-racism protesters rally in Athens after stabbing," *Reuters*, January 19, 2013

Catharsis as Stasis (Στασις, Pause, παύση)

*Why the Trojan Women? Greek tragedy is a beautiful monument, which we inspect with interest and respect with a scrupulous interpreter by our side. But it is a ruin where nobody would want to live.*⁴³

*Its horror is majestic, its cruelty is solemn.*⁴⁴ Sartre tells us, after mentioning that the theatricality of the *Trojan Women* had its own liturgical element and portrayed a political and social change that was taking place in Athenians' minds. Although it was believed to be too early for the Athenians to overthrow old idols and traditional mentalities, their political and social consciousness was developing. This tragedy represents this subtle change; a transformation of existences and an examination of specific fixed realities of the time.

Catharsis (κάθαρσις) was the purification of emotions through the practice of pity and fear while experiencing an ancient Greek tragedy. Pity was meant to be felt towards the tragic hero and fear towards the divine powers that have controlled his fate ("his" because the actors were always men, playing all the roles -even the ones written for women). The ultimate catharsis was the experiential understanding of one's being after going through an abundance of emotional journeys. Before the climax of the feeling, the audience had identified with the tragic hero and had mentally and emotionally participated to the events described. Ancient poets would consider the ultimate emotional experience of the audience in order to construct the effectiveness of the play. Catharsis would leave the audience in a state of internal awareness via an unconscious evaluation about the fate of the actor. The cathartic experience was supposed to be mirrored in the audience's psyche (ψυχή).

The concept of catharsis is now being transformed and adapted to the present time, a time where greed, power and dominance are being reassessed. The technique of the Aristotelian catharsis is abandoned. It is, once more, in the organic process of transforming and adapting to the social circumstances of today. Augusto Boal suggests that "Aristotle's coercive system of tragedy survives to this day, thanks to its great efficacy. It is, in effect, a powerful system of intimidation."⁴⁵

in-tim-i-date intimidate

εκφοβισμός
[in-tim-i-deyt]

⁴³ Euripides, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Ronald Duncan, *The Trojan Women* (New York: Knopf, 1967), Introduction.

⁴⁴ Ibid viii

⁴⁵ Boal, Augusto, "Theater of the Oppressed", Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jewestla/boal.htm>.

verb (used with object), in-tim-i-dat-ed, in-tim-i-dat-ing.

1. to make timid; fill with fear.
2. to overawe or cow, as through the force of personality or by superior display of wealth, talent, etc.
3. to force into or deter from some action by inducing fear: *to intimidate a voter into staying away from the polls.*

Boal states that “the structure of the system may vary in a thousand ways, making it difficult at times to find all the elements of its structure, but the system will nevertheless be there, working to carry out its basic task: the purgation of all antisocial elements. Precisely for that reason, the system cannot be utilized by revolutionary groups during revolutionary periods.”⁴⁶ Greece of 2013/14 and the post-Trojan war are both times where societal structures, culture, given systems and human lives are at stake. Therefore, purgation is not what an audience is awaiting or should be exposed to. There is no comfortable or permanent system to rely upon after being exposed in the process of catharsis.

Similarly, catharsis is transformative and sensitive to social change. It has been redefined and in certain moments of history, tainted with the means of brainwashing and exploitation. Tragic theater is re-examined in terms of the constructed emotional journey that the poets would intentionally build for their audiences. This internal transformation is compared to the indoctrinations that contemporary Greek politicians strategically initiate in order to influence the citizens. This abstract comparison gets justified by investigating these two acting methods: the mind-games that the ancient theater provided without a specific need of gaining a profit out of them, and the profit based power-games that political “theater” of today expresses with the goal to gain votes and authority over minds.

Political figures use specific presupposed gestures of imitation in order to excite certain sentiment and support from the everyday citizen. What both plays have in common is the targeted need for sympathy and emotional projection of the public to the actor’s actions. Formally and conceptually ancient tragedies examine the intricate and often confused relationships between the individual’s fate, the family, and the state. Similar attempts at organized performativity can be found in the actions of men in social and political power today. Although the reasoning behind the two performances is dissimilar, there is a shared desire for influence directed to the viewers/participants. The “distinctive mark of tragic imitation” relates today to the political performances that exploit emotional instability in order to inject certain beliefs and ideologies when crucial sociopolitical situations are prevalent. Greek tragedy in ancient times was perceived as a critical representation of the nation-state’s ideals and social conditions. They commented on the social morphologies of the state, *the*

⁴⁶ Augusto Boal, “Theater of the Oppressed”, *Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy*, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jewestla/boal.htm>.

*agora*⁴⁷(*αγορά*) and how these reflected the individual's consciousness of the time. They were heated commentaries in the form of plays that revealed social relations.

The Barbarian

The concept of the *barbarian* weaved with the uncanny image of the different are silently lubricating human relationships and interfering with social progression. I cover my face as I play the role of an observer. It's about the weight of the act of looking- the weight of investigating the distant. I am talking about a civilization that is neglecting the process of recovery; it is revolting to entropy and attempts to stand still although stillness is inheritably impossible. Although Georg Simmel in the beginning of the 20th century expressed his distress in regards to the manipulation of history, the need to sustain a utopic ground as a response to our unbelonging existence still penetrates our understanding of the world. "The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life. This antagonism represents the most modern form of the conflict which primitive man must carry on with nature for his own bodily existence."⁴⁸

A. barbarian, n. and adj.

1. *etymologically*, A foreigner, one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's.⁴⁹
2. A person who is not Greek.
3. The Athenians expecting the coming of the Barbarian
4. A person living outside the pale of the Roman empire and its civilization, applied especially to the northern nations that overthrew them.
5. A rude, wild, uncivilized person.
6. Sometimes distinguished from *savage*

Greek *métoikos*: from *metá*, indicating change, and *oikos* "dwelling"⁵⁰

⁴⁷The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica", Agora (ancient Greek Meeting Place), *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, Accessed January, 2014,
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/9404/agora>

The agora was the ancient Greek meeting place. "Agora, in ancient Greek cities, was an open space that served as a meeting ground for various activities of the citizens. Agora, in ancient Greek cities, an open space that served as a meeting ground for various activities of the citizens. The name, first found in the works of Homer, connotes both the assembly of the people as well as the physical setting; it was applied by the classical Greeks of the 5th century bc to what they regarded as a typical feature of their life: their daily religious, political, judicial, social, and commercial activity. The agora was located either in the middle of the city or near the harbor, which was surrounded by public buildings and by temples."

⁴⁸Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life", *Modernism Lab Essays*, Visited November 2013, http://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/The_Metropolis_and_Mental_Life.

⁴⁹"Barbarian", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Accessed May 23, 2014,
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15380?redirectedFrom=barbarian#eid>.

The Metics of ancient Greece were the resident foreigners and travellers who had settled in Athens as well as the slaves who had gained their freedom. They were carriers of other cultures that had chosen to remain in the mainland of Greece. Although in Athens the metics were abundant, they were neither tourists nor citizens. "They occupied an intermediate position between visiting foreigners and citizens, having both privileges and duties. They were a recognized part of the community and specially protected by law, although subject to restrictions on marriage and property ownership. A significant source of manpower and skilled labor, they constituted a large part of the population of Athens by the 5th century BC."⁵¹

When we want to demonize, foment hate or intolerance, engage in colonialism, imperialism, oppression or subjugation, we raise the specter of barbarism in order to Christianize, civilize and bring another people under our control. We are not much different from the ancient and intolerant Greeks.⁵²

After watching *Ruins*, a documentary by Zoe Mavroudi that refers to the political campaign of 2012, and the hunt down and exploitation of women sex workers who live in Athens I felt astounded by the fact that abusing one's dignity can be empowering for others. In that case, specific political figures wanted to be seen as preventers of "social danger" and used the fate of these women in order to profit their popularity. In 2012, one month before the National elections, the Greek Government organized a fierce search in the streets of Athens and called it a "sweep operation", with the attempt to locate and incarcerate sex workers who were affected with the HIV virus. Their process was extremely invasive. They loaded their trucks with the women took them in the police departments and if they were diagnosed with the virus they were sent to jail; if they were not, they were left to go home.

Someone in the documentary referred to the women, "like garbage, you know? No one wants to see garbage piling up in front of his door". These women were given no treatment for two months and all of their information and pictures were publicized for the *well being of the public*. In the photos that the media went crazy about, the women are heavily bruised. I wonder if these wounds were only symptoms of their HIV virus or were results of police brutality. Although the government was mainly targeting immigrant populations, to their surprise, most of the women who were eventually imprisoned were Greek. Although the ethnicity of the women makes no difference to the brutality of the

⁵⁰ μέτοικος: μετά, οἶκος

⁵¹ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Metic, ancient Greek Society", *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, Accessed November 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/378689/metic>.

⁵² "Who Were the Barbarians and What Impact Did They Make?" *Yahoo! Answers*, Accessed December 2013, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081208084900AAUgKGm>

issue, mentioning this, exposes one more wicked strategy of the government to “sweep away” minorities. It was a vulgar attempt to kill two birds with one stone. This act of violence against these women was one of the worst cards that the Greek Government had yet played. “As a country our dignity is now smashed on the ground; and we are still laying down there. This was the end”, says a Greek therapist who was interviewed in the documentary. According to Mathew Wait, Professor of Law and Policy at Birkbeck College in London,

[...] Criminalization is a bourgeois conceit, [and] something we can afford to do because it is a relatively contained epidemic. And contained, importantly among those people who are socially marginalized and have relatively little social capital: sex workers, drug users, men who have sex with men, migrants from sub-Saharan or endemic areas of the world where HIV is endemic. That’s what we learn about in the context of this. It’s the fear that the majority has of the minority, the fear if you like, that the virus will escape into the “normal” population. And its very easy to satisfy a popular call to punitive response by saying “don’t worry, we are going to criminalize the people who already have no access to the institutions (of perhaps), or have less access to popular, or media to put that case on, or have very little social or economic capital.”⁵³



Author. *Statue and Arrested Woman*. 2013.

⁵³ Zoe Mavroudi, *Ruins: Chronicle of HIV Witch-hunt*, (2013: Athens:) HD Video,

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlL4sQ3_Fo

Action

I am illustrating here the *other*: the tormented *other*, the socially disenfranchised, the immigrants and refugees-most people of color who reside in Greece today. *The other*: who I see in the faces of some Greek residents, blinded by the urgency of nationalism and have transformed into fascists. *The other*: the indifferent. The other: This land that could have been recovered by now. *The other*: My self-initiated choice to talk about othering while I am being sucked by the same ideology I tend to criticize. *The other*: Existing in spaces of misunderstanding. Of empathy and non-comprehension. I have been carrying my *heimat*⁵⁴, like a neurotic weight.

άλλος
autre
其他
anderes
altro
他
outro
otro
tjetër
drugj
آخر
cits
други
diğer
Other
სხვა
ሌላ
אנדערער
nyingine
ሌላ
další
beste
অন্য
друг
un altre
iba
ἄλλο
ອື່ນໆ
cits
другий
andra
kal

⁵⁴ Gonzalo Ortega, "Homeland-Human migration today as seen by contemporary Artists", *LAR-Blog*, Accessed November 2013, <http://livingartroom.wordpress.com/2011/07/03/homeland-2/>. Villem Flusser refers to the German concept Heimat to define the emotional link between humans and their homeland; the Heimat can be established far from the place of birth.

The Fall

The fall of a state, of the trickle-down effect, of information, a sovereign power, of a body. An African woman, a middle-eastern shop owner, my neighbor, my heritage, my backbone.

They Provide Ample Storage

I rush up the stairs and then mechanically turn my body left and toward the passport renewal office. Dust is floating in the air between my body and the walls. This police department seems empty and deserted. In my surprise when I turn right again, I come across metal bars. I was in such a rush that I bumped on the bars and felt her breath on my forehead.

Her frozen sight seems to be the only static element in the rottenness of this sterile place. I instantly feel misplaced; her figure cautions me and makes me look around for an exit. Her aged arms and bitten red fingernails are hanging down the bars. She sees through every pore of my skin and eventually questions my arrival. I am too busy to respond. I will later remember that she was stained with loneliness. At that moment I felt the marriage of empathy and fear overwhelming me, like a corset sharply tied around my waist.

While turning my back to leave I momentarily glance on the huge *ILLEGALS* sign above the metal door. Visitors here can be either Legal doing their everyday errands, or permanent, Illegal humans who are categorized as regular intruders to Greek society's peace and safety. I dash in the waiting area and get in the "Passport Renewal" room without knocking the door.

My damp hand slides on the glossy handle and the door slams behind me. The policeman doesn't move his eyes from the computer screen he welcomes me with an indifferent voice and asks me to take a seat. I am only here to renew my passport. Although it is just the two of us in this room, I am feeling an abundance of human presence overshadowing the space. The walls are grey and the national emblem is placed above the door, I believe it's blue with a white cross. Maybe they are in reverse.

The big, sweaty man keeps on looking at his screen with a half-smile and a cigarette hanging from his lips. A white-yellowish mustache is hiding his mouth and the burning cigarette is getting too close to the hair. It is really hot in here; I think and my eyes come across to the fan that is barely doing its job. The cigarette keeps burning and he has now stopped puffing it. I visualize his mouth on fire, the computer screen exploding, the noise of the indifferent typing and the old fan suddenly muted. stop. I end my mind from racing. Once more I find myself in this sickly room, sweating from anxiety and heat and waiting for this man to address me.

His gaze makes me feel as if I am asking for something impossible, labor intensive and obscene. And then I realize: His laziness managed to even make me feel bad. --Sir, I just need to receive the new passport I ordered days ago. For once more I am leaving the country to continue my studies on another continent. Three weeks of forgetting, being part of, also being not part of, and unconsciously waiting to leave again, seemed short. Equally short with the time that ink takes to dry on the paper; milliseconds only after you've placed and raised the pen. I have accepted the feeling of being disappointed but uncomfortably immune to my surroundings. Yet, this disappointment transforms into sadness the moment I step on the plane. Then the sadness evolves into endless research and suddenly the transformation circles around and falls back into disappointment. I heard someone saying recently: I am a good investigator only because I am very angry.

The sounds of the summer crickets and the Mediterranean mid-day breeze are boldly muted by the sadistic need for hypothermic sensations, which are manifested by the shut windows and the sounds of this crooked fan. Twenty minutes later he will find my name in his worn-out notebook, he will search out my passport from a closet full of unorganized official documents, and send me on my way. That room was a closet of ice.

On my way out I was looking forward to see the eyes of the woman behind the bars, I was intending to interact and ask questions. I abruptly close the door behind me and in my surprise the pair of hands that had strangely welcomed my arrival are now gone. There are no limbs grabbing the metal railings of the jail door across the hall; no more curiosity investigating me, the cell is dark and my eyes too weak to adapt to the light. My eagerness to reciprocate to her existence is chopped off and I realize that it is too late for any correspondence. I am currently used up by the bureaucracy of a system made out of foolish nationalists and their presenter, a cop who was lazy to even articulate my name.

The Camp

"We're going to have to control your tongue," the dentist says, pulling out all the metal from my mouth. Silver bits plop and tinkle into the basin. My mouth is a motherlode. The dentist is cleaning out my roots. I get a whiff of the stench when I gasp. "I can't cap that tooth yet, you're still draining," he says. "We're going to have to do something about your tongue," I hear the anger rising in his voice. My tongue keeps pushing out the wads of cotton, pushing back the drills, the long thin needles. "I've never seen anything as strong or as stubborn," he says. And I think, how do you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you bridle and saddle it? How do you make it lie down?

Who is to say that robbing a people of its language is less violent than war?⁵⁵



Amygdaleza Detention Camp for Illegal Immigrants⁵⁶

Video Stills from Interview with Syrian Immigrants
Owners of a mini market in Athens

“Wild tongues can’t be tamed they can only be cut out⁵⁷”

Amygdaleza is the first of about 50 camps.

Greek officials say will be built by mid-2013. *It is now built.* No documentation from the cells exists. It consists of dozens of containers that were originally set up to house people hit by natural disasters such as earthquakes.⁵⁸

About 130,000 immigrants cross the country’s porous sea and land borders every year, the vast majority via Turkey, and the authorities are forced to release those who are arrested because of a lack of permanent housing.⁵⁹

They provide ample storage.

⁵⁵ Anzaldúa, Gloria *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera.*, (San Francisco, Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 77.

⁵⁶ Hoft, Jim, "Greece Locks Up Illegal Immigrants in Country’s First Detention Camp Prison," *The Gateway Pundit*, April 2012, Accessed December 2013, <http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2012/04/greece-opens-first-detention-camp-prison-for-illegal-immigrants>.

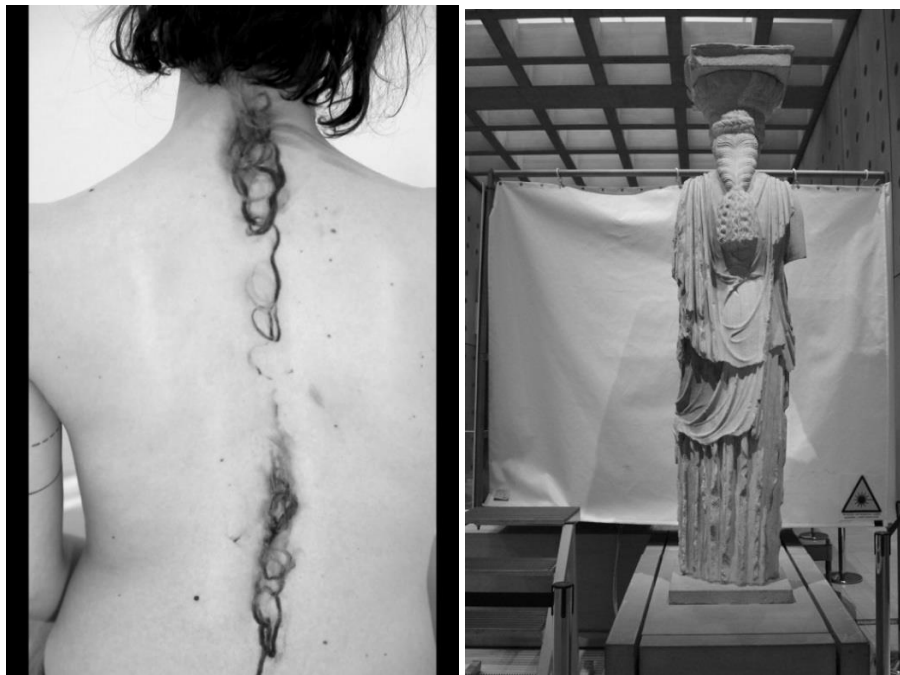
⁵⁷ Anzaldúa, Gloria *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera.* (San Francisco, Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 77.

⁵⁸ Hoft, Jim, "Greece Locks Up Illegal Immigrants in Country’s First Detention Camp Prison," *The Gateway Pundit*, April 2012, Accessed December 2013, <http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2012/04/greece-opens-first-detention-camp-prison-for-illegal-immigrants>.

⁵⁹ Ibid

The soil is cemented and it transmits humid dust accumulated by the surplus of flesh. The New land. The country, the roads, the buildings, the markets; the people; all aliens placed neatly into containers made for disaster victims. It was a temporary solution that has persevered. A country abused by monetary prosecutors and a European Union treats always its people like family. A family Greece never belonged to.

II. Renovating a Body



Author *Establishing a Backbone* 2014. Caryatid under construction at the Acropolis Museum

The skeleton of this writing is a human body, disseminated in fragments around the world. It is anonymous and following the promised words of transnationalism, its identity has been intentionally lost. Today it lies on remnants of voices, cultures, and interactions while it is embracing a dialogue that is made out of particles. Its spine is made out of smoke and it attempts to familiarize itself with the gaps between the marrow and the bones. Their distinct materiality creates an uncomfortable feeling of disjointed unity; however it's only a matter of time for them to merge down and reestablish a body. I have been thinking about my body's ephemeral symptoms as a medium of measuring my existence and its various fragmentary adaptations. As an extension of this idea, I am attempting to represent the dialectic consequences of hybridity and ephemerality.

My identity as a ruin, a remnant of an action.
My existence in the process of becoming an absence.

III. Dear Humanity

Dear Humanity,
It worked!
Peace is now self-evident.
War has become inconceivable.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Rompuy, Van "From War to Peace: A *European Tale*" *Nobel Lecture European Union (EU)*, December 11, 2013, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/eu-lecture_en.html.

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About the author

Born in Athens, Greece, Marina Miliou-Theocharaki is a writer, artist and educator who currently lives and works in Chicago. She is a graduate from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and holds a dual Bachelors degree in Fine Arts and Visual and Critical Studies. In her practice, culture and ethnic identity are silently confronted. By tapping on her nomadic tendencies she pushes her body elsewhere, displace its parts and becomes an observer of its material transformations. Body fragments, culturally stigmatized and in a state of refuge emigrate from their initial formation, disseminate in space and assimilate with the chosen vocabulary, language and materials. The conceptual processes of her making delicately suggest notions of immigration, trauma and empathy.

Recent projects include group exhibition Contained at Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, a residency and solo exhibition at the Fancy House Gallery, Chicago and group exhibition, Words we Live By, curated by Molar Productions. Miliou-Theocharaki is a member of the Chicago-based performance group, Collective Cleaners.

In 2014 she was awarded the George Roeder Undergraduate Award in Visual & Critical Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She currently holds a position as a Curatorial Research Assistant at the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University, Chicago.