

**Master in International Performance Research**

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**A Critical Approach to Crisis and Critique. Two Greek case-studies in the  
performing arts**

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## Abstract

“Criticism has become one of the essential qualities of modernity” Boris Buden argued and supported that self-reflexivity in arts is an intrinsic characteristic of being critical, whereas Reinhart Koselleck stated that “crisis” became the main analytical tool of modernity. The present paper, structured upon the performance analysis of two Greek case-studies in the performing arts field, *City-State* (2011) and *Yasou Aida!* (2012), traces the relationship between these two dimensions of modern thought, *crisis* and *critique*. Koselleck’s work on the concept of crisis in the perspective of the philosophy of history, is of great significance to the present approach of the current case-studies, in which the concept of crisis appears under similar modes. In addition, in *City-State* and *Yasou Aida!*, the sarcastic commentaries against dominant stereotypical discourse concerning past and actual national issues, are forming a critical approach to reality characterized by self-reflexivity. The exploration of the national past is used in *City-State* in order to uncover and discover historical events and political manipulations that possibly led to the collapse of the Greek political and financial state. In *Yasou Aida!* the critical reflection on actuality reappropriates both the European and Greek dominant stereotypes, using them as material for a critical meta-discourse. Both case-studies conceptualize the collapse of the emblematic elements of national identity, a process that activates self-critique as a major expressive mode. Still, this self-critique is incorporated in both case-studies in the perspective of the philosophy of history, producing a political critique of this nation under crisis.

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## Introduction

In the current turbulent political and social situation within Europe the contemporary performing practices are seeking ways to engage with actuality, to position themselves in the unfolding discourses and find their role into this historical momentum. 'We (still) believe that art is intrinsically equipped with the power of criticism. Of course, we don't simply mean art criticism here but something more than that, the ability of art to criticize the world and life beyond its own realm, and even, by doing that, to change both.' (33) The quote above is taken from the essay 'Criticism without Crisis: Crisis without Criticism' (2006) written by Boris Buden and published in the *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*. Buden's essay focuses more on how much, if at all, the contemporary artistic practices are aware of their delimitations, 'the conditions of possibility and production' (33) in order for art to be self-reflexive, the prime feature of being critical.

In this way criticism has become one of the essential qualities of modernity. For almost two centuries to be modern meant simply to be critical – in philosophy as much as in moral questions, in politics and social life as much as in art. But there is also another concept, which – as a sort of its complement – has long accompanied the idea and practice of modern criticism, and that is the concept of crisis. A belief that the two – crisis and criticism – have something in common, that there is an authentic relation, or better, an interaction between them, equally belongs to the modern experience. Therefore, an act of criticism almost necessarily implies the awareness of a crisis and vice versa; a diagnosis of crisis implies the necessity of criticism. (34)

This self-reflexivity as an intrinsic characteristic of art in order to be regarded as critical is one of the main points of reference in the current essay that aims to trace the relationship of crisis and critique in the performing arts. Crisis and critique are two terms that indeed have since a long time occupied the social and political discourses generated by historians and philosophers. They stood as a prevailing duality, not only feeding one another

in a reflective relationship but also as tools to form, speculate, research and assess significant events in the world history. Since World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, cultural critiques and global interpretations with "crisis" in their titles, have proliferated. Reinhart Koselleck wrote in the epilogue of his article, "Crisis" (397). These two keywords are coming once again to the forefront and are used by almost every epistemological and cultural field as a conceptual pair to analyze interactions and evolutions within the current political, economic and social sphere. In the humanities, the bibliography produced by this duality is much extended and is getting enriched in the current moment. Publications, articles and an extended record of conferences under the title of "crisis and critique," "arts and critique," "theatre and critique," "arts in times of crisis" are taking place in many European cities in 2012. Activism, anti-capitalist art, institutional critique, critical art practices and more are terms and concepts inextricably intertwined with the above core-duality in the sphere of arts.

In this context the present essay aspires to contribute to this re-emerging discourse, from the aspect of performing arts; by focusing on the artistic articulation of a response, a "critique," and a "crisis," in Greek the ability to exercise and articulate critique, towards the current crisis. The geographical spectrum of this research constrains itself in the field of performing arts in Greece, the country that for the past two years was found in the core of the inter-European financial and political evolutions, or in other words "the E.U. crisis." For this purpose, a concrete yet short speculation of the socio-political peculiarities of the specific geographical case-study would clarify some main aspects of the current condition. The present research will undertake a comparative performance analysis as a methodological tool to trace the characteristics of the critique expressed in two case-studies selected in terms of politics and aesthetics. The case-studies were selected by an all the more increasing production of artworks produced explicitly for the sake of commenting on

actuality. *Yasou Aida!* and *City-State* are two performances that were discerned by the fact that they were motivated by the current conditions. The first performance is the result of a German-Greek collaboration, produced in early 2012 whereas the second one took place at the beginning of 2011; one of the first examples in Greece of political theatre with a critical attitude towards the actual crisis. The two examples display many similarities regarding their aesthetic choices and dramaturgical patterns. Both performances zoom in the national past and extract historical events, famous statesmen's strategies and international relationships which seem to have been played a determinant role in the social development of the country, to articulate an internal critique. This self-critique focuses on a country that tried to stay aligned, at any cost, with the European standards highlighting the way towards its transformation into a developed capitalist society.

Reinhart Koselleck's life work was concerned extensively with the duality of crisis and critique. The critique as it was formed during the Enlightenment between the Absolutist State and the emerging bourgeois society, the crisis as it was perceived during the evolutions in Europe, mainly through the modern period. Koselleck's interest in the concept of crisis and its subsequent critique was unwrapped in his *ÖCrisisö* as a recorded route of the term in every societal field, its insertion in the philosophy of history the product of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and later on as a core-concept in financial and capitalist crises. In order to approach as close as possible the research questions of the present paper, namely *öHow is a critique of performing arts being formed today towards current sociopolitical conditions?ö* *öWhat makes its practices critical?ö* *öWhich are the main characteristics, if any in common, of this artistic critical manifestation?ö* the present research will engage with a number of discussions and artistic practices in the discourse of political theatre and critical art practices. Jürgen Habermas, Boris Buden, Bernard Dort, Bertolt Brecht and Jacques Rancière are some of the writers whose work stood inspiring and useful for the development of the present thesis.



## 1. Theoretical Framework

### 1.1 On Crisis

In 1959 Reinhart Koselleck published his dissertation *Critique and Crisis. Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*<sup>1</sup>, when humanity was standing devastated, violated and corrupted after the unspeakable outrage of the two World Wars and their outcome. For Koselleck the pathogenesis of modern society was lying on the multifold affair between the Absolutist State and the secretly formed society, the Masonry, from the gulfs of which the bourgeois society sprang up. The rise of the secret society and its indirect interaction with the official political authority in the age of -antechamberø the name Koselleck gave to the 18<sup>th</sup> century to state the era of transition to the modern world its humanitarian unificationø aspirations and the Utopianism created by this was for Koselleck the reason of the pathogenesis of the modern world. In a very schematic and simplified version of his thought, the then contemporary political crisis followed the underground critique that was cultivated by the indirect and invisible to the Absolutist state, political stance of the bourgeoisie that eventually broke out to the Revolution of 1789.

The heuristic comprehension, meant to clarify the link between the Utopian philosophy of history and the revolution unleashed since 1789, lies in the presupposed connection of critique and crisis. This grasp will prove itself. (9)

Yet, this revolution was not a direct product of the secret power of bourgeoisie rather than of its philosophy of history, the birth of which was to take its part on the dualism of morality and politics; a philosophy of history that would prognosticate the revolution by necessitating it and on the other hand would wash secret societyø hands of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Original title: *Kritik und Krise. Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt.*

The moral citizen, whether expressly stated or not, was always safe in a philosophy of history which by name alone was an eighteenth century product. The Freemasons were also in the vanguard of those who sought to supplant theology by the philosophy of history and religion by morality. At first the Christian tenet of salvation was removed voluntarily to a new, self-created past which for its part was to legitimize the plans of international Masonry (130)

Some years later, Koselleck contributed in a great level to the clarification of the much used term of crisis by writing an essay for the evolution of the word, its semantic interpretations and metaphorical uses till its application to a variety of fields, its induction to a concept and its adoption to other languages; 'Crisis' was an entry in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, a historical dictionary on politico-social terminology in Germany.<sup>2</sup> As Koselleck stated in the introductory note of the entry, the metaphorical flexibility of the word and its easiness to be adjusted in almost every field made it popular and transformed it into a catchword, and this ascertainment becomes evident throughout the whole entry. Departing from the Greek uses of the word where its original root is coming from he moves on to the adoption of the term into other national languages based in their appearance to dictionaries and lexica. The main axis Koselleck draws is the gradual way of the term from its adoption in English, French and German languages to its evolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from a word to a concept by focusing a lot on the integration of the word into the philosophy of history; this last point, namely the induction of the term in a philosophy of history, stands as a referential point for the formation of the current critique, as it was perceived by the present essay's research. Eliminating the majority of the singular references the present paper will focus on the main points of Koselleck's paper briefly and put more weight on the engagement of some referential points of his work with the perception of the current crisis by the present case-studies in performing arts.

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<sup>2</sup> The essay was published in English in *The Journal of the History of Ideas*.

Starting from the meanings and uses in ancient Greek, Koselleck refers to κρίσις (krisis) that is one of the nouns stemming from the verb κρίνω (krinō):

has its roots in the Greek verb κρίνω (krinō): to κρίνω (part, divorce), to κρίνω (to judge, to decide); κρίσις as a means of κρίνω oneself, κρίσις or to κρίνω. This created a relatively broad spectrum of meanings. In classical Greek, the term was central to politics. It meant not only κρίσις and κρίσις, but also κρίσις in the sense of reaching a crucial point that would tip the scales. (358)

Only the above pallet of uses makes obvious the aforementioned flexibility that allows each one of the notions. Regarding the fields of application in classical and modern Greece, Koselleck refers to the political, the juridical (with its religious connotations) and the medical sphere; to the political use of the word he suggests that the term takes the nuance of a decision as a crucial step that will change the existing condition of things. Being able to make a decision is the notion κρίσις in the sense of reaching a verdict or judgment, what today is meant by κρίσις (359). The juridical notion of the word is encountered in the Bible where the role of the judge, the one who will judge/exercise his ability to judge, is God. This religious connotation acquires an eschatological dimension, this of The Last Judgment. The medical use of the term was first encountered in the Hippocratic Corpus where it denoted the appearance of symptoms as the beginning of an illness or a crucial stage of an illness process that would result to death or to a recovery (360). Koselleck notes that the term acquired a figurative use as it passed to Latin language but retained the Greek meanings in its metaphorical uses, namely political, juridical and medical.

### 1.1.1 in the modern Greek dictionaries

Some comments on this first information would start, first of all, from the verification that the word has retained these three notions (political, medical, juridical) in the Greek semantic context, something that will come to be affirmed in the references to the Modern

Greek dictionaries. In *Babinotis Greek Dictionary* (2005) the verb (*krin*) is referred to as follows: 1. to express an opinion on (something), to assess 2. to exercise critique 3. (in the court) to declare a judgment, to judge 4. to hold a decisive role in the outcome of a case 5. to evaluate 6. to exercise critique (on others), to comment (usually negatively). In the *Greek Dictionary of Triantafyllidis Foundation* (1998) *krin* is referred to as follows: 1. to form a personal view, to form an opinion 2a. to declare an official and documented opinion on a subject (as a judge, referee etc) 2b. to state analytically and with arguments an opinion on somebody or something, as an expert 3. to a subject the importance of which is regarded decisive in the evolution of a situation or in the outcome of an event. The *Major Greek Dictionary* by Tegopoulos-Fytrakis (1999) cites *krin* as follows: 1. to form an opinion 2. to think, consider 3. to formulate an opinion 4. to form opinion as an expert, decide [an example for the jurical use is given] 5. to give a decisive turn to something, to act decisively 6. to exercise critique 7. to criticize, to deprecate [an abstract from the New Testament is given as example]. The above references are clarifying this conservation of the three notions but it is also becoming obvious that the interpretation of the word has acquired a quality and a capacity of the Subject to exercise the function of *krin*; continuing with the semantics of the notion in modern Greek of the word *krino*, this aspect of the contemporary spectrum of meanings in the Greek context is strengthened.

On the word *krino* the Greek Dictionary by Triantafyllidis cites two main and broad notional uses of the word, each of them divided in sub-notions. The first one is referred to the mind-process and the outcome produced by it; therefore there is the notion of [opinion] that man forms regarding an issue as a result of a logic process, the action or the result of the verb [krino]. As a second notion of the same use of the noun comes the notion of the intellectual procedure characterized by the proper evaluation of facts and situations or even the questions that test the critical skills somebody obtains. Another notion

of the word *crisis* is judgment, referring to juridical decisions as well as religion and The Second Coming. *crisis* is also referred to the legitimized annual act of evaluation in an administrative procedure of bureaucratic tasks. The other semantic use of the word is given as a medical term to describe conditions of a body or mind as a part of an already existing problem or something self-existent, a sudden aggravation of a chronic affection or the acute emergence of symptoms in a person so far healthy. The term can also be used to describe emotional or psychological change of state such as ða sudden indication of emotions, psychological indication or way of thinking.ð ðClimax of an evolutionary way accompanied by worsening condition of all the negative aspects, from the overcoming of which depends the return to the previous normal condition.ð Speaking in financial terms, crisis means ða disturbance in the rhythms of the relation between production and consumption.ð ðAn unsettlement of a whole or part of a whole of the intellectual, ethical or religious human beliefs which lead to determinant decisions. *Identity* [=s crisis]~ inner speculations, human questions seeking for their redefining and repositioning of human beings, mainly with regards to one's self or to the others, especially in occasions of self-esteem loss.ð

In the Greek dictionary Babiniotis *crisis* is referred to ðthe capacity man has to go deeper into thinking and conclude accurate results í The opinion, the assessment someone articulates with regards to people, things and situations.ð In linguistics *crisis* can be used also to state that a person assures whatever is saying is true; in military administrative matters is used as a term to indicate ðthe procedure during which decisions have been made by a relevant committee regarding retirement or promotion issues.ð A juridical decision made by the court constitutes also the *crisis* of the court according to which someone is exculpated or sentenced. The use of the word as an eschatological religious concept is once again confirmed by a reference in the Christian use as ða punishment or vindication of people by God that is to happen according to Bible during the end of the world í A disturbance of a

normal procedure or the practical controversy of well established values, institutions and structures, as a way of proof or ordeal. This dictionary also mentions the personal inner someone goes through resulting in a feeling of unsettlement, dissatisfaction with one's own self. In medicines it retains the notion of an illness that goes through an acute phase and also as a phase where someone develops positive characteristics that didn't have before, like a (crisis) of smartness. At the end it adds the use of the word as a comment, decision or opinion.

In the *Major Greek dictionary* by Tegopoulos-Fytrakis is cited as a mind-process that defines the relation between notions, compares and distinguishes the similarities||evaluation of deeds and situations, the articulation of a valid and thorough opinion on something|| mind's clarity|| a judge's decision or other official authority on a specific case|| period of disorder with difficulties and danger|| (in medicine) an abrupt change or paroxysm.

The points that can be extracted from these entries in the modern Greek language is, firstly, a pallet of the already existing uses of the term; the political, in terms of official and documented decision-making, the juridical and the theological (especially in relation to the Last Judgment) as well as the medical. Another point is the fact that the financial notion given by Triantafyllidis dictionary, namely a disturbance in the rhythms of the relation between production and consumption is reflecting the engelien and marxist interpretation of crisis as this is elaborated very lucidly in Koselleck's essay (1993), a fact that explicitly reflects that the dominant relation of production-consumption mechanism of the capitalist system is the core- source of a financial crisis in contemporary world. But apart from all, a great emphasis has been drawn in the use of the word as a mind-process that leads to thoughtful or not decisions stressing the ability of someone to be critical. Another comment that derives from the above entries is a twist in the psychological use of the word, although it

is being declared by Koselleck in a brief note that the term jumped into psychology from the medical notion early in France in 17<sup>th</sup> century (362). Summarizing the above points, a twist is noticed in the tendency of the term to be perceived in anthropological terms (mind-process for the ability to be critical in contrast to the political that stresses the issue of citizenship) and sociological terms (the ability to assess and evaluate notions, people and events and for man to stand for his documented opinion) something that is was already noticed by Koselleck at the end of his essay when he was stating the adoption of the term almost by every field of life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "In all the human and social sciences, crisis appears as a key-concept; in history, of course, to characterize epochs or structures. Political science tries to operationalize the term and distinguish it from the 'conflict'. From medicine the concept has spread to psychology and anthropology, ethnology and the sociology of culture." (399). The conservation of the semantic variations as well as this twist to, or better this evolution of, the anthropological and sociological field of application of the term will be proved important elements for the comprehension and perception of the current crisis and the response to this by the present-case studies in their form, content and ideological aspirations.

### **1.1.2 The concept of *crisis* in the philosophy of history**

The term appeared successively in French, English and German languages, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the first case and in the 16<sup>th</sup> in the other two. In the midst of 18<sup>th</sup> century Koselleck traces the appearance of the word in the political sphere when the word was found on documents regarding the Austrian War of Succession in 1740 (368) while from then on the term was used to describe political uneasiness in internal (civil wars) and external politics. "The common use of the word had neither been validated nor sufficiently enriched to be elevated into a basic concept. It served both as a descriptive category and as diagnostic criterion for political or military action." (369) For Koselleck this was still the case when he

was writing this essay with the difference that what was regarded to be an optimal time for decision was now perceived and "determined by inescapable pressures for action." (369) At that period the word seems to gain again its metaphorical use of the religious notion but now reformed "in a post-theological mode, namely as a philosophy of history." (370) The conservation of the medical and theological notions keeps strengthening a future prognosis with the stark duality that the term imposes between salvation or death, success or failure.

From their respective perspectives, a crisis either reveals a situation that may be unique but could also as in a process of an illness continue to recur. Or, analogous to the Last Judgment, a crisis is interpreted as involving a decision which, while unique, is above all final. Thereafter, everything will be different. Between these two extremes there may be a cornucopia of variants which, although logically exclusive, can influence the characterization of crisis both as entailing a possible structural recurrence and as absolute unique. In this way, the concept of crisis can generalize the modern experience to such an extent that "crisis" becomes a permanent concept of "history" (371)

Schiller is for Koselleck the first to approach the term as a way to "interpret all of human history as a single crisis that is constantly and permanently taking place," (371) a crisis the outcome of which will be announced neither by God nor by historians but by the facts themselves. Another variant stemming from this historical conceptualization of "crisis" is the use to indicate a historically transitional epoch, the critical outcome of which will be unique and will change the previous state of conditions for ever. Concluding from the above, Koselleck traces

four interpretative possibilities: 1) Following the medical-political-military use, "crisis" can mean that chain of events leading to a culminating, decisive point at which action is required. 2) In line with the theological promise of a future Last Day, "crisis" may be defined as a unique and final point, after which the quality of history will be changed forever. 3) Somewhat more removed from the earlier medical or theological semantic spheres, are two new historical (or temporal) coinages. The first uses "crisis" as a permanent or conditional category pointing to a critical situation which may constantly



recur or else to situations in which decisions have momentous consequences. 4) the second new coinage uses *ōcrisisō* to indicate a historically immanent transitional phase. When this transition will occur and whether it leads to a worse or better condition depends on the specific diagnosis offered. All of these possibilities reveal attempts to develop a single concept limited to the present with which to capture a new era that may have various temporal beginnings and whose unknown future seems to give free scope to all sorts of wishes and anxieties, fears and hopes. *ōCrisisō* becomes a structural signature of modernity. (371)

Rousseau and Diderot use the concept with a variety of combination of the above four possibilities. Koselleck mentions the possibility that this variety of combinations may stand the reason of the conceptualization of the word, *ōit* takes hold of old experiences and transforms them metaphorically in ways that create altogether new expectations. Hence, from the 1770s on, *ācrisisø* becomes a structural signature of modernity.ö (374) With Thomas Paine and the American War of Independence, *ācrisisø* acquires another dimension as well as another semantic extension, as he first uses the word to indicate *ōan epochal threshold which at the same time anticipates a final reckoning of universal significanceö* and on the other hand the word changes in relation to the meaning of revolution, *ōcrisis* is no longer a phase preliminary to revolution but continues to unfold through the American Revolution, which thus realizes its unique character.ö (374) Edmond Burke with his conceptualization of the French Revolution as part of the greater revolution within Europe and as a unique, till then, state of redefinition of new internal and foreign political affairs, argues that *ōcrisis* as a revolutionary concept of redemption becomes an analytical category for understanding concrete historical situations though it too aims to inspire political action.ö (376) For Chateaubriand as well, crisis is the key concept to politics and he defines the condition of crisis as *ōthe point at which the present situation intersects with universal historical conditions that must first be understood before a prognosis could be offered.ö* (376) According to Koselleck the French Revolution was perceived by its descendants as just a part

of a greater crisis, a fact that affirms once more that the term was being used from then on as a historical analytical tool of modernity, "Though largely driven by societal forces, crisis now encompasses as well religion, science, morality and politics." (376) A demand for a "science of crisis" arises for the need "to explain the society and the laws of its history. Only such a science can provide the means by which to resolve the crisis" (377) and here Koselleck quotes Auguste Comte who argued that "The great modern crisis can be resolved only by a total reorganization. This requires a sociological theory capable of explaining everything in humanity's past" (377) A thorough analysis of the humanity's past is necessitated in order to understand the historical evolutions in societal terms of the present.

Once crisis has been identified as an inevitable and necessary phase of history, it can be overcome through proper prognosis and planning. . . . While still reflecting its theological roots, "crisis" nonetheless has emerged as a truly autonomous concept of history. A central cognitive category according to the positivist belief it now provides the possibility of envisioning, and hence planning for the foreseeable future. (377)

Herder introduces the concept in the philosophy of history in the German-speaking world in 1774 in an effort to confront the central dualistic concept of the humanity's moral progress or deterioration by adopting the concept of "crisis" With the view introduced by Herder, "it is up to us to discover and assess all the inner forces of history rather than continue paying homage to a naïve idea of progress." (377) Herder sought to quit from the stark alternatives that the future prognosis offered till then and used "crisis" as a central historical concept that "necessitates thinking about long-term transformations" (378) conceptualizing crisis more as an epochal concept with the alternatives choices, in Koselleck's opinion, of revolution or evolution.

From the times of Schiller and with the analysis of Koselleck of the four interpretative possibilities, the concept of crisis that becomes the central analytical tool of modernity aims

to absolve itself from the eschatological dimensions of a future prognosis through a societal awareness and activation; this point will prove itself when the concept of critique (chapter 2.2) will be manifested as the only way for a societal evolution to come. At this point, I would like to stress that this route of the concept and the ideological procedures it carries with throughout its philosophico-historical formation, is a function that is being applied till today in the ideological formation and aesthetic structure of critique, at least in the case-studies examined in the present essay. My aspiration to prove this will follow a route through an examination of the ways this is being employed by contemporary performing arts and adjusted to the specific geographical, political and societal context; the main ideological platform of which is exactly this function of tracing back the history through a 'science of crisis', conditioned by the need to understand the current situation, give an explanation and clarify reasons, political and social responsibilities.

### 1.1.3 The concept of *crisis* in Economics

Koselleck highlights the fact that 'crisis' became a dominant concept in economics since it was connected with the capitalist financial system; for the reason that it could initiate successive international financial breakdowns. Till then, the economic use of the term was already since the 18<sup>th</sup> century known in the English speaking world, while in Germany the term entered the sphere of economics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'From 1857 on, economic crisis more increasingly viewed as global occurrences caused by the capitalist system itself.' (389) To affirm this, Koselleck refers to the use of other words, taken mainly from the medical terminology dictionaries, to refer to national financial problems in Germany.

í increasingly severe economic emergencies continued to be redescribed almost exclusively in such medical terms as 'relapse,' 'calamities,' 'convulsions,' and, for an especially long time, 'blockages.' Correspondents writing from England in 1825 warn of an 'impending crisis' that may already have

befallen that country. In the following year the expression is commonly used to describe its consequences in Germany, as well as those resulting from a wave of bankruptcies. (389)

From then on, a tendency for a crisis to be analyzed with regards to its effects on other fields of life and to be connected and integrated in a historical shift is apparent. Koselleck quotes Perthes who saw in England "a monetary crisis" which, linking it to the "stock market mob," he condemned in moral and social as well as in economic terms (389) and Niebuhr: "For the past 150 years, the history of commerce and monetary affairs, like the history of epidemics, has been an integral part of world history. Before 1721 general trade crises were unknown; now as they become more and more frequent, the future looks dim." (390)

Roscher in 1849 comes to argue that "financial crisis" is not the appropriate term to describe a crisis due to the demand and consumption imbalances, thus he introduces the term "production crisis" as a more accurate term and elaborates more on the crisis of an overproduction. "Roscher attributes the crisis to "the stagnation of consumption" and "the over-anticipation of demand," which has led to an excessive production of goods for which there are no customers" and he links up his theory "with other western theories about a growing global economic interdependence attributed to an ever greater productivity." (390)

Koselleck states that the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a point at which these successive financial crises started being analyzed and criticized in social terms.

From the 1840s on, the economically-based concept of crisis permeates the growing literature of social criticisms coming from all political and social camps that had begun to flood the market. "Crisis" was well suited to conceptualize both the emergencies resulting from contemporary constitutional or class specific upheavals, as well as the distress caused by industry, technology and the capitalist market economy (391)

All the above illustrate that the term, even in the field of economics, never stopped being historicized after it had entered the philosophy of history. The efforts to be interpreted, connected and analyzed through social dimensions and for a future prognosis to be given, was all the more crucial and imperative since the concept had acquired an international, universal dimension. Roscher had divided the crises in reforms or revolutions in accordance with the outcome of each case that would result in a peaceful integration in the already established legal system or would fail by changes going against this system. For Koselleck this was another affirmation that the concept of crisis had once again been elevated in a historical concept. "Thus, in the economic sphere as well, 'crisis' had been elevated into a historical 'super concept' (*Oberbegriff*) with which to analyze the challenges of the century." (392) Something that affirms all the more the above contextualization of economic crises through a historical spectrum of universal significance reaches its culminating point in 1857 with the first documented world crisis.

The economic crisis after 1856, caused in part by the gold rush and the subsequent frenzy of speculation set off by it, established the dominance of economics. As a consular official reported from the U.S.A. to Berlin: "Attempts to identify the origins of this crisis have resulted in finding them everywhere and nowhere." "Certainly, it was perceived as a 'world crisis.'" What made it altogether new was its conceptualization in international terms extended to commercial and political interactions as well as to the conditions of capitalist production. As noted by Michaelis, "the crisis of 1857 differs from all of its predecessors in that it was far more universal. Earlier crises hit only individual nations, while others were affected differently . . . The causes of crisis also varied from place to place." "To understand their common character and historical significance would require a 'history of the world economy.'" (392)

The multitude publications on economic crises right after the world crisis of 1857, accompanied by efforts to summarize and reflect on previous economic crises, indicates something that political and religious uses of the term never managed, namely to elevate the

term in a concrete concept. Koselleck refers two of these publications, the one, which was the first of all, is the *History of Trade Crises* by Max Wirth and the other is the *History of Political Economy Crisis Theories* by Eugen von Bergmann. For Koselleck this popular acceptance, occupation and prevalence of the concept in the economic sphere was understood as something connected to the ability of examining it thoroughly.

Compared with its use as a political or historical term, the economic concept of crisis now achieved far greater theoretical rigor. This was due to knowledge gained from experience. Economic crises despite the misery and despair they caused and intensified were transitional (not permanent). That perception made it possible to insert economic crises into specific philosophies of history. In this way, economic crises theories, both liberal and socialist, also influenced public perceptions. For liberal optimists, every economic crisis became a step on the ladder of progress.<sup>1</sup> However great the weight given to such social-Darwinian interpretations of crises, they were seen as transitional phases on the path to progress. Even socialist interpreters shared this view. But, horrified by the extreme misery that economic crises produced in daily life, their horizon of future expectations was more "eschatological." This was evident in Marx and Engels, whose use of the concept of crisis alternated between revolutionary hope and economic analysis. (393)

#### 1.1.4 The economic concept of *crisis* in the social theory of Marx and Engels

The cyclical economic crises of a system producing more than it could actually consume and the concomitant suffering of the population due to this surplus became for Marx and Engels the core of their historical and political analysis of this type of political economy or "science of enrichment."<sup>3</sup> Economic crisis is then described as "the time span when economic cycles begin to turn, the long-term courses of which have never previously been intelligible. Once these regularities are seen as historically determined, however, the chances increase that the capitalist system is about to succumb to its own problems and has entered the critical phase that will lead to its end by revolution." (394) In their *Communist Manifesto*

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<sup>3</sup> This is how Engels describes the mercantile system of capitalism in his *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*.

the procedures followed by the capitalist way of production in order to reborn from its ashes, in every temporary and continuous crisis are described. The only way to prevent this from happening was the way to a revolution of the proletariat, "the "death-bearing" class which the bourgeoisie itself had created." (394) According to this plan, the revolution would come only on the peak of a great global crisis, "a new revolution is possible only in the wake of a new crisis. But the one is as certain as the other." (394) For Marx, since this type of crisis always involved in its core in the relation between capital and labor it was expanded automatically in every social field, the outcome of which was his elaboration on a theory of history and a social theory. "It is to put it briefly always a result of a production process involving capital and labor, hence sociologically speaking, also a product of the dependency of the proletarian class on capitalists. Every crisis is thus at once a "crisis of work" and a "crisis of capital." Their interrelationship is depicted in many ways." (396) Marx's analysis and interpretation of the capitalist crisis in societal terms between magnified profits and unemployed workers was showing the way to an impasse that would in the best case lead to a revolution.

The capitalist mode of production will thus always run against its own barriers, because "the extension or contradiction of production will always be decided by the expected margin of profit and not by the relationship of production to social needs, to the needs of human beings developed as members of society." Crises therefore not only contain immanent forces through which they can be overcome, but are also manifestations of tendencies pointing to the structural limits of capitalism. It is that barrier across which, to quote Engels, "mankind" leap from the realm of necessity will lead to the realm of freedom." (396)

### **1.1.5 Critique in the concept of crisis**

The concept of crisis "plays only a peripheral role in the German Idealist philosophy of history in which the spirit (*Geist*) that drives reality naturally triumphs over any acute crisis" (384) writes Koselleck in the relevant subchapter, though he cites that the concept of

crisis still held a central place among the Young Hegelians, namely its [German Idealist philosophy's] heirs. (384) It is also the first time in Koselleck's entry that the word "critique" is encountered when Koselleck comments on the new meaning the concept of crisis has acquired by the Young Hegelians. "This praxis- and action- oriented philosophy seeks to achieve that freedom, the absence of which is the object of its critique. At odds with reality, that critique is pushing for a decision, which, historically understood as "crisis", is already preprogrammed and prepared" and cites Arnold Ruge who argued that "Our time has now become especially critical and the crisis is nothing more than the attempt to break through and to discard the shell of the past, a sign that something new had already replaced it" (384). To Koselleck, Ruge's perspective is a critique that propels the crisis. In Bruno Bauer's words, another Hegelian, "History will elevate to power the freedom which theory has given us and thereby create the world in a new form. History will take care of the crisis and its outcome." (385) The above certifies that, to Young Hegelians' thought, a practical resolution of the crisis, in every aspect of a State's life, depends exclusively on the possibility of a lucid and profound judgment of history. This stage will be reached only through a rigorous critique. "The concept of crisis thus remains within a philosophy of history calling for the execution of tendencies revealed through critique." (385)

During the reformation period towards the industrialization of society and before the Revolution of 1848 the discourse is formed in a way that acquires the duality of labor and property. With Gustav von Mevissen and Lorenz Von Stein talking about crisis as the "incongruence between the culture [*Bildung*] of the century and its actual customs, forms of existence and conditions" and a crisis as the last stage of the epochs discerned by the relation of the above duality<sup>4</sup>, the concept of crisis is drawn from the view of history of 19<sup>th</sup> century as an evolution towards the industrial society. The concept of critique in this case holds a

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<sup>4</sup> Where the first stage was Antiquity with free property and unfree labor and the second one, "the period of German kingdoms" to von Stein's words, that witnessed the battle between free property and free labor.



dominant role as to whether the human spirit has become strong enough to transform voluntarily and from within those conditions revealed by the power of knowledge, according to Mevissen (Koselleck, 2006:385) and if it is possible to convince capital and labor to sacrifice their special interests and to institutionalize instead a relationship of mutual dependency so that the state is no longer simply the handmaiden of property interests according to von Stein (385). The alternatives for both were a revolution and a European decline to barbarism, respectively.

For Koselleck, Burckhardt was the one to transform once and for all the metaphor of the Last Judgment into an anthropological and historical category. (388) What Burckhardt did, was to bring together the history of 19<sup>th</sup> century and interpreted as a great crisis by comparing it with a typology of historical crises he had created, His goal is to provide a historically and anthropologically grounded pathology of the processes of crises. (387) His developmental knots, (387) the way he perceived real crises, influenced by the cyclical theory of constitutional change, were indicating crises that were classified as true, failed or unfulfilled with the criterion of their effectiveness to propel social changes.

What can be assumed from this twist in the sociological and anthropological perception of crisis is an inverse analogy between the concept of critique and the eschatological concept of crisis. The stark alternatives offered by a prognosis of the future were, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, substituted by alternatives that, with regards to the humanity's strength, would manage to control the societal changes and by integrating these changes to be evolved. From the Young Hegelians to Mevissen, von Stein and Burckhardt the crisis was to sprang up by a profound critique/judgment/probing into history that, if it was to be proved strong enough, it would make possible a triumph over this crisis or/and the desirable freedom in social terms.

### 1.1.6 The social-scientific concept of crisis of Habermas

Going chronologically a bit farther from where Koselleck concluded the evolution of the term, Jürgen Habermas introduced his conceptualization of "legitimation crisis." The book that was published in 1973 was for Habermas an effort to capture crisis as a social-scientific concept, through a sociological approach that was launched from Marxist conceptualization of capitalist crisis. Habermas departed from the medical notion of the term to draw thereafter parallelisms between an illness/crisis with this of a societal crisis.

. . . the normal, healthy state can be observed and measured with the aid of empirical parameters. The patient's consciousness plays no role in this; how he feels, how he experiences his illness, is at most a symptom of a process that he himself can scarcely influence at all. Nevertheless, we would not speak of a crisis, when it is medically a question of life and death, if it were only a matter of an objective process viewed from the outside, if the patient were not also subjectively involved in this process. The crisis cannot be separated from the viewpoint of the one who is undergoing it the patient experiences his powerlessness vis-à-vis the objectivity of the illness only because he is a subject condemned to passivity and temporarily deprived of the possibility of being a subject in full possession of his powers. We therefore associate with crises the idea of an objective force that deprives a subject of some part of his normal sovereignty. To conceive of a process as a crisis is tacitly to give it a normative meaning the resolution of the crisis effects a liberation of the subject caught up in it. (Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*: 2)

In the above, a key-parameter of recognizing a crisis as such, in the Habermian sense, is explicitly connected to the subject undergoing this crisis and the recognition of the subject's condition as such. With the focus to the subject-affected by a crisis, Habermas analyzes the social crises in the four dominant formations of social organization, namely the primitive, the traditional, the capitalist and the post-capitalist, in order to elaborate on the idea that a social crisis occurs only when a loss of the social identity of each established social system occurs and is being recognized as such by the social subject itself.

. . . only when members of a society experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened can we speak of crises. Disturbances of system integration endanger continued existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when the consensual foundations of normative structures are so much impaired that the society becomes anomic. Crisis states assume the form of a disintegration of social institutions. (3)

From the Habermian sociological analysis of the concept occurs that the loss of the social identity implies a social disintegration that in turn, is possible to lead to the collapse of the particular system whereas another one must come to replace it. The role of the collective tradition is one of the most important bonds of this social identity. "In historiography, a rupture in tradition, through which the interpretive systems that guarantee identity lose their social integrative power, serves as an indicator of the collapse of social systems. From this perspective, a social system has lost its identity as soon as later generations no longer recognize themselves within the once-constitutive tradition." (4) Analyzing the class societies, namely all the above apart from the primitive, Habermas can discern the same scheme when it comes to critical times for the society; the difference lies in the flexibility of each system to absorb the vibrations generated by the crisis and avoid a social disintegration. More specifically, "In critical situations, traditional societies extend the scope of their control through heightened exploitation of labor power; that *is*, they augment power either directly through heightened physical force . . . or indirectly through generalization- of forced payments . . . Consequently, crises as a rule issue from steering problems that necessitate a strengthening of system autonomy through heightened repression. The latter leads in turn to legitimation losses, which for their part result in class struggles . . ." (20) In the respective situation in the liberal-capitalist social formation, Habermas notes that "the principle of organization transposes the conflict potential of class opposition into the steering dimension, where it expresses itself in the form of economic crises . . . The opposition of interests, which is grounded in the relation of wage labor and capital, comes to light, not directly in class

conflicts, but in the interruption of the process of accumulation, that is, in the form of steering problems. A general concept of system crisis can be gained from the logic of this economic crisis.ö (23) In this way the danger for a social disintegration appears indirectly through unresolved economic problems that endanger the system integration and therefore, the social integration. öIn liberal-capitalist societies, on the other hand, crises become endemic because temporarily unresolved steering problems, which the process of economic growth produces at more or less regular intervals, as *stich* endanger social integration.ö (25)

For Habermas this öfundamental contradictionö that can be found in the core of the social formation is possible only when an organizational principle of this formation necessitates a continuous and repeated confrontation between the social subjects or groups. öAs long as the incompatibility of claims and intentions is not recognized by the participants, the conflict remains latent.ö (27) Since, then, an economic crisis is apparent this incompatibility comes to the fore. öEconomic crisis is immediately transformed into social crisis; for, in unmasking the opposition of social classes, it provides a practical critique of ideology of the market's pretension to be free of power. The economic crisis results from contradictory system imperatives and threatens social integration. It is, *at the same time*, a social crisis in which the interests of groups collide and place in question the social integration of the society.ö (29)

Habermas, with his analysis of a social-scientific concept of crisis, tried to capture the term as a concrete sociological concept. His ideas of an economic crisis strongly interconnected with a social one in the realm of capitalism, where the first triggers the second, is helpful to comprehend the sociological twist of the critique in the present case-studies in performing arts, where a loss of the social identity, a questioning of the national identity as well as the strong opposition between the political class and the social one are of the high marks of this critique, the analysis of which will follow. For the purpose of

clarification of the environment in which the status of critique in the performing arts was formed, a brief contextualization of the socio-political events in the country since the official outburst of the crisis is necessary.

## 1.2 The Greek sociopolitical context

In August of 2007, when the big financial crisis burst out in the stock exchange market, everybody was trying to prognosticate the effect this would have in Europe. During 2008 the specialists were talking for a small scale influence that with the right handling it would be surpassed within some months, though the symptoms had already started affecting the most vulnerable countries. In April 2010 Greece signed the first of a series of financial support plans under the new government which had been elected in October, 4<sup>th</sup> 2009. The previous party in power had earlier been resigned due to the massive and intense dissatisfaction. This latter was an outcome of a series of political and social events that took part in the decade of 2000s, some of which were openly connected and accused for the country's financial weakness. Synchronously to the evolutions in the internal and external financial situation, a feeling of uneasiness, turmoil and insecurity was accompanying the frequent, at that point, revelations of long-term financial scandals and corruption, along with a feeling of moral collapse that was in the air of the social sphere.

At the beginning of 2008, in the months during which Greece was experiencing the first symptoms of crisis, the first scandal burst out; it was the so called "Siemens scandal" where many eminent Greeks were part of a bribery affair that included a public organization, the national telecommunications operator in Greece, OTE. This was just the tip of the iceberg that revealed an ongoing bribery relationship between Siemens in Germany and many countries where Siemens was gaining a lot from public money by tax evasion.<sup>5</sup> A few months later, during autumn 2008, another scandal became known, the "Vatopedi monastery scandal" the case was about a land swap between the church's property and state properties where the financial burden was on the Greek taxpayers. The abbot of the monastery, Efraim,

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<sup>5</sup> For more information there are articles in *Der Spiegel* (Online International), "Ex Boss Could Help Shed Light on Corruption". 29/06/2009 and *The Economist*, "The Siemens scandal. Bavarian baksheesh. The stench of bribery at Siemens signals a wider rot in Europe". 18/12/2008

as well as five members of the then ruling party, Nea Demokratia (New Democracy), were accused of synergy. A month later and without this scandal having simmered down another event shocked the country; on December, 6 a 15-year-old boy was shot dead by a policeman in Exarchia neighborhood in Athens. The sense of shock from the assassination of an underage boy by a policeman was followed by the shock that some of the social media presented the only recorded document edited with sounds and voices from riots in order to make the public believe that this happened by accident during an ordinary clash between policemen and anti-authoritarian people. What followed was approximately five days of riots and clashes where many buildings and stores were damaged or set on fire and that was an unprecedented event in the recent history of the country.

Sixteen days after the December 6<sup>th</sup> events another social rage sparked the already tense atmosphere in the country on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Kostadinka Kuneva, a Bulgarian migrant woman who was working as a cleaner was attacked by two men who made her swallow sulphuric acid. The woman was hospitalized for a year, turned blind in one eye while she is still facing serious problems with her throat and stomach. This woman was the Chair of the Federation of Cleaners and Maid-servants in the state company of transportations –Attiko Metroø and she had already received many life threats due to her activities for the improvements of the working conditions such as the pension system reform. Once again there was an effort for the case to be ceased down by supporting that the event was a –crime of passionø though the true motives were revealed a bit later.

It was this atmosphere in the social, political and financial environment under which many people spoke about the end of *Metapolitefsi*<sup>6</sup> and a new political and social era for the

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<sup>6</sup> *Metapolitefsi* is the term which defines the transition to Democracy that followed the seven-year dictatorship of 1967- 1974; this term characterizes also the whole period from 1974 to our days. This never ending transition was for Greece a period of radical social, economical and political changes that granted a new position to the middle-class and established a social state. On the other hand, clientelism, political cynicism, corruption,

country. More accurately, throughout this period the end of *metapolitefsi* has been proclaimed many times and it had been traced in many decisive points for the country (e.g. the beginning of the crisis, the period after the elections of 19th February or these on the 17th June of 2012) that indicates the uncertainty and diffusion regarding the historical determination of that period. This last decade of 2000s was for Greece a real shifting point in terms of national self-determination that passed through the glory of the Olympic Games 2004 to the days of the 2008 events. What shall be stressed here is that these events that presaged and conditioned the social crisis stood strong reasons to create a feeling of national failure for the country to keep up with its fellow-EU members. The habitual clientistic relationships in combination with the political and moral corruption were being projected as national features that people could not get rid of. The social media started to unroll the thread backwards to reveal interrelated scandals, to analyze political and financial agreements in order to uncover reasons and causalities that led to the current situation. Many reportages and documentaries were produced to study carefully and trace the steps towards crisis. Artists followed the same path in an effort to position themselves in these conditions and the way this was realized is the subject of the present case-studies.

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nationalism and populism are blamed on the *Metapolitefsi*. For more information you can read one of the many references to the end of *metapolitefsi* in English, one of which is written by Nicolas Mottas, "The Tragic End of Metapolitefsi" in *American Chronicle*. 08/05/10



## 2. *City-State*

### 2.1 Kanigunda theatre company

Kanigunda<sup>7</sup> is a Greek theatre company founded in 2005 by a group of five actors, Maria Kechagioglou, Maria Maganari, Giorgos Fringilas and Rebecca Tsiligaridou and the theatre and cinema director Yannis Leontaris.<sup>8</sup> The company's profile is more close to a 'conditioned collaboration' as it has been already stated by the participants, than a constant theatre group where the work and the participants are every time conditioned and negotiated regarding the artistic desire and aspiration without any constraints. The company's artistic concern is more oriented towards the conditions of the rehearsals by putting weight more on the production process rather than the artistic outcome itself; dealing with the text and the speech articulation as well as exploring the boundaries between different kinds of methods and experimenting with multiple theatrical codes are of great importance for the company. Their realized productions are affirming this artistic orientation; Kanigunda has produced till now seven theatre pieces<sup>9</sup> that vary in form, aesthetic choices and theatrical genres.

In 2011 the group focused into the realization of a devised work motivated by the then current sociopolitical situation in the country. *City-State* was the title of the title and was first performed in April 26<sup>th</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup> at the Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens, Greece while the performances were repeated on October, 12<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> in the venue of Teatro Technis. During that period the big, massive demonstrations, strikes and riots had started while on

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<sup>7</sup> You can visit the official website of Kanigunda available in English.

<sup>8</sup> During the years the group's members have expanded with the attendance of the actors Anthi Efstratiadou, Euthimis Theou, Petros Malamas and Marianna Tzani as well as with the director Korina Vasileiadou while constant members are the scene and costume designers Thaleia Istikopoulou and Georgia Bourda.

<sup>9</sup> *Electra* by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal (2005-06), *The Pretty Shepherdess* (2007-08) a play written around the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Crete by an unknown writer, *Genesis no.2* (2009) by Ivan Vrypaev and again the same year a Greek play, *Veggera*, written at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ilias Kapetanakis and presented in National Theatre of Greece. In 2010 the group presented the performance *The Hamlet of Yorgos Himonas* that was about the translation of the Shakespearean *Hamlet* by the well-known Greek writer and translator Yiorgos Himonas. His translation went further beyond a accurate translation of the original text of Shakespeare oscillating between theatre and poetry and generating a completely new text inspired by the story of Hamlet.

May 25<sup>th</sup> the first massive manifestation, better known as ‘The Indignant Movement’ took place on one of central squares in Athens, Syntagma square, which is located right in front of the Parliament. In politics, the country was in the middle of the financial reformations and adjustments according to the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary committee’s rescue plan after the agreement and signing upon the first memorandum on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010. In 2011, Greece had already for a year turned to the European Support System and it was about to vote the medium-term fiscal strategy for the years 2012-2015. What can be stressed here is the fact that during these years (2010-2011) the city of Athens experienced an enormous collapse with the break-down of and fires in many historical buildings as a side-effect of the riots that at some point between May and October of 2011, there were more days in a month during which riots were taking place than days without riots. These are all important in order to understand the core idea around which the main theme of the play structured by Kanigunda and the performance analysis will focus on the main points that constitute the core of the critique that this performance articulated in response to the crisis.

## 2.2 The Performance

The roles of the play are constituted by Myrtis, ‘the woman in the wrong clothes,’ ‘the woman with the soil,’ ‘the ethnarch of former times,’ ‘the prime minister’ and ‘the financial sponsor.’ Myrtis was a 12<sup>th</sup> year old girl whose skeleton was revealed in a massive tomb during the excavations in the subway operations in Kerameikos, a neighborhood in Athens in 1994, underneath which it is assumed that the ancient cemetery of Athens existed. In 2010, a group of scientists got along to restore the face of Myrtis who possibly died during the plague at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC.<sup>10</sup> The ethnarch of former times is Konstantinos Karamanlis, a real person, one of the former Prime Ministers of Greece and a

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<sup>10</sup> For more information in English you can visit the official website *Myrtis. Face to face with the past.*

former President of the Greek Republic who used to be a significant statesman in the post-war political life of the country.<sup>11</sup> The financial sponsor of the performance is a mysterious person who will be hiding his real identity till the end of the performance. The prime minister is the then (2011) real prime minister of Greece, George Papandreou, while the woman in the wrong clothes and the woman with the soil are fictional characters. Though the impersonation of specific real people is obvious, the declaration of this is not happening in an explicit way, but rather they use their first names and the assertion of the identity is happening through the references to well known events in which these people took part or with the screen projection of members of their family or friends. The sponsor, whose identity is the only one explicitly declared by himself at the end of the performance, holds from the beginning the role of the talk showman where at first introduces the subject of the present performance and at times intervenes in a bossy way to change or shift the subject of discussion in the direction he wishes; the other characters usually obey his wishes with more or less compliance.

The dramaturgical context of the play is the last days of the Greeks due to the universe collapse upon their heads any time soon. A mysterious financial sponsor<sup>12</sup> informs the population that it is about time, before they all disappear, to learn their history. The whole play is structured on a narrative-journey throughout the history of the city of Athens; the transformations it underwent with regards to urban designing as well as the key-points of its modern history. This narration does not follow a linear juxtaposition of historical events and facts but consists of a small selection of political events and decisions that still have an impact in today's situation to the company's perception. In the first chapter, the tour guide, a screen projects videos from the city of Athens and famous political persons where the

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<sup>11</sup> More specifically, Konstantinos Karamanlis (1907-1998) became a Prime Minister after the end of the war while his success in the elections is till today quite doubtful. After his election he undoubtedly collaborated with extreme right-wing groups as well as he demonstrated a rather hostile profile to the democratic politicians and left-wing political party. You can find more information in *Britannica Encyclopaedia* as well as in Wikipedia. They display a rather different profile each (and for this reason I cite both) where in the second case some more information are given regarding the negative aspects of his political services.

<sup>12</sup> Who is played by a woman dressed in a black official suit.

performers comment on and correlate every shot with the historical context of each picture. In the ethnarch of former times (Chapter I) the ethnarch starts talking about Athens and the urban planning as it was formed after the war period, namely between the decades of the 60s and 70s and especially about *antiparochi*<sup>13</sup>. The whole scene is structured on the way he imagined Athens and how it was transformed by his decisions; the other three women are commenting on their own way that is rejected by him. A speech and a counter-speech about Athens is being deployed, as it will be happening in almost every chapter, with the simultaneous projection of streets, neoclassic buildings, public spaces, parks, huge apartment-buildings and luxurious houses of famous politicians where the performers stop every time in a memorable place; the dialogue is full of comments on historical events in Greece like the military Junta of 1967-74 or the area of Psychiko, as the ethnarch says 'Psychiko is an experiment of 1923. It is influenced by the English idea of the garden-city, with the vision to create a suburb exclusively for the bourgeois, [a suburb] with no noisy passengers'<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> *Antiparochi* is a method of building-structure that was used in Greece after the War period till today and it was a way for the State to deal with the ongoing population, especially after the Civil War of 1946-49. With this method, the landowner was exchanging his cottage or his home site with one, two or more (depending on the deal) flats in the apartments building that was going to be build at the same position by the constructor. This method of building was legitimized with the authorization of Kostantinos Karamanlis.

<sup>14</sup> This is a citation from a recent article of 2009 with an interview with the German architect Richard Woditch whose PhD dissertation *Die Polykatikien* was on the Greek *polykatoikies* (the Greek-style apartments-building).



Fig.1. Myrtis and the woman with the soil in the òtour guideö in Athens. *City-State*  
(2011)

The play goes on with the introduction of the financial sponsor in the second chapter who from that moment will manipulate the way the performance is being developed by leading the debates and the subjects of discussion. The way chapters are deployed manifests a desire to shed light in a parallel way to the side-effects of the historical events that took part in Greece; the social dimensions and the humanø psychological effects. Thus, in the third chapter the sponsor introduces the woman in the wrong clothes and plays with her a psychological game that makes her believe that she wants to kill herself while many more issues regarding the citizen and the city as a stressful source are coming to the forth.

The use of subversion through an undermining process is being applied as the main aesthetic tool of critique throughout the performance and the analysis will follow a way to highlight this process that is the dominant critical tool. Through the function of overstatement, self-identification and historical parallelism but also the use of different kinds

of forms, theatrical and non theatrical, taken from the talk-show and the revue performances the performance is articulating a sarcastic critique towards the history of the Greek nation.

### 2.3 Subverting history

*City-State* flashes back to significant internal political decisions and actions in Greece during its modern history. Its scenes are inspired and created by a material searched and gathered by the members of Kanigunda and vary from political speeches, newspapers, archives, testimonies by inmates and doctors of ΉDromokaiteio mental hospital to the Greek and international literature. Every time the viewing point is multiperspectival in a way that throughout the whole performance is being generated an ideological Ήdebate between the political and the social speech spreading the focus on the multiple dimensions produced by a historical event. The weight is always being put at the sides of the story which are not illustrated by the official version of history. In chapter five, Ήthe temporary dictatorship, the ethnarch Konstantinos Karamanlis starts narrating the time he spent in Paris when he was in self-exile, just before the dictatorship of the Colonels in 1967. Some of the letters he exchanged with his close friend, Konstantinos Tsatsos, a Greek philosopher, politician and lawyer, are being presented. The scene is structured upon the backstage involvement of Karamanlis in the dictatorship of 1967.

**The philosopher, friend of the ethnarch:** I will now respond to my ethnarch friend who leaves in Paris. [ί ] Letter, 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1966: ΉI would suggest [ί ] a diversion from the political system and a temporary dictatorshipí ö

**The Ethnarch:** I respond to my friend, the philosopher. I live. Right after, in two hours, in seven years, tomorrow, I will become an ethnarch and I will make him a chairman. Letter, 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1966: ΉUnder these conditions, as it is dictated by logic and taught by History, a smooth democratic evolution is excluded. Because it is normal for reactions to occur, before they surrender themselves, from both the regime and the ones who feel threatened. Thus, the diversion must seem legitimized, somewhat controllableí ö

The letters are part of the real mail correspondence between the two men and are taken from the archive of Konstantinos Karamanlis.

The chapter twelfth, 'the Occupation-December events'<sup>15</sup> that is one of the longest scenes of the performance, starts with the sponsor prompting the rest to speak about the times under the German occupation during the second World War. Myrtis starts narrating her own story when fear and vagueness prevailed regarding what was going to happen every single day; 'During the occupation period, none of the Athenians knew who would come back home from their work in the night.' The ethnarch speaks about this period from a medical aspect as if he was a doctor at that time, stressing in this way the various psychological problems and mental disturbances of people under fear and insecurity.

**The Ethnarch:** Everybody was asking me for a diagnosis. [í ] Apart from the plethora of typical psychoneurosis that was developed after the occupation [in many areas of Athens] someone can notice [í ] light psychosomatic syndromes [í ] we still believe that a great change in population has occurred that resulted to the loss of smiling and acceptance of the facts with apathy.

The sponsor intervenes, and states the benefits of this apathy such as making people being more productive and effective and increasing their own potentiality. His cynicism is presented as the other side of the same coin.

**The sponsor:** The English sailors during the Great Catastrophe of Smyrna in 1922 were watching the event from the ship around five o'clock. It was tea time and they turned on the music. What did they have to do? To let themselves to sink along?

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<sup>15</sup> [Decemvriáná, (December events)] is called a specific historical period in Greece that started on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944 and is the prelude of the Civil War in Greece from 1946 to 1949. The conflict-groups were the leftist powers backed by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania and on the other hand the rightist government's power backed by the United States and the United Kingdom. The reason for this was the undertaking of the power in the post-war Greece by a rightist party (and a potential dictatorship) while on the rightists aspect a potential entry of Greece in the communist block was undesirable. During the clashes many civilians lost their lives and a state of food and water shortages was prevailing.

The sponsor decides to change the subject and asks somebody to narrate a love-story during the occupation. Myrtis takes the floor and speaks about a couple that was in love but the narration, as goes along, reaches a point of speaking more about the misery of the couple during the December events, their psychological problems and the miserable ending of their relationship. The sponsor intervenes by saying that this is not a love-story and he does not understand the reason why every time they want to make a whole drama out of every story they narrate. They move on with the woman in the wrong clothes and the prime minister, who is now the major general Katsipetros<sup>16</sup>; these two confront each other, speaking out loud and out of anger about the events from the December-clash as well all the collisions that followed; the dialogue is taken from real testimonies and presents both sides (leftist for woman and rightist for the man); their fight reaches a peak and the sponsor intervenes complaining that they moved away from the occupation period to the civil war and this is not what the sponsor asked for the only reason that "the December events bring you apart, while the occupation events bring you together." The woman in the wrong clothes starts talking about the major system of the black market that expanded at this period where many people taking advantage of the fact that the population was selling its belongings out to get a mere loaf of bread and speaks out a text about the black market and the houses that were given away in the occupation period.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the performance there are also many historical parallelisms taking place that in most cases it is for the sake of subversion of the current situation. The Greek ancient city-state at the first chapter where Myrtis takes a microphone and starts speaking; even though her lips articulate what is being heard from the speakers, there is another voice speaking Greek on her behalf with a foreign accent. The voice is carrying out a history class

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<sup>16</sup> Katsipetros is a semi-fictional person as there was indeed a major general with the name Katsimitros.

<sup>17</sup> The text is taken from a real recent master dissertation thesis about the development of black market in the occupation period.



with the subject of the ancient city-state. The ðteacherö is putting an emphasis in the abilities of the city-state for self-sufficiency, independence and self-determination while she is not missing to refer to the legal prohibition for an expropriation action.

The play is representing historical actualities and social conditions in order to undermine them. This process is the underneath instruction of every scene and deploys a variety of linguistic and performative tools, as well as multiple theatre genres. From the theatrical form of revue the performance borrows the interlude-scenes between the sketches. The songs being heard during interludes usually work in a contrapuntal way that comments sarcastically what has been already performed or what is to be performed. In the fourteenth chapter after an interlude during which everybody is dancing the prime minister announces that he needs to make an announcement. ðLike a prime minister, doctor, forever. I want to tell you that we have bestowed part of our national dominance. I repeat. We have bestowed part of our national dominance.ö

The documenter-like use of the material underpins the performance's effort to stay close to real events and speeches. The non theatrical form of the talk-show, oscillating between a cheerful broadcast and a Big Brother-like version accompanied by all the psychological games, restrains and relations leadings, creates the esteem of psychological manipulation, a feeling of suppression and lack of freedom. Accordingly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of ðthe expulsionö the sponsor introduces to the audience the woman in the wrong clothes and uses reverse psychology tips to humiliate her:

**The sponsor:** Ladies and Gentlemen, let me introduce you to an Athenian woman full of fear. This woman is afraid of death. (waves to the woman in the wrong clothes)

**The woman in the wrong clothes:** Who's afraid? What do you mean?

**The sponsor:** You are full of fear.

Are you afraid of death?

You are afraid of death.

(to the audience) She is afraid of death.

.....

Although, she is extremely hopeless she refuses to put an end to her life.

(to her) Do you refuse to put an end to your life?

(to the audience) She does refuse.

## 2.4 Subverting capitalist ideology and the post-capitalist human condition

A manipulation of the modern, collective unconscious is being manifested. In the ninth chapter, the attraction of Athens, the sponsor poses the question to the group, where this attraction of Athens is coming from, especially in such a crowded city; the function of overstatement, in combination with irony, is being applied in this dialogue where the citizens speech is depicting the popular collective unconscious beliefs.

**The sponsor:** Where do you feel safe?

**The Ethnarch:** I feel safe in the Mallí

**Myrtis:** It is beautiful in the Mall. You feel you don't live in Greece but somewhere in Europe.

**The prime minister:** The Mall is out of urban planning and thus illegal, are they going to knock it down?

**The sponsor:** Don't be afraid. No one is going to knock it down.

**The ethnarch:** Don't knock it down. Here I feel safe. And as citizen I feel safe here.

**The prime minister:** Here you cannot be thrown a Molotov bomb.

**Woman with the soil:** No one can throw a Molotov at me here.

**The Sponsor:** Watch out! A Molotov bomb can be thrown at you even if you don't expect it. Everyone can throw a Molotov bomb at you.

**Myrtis:** No. Here it is not possible. Here it is a warm shell.

**The woman in the wrong clothes:** Yes. They can give drugs to my children in the Mall.

**The Ethnarch:** The center is displaced again. With regard to where you are going in Athens you have the feeling that you are in another city. If you go to Evmorfou str.<sup>18</sup> you will feel you are in the Middle East. In the Mall you feel you are in the States. Is it wrong that I am attracted more by New York than by Kabul?

Some of the above statements are abstracts from newspaper articles under the title "Parks and malls". At the end, they all ask why the sponsor is so concerned about this information and the issue comes to who is the sponsor anyway. The sponsor leaves this issue to be answered at the end of the performance; he terrifies them that in case he is pushed he will cancel the performance right away though this is not his intention.

**The sponsor:** This won't be good for anyone.

It's not your benefit. No one's benefit.

This would imply bankruptcy.

Though I am convinced that you are all prepared for the worst.

You have endurance.

Fear helps you on this. And hope.

All this time you were counting the hours,

The days,

The weeks.

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<sup>18</sup> A crowded street in the centre of Athens, mostly populated by immigrants and it is regarded as a dangerous street to pass at nights.

You are being patient and you don't speak.

It would be a shame not to see the end.

What you need is a bit more distance.

You need an electroshock.

Break.

In the twelfth chapter, the Occupation- December events, the sponsor is outraged with the fact that the others go against his indications. He calls them all moralists because they are focusing on things that could not have been done in a different way. At the end he is accusing them openly and sarcastically about their stance and the fact they have not learn yet how to survive while his speech is going towards a crescendo that at the end is spoken out loudly and angrily.

**The Sponsor:** Come on now!

It's time to stop the moralizations.

Stop talking.

I don't understand. What have you been doing all this time? You have been accumulating information.

You are digging up history to affirm your ideas.

You saw where your ideologies led you.

You have to understand at some point that this is the way the market functions.

Capitalism has proved that it remains the preferable system by the majority of people when they already find themselves in the context capitalism has defined.

Take for instance the example of China.

The financial miracle of China is due to the fact that even the communists understood how the laws of the market work and the value of the enterprise profit.

You live because of the market. If the market stays stable, everything dies, as well as you.

This is given, isn't it? It is part of the history.

War is part of the history.

Injustice is part of the history.

Which is your role in the history?

Mustn't we learn how to survive?

So let's do so because we don't know how to survive.

## 2.5 Subverting political speech

The function of overstatement is again a pattern that is applied in order to undermine this time the political speech in the *City-State*. The handling of the political speech which is presented in the performance by the role of the ethnarch and the prime minister is based on an irrational meaning-making, declaring a complete absurd thought, though coherent according to a rational argumentation.

**The ethnarch:** Together we agreed upon *antiparochi*. I am you. Thus, in simple mathematics, the equation says: you are me. Don't go after beauty. Beauty can be really tiring. I am tired of looking at beautiful things. Europeans have turned their cities into museums. The mirror and the metal offer glory to the city. We must learn what we want. I built a city to be inhabited. To accommodate all the residents. [í ] the issue here is what we want. These are the residencies we want and we want them for all. ð Dwelling is a machine for housingö. Le Corbusier. These are the so called balconies. Balconies arrange with clear lines peoplesø action. The necessity for the human being to live upon another human being is a great necessity. (scene 1)

A surrealistic speech is produced in political announcements accompanied by the humor of a psychiatric obsession.

**The ethnarch:** Listen to what I am telling you: I made once a city that today names a supermarket ðamore<sup>19</sup>, ðpolytechnoð Anna-Maria Kalouta<sup>20</sup>. You can enter, do your shopping and ask: ðWhy is this shop called amore?ö It does maintain memory. I am going to narrate the story of this city.

The rebuilding and reconstruction of Athens accompanied the demolishing of the old buildings that were carrying with them the habits and customs of the natives; the reconstruction of Omonoia sq. (one of the central squares of Athens, along with Syntagma square) happened with the demolition of the old water-spring where the women used to go there to take water for everyday use. This is one of the scenes performed in the seventh chapter. At this point the prime minister intervenes with the above words ðall this must be corrected; Greece changes; it will change. And will change once and for all. We will do the revolution of the self-evident before they all start throwing stones to us. ðThey will all hunt us with stones in the hands<sup>21</sup>ö. Myrtis is talking about the Summit of 1996 when the goods such as the free access to health, education, the water and more, were translated into services and commodities while the prime minister is listening to her with a slight indecision; Myrtis is asking once again for water in exchange of stones that the prime minister awaits for. The sponsor on the other hand works like an enchantress who is trying to seduce him; he takes off his coat and reveals a silver-colored top with sequins, takes the microphone and starts singing, but once again he pretends singing while another famous song is being heard. The

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<sup>19</sup> ðAmoreö theatre was an independent, non institutionalized theatre company that was operating for 17 years and closed down in 2008. Its artistic profile along with its highly appreciated contribution in arts with radical performances made it popular and gained the characterization of a ðhistoricalö theatre. Among other reasons, it closed down also because of the unstable state funding. Today, in its physical position a supermarket of the known supermarketø chain Vasilopoulos has been built and in honor of the theatre there is a label with the name ðAmore storeö.

<sup>20</sup> All these names are theatre buildingsønames in Athens.

<sup>21</sup> This phrase was an abstract from a real speech of the prime minister back in 2010.

family of the prime minister, namely his grandfather Georgios Papandreou and his father Andreas Papandreou, both famous statesmen, is being projected on the back wall and the scene is transformed into a relation between a mother and a baby where the sponsor points at the family of the prime minister encouraging him to go closer while the prime minister is trying to touch the screen as an infant who tries to touch the ones who are being projected, namely his family and himself as a baby in his mother's hands. The ridicule of the prime minister by his own saying but mostly by his stance towards the sponsor and his manipulating power are becoming obvious by the presentation of the prime minister as a caricature.

In chapter thirteenth, the mayor, being played by the Ethnarch, gives a speech regarding the period of December events that coincided with his first service as a mayor and the issue of the national union and reconciliation that was his prime aim. What he did about this was to set up a sculpture as a symbol of this reconciliation's effort. This part of the speech constitutes a clear sarcasm regarding the position of the mayors who, the majority of them, are fully aware to built or change something in the city in order for this to be seen as a deed by the mayor though they are quite inactive, lazy and unaware in doing something substantial for the city's benefit. After this small initiation about the sculpture he feels he has covered the subject and switches to today's situation of the city and its problems. The main issue is the accumulation of flies in Athens and the mayor accuses the immigrants who stay on the streets, the people who protest marching everyday and the parties because of the pre-election's billposting. This text actually belongs to a real interview of the former mayor of the city of Athens in 2010. He moves on with the immigrants and the plan of the concentration camps that is an explicit reference to the current events regarding the issue of the illegal immigration.<sup>22</sup> The issue of the flies becomes the central point of his speech and it is

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<sup>22</sup> The undertaking of the plan of Xenios Zeus is a government's plan to move on to mass arrests of illegal immigrants who are going to stay temporary in military camps. The plan has raised opposition and still remains a controversial issue.

becoming obvious that the speech is full of irrational thought although given in a serious way. "The issue with flies was so dreadful that I had to examine thoroughly the physiology, the social life and the psychology of the fly myself." At the end he discovered that the flies were coming from the feces of the immigrants on a public garden near the Omonoia square<sup>23</sup>. His speech is obviously surrealistic when he is interrupting his own row of thought to share the fact that these feces of the immigrants were at a grocery garden that once had produced the biggest artichoke and all citizens were so proud of their garden. The mayor's speech is being subverted also through the parallel action of the other actors who are bringing different kinds, and irrelevant to each other props, positioning them over the mayor's body or upon his head in a way that transforms him in some kind of crazy and ridiculed man. At the end when he states that they made the immigrants, the homeless and the troublemakers to move away and managed to get rid of the flies, the other actors are performing each of these groups of people that every time change positions while the speech becomes even more sarcastic towards racist beliefs.

**The mayor:** At this point the Athenian citizens helped a lot. And mainly the inhabitants and the ladies of the neighborhood of Saint Panteleimonas and thousands of young girls and boys, in a good fit and shape that later on they signed on in the police force. We made all together a wall. Everyone next to each other. We built the wall of the distance. Namely a distance was created. Athens was cleaned up.

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<sup>23</sup> Omonoia square is one of the two central squares of Athens where the last years has been inhabited (and the neighborhood surrounding it) by mainly immigrant's population and also has become a haunt for drug users.





Fig. 2. The mayor. *City-State* (2011)

## 2.6 The mentally disturbed speech as an undermining process of the political speech

Part of the material used by Kanigunda company was based on a collective volume, published by Maria Fafaliou, *Iera Odos str. 343, Testimonies from Dromokaiteio mental hospital* (1995). The book contains testimonies and literary essays from doctors and inmates. The use of the irrational speech is dominant in the text of *City-State*. The mentally-disturbed speech intensifies the presence of this irrationality and it is functioning as a counter-speech in juxtaposition to the political speech. We wanted to speak about the relationship between politics and citizens. In the meantime we realized that the political speeches being announced every now and then are more irrational than the testimonies given by mental patientsö said Maria Kechagioglou in an interview given in media. This juxtaposition brings to the forefront the process of highlighting both speeches from the otherø presence and questioning which one of the two acquires more rational argumentations. In the fourth chapter, Myrtis is asking for water and persistently repeats that she feels thirsty although the ethnarch, the woman in the wrong clothes and the woman with the soil are afraid of helping her out by giving her

water. The whole dialogue is structured upon the disagreement and miscommunication between Myrtis who is thirsty and asks "where did the waters go?" and the prime minister, who is not responding directly and prevaricates. Myrtis speaks out a poem written by an inmate in the Dromokaiteio Psychiatric Hospital that carries a clear reference to the political situation and the role of the statesmen.

**Myrtis:** Will you give me some water? I am thirsty because in 430 B.C. there was plague in Athens and thirst. Fifty thousand people died including me. [í ]

**Prime minister:** Don't be afraid. People were burying each other but things are going wonderful now.

**Myrtis:** Things are not going well. Many people from us died outside their houses, close to the wells because the disease had the symptoms of feeling thirsty. I died out of thirst. Where did the waters go?

**Prime Minister:** Which waters?

**Myrtis:** Are you making a fool out of me?

You don't know what the waters are?

Why did you build up the "Geraniö" spring?

(to the audience) He doesn't understand what I am asking.

Will you give me some water? I am thirsty.

**Prime minister:** What is the "geraniö" spring?

**Myrtis:** It is obvious that you understand. It is obvious that you pretend you don't understand. It is obvious that you are making a fool out of me. I don't want to look into your eyes anymore. Things are not going well. He has guilty eyes. Hidden words you should guess. . . Guilty eyes, hidden words that you cannot make a guess, they plan the

future out of nothing, they become thieves and bosses, they want slaves and servants,  
they are thieves and they call us thieves, they are morons and call us morons. . .

The allegory is a form that is being applied to comment on the policy and tactics of the power holders as well the reaction and revolt on behalf of the power-receivers. In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter the woman with the soil is narrating an allegory of the coastal donkey. This story is about the coastal donkey and the mountainous donkey where the difference lies in the fact that the first one is used in carrying tourists and going on tour along the area and posing in photographs where the second one is used to carry timber products and raw materials that are really heavy. The main story told by the woman with the soil is that during the ancient times the coastal donkey was in reign and that it was very strict with the other donkeys by forcing them, first and foremost, to wear a saddle. After many years of mishandle the donkeys decided to revolt. They had nothing to lose. The allegory implies the question of revolt in a complete hopeless stage of life and creates parallelisms to the current state of citizens' revolt and uprising.

**The woman with the soil:** Because their backbones were cracking into two

And their feet were full of wounds

And their bones were smashed

And their tongue was dry from being thirsty

And their lungs and hearts were swelled

And they had bruises because of the cold and the poverty and the  
mockery

And there was nothing left to eat apart from thistles

And they had nothing else to defend for apart from their own skin

And they couldn't stand it anymore<sup>24</sup>

## 2.7 The capitalistic speech

The role of the sponsor is the representation of the capital which in the performance is presented as the only ruling value. A variety of performative aspects demonstrates even the physical superiority of the sponsor. At the beginning of the performance, the sponsor is stretching his body while the prime minister, the identity of whom is not known yet, enters the stage and offers him help as if he was his personal trainer. The relationship between the sponsor and the prime minister is the one that manifests the superiority of the capitalist speech over the political during the whole play where the sponsor exercises a seductive manipulation over the prime minister. It is the only role that seems untouchable by the undermining process even though at times small spastic movements of his facial expressions demonstrate a mental disturbance. He keeps calm and distanced from the discourses being deployed throughout the play and retains an apathy towards the loaded with feelings participants. The sponsor continues with the revelation of his identity in the fourteenth chapter; he is Michalis Christoforakos from Siemens scandal (see chap. 2.3), the executive director in Siemens Greece who after the scandal run away to Germany and managed to get exculpated by paying a small amount of money with the accusation of synergy. Christoforakos had become a joke-subject for so long because of the fact that the police could never arrest him and is now believed that this was a rescue plan. His speech reveals a cynicism and sarcasm towards the Greek authorities and the Greek people who never managed to arrest him.

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<sup>24</sup> The abstract with the allegory is taken from a published edition of a Greek writer, Giorgos Vasilakos, *Stories with thoughtful lessons*.

**The sponsor:** Politics is a useless mediator between you and me. The same as the elections.

Now that I am talking to you I am already far away from you.

I am redeemed.

I left from this city disgusted.

Now I live far from Athens,

In cities of Germany

Full of parks,

Trees,

Breathing spaces,

Children's gardens,

Here beauty is everywhere.

It is around us and comes inside us as well.

The performance is a present from me!

A donation!

These are his last words and then leaves to return in the end, the last chapter, where he is going to speak out an abstract from the real testimony of Michalis Christoforakos to the public prosecutor of Munich, Baumler-Hosl in July, 6 2009 which was published in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* in May, 25 2010:

**The sponsor:** I want to explain to you how the so called system of influence functions for so many years in relation to the funding between parties in Greece. [í ] Parties have these systems and know where and which lever must be in use every time. [í ] the party knows in which way a man can have an influence in the decision-making. [í ] the employees know exactly what decision to make when they receive a call from the party's politicians or the ministers. If

they don't behave accordingly, as the politicians wish, their career will be driven very fast in a dead end. [i ] the parties were kept asking for money till 2007.

The above abstract in the play was sustained without any change from the original speech, stretching in this way the irrationality of the speech itself, that has to be heard without any performative interference or undermining contextualization.

At the end of the performance each one of the actors will start entering one by one the light-spotted circle in front of the curtain and speak some words as the last appearance of the show, a familiar tactic in revue performances. The woman with the soil speaks about the persistence of the Athenians to learn about their past and discover their roots by building museums. Instead of looking up and out they look inside and down, namely they are introvert and they recycle themselves, their glorious ancient history. After she disappears the ethnarch enters and talks about the new Athens and his name that will pass after his death to eternity demonstrating once again the political statues of narcissism and vanity. The prime minister enters with a flower in his hand, showing in what extend he was not prepared to become a prime minister; he starts always with the same phrase: "I am the prime minister. A doctor forever" and states that he is leaving on vacation after all these unfolding events. Before he leaves he speaks out the famous phrase, "we ate them [the money] together," a provocative statement of the co-president of Papandreou's government, Theodoros Pagalos when he answered to a question about the money loss. At the end he leaves by saying that he governs a corrupted country. In the meantime, the woman in the wrong clothes has already entered the lighted circle with the Greek flag around her neck just like a superhero that intervenes once in a while by turning her head to the audience and commenting. She starts a speech without cohesion; the main subject is her participation in the guerilla movement during the German occupation after which she was committed to a mental hospital; her speech is full of accusations against politics and politicians. After her speech, the curtain rises and a song is

sung by the woman with the soil, though it is not her voice but a singer's voice. Myrtis is narrating people's need, their need especially, to come together and breathe each other's air while the woman with the soil is coming to the front of the stage and starts speaking about the first day she came to Athens when none was there; everybody was at war. The performance ends with the woman's voice admiring the Athenian light with the lights off.

## **2.8 Perception of the performance by the critics**

The performance took place during April and May of 2011 and was repeated in October of the same year. Almost a year and a half later it took part in the program of the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris together with other two performances by Greek artists in the context of the festival Chantiers d'Europe and was presented on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of June of 2012. The performance's participation in the festival was part of the collaboration of the Onassis Cultural Centre (where the performance was first presented) and the Théâtre de la Ville. The three different historical moments and the two different geographical locations explicitly influenced the perception of the performance by critics and audience and are regarded of crucial importance in the assessment's process of the reviews written about it. As it was already noticed, spring of 2011 was the period before the massive revolts while in October of 2011 the events were on the peak of the political turmoil as the then prime minister George Papandreou resigned a month later, on 11<sup>th</sup> November of 2011. A few months later and while Greece was experiencing the practices of the interim coalition government, the performance was presented in France, exactly two days before the national elections of Greece on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, and with all the international media focused on the debate between the right-wing party of Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) and the left-wing party of SYRIZA. For all the above conditions the review's perception must be examined divided and in accordance to those three different periods and in respect to the respective political and social conditions.

Regarding the first cycle of the performance's presentation it seems as if a big part of the Greek critics did not manage to consider thoroughly not only the actual aims of the performance but even more to assess the production's process, the theatrical and non theatrical tools it employed along with the ideological axes on which it was based. What can be assessed out of twelve reviews that I managed to gather from the press as well as the e-press is that the majority of the critics were more oriented towards the aesthetic means the performance employed rather than the political critique; namely, the devised process, the loans from the revue and the documentary-like approach in combination with sarcasm and humor. Oriented towards this direction the main debate was formed around the idea of whether or not the performance managed to accomplish this *ōbetō* of a post-dramatic theatre play. Although this effort to engage a dialogue with the current issues was recognized by all reviewers, the majority of them left this issue unexploited and without going any deeper in the way this narrative was being communicated. Moreover, a persistence on some kind of fixed, regulated artistic forms and aesthetics according which the performance failed to meet the standards, were also the main argument of some of the reviews.

‘History and Injustice’, ‘The memorandum became a revue’, ‘With the humor as a weapon’, ‘Cabaret Hellas’, ‘A politico-social cabaret of Athens’ and ‘A political performance for the city’ are some indicative titles of the reviews. Even though the political critique of the performance is demonstrated in these titles, the reviews seem to have exhausted this issue in their titles or in the description of the play in the first paragraph by putting more weight on the aesthetic aspects of the performance. One of the most illustrative comments of this misperception of the performance is drawn out here in the most extreme cases. One of the reviewers starts with a correlation between the Kanigunda's performance and Marcel Duchamp's ‘readymades’. He actually argues that the impact of the first comes as a consequence of the second's artistic practices for the main reason that it tried to mingle and



intertwine the theatrical process with issues attached to philosophy, semiotics and linguistics. Another review affirms the obsession with the dramaturgical accuracy: 'there is a clear point of mishandle of the dramaturgical material and the performance's time. The performance says too much and it is at loss with the long scenes with no specific reason that destroys the cohesive tissue of the narrative'. (review by Louiza Arkoumanea, *To Vima*)

Some other critics saw in the performance some kind of an alternative way of denouncement than the one that was being going on on the streets. 'It was, to my opinion, the most substantial political intervention the Greek theatre did in our days, maybe not that collective but more effective than some of the protests gathering[í ]the company managed to compose it[all the heterogeneous material] and to hit directly its goal- the state of the political life of this land.' 'A performance, staged at the beginning of May, foresaw the actuality and the events that were to happen a bit later in this land' 'It is about a peculiar and multi-way performance that plays with the form of the revue but at the same time undermines it.' (review by Yorgos Sarigiannis, *TA NEA*)

Four months later and the media were dedicating some lines urging the audience not to miss out the performance of *City-State*, those of them who considered it as a contemporary theatre masterpiece while repeating some of their already written previous comments. One of the reviews of the October-term repetition of the performance was focusing on the historical accuracy of the theatre-piece and was actually advising the theatre companies that would like to deal with history to hire a scientific consultant. 'A scenario-agglutination of many and diverse texts that presents a lack of consistency and a thematic core [í ] this is a usual phenomenon of today's theatre: namely to use historical information incorporated in some scenes of theatrical plays in order to attribute maybe a more powerful entity in the performance's opinion or just to steal the attention of spectators who don't acquire a great deal of historical education.' The reviewer's misperception of the performance is once again

obvious by the fact that the issue of negation of expropriating land in the ancient city-state was perceived in a literal way, and considered as a contradiction of the performance, although the performance almost praises the determination of the Greek cities never to assign part of their land to the foreigners on the other hand it accuses the current nationalists for their behavior towards immigrants. (review by Yorgos Smyrnis, *monopoli.gr*)

Eight months passed before the performance was presented again, now in the context of a show-case of the contemporary Greek theatre in the festival of the Théâtre de la Ville, a well known and prestigious venue that is usually hosting the newest trends of the international scene. During the period that started from the beginning of the summer of 2011 till the spring of 2012 a lot had changed in the political life of Greece but also much more had changed as regards to the country's profile in the international media. From the end of May, 2011 organized and massive demonstrations started as mentioned above (chapter 2.3) and continued throughout the summer and autumn 2011; one of the biggest protests full of indignation, rage and violence took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, a day before the ratification of the medium-term fiscal strategy. The social turmoil was all the more growing and the international lights were now turned towards the social conditions of a country that was on fire. It is not my role here to go more deeply into this research but for sure the result of all these, also in accordance with the financial uneasiness of other European countries at this point, drew the attention to the national social environment. The support that was growing for the Greek people kept going on, the peak of which came to be the 28<sup>th</sup> day of February 2012, "The International day of Action" or the "Solidarity Protest" as is more usual to refer to, under the slogan "We are all Greeks!"

Under this atmosphere the performance was presented in the Parisian audience just two days before the national elections in Greece. For this reason, the connection in the reviews of the upcoming elections with the performance and especially in the context of the

presentation of the Greek contemporary theatre, together with the other two performances the connected threat of which is the current Greek actuality that opens a discussion with the anxiety and the sociopolitical impasses of Europe<sup>25</sup> is more than plausible. The performance tries to understand how they [the Greeks] got there. Democracy is in question. The Greeks will vote. The people will decide. [í ] The people will confirm the rejection of austerity. We will find out tomorrow. Another review prompts the French people to visit the performance to hear the truth in person in order to substitute the fear spread out by the social media, Good evening, Greece! Tired of the scarecrow that the mainstream media stirs for a few weeks talking about Greece? Go see *Polis-Kratos*! [City-State] [í ] the friction between documentary and fiction, Kanigunda presents a Greek tragedy with hints of farce and satire. Greece in its broken mirror is reflected to us.

From what has been posed here what can be easily noticed is flexibility in critics' perception to reflect on the performance's achievements and aspirations always in respect to what is happening at the moment trying to make some meaning out of it. At the end, the effort to draw an explanation from all these events with the eyes turned always to the current situation, it is a matter of socio-political context when it comes to critique, at least while this is applied to an assessment of a review.

## 2.9 Conclusions

The critique of *City-State* is oriented towards the share of responsibility modern Greece has in the current unfolding crisis. The inner speculation of the past domestic national events and their societal impact is manifesting this choice. By making historical parallelisms, with regards to the ancient city-state and its essential political characteristics, namely independency, autonomy and autarchy, by manifesting this ancient past-loving of the Greeks

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<sup>25</sup> The quote is taken from the press release of the Onasis Cultural Centre that was the organizer of the performance's participation in the French festival.

for the Greeks, the performance brings to the surface the national collective pride and complexes at the same time and subverts them totally. The interest focuses on the current situation as an effect and implication generated in the societal field and the national collective unconscious from the mainstream national policy rather than the games played in the European external politics and finances. The outcome of this imperative need was concerned to develop some kind of a collective narrative that would articulate an answer to the question "what drove things in the current condition?" In the core of its critique, *City-State* is placing the way Greece proceeded towards an evolution to a capitalist society and its alignment to the respective developed European societies; in terms of urban planning, the policy towards migration issues etc. In fact, it is a text written carefully about the path Greece followed towards capitalism, profiteering and plutocracy. The political decisions, the adjustments of these decisions to the specific societal context and its impact to citizens, through a sociological and psychological perspective are depicted magnified to overstate the hastily evolution of the nation.

The way to realize this attempt consists of a variety of theatrical and non theatrical tools and forms what constitutes the aesthetics of this critical attitude. Integral parts of the revue, the talk-show, the documentary, are mixed to create the performance's form. The undermining process is the main ideological tool to exercise its critique. For this, the domestic politics, the post-modern collective unconscious as an evolutionary societal process are undermined through the function of self-identification and overstatement, irony and sarcasm, the use of allegory and the juxtaposition of a mentally disturbed speech. This multi-layered performance in terms of meaning-making created by a combination of all these ideological and aesthetic tools, is giving the freedom to the audience to create its own correlations and connections. It asks them to put a great intellectual effort, since nothing is given, to articulate their own stance towards the events.

Concluding, what can be stated here, as a key-point that later on will be elaborated on the conclusions, is a route to look back in the past, thoroughly, with historical accuracy and with the historical documents as a tool, in order to explain, assess and reflect critically on the contemporary society. To my personal understanding this form of critique does not move far from the conceptualization of crisis within a philosophy of history nor from a conceptualization of a crisis of the capitalist system of political, financial and societal organization. These critical ideological axes seem to reflect back to the evaluation of Koselleck and Habermas on the conceptualization of crisis and will be discussed in combination with the analysis of *Yasou Aida!*

### 3. *Yasou Aida!*

#### 3.1 The Background

On May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2010 one of the biggest strikes took place in Greece against the first wave of fiscal cuts. During the collisions three bank employees died from suffocation in their working place, Marfin Bank, when a petrol bomb was thrown inside the building. The news spread all around Europe and media lights were all turned to the Greek social situation. This incident was the motive for the music-theatre company Neuk lner Oper in Berlin to be concerned about the social unrest in the core of crisis.

It was that moment that we decided to go to Greece; we wanted to do something about this, to meet people, to make an opera together regarding this situation. The current crisis is not only Greece's matter. Greek problems do exist but it goes even further than that. What is happening right now is a sad, dangerous and inflated chapter of the European history and we wanted to make a production about this. (interview on *Antapokrites*, a TV broadcast for ERT, the National Greek Television)

Bernhard Glocksın, artistic director of the theatre, described the motive that activated the opera's reaction, declaring that it was a condition above and beyond the financial crisis and the relationships between the two countries but an extreme, unprecedented social phenomenon within the European Union. Neuk lner Oper<sup>26</sup>, a low-budget music-theatre company contacted the Greek music-theatre director Alexandros Efklidis. Efklidis proposed to NO to work together with The Beggar's Opera<sup>27</sup>, also a low-budget music-theatre company based in Athens. The similarities these companies share can be epitomized in the de-contextualization of music-theatre from the existing forms of institutionalized music-theatre (different in each country) by creating a work more closely engaged to the social actuality and contemporary artistic tendencies, whether this is interpreted in ideological approaches,

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<sup>26</sup> In Neuk lner Oper's directorial team participates Bernhard Glocksın, artistic director, Andreas Altenhof, management and marketing position and Laura Hörold, financial management.

<sup>27</sup> The Beggar's Opera consists of Charalampos Goyos, musician and music composer, Constantinos Zamanis, scene and costume designer and Dimitris Dimopoulos, translator, producer and stand-up comedian.

artistic forms or choices regarding performances, venues or tickets, prices. Efklidis is also a director with an alternative approach to the opera and concerned with the political interpretation of repertory or modern operas. The Neuköllner Oper is located in a small space, a former ballroom, re-shaped into theatre in the neighborhood of Neukölln, an area inhabited mainly by immigrants and especially Turks. The Opera's audience mainly consists of people from the area, and has a low price ticket policy. Given in short the main points of the companies and artists, what can be said is that they re-orient, reform and rejuvenate the performing practices in many ways and by various means, theatrical and non theatrical, and they engage with contemporary societal issues.

### 3.2 The performance

In the beginning of 2012 one of the most radical, in terms of engagement with actuality, performances was produced by the collaboration of the German and Greek artists. *Yasou Aida!* was presented in Berlin with a cast of five singers from Germany and five from Greece. "Das Stück zum Staatsbankrott "Yasou Aida" [The piece of national bankruptcy "Yasou Aida"] (*tip-Berlin*), "Ausverkauf in der Euro-Zone" [Sell off in the Euro-zone] (*Der Tagesspiegel*), "YASOU AIDA. Die Krise geht in die Oper" [The crisis goes to opera] (*Berliner Zeitung*) were some of the reviews' titles. Most of the reviews tried to approach both the performance and the situation presented by focusing a lot on the Greek artists' perspective regarding the situation in their country. Often the reviews commented on the actual state of Greek artists and institutions.

The performance was an adaptation of the famous opera *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi; the main subject, borrowed freely from the original, upon which the new play was structured, was the relationship between colonizers and colonized. The performance time is the present and the place is the European Central Bank where Elpida, an immigrant from Greece (the enslaved princess Aida of Verdi's original), is working as an intern. In the first scene of

*Yasou Aida!* a work meeting is held regarding the situation in Greece; the Boss, listens to the report of an envoy to Greece presenting the latest data of the fiscal situation. The envoy announces that the public opinion in Greece has turned against the aid package and that there are voices suggesting state bankruptcy and exit from the common currency. The working group rejects unequivocally this scenario and activates the fiscal consolidation plan *õGuerra e morteõ* (*õWar and deathõ*). As most suitable for the enforcing of the plan, the working group chooses the young and promising Rainer Mess, one of the rapidly-rising top executives, who holds a secret affair with Elpida, but also with Anna Riche, the head of his department.

The Greek delegation, which is led by the minister Manos Stavrou, is expected to join the Bank's General Assembly in order to discuss the new measures that have to be taken. During this discussion Rainer's gradual realization that the technocratic approach to the economic crisis involves immeasurable social consequences, comes to the fore. Being convinced that the ECB's program is not working in the right direction to help Greece to overcome the crisis, he is being accused as a traitor that goes against the interests of the bank. He stands a trial that finds him guilty as he refuses to defend himself. On the other hand, Elpida has transformed into a real ECB member by realizing that she must forget about her country, stop being sentimental and try to earn her life that to her, is now in the ECB where she is being offered Rainer's position.

The original Verdi's opera, written in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, explicitly presents the colonial relationships between Egyptians and Ethiopians. The creators of *Yasou Aida!* perceived the current situation as a post-colonial one, not mainly by the current state of political and financial affairs between Europe (and mainly Germany) and Greece but foremost by the manifestation of a stereotypical discourse produced in the social sphere. As Efklidis states:

The original *Aida* is a product of the late colonial world and transposes some of the themes of the colonial era to the collision between Egyptians and Ethiopians. In the current condition of the European



Union, a neo-colonial condition begins to be formed where two different populations, that till yesterday were partners in a supposed union with the aspiration to become a real political, financial and social union, are starting to develop a relationship between masters and subalterns. This doesn't mean that we would like to transfer accurately the relation between Ethiopians and Egyptians in the current situation, this would be extremely simplistic and it doesn't respond to the reality. What we try to do is to show the power of the stereotypical discourse; in what ways the stereotypes from a marginal discourse are coming to the core of the political decisions and in a decisive way affect, sometimes, the European policy. (interview on *Antapokrites*, a TV broadcast for the National Greek Television)

### 3.3 Subverting the stereotypes

The performance undertakes a critique of the current state of affairs by using subversion as its main critical tool; thus, the stereotypical discourse, in the social sphere and the political field, is being presented through an undermining process, sometimes obvious some other times implicitly imposed. This process is applied, and mainly expressed through linguistic games but also performative tools, like the use of allegoric or secondary actions; sarcastic transcriptions and re-contextualization of affairs as well as complete inversions of events with regards to the original play but also to a common public opinion.

Elpida, whose name means -hope in Greek, is migrating with the hope of a better future. In the second scene she narrates her life back in Greece and her ambiguous feelings. She is singing along, reproducing all the stereotypical ideologies regarding migration in Greeks thought: the beauties and the advantages of her country but at the same time about the corruption of the people and institutions; the country that pushes the young native people abroad to find jobs when the people who left behind become full of misery when they can't find a decent job or they have to employ a whole social and political network to do so. She doubts the possibility that her country will ever change, given how thoughtlessly it has scattered its potential and chances.

**Elpida:** What a country! It hurts you

Even when you're away from it

I was a straight-A student  
With scholarships  
But what about a job? Bollocks!  
They said òlet someone helpö I didn't want to  
To be pitied  
By aunts, by relatives, by all these beasts  
Those who stay there are eaten by the ground  
Let them flee, what are they waiting for?  
Get away!  
Get away?  
Get away, while there is still time  
There! Don't feel any guilt!  
Isn't it a shame  
For young people to live in a tomb?  
Those who have to offer  
Just rot there  
When they go abroad, they bloom  
A plant in a little flower-pot  
Can it stay there forever?  
Ah! Leaving your roots hurts, it hurts  
And the flower-pot never leaves you  
Heritages, histories and glories  
I don't want to carry those. And I can't  
Live buried in the debts of others  
That I'm not in a position to pay for  
No, I know what I left behind:  
A self-destructive country  
I don't want to live in its decay  
Even though it is the most beautiful country there is

The other Greek role in the play is Manos Stavrou, presented stereotypically as the corrupted politician who performs the wooden political speech full of ambiguities and vagueness. His speech to the general assembly is a spoken comical interlude, with a strong Greek accent:

**Manos:** Thank you, thank you.

All of you know of the troubles my homeland is facing, and most of you know of the sacrifices we all have to keep on making, so that these problems are solved.

We bestowed our trust and faith on our allies' knowhow and help, and I am pleased to inform you that all the plans proposed are in full swing.

It is a hard path we travel on, but just like Hercules, we know that it is the road that is full of obstacles and dangers that will lead us to a safer place, and not the care-free looking short-cut.

Our efforts are titanic, but have been so carefully observed and augmented by Rainer Mess, whose strives and actions were so overwhelming that one could easily assume he was working to save his own country.

To us, he is also a Greek.

Rainer, you are also a Greek.

The ECB, namely the capital, is presented as the new religion of the contemporary world; this is highlighted and subverted with the use of the counterpoint function between the ECB community and the Christian community. Ramphis is a high priest of Isis in the Verdean *Aida*. His role in *Yasou Aida!* was retained and became Krista, a priestess who conducts the secret "religious" ritual held by all the head members; dressed with a huge

ōeuroö hat around her head begins to mumble the anthem of the ritual by showing her teeth. The anthem is the chant written by Mathew or else ōOur Fatherö, with changed words to depict the devotion to the capital:

**Krista:** Our Euro in heaven,

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Peace in credit

Give us today our daily interest.

Forgive us our sins

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power

and the glory are yours

now and forever.

Amen.



Fig. 3. Krista, the priestess. *Yasou Aida!* (2012)

The ritual of the E.U. committee is a clear comment regarding the holiness through which the E.U. perceives the conservation and maintenance of the financial balance and political stability between the E.U. countries and is repeated in every scene of the ECB members underpinning the religious character. All the European countries must commit themselves and work for the prosperity and for the sake of unity and uniformity of the international community that the same time is presented as the guardian of all, from whom they will be protected by exterior menaces; where the poor and the helpless will find a shelter.

**All:** Unity in diversity  
Strength in accumulation  
Of each and every nation

Under a single song  
Europe, Europe, Europe  
Europe, you're up!  
You're up, you're up, you're up  
One simple choice, one single voice  
Europe, you're up!  
Under a single flag  
Enriched by different cultures  
Embracing all traditions  
Creating the conditions  
For everyone to thrive  
In peace and productivity  
To work, live long and prosper  
Obedient and proper  
Building a safer hive  
Guarding our borders from menaces  
Protecting the weak and the helpless  
Shielding the pure from the shameless  
Building a home for all

Like a mother, the ECB will also punish the children who paid no respect and tried to deceive and cheat, in order to bring them back on the right track but also to give the good example to the rest. The third scene is a didactic school feast where the little bad pig is punished after having done his self-criticism. The party's subject is the fairytale "The five pigs and the rights of the loaners" where the necessity for sacrifice of the weaker countries to the altar of the financial system is endorsed. They all enter the stage carrying in their hands one of the performers who represents the bad pig of the E.U; they lay him upon a small platform and give him the school poem forcing him to recite it in front of a microphone while the others in

the role of the audience are clapping happily. The boss of the bank, here in the role of the compere, prefaces the school party:

**The boss:** Once upon a time, there lived five little pigs,  
named Escudo, Lira, Punt, Drachme and Peseta.  
They were all lazy and dirty.  
Still, they wanted to live  
with the nice, white sheep in the Euro-barn.  
It is the history of the little Drachme  
that we want to tell you:  
and the schoolboy speaks the poem:

**Drachme (pig):** I am the little Drachme  
I am a naughty pig  
Here's the Euro-barn  
I wasn't allowed to enter  
I needed documents  
I falsified them  
So that the strict farmer  
Would let me in  
I now live with the sheep  
In our EU-home  
They are truly nice and friendly  
They even lent me money  
We piggies have a sweet-tooth for money  
Sheep like interest  
But, money and interest, I ate them  
Yes, I behaved badly  
The sheep want to punish me  
And rightly so  
They now are my masters, and I  
I am their servant

The sheep want to eat  
So now, I have to sacrifice myself  
Careful, fellow-piggies  
Punishment is not far



Fig. 4. Drachme, the pig. *Yasou Aida!* (2012)

At the end of the party, the rest who represent the audience but are actually the others in the -Euro-barnø slaughter the pig and they close the ritual with a religious chant.

The fourth scene is taking place in the beauty spa of the ECB. Anna is treating herself by a team of beauticians. It is the time when Rainer is expected to return from his trip to Greece. Elpida also enters the spa, and Anna decides to take information whether she is really sexually involved with Rainer.

**Anna:** There she comes!  
Elpida comes, stop bitching about.  
Yes, she's so industrious,  
still she's just a GreekYeap,  
she's so industrious,



still she's also a woman

When Elpida falls in the trap and their affair is revealed Anna comments:

**Anna:** How Greek, to take what's not yours!

You can have him, if you can keep him

Anna is satisfied with that and pays for the manicure, since Elpida has no money!

### 3.4 Addressing and subverting the national collective narrative

*Yasou Aida!* places in the heart of its subverting trajectory the collective narrative of the Greek past. The idea of the Greeks as the descendants of one of the oldest civilizations, the homeland of Socrates and Aristotle, is not only the prevailing mainstream official narrative of both natives and foreigners. It is also a product that has been projected, exploited and merchandised for national and international, touristic and non touristic purposes. This narcissistic and self-loving attitude of the national narrative from the Greek's perspective is becoming a trap in the national conscience that oppresses Elpida. In the second scene Elpida is left alone singing about her *ōtombö*, her country, opening one by one the cupboards behind her where she finds all the touristic attractions of her homeland; Pericles's statue, a *ōtsoliasö* miniature, a bottle of ouzo, that represent the stereotypical image of Greece in the eyes of the German audience, for which the performance was conceived.

**Elpida:** Heritages, histories and glories

I don't want to carry those. And I can't

Live buried in the debts of others

That I'm not in a position to pay for

No, I know what I left behind:

A self-destructive country

I don't want to live in its decay

Even though it is the most beautiful country there is

I am who I am, I am here.

I want to see what will happen  
 I can't wait, I am anxious  
 I feel I'm living for the first time

The glorious national past is coming once again to the fore in order to validate the new dawn of the modern Greek world; The eighth scene opens with the projection of Elpidia's computer screen. She tries to write the twelfth review of the "Economic Program of the Greece's debt reformation". Three of the musicians have moved from the orchestra on stage and are also sitting on some of the desks that now have a Greek flag miniature at one of the corners and are playing Verdi's music with Greek traditional instruments. Offstage, the continuation of the bureaucratic celebration is being heard where the drunken participants are singing a Greek old song. She re-watches some spots from the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games 2004 in Athens, the time when everyone believed that Greece was near to reclaim something from its past grandeur. She reminisces the past and the good, glorious days that were promising a brilliant future for the country and of course, herself. She sings alone and doubts if she will ever experience such glorious moments like those back in 2004. The above scene is designed to hit ironically of course straight to the heart of the collective national consciousness. To contextualize this it should be reminded that in 2001 Greece celebrated its entrance in the zone of the European single currency and this was enough to declare a promiscuous future similar to this of many European countries. The next four years the country came over a period of national trance which reached its peak in 2004 with the Olympic Games. The opening ceremony itself can confirm this national pride of the past while the opening performance was a representation of the national or better nationalistic narrative; the Aegean sea, sailors, the sunny weather, the twelve Olympian gods, all accompanied by the traditional sounds of the lyre and bouzouki, namely all the key-references of the myth of the historical continuity of the Greek Nation. The same year the

national football team won for the first time in history the UEFA European Football Championship and this was accompanied by the next year's winning the Eurovision Song Contest. Greeks were seeing themselves with unprecedented national confidence, based on symbolic as well as illusory cultural battles that it was to collapse a couple of years later. Elpida, in this context is singing on the music of the famous Nile aria "O patria mia" (Oh, my homeland) her aria, full of the stereotypes of the Greek petite-bourgeoisie:

**Elpida:** Will I be entitled to such a country again?

Never! Never again

(ELPIDA)

Blue light, seas and skies of mine

I long for summers lost

Dreamlike memories of my life

Will I be entitled to such a land?

Will I ever be entitled to such a country again?

To such a country

Will I be entitled to such a country again?

Never... Never again

Such a country, full of beauties

Full of gifts, why is it slowly dying?

Still, sometime, someone will do something

And the country will once again rise

It will resurrect again

It shall rise again

Rise again, it shall

Oh, seeing such a country

Will I ever be entitled to?

This is the song Elpida sings while watching the O.G. with grief and reminiscing the great past times; for all the above reasons this scene is a very much controversial scene. The

ambiguity lies in the function of self-identification that in this case is becoming a subverted self-identification. Personally, I witnessed the audience being really touched and indentifying with Elpida by watching the glorious past that was working in a double function; the historical foretime of the Greeks as this was performed in the O.G. of 2004 and the year of 2004, a year of wealth and superiority. For many people what was being communicated at this point of the performance was the didactic message of how messy things are in the present moment after a great historical point of grandiosity and everybody had just to weave his head in an affirmative way. A deeper level of thought and speculation could reveal to some other the humbleness of feelings of those who (like Elpida) are thinking of these times as indeed a great part of the nation's history that now is gone forever. This ambiguity is highlighted in some critiques while in some others leads to misconceptions that reaffirm the ambiguity. The first, written in February of 2011 was from a Greek critic who travelled to Berlin to watch the performance and commented on this scene, "The German audience- an audience really enthusiastic [í ] considers as justified and self-evident the fact of Elpida being emotional when she is thinking her homeland while watching spots from the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Athens. For the Greeks, on the other hand, it will be probably easier to understand the self-sarcasm" (A Greek version of Verdi's opera staged with success in Berlin, *TA NEA*). Unfortunately, he was disconfirmed some months later when another critic fell in this trap. "Yes, at the end, the performance of Yasou Aida was aiming the "affect" of the audience, sometimes in the same way that the men in politics address the people; with the presence of emotions and the absence of rationalism. That is why the most emotionally loaded moment of the performance was when spots from the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in 2004 were projected. Glory VS poverty" (Review by Olga Sella, *Kathimerini*)

In the scene after the projection of the O.G., Manos Stavrou is leaving the party and enters the stage while flirting with Krista; as he sees Elpida gives up the girl and greets Elpida cordially. This scene in the original *Aida* is between Aida and her father, yet in *Yasou Aida!* it is transposed into the field of political paternalism. He starts with his usual wooden discourse regarding the vision of a country that, in spite of all difficulties, always manages to survive and shine. Elpida rejects his sayings and stands against both the sterile idolization of ancient glories, and contemporary lawlessness, which makes life there unbearable. Stavrou consults Elpida to be more pragmatic and flexible but she, on the other hand, accuses politicians for the current national mess and crystallizes the model of the people who believed in the words of the politicians before the elections. The romanticized idea about a whole reformation of things that would come from someone who would have the will to change the current state of affairs regarding the common good is another stereotypical feature that Elpida presents. The pragmatic Stavrou and the idealistic Elpida are unable to agree on what should be done while the whole scene is a representation of the stereotypical collisions in the prevailing political discourse in Greece.

**Manos:** It's me, I greet you, fellow-greek

You honor the fatherland

Honor to all ex-pats

that even away from the country

strive and bring glory to our Greece

Congrats, I admire you, you are the future

.....

Two strangers,

when they meet abroad, talk as friends

They laugh and cry together, like buddies

Don't forget: our people when united

Conquer all battles

**Elpida:** I don't forget: our people when united

Conquer all battles

**Manos:** The time of comradeship has come again

Hand in hand, we shall be saved

**Elpida:** How long can we go on

comforted by the past?

If one does not demolish, how can one build?

How can one build

on ruins and illegally constructed buildings?

**Manos:** Remember

Don't act like those know-it-all types

That question the status-quo

You are so young

You should water your wine (Greek proverb)

### **3.5 Subverting the established policy**

The undermining process of the performance goes further against the established political procedures that supposedly protect democracy and transparency. Using intentionally overstatements that in the most obvious way unveil that what is on the surface is just a fake procedure falsifying the democratic rules while everything is prescribed to follow an already taken decision. This overstatement is manifested in the pseudo-participation of the audience. In the sixth scene Krista, who impersonates the mediator of the discussion between Manos Stavrou and the press, introduces press-representatives that she discerns randomly from the

audience and gives them already prepared questions. Stavrou's answers include all the stereotypes that everybody expects him to say: that Greece accepts the responsibility for the low point it has reached, that it is trying hard to come back on the right track, and that allegations that Greece considers selling its national assets (the islands, the Acropolis) are populist fictions. At some point the performance is interrupted by a voice, like this of the stage-manager, announcing that now is the time for the audience to experience the real democracy and continues:

**Stage-manager:** Dear audience, you will now get the chance

to experience direct democracy.

All of you sitting on the left

-you think it's right, but it is left-

You are the Feelingists.

You stand for empathy, humanity and right.

You will cry out together,

when the soprano signals you.

Let's try it.

[the audience shouts]

Thank you.

All of you sitting on the right

-you think it's left, but it is right-

You are the Reasonists.

You stand for logic, rationalism and right.

You will cry out together,

when the alto signals you.

Let's try it.

[the audience shouts]

Thank you.

Let's all try it now.

[both sides of the audience shouts their words repeatedly]

All sides are right.

This is a tragedy.

This is democracy.

The above words together, namely *öwe ate it togetherö* is reference to a famous statement of the ex vice-president of the government, Theodoros Pagalos; this same phrase appears also in *City- State*.

A bit later, in the thirteenth scene, Rainer stands on trial and the jury is giving him the chance to defend himself. Krista enters with the wheel of fortune, from the famous TV show, on which all the possible decisions regarding Rainer are written. The choices are all the same, -bankruptcyø written in all European languages. Everybody is in a hurry to judge him but Krista, who is there to secure the democratic procedures is prompting them to be patient. After the third call of Rainer who does not respond, it is about time to take a decision. For the sake of the democratic process a ballot will take place.

**Krista:** Dear members of the investigation committee

You now have to vote with these balls

Red means ötraitorö and blue means öinnocentö

Once you decided

I will bring the ballot

The voting begins, but only then

Democracy rules here

Two of the performers are carrying bowls with balls to pass them to the audience, though these bowls contain only red balls. And Rainer is declared guilty.

### 3.6 Inversions

The creators of the performance chose to put in the center of the dramaturgy of their piece a very recognizable situation in actual Greece. Elpida has no other option than to migrate from her country to work as an intern in Germany. The story is well-known and much-experienced by the actual young Greek generation. Automatically there is a self-



identification from the Greek side. But what is not according to what everyone would expect (regarding the original play and the development of a love story for those who were not familiar with *Aida*) is the fact that this girl would deny at the end her national background, her national identity which was a *ōtombö* for her to move on in a life status hostile to the current Greek mentality. There is a reverse here that deceives the spectator, an abrupt end that upsets and surprises him at least the Greek audience.

Accordingly, there is a reverse analogy to what is happening to the other protagonist. Rainer Mess, who is introduced as a powerful and outstanding banker employs lots of possible ways to gain what he wants by having an affair with the head of the department, Anna Riche, but who is also sexually related to the young intern. At the end of the play there is a reversal in his point of view and, though melodramatically, he swifts his ideology and his way of life by recognizing the harm of the E.U. Bank policy to Greece. So, with regard to the plot, there is till now a German working for the E.U. bank that goes at the end on the other side and there is a Greek who by feeling personally trapped into national collective representations decides to move on even if this means going against her country by continuing working for the E.U. Bank.

One may say (as it has been already stated by many spectators) that the performance presents an anti-patriotic profile with nihilistic aspects. Another one may admire the fact that the performance managed to depict loyally the actual reality and another one can say that the performance's creators are from the side of the Germans for the reason that the Greek in the play breaks at the end all the bonds with her country and decides to work for the E.U. bank. And all these reactions seem to be the contributor's aim for the reason that they created very carefully situations the meaning of which was oscillating between literal adaptations of reality with a delicate sarcasm that was undermining the characters as well as the conditions they were experiencing. This last inversion of the play with regard to the original *Aida* is the

final reverse of the stereotypes. Unlike Aida and Radames, Elpida and Rainer Mess will not sacrifice their life and their beliefs to die together. And the most important is that these two reversals are happening without influencing at all their background; ECB carries on with its goals, staying unaffected and isolating all the possible dangers to its profits.

### 3.7 Conclusions

The performance was indeed understood as very much a groundbreaking performance by the majority of the Greek critics and was also presented in the international media such as the BBC world news and the financial pages of *Le Monde*. ‘Geniously scandalous, poisonously critical toward the politico-financial timeliness’ (Yannis Svolos, *Classicmusic*), ‘brand-new, devious, unconventional [í ] neat and smart’ (Yannis Svolos, *To Pontiki*), ‘There is a lot of craziness, a lot of talent, a lot of ‘disrespect’ and a lot of truth’ (‘Yasou Aida! of the crisis: A Greek-German alternative opera’, *Express*), ‘satire, humor, emotion, denouncement’ (‘Applause and laughter to the contemporary Aida’, *To Vima*), ‘stimulating exemplar of a contemporary, politically oriented musical theatre’ (Eftechios Choreatakis, *Athinorama*). This performance was singled out as a direful venture of a project that is going against the contemporary state of things in politics. What was stated with regards to how the performance stood across the timeliness, the reviews did not present much fluctuation as to what was perceived by the audience. Accurate and cruel critique with a lot of sense of humor and sarcasm, combined with a mood of self-awareness and self-censorship that avoids in every case to turn itself into a weepy ‘moralistic fairytale, like the ones narrated, as the director says, by the media’ (*Express*). Besides, the performance is not at the end about Greece and Germany but the European story as it was mentioned by one of the reviewers. ‘I arrived in Neukllner Oper carrying with me if not a pure prejudice, then a sort of melancholy[í ] I was imagining who would be presented as victimizers and who as victims.[í ] ‘Many people are coming to the performance thinking that it will be an

emotional spectacle for Greeks and against Germansø says the director Alexandros Efklidis; among them myself. However, I was celebratory disconfirmed by a successful performance of musical theatre that undermines with delicacy the certainties and plays by bursting the stereotypes out to the audienceö reviewed a critic from the Greek newspaper .

Another review from the communist party newspaper [Radical] goes further with a clear comparison/assessment of three of the performances presented in the Athens festival. The critic reviewed each one of them separately, though in the same column, under the common title ð ÷ ø ö [Timely ÷Aidaø and distorted questionings]. More specifically, her comments were more oriented toward the distorted political messages of the two other performances and lesser to the attempts of *Yasou Aida!* where in this last case she constrained himself in the very modest comment ða group that introduces, beyond the bourgeois aesthetics, influenced by the brechtian aspect about opera, a ÷lookø to the operatic genre . . . seeking a subversive adaptation of sociopolitical actualization of the story from the one side, while on the other side, an updated orchestration of the orchestral parts and a closer to the prose theatre instruction of the songs.ö

The performanceø's critique, as this occurred by the performance analysis, is being articulated through the application of a tricky self- identification, the function of overstatement, the use of inversion and the use of secondary actions that re-contextualize the main action by undermining it. For instance, during the first conference of the ECB a documentary from wild life with elephants and black men in Africa is being projected, the result of a mistake done by Elpida. In the ninth scene where Elpida is alone with Manos Stavrou talking about the inner politics of Greece, Krista ðintrudesö in the action, sits on a chair, turns on the TV and watches a cooking show with Krista herself preparing some cookies in the shape of a Euro coin that she will offer a bit later to Rainer and Elpida, while they are discussing the importance of moral integrity.

All of these tools employed are means of the performance's subversive idiom which stands its main critical tool. The target of this critique is unleashed towards the external and international political and social field as well as the internal affairs; the established political system but also the national collective narrative, supplied and reproduced by the internal political and social sphere. The pattern for the first case, this of international relations, is taken from another art piece, a platform from which similarities and correlations can be engaged creating by this a two-dimensional critique; a critique that addresses the new era of colonial tactic but also a post-colonial era regarding the historical times of the Verdean Aida. The absence of this use of an older pattern would not have allowed this historical parallelism to occur nor would have declared the shift to the social attitude with regard to the end proposed by the two versions. Regarding the second, the internal socio-political field, the critique unwraps the historical threat backwards and brings to the surface a series of stereotypical approaches of linear national representations. This function must happen first, in order for an undermining process to take place.

The majority of the critics commented on the fact that the audience was 'invited' in the performance to use and develop its own 'crisis', to think, filter, judge and react to what was unfolding in front of their eyes. There was not few of them that commented on this issue and moreover reported the audience's reaction to this. 'The audience is the one that is invited to react as jongleur. And if sometimes 'the ball is endangered to fall down' [to miss something from what is happening] maybe it is because of the inadequate readiness of the spectator. It is interesting- man tests his reflex' (*TA NEA*). With reference to this latter assumption, the critical stance of the play is manifested also from the creators' effort to provoke and reveal the audience's critical thinking. The use of all the above undermining tools (self-identification, overstatement, inversion and the secondary actions) made the performance able to leave open the interpretation and meaning-creating for its audience. In

detail, the play introduced and exposed the main themes with a seemingly realistic state of affairs that uses the language and the plot of the current situation (the Greeks going abroad and the stereotypical discourse produced by this situation) offering in this way the self-identification that after a while is going to trigger and question the spectator. Although the critical stance regarding the international affairs is stated in a clear way through the use of allegories, parallelisms and symbols (the display of the E.U. as a big family, the ritual of the ECB, the ECB school party, the pseudo- experience of democracy as well as the ballot in the Rainer Messø trial), the unfolding of the Greek situation is taking a more indirect way that moves away from this logic of purely parodying and travestyng. The identification offered with Elpidaø's stance and the display of all the national symbols and characteristics surrounding her, as well as her much realistic and recognizable dilemma oscillating between her personal aspirations and the duty of her national identity, are steps towards this awareness of manø's . The overstatement of Elpidaø's melodramatic figure along with the presence of Manos and the bunch of Greek national symbols underpins the conviction that the creators of the play followed a systematic way to place the audience in an awkward position to make it doubt about its own stance in the real current debate and provoke their critical thoughts.

Therefore, what can be supported here is that the performance followed a very systematic and introvert way to declare its own beliefs regarding the countryø's participation in the current crisis and instead of trying to impose this idea to its audience, it chose to invite it, share its thoughts and allow it to produce its own critical conclusions out of this. But I will leave this issue open in an effort to discuss it later on in the conclusions making the link to *City-State* and to issues regarding critique in contemporary artfield.

## 4. Conclusions. On Critique

### 4.1 Crisis- - self-critique

At the beginning of this paper some points were discussed on the semantic notion of the term *crisis* as it was clarified by Koselleck and the current contemporary spectrum of uses in the Greek context. To remind this in brief, there was the ascertainment that the already existing notions (political, juridical, theological and medical) are still in use; however, the use of the word has been expanded significantly till today in the sphere of psychology, anthropology and more, it is certain that this expansion has followed the already existing notions, in this case most probably the medical notion. The second point was that the financial notion found in Modern Greek dictionaries was reflecting a crisis strongly connected with and occurred explicitly by the capitalist system of production. This linguistic dimension can be associated with Koselleck's remarks on the financial use of the concept of crisis as it was developed by the social theory and the theory of history by Engels and Marx. The third point was the stressing of the second semantic notion of the word crisis in Greek, namely *crisis*, as *crisis* a mind-process that leads to thoughtful or not decisions stressing the ability of someone to be critical. Finally, the fourth point was a twist in the anthropological, psychological and sociological dimensions of the term.

If we take one by one the above points there are some interesting remarks we can make regarding the present case-studies. First of all, an application of almost every semantic use is being displayed in the performances through an ironic, subverting metaphoric theatrical discourse. The prime minister in *City-State* sarcastically impersonates the then prime minister Giorgos Papandreou. Every time he is about to start his speech, he is presenting himself as a doctor repeating the same motto: *"I am the prime minister, doctor forever."* The correlation is an ironic comment on the time Giorgos Papandreou became a prime minister. It was in

October 2009 that the government of PASOK took on after the spread public dissatisfaction that the previous party of New Democracy had provoked. Giorgos Papandreou came to the forefront of the internal politics as a savior of the country giving hopes and promising that everything would become better and the crisis would be surpassed. The comment here is that he came as a doctor, an expert to curate the ill country but he failed. In *Yasou Aida!* the one who comes to offer help to the country in danger is the European Central Bank presented as the center of a new religious cult that will treat the virtuous ones with benevolence while the sinners will be punished by the jury of ECB. Here the crisis is perceived and attributed as a new state of affairs and socio-political order, in which the former established principles and authorities in all aspects of life, theological and juridical are being torn down and replaced by some new, associated with finance. The crisis, therefore, is presented as the adjustment in this new condition. Though the word *crisis* had never acquired a figurative use in the Greek linguistic context, it is being used as a metaphor by transposing one semantic notion on another of the same word. Namely, the fact that the country is in a state of crisis is metaphorically being expressed as the notion the medical use implies; a medical crisis, for which a doctor is needed. This kind of metaphor is being incorporated in a variety of subverting tools that comment ironically on the internal politics and the inter-European relationships. This metaphor-game is played throughout both performances and enhances the main subverting axis of the events deployed.

The presence of the capitalistic aspect that crisis acquired from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, in the frame of financial theory and has been infiltrated in linguistic use, is once again dominant in both performances. For the *City-State* and *Yasou Aida!* is not the financial situation itself and the economic collapse of the country that is depicted but the religious-like worship of the capital. On the one hand there are the ECB's aspirations of accumulating and sustaining the power of the capital in a kind of post-colonial situation and on the other hand there are the

Athenians in *City-State* who bring on stage the cultural implications of capitalism, that so much entered the every-day life that people prefer the Malls as the safest environment to protect themselves and their children. Their critique is openly focusing on the imbalance between the financial health of a country, its political strategies and its social and cultural behavioral trends. The fact, that in both performances a social conflict is presented, depicts the habermian analysis of a social conflict in crises created by the capitalist system of organization. According to this habermian logic, a crisis, to be understood as such, is always connected with the subject undergoing this crisis and this subject's recognition of crisis as such. Another point of Habermas was the social conflict generated by this type of capitalist crisis. This conflict in the present performances is becoming apparent through the juxtaposition of the social and the political discourse. In *City-State* there is always focus on the sociological aspects of politics in a variety of couples with conflicting interests: the prime minister with Myrtis (chapter 4), the ethnarch with the people commenting on Athens rebuilding (chapter 1), the financial sponsor with Myrtis in the occupation period and the December events (chapter 12), the woman in the wrong clothes and the major General Katsipetros (chapter 12) and more on. In *Yasou Aida!* this is manifested primarily in the crashing relationship between Elpida and the minister Manos Stavrou (scene 9) but also in the relationship between Elpida and Rainer as it is formed at the end of the play (scene 10 and 14). This social disintegration is the outcome of the loss of the social identity. In chapter 1.1.6, I referred to the core-indicators of this loss of the social identity in habermian terms that is the disintegration of the collective tradition, a rupture with tradition that becomes apparent . . . as later generations no longer recognize themselves within the once-constitutive tradition. (4) After all, could it be supported that these performances' orientation towards the political and social narrative that is being generated at the moment, plus this effort to disintegrate and undermine the national collective narrative, serve as an indicator to



articulate that a social disintegration within the current capitalist crisis is on the way? For the case-studies above I believe that the fact that they oriented their critique especially towards the social dimensions and the social contradictory discourses are at least a confirming point of the above hypothesis. Namely, this socially oriented critique towards national traits, narratives, and history, manifests the view of a socially disintegrated capitalist society.

The third point was the prevalence of the word *crisis* in the Greek context as a mind process that leads to thoughtful questions, reflections, and judgments. What today is expressed in English by the adjective *critical* is stated in Greek by the noun *kritiki* that never dismissed its notional character, a meaning that is also stressed by Koselleck. Both case-studies manifestly display a profile of inner, national critical speculation for the country's position and its share of responsibility within the current condition. A self-reflective attitude is being exercised by the subversion of the mainstream public current discourse and the excavation of the past that will lead to the core-reasons of the national crisis. A self-critique is being displayed here and at this point I would like to go back to Buden's statement regarding art's urgency to be self-reflective in order to be critical.

we (still) believe that art is intrinsically equipped with the power of criticism. [1] the ability of art to criticize the world and life beyond its own realm, and even, by doing that, to change both. This includes, however, some sort of self-criticism, or more precisely, the practice of critical self-reflexivity, which means that we also expect of art to or at least used to expect to be critically aware of the conditions of its possibility, which usually means, the conditions of its production. These two notions to be aware of the conditions of possibility and production point at two major realms of modern criticism: the theoretical and the practical-political realm. It was Immanuel Kant who first posed the question about the conditions of possibility of our knowledge and who understood this question explicitly as an act of criticism. From that point on we may say that modern reflection is either critical or in this self-reflexive way or it is not modern. (33)

I would like to transpose this argument of self-reflexivity of Buden, based on the kantian sense of the modern critical stance, to a performance's process of commenting on the national social and political background. This self-reflexivity, as the modern understanding of being critical, is to be found in the core of these performances' critique by all the aforementioned means of self-speculation and by 'self'I mean here national; a national, inner speculation of this social crisis that is realized by the demolition of all the kind of misleadings and mistreatments of political and social planning towards a modern, capitalist, globalised nation. The absence of any kind of weepy story full of misfortunes is an example to avoid for the present case-studies, while a very well-studied and thoughtful overview of the country's path towards modernization is deliberate.

The fourth point was a tendency of the term 'crisis' to be perceived in anthropological, psychological and sociological terms. Koselleck referred to the adoption of the concept by psychology, anthropology and sociology of culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, according to his remarks, none of them managed to conceptualize the term in concrete. The Modern Greek Dictionaries' references affirmed this expansion and tendency. It is also already manifested that the present case-studies had also put weight on the psychological and societal dimensions of the current crisis though in a different level and way each of them. In *Yasou Aida!* the focus is more on the popular, stereotypical social discourse that is being projected by the body politic, the mainstream media and consequently the rest of the population as the mouthpiece of the first two. In *City-State*, on the other hand, there is a widespread reference on many levels and aspects of the human life. The way crisis is being depicted in *City-State* resembles more a permanent concept of the modern social history of the nation where psychological disturbance, social misery, distress, and moral corruption are the common national characteristics of this society.

## 4.2 A philosophy of History in the service of self-critique

Koselleck argued that the concept of crisis was lying from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on within a philosophy of history, involving always and in many ways a plethora of historical correlations, historicized interpretations accompanied in many cases by prophecies and prognosis based on scientific speculations of the past. This paper suggests the prevalence till the present times of this philosophico-historical conceptualization as an analytical tool of critical times. Till 1957, the time Koselleck published his paper in German, he was asserting that the evolution and spread of the term so far could only affirm once again its residence within a philosophy of history; crisis as a transitional stage leading to a better future or the demise of the humanity, crisis as a structural category or a permanent analytical tool of speculating the historical events, always retained itself within the same field.

Huizinga, on the other hand, predicted a more open future. He was convinced that "the crisis in which we live, however serious, must be a phase in a progressive and irreversible process. . . . That is what makes the contemporary consciousness of crisis so new and so different from any previous experience." Husserl expanded the theme of crisis into a broadly conceived philosophy of history. He characterized the "crisis of European sciences" as a manifestation of an ever more present "crisis of European civilization." Ever since Descartes' separation of object from subject, the Greek *telos* of following the dictates of reason has increasingly disappeared from sight. Phenomenology is meant to bridge the chasm between a science addicted to observable reality and the internal life of human beings. Such efforts "whatever their analytical quality" do not reach much beyond the frame of philosophies of history already established in the previous (nineteenth) century. (398)

The use of the colonial era as a platform to approach the contemporary post-colonial situation, parallel to the reproduction of a collective narrative based on past times of national grandeur and pride in *Yasou Aida!*, as well as a reconstructed narrative of the past that subverts the official national history in *City-State*, may be seen as reactions based on the

methods of the philosophy of history, that necessarily passes through self-reflection and critique.

In his essay, Dimitris Papanikolaou, a Lecturer in Modern Greek Studies at the University of Oxford, points out lucidly this tendency of the Greek artists to flash back in the nation's past in order to put under thorough critique the current cultural and socio-political restlessness and discomfort. In his paper, "Beyond the 'Greek Crisis'" Papanikolaou questioned the Modern Greek identity under the shadow of the great Greek ancient civilization as an overloaded burden on the backs of the contemporary Greeks. At first he introduces the Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens that launched its activities during autumn 2010 with a conference dedicated to the Greek civilization's diachronic contribution world-widely.

. . . the conference aimed to showcase the diachronic importance of Greek thought to the world: what the Greeks did and the reason it still matters. Only that, with 'Greeks' in this case, most of the participants and certainly the larger part of the audience understood the 'Ancient Greeks.' Modern Greece, including its handful of powerful private institutions and their well-handled cultural globality, was once again seen as the quintessential archive of a perennial past. Within this logic, Athens was presented as the perfect place to have this international dialogue about the undisturbed relationship between the present and its past.

What follows Papanikolaou's argumentation is an urge to a collective effort, in the midst of the crisis, on behalf of Greek artists, to "get rid" of this past for the sake of a critique of the contemporary state of the nation. His focus concentrates on the way Greek artists put serious efforts to investigate and re-discover this national identity by freeing themselves from their national past. Together with many films produced by Greek artists, some of which attained international publicity in film festivals, Papanikolaou dedicated a big part of his essay to *City-State*.

Less than five months later, in the same Onassis Cultural Centre, Athenians were able to see an experimental play by the group Kanigunda. The performance started with one of the actors impersonating Myrtis, a girl who died of the typhoid plague that hit Athens in 426-430 BC . . . The ancient Greeks, once again! Yet the process now was somehow reversed because this time, in the voice and with the face of an ancient inhabitant of the Athenian city state who died during a plague, the audience was introduced to a postmodern political satire about the current Greek crisis. Cunningly entitled *The City-State*, this play was the first, or at least the first I know of, that took the current crisis as its subject matter in such a self-conscious way. [í ] a long tissue of literary quotations about rootedness and uprooting, about the state of fear and its pervasive effects, about waiting for the end of the world. A performance that had started with the reassurance that the ancient Greeks are still with us (the Myrtis impersonator in a low voice whispering: "Good evening, I am alive! I am very happy to be meeting you"), ended with another actor impersonating George Papandreou and exclaiming: "I am your prime minister. The perennial doctor. And I've got something to tell you. I want to tell you that we have just ceded part of our national sovereignty."

For Papanikolaou this tendency could be called the "poetics of the disturbed archive" as he went on by elaborating on many contemporary examples of Greek artworks.

It seems to me that there is an interesting trend of cultural expression produced in Greece at the moment, which, even though not always related to the crisis directly, can assume, in the current climate, a radical political position. This is a trend characterized by its effort to critique, undermine and performatively disturb the very logics through which the story of Greece ó the narrative of its national, political, sociocultural cohesion in synchrony and diachrony ó has until now been told . . . If I were to give a title to this tendency, I would call it the "poetics of disturbed archival logics" or the "disturbed archive." To illustrate what I mean, let me return to the *City State* performance: in its collage of images, archival footage, historical and political texts and current opinion-making pronouncements, the play first rehearsed well-known arguments about the past's burden on the present and the historical responsibilities of the ruling classes, of generations of politicians and of corrupt entrepreneurs for the current failures. But exactly in its mixing and performative extravaganza, in its disturbing of the linearity and generational logics of the question of blame, *in its excess*, this troubled and performed archive ended up reframing the question of responsibility altogether. This was not just a story about

ancient democracy, the *ancient polis*, gone awry in its modern resurfacing. It was instead a radical questioning that started from the current state of precariousness, in order to critique the reading of the past and ask: Who has been doing this reading on our behalf, in what ways and to what effect?

This subversive path that both performances used as their main critical tool was accompanied by performative and aesthetic devices that were described in the performances' analysis; the undermining process, the secondary action, the allegorical use of narration, the semantic metaphor of the term 'crisis' and more on are inextricably linked with a process of demolition, one by one, of all this dominant national narratives, including the ancient past, the official history of the glorious past, the contemporary collective narrative based on stereotypical motifs of speech. Papanikolaou is stressing this imperative:

As the cultural logics of continuity and traditional modes of thinking about political agency and blame were being undermined, responsibility was now becoming a genealogical question, or rather a genealogical imperative. [1] What I am trying to argue though is that this type of undermining now has the potential to become a dominant political and cultural critique, a full-blown genealogical attack that takes the current state not as a symptom of things that went wrong in the past, but as the very point from which the past should be reviewed, revisited, re-collated, reassembled and reassessed, both in political and in identitarian terms. I am also saying that, through this larger logic of archival disturbance, an array of cultural texts are bound to take on a political importance that perhaps would have been unthinkable some years earlier.

Concluding the main points of this discourse which were drawn in this paper, it would be wise to clarify and highlight the core-dimensions of this critique as they were manifested by the present case-studies. Both performances perceived this crisis above and beyond its financial frameworks, they tried to capture the societal dimensions of the actual situation conceived not as the outcome of a local crisis but much more, as the battle field of a global process. For this to be realized they followed a way towards a national self-critique that re-gathered and re-assessed historical events and national emblems. A philosophy of history in

this self-critique process stood as the main tool for this national ideological deconstruction. The subverting process employed and applied in this procedure of self-critique seems the main ideological tool.

### 4.3 Brechtian echoes

When Papanikolaou was talking about the poetics of the disturbed archive, he highlighted the performance's call to the audience to form a critical awareness, to use not only during the performances, but in their everyday lives, as well. For this reason, Papanikolaou talked for this emerging critique as another type of epic theatre: 'the audience was called to reflect on its own position as a part of this archive. Making sense of it all would perhaps open up a new space for critique. An incitement to act, therefore, just like in epic theatre. Yet, unlike epic theatre, an incitement to act *from within*, not from a vantage point (with)out.' Some months later, a similar comment was made for the performance of *Yasou Aida!* 'A group that introduces, beyond the bourgeois aesthetics, influenced by the brechtian aspect of opera, a look to the operatic genre [ ] seeking a subversive adaptation of sociopolitical actualization of the story.' (review by Thymeli, *Rizospastis*) arguing for a familiar approach of *Yasou Aida!* to this of the brechtian perspective. Indeed, someone may discern a broad spectrum of common ideological and aesthetic approaches worth to mention and especially with regard to how this critique incorporates history in its core-subject. What constitutes a common dramaturgical axis for both case-studies, from a brechtian aspect, is the reflection of the same society whose audience is addressing. Bernard Dort wrote on his book on Brecht<sup>28</sup> that 'this is not a bourgeois theatre but it addresses the bourgeois' (Dort:77) in a way that it presents on stage what bourgeois is fond of watching, together with things that feels uncomfortable with. This for Dort transformed the audience of Brecht, in his period of *Threepenny Opera* and the *Rise and Fall of the city of Mahagonny*, from a subject to an

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<sup>28</sup> Here I use the Greek translation of the book.

object of his performances. In Brecht's words, *The Threepenny Opera* is "a concentrated version of the life the spectator wants to see on stage" that according to Dort, "it is a disguised performance, an anti-operetta. A trap-performance in which the bourgeois spectator must get trapped." (77) If the *Threepenny Opera* is a trap-performance, the *Rise and Fall of the city of Mahagonny* is, according to Dort, "even more radical- a trap-performance, a bourgeois mirror" (79). The above seems aligned with the achievements of the present case-studies that both put on stage a mirror to reflect their bourgeois audience. By reproducing the stereotypes, the habitual social practices and the political deeds of this society, representing its common linguistic code in a way that magnifies it, concentrates it and subverts it, these performances form a critique that addresses this audience back, in a way that tricks them and makes them ponder whether this performance is for or against them.

The alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) was used by Brecht as a tool to form and fulfill, in his late period, the epic form. To Dort, this alienation effect "is neither a mere directorial tool, nor a doctrine of some kind of a new formalism but the presupposition for the accomplishment of this double movement [earlier he mentions this retrogressive movement between alienation and liberation, abandonment and choice, acceptance and negation], this critical function that constitutes the core of his art." (165) *Yasou Aida!* and *City-State* adopt subversion as their main function, using self-identification and overstatement as tools. The overstatement is used to distort and subvert the identifications the audience came with.

This process of subversion consisting in the successive functions of self-identification and overstatement has been adopted at times by artists and has become a subject of academic investigation. This relatively newly-displayed function has been applied in several artistic manifestations inside and outside theatre and it tends to be regarded as a performative tool outside the established performing arts. In an essay written by Kostis Stafylakis, a Greek art



theorist and visual artist, the concept of *over-identification*<sup>29</sup> is referred to a use to denote this type of performative feature deliberately used in activism. The essay, "Overidentification and the Greek Crisis" (*scurvytunes blog*) focuses on the adoption of overidentification by Greek contemporary artistic manifestations. Stafylakis is using here a couple of examples to clarify this attitude of overidentification and this quote below comes from an activist group's description that was active particularly during the first years of the crisis. Stafylakis explains the stimulus for this action.

. . . various syndicates and unions warned the Socialist Party (PASOK) government to avoid measures that would cause further turmoil and injustice. But the (Syndicate of Corporations and Industries) demanded more flexible labor agreements in the private sector in order to "protect workers' jobs." This was the moment when a different group, also calling itself , appeared and began to organize public rallies. But their acronym now stood for the "Syndicate of Sincere Industry Owners" [í ] Using loud speakers, they launched slogans such as: "Tax the poor, there are more of them anyway." "Individual contracts for everyone, because each person is different." "Abolish wages, apply compulsory labor in our corporations." "Enough with populism, the memorandum was, is and will be a blessing to this country." "Are you unemployed? That's your problem." "We welcome the government's decision to eliminate taxes on our properties ó we offer the jobs, are we also going to offer the wages?"

This was the first group-march that used this type of alternative manifestation instead of the usual way, drawing the attention of the majority of the by passers. Stafylakis's statement with regard to the term's definition is the following.

Overidentification is related to forms of critical cultural practices; its "criticality" is generated when "subjects of overidentification" begin to admit and embrace the fact that their subjectivity is deeply interwoven with and by social discourses, power, authority, heteronomy and is structurally

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<sup>29</sup> The term was adopted by psychoanalysis to analyze the artistic manifestations of the state of NSK actions. The Neue Slowenische Kunst activists adopted the tool of overidentification, which was later on defined as such, in order to respond to neo-liberalism tactics in post-Tito Yugoslavia. What they did was actually to represent in an accurate way their subject of critique by means of subverting it through a process of overstating its attitude and its real intentions; by producing its "superego." The process of overidentification in NSK practices was much examined, analyzed and enriched by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. For extended reading you can consult Žižek's publications, *The Plague of Fantasies* (1997) and *The Universal Exception* (2006).

involved in their reproduction. In this respect, practices of overidentification can potentially foster a critical interrogation of current social dogmas to the extent that an unconscious part of one's own attachment to the social apparatus is (re)enacted. In this gaming or acting out, the "over" or surplus of overidentification is the movement beyond the safe, controlled, supervised representation of identity.

Although the term of overidentification with the function of subversion that is succeeded by an overstated self-identification process seems in a great level identical, I would rather, at this stage, retain a full description of the subversion process in the present case-studies.

#### 4.4 Brechtian critique of history

According to Dort, Brecht's interest regarding history and his successive critique towards history was two-fold; on the one hand he wanted to reproduce, in order to denounce it on stage, the history presented by the Nazis in a period that for Brecht himself was in fact a parody of history. His second target of critique was the official history itself as it was presented through "our books, regarding our heroes' biographies." This Brechtian critique of the official history was a critique focusing more on a heroic presentation of war as a momentous challenge.

The Nazi Germany was continuously invoking History. It was the performance as a whole, it wanted to be a theatrical presentation of History and it was nothing more than its parody. The first aim of Brecht will be to denounce this parody, to uncover that it is a parody and to do this not only for the Hitlerian masquerade but also for the official History of our books, our heroes' biographies. The negation of this official pseudo-History is expressed lucidly in *Mother courage and her children* when to the priest that he says to her: "Now it is the burial of the General. A historical moment" the mother responds "For me a historic moment was when my daughter was hit on the eye" (125)

Moving on with the subject of history at the core of the Brechtian critique Dort refers to the *Fear and Misery of the third Reich* where "autonomous scenes are presented explicitly referring with much accuracy to real events of that period." (138) Brecht, according to Dort, was seeking to make clear the contradictory powers, external and internal, generated by the terror of history; a history that was mainly defined by "war, the hero's adoration and the lies

of the ones in power. (138) These contradictions, innumerable in the *Fear and Misery of the third Reich* were presented mainly by indecisions and dilemmas, like the one of the judge who could not decide for the Germans' benefit or for his own benefit.

These contradictions are very deep rooted: are coming from financial benefits but there disease is reaching us inside. For this, Brecht denounces the war and the official History that alienates us but synchronously it shows us how ourselves are alienated, how we accept and perpetuate this alienation. These contradictions are not only external but also rooted within us. We are not only victims of the capitalist terror, we are also its carriers, or better its instruments. (139-41)

The issues of national history and historiography are to be found always in the core of an ideological formation of a political discourse and its counter-discourse. In Brecht, critical historiography proved to be one of the main subjects in question to contest the Nazis' philosophy of history and the official national history, as well. In the critical stance of the present case studies the controversy of the official history and the mainstream ideological stereotypes are the main aims to hit as a condition for self-critique to be achieved. Therefore, it triggers to think of historiography as one of the main subjects of critical art practices.

#### **4.5 The collage of critical art practices**

The form of collage has been noticed by many critics as the prevalent aesthetic and ideological form of the present case-studies; from what it can be assumed from their perception of the performances, by collage they mean the visual and textual mixing and matching of non-relevant elements of theatrical and non-theatrical means and the synthesis of a text out of bits and bytes of current reality and history. This technique of collage is for Rancière the dominant form in modern art, as its critical capacity lies in its ability to trigger and raise its spectators' awareness. In his essay 'Problems and Transformations in Critical Art' that was published in 2006 in the volume *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop, he concludes on the substances which render art practices critical and how the form of collage contributes to this critical stance that stands in between aesthetics and politics. 'In its most

general formula, critical art intends to raise consciousness of the mechanisms of domination in order to turn the spectator into a conscious agent in the transformation of the world. . . Critical art that invites you to see the signs of Capital behind everyday objects and behaviours risks inscribing itself into the perpetuation of a world where the transformation of things into signs redoubles the very excess of interpretative signs that make all resistance disappearö (83)

The technique of collage intrinsically carries the ability of stimulating critical thinking and a type of autonomy in meaning-making from the side of the spectator. According to Ranci re, the key-factor of critical art lies in the co-presence and mixture of heterogeneous elements which generate a double way of speaking from the side of the artwork and therefore a double way of perceiving from the side of the audience.

If collage has been one of the great techniques of modern art, it is because its technical forms obey a more fundamental aesthetico-political logic. Collage, in the most general sense of the term, is the principle of a 'third' aesthetic politics. Collage can be carried out as a pure encounter of heterogeneities, testifying wholesale to the incompatibility of two worlds. It's the surrealist encounter of the umbrella and the sewing machine, showing the absolute power of desire and dreams against the reality of the everyday world, but using its objects. Conversely, collage can be seen as evidence of the hidden link between two apparently opposed worlds: thus do the photomontages of John Heartfield, revealing the reality of capitalist gold in the throat of Adolf Hitler, or those of Martha Rosier, mixing photographs of the horror of Vietnam with advertising images of American comfort. In this case, it's not any longer the heterogeneity of the two worlds that should nourish a sense of the intolerable but, on the contrary, the making evident of the causal connection that links one to the other. But the politics of collage finds its balancing point where it can combine the two relations and play on the line of indiscernability between the force of readability of sense and the force of strangeness of non-sense. (84)

This 'dialogue' between art and ordinary life, their matching points and the collage occurred by this combination, is responsible for what Ranci re names the 'third way of micro-politics of art' and uses as his case-studies Brecht's *Arturo Ui* but the visual artists of the 60s and 70s till now, as well. 'It is because of this crossing of the borders and status changes between art

and non-art that the radical strangeness of the aesthetic object and the active appropriation of the common world have been able to come together and constitute the 'third way' of a micro-politics of art, between the opposed paradigms of art becoming life and art as resistant form. This process underpins the performances of critical art, and can help us to understand its contemporary transformations and ambiguities. The technique of collage is evident in the performative aspects of the present case-studies in the contextualization of the main discourses, namely the political, the social and the capitalist by forms taken from the contemporary mainstream media. For instance, the autarchic relationship in the *City-State* of the financial sponsor with the others is re-contextualized and presented in the form of a TV show with all the suppressive, psychologically manipulative, elements that elevate the suppression in a multi-interpretational spectrum of connotations. It is the same happening with the singing interludes taken from the revue performances that through their interaction with the previous and/or the next scene the message acquires another interpretational quality. In *Yasou Aida!* this becomes obvious through the use of the 'wheel of fortune' game, the school party of the pigs, and the integration of national and religious emblems in the representation of the current external politics. But the name of the performance is also a collage; *Yasou Aida!* took its name not only by the verdian *Aida* but also reflects on the title of the song that represented Greece in the Eurovision Song Contest of 2007, *Yasou Maria*. For Rancière heterogeneous collage generally takes the form of a shock, which reveals one world hidden beneath another: capitalist violence behind the happiness of consumption: market interests and violent class struggle behind the apparent serenity of art. Art's self-criticism thus blended with criticism of the mechanisms of state and market domination. (87) This shock of revelation is being left to the spectator's disposal to perceive, interpret and reflect on this display of collaged material. If I had to stress something in the intrinsic quality of collage to be critical, by creating this 'third way' that Rancière proposed in his essay, this

would be the quality of autonomy; of the ability offered to the spectator to exercise his own critical thinking and “to turn the spectator into a conscious agent.” In terms of Ranci’s thought, to emancipate him. And this autonomy was achieved in *City-State* and *Yasou Aida!* by an ambiguous multi-interpretational collage.

#### 4.6 Epilogue

At the end of this paper I would like to make some comments with regard to the current field of performing arts in Greece. Since the summer of 2011, the performances referring to the social dimensions of the current critical actuality have been proliferated gradually and reached their peak in the summer of 2012. An introvert speculation of the past and historical parallelisms at the core of these artistic manifestations, display a mood of re-discovery of the national myth. From the individual to collective initiatives in the independent theatre scene, to the institutionalized practices of the National Theatre of Greece, the national identity issues were the core-subject of performances or of the whole season planning.

The National Theatre of Greece in Athens announced for the seasons 2011 and 2012 a two-year program involved in the actuality issues. To achieve that, it contextualized its repertory for the year of 2011-12 under the question “What is our homeland?” Iö stating at the same time that there will be a “What is our homeland? II”ö the year after. What actually meant this phrase, taken from a famous poem by the Greek poet Ioannis Polemis, was that the directors would be invited to answer this question with the plays selected. Parallel to this the NT engaged a new section in the repertory; “The National Theatre supports the Greek writers who are oriented in today’s Greek condition and it is presenting nine plays that are trying to articulate all that is happening around us” (National theatre’s website). For three days in May

(9<sup>th</sup> evening- 13<sup>th</sup> evening) NT presented indeed 9 one- act plays by Greek dramatists.<sup>30</sup> At the end of the year, the NT held a meeting to discuss and assess the outcome in relation to each first programmatic report. In his opening speech a professor in Theatre Studies in Athens University, Platon Mavromoustakos, declared that "the National Theatre, being the first stage of the country, decided to open up the chapter "Greece". The repertory chosen reflects this ambition. *Pericles* by William Shakespeare was directed by the artistic director of the NT, Yannis Chouvardas (a show also performed in the festival "Globe to Globe" in London). Another play performed by NT that year, was *Nicki* (1978) by the Greek writer Loula Anagnostaki. The play is about a family of Greek immigrants in Germany chased by the phantoms of the two wars (WWII and civil war). The play *Patrides* (Homelands), a devised text consisting of two texts from the postwar period, interviews and testimonies of immigrants was the work of two famous and commercial writers and it was performed by actors of different nationalities. Another play was *I Auli ton Thavmaton* (The Yard of the Miracles); written in 1957 it depicts the conditions after the war in a small neighborhood connected by a yard, an urbanistic archetype for postwar Athens. For the director of the play this yard was the yard of the victims; in Greek the two words, miracles and victims are separated only by a letter, (thavmata) and (thymata), making by this a sarcastic comment. To the question "what is our homeland?" Kakleas, the director of the play, responded: "In a try to answer with the team to the question, we were coming up with stereotypes, clichés and nationalism. So, we oriented ourselves to our personal experiences through this crisis . . . I feel my country is everything I like; Greek to me is Papadiamantis as well as Dickens. I don't want my homeland to be something that hurts me. I want to get rid of the label of Greek, to liberate myself from this sense of national duty." The director's answer was depicting in a simple but lucid way the possible traps in the search of the national

<sup>30</sup> The plays are *Melissia* by Alexis Stamantis, *Zografise to* by Maria Papalexi, *I Lista* by Cleri Lionaki, *Epafi* by Fivos Botsis, *O Farmakos* by Alexandra Samothraki, *I mikri Sirina* by Theodoros Espiritou, *Choris Esena* by Yiannis Papadopoulos and *Topia me ginaika* by Panayiotis Mentis.

identity. *Tou Koutrouli o Gamos* (Koutrouliø Wedding) is a comedy written in 1845 by Alexandros Rizos Ragkavis. The story of a corrupted society where everyone can cheat anyone and become whatever he likes even if this means to become a politician, echoed several hot political issues of our days.

In Athens and Epidaurus Festival in the summer of 2012 many performances related to the timeliness were presented. *Athanasios Diakos: The Comeback* and *La Commune Grecque* were among them. In the first case the play was about the return of one of the most famous Greek heroes, during the Greek Revolution, against the Turkish Empire in 1821, Athanasios Diakos, who was killed by impalement. The story is about the hero whose life is saved by an immigrant at the last moment and is transferred with his fiancé, Krystallo, to Greece of 2012, where he refuses to sacrifice his life once again in the current conditions. The second one is dealing with the Greek protests, riots, and strikes contextualized and interpreted in revolutionary terms. The play is inspired and demonstrates parallelisms with Peter Watkins' film *La Commune*.

Going back to the present case-studies I will remind you the participation of *City-State*, a year after its first performance, in the French festival *Chantiers d'Europe* together with other two Greek performances, *Guns! Guns! Guns!* and *The double Book*, both contemporary plays. *The double Book* is an adaptation of a novel written in the post war period that in the words of the press release by the Onassis Cultural Centre the writer manages to run through the whole modern history of Greece- neither as a spectator nor through a historical and political way, but by depicting the psychological landscape that these moments of our history created . . . Synchronously, his story manages to become universal, a meditation for the human position in today's world. *Guns! Guns! Guns!* has as its subject-core a delusional review of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Historical personalities, recorded documents, romantic heroes, public speeches, guns, movements, songs, flags



exhilarate like a panorama in front of the eyes of the spectator. A diving into the recent past that questions the present.ö

From this very short description of the above examples in the performing arts, some preferences, tendencies and axes become clear. A flash back to the history is present through different ways and with different aims. The Greek identity is put under the microscope and is been examined through different angles. The rediscovery and reactivation of old texts, a patchwork of an already existing material or interpreted in distorted historical parallelisms is one of the routes to search for this national identity. A need to correlate the present with the past and by this to conclude about the present situation, is of the core aims; multiple ways of historical and political correlations, efforts to discover or invent coherence, a linear story where the history may repeat itself or lead to a revelation of the solution, the truth, the reasons or the future. Even though this is not enough to react critically on the actuality, it does confirm a tendency to interpret the present critical condition historically. The influence of the philosophy of history seems present in every one of the above efforts, however, the means by which this is realized oscillates a lot from case to case.

This burst out of performancesø productions after the summer of 2011 was probably conditioned and facilitated a lot by the turn of attention and support that was spread to the social situation of the country. In arts it could be noticed that whatever had to do with Greece and was presented in relation to actuality took the form of heroizing the Greeks. From what is being noticed from this turn it seems that the Greek artists followed a path that can be interpreted in an oppositional assumption; on the one hand they liberated themselves through a self-critique or on the other, they trapped themselves by the feeling of duty to deal with the ðhotö issue of the crisis and the responsibility to articulate their own discourse on it. The need of an introvert process of national speculation, the historical connections and correlations are

indeed the core issues that the Greek artists focus on. Self critique or nationalistic attempts of representing national issues in the search of lost national identities and emblems are two core-dimensions of the national speculation process; this process may lead to a subversive procedure or an affirmative one. The present paper ventured, although admittedly early, to trace some of these characteristics and tendencies of art under critical times; and hopefully, it contributed to the discussion of issues that need to be carefully examined and assessed.

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