

**SHATTERED ICONS AND FRAGMENTED NARRATIVE IN A WORLD OF
CRISIS: HERAKLES MAINOMENOS BY THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF
GREECE AT THE EPIDAUROS FESTIVAL 2011**

'Narrative is what translates knowing into telling'

(Hayden White quoted in Hutcheon 1996:121)

INTRODUCTION

This article offers an analysis of a postmodern revival of Euripides' rarely performed tragedy *Herakles Mainomenos* by the National Theatre of Greece. The production was directed by Michael Marmarinos for the Epidaurus Festival (2011). The communal aspects of the performance and the historical and cultural context are highlighted in order to argue that the production has a political subtext with a timely message for its audience. More specifically, it maintains that the tragic hero Heracles can be read as a metaphor for Greece and the chorus as representing the Greek people in current times of world economic crisis. Towards this end the shattered aspects of Heracles and the function of a subversive chorus will be discussed closely. On the levels of the text and of performance the discussion focuses on metatheatricality and narrative in order to unpick the director's subversive approach to the core themes of Euripides' tragedy and his politicised interpretation of the play.

Apart from the introduction, the article divides into five main parts and the conclusions: part one gives an overview of the historical and cultural context of the National Theatre's production as well as of the director's main aesthetic and theoretical viewpoints vis-à-vis the revival of Greek tragedy. Part two discusses the themes of Euripides' tragedy and Heracles' fragmented and shattered icons in view of the production. The article proposes that Marmarinos' version of *Herakles Mainomenos* questions the role of evil in the world and the relationship between man and god(s), while emphasising the inexplicability of human behaviour. It also purports that the director's interpretation of the drama strongly emphasises the aspect of 'mainomenos' (furious, enraged) and appreciates the hero's human nature. Part three discusses the performance text, the additions made to the choral parts and the elimination of whole scenes and/or lines in order to promote particular political interpretations of the classical narrative. To this end, this part closely examines metatheatrical devices and translation choices. Part four focuses on the representation of the chorus, enhanced by means of metatheatrical devices and narrative structures. It is argued that the aesthetic of narrative discontinuity in the National Theatre's production functions as an ideological tool in support of the director's belief that the tragic chorus can function both as separate individuals and as a collective force. In part five it is argued that the portrayal of the tragic hero in Marmarinos' production invited its audiences to view Euripides' tragedy as a political commentary on contemporary events in Greece. The issue of historicity will be considered vis-à-vis the role of the Messenger in the play performed by the same actor who plays Heracles. This directorial choice is important for the representation of ambiguity as a defining characteristic of Heracles' conflicting mythical figure, as well as for the interpretation of the hero in Marmarinos' version as a metaphor for Greece in a time of crisis. The discussion in part five will focus on the *exodos* scene, Heracles' monologue after his awakening, the *agon* between Heracles and Theseus, and the adaptation of the final *stichomythia*. The last part of this article summarises the conclusions of the discussion, mainly proposing that significant issues examined by Euripides in *Herakles Mainomenos* were either left open or were undermined in Marmarinos' revival. Heracles' tragic figure was fragmented and his mythical image shattered, while the chorus was portrayed as an ironic, detached narrator, using humour to undermine the core themes of the drama. It is argued that the National Theatre of Greece production was a highly politicised interpretation of Euripides' drama.

AMIDST A TIME OF CONFLICT: HERAKLES MAINOMENOS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EPIDAUROS FESTIVAL 2011

Among comparatively few revivals of ancient Greek Drama in the Athens/Epidauros Festival in 2011¹ the National Theatre's production of the rarely staged *Herakles Mainomenos* (*The Madness of Heracles*) stood out as a postmodern adaptation of Euripides' tragedy.² It premiered on 5 August 2011 at the ancient theatre of Epidauros³ and offered its audience a politicised version of Euripides' tragedy. The production echoed Marmarinos' artistic aesthetics and theoretical position vis-à-vis the reception of Greek drama in the twenty first century, in particular with regards to the function of the chorus and narrative (versus dramatic action) in the tragic genre.⁴ In a series of pre-production interviews Marmarinos talked about the reception of ancient Greek drama 'in terms of thermodynamics'. He discussed the concept of the chorus as 'a total of individualities at convergence', distinguished between the public and the private sphere, labelled the ancient orchestra as a public space, and talked about history versus memory (see Marmarinos interviews 2011b, c, d). These preoccupations found their expression in his *Heracles* rendering it a highly politicised reception.

Marmarinos' creative adaptation was an almost three-hour long theatrical experience, characterised by metatheatricality. It included live music and original choreography, and its performance text was created out of a patchwork of ancient texts inserted within an unabridged translation by Yorgos Blanas. Marmarinos' reception of Euripides' *Heracles* offers a contemporary commentary on the ancient concept of madness. In the programme of the production the director (2011a: 54) is quoted as saying:

I feel as if Euripides has inserted a letter into a bottle, tossed it into the ocean and is waiting for each era to find it and give substance to the very real yet enigmatic term which he yokes to his hero: *furens*.

His interpretation of *mainomenos* (furious/enraged) as well as his attested 'fascination with textual manipulation and the deconstruction of every work, classical or modern' is characteristic of a general postmodern 'depolicitisation' (Pavis 1992: 70), that is essential for a political reading of the tragedy.⁵

The director invites his audience to read the tragic hero and the chorus of Euripides' drama as reflections of Greece and of the Greeks respectively in the context of the play's revival at a time of social conflict characterised by the IMF's austerity measures, the Indignados of Syntagma square,⁶ massive protests by trade unionists, high levels of frustration among the populace and suicide as a form of political protest. In this respect, the production offers an answer to the question 'Τι είναι η πατρίδα μας;' (What is our country?), the official slogan for the National Theatre's 2010-2011 season.⁷

HERAKLES MAINOMENOS: A POWERFUL EURIPIDEAN DRAMA.

HERACLES: ASPECTS OF A TRAGIC HERO

Far from being a typical Euripidean tragedy (Halleran 1988: 13; Griffiths 2006: 83; Walton 2009:132) *Heracles* positions itself in-between the supernatural and the metaphysical planes. The drama problematizes the status of the gods and the role of the poet. Euripides explores the themes of divine protection, friendship, and, above all, violence, madness, and suicidal contemplation as potential qualities of a hero and of a heroic society. As Griffiths (2006: 23) notes 'Heracles shows little respect for the usual social or personal boundaries which operated in Greek society.' Euripides explored the controversial aspects raised '[i]n the myths of the Greeks' great civilizer, Heracles' (Hall 1989: 51-2) and dramatised the merging of myth and cult. As a play *Heracles* has 'unusual rhythm' and structure (Walton 1987: 128-9; Walton 2009: 136, 176), in other words, it offers its audience changes of tone, sudden twists, unforeseen developments and *peripeteiae*.

There are three dramatic climaxes in the play; the tyrant Lycus' murder by Heracles, the murder of Heracles' sons by their own father and the hero's rescue from suicide by his friend Theseus. *Herakles Mainomenos* is a tragedy whose protagonist is complex and ambiguous in his nature. Its philosophical ambivalence towards the super hero of Greek mythology, an ambivalence which is inherent in the mythological tradition but it is nonetheless spelt out on the theatrical stage by Euripides, demonstrates that the noblest and the basest qualities can co-exist within one individual.

The plot revolves around the demoting of the demigod Heracles and what happens when a 'superhero' murders his family after a burst of insanity inflicted by the gods. Heracles is away from Thebes undertaking the last and most severe labour, his *katabasis* to bring back the fierce dog Cerberus. During his absence his family suffers greatly. Lycus has usurped the throne of Thebes and threatens to kill Megara, Heracles' wife, their three sons and Amphitryon, his mortal father. Lycus has already killed Megara's own father, as Amphitryon declares in the prologue. The hero's family is seeking sanctuary at the altar of Zeus, their only ally a chorus of elderly Theban men. It is at this point that Heracles enters and murders Lycus, thus saving his family from a ritualistic death at the hands of the tyrant. Before too long, however, in a burst of rage visited on him by Lyssa and Iris at the command of Hera, the hero slaughters his wife Megara and their three sons. As dictated by the conventions of Greek drama the gory details are reported by the Messenger.

Only Heracles' mortal father survives. He waits for his son, tied to a broken pillar, to regain his senses so he can gently let him know what he has done. When the hero regains his sanity, he experiences pain and despair, and wonders how he is going to carry on living (see Fig. 1). Theseus arrives and tries to help his friend, who is inconsolable. Eventually Heracles is persuaded to follow Theseus to Athens. The two men exit after a bitter farewell to the hero's dead family and to his native land, leaving Amphitryon and the chorus to lament for lost heroes and lost hopes.

Marmarinos' *Heracles* questions the role of evil in the world and the relationship between man and god(s), while highlighting the inexplicability of human behaviour. In this respect, I would describe *Heracles*' iconoclastic values as 'Euripidean', for the play contains at its core a criticism of the divine. It highlights the futility of human actions and the inherent self-destructiveness of human nature.



Fig. 1: Nikos Karathanos in the role of Heracles as he bids a painful farewell to his dead wife Megara (Kariofyllia Karambeti). Photo by Michalis Kloukinas.

The play's hero is a problematic figure. He is an icon for the chorus, both mortal and divine in the eyes of his family and friends and even in his own estimation. Burkert classifies Heracles among the 'figures who cross the chthonic-olympian boundary' (Burkert 1985: 208). He is a

potent symbol because he defied the Homeric principle that no god is a hero and no hero becomes a god (ibid: 208-11).

The narrative of Euripides' drama suggests that Heracles' tragic identity is constructed out of fragments, his madness, inflicted by Hera, precipitates a crisis which results in total destruction and his heroism is revealed to be illusory. *Herakles Mainomenos* can thus be read as a drama that raises issues of (self-) definition. The strong emphasis placed by the director on the definition of 'mainomenos' and the appreciation of the hero's human nature underpin his interpretation. Moreover, they give his revival a distinctly contemporary flavour. Euripides' Heracles, both fragmented and shattered, can be read as a symbol of modernity. In discussing the implications of globalisation in modern times Tsoukalas (2010: 65) argues that 'all conceptual certainties along with the internalised matrixes of reading the "self", the "other" and the social whole seem to have been literally vaporised'. The ironic portrayal of the chorus and the representation of a deeply-flawed Heracles allow for an updated interpretation of the tragedy framed by this metaphor: after a time of conflict and catastrophe Heracles/Greece survives deeply frustrated, but freed from past icons and rhetoric. At the same time, the chorus/Greek people function as a subversive group, a motley group of citizens detached from the hero/country. In a special note in the programme written to accompany the production Marmarinos (2011a: 47) describes the chorus in the following words:

The CHORUS, a random group of citizens. You may come across them on the tube, at street lights, on a guided tour, at a square, next to a fountain, waiting in a post office queue or at a bus stop... These people - MEMBERS OF A SECRET CHORUS OF SOME TRAGEDY - are tied together through a thick Silence, the feeling of Suspense which comes before action. They comprise the Chorus of an unknown *Oresteia*, located in the centres of big cities, echoing like sensitive instruments the rhythm of an underground pain of this moment-in-time, this place.⁸

METATHEATRICALITY, TEXTUALITY AND NARRATIVE

In Marmarinos' *Heracles* metatheatricality is a particularly prominent feature of the performance text.⁹ Additions were made to the choral parts, while lines and even whole scenes were eliminated in order to promote particular political interpretations of the ancient narrative through metatheatrical devices as well as translation choices. In this discussion the terms 'metatheatricality' and 'metatheatrical' are employed to draw attention to particular scenes and devices on the performance (rather than on the textual) level which can potentially foster in the audience an awareness of the artificiality, illusion and subjectivity of stage representation. As I will demonstrate, in Marmarinos' staging of *Heracles* metatheatricality relates to the disruption of the theatrical illusion, while metatheatrical devices may shift the narrative of the plot and/or forge intertextual connections through other performative means and/or art forms.

The performance text is a typical example of a trend in the translation of Greek tragedy since the second half of the twentieth century described as 'a creative reading of the ancient text' (Hardwick 2000:12). It epitomises a common practice in translating and staging classical Greek drama which rests on 'production pressures and the directorial role as drivers of adaptation' (Hardwick 2008: 356). Specifically, it points towards Marmarinos' emphasis on collective textuality and collaboration with translators/poets of a younger generation as well as with dramaturgs. As is characteristic of Marmarinos' approach *Heracles'* text was translated by the poet and translator Yorgos Blanas 'in collaboration with the director'¹⁰ and was edited by the director and Myrto Pervolaraki.¹¹

Blanas and Marmarinos' version departs from Euripides' text in various ways: it omits mythological and divine references, adapts choral odes and updates the play's political allusions. Furthermore, the use of common sayings and metaphors found in classic *laiká* songs (urban folk songs, see page 17 for further details) and the conversational tone of the translation are designed to foster audience identification with the action on stage, thus bringing an unfamiliar tragedy closer to its modern context. Consider, for example, the following lines:

LYCUS

Κι εσύ, λες και παντρεύτηκες το φως το ίδιο, κάνεις.
 Τι τρομερό κατόρθωσε ο άνδρας σου, για πες μου;
 Τη βδέλλα που πετσόκοψε, εκείνη μες στους βάλτους;
 Ή το θηρίο που ψάρευσε – όπως μ' ακούς! – στα δάση της Νεμέας;
 Με δίχτυα το παγίδευσε το αγρίμι· κι ας κομπάζει
 πως το άρπαξε στα χέρια του και το 'πνιξε.

As for you, you act like you've been married to light itself.
 What great deeds has your husband accomplished? Tell me.
 Was it that leech in the swamps that he hacked apart?
 Or the beast he fished – yeah, you heard me – in the Nemean forest?
 He used a net to trap the wild beast; though he boasts
 that he used his own hands to throttle it.

(Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 151-54)

AMPHITRYON

Άσ' τη θεά στον θρόνο της·
 και κοίτα εσύ τι κάνεις

Leave the goddess on her throne;
 and worry about your actions.¹²

(ibid. 1129)

On the performance level, the unimpassioned enunciation, the non-elaborated paralinguistic codes, and the simple gestures used by the actors coupled with the conversational, unsophisticated tone of the performance text testifies to Marmarinos' postmodern approach to tragedy.

The director highlighted the political aspects of the performance by means of powerful metatheatrical scenes and devices. The entrance scene is a case in point. The protagonists and the chorus of *Herakles Mainomenos* arrive on the orchestra of the Epidaurus theatre as passengers off a long-distance bus from the 1960s. The cast of the ancient Greek tragedy becomes a group of travelling players-fugitives in casual modern clothes¹³ carrying their suitcases; an allusion to Theo Angelopoulos's troupe in his 1975 film *The Travelling Players*.¹⁴ As they approach facing the audience, they mutter and then speak in unison ('*Είμαστε κουρασμένοι*', 'We are tired'), while similar self-reflective phrases from Angelopoulos's film are projected in the background. Marmarinos thus subverts the authority of the Euripidean text by offering an alternative collective identity to the tragic characters and the chorus. He detaches them from the context of the ancient Greek *polis* and integrates them into an updated, yet unspecified, location. In the meantime the bus, which Heracles' family has commandeered, is stationary in the background and remains there throughout the performance, headlights on. It is a distracting prop amidst the bareness of the stage environment. Over the course of the play an almost empty orchestra will be gradually filled with plastic stools and some props which the three boys will use in their play. There is a bleak tree on the left where Megara (Kariofyllia Karambeti) is found crouching suffering from spasms. Zeus' altar lies in the centre and a pair of floor microphones are scattered around. The set design by Eleni Manolopoulou is reminiscent of Beckettian scenery¹⁵ and complements the director's unconventional staging of the ancient tragedy. The representation of the entrance scene of the chorus can be read as a metatheatrical allusion to Angelopoulos' film with its strong political message, but also more generally as a political allusion to modern cases of immigrants seeking political asylum. In the performance narrative, too, there are metatheatrical devices which lend support to the director's creative and fragmentary approach to the classical text and to his politicised interpretation of the ancient tragedy. For example, the chorus frequently interpolates the introductory phrase '*Κάποιος είπε*' (Someone said) at various points in the drama. Consider the *parodos* when the chorus members discuss their plight and the current situation in Thebes:

*Κάποιος είπε Σκοτάδι, φόβος, ερημιά
μέσα μας*

Someone said: Darkness, fear,
solitude inside us

(Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 112-3)

Κάποιος είπε - Ελλάδα, Ελλάδα δύστυχη

Someone said - Greece, ill-fated Greece

(ibid. 135)

Again, in the third choral ode when the chorus hears about Lycus' murder by Heracles, the phrase *Κάποιος είπε* is used to introduce references to the glory of the city of Thebes, the fairness of the gods, fate and divine justice. Finally, in the lament scene the chorus adds the phrase repeatedly when addressing Amphitryon:

Κάποιος είπε Κλάψε! Αχ, κλάψε...

Someone said: Weep! Oh weep...

(Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 1064)

As the above examples indicate the production favoured putting distance between the text and the role and inviting the audience to (re)consider the truth of the tragic discourse as well as myth itself. In this production emotions were downplayed and the actors adopted a simple style of delivery. This postmodern approach to staging ancient Greek tragedy deliberately abandons the declamatory style of acting traditionally used in revivals and the overemphasis on *kinesis* (movement).

Other metatheatrical devices used in the production contribute to Marmarinos' design and reinforce his postmodern staging of the ancient tragedy which aims to undermine the solid reality of the tragic material. These are the ritualistic triple repetition of Amphitryon's (Minas Chatzisavas) and Megara's lines at the sight of Heracles approaching the palace's threshold, Amphitryon's description of the family's history in the prologue delivered as if he was a distant narrator totally unconnected to the drama and the self-introductory address employed by Iris and Lyssa (Madness) each time they spoke.

One of the more sensational scenes in Euripides that was retained by Marmarinos in his production is the unprepared and unexpected arrival of Iris and Lyssa (Madness) 'above the house' (817) which signals the beginning of the second part of the drama. The director represented this turning point in the dramatic action through a series of meaningful choices. When the chorus exits no bystander or witness is left on the orchestra, which is now empty, with only a few plastic stools scattered around. The stage remains dark with only low red floor lights scattered around the orchestra.¹⁶ The music is soft with recurrent piano motifs.¹⁷ Hera's messenger, Iris, and Hera's reluctant functionary, Lyssa, walk on stage. Iris (Stephania Goulioti) enters quietly and slowly, her kinesic code reminiscent of the austere posture of a prima ballerina. She whispers into the microphone, her speech like a lullaby frequently interrupted by artful pauses and munching on some kind of food. In contrast, Lyssa (Theodora Tzimou) moves around the stage restlessly. She runs around the orchestra and then climbs up the rocks on the left where she stands with bare breasts, an uncanny female figure moving only the upper part of her body while uttering strange vocalizations. While Lyssa speaks, Iris sings a song in a melodious and captivating voice. These directorial choices were designed to underline the fragmentation and isolation of 'a waste land': everything takes place 'in vacuo'. The chorus is not present and the two female figures do not interact in any way. In addition, they represent opposite values as Iris can be interpreted as a symbol of logic and eurythmics and Lyssa as a symbol of distraction and violence.

REINVENTING THE CHORUS

The chorus of *Herakles Mainomenos* in Marmarinos' production is an irregular group of four old and eight young actors plus a young actress (see Fig. 2). During the performance the chorus frequently shouts as a rebellious unit and at times performs interpolated songs and lines sometimes as a solo, other times in pairs or even in groups of three. A case in point is the *parodos* when the younger members of the chorus working in pairs raised up the older ones and carried them across the stage, while the latter pretended to walk on air holding their walking sticks aloft. Another example can be found in the first episode which is rife with political references, as well as being full of rhetoric about the importance of moral values and heroism. The chorus, unable to use their swords, reacts to Lycus' tyrannical attitude by swaggering about and shouting (252-74). The chorus' portrayal is enhanced by means of metatheatrical devices and narrative structures. In particular, the second choral ode (637-700) largely a hymn in praise of youth is adapted using a variety of devices: repetition [*Σιχάθηκα τα γηρατειά... Σιχάθηκα και τα μισώ* (I'm sick of old age... I'm sick of it and I hate it)], the elimination of many of the references to the gods, the added expression of a yearning for the gods to grant youth twice to 'those who are peerless, unique, happy, generous' ([*σ*]τους ανεπανάληπτους, [*σ*]τους μοναδικούς, [*σ*]τους χαρούμενους, [*σ*]τους γενναιόδωρους), anachronistic political allusions and set expressions about the fluidity of human nature and time¹⁸, and the contrast between the 'grand narratives' (Lyotard 1984) and the older members' individualised narratives which refer to their preferences of iconic *rembetiko* singers and popular music instruments. This metatheatrical device enhances the fragmentation of the chorus's narrative since the older members interpolate personal narratives (e.g. *Εμένα μ'αρέσει το κλαρίνο και το μπουζουκάκι...και η Μπέλλου* [I fancy the clarinet and the bouzouki...and Bellou]) thus disrupting the thematic unity of the second choral ode. The significance of this is that any 'grand narratives' (in Lyotard's terms) of Euripides' drama supposedly with a legitimating function to make sense of history do not provide a comprehensive explanation of historical experience of knowledge.

The aesthetic of narrative discontinuity functions as an ideological tool in support of the director's belief that the tragic chorus can function both as separate individuals and as a collective force. The production thus offered a dual representation of the chorus. In scenes where they share collective memories and mutual passions its members are portrayed as a restless and unruly modern band who play a variety of instruments and dance frantically. In contrast, in several added scenes each chorus member's individuality was stressed and they were portrayed as ironic narrators/commentators of history.¹⁹ Aided by the music of Kamarotos, the choreography of Konstantinos Rigos and the division of the chorus into old and young members, Marmarinos succeeds in embodying his concept of the tragic chorus in this production.



[Fig. 2:](#) The chorus in Marmarinos' *Herakles Mainomenos* (2011). Photo by Michalis Kloukinas.



[Fig. 3:](#) Young and old members of an active and anarchic chorus. Photo by Michalis Kloukinas.

There are political implications to Marmarinos' portrayal of the chorus in his production. Enhanced by metatheatrical interpolations, textual adaptation, the elimination of many of the divine references and the deconstruction of Heracles' labours Marmarinos' depiction of the chorus as a forger of history can be viewed as a politicised comment. For example, the laudatory tone of the first choral ode (348-450), which in Euripides' text praises Heracles as a panhellenic hero and a civilizer, is subverted. More than once a member of the chorus revised the lines spoken by another member, while the chorus grew either discordant when recording Heracles' labours or forgetful about mythological details and past events. The performative text of Euripides' tragedy is adapted by the addition of private narratives, announcements about the opening times of museums, comments and asides. Stage action is enacted in a playful manner with lots of gags, mimetic action and live music from wind and string instruments performed by the younger chorus members (see Fig. 3). A chorus member takes off the pelt of the Nemean Lion, while others pretend to weep or shut their mouths as they tell the story of the hero's labours. Similarly, the choral section in lines 875-85 is omitted and the chorus' part revised. In Marmarinos' production the chorus does not comment either on

Greece's misfortune or Heracles' glory or Zeus. The political and divine references in these lines are omitted. Moreover, in the lyric dialogue between Amphitryon and the chorus, the latter is portrayed as a casual bystander rather than as a chorus of unsettled citizens facing Lyssa's destructive attack on Heracles. The destructive violence of the scene is subdued through the chorus' casual account of Lyssa's arrival and a single cry 'Αχ' (Oh') uttered by each member in a distant manner close to the microphone. These paralinguistic codes demonstrate the ironic approach adopted in this production that invited its audiences to reconsider the inevitability of a negative situation.

The use of the microphone in relation to a range of paralinguistic codes employed by the performers reveals additional political undertones. Amphitryon's direct denunciation of Greece in lines 228-9 is uttered behind a switched off microphone – possibly a suggestion that the Greek people are deaf to criticism. The same holds true of Heracles' first lines upon his awakening and his *stichomythia* with Amphitryon. Other lines delivered by Amphitryon, which allude to the injustice of Zeus, are pronounced with extra emphasis and/or with significant pauses – probably alluding to the well-known tendency of the masses to abjure responsibility and place the blame on the authorities. In the *parodos*, which is an adaptation rather than a close translation of Euripides' text, the chorus lamenting Greece's fate deliver their lines very close to the microphone, thus creating an atmosphere of intimidation and terror rather than sorrow through over-coding of voice projection, articulation and intonation. These directorial choices change the meaning of the text by foregrounding the political aspect.

The director's concept of the chorus is thus politicised. The repetition of the added phrase 'Someone said' used by the chorus to draw attention to their weak physical state undermines the feeling of menace in the *parodos*. Moreover, the chorus' eagerness to fight against the tyrant and to stand by old Amphitryon is also ridiculed through the representation of the chorus as a rowdy gang rather than as an active mediator. Political undertones can also be detected in the scene of Lycus' murder when the chorus is comically portrayed as a group of naughty pupils loitering near the gate of the palace waiting to hear the news of the new king's death. On the performative level this ironic representation reveals hidden political nuances. Lycus' lines have been omitted. The murder scene is, thus, undermined and, consequently, Heracles' labour and his power are subverted.

In this scene the text is heavily adapted and is rife with updated political allusions to corruption and plutocracy which ultimately give a cynical tone to the *logos* of the production. Blanas' (2011: 38) interpretation of the murder scene is suggestive and worth quoting here:

Lycus is dead. In the meantime Heracles and his drama give way to an enormous painting which depicts life intruding into the roles – of the ruler, the ruled, the victim, the victimizer – and disorganising them. Life holds nothing heroic.

The chorus reports Lycus' murder with a "cool" demeanor',²⁰ like a distanced narrator. They refer to his just punishment for *hubris*, while at the same time recalling the power of law by the use of the phrase 'Someone said'. With the same detachment and indifference the chorus members sing and dance to the tune of a Cretan folk song later on in the production, while at the end of the scene they sit in a circle on plastic stools and solemnly deliver a hymn to Heracles and Zeus. In the *exodos* scene, the role of the chorus is confined to that of a musical ensemble performing live music on the stage, now a dimly lit barren plane of overturned stage props. Moreover, the theme of *philia* emphasised in the closing lines of the source text (1425-6)²¹ is abandoned in favour of a pessimistic concluding statement foregrounding loss and isolation, albeit in a detached, indifferent manner:

*Χάνουμε τους καλύτερους,
χάνουμε τις ελπίδες μας...
και πάμε.*

We are losing our best people,
we are losing all our hope...
we are well on our way.

(Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 1428-9)

The chorus in Marmarinos' production is portrayed as a sceptical, even at times ironic and indifferent narrator rather than as a compassionate tragic commentator. Although deconstruction and apoliticality are characteristic of postmodern theatre (see Auslander),²² the chorus' detached, distanced attitude is in itself a political comment, alluding to the attitude of the Greek people in 2011 and to the economic crisis. The production invited its Greek audiences to compare *Heracles'* chorus to their own response to the destruction of their country.²³

HISTORICITY AND NARRATIVE: REPRESENTATION OF HERACLES/GREECE

The portrayal of the tragic hero in Marmarinos' production also invited its audiences to view the play as a political commentary on contemporary events in Greece. Many of the main themes of Euripides' tragedy such as the status of the hero, friendship and family were intentionally subverted in the revival. The issue of historicity will be considered vis-à-vis the role of the Messenger performed by the same actor (Nikos Karathanos) who plays Heracles. This directorial choice is important for the representation of ambiguity as a defining characteristic of Heracles' contradictory mythical figure,²⁴ as well as for the interpretation of Heracles in Marmarinos' version as a metaphor for Greece in a time of crisis.²⁵ The discussion will focus on the *exodos* scene, Heracles' monologue after his awakening (1088-1108), the *agon* between Heracles and Theseus, and the adaptation of the final *stichomythia*.



Fig. 4: Nikos Karathanos as the Messenger in a trance after his grim narrative. Photo by Michalis Kloukinas.

The Messenger speech (922-1015) is a long descriptive, morbid account of Heracles' madness and destructive violence against his family staged as an aside to the audience in front of a microphone. The actor (Nikos Karathanos) describes the agonising events in a suitably emotional and mimetic style. In contrast to his low key Heracles, Karathanos's rhetoric and mannerisms set the dramatic tone of the Messenger scene. In the end he collapses in a trance on the altar; his eyes are shut and he clasps the microphone between the hands like a rock star (see Fig. 4). It is a powerful theatrical scene that matches that of Heracles' recovering from 'the murderer's sleep' (Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 59). It could also be interpreted as a comment on the narrative technique of Euripidean messenger speeches and the problem of how to portray them on the modern stage. In terms of the portrayal of the tragic character it demonstrates 'the nexus of paradoxes of which the tragic figure of Heracles is composed and which, in turn, generates multiple *personae*' (Giosi 2009: 36).

The doubling of the roles of Heracles and the Messenger stands out as a paradigm of *doing* History vs. *being* History, in Ricoeur's terms, thus implying a reciprocal relationship between the act of the narration of History and the fact that people exist within History (Ricoeur 1990 [1980]: 55). Through this double stage representation Marmarinos reveals that in his view History has 'only one chance to recover when events hurl us onto the rocks, and that is when it brings us together to narrate itself to us' (Marmarinos 2011a: 54). It is a knowing narration which turns into a gruesome (self-)awareness for the Messenger/*histor* represented on Heracles' body thus subverting the distance between historicity and narrative.²⁶ It also symbolises painful experience, fragmentation and isolation. In addition, by means of this doubling the audience is encouraged to compare Heracles to contemporary Greece as sites of on-going trial, violence and destruction.

As discussed above the performance text by Blanas and Marmarinos relies heavily on metaphors, set expressions and intertextual allusions to classic Greek *laiká* songs and Modern Greek poetry.²⁷ This is particularly true for the translation choices in the closing scene. In this scene Heracles' self-revelatory monologue and his *agon* are characteristic of the concept that underpinned the production. Heracles' mortal *persona* is emphasised while his identity is constructed as that of 'the quintessential Greek hero', a worker labouring in low-middle class city areas (Marmarinos 2011a: 24, 54). In these scenes Heracles' discourse recalls songs by iconic Greek folk musicians like Stelios Kazantzidis and Yorgos Zambetas and popular songwriters like Lefteris Papadopoulos. The following lines demonstrate how Euripides' text was adapted for a contemporary audience relying heavily on low register, set expressions and metaphors.

Όλα γύρω
μου είναι ξένα, σκοτεινά, και με πονάνε σαν πληγή.

Everything around
me seems strange, dark, and aches like a wound.

(Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 1108)

Ένα μαχαίρι την ψυχή από μέσα μου να βγάλει; Να τη δικάσω, να μου πει τι έκανα
στα παιδιά μου;²⁸

[Can anyone give me] a knife to uproot my soul? Put my soul on trial and let it tell
me what I have done to my children?

(ibid. 1151-2)

The discourse of *phainesthai* (appearance[s]) and the interrelated vocabulary of (in)visibility, covering and disclosure/exposure²⁹ - conceptually related to light/sight and cover/uncover - can be viewed as a paradigm of a political discourse which supports a politicised reworking of Euripides' tragedy. More specifically, it triggers associations with constructs, such as *diapháneia* (transparency), *apokálypsis* (disclosure) and *kálypsis* (cover-up), suggestive of current Greek politics. The following translation choices are indicative. In the hero's monologue after he recovers from his madness, the translators use 'το φως' (the light) in line 1090. In *Amphitryon* and Heracles' *stichomythia* emphasis is placed on sight:

Και μόνος σου μπορείς να δεις,
-αν σ' έχει πια αφήσει...

You can see for yourself,
- if it has now released you...

(Blanas & Marmarinos 2011: 1117)

Ωχ! Φρίκη
μου τρώει τα μάτια. Ο δύστυχος
εγώ...

Oh! What horror
eats out my eyes. What an unfortunate man
I am...

(ibid. 1132)

Later, in his monologue (1146-62) Heracles acknowledges feelings of guilt, fear and a sense of inferiority. Here the vocabulary of (in)visibility and the images of covering are prevalent: 'I will expose myself', 'come and have a look - don't look', 'where should I hide myself', '[where should I] disappear', 'I wish the earth opened up at my feet and swallowed me down', 'bring me a dark rag to cover my face', 'I'm ashamed of the look of the living'. The same discourse is used by Theseus who draws the audience's attention to the act of disclosing/exposing Heracles' face and eyes and the visibility of his face. On the performance level the discourse of *phainesthai* is enhanced by apt light design. The hero comes to embody this theme in Marmarinos' revival when a prone and naked Heracles is covered with his lion skin (compare Fig. 4 and 5).

In his *agon* with Theseus, Heracles' heroic image is shattered. The hero emphasises his present condition rather than his mythical *persona* and refers to his labours and life in deprecatory terms. The text is adapted so that the hero's reaction to ethical and ideological values is treated ironically. Consider, for example, the omission of Heracles' reference to his mortal father (1264-5), which subverts the human side of the hero; or Heracles' self-reference as 'the best among the Greeks' rather than as 'τούς εὐεργέτας Ἑλλάδος' (the benefactors of Greece, 1309-10). In Marmarinos' version the hero's status is undermined. In the first part of his *agon* a desperate Karathanos steps barefoot onto the orchestra floor clapping his hands in a symbolic act of self-mocking irony.



[Fig. 5:](#) Karathanos in the role of Heracles covered in his lion skin and sleeping 'the murderer's sleep'. Next to him on the orchestra floor Minas Chatzisavvas (Amphitryon). In the background stands the chorus. Photo by Michalis Kloukinas.

In the scene between Theseus and Heracles the theme of *philia* (friendship) and the Greek idea of *oikos* (family)³⁰ are also undermined. In addition, the impact of Theseus' political rhetoric is subverted by means of a performance of him as weak and lacking in tragic gravity, by the actor (Thodoris Atheridis). Theseus and Heracles' debate is rendered innocuous because it is played out against a cacophony of noises produced by the singing and shouting of the chorus accompanied by the accordion. The *stichomythia* between the two friends is abridged and line 1401 (παίδων στερηθείς παῖδ' ὅπως ἔχω σ' ἐμόν), which suggests the bond between the two men, is omitted. In addition, Heracles' concluding didactic lines (1425-6) about the superior value of friendship versus wealth and power are also omitted. The chorus'

concluding reference to *μέγιστα φίλων* is also left out in this translation. At the end of the drama the production does not emphasise either the image of a strong friendship, or that of Heracles as a devoted family man. Marmarinos' reading of the theme of friendship is rather ironic, in line with to his overall emphasis on the political aspects of Euripides' drama. In view of the socio-political context of the production the audience may well have interpreted Heracles as a reflection of Greece: a bruised and isolated hero/country that survives because of the aid of 'friends' (and/or allies). However, such a support should not necessarily be viewed in a positive perspective. In other words, it could be argued that at the end of Marmarinos' production, the following message is sent to the audience: not too much should be made of the aid of allies.

The final *stichomythia* is also adapted. Amphitryon's role is omitted (1418-21) and father – and - son do not embrace on stage. Heracles' order to his father to bury the children and his promise that he will return to Thebes to ensure his father receives a decent burial are omitted. This can be read as an ironic and fragmentary interpretation of Heracles since the director chooses to cut the hero off from both his heroic past and his home. In the end Heracles comes to symbolise isolation deprived of his background and his legend. In terms of his representation on stage Heracles' retirement and the retention of his bow and arrows – insignia of his heroic past and reminders of his guilt – can be seen as symbolic gestures. The exit scene in Marmarinos' *Herakles Mainomenos* becomes a comical escape rather than a symbolic rebirth and a new beginning for the tragic hero as in the source text. The two friends exit, arms around each other's shoulders, strutting and whispering their lines; Heracles puts out the bow in a comic gesture as if he needs to show it off. This is a caricature of the ancient hero.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have argued that significant issues - such as self-definition, friendship and 'a crisis of faith' (Griffiths 2006: 24), family and heroism - examined by Euripides in his drama were either left open or were undermined in Marmarinos' revival. Heracles' tragic figure was fragmented and his mythical image shattered. His heroic status was subverted and his ambiguity was highlighted. These elements, albeit present in Euripides' text, are emphasised in Marmarinos' version. The chorus was portrayed as an ironic, detached narrator, using humour to undermine the core themes of the drama. Marmarinos' reading of Euripides' play is loaded with a negative charge and characterised by fragmentation, caricature and detachment. It can thus be read as an updated comment on the concepts of *mainomenos* and madness. In a world of crisis and violence this *Heracles* is quite political because of its 'despairing nullification of Euripides' radical rehabilitative message' (Riley 2008: 350). Marmarinos values Narration over History and as a result his narrative is ironic and dismissive of History. In the socio-political contexts of the 2011 Epidaurus Festival, Marmarinos staged an unsettling production of *Herakles Mainomenos*' which underlined individual pain and public detachment as contemporary forms of postmodern experience. Lyotard (1984: 14-5) argues that according to the postmodern perspective "[i]dentifying" with the great names, the heroes of contemporary history, is becoming more and more difficult [...]. Each individual is referred to himself. And each of us knows that our *self* does not amount to much'.

The audience of the National Theatre's production may have recognised the parallels between the narrative of the performance and its context in the post-crisis era. Heracles and the chorus can be interpreted as reflections of Greece and the Greeks respectively. On the one hand, following all the conflict and violence Heracles/Greece may survive, but it will be weakened and isolated. Released from past symbols (i.e. a heroic past) and old rhetoric, Heracles/Greece manages to carry on. In the play Heracles kills his children. This may also evoke a parallel with a current Greek cliché, according to which 'Greece/the country eats her children'. The chorus/the Greek people exhibit, however, a disorderly, detached and sarcastic rather than a positive, politically committed attitude. All this does not bode well for the future. In the context of contemporary Greece and the recent socio-political situation characterised by austerity and public frustration, this *Herakles Mainomenos* was a highly politicised interpretation of Euripides' tragedy that subverted the ancient drama's main themes, such as divine protection, friendship, and, above all, violence, madness, and suicidal contemplation as potential qualities of a hero and of a heroic society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- When referring to Euripides' text I follow the edition by J. Diggle. 1981. *Euripidis Fabulae*, II. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Fourth edition 1992]
- Auslander, P. 1997. *From Acting to Performance. Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Blanas, Y. 2011. Translator's note. Production programme of *Herakles Mainomenos*, National Theatre of Greece, 38-40.
- Burkert, W. 1985. *Greek Religion*. Transl. by J. Raffan. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Euripides, *Herakles Mainomenos* (2011). Transl. Yorgos Blanas in collaboration with Michael Marmarinos. Athens: Nefeli.
- Georgousopoulos, K. 2011. Akademaikos refenes [Academic dutch treat]. Review, *Ta Nea* 19 September 2011.
- Giosi, M. I. 2009. *Euripides Heracles*. Introduction, translation, comments. Athens: Smili.
- Griffiths, E. 2006. *Euripides: Heracles*. London: Duckworth. [Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy]
- Halleran, M.R. 1988. *The Heracles of Euripides*. Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Interpretative Essay. Newburyport: Focus Classical Library.
- Hardwick, L. 2000. *Translating Words, Translating Cultures*. London: Duckworth.
- Hardwick, L. 2008. Translated Classics Around the Millennium: Vibrant Hybrids or Shattered Icons? In Alexandra Lianeri & Vanda Zajko (eds.). *Translation and the Classic. Identity as Change in the History of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 341-66.
- Hardwick, L. 2010. Negotiating Translation for the Stage. In Edith Hall & Stephen Harrop (eds.). *Theorising Performance. Greek Drama, Cultural History and Critical Practice*, 192-207.
- Hall, E. 1989. *Inventing the Barbarian. Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [Oxford Classical Monographs]
- Hutcheon, L. 1996. *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Ioannides, G. 2011. Herakles me menos, choris leonti kai mytho [Heracles with rage, without lion's hide and myth]. Review, *Eleftherotypia* 8 August 2011.
- Ioannidou, E. 2008. Monumental Texts in Ruins: Greek Tragedy in Greece and Michael Marmarinos' Postmodern Stagings. *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies* 3.

- Karathanos, N. 2011. O Herakles einai o pateras olon mas [Heracles is the father of us all]. Interview with Ileiana Dimadi, *Athinorama*, 30 July 2011. <http://www.athinorama.gr/theatre/article.aspx?id=10755> (accessed 19/9/2011).
- Kotzamani, M. 2000. Agamemnon (The Ghost Sonata). Performance Review, *Theatre Journal* 52/4: 576-8.
- Kolitsidopoulou, A. 2011. To teatro akoumba to microphono [Theatre touches the microphone]. Review, *Kathimerini* 21 August 2011.
- Kriou, M. 2011. Pioni sto paixnidi ton theon [A pawn in the game of gods]. Review, *Athinorama* 25 August 2011. <http://www.athinorama.gr/theatre/article.aspx?id=10822> (accessed 20/11/2013).
- Lambropoulos, V. 2010. Greek Chorus is 09. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 28/2: 277-84.
- Lyotard, J.-F. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Transl. from the French by G. Bennington & B. Massumi. Foreword by F. Jameson. Manchester: Manchester University Press. [Theory & History of Literature, 10]
- Manteli, V. 2009. Evripidi *Iketides*. Mia mousiki parastasi. Theseum Ensemble /VeenFabriek [Euripides' *The Suppliants*, a joint production by Theseum Ensemble and VeenFabriek: A musical performance of ancient drama at the Epidaurus Festival]. Review, *Theatrografies* 15: 113-6.
- Manteli, V. 2011. Humour and... Stalin in a National Theatre of Greece postmodern production. In Villy Tsakona & Diana E. Popa (eds.), *Studies in Political Humour. In between political critique and public entertainment*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 243-70.
- Marmarinos, M. 2011a. Director's notes. Production programme of *Herakles Mainomenos*, National Theatre of Greece, 24-5, 47, 54.
- Marmarinos, M. 2011b. Tin apelpisia ti fovame perissotero apo tin katastrophe [It is despair that I fear more than catastrophe]. Interview with Myrto Loverdou, *To Vima*, 2 July 2011. <http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=409185> (accessed 18/10/2011).
- Marmarinos, M. 2011c. Epeidi epichorigise prepei na to vouloneis? [Just because you get a subsidy you need shut up?]. Interview with Katerina Komita, *EF* [the official newspaper of the Athens Festival] 27-28 July 2011. <http://www.greekfestival.gr/gr/article55.htm> (accessed 12/09/2011).
- Marmarinos, M. 2011d. Marmarinos Mainomenos [Marmarinos Furens]. Interview with Sonia Zacharatou, *VIMagazino* 31 July 2011. <http://www.tovima.gr/vimagazino/interviews/article/?aid=414001> (accessed 18/10/2011).
- Pavis, P. 1992 [1986]. The Classical Heritage of Modern Drama: The Case of Postmodern Theatre. In *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*. Transl. by L. Kruger. London & New York: Routledge, 48-74.
- Polenakis, L. 2011. Ena ...paramythi pou amartise [A...fairytale which has sinned]. Review, *I Avgi* 25 September 2011.

- Pourgouris, M. 2010. The Phenomenology of Hoods: Some Reflections on the 2008 Violence in Greece. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 28: 2, 225-45.
- Ricoeur, P. 1990. *I Afigimatiki Leitourgia* [The Narrative Function]. Transl. by V. Athanasopoulos. Athens: Kardamitsa.
- Riley, K. 2008. *The Reception and Performance of Euripides' Herakles. Reasoning Madness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tsoukalas, C. 2010. *I Epinoisi tis Eterotitas. «Tautotites» kai «Diafores» stin Epochi tis Pagosmiopoiesis*. [The Invention of Otherness. 'Identities' and 'Differences' in the Age of Globalisation]. Athens: Kastaniotis. [2nd edition]
- Walton, J. M. 1987. *Living Greek Theatre. A Handbook of Classical Performance and Modern Production*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Walton, J.M. 2009. *Euripides. Our Contemporary*. London: Methuen Drama.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for his/her constructive criticism. I would also like to thank Professor Michael Walton and Professor Eleni Antonopoulou for their suggestions and insightful comments. Savas Kyriakidis (National Theatre of Greece), Rena Fourtouni and Myrto Pervolaraki (Theseum Ensemble) facilitated my research. I am grateful to Michalis Kloukinas for access to his archive of photographs and for permission to reproduce the photos in this article. All photos are from the first dress-rehearsal at Epidaurus.

¹ The programme of the Athens/Epidaurus 2011 Festival included eight revivals of ancient Greek plays. See the official site of the Festival <http://www.greekfestival.gr/en/> (accessed 19/10/2011). Most productions were adaptations of well-known and lesser-known classical texts and it is not fortuitous that they focused on iconic figures of classical drama. An aesthetic interest in interpreting Greek drama through rewriting, adaptation, and representation of various performing modes (dance, music, circus, performance) can also be testified. Five out of eight productions were not based on extant plays but were rather conceptualized in a fragmentary mode as 'text composition', 'adaptation', and (performative) intertextuality. This concept echoed Festival chairman and artistic director Yorgos Loukos's concerns about the need for 'eclecticism', 'openness' and reflection in times of 'a crisis of identity and orientation'. See <http://www.greekfestival.gr/en/article17-a-note-from-the-chairman.htm> (accessed 19/10/2011).

² Critical reception of the production was mixed. Favourable reviews mostly focused on the director's experimental approach, the theatricality of the performance, the merits of Yorgos Blanas' translation, and Dimitris Kamarotos' expressive music. See e.g. Ioannides (2011), Kolitsidopoulou (2011), and Polenakis (2011). In contrast, see Georgousopoulos (2011) who condemned the 'postmodern' aesthetics of Marmarinos' adaptation.

³ The production received a second performance in Epidaurus on 6 August 2011. It then went on tour and was performed in ancient theatres and other outdoor venues across Greece. See the official site of the National Theatre of Greece:

http://www.n-t.gr/en/events/hraklis_mainomenos/?rp=1 (accessed 19/10/2011).

⁴ Kotzamani (2000: 576-8) addresses the director's unusual reinterpretation of the main characters in his production of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and how this impacted on his portrayal of the chorus. Ioannidou (2008) focuses on the postmodern quality of Marmarinos' revivals of Greek tragedy and the fragmented textuality of classical drama in his productions. Manteli (2009: 113-16) focuses on the parody on the performance level and the clash of register that characterises his production of *The Suppliants*. Manteli (2011: 243-70) discusses

humour, intersemiotic and intertextual signs in another of Marmarinos' postmodern productions for the National Theatre of Greece.

⁵ See also Marmarinos' interview with Sonia Zacharitou (2011d) and his interview to e-zine *elculture*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCaesV1jyUQ> (accessed 18/10/2011).

⁶ The 2011 protest Movement of the Indignados (Kinima ton Aganaktismenon) in Syntagma (Constitution) Square was similar to the 2011 demonstrations in Spain and Portugal against the economic crisis and the Eurozone requests, against unemployment, the deterioration of quality of life, the sad realisation of the inadequacy of the political staff and lack of future prospects for improvement. It took the form of daily public gatherings and squats in Syntagma Square (situated opposite the Greek Parliament in the Athenian capital), making the first stage of a new form of social mobilisation for Greece. Following the example of Spain's Indignados a mosaic of people organised through social media, voiced their frustration and disapproval against the existing political elite and their recent economic decisions. The main characteristics of the Movement of the Indignant were: dependence on the social media, plurality, diversity, peacefulness and strength as well as frustration and non-coherence, which can explain why the phenomenon of such a massive social mobilisation did not grow into a viable political alternative.

⁷ The question is an intertextual quotation from Ioannis Polemis, a prestigious Greek poet and playwright of the early twentieth century. It is actually the title of Polemis' melodramatic lyrical four-stanza poem and comprises half of its first verse. The poem addresses the issue of ethnicity in the form of rhetorical questions without providing a clear-cut answer. However, it concludes by describing 'our country' as an inner voice inciting 'us' (a communal address) to go ahead.

⁸ Translated by the author. The emphasis is as in the original text.

⁹ In the context of an informed discussion about the audiences of ancient drama Hardwick (2010: 204) points out 'the need to analyse the whole production concept for how it embeds information and metatheatrical commentary as well as narrative.'

¹⁰ Euripides *Herakles Mainomenos*, trans. Yorgos Blanas in collaboration with Michael Marmarinos (Nefeli, 2011).

¹¹ The programme of *Herakles Mainomenos* (2011: 22, 52).

¹² All extracts from Blanas and Marmarinos' text are translated into English by the author.

¹³ Costumes by Kenny MacLellan.

¹⁴ The opening scene in *Herakles Mainomenos* strongly reminds of the opening static take in Theo Angelopoulos' acclaimed film *The Travelling Players* (*O Θίασος*). In the film, a group of travelling players peregrinates through Greece aiming at performing a popular Greek pastoral drama *Golfo* by Spiridon Peresiadis. In a first level the film focuses on the historical events between 1939 and 1952 in Greece as they are experienced by the travelling players and as they affect the villages which they visit. In a second level the characters live their own drama of jealousy and betrayal, with its roots in the ancient myth of the House of Atreus. The film, which also has a strong political subtext, was released after the fall of the colonels' regime in 1974 and when Greece returned to democratic rule. However, Angelopoulos, who aimed to show why it had been so difficult to establish democracy in Greece, had been working on the film throughout 1974 when the dictatorship was still in power. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Travelling_Players (accessed 3 June 2013). Manteli (2011: 243-70) discusses Marmarinos' habit of parodying a plethora of aesthetic forms and exploiting intersemiotic signs in a recent production of a postmodern drama by the National Theatre of Greece.

¹⁵ Beckettian style and theatre are noted for their bleak outlook and minimalism. The theatrical quality of Beckett's plays regarding stage design is pertinent to distance, empty space and surrounding blackness, indefiniteness and simple props. In other words, Beckett's theatre lends itself better to minimalist staging.

¹⁶ Light design by Thomas Walgrave.

¹⁷ Music by Dimitris Kamarotos.

¹⁸ See in particular, Blanas and Marmarinos' translation (2011: 41):

Αλλά ... τη διαφορά
ανάμεσα στην αρετή και την κακία οι θεοί
την άφησαν ρευστή.
Και πάνε κι έρχονται οι καιροί, ρευστοί κι αυτοί·
κι η μόνη διαφορά: πως κάπποιοι θησαυρίζουν.

(669-72)

Yet... the difference between virtue and vice is left fluid by the gods. And times come and go, also fluid; the only difference being, certain people accumulate large fortunes.

¹⁹ Lambropoulos (2009: 279) draws attention to a similar conceptualisation of the Athenian chorus in Dimitris Dimitradis' *I am Dying as a Country* also directed by Marmarinos for the 2008 Athens Festival.

²⁰ The phrase is borrowed from Auslander (1997: 60).

²¹ 'ὄστις δὲ πλοῦτον ἢ σθένος μᾶλλον φίλων ἀγαθῶν πεπᾶσθαι βούλεται κακῶς φρονεῖ'. See also 1429, τὰ μέγιστα φίλων ὀλέσαντες.

²² See Auslander (1997: 58-72) for a discussion of the concept of the political and of deconstruction and apoliticality as symptoms of postmodern theatre with reference to The Wooster Group.

²³ Reviews addressed the impact of the production on the audience. Kriou (2011), for example, argues that "Michael Marmarinos updated Euripides' tragedy so that it affected the consciousness of contemporary audiences."

²⁴ See Giosi (2009: 21, 35-37).

²⁵ Nikos Karathanos (the protagonist) also set the director's take on Euripides' play into contemporary political contexts. "How can you live on when disaster strikes you mercilessly? It's like the bankruptcy of the country right now." Interview with Ileana Dimadi (2011).

²⁶ See Ricoeur (1990) on history and narrativity, narrative and historicity, particularly his view that history and fiction both relate to reality and to the fundamental historicity of human existence.

²⁷ The recurrent image of *wounds* and *wounding* in the exit scene is reminiscent of Miltos Sachtouris' surrealist poetry. Sachtouris (1919-2005), who belongs to the poetic movement of the first Greek surrealists, uses strong imagery to represent a monstrous world of violence, disrupted societies and dislocated people, the inhumane, the absurd, the unavailing. Images of death, destruction and suffering are recurrent in Sachtouris' poems.

²⁸ In an interview with Dimadi, Karathanos (2011) acknowledges that these lines sound as a lovely *rembetiko* song: "Each time I pronounce this phrase I think 'oh, that's a nice rembetiko!'"

²⁹ For a sociological approach to the mass media discourse of *phainesthai* and its implied violence in the context of the 2008 riots in Greece see Pourgouris (2010: 225-45).

³⁰ Griffiths (2006: 65-80) briefly analyses Greek ideas about family and genealogy and explores the family dynamics through the individual relationships. She also considers the issue of family, the community, and warfare in relation to Lycus and the debate on the bow.