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Journal article

**Strange homelands: encountering the migrant on the
contemporary Greek stage**

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Strange Homelands: Encountering the Migrant on the Contemporary Greek Stage¹

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Abstract

This article examines three examples from recent Greek theatre that stage experiences of migrants and refugees against the backdrop of Greece's growing internationalism and multiculturalism. In allowing migrants to author their own narratives of border-crossing into a new "homeland," these theatrical endeavours attempt to break both the monologism of Greek theatre and monolithic understandings of national identity. In acknowledging the risks and tensions underpinning the migrant's presence on stage, the article also applies pressure to questions of encounter, authenticity, representation, and self-expression, and it interrogates some ways in which migratory subjects navigate the precarious space of belonging and author themselves in the context of contemporary Greek theatre.

Keywords

exile; heteroglossia; authenticity; *One in Ten*; *Homelands*; *Clean City*; *The Emigrants*

Bio

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Recent Greek theatre evidences a growing interest in migration and displacement, with mainstream and alternative theatre venues staging works that aim to capture the experiences of migrants and refugees who have arrived in the country since the early 1990s. Stories of exile are often presented in the form of documentary or testimonial theatre and position migrants on stage as the authors of their own work. Such theatre emerges against the backdrop of a suite of socio-political changes also engendered by forced migration and displacement. While such changes have brought a marked demographic shift, they have also intensified racism and xenophobia that have been particularly pronounced in light of “stranger-danger” rhetoric (Ahmed 3) and the everyday violence migrants and refugees face in the public space.

Focusing on aspects of language, identity, migration and exile, this article examines three Greek productions that facilitate encounters with “unfamiliar strangers.” All were created by migrant artists or include migrants as performers: Laertis Vasiliou’s *One in Ten* [*Ένας στους Δέκα*] (2007), Thanasis Papathanasiou and Michalis Reppas’s *Homelands* [*Πατρίδες*] (2012), and Anestis Azas and Prodromos Tsinikoris’s *Clean City* [*Καθαρή Πόλη*] (2016). I use the term “encounter” to highlight theatre’s function as a social space that brings “strangers” into close proximity with each other; I am also particularly interested in the representational and linguistic conditions within which this encounter creates “legible” subjects. I am indebted to Sara Ahmed’s *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, in which she defines encounter as “a meeting which involves surprise and conflict” (6). Ahmed observes the varying levels of recognition and value accorded to different bodies: “some-bodies are more recognizable as strangers than other-bodies precisely because they are already read and valued in the demarcation of social spaces” (30). Ahmed’s ideas here resonate with Judith Butler’s notion of precarious life, which is theorized as the product of practices that create “a differential allocation

of grievability” (Butler xiv).

While encounters with the precarious Other might elicit empathy, and therefore a sense of responsibility and action, it is important to scrutinize the framing of this encounter and to question the limits of empathy. Ahmed warns that contemporary culture’s fascination with suffering runs the risk of producing “stranger fetishism,” thus masking the particularities of the migrant’s identity (9). Likewise, Lilie Chouliaraki takes issue with post-humanitarian appeals and “feel good activism” rehearsed by NGOs and celebrity culture:

In portraying sufferers as powerless victims or as dignified agents, these campaigns intend to produce either a universal morality of justice, through “negative emotions” that ultimately dehumanize the sufferer, or a universal morality of empathy through positive emotions that eventually appropriate the sufferer in a world like “ours.” Neither of these two forms of universalism [...] ultimately manages to sustain a legitimate claim to public action on suffering. (74)

The problem of representing migrant subjects has also preoccupied theatre scholarship. Theatre has been at the forefront of offering a voice to the subaltern, but staged encounters with precarious Others have also come under scrutiny. In the context of refugee theatre in particular, Alison Jeffers persuasively discusses how Julie Salverson’s concept of “an aesthetics of injury” (qtd. in Jeffers 150) enhances voyeurism and thus compromises the refugee’s agency and identity. Jeffers is particularly concerned with the “power of bureaucratic performance,” which controls the ways in which refugees are expected to perform “correct” identities that will ensure the legitimacy of their stories and claims to authenticity (44–46). This concern is particularly crucial in the context of documentary theatre, where the collapse between the representational and the unmediated – the putatively fictional and putatively authentic – renders the task of critique fraught. As Emma Cox argues, theatres of reality dealing with migration and asylum tend to represent the refugee subject as “innocent” in order to elicit empathy: “the expectation

that when a refugee speaks he or she is ‘giving evidence’ is so pervasive that it becomes exceedingly difficult to ethically circumvent constructions of refugees as innocent individuals” (29). While Cox and Jeffers interrogate the extent to which theatrical strategies may empower the refugee subject, Lindsay Cummings makes a case for theatre’s potential to overcome understandings of the refugee subject as powerless, as it offers greater freedom of expression than the legal frameworks of the state (186). In this sense, performance provides a space in which migrants and refugees can author and perform their stories of exile; the stage presence of the refugee subject might increase the empathetic force of the stories told, mobilizing an affective economy of labour from both performers and audiences (Cummings 187).

This critical field presents us with profound ethical and political questions concerning the ability of face-to-face encounters to mobilize collective responsibility, and subsequent action, for the protection of precarious lives. It also poses questions about the frames of recognition that facilitate such encounters. In the examples under consideration, the term “migrant” connotes subjects in exile whose precarious lives share affinities, without suggesting, as Yana Meerzon points out, that the experience of exile is the same for *all* migrant lives (2).² I am also interested in the elements of “surprise and conflict” to which Ahmed refers, elements brought by the appearance, onstage, of “theatre strangers” (Garde and Mumford 3) in their encounter with “native” audiences. Here, “appearance” connotes physicality, language, and voice. According to Marvin Carlson, “nothing so immediately marks an outsider as representing another culture than the fact that he [*sic*] speaks an alien language” (21). Such attention to language, therefore, further complicates the frames of legibility, belonging, and power that the migrant subject is forced to navigate in everyday life and on stage. The act of speaking an “alien language” draws attention to the perennial predicament of the foreigner, as Jacques Derrida observes, to translate and be

translated in a language not “his [*sic*] own but one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the State [...] [as] the first act of violence” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 15).

Carlson’s and Derrida’s discussions of language, appearance, and power are pertinent to my analysis of documentary theatre focusing on migration and exile: while offering the migrant a platform to voice experiences of border-crossing and encounter with a new homeland, his presence on stage and any emphasis on his “authentic” voice further mark him as a “stranger” and risk exoticizing him. At the same time, by toying with extant frames of legibility, theatre about migration and exile might also destabilize “authentic” performances of nation, home, and belonging. Carlson highlights how “the alien voice of the outsider” might contribute to promoting theatrical heteroglossia (21). His application of Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia – that is, the “dialogic nature of language” (Bakhtin 273) – is useful vis-à-vis the contours of national identity. For this reason, the article also considers the possibilities offered by migrant theatre in Greece in developing heteroglossic (and breaking monolithic) understandings of national identity. Applying pressure to terms such as strangeness, encounter, hospitality, representation, and national identity, I examine strategies of embodiment and self-representation to interrogate how such theatrical frames, in the context of contemporary Greek theatre by migrants, mark bodies and identities and shape perceptions of the stranger.

Monolingualism and Greek National Identity

The topic of multilingualism in Greek theatre has so far been an uncharted area of research. In the absence of minority theatres or any meaningful public discussion about transnationalism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism (as has occurred in other European countries), theatre in

Greece largely reflects national imaginings of cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Greek audiences are more or less “homogeneous in terms of cultural assumptions but also in the way that these assumptions [are] theatrically expressed,” to follow Carlson’s thinking (12). Standard Greek (i.e., the language as it is spoken in the capital) appears as the linguistic norm, with regional dialects or accents holding an inferior status and presented as objects of “ridicule or at least condescension” (Carlson 10). This linguistic monologism is also reflected in the notable absence of non-native actors on the Greek stage in previous years.

Greek theatre’s monolingualism mirrors wider performances of Greek national identity as “an imagined political community,” which is both “limited,” “sovereign,” and reinforced by cultural practices (Anderson 6). The identity of the modern Greek nation, formed in 1830 following independence from Ottoman rule, has been largely circumscribed by the ideological tropes of continuity with a “glorious” ancient Greek past. As Constantine Tsoukalas explains, such a process – enabled through the gaze of European modernity rather than the Greeks themselves – forged a national identity rooted in ideals of uniqueness, indigeneity, universality, and superiority, which perpetuated a division between the “civilized West” and the “barbaric East” (8).³

The preservation of difference compared to “barbaric Others” very much depends on myths of linguistic homogeneity calibrated by “one language, one nation” ideologies. A key marker of national identity, language is “ideologically saturated” (Bakhtin 271) and a “*territory* [...] marked by frontier lines drawn to protect a scared interior which has to be kept intact by everything surrounding it” (Moschonas 177). In the case of Greece, such myths aim to obscure the nation’s linguistic diversity (which predates its nineteenth-century formation) and thus to mask the existence of minority languages spoken in its interior.⁴ Ongoing questions around the

authenticity of Greek national identity are all the more “pertinent during times of crisis” where it is crucial to maintain “the nation’s cultural legitimacy or superiority” (Zaroulia, “Members” 201). In the case of contemporary Greece and the multiple crises to which it is currently subject (including a significant rise of nationalism), homogeneous perceptions of language, fulfilled by the imperatives for “purity” against “barbaric Others,” become particularly pronounced. At the same time, due to the forces of globalization and recent migration now transforming Greece’s urban centres into more multicultural hubs, there are signs of a heteroglossic shift. Bakhtin distinguishes between “centripetal” and “centrifugal forces,” which create tensions between linguistic homogeneity and a “unitary language” (centripetal) and socio-cultural heterogeneity (centrifugal) (272). Such tensions provide a useful framework for considering the ways in which multilingual subjects negotiate their position within “constantly shifting political and ideological conditions” (Mariou 31).

Migration has played a key role in imaginings of the nation since the late nineteenth century. Waves of emigration from Greece to the United States (1920s), to Germany and Australia (1950s–1960s), and to elsewhere in Europe (2010–present) – as well as population displacements from Eastern Turkey to Greece – have saturated popular imaginings of *hellenikotita* [Greekness] with tropes of exile, *ξενιτιά* [the state of being a foreigner *and* in a foreign land], and *νόστος* [homecoming]. Notwithstanding its strong connection with migrant experiences, Greek society has proven to be the most hostile of Southern European countries toward in-migration (Swartz and Karakatsanis, “Challenges” 100). Since the fall of the Eastern bloc, Greece has seen an exponential increase in the inflow of (primarily undocumented or semi-documented) migrants (Dalakoglou 24–25) and now has the highest migration rates in the European Union, particularly in its urban centres: at present, migrants comprise ten per cent of

the overall population (Swartz and Karakatsanis, “Securitization” 33).⁵ This demographic transformation has challenged ethnocentric narratives and mono-cultural ideology. It has also intensified xenophobic and racist discourses as well as anti-migrant attitudes, which regularly result in street violence and police operations to “cleanse” the city of “stranger bodies.”⁶ Furthermore, it has brought policies rooted in perceptions of the foreigner as a threat to cultural and religious identity and “to one’s own personal safety and security” (Swartz and Karakatsanis, “Securitization” 34) rather than humanitarian values. Despite shifts in public policy and rhetoric between 2004 and 2008, negative attitudes towards migrants still persist in the Greek imaginary, buttressed by the pressures of the financial crisis (Swartz and Karakatsanis, “Challenges” 108).⁷ On the other hand, one positive development in public policy followed the victory of left-wing party Syriza in the January 2015 elections: a bill, passed by the Greek Parliament in July 2015, allowed second-generation migrants to be naturalized as Greek citizens.

In the realm of artistic production, work about migration mostly foregrounds the Greek emigrant or the Greek diaspora in the post-war period.⁸ More recently, a body of work that explicitly tackles migrant experiences within the Greek borders has been slowly gathering pace.⁹ This interest coincides with the resurgence of documentary theatre and autobiographical performance, as well as the emergence of so-called “Theatre of Real People.” Garde and Mumford make a case for the latter’s political potential, as it intensifies cultural diversity in everyday life and “facilitate[s] encounters with culturally diverse people” and “unfamiliar [...] theatre strangers” who have not received formal performance training (3–5). Drawing on a mixture of theatrical forms, the examples discussed below invite different groups of migrant subjects to negotiate their multiple belongings and establish connections in the wider Greek community. They show, I argue, the beginnings of an engagement with heteroglossia, opening a

space for more playful and diverse imaginings of national identity.

The Migrant Artist: *One in Ten*

One in Ten is a devised autobiographical theatre piece based on the experiences of four migrant artists living and working in Greece. The piece was presented at the Upstairs space of Theatre of the New World [Θέατρο του Νέου Κόσμου] during the 2007–2008 season. A venue with an explicitly political agenda, and one that has supported young theatre-makers and new plays and playwrights from Greece and abroad since its opening in the mid-1990s, Theatre of the New World has been encouraging migrant artists to develop and present their work. A key example was its 2003 production of Slawomir Mrozek’s 1973 play *The Emigrants* [Εμυγκρέδες].

Performed by two Albanian actors and staged in both Greek and Albanian, the production was the first to offer the opportunity to migrant theatre-makers to perform in their native language.

According to its artistic director, Vangelis Theodoropoulos, the theatre is committed to providing the space of encounter between migrant artists and the Greek public:

We very much believe in the importance of migrants to be able to express themselves artistically in their own language; they [migrants] are a part of Greek society and particularly those coming from Albania who stand for the majority of the migrants in Greece and have been largely misinterpreted. This production is an act of coming closer to our Neighbour, which is much needed at a time of escalating xenophobia and racism [...] we thought were long gone.¹⁰

The choice to perform *The Emigrants* in Albanian was fuelled by a desire to, in Laertis

Vasiliou’s words, “make our presence felt” (qtd. in Kakoudaki [Κακουδάκη]) to other Albanian migrants living in Greece; in turn, the performers would increase their visibility and explore their “double identity” (Vasiliou qtd. in Kakoudaki [Κακουδάκη]) as both Albanian and Greek:

“When Albanians in Greece accept their future as Greeks and the Greeks accept our future as Albanians, this double identity will be clear and we will know both our homelands well.”¹¹

Accepting this “double identity” rests upon what Meerzon has called the exilic artist’s “double framing of self” (16). Theatre provides space to migrant subjects to re-negotiate their multiple identities through the performance of self in a public forum. In the case of autobiographical and documentary theatre in particular, the boundaries between quotidian performance of self and theatrical performance blur as “there is always more than one self to contend with” (Heddon 27). Written entirely by its migrant subjects, *One in Ten* includes original autobiographical material dealing with questions of integration, identity, and belonging carefully interwoven with other texts focused on migration and exile; in doing so, it offers the exilic subject a space for re-signification.

The majority of the piece was performed in Greek with occasional code-switching to Albanian, Bulgarian, or Georgian. As with *The Emigrants*, the performance’s target audience was diverse: performers addressed their own compatriots as well as the native Athenian audience and captured the uncertainty and *in-betweenness* underpinning their identities as both actors and migrant subjects. All four artists (including the piece’s director) discovered or pursued their passion for theatre after migrating to Greece. *One in Ten*’s director, Laertis Vasiliou (who also directed *The Emigrants*) came to Greece at the age of eighteen, during the first wave of migration from Albania (and particularly the region of North Epiros) in the early 1990s. “I have chosen to stay and make work here in Greece because whenever I have found myself abroad for theatre and film jobs (Europe, the U.S., Asia,) I realized it is the only country I do not feel foreign. I have chosen to stay in Greece because the first lullabies I heard from my grandmother were from Epiros,” he says.¹² Performer David Maltese is an actor, musician, and translator born in Tbilisi, Georgia and has taken part in numerous films and prestigious theatre productions; he joined Point Zero [Σημείο Μηδέν] theatre company in 2013 and has adapted and translated

Yevgeni Zamyatin's novel *We* for the company's production in 2015. Performer Enke Fezolari, who admits feeling both Balkan and Greek, was born in Pogradets, Albania; having studied acting and dance, he has been working as a theatre director since 2006. Performer Kris Radanov was born in Ruse, Bulgaria and migrated in 2001 to Greece, where he worked in construction before becoming an actor. In 2010 Theatre of the New World hosted his monologue *Social Structure Inc.* [Σόσιαλ Δομή ΑΕ], which was based on original testimonies about and research into the forced labour camps in post-war Communist Bulgaria, where his biological father served for ten years. Radanov defines homeland as the place "where I feel good [...] it is the people [that make me feel at home]."13

The search for a homeland becomes a recurrent trope in *One in Ten*. The voice of the exilic subject appears as both singular and collective, either initiating a dialogue among individual experiences or combining migrant voices into one narrative. This dual form is achieved by means of recognizable postdramatic devices, which reveal the theatricality of the migrant self and the inherent instability of the self in performance. The performance opens with each actor cleaning the stage (hoovering and mopping) while giving the others instructions in his native language, creating a multilingual vocal landscape and a community of labourers. When they switch to Greek, the actors begin to disagree about the order of the scenes or argue with the sound technician. Such choices inscribe them as performance "hosts," that is, subjects who have control of the stage and the creative process. At the same time, the extent of their agency is questioned: when the order of their cues becomes confused, it is revealed that the production's sound technician has made a mistake with the music track. His refusal to co-operate undermines the performers' agency and rather positions them as "guests" who should be grateful to their host: "YOU will tell me how to do my job? YOU? We gave you a place to live. We gave you

food and allowed you to enter our homes, now you also want to make theatre? [...] Do not bite the hand that feeds you. This is the track. (*He presses Play*). Take it or leave it.”¹⁴

The performance text draws on experiences shared by the three actors, such as their “illegal” border-crossing and their position as economic migrants from former Communist states. To facilitate dramaturgical flow, the three performers also speak the voices of their “native” interlocutors. The piece includes humorous moments which counterpoise and partly challenge “the view of the exilic state as one of mourning, depression, disbelief, and constant suffering” (Meerzon 2); these moments also playfully comment on assumptions about their identities. Meerzon stipulates that being in exile changes the ways in which migrants perceive themselves, particularly when they need to express themselves in a foreign language, which “increases an exile’s insecurity” (14) but also marks him or her as a foreign being: “The moment an immigrant starts to instigate a dialogue, his/her vocal and visual differences betray the speaker’s foreignness: the accent of one’s speech, the colour of one’s skin, or the cut of one’s clothes makes the exile a marked being, someone who always circulates at the centre of the communicating model” (16). The already marked identity of the migrant’s body is shown in two incidents narrated by Kris and Enke. Kris shares a story that reveals his “failure” to pass as Greek. When he was working as a delivery boy, someone asked where he was from, and he immediately responded with the name of the region where he lives in Athens: “‘Not where you live dear, where are you from?’ Damn it, how do they know I am a foreigner? My Greek is so good!”¹⁵ Enke narrates an incident when he was fetishized as the “primitive Other”: during an improvisation exercise, the teacher asked him to imagine being the leader of an Indian tribe. He was then congratulated: “See how Enke maintains strong connections with his roots!”¹⁶

Such playfulness is sustained throughout the piece, with interludes about the costs of

visas and permanent residence common to all migrants. Evoking a popular ad campaign, “Live your Myth in Greece,” these interludes subvert popular idyllic images of Greece that are often used for luring tourists. The interludes are juxtaposed with more poetic moments that destabilize the authenticity of official documents and the authority of the narrated self. For example, the performers’ “real” story of border-crossing included in the performance text, transforms into a fictional narrative that constructs a “false” memory of them walking in the snow as children.

At the heart of the piece lie the themes of being in exile [ξενιτιά] and a foreigner [ξένος], introduced through intertextual references such as a projected passage from Virgil: “They exchange their home and sweet thresholds for exile, and seek under another country under another sun.”¹⁷ The performers later indulge in a question and answer game where they list names, expressions, and songs that include the word ξένος (*xenos*).

Enke: Street?
Kris: Xenokratous
Enke: Author?
Kris: Xenopoulos
[...]
Enke: Composer?
David: Xenakis
Kris: Song?
David: “Xenos.”
Enke: Xenos?
David: “Xenos and enemy I will be for you from now on.”¹⁸

This game mutates into a pseudo-interrogation vignette between a psychiatrist (an unnamed actor dressed as a doctor who only appears on screen projection) and the performers, who are asked to respond to questions about language and belonging:

Man: Where did you learn Greek?
David: At work.
Enke: At school.
Kris: In the street.
Man: What language do you speak with your family?
David: Georgian.

(*Enke does not speak.*)

Kris: Bulgarian.

Man: (*To Enke*) What about you?

Enke: I never speak Albanian. I have almost forgotten it.

Man: When you are in a public space what language do you speak?

All: Greek.¹⁹

While they are all keen to identify or dis-identify with their mother tongues, each chooses to remain silent when posed the question, “How do you feel living in Greece?”²⁰ Their refusal to speak underscores the difficulty of translating emotions into a foreign language.

The migrant’s process of theatricalizing the self is reminiscent of the labour of an impressionist who adapts and mutates to fit his context and become imperceptible to the external gaze of the “host.” Having arrived from post-Communist countries, all cast members had to become “westernized” in their new home. The piece closes with a cabaret scene in which they initiate a dance act performed to Renato Carosone’s song “Tu vuoi far l’americano”: “And now ladies and gentlemen, the story of a child who wanted to travel far away. To arrive *somewhere*. When he arrived at his magic place, he was asked to become someone *else*. To change his name, his language, his ways of dress, his gender and to become.... *Americano*.”²¹ While the performers dance, images of well-known people from the Soviet bloc are projected. The audience is directly addressed: “who would like to be *Americano*? You? You? He is *Americano*! What about you? You? You?”²²

This reversal of the gaze of encounter is significant. Radanov has discussed how lucky he felt to receive a warm audience response while admitting that *One in Ten* changed his own perception towards other migrants: “[it] helped me love my neighbor because he [*sic*] is different. He might have different mentality, different skin colour, different language, but the same soul: he feels pain, he cries, he feels happy, he smiles. Xenophobia facilitates the existence of an enemy who is held responsible for our own faults.”²³ *One in Ten* was one of the first steps

in the process of educating theatre audiences about first-generation migrants coming from post-Communist countries, migrants who have often been portrayed as criminals and seen as threats to national security. The show prefigured subsequent public rhetoric that supported migrants' integration into Greek society. While the requirements of assimilation might erase the migrant's voice, *One in Ten's* emphasis on the theatricality of the self also highlighted the instability and fluidity of identity.

Imagining Home and the Nation: *Homelands*

In 2011, the Greek National Theatre launched a two-year season addressing the question “What Is Our Country?” (although the word “πατρίδα” is better translated as “homeland,” which better reflects the preoccupations of the season’s programming).²⁴ According to its then artistic director, Yannis Houvardas, the season aimed to address a crisis of Greek national identity against the backdrop of contemporary uncertainties and to “explore the essence and dynamics of our cultural heritage.” Particular attention was paid to the meaning of ξένος [foreigner] in a suite of plays that explored either the histories of migration in and out of Greece or the contemporary realities of migrants living in the country.²⁵ The season included *Homelands* by Thanasis Papathanasiou and Michalis Reppas, a documentary theatre performance presented at the Theatre’s New Stage-Nikos Kourkoulos from February to May 2012. The piece extended the directors’ previous work, which explored issues of foreignness in the form of comedy. As Papathanasiou and Reppas explain in the play’s programme, where their previous plays *Evros Across from Us* [*Ο Έβρος Απέναντι*] (1999) and *In-Laws from Tirana* [*Συμπέθεροι από τα Τίρανα*] (2008) used the migrant as a “catalyst” to look at the faults of Greek society (such as racism and xenophobia), *Homelands* aimed to stage how migrants view themselves (4). In doing

so, *Homelands* traces the lineage of mobility in and out of Greece by drawing on a range of source material, from published accounts and historical documentaries to unpublished letters, memoirs, and oral testimonials. The play includes the stories of three refugees who appeared on stage as themselves: Syrian Bakar Hussein al Bakar, Pakistani Irfan Muhammad Arif, and Afghan Barkat Hosseini performed alongside six Greek actors who played different voices from the Greek diaspora that emigrated to the United States, Canada, Germany, Belgium, and Australia between 1897 to the 1970s.

Bakar, Irfan, and Barkat had some prior stage experience through their work with the theatre company Station Athens, led by director Yolanda Markopolou in collaboration with the NGO Amaka, in the laboratory space SYNERGY-O. This important initiative – located in Metaksourgio, one of Athens’ most multicultural neighborhoods – provides the opportunity for migrants to explore photography, video, and theatre and to socialize, learn Greek, and build social networks. Having arrived in Greece in 2005 or 2006, all three migrant performers have gained asylum rights yet cannot travel abroad. The conditions of their settlement in Europe are regulated by the 2003 Dublin II EU treaty, according to which refugees can only seek asylum in the country of entry; like many others, they are stranded in Greece, one of the key points of entry from the Middle East and Africa.

The time of *Homelands* was marked by an exponential increase in support for Golden Dawn, Greece’s nationalist far-right party, and in xenophobic discourse and legislation propagated by the right-wing New Democracy party, whose anti-immigration rhetoric had won them the May 2012 general election. Against this backdrop, the show aimed to encourage proximity and greater empathy between native audiences and refugee subjects. Its dramaturgy inscribes the refugee experience within widely rehearsed stories about migration, such as “the

loss of home or homeland” or “the necessity to flee and a coercive relational structure whereby any real agency dissolves in the face of persecution” (Cox 32). In the script, Bakar, Irfan, and Barkat share details of their perilous border crossings and difficulty integrating into their host country due to cultural differences.²⁶

As with other Greek theatre productions featuring refugee performers, the (male) refugee subject in *Homelands* speaks scarcely in his mother tongue. In the beginning of a section on “Crossings,” Bakar sings a Syrian folk song entitled “We Travel,” which connects to other songs about exile from different time periods sung by Greek performers. During another section, Barkat reads a letter from his mother (translated by one of the actors on stage), who urges him to stay in Greece. For the most part, however, the refugee projects his desire for integration. Irfan shares his passion for ancient and modern Greek history and his knowledge of the Akropolis and Theodoros Kolokotronis.²⁷ He is adamant that he does not wish to return to Afghanistan: “Everything I have learned, I have learned it here in Greece. I want to live here where there is freedom. I only want to return to Afghanistan as a visitor, to see where I grew up where I walked. To see where we used to play in the mud.”²⁸ He also confesses his affection for Greek pop singer Yannis Plutarhos, one of whose songs he sings on stage. His urge to integrate connects him to the Greek migrant stories threaded through the piece, in which *νόστος* [homecoming] is a key motif. *Homelands* also addresses the dissonance produced when the migrant is not able to speak the language of the host. One of the stories from the Greek *gastarbeiters* in Germany describes an incident in which a Greek migrant was accused of stealing: “This is what happens when you live in a foreign land and you do not speak the language. You are automatically deemed a thief.”²⁹

Markopoulou argues that having the refugee speak in Greek is important for both

audiences and performers: “a key concern for them is their identity and integration in Greek society. When they narrate their story in Greek, they come closer to us. But we also see them as more familiar in witnessing their effort to learn our native language.”³⁰ Markopoulou’s statement echoes Cummings’ understanding of empathy as a two-way process that involves emotional labour from both performers and spectators (187). Reminding us of the importance of language in the processes of integration and belonging, it nevertheless raises questions about the nature of hospitality. As Derrida asks, “must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language [...] so as to be able to welcome him [*sic*] in our own country?” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 15).

As Albanian émigré Gasmet Kaplani notes, “whatever I do, I will always be a foreigner for friends and foes. [...] For example, your name marks you as a foreigner, it poses a threat.”³¹ In *Homelands*, the refugee’s successful assimilation and belonging are compromised by the colour of his skin, which marks him as a “stranger.” This racialization limits the possibilities of self-inscription and re-definition of identity and inhibits the refugee’s ability to connect with women or start a family. All three performers share an anxiety about *appearing* as foreign: Barkat argues that “Greek women do not want us. They think that we are foreigners ... that we are poor.”³² Bakar narrates how his Greek girlfriend was ashamed to admit their relationship to her circle. He confesses that “I bought clothes. Good clothes. Brands. [...] So I do not appear as a foreigner.”³³

Homelands does not seek to condemn the poor treatment of refugees or ask questions about responsibility, hospitality, or the policy making that sustains structures of precarity. Rather, Papathanasiou and Reppas’s exploration of “home” is driven by a romanticized approach to exile. As they point out in the programme, the process of working through the documents used

in the production shifted their humanitarian intentions. They came to focus on the journey from childhood innocence to a harsh reality from which there was no return: “It is not space that separates us from our homeland but time. Time renders us exiles. *Nostos* [homecoming] remains unfulfilled. Everyone is hovering in an absurd and incomprehensible world. We are all migrants.”³⁴ Equating the nation’s experience to that of the migrant suggests a naïve understanding of the experience of exile; it erases the specificity of a refugee experience largely determined by forced displacement due to the conditions of war and prosecution. What becomes pronounced instead is the existentialist crisis of the Greek nation’s identity following the 2010 debt crisis. The direct allusion of the National Theatre’s season to Ioannis Polemis’s poem “Ti ein’ I patrida mas” further inscribes the performance within a romanticized and nostalgic narrative of Greece. According to Zaroulia, such choices express a longing to return to a time now past, which also “reaffirm the National Theatre’s role as guarantor of theatrical tradition and national continuity” (“What Is Our Motherland?” 207).

“Homeland” here is already presented as “the experience of familiarity.”³⁵ By animating the archive of the histories of Greek emigration, *Homelands* stages the nation as an imagined diaspora where the “unfamiliar” refugee subject is re-inscribed and re-signified through the lens of *familiar* perspectives of national history. This choice shifts the encounter from an “unfamiliar” to a “familiar” one; it attempts to narrow the distance between audience and performers. But this encounter between audiences and performers – *and* between performers and practitioners – needs to be scrutinized. As Elizabeth Tomlin has shown, when approaching documentary theatre that draws on principles of authenticity and the “real” (especially as markers of political engagement), one needs to consider the class, socio-economic status, and ethnic backgrounds not only of performers and the audience but also of the theatre makers who curate the work. These

differences are always present: they shape relations among spectators, theatre makers, institutional structures and non-professional migrant performers and risk exoticizing, rather than empowering, the migrant subject. In silencing specificities and cultural differences, the refugee in *Homelands* can only appear as a *guest* within “authentic” unchallenged narratives about nation and exile.

Hosting the Nation: *Clean City*

The examples examined thus far, as well as most documentary and testimonial theatre focusing on migration, confirm that “the stereotype of the migrant-traveller and its connotations symbolically connects to masculinity” (Kampouri [Καμπούρη] and Lafazani [Λαφαζάνη] 25). In this section, I turn to *Clean City* and examine how it unsettles national narratives and stereotypes of female migrants, such as the five that perform the show: Freda Resurrection (Philippines), Drita Shehi (Albania), Mable Mosana (from South Africa), Valentina Ursache (Moldavia) and Rositsa Pandalieva (Bulgaria) (see Figure 1). A co-production of the Onassis Cultural Centre (OCC) and the Goethe-Institut, as part of the project EUROPOLY, the piece was devised and directed by Prodromos Tsinikoris and Anestis Azas. It was first performed at the OCC and subsequently the National Theatre’s Experimental Stage, where Tsinikoris and Azas are artistic directors; subsequently, it toured European cities.³⁶ The directors have spoken about how their work is driven by a desire to “shift” the spectator’s gaze by presenting “alter-narratives” on stage (Azas, Tsinikoris, and Hager 260; 262). This desire is explored through the practices of “Theatre of Real People” as developed by Rimini Protokoll, who have had a profound influence on Tsinikoris and Azas’s methods and aesthetics.³⁷ *Clean City* was the directors’ second production dealing with questions of migration, belonging, and exile following their *Telemachos: Should I*

Stay or Should I Go? (2013), co-produced by the OCC in Athens and Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Berlin.³⁸

Notwithstanding their identity as economic migrants, the women are connected mainly by gender and occupation, which are used as the piece's conceptual anchors. The trigger for making the performance was the rise of Golden Dawn, which won eighteen parliamentary seats in the 2012 General Election. As Azas highlights, the performance's title refers directly to the popular Golden Dawn motto "cleansing Greece" ["Να ξεβρομίσει ο τόπος"], which was adopted by the party's followers and has become a naturalized anti-migrant ideology. *Clean City* aimed to challenge this rhetoric by addressing the question "who actually cleans Greece"? ("Clean City"). In addition to its critical engagement with discourses on "stranger danger" and ethnic purity – discourses promoted by neo-fascist and nationalist rhetoric – the piece also alludes to several incidents of injustice against migrant cleaners in Greece since 2010, which brought to the fore issues of gender, nation, migration, and domestic labour.³⁹

Clean City draws connections among these issues in several ways. According to the "expert opinion" of gender scholar Nelli Kampouri, who appeared in a video projection during the performance, migrant female domestic workers facilitated the emancipation of Greek women by giving them more independence; at the same time, Kampouri continued, their care work maintained domestic gender roles and, by consequence, Greek national identity (*hellenikotita*). *Clean City* re-visits the 1980s liberal-feminist model of the "superwoman" who can do it all (abetted by the under-acknowledged labour of domestic workers), as emphasized in promotional material that presented all five performers in super-heroine costumes. In reframing care work and domestic labour, *Clean City* counters narratives that devalue them "as the feminized, private work of home, rather than as society's work" (Lawson 2); instead, it presents the home as a

central aspect of the public sphere. The performers' success is buttressed by stories of their children's successes: Mabel's nineteen-year-old daughter, Zoe, studies at university while playing in the women's basketball team that won the silver medal in the European championships; Drita's son, Enke Fezollari (performer in *One in Ten*), has gained wide recognition as an actor and director.

In sum, the encounter staged between audiences and domestic migrants becomes one of "surprise and conflict," as stereotypes of female migrants as victimized, vulnerable, silent, obedient, sexualized, or passive are replaced with positive connotations of "heroes, protagonists, winners" ("Clean City"). This element of surprise is introduced in the piece's opening scene, where the domestic worker playfully establishes hospitality rules with the audience who are hailed as the performers' "guests". Rositsa urges spectators to refrain from littering the space: "Ladies and Gentlemen. When the performance is over, I do not want to see any chewing gums under your seats. And do not throw your bottles of water. You brought it [the bottle] in the space? Take it out with you. Think about us the cleaners. Our backs hurt having to bend over and look for [your rubbish]." ⁴⁰ Similar moments of comic relief interweave with personal stories that present performers as "acting subjects in a global history" (Azas, Tsinikoris, and Hager 266). Rositsa explains how she left Bulgaria without her children and husband in order to feed her family and wonders about the gender implications of this decision: "Why should a woman leave to make money?" ⁴¹ Drita narrates how she first came to the country from Albania as part of a teachers' exchange programme and then decided to stay; having paid money to traffickers, she managed to bring her children and husband (whom she ultimately divorced).

The script is in Greek apart from when Freda, speaking in Tagalog, shares a voice tape she sent to her family in the Philippines in 2004. In it, she attempts to capture the feeling of

being a migrant through the metaphor of a fairy-tale (an English translation is provided in the written script):

I am making this tape so you do not forget my voice because I do not know when I will be back. It is very nice here. Do not worry about me all is fine. I have a student visa. [...] I am slowly learning the language from a Greek song that I like very much [...] sung by someone called Notis Sfakianakis. [...] I also went to the cinema and saw *The Chronicles of Narnia* – a tale with four children who enter a closet and travel into another world going through a lot of adventures. Like myself. (Azas [Αζάζ] and Tsinikoris [Τσινικόρης] 14)

Mabel also enacts a phone call made to her father in South Africa after she first arrived in Greece. Her speech not only draws attention to processes of translation in her host country but also captures how the body becomes marked through difference, as well as the acts of violence this difference incites:

The funny thing is that I don't understand the language, because Dimitri [her husband] doesn't have time to teach me. And when I talk to my in-laws I use my hands. We understand each other. No, dad, they are not racists. Only when I go outside I see people's strange reactions. For example, yesterday I was walking down the street and somebody started shouting from a balcony above me saying "Ελάτε να δείτε μια μαύρη," which means "come and see a black woman." (Azas [Αζάζ] and Tsinikoris [Τσινικόρης] 6)

Not dissimilar to *Homelands*, *Clean City* juxtaposes the experiences of its performers, particularly those who originate from the former Soviet bloc, with experiences occasioned by the Greek debt crisis. Coming from post-Communist states, Drita, Rositsa, and Valentina have

experiential knowledge of a rapidly declining quality of life. They share memories from the fall of the Iron Curtain when they lost all their money and queued for rations. At the same time, they draw attention to their double vulnerability as migrants in contemporary Greece. Mabel compares the fear she felt during the 1976 student riots in South Africa with the fear she experienced during pogroms against migrants carried out by the Golden Dawn in 2011.

Valentina, too, narrates how her daughter was stopped and asked her to recite the Greek alphabet in order to prove she was Greek: “Luckily she said it [correctly].”⁴²

What underpins all migrant stories is the question of home and belonging. Azas stipulates that the piece “shifts national narratives”; it speaks to questions of assimilation and the quest for a “home”: “in the end they [all] found a home here. And this, perhaps, explains the success of this show, because after all, all of us are, one way or another, in constant mobility” (Azas, Tsinikoris, and Hager 266). The performance’s closing scene consolidates such questions of identity and national belonging for the migrant female subject by reversing a national stereotype. Valentina begins to sing a popular song, “I Ain’t Going Anywhere, I Am Staying Right Here” (“Δεν πάω πουθενά, εδώ θα μείνω”) while Rositsa takes the floor for a *ζεϊμπέκικο* [*zeibekiko*] dance and invites spectators to join the performers on stage. These dramaturgical choices aim to minimize the physical and cultural distance between performers and the Greek (native) audience by encouraging a communal ritual. As a solo male dance, *zeibekiko* is associated with a “defiant masculinity” (Cowan 173), while also standing for the performance of banal national imaginings. Having female migrants perform the dance works to unsettle such gendered and national narratives. At the same time, the dance also echoes stories of fleeing and migration: originating from the tradition of *ρεμπέτικο* [*rebetiko*] music, brought to Greece by refugees fleeing Asia Minor during the Greco-Turkish war (1919–1922), it alludes to stories of dispossession and pain.

As Sofia Kalogeropoulou notes, its performance reflects “the negotiation of identity in a new environment” (63), and thus suggests the fluid nature of performed identity. Through this semiotic and cultural matrix, the *zeibekiko* in *Clean City* allows the migrant performer to re-signify herself as a precarious but also resilient agent.

In her review of the performance, Tonia Karaoglou notes the affinities between the performers’ stories and the contemporary conditions of precarity in Greece in light of cuts to pensions and salaries. It is this connection, she argues, that “cancels the division between us and them” (Karaoglou [Καράογλου]). What happens on stage profoundly affects you, Karaoglou continues, “not because you empathize with ‘the Other’ on a humanitarian level but because of the sociopolitical developments which put us all in the same boat.”⁴³ Karaoglou’s intimation that the piece enables a close encounter with the Other as the “same” partly masks the asymmetrical power relations inherent between the performers and the audience, such as the everyday threat of being attacked on the street or searched by the police. At the same time, it reveals how the performance’s reliance on positive images of migrant women ultimately appeals to “a universal morality of empathy” (Chouliaraki 74) through its reversal of stereotypes. Echoing 1970s feminist theatre’s call for positive representations of women, such Theatre of Real People might also propagate certain stereotypes in order to achieve visibility and empowerment for the migrant subject. This strategy is risky: it flirts with conservative understandings of *hellenikotita* – a danger raised by Efi Giannopoulou’s review, in which she points out that the show’s performers are perhaps too comfortably inscribed within the traditional and conservative stereotype of the “Greek mother,” thus assuaging anxieties about the female migrant as a threat to the Greek family core (Giannopoulou [Γιαννοπούλου]). Navigating these tensions, *Clean City* playfully speaks to migrant subjectivities and imaginings of nation in the contemporary Greek fabric.

Towards Heteroglossia in Greek Theatre?

Although recent Greek theatre has lacked a multilingual body of texts, an interest has emerged in staging migrant narratives in the forms of documentary and testimonial theatre. These theatrical encounters tap into national narratives of *hellenikotita* and propose more heterogeneous and playful ways of imagining Greek identity. In navigating tensions among received notions of authenticity, empathy, and stranger fetishism, I have examined some ways in which the migrant Other has been staged and imagined as a “familiar stranger.”

In the absence of any scholarly discussion about language, representation, and migration in Greek theatre, and following Bakhtin’s understanding of heteroglossia, I have highlighted tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces at play. These forces put questions of hospitality under scrutiny and suggest that the agency of the migrant might be compromised. In embarking on “a personal journey of redefining what one calls home and where one finds one’s homeland” (Meerzon 3), migrant performers often express a profound anxiety about belonging and desire for integration into Greek society. In this light, I considered how processes of re-signification and the performance of self (such as in the case of *Homelands* and *Clean City*) may sometimes mitigate the possibility to disrupt Greek theatre’s monolingualism and its assumptions about cultural homogeneity. What emerges, therefore, is the impossibility of hospitality that Derrida explored. The quest for integration through assimilation often becomes a strategy employed by Greek theatre practitioners who work with migrant performers, and this quest needs to be scrutinized, its power relations questioned. On the other hand, contemporary migration theatre in Greece also allows the space for playful and surprising reconfigurations of exile, identity, and belonging that might challenge assumptions about the “stranger.” The growing

internationalism and multiculturalism in Greece, as well as the notable increase of migrant visibility in Greek theatre, proves hopeful.⁴⁴ More performers and theatre-makers from multilingual backgrounds are receiving professional training and appearing on Greek stages; these changes promise that migrants may occupy more salient roles in the future and establish a stronger and more diverse presence in Greek theatre without having to perform their “authenticity,” “innocence,” or sincerity as assimilated migrant subjects.

Figure 1 caption: From left to right: Fredalyn Resurrection, Drita Shehi, Mable Mosana, Valentina Urchache, Rositsa Pandalieva in *Clean City*. Photo credit: Christina Georgiadou.

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² It is important to resist the generalized use of exile as an existential metaphor. Rosi Braidotti distinguishes between the migrant and the exile, pointing out that the former is primarily defined by class structures (22). Meerzon, too, draws attention to shifts in contemporary notions of exile, which move beyond narratives of suffering to those of accomplishment (2–7). My chosen artists and performers are clearly inscribed as (economic) migrant subjects, although the term “exile” serves to highlight the “conditions of translation, adaptation and integration shaped by the cultural challenges one meets in a new country” (Meerzon 7).

³

The relationships among Greek national identity, antiquity, and Europe have garnered much scholarly attention. See, for instance, Calotychos; Smith. For a discussion on theatre, nation, and Greece, see Zaroulia (“Members”).

⁴

The debates over the recognition and visibility of minority languages in Greece (e.g., Arvanite, Aroumanian [Vlach], Bulgarian, Slav-Macedonian, and Roma) are still ongoing; see Baltiotis and Embiricos.

⁵

The majority of migrants arriving in Greece since the 1980s came from Egypt and the Philippines, Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Romania, Soviet Union), and the Balkans (Bulgaria, Albania); more recent waves originate in Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and African countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Eritrea and, Sierra Leone.

⁶ On the spiraling of violence against migrants, see Dalakoglou 34–35; Chatziprokopiou 168–70. For a map of attacks, visit <http://map.crisis-scape.net/>.

⁷

In several European Social Surveys (ESS), conducted between 2003–2011, focusing on attitudes vis-à-vis migration, the majority of Greek respondents strongly favoured cultural homogeneity in terms of language, religion, and customs over multiculturalism, and they would accept migrants on that basis (see Swartz and Karakatsanis, “Securitization” 39–40; “Challenges” 100).

⁸

Such work includes Alexis Sevastakis’s *Labour’s Journey* [*Ταξίδι Εργασίας*], Kostas Papakostopoulos’s *Emigrants’ Dance* [*Χορός Εμigrκρέδων*], Loula Anagnostaki’s *Victory* [*Η Νίκη*], and Elli Papadimitriou-Vangelis Theodoropoulos’s *Common Speech* [*Κοινός Λόγος*].

⁹

The most salient examples are Yolanda Markopoulou’s *We Are the Persians!* [*Είμαστε οι Πέρσες!*] (2015), Anestis Azas’s *Case Farmakonisi, or The Right of Water* [*Υπόθεση Φαρμακονήσι ή το Δίκαιο του Νερού*] (2015), Nikos Diamantis’s *Under-Hidden Voices* [*Under-Κρυμμένες Φωνές*] (2015–16), and Dries Verhoeven’s *No Man’s Land* (2014).

¹⁰

“Πιστεύουμε πως έχει μεγάλη σημασία να εκφραστούν θεατρικά (και στη γλώσσα τους) οι μετανάστες, που αποτελούν κομμάτι της ελληνικής κοινωνίας, και μάλιστα οι Αλβανοί, που είναι το πιο μεγάλο αλλά και παρεξηγημένο κομμάτι των μεταναστών. Η παράσταση είναι μια κίνηση πλησιάζματος του Διπλανού μας, κάτι που το έχει ανάγκη η κοινωνία μας [...] που καταγράφει φαινόμενα ξενοφοβίας και ρατσισμού που πιστεύαμε πως είχαν υποχωρήσει” (“The Emigrants” [*Εμigrκρέδες*]).

¹¹ “Όταν θα μπορέσουν να δεχτούν οι Αλβανοί της χώρας μας το μέλλον μας ως Έλληνες και οι Έλληνες το μέλλον μας ως Αλβανοί τότε αυτή η διπλή ταυτότητα θα έχει ξεκαθαρίσει και θα ξέρουμε πολύ καλά την πρώτη και τη δεύτερη πατρίδα μας” (Vasiliou qtd. in Kakoudaki [Κακουδάκη]).

¹² “Επέλεξα να ζω και να δημιουργώ στην Ελλάδα, γιατί όταν βρέθηκα δουλεύοντας – είτε με θέατρο είτε με ταινίες- σε άλλες χώρες (Ευρώπη, Αμερική, Ασία) συνειδητοποίησα πως η μοναδική χώρα που δεν αισθανόμουν ξένος ήταν η Ελλάδα. Επέλεξα να ζω στην Ελλάδα γιατί τα πρώτα νανουρίσματα που άκουσα ήταν τα ηπειρώτικα από τη γιαγιά μου” (Vasiliou [Βασιλείου], Interview).

¹³ “Σήμερα πια πατρίδα μου είναι όπου νιώθω καλά. Πατρίδα μου δεν είναι το χόμα, αλλά οι άνθρωποι” (Loverdou [Λοβέρδου]).

¹⁴ “Θα μου πεις ΕΣΥ πώς να κάνω τη δουλειά μου τώρα; ΕΣΥ; Δε φτάνει που σας μαζέψαμε εδώ πέρα. Σας δώσαμε ψωμί να φάτε, σας βάλαμε στα σπίτια μας, τώρα θέλετε και θέατρο; [...] Μη δα-γκώ-νε-τε το χέ-ρι που σας τα-ϊ-ζει. Αυτή είναι η

μουσική (*Πατάει Play.*) Αν σ' αρέσει" (Vasiliou [Βασιλείου], *One in Ten* [*Ένας στους Δέκα*] 21).

¹⁵ "“Όχι πού μένεις, γλυκέ μου! Από πού είσαι.’ Γαμώτο, πώς καταλαβαίνουν ότι είμαι ξένος; Αφού μια χαρά τα μιλάω τα ελληνικά” (24).

¹⁶ “Μπράβο στον Ένκε! Είδατε; Διατηρεί άρρηκτους δεσμούς με τις αρχέγονες ρίζες του” (24).
¹⁷

In the original, the Virgil passage appears in its original Latin: “Exiloque domos et dulcia limina mutant/Atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole jacentem” (19).

¹⁸ Ένκε: Οδός;
Kris: Ξενοκράτους
Ένκε: Συγγραφέας;
Kris: Ξενόπουλος
[...]
Ένκε: Συνθέτης;
David: Ξενάκης.
Kris: Τραγούδι;
David: “Ξένος”
Ένκε: Ξένος;
David: “Ξένος για σένανε κι εχθρός θα ’μαι από σήμερα κι εμπρός” (34–35).

¹⁹ Άντρας: Πού μάθατε ελληνικά;
David: Στη δουλειά.
Ένκε: Στο σχολείο.
Kris: Στο δρόμο.
Άντρας: Με τους δικούς σας, τι γλώσσα μιλάτε;
David: Γεωργιανά.
(*Ο Ένκε δε μιλάει.*)
Kris: Βουλγάρικα.
Άντρας: (*Στον Ένκε*) Εσείς; Εσείς;
Ένκε: Δε μιλάω ποτέ Αλβανικά. Σχεδόν τα έχω ξεχάσει.
Άντρας: Όταν βρίσκεστε σε δημόσιο χώρο, τι γλώσσα μιλάτε;
David: Ένκε,
Kris: Ελληνικά. (38)

²⁰ “Πώς αισθάνεστε στην Ελλάδα;” (38).

²¹ “Και τώρα, Κυρίες και Κύριοι, η ιστορία ενός παιδιού που ήθελε να ταξιδέψει μακριά. Να φτάσει κάπου. Όταν έφτασε στο μαγικό του τόπο του ζήτησαν να γίνει κάποιος άλλος. Να αλλάξει όνομα, γλώσσα, ντύσιμο, φύλο και να γίνει... *Americano*” (40; emphasis in original).

²² “Ποιός θέλει να γίνει ...Americano; Εσείς; Εσείς; Εσείς; Αυτός είναι...Americano! Εσείς; Εσείς; Εσείς;” (40).

²³ “Η παράσταση *Ένας στους Δέκα* με βοήθησε να αγαπήσω το διπλανό μου, ακριβώς επειδή είναι διαφορετικός. Έχει άλλη νοοτροπία, άλλο χρώμα, άλλη γλώσσα, αλλά την ίδια ψυχή: πονάει, κλαίει, χαίρεται, χαμογελάει. Η ξενοφοβία βοηθάει στο να υπάρχει ένας εχθρός, αυτός που φταίει για το χάλι μας” (Αϊβαλιώτου [Αϊβαλιώτου]).

²⁴

In Greek, “Τι είν’ η πατρίδα μας;” The title alludes to a well-known pastoral poem by Ioannis Polemis (1862–1924) widely taught at Greek schools, which celebrates the Greek landscape as “homeland.”

²⁵

The other plays included Yannis Tsiros’s *Invisible Olga* [*Αόρατη Όλγα*] and Lena Kitsopoulou’s *Aoustras, or Couch Grass* [*Αουστρας ή η Αγριάδα*], both produced under the auspices of a pan-European project called “Emergency Entrance.” Funded by the EU, it brought together theatres from Italy, Israel, Austria, Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

²⁶ My analysis of *Homelands* is based on my attendance of the performance in 2012 and the production video and script at

the National Theatre archive.

²⁷ Kolokotronis was a hero of the War of Independence (1821–32), which led to the formation of the modern Greek state.

²⁸ “Δεν θέλω να γυρίσω στο Αφγανιστάν – εγώ έχω μεγαλώσει εδώ στην Ελλάδα. Ό,τι έχω μάθει στη ζωή, εδώ έχω μάθει. Θέλω να μείνω εδώ που είναι ελευθερία. Στο Αφγανιστάν θέλω να γυρίσω μόνο σαν τουρίστας. Να δω πού μεγάλωσα, πού περπάτησα. Να βλέπω πού παίζαμε στα χώματα” (Video recording).

²⁹ “Αυτά παθαίνεις να ζεις σε ξένο τόπο και να μην ξέρεις γρι από γλώσσα. Σε βγάζουν κλέφτη στο άψε-σβήσε” (Video recording).

³⁰ “το κεντρικό ζήτημα για αυτούς τους ανθρώπους είναι το θέμα της ταυτότητας και της ένταξής τους στην ελληνική κοινωνία. Όταν λοιπόν αφηγούνται την προσωπική τους ιστορία στα ελληνικά έρχονται κοντά σε εμάς. Αλλά κι εμείς μπορούμε να τους δούμε με μεγαλύτερη οικειότητα διαπιστώνοντας την προσπάθεια που έχουν καταβάλει για να μιλήσουν τη γλώσσα μας!” (Kleftogianni [Κλεφτόγιαννη]).

³¹ “Ό,τι και να κάνω θα είμαι ένας ξένος για φίλους και εχθρούς. [...] Το όνομά σου, π.χ., ξενίζει, ‘προκαλεί’, ή φοβίζει” (Imbridis [Ιμβρίδης]).

³² “Οι Ελληνίδες δεν μας θέλουν. Σκέπτομαι που είμαστε ξένος ... που είμαστε φτωχοί” (Video recording).

³³

“Αγόρασα ρούχα. Καλά ρούχα. Μάρκες. [...] Να μην φαίνομαι ξένος” (Video recording).

³⁴ “Γιατί δεν είναι ο χώρος που μας χωρίζει απ’ την πατρίδα αλλά ο χρόνος. Ο χρόνος μας ξενιτεύει. Και ο νόστος μένει πάντα όνειρο ανεκπλήρωτο. Είμαστε όλοι μετέωροι σε ένα κόσμο παράλογο και ακατανόητο. Είμαστε όλοι μετανάστες” (Parathanasiou [Παπαθανασίου] and Reppas [Ρέππας] 5).

³⁵ “Η πατρίδα για τον άνθρωπο είναι μια βιωματική εμπειρία οικειότητας” (Programme 8).

³⁶

The piece has toured to cities such as Munich (Kammerspiele), Paris (Théâtre de la Ville), Zurich (Theater Spektakel), Ljubljana (Mladi Levi), Vilnius (Sirenos Festival), Lisbon (Teatro Maria Matos), and Strasbourg (Théâtre Le Maillon).

³⁷

The directors have collaborated with Rimini Protokoll for their 2010 *Prometheus in Athens*. The piece explored the beginnings of the Greek debt crisis by figuring a Bulgarian immigrant domestic worker, Konstantina Kouneva, as a modern-day Prometheus. For a discussion of the production, see Fragkou (171–92).

³⁸

Ballhaus Naunystasse, founded by Shermin Langhoff in 2006 and now run by Wagner Carvalho, has pioneered the genre “post-migration theatre.” Langhoff’s vision was to establish a space where marginalized voices could be heard. It has now become a significant creative hub for second-generation migrant artists and artists of colour living in Germany.

³⁹

I allude to the high-profile case of Konstantina Kouneva, who was attacked with acid in 2009, as well as the battle of a group of female migrant cleaners who lost their jobs from the Ministry of Finance in 2012.

⁴⁰ “Κυρίες και Κύριοι. Όταν τελειώσει η παράσταση δε θέλω να δω τσίγλες κάτω από τα καθίσματα. Και μην πετάτε τα μπουκάλια με το νερό. Το πήρες [το μπουκάλι] μέσα? Πάρ’ το και έξω μαζί σου. Δεν λυπάσαι εμάς τις καθαρίστριες; Δεν λυπάσαι τη μέση μας; Σκύβουμε, ψάχνουμε” (Azas [Αζάς] and Tsinikoris [Τσινικόρης] 1).

⁴¹ “Γιατί πρέπει η γυναίκα να φύγει για να βγάλει τα λεφτά;” (8).

⁴² “Ευτυχώς και η κόρη μου την είπε” (22).

⁴³ “Όχι επειδή συμπάσχεις ανθρωπιστικά με τον ‘άλλο’, αλλά επειδή βλέπεις ότι τα κοινωνικοπολιτικά δεδομένα τείνουν να μας δέσουν όλους στην ίδια μοίρα” (Karaoglou [Καράογλου]).

⁴⁴ In 2015, Akadimia Platonos theatre staged Dimitris Kehaidis’s two-hander *Backgammon* [*To Τάβλι*] with two Greek performers of African descent, Samuel Akinola and Stefanos Mouagie. Although the play was performed in Greek, it showcases an important shift in Greek theatre, as it revisits a text inextricably linked to the identity of the modern Greek nation both in terms of content and stage history. (The play was originally staged by the renowned director Karolos Koun in 1972). In this way, it disturbs the exclusively white tradition of Greek theatre and the nation.