Translating the Greek Civil War: Alexandros Kotzias and the translator's multiple *habitus*

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines how literary and socio-political influences might permeate translatorial action and lead to the articulation of the translator's multiple *habitus* by looking at the Greek translation of a highly controversial book. Nicholas Gage's *Eleni*, published in the USA in 1983, captures the darkest moments of the ideological rift between Left-wing and Right-wing forces during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). The translator of *Eleni* into Greek, Alexandros Kotzias (1926-1992), a post-war political novelist, was considered a highly controversial literary figure amongst the Greek Left-wing literati. Drawing on narrative theory, this paper establishes how Kotzias' own constructed public narrative of the civil war, an outcome of his individual past socialization within the Greek socio-political field, surfaces in the translation of *Eleni*. Ultimately, this paper argues for the translator's *habitus* as a multiple entity, whose various facets correspond to the translator's diverse socialization within a variety of social fields.

KEYWORDS: Bourdieu, Greek Civil War, ideology, narrative theory, translator's agency.

Introduction

In a paper entitled 'The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas' (Bourdieu, in Shusterman, 1999:220), Bourdieu introduces the three stages of cross-cultural pollination of ideas: *selection*, which refers to the cultural product selected and the agents involved in its introduction to the new culture; *classification*, which describes the different status cultural products acquire in their new context, either deliberately or by virtue of their new cultural setting; and *reading*, which captures deviations in the interpretation of those products in their originating and receiving cultures. This is Bourdieu's first assertion on the international transfer of cultural production and, by extension, the first reference to translation. The conceptual foundation of his theoretical approach lies in the polysemy that Bourdieu attributes to all intellectual works. As "texts circulate without their context" (1999:221), they are envisaged as dynamic entities, determined not only by their field of production but also by their field of reception, vested by meaning, that is, by the context in which they circulate. As the title of Bourdieu's paper suggests, this polysemy can be construed as an inherent quality of cultural products, dormant until the social context (*social conditions*) is altered and through that change, the cultural product is redefined.

Although Bourdieu extensively discusses contextual factors that determine the trajectories cultural products follow across cross-cultural boundaries, reference to the translator is very limited, which perhaps overshadows the translator's agency in this transfer (see Bourdieu 1999:222). Symbolic changes do not merely occur due to structural differences between cultures, but can be triggered by particular agents involved in the intricate process of cultural transfer. Translators might have a vested interest in the work they introduce in their domestic culture and, therefore, might contribute particular types of capital to the transfer process and in this manner substantially change the symbolic value of that work.

The case of *Eleni* and its Greek translation exemplifies the aforementioned point particularly effectively. The story of *Eleni* unfolds on two temporal planes. One concerns life in rural Greece, before and during World War II and the subsequent civil war. Against this historical background, the reader follows the life of Eleni, Nicholas Gage's mother, and her death at the hands of Greek Communist guerrillas on the purported grounds of treason because she attempted to prevent her children from being sent to countries behind the Iron Curtain.[1] Simultaneously, the author narrates his own modern-day journey in tracing and avenging his mother's murderers. Due to the fact that *Eleni* is an aestheticised true story, in which the characters, situations and historical events described are ostensibly real but are animated through the tropes and aesthetic devices of the novel, it becomes highly problematic when it is 'repatriated' in its 'original' historical context. Furthermore, *Eleni* acquires a different symbolic meaning within the Greek context. On the one hand, by virtue of its engagement with the public narrative of the Greek Civil War it acquires symbolic value as a historiographic piece, making a contribution to the public narration of the civil war in the Greek context. On the other hand, by virtue of its narration of the war from a contested perspective, the book further acquires political value. This symbolic redefinition is not merely attributable to the structural qualities of the field of reception, but also to the symbolic contributions of the translator, who was able to distinguish literary, ideological and moral qualities in the book and foregrounds them through his translation. As will be posited in this paper, the balance between fact and fiction and the engagement with a highly controversial public narrative of Greece engenders the distinction between the translator's professional, literary and ideological dispositions and necessitates a different alignment between these various aspects of the translator's multiple *habitus*.

The translator's *habitus*

To account for the behaviour of literary agents and their cultural production, and in the case of the subfield of literary translation, translatorial action, Bourdieu formulates a theory of action, according to which agents' practices are determined by the relationship that develops between an individual's social trajectory and embodied dispositions, on the one hand, and the structure of the field in which an individual is active, on the other hand. This relationship is embodied in the agent's *habitus*:

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, *structured structures* predisposed to function as *structuring structures*, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends (1990:53; emphasis in original).

As such, the *habitus* of the agents is formulated on the hypothesis that agents neither blindly obey a set of externally regulated rules, nor do they merely act on personal value systems. There is a process of proselytization, during which the field provides the norms and rules, which are meant to guide the individual's practice within the field, and the individual participates in this process by contributing previous experiences, dispositions and values. The agent's *habitus* is the interface where the meeting of these two elements transpires, negotiating between the field's 'rules' and the individual's dispositions and previous experiences to produce practice. However, with regard to individuals' actions within the field of cultural production, although Bourdieu denies the Substantialist categories of class,

[1] During the Greek Civil War, around 25,000 children were removed by Communist partisans from their villages in the northern part of Greece. This practice is widely known as '*pedhomazoma*' (Boeschoten 2008:131).

developed within Marxism (see 1998), his most valued distinction that determines agents' action, is between aesthetics and the economy, where he observes a strong correlation between class, production and taste (elite vs. mass culture) and their relentlessly direct correspondence within the *autonomous* pole of the field (high culture, avant-gardism, disengagement from the social world) and within the *heteronomous* pole of the field (mass production, easily digestible aesthetics, political engagement). Lahire (2003), however, challenges the constructiveness of observing and understanding social action merely within the limits of a 'professional field'. Similarly, within Translation Studies, Simeoni recognizes that agents are simultaneously situated within a variety of social fields, identifying "multiple kinds of *habitus*" that combine various dispositions, acquired within these diverse fields, and observes their impact on action (1998:17).

Literary translators and other agents, along with their corresponding fields, are immersed in years of accumulated history, experience and knowledge. The norms that inform the *doxa*, *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy* of given practices are born out of conflicts, clashes of interest, allegiances and common beliefs. These conflicts and interests, however, are not limited to the stakes of the particular field in which agents exercise their profession but often extend to other realms (e.g. political, ideological). This should not suggest that Bourdieu does not acknowledge the influence that surrounding fields bring to bear on the literary field, and by extension, the subfield of literary translation. After all, Bourdieu recognizes that the former occupy a dominated position within the "field of class relations" and the "field of power" (Johnson 1993:14). This paper merely places emphasis on the fact that Bourdieu's further distinctions within the field (e.g. engagement with sociological, ideological and other social issues vs. ethical nihilism) acquire different symbolic meaning within the cultural field, based on the shifting relationship the former maintains with its surrounding fields, and that external struggles can therefore have an equal impact on agents' actions, as internal struggles do.

Although the impact external struggles bear on the agent's *habitus*, or their manifestations in a given field are recognized by Bourdieu, they can be further elaborated and made more concrete through the methodological tools of narrative theory. Narrative theory (see Somers 1992, 1997; Somers & Gibson 1994; Baker 2006) can prove instrumental in taking up Bourdieu's interest-based approach to social practice and extending it to incorporate literary agents' preoccupations and actions outside their immediate field of operation. In accordance with Bourdieu, who gives precedence to the cognitive and social construction of reality, so too does narrative theory move "along the central axes of the interaction between *agency* and *structure*" (Somers & Gibson 1994:39), consolidating the critical link between reality and perceived reality. In short, within the social sciences, narratives are perceived as those stories that societies and individuals devise to structure and comprehend reality. Their range of influence fluctuates between the *personal narratives* individuals devise to situate themselves in society; the *public narratives* that establish a sense of community and are constructed by public institutions and social structures (e.g. the family, the educational system); *conceptual narratives* that embody the stories scholars elaborate for their object of inquiry; and finally the universally verified *master narratives*, those "epic dramas of our time" (Somers 1992:605) that surround the contemporary individual.

Two very important observations about narratives are instrumental in understanding how narratives can influence translatorial action. Firstly, every narrative offers a "distorted picture" of reality and its object of description (Carr 1997:7) and therefore reality becomes a matter of subjective interpretation. Secondly, adherence to a particular narrative becomes a formative factor in the constitution of a community in as far as individuals reside in specific

narratives where "there is confirmation for the story that constitutes one's life" (Fisher 1997:314). Therefore, narratives function as indices of distinction, congregating or segregating individuals according to the shared stories they endorse. These stories have roots in various spheres in the social landscape (political, literary, etc.), while they can be constructed and disseminated by various institutions that sanction them, or they might fulfil a subversive function, offering competing interpretations of events, comparatively to the established ones (see Fisher 1997).

Translatorial agents are not immune to this narrative construction of the social world, but in acting as embodiments of established or subversive tales, they may try to validate or respectively subvert them within their immediate field of practice. Agents do not form allegiances or develop rivalries merely on shared class or professional interests; "the real class is a result of the struggle for classification, which is a properly symbolic (and political) struggle to impose a *vision* of the social world" (Bourdieu 1998:11; my emphasis). That vision may very well be the common social or historical public narratives individuals share and therefore extend beyond the immediate field of interest and its competing narratives. Therefore, narrative theory can prove indispensible to the conceptualization of Bourdieu's external struggles as narratives and in the theorization of how the latter penetrate the literary and translational fields, to be refracted through those fields' logic. As these narratives traverse the literary and translational fields they interact with the trajectories of literary translators and translated cultural products. Consequently, the translator is simultaneously subjected to a variety of narratives rooted in diverse social fields (politico-historical, professional translatorial, aesthetic, etc.). Essentially, this allows us to form an understanding of translatorial action as the interaction between the translator's *habitus*, the *doxa* of the field of literary translation and narratives external to the field, but indeed consequential. Through the case of *Eleni* (1984), I will examine how the conceptualization of external struggles as narratives that penetrate the field of literary translation, combined with an informed history of the translator, can help us understand the translator as a "mixture of genres" (Lahire 2008:185).

Eleni and the Greek Civil War

Shortly after its occupation by Germany (1941-44), Greece entered one of its darkest eras, that of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), which had its roots in the ideological clash between the right wing and the left wing. Although the conflict materialized only after the end of World War II, ruptures were externalized in socio-political, ideological and intellectual spheres before its end. In this period, Greece witnessed the most violent atrocities between these two main ideological fronts, while centrist feelings were dwindling in the name of a highly polarized political and social struggle. The end of the civil war in 1949 was marked by a right-wing victory and the emotional, economic and political devastation of the Left. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was banned until the fall of another traumatic epoch for Greece, that of the military junta (1967), which collapsed in 1974 (see Woodhouse 1985).

Although the conflict materialized most conspicuously in the political field, it carried serious implications for the intellectual, social, literary and historical fields of Greece. The events of the civil war, along with their ideological underpinning, continued to haunt the Greek political and cultural fields for many years after the events transpired, as discourse on the matter was highly polemical and polarized. In recounting the events of the war, one of the most crucial controversies that emerged with regard to the civil-war narrative centred on the role of EAM

and ELAS during the German occupation and the following civil war.[2] While the left circulated narratives that framed their role as one of emancipators, on the one hand, and fighters for their political establishment on the other, the other side framed EAM and ELAS's role as one of traitors and violent engagers of political power. Crucially, the conflict transcended its originating temporal and topical space and continued to inform political, social and intellectual spheres in Greece well into the 1980s. As Roderick Beaton has put it, "the scars of the conflict were clearly visible in many aspects of Greek public life until at least the mid-1980s" (1999:197).

Eleni, which was written by the Greek-American author, Nicholas Gage in 1983, is a book which deals precisely with this very controversial and tempestuous era of Greek warfare. By its nature, this book cannot be easily classified under one particular genre. Extensive research had been undertaken to reproduce the historical and political narrative of the time but also, to offer an authentic depiction of the society of rural Greece during this period. In addition to its sociological and historical value, however, the central story of *Eleni* has been reconstructed in a manner that resembles a novel; dialogues are recreated, characters' thoughts are reconstructed, the chronological continuum is occasionally broken and the third-person narration is interrupted by frequent interpolated passages in the first person, describing the author's first-hand memories of the events. Bearing in mind the above, it is easy to understand why *Eleni*, an aestheticized 'real' narrative, has circulated under various subject areas (e.g. history, literature, nonfiction, biography, autobiography and others).

In Greece, the controversies caused by the Greek Civil War rendered its treatment by history writing a rather precarious venture for some time, so it was up to the literary field to chronicle the events of the war (see Mackridge 1988). Therefore, a political and ideological struggle concretely penetrated the literary field after the end of the war. Since the end of the civil war, many authors within the Greek literary field have presented aestheticized fictional or semi-fictional accounts of it. Indeed, Beaton notes that "documentary or lightly fictionalized accounts of events in the war[3] and the civil war became the dominant form of expression among new writers" on both ideological sides (1999:236). So, by the time *Eleni* was published in Greece in 1983, the Greek literary field was already endowed with instances of Greek Civil War literature, either lightly or considerably fictionalized, among which *Eleni*'s novelistic qualities were to situate it. However, *Eleni* entered Greek boundaries at a politically and socially awkward period, less than ten years after the fall of the military Junta.

The Junta had shifted the scale politically and ideologically, a phenomenon which exteriorized right after its fall in political, ideological, intellectual and social fields. Leftist voices resurfaced again after years of exclusion both in literature and history writing. Overtly *conscripted* literature began to eclipse after the fall of the Junta (see Apostolidou 2010:150, 151) and many writers called for a humanitarian approach to literature. At the same time an innovative and sophisticated faction of left-wing writers turned against previous leftist prescriptions for literature that reinforced "dogmatism and political conscription" (Apostolidou 2003:286; my translation). Despite attempts at reinvention of the Left, much of the pre-Junta left discourse re-emerged due to the "hyperbolic party-isation[4] of the era, better

[2] EAM (National Liberation Front) was the earliest resistance group formed under the auspices of the communist party of Greece (KKE) in 1941. In 1942 the armed force of EAM, called ELAS (The Greek People's Liberation Army) was formed (Farakos 2000:19).
[3] World War II.
[4] *Party-ization* (κομματικοποίηση) differs from politicization in that it captures the conscription not to a political idea, but a particular political party.

yet, the entrenchment of a substantial group of intellectuals behind party mechanisms' (Apostolidou 2003:297; my translation), much to the detriment of national reconciliation and progress. At the same time, left-wing interpretations of the civil war and its aftermath prevailed and slowly became institutionalized (see Kalyvas 1999; Nikolopoulou 2008). This institutionalization of the left-wing narrative of the war, along with the narratives of the Junta's oppression and blight of intellectual life that were in circulation in post-Junta Greece made it difficult for rightist voices to be heard. As Nikolopoulou points out, "the dominant mode of memory configuration of that period was [the publication of] testimonies" (2008:374; my translation), which was then predominately left-wing in nature.

Against this background, *Eleni*'s perceived anti-communist tone made it a target for Greek audiences and critics. Beyond the criticism that *Eleni* elicited, some also expressed disappointment in the translator, Alexandros Kotzias, for undertaking the translation (see Karolas 1984). Kotzias, already considered a conservative, was seen by a section of Greek society as contributing to the circulation of an unsubstantiated, false account of the Greek Civil War. Therefore, to a certain extent, Kotzias' act of translating *Eleni* was understood as a political act for the purposes of disseminating particular ideological ambitions, "[a] heretical import […] bringing a message, a position of force from a different field, […] to try and shore up [his] own position" (Bourdieu 1999:223). The extent to which the vindication and dissemination of a political narrative was in fact the motivation behind this translation will be discussed in this paper.

Alexandros Kotzias: the translator's trajectory

A distinguished novelist in Greece, Alexandros Kotzias (1926-1992) worked in various Greek newspapers as a critic, pursuing his interests, which alternated between the social, the political and the aesthetic. Although he was a political writer, his understanding of politics extended to incorporate the aggregate of social reality and its impact on Greek society, through the literary treatment of the relationship between "personality" and "context".[5] His works, therefore, were inevitably political, since the above mentioned "context" was politically-charged. Indeed, he was an author whose literary output fervently traversed the boundaries between the fiction of the aestheticized world and the turbulent reality of a politically and socially unstable Greece during the Second World War, the Greek Civil War and the military Junta (1967-1974).

Kotzias had devised his own narrative of the social and ideological dilemmas of the above periods, which he referred to as the "Thirty Years War of Greece" (Kotzias, cited in Papatheodorou 2002:772; my translation) and which almost exclusively served as the thematic basis for all of his work. This would, on the one hand, lead Kotzias to the elaboration of an aesthetics of politically corrupt, morally compromised and ideologically opportunistic characters, but, on the other hand, it would subject his work to misinterpretations, due to the contemporary social, political and ideological struggles, in which his work was embedded, making him a sort of *heretic* in the Greek literary tradition, "excluded by the official aesthetic" (Bourdieu 1996:106), as Kotzias would never gain wide readership. As we will later see, his translation of *Eleni* was in some aspects consistent with his literary trajectory although it was published after Kotzias was rehabilitated in the Greek literary field.

During the German Occupation of Greece, Alexandros Kotzias aligned with the left-wing resistance group EPON in their struggle against the Germans, only to be disillusioned by the

[5] Book presentation of *Γενναίος Τηλέμαχος* [*Brave Telemachus], Η Βραδυνή*, 21 November 1966 (cited in Rota 2004:227).

leftist ideology particularly after the *Dekemvriana* in 1944 (see Dermitzakis 1995:15).[6] Belonging to a generation of writers that had witnessed two of the most turbulent periods of modern Greece, namely the German Occupation and the civil war, Alexandros Kotzias and his contemporaries became the heirs of a tumultuous "heritage" which was not only "inscribed in the very structure of the [political] field" (Bourdieu 1996:243) but which had permeated all spheres of social practice. This heritage to a great extent determined Alexandros Kotzias' authorial and translatorial agency in the field.

Within the Bourdieusian framework, the individual does not re-invent him/herself outside time and space in a series of independent creative outpourings but defines him/herself in relation to a "*space of possibles*" (ibid.), which is both constant, inscribed in the essence of the field in the form of a heritage, and fluid, in the changes that every single agent's participation induces in the field. What is interesting about that "*space of possibles"* in the literary and translational field of Greece after the civil war (particularly within the 1950s and 1960s), as well as after the fall of the Junta (1974), is the tension that is created between the actual positions available in the respective fields and the polarized political narratives of the Left and the Right that circulated the Greek social field. At least on behalf of the readership and some 'committed' authors and literary critics, there is a tendency to conscript writers to one of the two sides. This is evident even in contemporary academic discourse that attempts to analyse the Greek literary field from the civil war onwards, which consistently employs political titles to position writers in the field (e.g. see Apostolidou 2003, 2010; Kastrinaki 2005).

This 'forced' parallelism between the available positions in the literary field and the external political narratives is to some extent inevitable in consideration of the following: first of all, "the highly politicized nature of the post-war generation in Greece" (Beaton 1999:276) and, secondly, the fact that the polarisation of the Left and the Right was accompanied by the struggle between a number of opposing public narratives that concerned a variety of social dilemmas that had developed throughout the course of the twentieth century, such as the 'Language Question'[7] and the conflict between "the inheritance of eastern Orthodoxy" (Beaton 1999:262) and the western world. Consequently, it could be argued that a deep schism penetrated Greek society on practically every consequential matter. It seems that due to this external polarization, some political authors were 'artificially' polarized in the literary field as well.

Within this highly polarized "*space of possibles"*, Kotzias produced his first novel, *Siege* (1953). The novel was immediately repudiated by a dominant leftist circle of critics, cast off as a profusely apologetic attempt to rationalize, but not vindicate, the atrocities committed by the Right during the civil war, while casting a grossly unfavourable light on the Left (see Dermitzakis 1995). Among other works, Kotzias' *Siege,* Kasdaglis' *The Teeth of the*

[6] EPON stands for United Panhellenic Organization of Youth and was the youth wing of EAM (National Liberation Front). The term *Dekemvriana* refers to a series of armed conflicts that took place in Athens between December 1944 and January 1945. On 1 December 1944, the British head of the Allied Forces in Greece ordered the disarmament of all armed resistance groups, with the exception of governmental forces. In response, EAM organized a demonstration in Athens, which led to an armed conflict that lasted over a month between EAM and ELAS fighters, on the one hand, and governmental and British Army forces, on the other.

[7] The *Language Question* refers to a very public and violent debate about the correct form of written Greek, which was polarized between advocates for the demotic form of Greek and adherents of the 'purist' form of Greek (*katharevousa*). It was an Act of Parliament in 1985 that established the demotic as the official language (see Beaton 1999:326).

Millstone (1955) and Roufos' trilogy *The Chronicles of a Crusade* were pigeonholed as "anti-partisan, anti-human, anti-Hellenic" (Hatzis 1961; cited in Kalamaras 2009:142) by virtue of the aesthetic and ideological perspective they employed to illuminate the Resistance against the Germans and the Greek Civil War. In an extreme criticism by the critic Raftopoulos (1955), Kotzias' *Siege* was pigeonholed as "black literature", a title coined to denote "slanderous political literature" and literature of "propaganda of hatred" (cited in Papatheodorou 2002:762). Apostolidou maps a struggle that began in the literary field over "the interpretation of the traumatic experiences and moral victory of the one or the other [ideological] side" that more or less takes place "*in absentia* of literature itself" (2010:137).

However, the struggle seems to have had a concrete aesthetic manifestation relevant to *narrative form*. Despite the fact that such works were renounced outright on the basis that they "slander[ed] the resistance of the Greek people [against the Germans]" (Raftopoulos 1955:332), their aesthetics of the negative, namely the employment of anti-heroes as central characters in their stories was one of the main reasons they were disputed. In that vein, Kotzias' *Siege* is reviled as "four hundred something pages", in which, the author attempts to "narrate the mental fluctuations of a hardened criminal, whom [the author] wishes to turn into a tragic persona" (Raftopoulos 1955:333). Raftopoulos expresses his aesthetic preoccupations more explicitly in relation to Kasdaglis' work, suggesting that even if an anti-hero can be conceived "there can be no work of art that does not encapsulate an underlying truth, that does not possess an affirmation of life values" (ibid.). In the aesthetic *possibles* of the Left belonged the positive hero as well as an expectation of the author to identify with his characters (see Dermitzakis 1995; Papatheodorou 2002).

By virtue of the distance and mistrust which Kotzias maintains toward his characters, he is pushed to the ostracized part of the field both because of his political thesis, but also due to his poetics of the 'negative'. Kotzias reinforces these poetics strategically through his translations, which can be understood as aesthetic and political position-takings, reaffirming his position in the Greek literary landscape. To that end, Kotzias establishes his 'elective affinities' through translating Kafka, with whom he shares an interest in issues of ethics and justice, and Dostoyevsky, whose poetics he emulates in his own novels. Most interestingly, Kotzias translates Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1940) in 1960, a novel critical of the hard-line doctrines of the Left, written by an author equally disillusioned by Communism. Unlike Dostoyevsky's negative heroes, however, Kotzias' own creations are often completely dehumanized, which made critics particularly wary of his literary output and partially explains his slower rehabilitation in the Greek literary field (see Dermitzakis 1995).

In retrospect, it could be argued that the symbolic value that was attached to the heroic narrative of the civil war gained greater urgency in post-war Greece than any aesthetic quality some authors had to contribute to the field, particularly in reference to the readership sphere. As Kaloutsas (2002:779) has suggested, the misinterpretation that Kotzias' work invited can be attributed to the social and political climate, in which he emerged as an author. The structural particularities of the field at that time could not seemingly tolerate Kotzias' literary construction of an ideologically opportunistic faction of society until much later in time, when his work attracted the appreciation that stems from historical distance. Similar structural particularities were in effect at the time when *Eleni* was published. In addition to the dominance of the leftist narrative version of the civil war, memories of the Junta had perhaps created a climate where any account of the war that did not abide by the 'official' narrative triggered horrid memories of the Junta's anti-communist rhetoric.

Literary and political dispositions: symbolic exchanges between Alexandros Kotzias and *Eleni*

Within the post-Junta context, a time when official discourse had focused on constructing a narrative of *victimization* of the Left (see Nikolopoulou 2008:378), *Eleni*'s narrative of the civil war introduced the book to the realms of "heretical imports" (Bourdieu 1999:223), by virtue of its 'anti-communist' nature. The most interesting and revealing aspect regarding translatorial agency, however, is the translator's potential motivation for introducing *Eleni* to the Greek context. Although Kotzias subscribed to a 'story' of disenchantment in the Left, his *literary habitus* further recognized a different symbolic capital in *Eleni*, rooted firstly in the uniqueness of the genre and secondly in the potential incorporation of his own literary devices in the translation to colour *Eleni's* negative heroes with his own sombrely sarcastic expression. Papatheodorou suggests that Kotzias' aesthetics and narrative form was not just an artistic mode of expression but a "drastic political indictment" against the dominant historical narrative of the winners (2002:769), a preoccupation that underlined most of his novels. The translation of *Eleni* contributes to combat that dominant historical narrative, since Kotzias believed in the production and circulation of testimonies from both ideological fronts for national reconciliation to emerge.[8]

Kotzias' keen awareness of the social issues that tormented Greece gained him symbolic capital beyond the limited boundaries of the literary field and could be said to raise him to the sphere of public intellectuals in Greece. The issues that anguished him and which made his literary output politically engaged were the relationships between the past and the present, which revealed itself in Kotzias' characters, who were tormented by past deeds and had fallen victims to misinterpreted ideologies. This led his literary work to a fixation on the "social chameleonism" (Micke 2002:811), adopted by some, and the misconception of ideologies, a realization which is articulated by Kotzias on the back cover of one of his most striking works, *Usurped Authority* (1979):

> In a Thirty Years War, many people intentionally or unintentionally sacrificed; but there are some masters of survival who methodically and ruthlessly utilizing whatever skills nature bestowed upon them, they pursue a single goal: to slip through the collective ordeal unscathed. […] However, readers should note that this book is neither history nor a chronicle; its author aspired to write something more real than the historical truth - a novel (cited in Papatheodorou 2002:772).

His perception of the causes that perpetuated the Greek Thirty Years War[9] was the afore-quoted amorality, trivialization and ill-perception of ideology that transformed a faction of the nation into compromised opportunists. In an article published in the journal *Synechia*, Kotzias momentarily departs from the world of literature and instead explores the distorted social forces that are in effect in Greece through his own sociological analysis of the unsavoury and compromised character-types that he observed in a troubled Greek society (e.g. the collaborator, the informer) (see Papatheodorou 2002:774-775). His own literary work trailed the trajectory of these characters throughout the course of Greece's troubled years. His translational work helped him find the literary models that would most fruitfully illuminate their obscure and compromised dispositions, while validating his social anxieties about the

[8] Personal communication with Elisavet Kotzia, the author's daughter (15 December 2011).
[9] Kotzias coined this term to refer to the periods of WWII, the civil war and the Junta in Greece. Whereas these events are usually treated as separate, although intertwined, events, Kotzias discerned a more intricate relationship and continuity between them, with an emphasis on the social dynamics they effectuated.

corrosive effects large-scale events and absolutist ideologies had on the human psyche and consolidating his position in the field. *Eleni* is no exception to this pattern. Beyond a historical account of the Greek civil war, *Eleni* offers a sociological and *ethografic*[10] narrative, wherein those amoral and compromised characters play a pivotal role. In a quote that appears in the book, Gage's father asserts: "It was the villagers who devoured her" (1983:19). Eleni's death is therefore portrayed as the outcome of fanatical ideology, on the one hand, and the weakness of individuals to defend morality, on the other. This amorality seems to have attracted Kotzias, while rendering *Eleni* as a heretical move on the political and ideological level, as it combated established public discourse that focused on a narrative of victimization and over-romanticized heroism of the Left.

Similar to Kotzias' own literary production, *Eleni's* story is one that diverged from sweeping descriptions of the overarching national schism between the Left and the Right focusing, contrarily, on the destructive polemics and powers that a war entailed for the common individual; a war which, in the case of *Eleni*, reached the most remote of villages and created distorted social dynamics that depended on fear and blind allegiances. Indeed, Kotzias was never interested in spotlighting "the most epic, the most impressive aspects of violence" but was instead interested in illuminating how the overarching violence "pervaded the social web through sub-webs of authority" (Papatheodorou 2002:774; my translation). *Eleni* took Kotzias a step further in exposing those aforementioned social dynamics, which operated based on corrupt notions of autonomy and moral integrity, and it did so by virtue of its genre. *Eleni* did not only possess the literary qualities that were pivotal to Kotzias in undertaking this translation, but being an aestheticized 'true' story, it was witness to the political power struggles and their impact on Greek society, on "real people" (Kotzias 1984; my translation). Therefore, *Eleni's* Greek translation benefited from the symbolic capital stemming from Kotzias' literary persona and Kotzias drew on the legitimacy of the events described in the book to explore the impact of the ideological war on the common man.

In what follows, I will briefly demonstrate how Kotzias' literary, ideological and social dispositions exteriorize in the actual translatorial *praxis*. In terms of Kotzias' literary dispositions, a comparative analysis of the original and translated versions of *Eleni* reveals the intensification and enhancement of the book's literariness. For instance, the more politically-correct and objective *"her death"* (1983:79) is substituted with the emotionally-charged *"το χαμό της"* (*to hamo tis;* her perdition). Furthermore, some lexical items which carry a specific meaning in the original are rendered into Greek through expressions which could be categorized as equivocal. Such an example would be the translation of *"prisoners"*, which unambiguously refers to captives, into the ambiguous lexical item *"δεσμώτες"*(*desmotes)*, which literally means 'prisoner' but is also metaphorically employed to signify 'thrall'. Most literary interventions, however, reflect Kotzias' social and ideological positioning, as analyzed above. For instance, the term "*carcass"* which features prominently in *Eleni,* due to the content of the book, is consistently translated as "*σφαχτάρι"* (*sfahtari;* slaughtered), which is not only more explicit as to the cause of death, but is also a marked term, almost exclusive to literary style.[11] Most importantly, the term "σφαχτάρι," or more frequent equivalent "σφαχτό" (*sfahto*), which commonly refers to the slaughter of animals, is not only relevant to literary register, but consistent with the translator's literary inclinations, which consist of the

[10] *Ethografia* is a literary genre that evolved in Modern Greek literature (1880-1930) and involved the faithful representation of the value systems, traditions and life of rural Greece.

[11] Information on the register and connotational meaning of expressions has been taken from Triantafyllides' dictionary of modern Greek which can be accessed online at http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html [last accessed 20 July 2011].

employment of crass and sophisticatedly boorish language to illuminate not only a scarred and inhumane psyche but also the coarseness of the civil war. The literary value of *Eleni* is indeed one of the most crucial aspects that led Kotzias to translate the book:

> The author of *Eleni* has his political views, like all individuals. Whoever subscribes to them, agrees with them, whoever opposes them, rejects them. I didn't dwell on that. I'm not interested in his political views. I was drawn by the literary value of the book (Kotzias 1984; my translation).

This argument is supported by the fact that, in the same interview, Kotzias further situates *Eleni* among what he deemed as the very few examples of domestic literature where the aesthetic technique recreates the memories of the civil war so skilfully, such as Apostolides' *Pyramid 67* (1950), Valtinos' *The Descent of the Nine* and Charis' *Days of Wrath* (1979).[12] Through this comparison, Kotzias further elevates the literary value of *Eleni* and attaches further symbolic capital to the book that raises it to the status of the aforementioned literary works. At the same time, Kotzias' endorsement and translation of the book validates it as a legitimate episode of the public civil-war narrative.

Kotzias attempts to even further emphasise *Eleni's* validity as a genuine episode of the public narrative of the civil war by enhancing the book's cultural specificity. General terms, such as "*breast ornaments*" are substituted by more specific terms, such as "*κιουστέκια*" (*kioustekia*) which denotes a specific Greek breast ornament which was typical between the period of 1430 and 1913.[13] Furthermore, Kotzias strengthens *Eleni's* sociological and *ethografic* narrative by integrating into the translation lexical items and expressions that are part of specific Greek dialects, by substituting some lamentation or folklore songs that appear in the book through genuine Greek ones and by favouring culture-specific items over superordinate terms. Through these choices additional symbolic value is contributed to the *ethografic* narrative that underlies the main historical narrative *Eleni* promotes. Simultaneously, although *Eleni* does not describe fictional events, the incorporation of culture-specific items and other such folkloric elements reconstructs space and historical background in a manner that is redolent of established literary practices in Greece, which almost exclusively favoured the local over the universal.[14]

Considering the embeddedness of the Greek literary field in the wider Greek context and Greece's history, which is tormented by catastrophic events since the beginning of Greece's liberation from the Ottoman Empire in 1821 (see Mackridge 1988:90), it is clear that domestic history was too much a part of the Greek identity to be ignored, even by literary authors. Indeed, domestic historical events were a prominent subject matter for Greek authors particularly since "historiography was determined either to ignore the events or to give them a fanatically partisan interpretation" (Mackridge 1988:91). Within this context, literary production predominately focused on historical events with varying degrees of fictionalization. As mentioned above, Kotzias situates *Eleni* within the domestic literary production by contributing to the novel's literariness through the enhancement of the text's literary elements. Furthermore, through the intensification of the book's underlying *ethografic*

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[12] This information has been found in a transcribed interview of Kotzias found in the author's private archive.
[13] See http://www.imma.edu.gr/macher/hm/hm_main.php?el/B3.2.3.2.html [accessed 30 January 2011].
[14] Reference is made here to the genre of *ethografia* in its broadest sense. For a general idea of the genre of *ethografia* in Greek literature see Eleni Politou-Marmarinou's entry "Ethografia" in *Papyrus Larousse Britannica*, Volume 26, Athens 1984:219-221.

narrative Kotzias further consolidates *Eleni's* position among other historical testimonies or historical novels in circulation in the Greek literary field.

A characteristic of the ideological dispositions of Kotzias which manifested itself in his literary career was the engagement with the moral and social debasement that the ideological war had inflicted on the Greek individual. *Eleni* exercises a strong moral critique on particular individuals, who, although rooted in reality, satisfy Kotzias' aforementioned typology of the morally debased personages he identified in Greek society. Kotzias is infamous for the adoption of "an ill-mannered, boorish, crass, expletive and scatological language" (Boukalas, cited in Papatheodorou 2002:766) to expose the dubious morality of such characters. Through the literary elaboration of the 'anti-hero', Kotzias manages a mocking and sarcastic approach toward those characters that perpetuated the degenerate social dynamics of mid and post-war society.

Eleni is a repository of such 'anti-heroes' whose actions are guided by morally impaired belief-systems, fear and opportunism. Eleni's trial, which led to her execution, is in fact presented to the reader as an absurd dramaturgical praxis of cruelty and blind adherence to distorted ideas on behalf of the guerrilla judges and moral weakness along with morbid fear in the name of self-preservation on behalf of her fellow-villagers. Nicholas Gage paints an exceedingly grim image of those characters, who are presented as wretched and pitiable as the story progresses. Indeed, one of the prevalent themes of *Eleni* is revenge, and the book's initial ambition is framed by the author as the investigation and vengeance of his mother's murderers. Throughout the course of his investigation, however, Gage realizes that most of the culprits have been 'avenged' by fate in various ways, which in terms of literary effects and narrative progression weaves a narrative of *catharsis* for the reader. Although justice does not necessarily prevail, emotional and moral order is restored as those characters are encountered in the book later in life. Many communist and ex-communist figures are found in a deplorable state of oblivion, self-pity or denial.

Kotzias' aptitude of rendering the dark dispositions of characters and further performing radical ideological and social accusations through a skilfully sarcastic and even occasionally disdainful language is forcibly perceivable in the translation of *Eleni*. In the following example, Gage presents a description of *Prokopis Skevis,* a communist guerrilla, fellow-villager of Eleni:

> *Original*
> The elder [Prokopi] was a politician… filled with book-read Marxism which used to pour out from his mouth in rather amusing contexts and clichés (1983:108).

Kotzias translates the above excerpt as follows:

> Ο μεγαλύτερος [ο Προκόπης] ήταν ένας ***πολιτικάντης***... ***παραγεμισμένος*** με μαρξισμό από αναγνώσματα, που συνήθιζε να τον διαχέει από το στόμα του με μάλλον διασκεδαστικά συμφραζόμενα και κλισέ' (1983:150; emphasis added).
>
> *Back-translation*
> The elder [Prokopis] was a ***politician***... ***stuffed*** with Marxism through readings, which he used to disperse from his mouth generating rather amusing contexts and clichés.

The term "*πολιτικάντης*" (*politikandis;* politician) which is used to substitute the term "*politician*" is a derogatory term used to denote somebody who exercises politics with a view to meagre and petty ends. The adjective which means "*excessively padded*" or "*stuffed*" and substitutes the adjective "*filled*" also carries an evaluative tone that captures the concept of misappropriated and trivialized ideology with reference to Marxist theory. Moreover, due to its allusion to the culinary use of the word "*stuffed*", "*παραγεμισμένος*" (*paragemismenos*) generates a humorous effect, which renders Kotzias' sarcastic portrayal of Prokopis even more forceful. The connotational meaning, which these terms convey, subtly alters the coherence of Prokopis' character and introduces an element of ideological tenacity and distortion.

In another example, Gage describes his impression when meeting *Takis Bollis*, an ex-communist guerrilla figure:

> *Original*
> Taki bore no resemblance to my image of him. He was a small, frail, gnomelike man, untidy wisps of gray hair spiking out around his bald pate, his lower face caved in around an overbite. He had the sly shrivelled look of a doll made from a dried apple (1983:9).

Kotzias' translation reads as follows:

> Ο Τάκης δεν έμοιαζε καθόλου με την εικόνα που είχα σχηματίσει γι'αυτόν. Ήταν μικρόσωμος, ασθενικός, ίδιος ***καρκατσέλι***. Ανάκατες γκρίζες τούφες ξεπετούσαν ολόγυρα στη φαλακρή του ***γκλάβα***, το κάτω μέρος στο μούτρο του σκαμμένο από το προγναθικό πηγούνι. Είχε την ***μπαμπέσικη***, ζαρωμένη φάτσα μιας μουτσούνας καμωμένης από ***μαραγκιασμένο*** μήλο (1983:22; emphasis added).

> *Back-Translation*
> Takis did not look like the image I had formed of him. He was runty, weakly, ***a spitting image of a locust/ name of an elf***. Gray wisps were popping hugger-mugger around the bald ***pate***, the bottom part of his face dug by the prognathous chin. He had the ***treacherous/sly,*** wrinkled face of a ***mask/face*** as if made from ***wrinkled/withered*** apple.

In the above excerpt the qualifying adjective "*gnomelike*" is substituted by the noun "*καρκατσέλι*" (*karkatseli*) which in Greek signifies either a type of locust or, according to Greek tradition, the name of an elf. Both meanings produce a humorous image of Taki Bollis, either referring to his parasitic nature or his pathetic-like state. The word "*pate*" is translated as "*γκλάβα*" (*gklava*) which in Greek denotes a "head", nonetheless carrying an ironic overtone, commonly used in expressions to imply that a person is not particularly sharp (e.g. *δεν κόβει η γκλάβα του*; *den kove e gklava tou*). Further, the word "*sly*" is substituted by the colloquial word "*μπαμπέσικη*" (*bambesiki*) which produces a humorous effect by virtue of its register, followed by the sarcastic use of "*μουτσούνα*" (*moutsouna*) which is an alternative for "*face*", originally denoting a carnival mask. By virtue of its original meaning, it acquires a derogatory slant in this context, suggesting a bizarre, even uncanny figure. Finally, the adjective "*dried*" is translated as "*μαραγκασμένο*" (*maragkiasmeno*) which means "*withered*" but has come to sarcastically denote a "*wrinkled*" face, intensifying the grotesqueness of Takis' image.

Based on the above examples, it is not difficult to discern how Kotzias depends on his arsenal of sarcastic and morbidly comic expression to shed a disdainful light on the characters in *Eleni*, an effect achieved mostly through the use of colloquial expressions and ambiguous terms with strong connotational undercurrents. Kotzias consistently employs satirical strategies in the translation to describe the physical traits or afflictions of such unsympathetic characters. These unflattering and comic descriptions have the effect of morally and ethically denigrating those figures as they metaphorically reflect the grotesqueness of their character. As mentioned earlier, the Greek literary field maintains an eminent image of Kotzias as a disillusioned author, known for his caricature-like, mocking portrayal of hard-line characters. As evidenced through the above examples, this image of Kotzias emerges in the translation of *Eleni* through his critical positioning towards the Communist figures involved in the story.

Kotzias' *habitus*: plural dispositions

> Could the *cognitive specificity* of a translating faculty therefore have less to do with language and verbalisation than with social cognition and sensitivity, interaction with the outside world and beyond that, perhaps, adaptive movement, or motor control? (Simeoni 1998:13)

Arguing for the translator's positioning within a variety of state-national and cross-cultural social fields, Simeoni attempts to reclaim the social and cultural situatedness of the translator's *habitus*, while calling attention to the fruitless impasses of a purely cognitive approach to the faculty. Similarly, Gouanvic (2005) explores translators' predilection toward particular authors and literary genres in the context of their social and cultural trajectories. Incorporating the notion of norms into her research, Inghilleri (2003) also illuminates interpreters' choices with regards to professional norms and extra-professional, social influences. However, the questions put forward by Simeoni, as to the extent to which different influences are active in the translator's *habitus* and observable in translation are still very relevant in sociological approaches toward translation (1998:17). Therefore, sociological research in translation should strive to identify those methodological tools that can best illuminate the complex relationship that develops between agents and their social context (outside their restricted professional field), and how that context is somatised and reproduced in translation.

The extension of Bourdieu's duality of the *habitus* to the realms of a "dispositional plurality" (Lahire 2003:351) allows researchers to examine the translator's agency from different perspectives, but it also captures most fruitfully the interaction between cultural production and external influences. The conceptualization of those contextual influences as narratives that penetrate the literary field and sub-field of translation render them more concrete and more easily identifiable in the actual translation process, by facilitating a more holistic approach to context both text-specific and translator/agent-specific. As the case of *Eleni* exemplifies, Kotzias' *habitus* as a translator, while attuned to the demands of the translational profession, simultaneously embodied both literary and ideological ambitions. Those were 'bodily' manifested in the abrasively critical treatment of certain primary and secondary characters of *Eleni*, which in a sense are re-narrated in a manner that abides by Kotzias' own constructed narrative of the civil war.

Essentially, the case of Alexandros Kotzias demonstrates how literary translators are simultaneously subjected to the diktats of professional standards and ethics but also further social, public or personal narratives, which in this case concerns politico-historical and

aesthetic ones. Kotzias aspired to elevate *Eleni* in the sphere of Greek literature and situate it among other literary accounts of the Greek Civil War, and partly materialized that through unleashing his literary dispositions during the translational act and enhancing the 'literariness' of the book. On the other hand, Kotzias' accusatory positioning toward a particular faction of Greek society also surfaces in the translation, through the strengthening of the unsavoury portrayal of certain primary and secondary characters of *Eleni*. Therefore, *Eleni* served as an outlet for the manifestations of Kotzias' literary, ideological and political dispositions.

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