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Semiotics and Fieldwork:
On critical ethnographies

edited by
Eleftheria Deltsou & Fotini Tsibiridou

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& Fotini Tsibiridou

Introduction – Semiotics and Fieldwork: On Critical Ethnographies

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Prisoner (once again) of the Caucasus: An ethnography of film

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Conference Report: The Fugue of the Five Senses: Semiotics of the Shifting Sensorium. October, 14-16, 2016, Thessaloniki

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Simona Stano. Eating the Other. Translations of the Culinary Code

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INTRODUCTION

Semiotics and Fieldwork: On Critical Ethnographies

Eleftheria Deltsou & Fotini Tsibiridou

Since its inception over a century, ethnography has been considered the characteristic research method of socio-cultural anthropology and the ontological *sine qua non* of an anthropologist. For anthropology, ethnography is both the conduct of a qualitative research process, as well the outcome of this process in a text (book or article) that analyzes a(ny) socio-cultural phenomenon. There, the ethnographer presents the ethnographic data and attempts to uncover the underlying significances, which are always to be found in relation to wider socio-cultural contexts. To grasp ‘the native point of view’ anthropologists gather all accessed data that will enable a holistic understanding of the people and/or the phenomenon under study. For several decades now this type of research methodology has been adopted by various other disciplines that also employ qualitative research methods, the term ‘ethnography’ being equated with more or less any qualitative research project that provides a detailed description of everyday life and practice.¹ The encounter, however, between semiotics and ethnography did not constitute a common point of convergence between anthropology and semiotics for quite some time. Actually, initially it was more a cross-fertilization between anthropology and semiotics, in specific Levi-Strauss’s structural anthropology and Geertz’s and Turner’s symbolic perceptions of culture.

Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology emerged under the influence of the Prague School of structural linguistics, but its models essentially relied on Saussurean linguistics (Harkin 2007). Lévi-Strauss approached the organization of cultural sign systems, e.g., totemism, myth, kinship rules, as ‘languages’ whose deep structures underlie surface phenomena. For Lévi-Strauss, binary oppositions were seen to constitute the basis of underlying ‘classificatory systems’ within cultures. On the other hand, in *Thick Description* Geertz gave the renowned definition of culture as essentially semiotic, namely, the webs of significance that ‘man ... himself has spun’ (1973: 5). The task, thus, of anthropological analysis became a search of meaning and an issue

of interpretation. Symbols as vehicles of 'culture' are to be studied for what they can reveal about culture, i.e. how symbols shape the ways that social actors see, feel, and think about the world (Ortner 1984: 129). This semiotic conception of culture as 'webs of significance' formed the paradigm of 'interpretive anthropology' that called for the thick description of human behavior within its social context. Turner (1967), on the other hand, also a proponent of symbolic *anthropology*, put emphasis on symbols, his theory eventually to be described as the symbolic approach. Turner's view of culture established an anthropology of meaning that approached symbols in a more semiotic fashion than Geertz (Portis-Winner 2009: 133). He was interested in the ways in which symbols operate within 'society' (Ortner 1984:130), that is symbols as 'operators in the social process', which, when put together in certain arrangements in certain contexts, incite social action and produce social transformations (Ortner 1984:131).

In semiotics, on the other hand, this cross-fertilization with anthropology was less apparent. Even though in 1916 Saussure defined semiotics as the 'study the life of signs within society,' his theoretical emphasis was on semiotic systems or structures, without really considering the role of the wider socio-cultural context in signification, as anthropology did. The holistic interpretation of anthropology that considered the social context as an indispensable factor for the interpretation of signs/symbols did not seem to be an anticipated point of convergence between semiotics and anthropology yet, even more so ethnography. Herzfeld, however, as early as 1983, discussed a convergence of semiotic perspectives in anthropological discourse and method, and in particular in an understanding of fieldwork as a pragmatic embodiment of theory, a shared perspective that he called semiotic ethnography (1983: 99).² This direction did not seem to establish a strong tendency, most likely because, as Vannini remarked (2007: 3), ethnographers, interpretivists, interactionists, and qualitative researchers dismissed structural semiotics as formal, abductive, idealist, speculative, amoral/functional, detached, and objective, in opposition to their informal, inductive, empirical, descriptive, moral, sympathetic, and even subjective/reflexive ethnography.

It was many years later that a more holistic social semiotics developed, which focused on semiotic practices and explored how linguistic and communicative codes are formed by social processes, being themselves part of those social processes too. A few decades ago social semiotics repudiated the old structuralist emphasis on the relations between parts within a system and emplaced signs in specific social and cultural contexts. Characteristically, Lotman's 'semiotics of culture' approached culture as a 'semiotic mechanism for the output and storage of information' (Lotman 1977). Later his notion of the 'semiosphere' (Lotman 1984) saw sign processes to operate in the set of all interconnected *Umwelten* (that is, factors that can influence people's behavior), as a modeling system with permeable boundary structures that facilitates the mapping of the contexts of culture (Portis-Winner 2009: 130-131fn.1)

At the same time, Kress's Social Semiotics diverged from 'traditional', Saussurean semiotics by its emphasis on meaning-making vs. meaning-use. For him, systems of signs do not just exist

and are put in use, but there is a ceaseless *social (re)making* of a set of cultural resources. Thus, a semiotic action involves the choice of a *signifier* from paradigms, to be then made into a sign according to the interest of the maker in a particular social environment. As a remade signifier, the new sign becomes available for the *making* of more signs. Social semiosis, in other words, is both the *choice* of existing signifier-resources and the anew *making* of signs from them (Kress 2011: 242, italics in the original).

This switch in emphasis in social semiotics incorporated the theoretical and thus methodological changes that had occurred earlier in social theory in general and in anthropology in specific: the emphasis on the role of agency and action in the production and reproduction of social structures (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1976; Giddens 1984; Ortner 1984), as well as critical ethnography's sensitivity to issues of agency, power, knowledge, reflexivity, and representation (Appadurai 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983; Marcus and Fischer 1986). In such a context, a *socio-semiotic ethnography* was advocated to combine the Peircean and pragmatist social semiotic tradition, classical and contemporary critical theory and post-structural socio-linguistics, contemporary cultural studies, an advancement that would carry great potential across the academic spectrum (Vannini 2007: 1-2).

This shared emphasis by social semiotics on social action, context, and use has been brought forth by Kress (2011: 243), who argued that the cultural resources for representation are constantly remade in line with the interest of the sign-makers' needs and requirements, and the prevailing structures of power in their life-worlds. This makes every sign particular to the social characteristics of this social environment, to the life-world of the sign-maker and that culture. In this respect, social semiotics is a theory of meaning that looks for *meaning*, *meaning-making*, the *agency* of *meaning-makers* and the constant (re-)constitution of *identity* in sign- and meaning- making, as well as the (social) constraints faced in *making* meaning. The focus on the relation between *social semiosis* and *knowledge* in terms of how and by whom 'knowledge' is produced and shaped and constituted distinctly in different modes, which resources are available in any one society for the *making* of meaning, how, therefore, 'knowledge' appears differently in different modes (Kress 2011: 242, italics in the original).

An important identifying trait of social semiotics came to be the attribution both of power to meaning and of meaning to power, taking into consideration the ever unstable conditions of hegemony and the consequent 'multi-accentuality' or heteroglossia of signs (Vannini 2007: 6). Considering culture, society, and politics as intrinsic to semiosis, socio-semiotic ethnographers need to acknowledge the power dynamics that are intrinsic to their research practices from the very beginning to the very end. Reflexivity should, therefore, be ensured by socio-semiotic ethnographers in their heteroglot *paroles*, the process of explicit dialectic self-awareness, and the polyvocality, which informs the very shape and validity of socio-semiotic ethnography (Vannini 2007: 10).

At this juncture social semiotics saw 'language' as just one among the resources for making

meaning and started also paying attention to non-linguistic modes of communication as 'resources' for making meaning, as new 'grammars'. Multimodality, i.e., the communication practices through a range of textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual semiotic modes, addresses the modes used to compose messages. 'Multimodality' is thus defined as a field of work, a domain for enquiry, a description of the space and the resources that enter into *meaning*, taking for granted that the available resources in one social group and its cultures at a particular moment constitute one coherent domain, an integral field of nevertheless distinct resources for *making* meaning (Kress 2011: 242). In that direction, however, Pink (2011: 266) argued that Kress's notion of 'sight, hearing, smell, taste and feel' as 'each being attuned in a quite specific way to the natural environment, proving us with highly differentiated information,' should be reconsidered. For her, Kress's argument that the multimodality of our semiotic world is guaranteed, because 'none of the senses ever operates in isolation from the others' (2000: 184 in Pink 2011: 266), should be revised, because people actually tend to communicate linguistically about their embodied and sensory perception in terms of sensory categories.

While the importance of the context, of the surrounding ambiance, and of multimodality in the interpretation of the signs/symbols expanded the social semiotic perspective, there seems to still exist a preoccupation with texts. McDonald (2013: 320) commented that, while analysts within the Social Semiotic tradition criticize the privileging of language within multimodal studies and semiotics, they still favor language as the model for other semiotic modalities, being essentially considered as different kinds of 'languages,' rather than as modalities in their own right. For her, the disengagement of social semiotic approaches from linguistic models requires first the comprehension of the nature of semiosis; how modalities combine in 'performance,' the links between the iconic and/or indexical and/or symbolic referential processes involved in expression and interpretation in each modality (McDonald 2013: 331-332).

Notwithstanding the critiques and the different views expressed above, it seems that the holistic perspective of anthropology, which takes the social context as requisite for the explication of signs/symbols, has become a well-established point of convergence between semiotics and ethnography. Indicatively, Kress defined both 'ethnography' and 'social semiotics' as qualitative research 'approaches' in the social sciences that should be explored whether and how they can or should collocate to their common benefit (2011: 239). Considering that this encounter would encourage rapprochements and interdisciplinarity across a wide range of fields, Kress argued (2011: 241) for the cooperation between Social Semiotics and ethnography, because to him the invocation of 'the social' by the Social Semiotic analysis of (social) semiosis (the *making* of meaning in social environments) is not equally detailed as in *ethnography*.

Pink (2011: 273), on the other hand, considers only a 'classic' ethnography to be theoretically and methodologically coherent for the multimodality paradigm, because multimedia scholars are still drawn by the semiotic principles of 'classic' 'Geertzian' ethnography. As a result, she argued, the 'classic' conceptualizations of culture, meaning, and experience that

multimodality scholarship advocates, bypass the recent critical literature around ethnographic methodology. While their approach to ethnography recognizes the need for researcher reflexivity and seeks to understand the relational constitution of meaning, yet, its ethnographic approach is mainly observational of culture-as-readable-text. Even more, its emphasis on the *differences* between different senses, different modes, and different media assumes a world that is separated into sets of discrete, but relational to each other, components (Pink 2011: 270).

Meanwhile, Kress (2011: 241) considered that the encounter between semiotics and ethnography raises a core issue: whether general aim would be a merging of frameworks and methods, or the potential temporary complementarity of distinctly different approaches around a specific task. While this is more of a concern for social semiotics than for anthropological ethnography,³ Kress argued for old good anthropological ethnography to provide 'the social' in the analysis of social semiosis. For a multimodal social semiotic analysis to visit the homes of customers, do some kind of survey, conduct interviews, gather other material, is to employ methods that are much more in the domain of ethnography and made for such tasks. Being clear that interviews and 'participation' are not tools of Social Semiotics, he perceived complementarity to be the use of each approach for what each will do best, and suggested to bring the two kinds of 'findings' together and see what that would show⁴ (Kress 2011: 245).

Regardless of whether the encounter between ethnography and semiotics will eventually be one of complementarity or merging, and which one will prove to do what better, the emergence of new sites of representation shows the fruitful interplay of semiotics and ethnography in the critical analysis and interpretation of context-bound social action and symbolic interaction, particularly when they are engaging with sites and microcosms that are non-discernible by other means of research for non-reductive understandings of the contemporary. The following examples of semiotic ethnographies exemplify some fruitful directions that this interaction of social semiotics with ethnography has recently taken: how the semiotic employment of the body in systems such as music expands understandings of language and expresses very different kinds of meanings (McDonald 2013); how at moments of friction, the never fixed and stable indexical meanings are temporally reshuffled and the symbolic systems of new political systems engender reclassifications that employ the ability of old signifiers to signify something new or new signifiers to signify something old (Brink-Danan 2010); how an ethnography of a semiotics of commodity contemplates over a theory of semiosis to explain both the semiotics of commodities and the commoditization of semiosis, and a definition of meaning that brings together political economy with the techniques of linguistic anthropology (Kockelman 2006); how an ethnographic analysis of Bible Advocacy shows that the sense of ambience, i.e., a sensual semiotics, may improve an understanding of, or transcend the structural public-private distinction (Engelke 2012); how an analysis of 'multimodal' transcripts from a social semiotic framework accounts for transcripts as *artefacts*, as empirical material through which transcription can be reconstructed as a social, meaning-making practice (Bezemera and Mavers 2011);

how the semiotic function of the hashtag in social media, as intended significance of an utterance, may indicate a meaning that is possibly otherwise not apparent (Bonilla and Rosa 2015).

This journal issue aims at combining social semiotics with ethnographic fieldwork, mostly in the direction of a critical ethnography that goes beneath the obvious, that exposes obscure operations of power and control, and challenges regimes of knowledge and social practices that frame people's everyday choices in any possible way. In Vannini's words (2007: 121), socio-semiotic ethnography is a form of critical analytic ethnography that seeks to combine fieldwork and theory in order to understand and interpret social processes, a critical practice that emphasizes the praxiological relevance of critical emancipation and critical enlightenment. All the ethnographically based semiotic researches and the semiotically informed ethnographies of this issue share an openness to different fields, such as cultural studies and social semiotics (Vannini 2007). Sideri's textual and contextual analysis of a movie as context of multiple meanings and power relations meets with Zaimakis' analysis of street art practices as alternative modes that express dissatisfaction, protest and, often, readiness for social change, as well as Canakis' research of changes on the linguistic landscape brought forth by tourist and refugee flows. These thick descriptions of the particular cultural contexts and the global expectations of social agents challenge the limits both of ethnographic practices and of semiotic understandings in conditions of dynamic historical, economic, and political transformations. This is also the case of Tsékénis' paper on culinary semiotics and the political economy of witchcraft in Africa. Bouissac's ethno-semiotics of a circus live performance further shows participant observation as mainstream ethnographic modality to complement with the analysis of performances as multimodal texts. They all challenge the impact of the cultural meaning and reflexivity, when fieldwork experiences are facing overlapping socio-historical codes and significations, in colonial and modern, post-colonial and late modern environments.

We consider that this openness to, or synergy/penetrability amongst the fields of social semiotics, anthropology, sociolinguistics, cultural studies, visual studies, media studies, political economy, etc., challenges predominant trends in understanding our complex globalized world(s). In this issue's critical texts, participant observation meets social semiotics to serve a new critical semiotic ethnography. This complementarity shapes a framework of cultural critique that assists ethnography in its reflexive undertaking and social semiotics' search for source signifiers that produce other signs of meanings within social practices.

This complementary interaction works as a dynamic game, flexible and precarious, that can be permanently transformed by social actors through everyday experiences and everyday triviality. All the studies in this issue pay attention to the importance protagonists give to banal everyday trivialities. Social agents produce dissent, critique, meaningful communication, recognition, by way of signs that are created through ordinary discourses, words, habitus, materials and representations. These trivial everyday components seem to work as source-signifiers in order to produce new signs, transmit and transform their cultural meanings. From this per-

spective, the present volume contributes to relevant previous discussions on the importance of everyday semiotics and hermeneutics (Yoka & Paschalidis 2015), where semiotics meets ethnography, art and cultural studies.

In this framework, the adherence of the present studies to everyday triviality serves and stresses the impact of complementarity between critical ethnography and social semiotics. In our globalized world(s) and multiply mediated realities, we realize more and more that ethnography cannot be limited to dry participant observation. Representations of every lived experience that produce cultural meanings need a detailed deconstruction by methods and approaches that locate and problematize the dispersal of power (i.e. cultural studies, feminist and minority studies). In this direction, socio-semiotics' focus on 'any representation of how people experience, use, practice, talk about, contest, critique, understand—and in general, interact—with polysemic meanings of semiotic resources' (Vannini 2007: 125) further advances endeavors for a more reflexive and critical ethnography.

NOTES

1 Kress (2011:241) commented on the constantly expanding use of the term *ethnography* that, as in Social Semiotics, signs are specific at the moment of their making and are remade by interpretation, anyone's use of the word/signifier 'ethnography' makes a sign of it that is precise for her or him at that moment.

2 For an insightful application of semiotic principles in ethnographic analysis see Herzfeld 1981; 1986; 1987.

3 Pink, also, argued that, while multimodality scholars make approaches to ethnography, the interest in the multimodality approach among anthropologists is not equally great (2011: 273).

4 Kress assumed for the time being a relation of 'cooperation' and 'complementarity,' to consider later on, if the tasks persist, a merger (2011: 241).

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Ethno-semiotics of a circus act: Mirko and his goats

Paul Bouissac

This article addresses the challenges of engaging in ethno-semiotics research of circus performances and provides an example to illustrate the methodological strategy that is proposed. The approach is bottom-up rather than top-down. First a fine-grained description that integrates both perceptual information and emotional experience from the individual point of view of the observer is produced after several attentive viewings of the performance. Reactions from other members of the audience are also noted to limit the possibility of a strictly subjective verbal rendering of the experience. Secondly, the cultural implications, semantic connotations, and cognitive semiotics of the performance are probed in order to develop a 'thick description' that can serve as a basis for a tentative interpretation. The article then proceeds from the description of a goat act to examine other acts belonging to the same paradigm in circus culture: animals that are paradoxically trained to do nothing. The final section attempts to explain the cognitive reason for which such acts are enjoyed by the audience, and, more generally, why the circus makes sense even in its most unexpected productions.

KEYWORDS ethno-semiotics, methodology, humour, theory of mind

Introduction

Circus ethnography research is a complex endeavor that requires difficult choices at the onset. The shows produced by today's traditional circuses, and by other contemporary forms of the acrobatic arts, are only the tip of the iceberg. Certainly, the performances can be observed and analyzed as meaningful multimodal texts. But truly construing the circus as an ethnographic object should imply that equal attention is paid to the long processes of production themselves and to the organizations that support them. These aspects have historical

depth, social and economic dimensions, and semiotic relevance. Although I had direct access during several episodes in my life to the inner world of the circus, my scientific focus has been so far exclusively on the ethno-semiotics of the acts and programs which can be observed in actual live performances (Bouissac 1976, 2010, 2012, 2015). The rationale for this heuristic decision is that the interface between a circus act and its audience for the time of its duration is a well-bounded event both temporarily (it has a marked beginning and end) and spatially (it occurs within a circular area and above it, and the spectators surround it with maximal visibility). Even if the scope of the research is thus restricted, the quantity of semiotic information displayed in the ring during the few minutes that a circus act usually lasts and the complexity of the dynamic that unfolds under our eyes can be overwhelming. The circus ethnographer who attends an act for the first time experiences a holistic event that could be characterized as a massive production of meaning and a collective emotional response that is contagious. The systematic semiotic probing of the interface between performance and audience attempts to answer the following questions: what kind of meaning is produced? How is it articulated? What are the assumptions or implications at play? And why does it trigger such gratification among the audience or, at times, is met with disapproval when it fails?

At this point, an important methodological decision is called for. Will the description and interpretation be based on a single viewing, thus focusing merely by necessity on the most salient meaningful effects and reactive affects that can be registered in short-term memory? This is, after all, the experience of the great majority of spectators who attend a live circus performance only once in a while and foster later a long-lasting selective memory based on what they perceived and felt then. Or will several successive viewings of the same spectacle be used by the ethnographer to construct a richer and more complex object of study making it possible to engage in the *thick description* (Geertz 1973) of a structured event, loaded with cultural connotations and implicit intertextual references, that is repeated day after day with minor variations? The latter enables a quasi-exhaustive categorization of all the multisensorial elements at work in a circus act and the ways in which they are combined, and unfold as a dynamic unit from the beginning to the end. During multiple observations, attention can be paid to the audience's reactions and, these indications can provide the researcher with reliable information on the variations that may occur in the reception of the act in synchrony with its successive moments.

All scientific observations and descriptions are based on a model or a matrix that has been constructed through the first stage of the inquiry. Any acrobatic or trained animal act is generated by an algorithm, that is, a set of self-instructions which the performer implements at a particular pace. These instructions include (i) technical movements such as: make the horses run clockwise three times around the ring; then, make them change direction; or: juggle with three balls with twelve catches; then, add a ball and pirouette before the last catch; and (ii) make social gestures toward the audience around you such as smiling as if you were having

fun with the horses; or, tilt your head toward the public and pause after a series of successful juggling tricks to acknowledge their applause. All this can in theory be described 'objectively' but the observer of a circus act is also necessarily a spectator and, therefore, is embedded into the very object of the study. This creates an experiential dimension that transforms the observation into a comprehensive self-implicating account.

The only way to do semiotic justice to the complexity and symbolic richness of circus acts is to engage in a 'thick' description while keeping in mind that the subjectivity of the observer is an important component of the experience that is reported as the 'object' of the study. There is enough evidence, though, that it is a shared subjectivity grounded on the common denominators of the performance. It can be safely assumed that a significant overlapping of the individual receptions guarantees the authenticity of the ethnographic descriptions and interpretations.

The traditional circus offers a limited set of genres and paradigms within each genre. Genres include for instance ground and aerialist acrobatics, or domestic and wild animal training. The paradigms within the domestic animal genre comprise species endowed with distinct status: horses, dogs, and farm animals such as cows, pigs, and geese. They rank on a scale from higher to lower class, the latter being most often associated with clowns; the former with equestrian aristocracy. However, it must be kept in mind that the differential statuses of animals depend on the cultures in which they are observed and on whether they are considered to be autochthonous or exotic. Furthermore, each species comes with its own local semiotic baggage, a bundle of symbolic values, stereotypical characterizations, and folk narratives. Similarly, acrobatics of all kinds can evoke historical and mythical associations through the artists' demeanors, their stage names and costumes, and the music that accompanies their acts. 'Thick' description cannot gloss over these webs of images, metaphors, and connotations that are delivered as a rich package with each performance. Whether these meaningful dimensions are only in the eyes of the beholders or deliberately designed by the performers, they infuse the experience that is the object of the ethnographic inquiry. Indeed, circus acts are not passively 'consumed' by the spectators but they are co-constructed by the artists and their audience. Therefore, the goal of the ethno-semiotician is to elaborate an inclusive and comprehensive object through elucidating the dynamic interactions of the multiple signs that are at play in the performance of a circus act. It also must disentangle the multiple layers of cultural memories that are woven in it.

A challenging goat act

Let us probe the approach described above in the case of an act I observed in August 2015 in a Polish circus that was performing in Warsaw. *Cyrk Zalewski* had pitched its tent in a

suburb of the Polish capital. I was able to attend the show three times. As an admirer of the circus arts, the first show is always for the pleasure. Putting temporarily semiotic concerns into parenthesis, I experience the acts as a *bona fide* spectator, feeling free to pass esthetic or technical judgments on the performances I witness. The program was traditional. Some acts were a little better than average. I was only mediocrally interested in a goat act that was presented by a clown, Mirco (Miroslaw Bogut). On face value, it was trivial except for an amusing trick at the beginning of the act. There was a lot of talking by the clown during the act but the goats were only minimally trained and what they did was truly undistinguished. Not being conversant in Polish, this was a handicap. But, after all, circus is a visual art and I can tell a well-trained animal from one that hardly meets usual standards. I thought it was a poor act. But, for the ethnographer of the circus, when one moves from the first experience to the reflexive observation and description, a bad act is as interesting, if not more, than a good act. Why was it bad? This is a true question for the semiotician. I was challenged by the fact that this 'mediocre' act was quite successful with the public which, obviously did not share my critical opinion. From their point of view, it was a good act. But why?

The second viewing was in the company of a native speaker of Polish who first provided some fragments of translations, then, quickly, stopped and dismissed the talk as 'uninteresting chatting'. That time, the goats were behaving with some variations compared to my memory of the first experience. But these were not variations that could be considered as the results of a sophisticated training. They seemed to be random. Still, the audience appeared to enjoy that act. Obviously, some meaning was produced very efficiently by this performance.

For the third observation of this act, I came equipped with my pencil and notebook, and later extracted from the native speaker on my side the gist of what the clown was saying during his constant chatting. The act unfolded as follows in two distinct parts.

1. As some stools and other props are being brought into the ring in preparation for the next act, someone creates a disturbance among the audience. The ring master, who was busy overseeing the placing of the props, turns toward the culprit and a spotlight illuminates a shabbily dressed clown. The ring master asks this individual if he has an admission ticket, adding that, if he does not, he will throw him forcefully out of the circus. While the ring master walks around the ring to reach the location where the disturbance occurred, the clown asks a lady seated next to him whether she would kindly let him have her ticket just for a moment. She complies and when the ring master stands in front of him, the clown triumphantly shows him the right ticket. So far, so good. The ring master apologizes and begs the man to keep quiet henceforth and enjoy the show. As the ring master is walking back to the center, the clown calls him and suggests that he should also ask the lady next to him whether she has a ticket. The public laughs at the gag.
2. The clown, Mirco, walks to the ring, extracts a newspaper from his pocket and sits

down on the border of the ring and unfolds the newspaper to read it. A large black goat enters the ring and approaches him from behind. He notices the animal only when it starts eating the newspaper. At this moment, Mirco starts chatting to the goat and will continue chatting non-stop in a confidential tone of voice, at times raising the volume to make side remarks intended for the public. Expectedly, the goat's action is explained by alluding to its starving for news. The goat is led back to one of the stools on which four more goats have been brought by attendants holding them on leashes. The goats are spectacular. They are beautiful specimens of the Valais mountains breed found in the South of Switzerland. They sport long curved horns and a rich, long coat of white and black hairs. Mirco makes comments about each animal and describes their great acrobatic skills. Including standing on the pedestals, climbing a pyramid of stools, doing feats of balance, and leaping from stool to stool. In fact, the goats are merely trained to stay in the ring and are pulled or pushed through their paces by Mirco or his attendants, or they are enticed to move from one spot to the other by small rewards of food. In addition to the five adult goats, a young animal cavorts around the arena but Mirco pretends to keep it under control with occasional gestures and verbal commands. He tells the audience that this young goat is eager to work and cannot wait for its tricks...which never happen. The big goats' performances are equally unimpressive. When one of them is brought to a stool and ordered to jump to the next one, it leisurely walks across the short gap between the two stands. Instead of doing a hind-leg walk, Mirco hoists the front legs of another one and the attendants push it from behind. Several such 'tricks' are presented in rapid succession while Mirco keeps chatting about how smart and skilled the goats are. At times, he begs them not to ridicule him as he needs to make money to feed them. He also explained to the audience what they think and why they act this way. At the end, they all leave the ring while the spectators express their pleasure with sustained applause. This last information is crucial. It indicates that meaning has been produced and this is what matters to the semiotician. But how to account for the success of such an apparently mediocre display of animal training?

Snapshots of this act can be found on Miroslaw Bogut's Face Book page among other visual documents <https://www.facebook.com/mirco.bm>. It shows in particular the clown begging a goat to leap though a hoop held high above his head, and another photo showing that Mirco has to hold a milk bottle high in order to have a goat standing on its hind legs and resting its front leg on his body to hold the upright position.

Animals trained not to do what they are asked to do

Mirco's goat act belongs to a rich paradigm of domestic animal acts in the traditional circus repertory. The algorithm has the following form: take a docile domestic animal and train it to stay calm in the ring and do nothing or very little while the presenter frames this inaction (or spontaneous natural behavior) within a discourse describing what this animal will do, can do, or thinks. At the same time, be very active around the animal and implement physically whatever the animal is supposed to do as a result of its training. Note that this applies to domestic animals with are defined in the contextual cultures as providing an economic service such as work, food, or other functions, for instance: mules, donkeys, dogs, goats, cows, chickens, geese, and the like.

This abstract algorithm can generate various narratives that can be implemented in the ring with effective dramatizations. Examples I have witnessed during the last four decades include the Swiss mime and clown Dimitri who presented a cow. The ring master asked him for some milk but the clown was unable to obtain any because he lacked the basic technical knowledge necessary to draw the milk from the udders; he first placed a bucket under the animal and tried to make the cow deliver spontaneously the milk by enticing her with the kind of whistling sound that is often made by a caretaker to prompt an infant boy to urinate, thus assimilating the udders with penises; then, he attempted to pump up the milk by manipulating up and down the cow's tail as if it were a water or gas pump; instead, the animal, which had been given plenty to drink before the show, often released itself in the ring for the enjoyment of the audience. The Russian clown Karandash performed with a mule that refused to pull his cart to the point that he had to leave the ring pulling himself the cart in which the mule was seated. Douglas Kossmayer, under the stage name of Eddie Windsor, introduced his 'glamorous' partner Lola Basset, who turned out to be a female basset hound; the dog entered the ring slowly and walked toward the trainer standing beside a table. 'She' had a touch of make-up on the cheeks and was wearing a diamond-studded collar. The animal was self-composed and looked up at the trainer with loving eyes. However, when it was ordered to jump on the table, it would not budge. The man had to lift the dog half way. Lola eventually was hanging with the front legs resting on the table's edge. Inch by inch, he pushed her up until the dog was resting on top of the table. The trainer kept verbalizing how dynamic and obedient 'she' was but had to bring the dog back on the ground using the same process as the one he used for the way up. Then came the trick of leaping through a hoop. Holding the circle high in front of the dog, the trainer shouted 'Jump Tiger!' As there was no reaction, he lowered the height several inches down while his orders were becoming more and more like supplications. Eventually, Lola walked through the hoop when the later was on ground level. The trainer never stopped talking, at times to the dog, at times to the audience, for all the duration of the act. These three examples of the implementation of the paradigmatic algorithm that was formulated above were met with great success.

Engaging in a thick description of Mirco's goat act first required that we identify the paradigm in which it belongs. This does not mean that the full paradigm was present in the trainer's mind when he conceived and created this goat act. Circus artists, though, maintain a kind of memory bank comprising a number of past and contemporary acts in their specialty. They work from precedents, like some legal systems, which they may imitate and slightly modify rather than creating them from scratch through applying an explicit code to a particular domain. The same is true for the audience. They hold some folk knowledge about the fauna of their natural environment. Their own occasional experiences of the circus prompt them to foster a set of expectations when they go to a circus. Farm animals are often associated with clowns, or with presenters dressed as farmers, which, incidentally, is the original meaning of the word 'clown' in Old English. These farm animals are supposed to embody lower moral or mental qualities. Donkeys are considered to be stupid and stubborn. Goats are credited for being willy and devilish, and they are sometimes characterized as the clowns of the animals because of their antics. They have long been loaded with mythical symbolism, from their kinship with the god Pan to their affinities with Satan and witches. All these semiotic layers form a thick cognitive context from which the spectators spontaneously draw symbolic resources for their immediate live interpretations, thus making sense of the performance. But the key to understand why the non-performance of the goats in Mirco's act produces so much humorous sense relates to a fundamental cognitive competence of humans called the 'theory of mind.'

Humor and the theory of mind

The theory of mind (often referred to as T.O.M.) is a notion that was first devised by developmental psychologists who observed that a stage in the maturation of children allows them to interpret others as intentional agents (e.g. Meltzoff 1995; Baron-Cohen et al. 2013). This means that the child discovers that others have a mind and perceive their surroundings in a way similar or not to their own. It is important to understand that T.O.M. is not a philosophical discourse about what the mind is but designates our conceptualization of others as having their perceptions and intentions that may be different from our own. It empowers our capacity to design strategies that take into account what we believe others believe and perceive. Empirical studies have shown that this cognitive competence has evolved in primates as well as in other species (e.g. Premack and Woodruff 1978; Krupenye et al. 2016) but has reached an apex with humans who have the ability, to some extent, to 'read the mind' (that is, the beliefs and intentions) of others before they act, or at least to assess their options and anticipate their most likely behavior that may be determined at times by false beliefs. This is a marked adaptive advantage in social species but, like all adaptations, it carries a cost. Intentions can be attributed to inappropriate physical objects for the sole reason that they move and appear

to behave like organisms. In many traditional cultures, volcanoes, for instance, are construed as unpredictable powerful agencies and it is common for the populations which are threatened by an eruption to sacrifice some animals, and even sometimes humans, in order to appease the volcanoes and prevent them from killing more people. It is a great advantage to figure out what others are likely to do, and to devise appropriate strategies or, at least, to understand that the point of view of others must be taken into consideration. But we are prone to read intentions where there are none, to misread others' minds, or to be deceived by their manipulative behavior. As in the case of visual perception, framing and priming can bias what we see. Humans tend to perceive faces in clouds, on tree trunks or on stone walls on the bases of a few minimal visual cues. This human cognitive competence and its tendency to over-interpret must be kept in mind when we endeavor to understand why Mirco's goat act is successful with the audience in spite of demonstrating only rudimentary training skill.

The constant chatting of the clown provides a general frame of interpretation by pretending to read into the mind of the goats, putting word in their mouths, so to speak, or at least articulating their assumed inner speech. He personalizes them by giving them names and he pretends to read their intentions and private motivations. When an animal fails to jump on order, he utters: 'Ah! This was a good joke! She can jump high in the backstage but she always tries to humiliate me in public! Three months ago, she made a big leap. She brought the house down' or to a goat that does not budge on request: 'Please, Angela, don't do that to me. I need to earn my bread ... and yours'. Gestures can also construct intentional frames. If a goat seems to hesitate to walk a bar between two pedestals, the clown kisses her on the nose and she immediately complies. 'That is the way she manipulates me! She never has enough kisses!'

As the act unfolds, the audience construes the goats as the principal agencies and, as in the similar dog acts that were described above, the meaning produced is that the animals reverse the relation trainer / trainee. The iconic example of this operation is the trick to which I alluded earlier in which the clown who had come to the ring in a cart pulled by a mule, eventually left the ring pulling the cart in which the mule was seated.

This circus paradigm cannot be fully understood, though, if it is not related to the category of wild animals training in which the dominance over natural wilderness is redundantly asserted. The clown is an anti-trainer, the symmetrical inverse of the wild animal trainer. Each one derives its value from the other. Transposed in the social register, we could say that the opposition stands between the warriors and the farmers, or even, perhaps, between the hunters and the pastoralists. This constitutes the deep semiotic opposition that accounts for the production of meaning of this act. In fact, the program in which the goat act was a part included a lion act through which the animals were forcefully driven through their pace and fully accomplished the tricks they were prompted to do. It should be clear that a circus act's meaning emerges from the complex dynamic relations that are embodied in the whole circus tradition. This tradition is rooted in the deep time of oral mythical narratives of which circus

acts survive as shards and fragments of ancient rituals. In the circus experience, there is indeed more than meets the eyes.

Is Mirco an anti-hero? Or is he a meta-hero in the sense that he deconstructs the delusion of the heroic lion trainer? The status of meta-hero would be congruent with his function as clown. Through contemplating his apparent failure to dominate the animals which, as domestic animals, are culturally defined as dominated, the spectators can access the broader abstract structure that is cognitively subjacent to the spontaneous understanding of this act. This has to do with the semiotic of action which implies a logical system of oppositions whose cardinal positions are: first, doing and not doing with respect to the values of possibility and obligation; secondly, making someone do something, not making someone do something, making someone not do something, and not making someone not do something. This subjacent system of oppositions and mutual implications accounts for the semantic of action verbs such as achieving, failing, forcing, preventing, prohibiting, allowing, and the like, which are at the core of the spectacular process of training animals. The circus paradigm we have explored in this essay, more particularly Mirco's goat act in the context of the whole circus program, displays a visual theory of manipulative action in the symmetrical inverse mode which establishes the transgressive nature of the clown and his capacity to transcend the code that defines one of the main tenets of Neolithic cultures within which we still live: the domestication of some species. We can note in conclusion that just before the goat act started, Mirco first appeared as the protagonist of an episode in which he acted as a transgressor whose presence in the audience was unlawful, and that he escaped punishment by tricking a spectator into conspiring with him for the purpose of outsmarting the ring master, thus unveiling the arbitrariness and vulnerability of the cultural order. This action had qualified him as a trickster right at the onset of the goat act.

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Snapshots of the Balkans through Ethnographic Investigation of the Linguistic Landscape

Costas Canakis

This paper investigates the linguistic landscape of Dubrovnik and Kotor on the Southeastern Adriatic coast, and Mytilene in the north Aegean attempting a theorization of its findings at the intersection of (socio)linguistics, ethnography, and semiotics, which has gained ground as the platform of choice in linguistic landscape (LL) research. I argue that the influx of both tourists and refugees, despite the obvious differences between the two groups, has had radical consequences for the LL which have so far attracted virtually no attention in the relevant literature. And yet, tourism and the arrival of new populations have considerable and lasting effects on the LL which can only be adequately investigated by systematic ethnographic studies of the semiotic means employed in inscribing it. Nevertheless, ethnography, as a methodological sociolinguistic tool, cannot substitute or supersede cognitive aspects of language. If doing LL research means doing semiotic landscape research, then we also have to consider semiosis and higher-order indexicality qua categorization. I understand ethnographic LL research as contributing to a better comprehension of the dynamic indexical relation between language and physical space (turned into place through human agency). Just as a certain accent and particular morphosyntactic choices may index the place of origin of a speaker, a specific LL may index populations and their socioeconomic relations at a certain historical moment. Focusing on these dynamic indexical relations may have far-reaching consequences for superdiversity as a way of making sense of language-in-society.

KEYWORDS Linguistic landscape (LL), ethnography, Balkans, tourism, refugees

Introduction

By focusing on the linguistic landscape (LL) of Dubrovnik and Kotor, and Mytilene, this pa-

per attempts a theorization of its findings at the intersection of (socio)linguistics, ethnography, and semiotics (cf. Canakis 2012, 2014, in press, forthcoming a, b; Canakis & Kersten-Pejanić 2016) – a merger which has gained ground as the platform of choice in second wave LL research (Blommaert & Maly 2014; Blommaert 2016; Stroud & Jegels 2014; Kitis & Milani 2015; Stampoulidis 2016). Specifically, the focus is on the LL of Dubrovnik and Kotor, two traditional tourist destinations on the Adriatic, which have been significantly transformed due to the influx of recreational, thematic, and business tourism, and on the LL of Mytilene as it has developed over the last decade both due to the reciprocated tourist flux from Turkey (as opposed to simply towards it) and, more recently, due to the refugee crisis.

My argument is that the influx of tourists and refugees, despite the obvious differences between the two groups, has had remarkable consequences for the LL. And yet, reasonable as it may appear to co-examine the effects of tourism and refugee fluxes in the LL in tandem, it has so far attracted no attention, to the best of my knowledge, despite a long-standing interest in the effects of tourism (cf. Torkington 2009), migration (cf. Lin 2003), and humanitarian crises (cf. Knight 2015; Kitis & Milani 2015; Stampoulidis 2016) in the LL around the world. To begin with, both tourists and refugees characteristically inscribe their presence in the LL in –obvious and non-obvious but often indelible– ways, despite the transient character of many of the relevant signs. This presence may be registered in the form of ‘more’ or ‘new languages’ (or, more precisely, alphabets –as it takes special knowledge to tell apart, e.g. written Arabic, Farsi, (Pakistani) Urdu, Pashto or, indeed, Ottoman Turkish) as well as through acts of direct and indirect reference in previously available linguistic varieties. Be that as it may, tourism and the arrival of new populations have considerable and lasting effects on the LL that can only be investigated adequately by systematic ethnographic studies of the semiotic means employed in inscribing it.

In this work, I focus on data collected over a period spanning more than ten years (July 2006 to October 2016). In the first section, I embark on a brief discussion of methodological and theoretical issues pertaining to LL research. In the second section, I focus on the case studies, devoting a subsection to each. The last section features conclusions on theoretical issues, predominantly on the relevance of the LL as a locus of ethnographic research for the *in situ* investigation of higher-order indexicality (Silverstein 2003; Canakis & Kersten-Pejanić 2016; Canakis forthcoming a).

On theory, methodology, and data: How space becomes place through human agency

LLs are formed, among other things, by discourses currently circulating in (and about) certain spaces. These spaces become *places* via human agency and subjectivity –the defining

characteristic of agency. In turn, these places are embodied and may well be inscribed and, of course, contested (cf. Lefebvre 1991; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Yannakopoulos & Giannitsiotis 2010). As people occupy space and turn it into place, aspects of the discourses they produce find their way on walls in the form of written signs and eventually come to stand in an *indexical relation* (cf. Jakobson 1990; Fillmore 1975; Silverstein 1976, 2003; Caton 1987; Hanks 1990; Ochs 1990, 1992; Duranti 1997, 2003; Canakis 2007) to the places in which they were created and the place which they had an active role in constructing at a certain historical moment (Canakis 2012, 2014, in press, forthcoming a, b). Higher-order indexicality (Silverstein 2003) is dependent on categorization in a dynamic give-and-take (Canakis forthcoming a), which justifies the time-honored view of language as the most complex semiotic system available, and is in dialogue with both the structuralist and the anthropological tradition still informing current work in linguistics as a discipline.

Although research on LLs has sustained an interest in issues of bilingualism and multilingualism in public space, with a special focus on linguistic diversity and vitality (Spolsky & Cooper 1991; Landry & Bourhis 1997; Gorter 2006; the contributions in Shohamy & Gorter 2009 and Shohamy, Ben-Rafael & Barni 2010; Grbavac 2013; Canakis 2014), there is a growing interest in more experimental approaches dealing with the symbolic (cf. Shohamy & Waksman 2009; Canakis & Kersten-Pejanić 2016). At the same time, as LL research is coming of age, the focus shifts towards largely ‘monolingual’ urban spaces (Canakis 2012, 2014, in press, forthcoming b; Grbavac 2013; Papen 2012), in an effort to show the usefulness of LL in investigating aspects of public discourse –social and cultural beliefs on current issues. According to Grbavac (2013: 501), ‘linguistic landscape research can lead to various conclusions about speech community and its social and political implications, about prevailing cultural beliefs; it mirrors different social issues.’ More recent work has taken this ethnographic perspective still further (Blommaert & Maly 2014; Stroud & Jegels 2014; Blommaert & De Fina 2015; Kitis & Milani 2015; Blommaert 2016) to such an extent that specialists in the field have started talking of ‘second wave LL research’. This point is also made in the recently launched journal *Linguistic Landscape: An International Journal* (Barni & Bagna 2015; Shohamy & Ben-Rafael 2015). According to Blommaert & Maly,

[while] earlier quantitative LL research yielded useful indicative ‘catalogues’ of areal multilingualism, it failed to explain how the presence of the presence and distribution of languages could be connected with populations and communities and the relationship between them, or with the patterns of social interaction in which people engage in the particular space. (Blommaert & Maly 2014: 3)

This position can be meaningfully related to Shohamy’s argument that

[o]ver the years it became clear that LL is grounded in a number of diverse disci-

plines which focus on multiple dimensions of public spaces; these include: sociology, law, language policy, language learning, tourism, geography, psychology, economics and architecture, to name just several of a longer list. (Shohamy 2015: 153)

Shohamy & Waksman (2009: 316) claim that ‘the broad repertoire of LL text types as situated in the public space can be conceptualized within the discourses of existing human culture [and] as such they are part of meaning construction that serves various social functions and is subject to various discourse forces.’ The LLs focused upon here will be the ‘ecological arenas’ (Shohamy & Waksman 2009) in which we shall investigate immigration and tourism. The data have been collected at various intervals between 2006 and 2016, a time span which is crucial as it covers significant changes in all polities under investigation.

The data consists primarily of photographic material of LL ‘signs’, understood as ‘any piece of written text within a spatially defined frame’ (Backhaus 2007: 66), and the variables to be examined include –among other things– the date on which the sign was photographed; the area surveyed; whether it is a government or a private sign; the type of establishment where it appears; the type of sign and the type of discourse in urban space; the number of languages on the sign and their order of appearance; the font and size of the text; visibility of the sign and mobility of the text carrier; number of scripts and their relative order of appearance (cf. Grbavac 2013: 506). Such details will be shown to be of interest in the appropriation of public space by LL agents.

The innovative aspects of this project are that:

1. it investigates aspects of the LL in urban spaces which are not generally thought of as multilingual (cf. Landry & Bourhis 1997 on the bilingual experience in Canada)
2. it does so with a focus on citizenship and its interplay with dominant discourses on ethnicity and nationhood as they emerge in view of tourism and forced migration flows, and
3. it envisages a dialogue between the latest developments in sociolinguistic LL research and social scientific work on citizenship in the Balkans.

Snapshots of the Balkan LL Dubrovnik

Conducting research on the LL in Dubrovnik since 2006, means –inadvertently– chronicling the stabilization of a relatively recent national Croatian state in what is an old-world city. All the more so, since Dubrovnik epitomizes Croatia as the indisputable epicenter of tourism on the Eastern Adriatic since the 1960s, while also being emblematic of the *domovinski rat*, ‘the homeland war’, during which the city was sieged (1991-1992) and damaged by Serbian

and Montenegrin JNA forces. Moreover, recent accession to the EU (as its 28th member, since 1 July 2013) has reshuffled the cards of Croatian identity, coinciding as it did with a flailing local economy –despite a thriving tourist industry– and a global crisis which has brought new war refugees at its borders, less than two decades since the influx of ethnic Croatian refugees from ex-Yugoslav lands.

In the midst of these new affordances and limitations, Dubrovnik finds itself in a balancing act between novelty and tradition, always clinging proudly to the achievements of the Republic of Ragusa and Croatia's *antemurale christianitatis* status, underscored as it has been by an obvious enhancement of religious feeling since Independence (as is the case with other Republics of former Yugoslavia, cf. Lampe 1996; Ramet 1996). At the same time, Dubrovnik, as many other urban centers in the area, is a border town and its ties with towns such as Trebinje, Neum, Mostar (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Herceg Novi, Kotor, and Budva (in Montenegro) are obviously implicated in its livelihood. For although clearly the destination *par excellence* on the Eastern Adriatic, it is still marketing itself given its advantageous position to the aforementioned tourist attractions outside of Croatia, as it is geographically isolated from the capital and the rest of the country.¹

Tourism is not news for Dubrovnik –and neither are refugees. And yet, tourists are no longer mostly Western or Central Europeans and refugees are not ethnic Croats from other parts of the country or neighboring Yugoslav Republics. Indeed, citizenship in Croatia has seen significant transformations since the 1990s (Štiks 2006, 2100; Ragazzi & Štiks 2009; Ragazzi & Balalovska 2011; Shaw & Štiks 2013)— and all of this has found its way on city walls, directly or indirectly.

Identity and heritage issues loom big in Croatia, where the *domovinski rat* 'homeland war', has shaped the lives of its citizens as it did in most other Yugoslav Republics. Dubrovnik, as a martyred town bombarded and besieged for nearly two years, capitalizes on this, putting up official signs documenting the destruction of Stari Grad monuments (see Pictures 1-3 and Picture 4 for a semiotically loaded message in Latin), marketing videos of the siege in 1991, issuing exhortations that people should not forget (Picture 2-3), putting up larger-than-life billboards expressing allegiance to local 'war-heroes' (Picture 5-6), publicly displaying military equipment (cf. Pictures 7-8 where the earlier picture bears no plaque), and using a variety of other semiotic means, such as renaming streets (e.g. former *Dalmatinska* currently *Kardinala Stepinca*) and making heavy use of the national flag (cf. Picture 5).



Picture 1: Bombed sites during siege



Picture 2: 'Don't forget!'



Picture 3: 'Don't forget!'



Picture 4: Commemorative plaque in Latin



Picture 5: '[A. Gotovina] Dubrovnik is with you'



Picture 6: Pro Gotovina billboard on Čilipi route



Picture 7: Port of Gruž, Dubrovnik 2008



Picture 8: Port of Gruž, Dubrovnik 2016

And yet, as much as such items may underscore the hard feelings harbored towards neighbors, one should bear in mind that all of the Southern Croatian Litoral is a border area given its very narrow width, which is why the attractions of Dubrovnik include at least parts of Montenegro Bosnia and Herzegovina (cf. Pictures 9-10). Therefore, heritage and identity constitute hard currency here and monuments and heritage sites, ‘a key mechanism in defining community, ethnic or national identity and re-inscribing the [...] landscape’ (Marschall 2004: 95), are hard to miss in Dubrovnik. The LL in Dubrovnik testifies against one reading of Rivera’s (2008: 613) claims that Croatia ‘has omitted the war from representations of national history,’ although her claim that ‘the state has managed Croatia’s “difficult” recent past through covering and cultural reframing rather than public acknowledgement’ can hardly be countered. This state of affairs, however, is not surprising given the representation of Croatia as ‘victim’ favored by a succession of state officials (Kearns 1996; Razsa & Lindstrom 2004; Jovic 2011).



Picture 9: Stari Grad Dubrovnik



Picture 10: Stari Grad Dubrovnik

However, a more careful look shows that this state of affairs is more representative of the hey-day of Dubrovnik as a purveyor of holidays to Mitteleuropa in the 1960s and 1970s than it is today, with English occupying first or second place (Picture 17), when it does not stand alone (Picture 18). Another traditional local designation along with *SOBE* 'rooms', i.e. *APARTMAN* 'apartment' (Picture 19), is also very common, as it appears on a sign distributed by the local tourist authorities. More recent signs have expanded their repertoire to cover a variety of European (and non-European) languages as in the administrative sign (Picture 20), where the order of choice is Croatian, English, German, Italian, French, Spanish, (faulty) Russian, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian (although commercial signs, as in (Picture 21), may favor a somewhat different order).



Picture 15: Dubrovnik, Lapad



Picture 16: Dubrovnik, Lapad



Picture 17: Dubrovnik, Boninovo



Picture 18: Dubrovnik, Stradun



Picture 19: Dubrovnik, Montovjerna



Picture 20: Dubrovnik, Stari Grad, City Walls



Picture 21: Stradun



Picture 22: Lapad Promenade

This point is amply documented in the LL of *Stari Grad*, the Old City, and Lapad, a popular part of town offering easy access to organized beach facilities. First, and most tellingly, in restaurant menus – restaurateurs being, apparently, the quickest to react to changes in the tourist industry, the staple of the town's economy in modern times. For instance, as soon as a Turkish development company undertook to rebuild a hotel destroyed during the siege on the city in the 1991-1992, and Turkish Airlines starting flying directly from Istanbul, some menus on *Stradun*, Stari Grad's promenade, started featuring Turkish; and they started featuring Greek too as soon as Cypriot visitors became more visible as passengers on the cruise boats and Croatia Airlines and Aegean Airlines connected Athens and Dubrovnik with direct flights for the first time since Yugoslav times.

A notable change in the LL occurred when Dubrovnik became a favorite with Russian

tourists, after 2008 (Picture 22), which is of special interest to us, as presence of the Cyrillic alphabet in Croatia is semiotically tricky for, despite its differences from it, Russian Cyrillic readily alludes to Serbian Cyrillic, which has been a point of bitter controversy during Yugoslav times (Bugarski 1997: 46-50; Greenberg 2004: 42; Canakis 2011: 21) and is now virtually extinct in this part of Croatia. Script in the former Yugoslav has been a confessional matter (cf. Bugarski 2012: 227), interwoven with (then) ethnic (and now) national and local identity. This is a fact that has to be co-estimated with the notable shift from digraphia to a progressively Cyrillic-only policy in Serbia and Republika Srpska (cf. Bugarski 1997, 2012; Radović 2013; Ivković 2015).

Road signage is another point to consider. Since independence in 1991 (a process which can be traced at least as far back as the Croatian Spring in the 1970s), Croatian administration has systematically favored a purist language (Bugarski 1983: 66; 2001: 84; 2004a, 2004b), known in and out of the country as *novohrvatski* 'new Croatian' or (*hrvatski*) *novogovor* '(Croatian) newspeak' (Greenberg 2004: 48-50; Alexander 2006: 415; but cf. Grčević 2002: 151, quoted in Rice 2010: 35, for a different view). Since common words such as 'airport' have changed, this is often manifested in road signage; e.g. the former Serbo-Croat internationalism *aerodrom* (still in use in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and of course still in the mouths of most Croats) is now officially *zračna luka* (a translation loan, literally 'air port'; Picture 23). However, characteristic as such instances may be of the Croatian LL, there are other elements that give the local LL its flavor. Brown background is not only used for sights, as it does in all of ex-Yugoslavia and other parts of Europe, but hotels too. Moreover, hotel signs are to be found side by side with regular road signage (Picture 24), thereby indexing that the city officially considers tourism its major industry.



Picture 23: Dubrovnik, Boninovo



Picture 24: Dubrovnik, Gruž

Appropriation of heritage is especially obvious in Stari Grad, where medievaesque hanging banner-signs, put up by the city, advertise both monuments (Picture 25) and businesses (Pictures 26-27). Croatian is the language of choice on these banners, probably since the Italianate terms used in Dubrovački, the local dialect, render recognition of the intended message rather easy, e.g. in Picture 27, where *Konoba* 'tavern' is followed by the name which is *in se* Croaticized Italian, *Lokanda Peskarija* (cf. it. *Locanda Pescaria*), the loan is more obvious in writing than it would have been when spoken, as locals adapt Italian loans to Croatian stress and tone patterns (cf. [lókanda peskáríja]).



Picture 25: Dubrovnik, Stradun



Picture 26: Dubrovnik, Stradun



Picture 27: Dubrovnik, Stari Grad



Picture 28: Dubrovnik, Onofrio's fountain

Probably the most striking aspect of the LL, is the appropriation of *glagoljica*, the Glagolitic alphabet (cf. Appendix I), as the Croatian 'national script' (cf. Greenberg 2004: 41-42 and Brozović 1995: 29 quoted therein). Glagolitic is the oldest known Slavic alphabet, the earliest version of Cyrillic and reached the Croatian coast several centuries after having been introduced to Bulgaria and other Slavic speaking territories. Therefore, while it is accurate that *glagoljica* is the oldest Croatian script, it is doubtful that a case can be made for it as a 'national' Croatian script.⁴ This testifies to both the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm 1983) and the extensive commodification of heritage (Marschall 2004) that characterizes Dubrovnik and encompasses other semiotic means –ranging from frequent use of the coats of arms and flag of the Republic of Ragusa (a version of which bears the Latin logo *LIBERTAS*), marketing of the necktie (*kravata*) as a 'traditional' Croatian garment, the promotion of *lindo* music, and *karaka* tourist boats to the (very same) man in 'traditional' (read: Renaissance Ragusan) costume who has been standing year in year out at Onofrio's Fountain since 2006 (Picture 28).

The ubiquitous presence of the Croatian flag (also known as *sahovnica* 'chessboard', due to its red and white checkered coat of arms) is an element of the Croatian semiotic landscape visitors cannot fail to register. It is also worth noting that the new flag bears a controversial coat of arms, drawing its origins from the period of NDH (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* 'Independent State of Croatia' between 1941 and 1945), Pavelić's quisling state during the Nazi occupation. The very mention –howsoever inaccurate– of the term *Independent* as a modifier of *Croatia* during that period has certainly played a role in the adoption of this, otherwise semiotically lethal, coat of arms for the 'thousand-year-old dream' of an independent Croatian State (and to put things right, this is certainly not an idea shared exclusively by foreigners). The best proof I can think of in support of the point that Croats are ambivalent about (the omnipresence of) their flag, is the work of a Croatian artist in a European contest for 'Europe 2020' posters, which I saw in an exhibition Athens in 2008. The poster was provocatively titled 'Croatia: Still untouched by modern dentistry'⁵ and featured a mouth with bad teeth, in red and white, unmistakably alluding to the national flag.

Last, graffitied slogans and other signs with explicit or implicit nationalist content –which often pertained to the tense relations with Serbia until the recent past (cf. Pictures 1-4, 30) are also hard to miss and are probably of the same order with use of the national flag. In 2006-2007 the public waste bins on the promenade connecting Lapad beach to Babin Kuk bore the inscription *Srbi su zli* 'Serbs are evil' (cf. Picture 29), whereas a larger than life picture of Ante Gotovina and the inscription *Dubrovnik je s tobom* 'Dubrovnik is with you', along with large Ragusan and Croatian insignia in the background, is still among the last things you see on your way to Čilipi airport (Pictures 5-6). My understanding of the semiotic state of affairs in Dubrovnik is that it is striving to balance the local, the national, and the commercially cosmopolitan in its LL, a balancing act that is anything but incommensurate with the manifest diversity of local sensibilities.



Picture 29: Lapad-Babin Kuk promenade



Picture 30: Dubrovnik, Stari Grad

With realty prices in Stari Grad allegedly going for approx. 9,000-10,000 per square meter as early as 2009 and four and five star hotels having almost completely replaced more affordable accommodation, Dubrovnik self-consciously caters to upmarket tourism. It is no surprise that locals were worried about the consequences of the recent refugee crisis: specifically, the possibility of people straying off the ‘Balkan route’ (cf. Papataxiarchis 2016c), towards the west and the Adriatic, on their way to Central Europe. The experience of the screeching halt in the tourist industry experienced during the siege in 1991-1992 (Wise 2011; Wise & Mulec 2012), despite the publicity and profit from unavoidable ‘dark tourism’ (Lisle 2000, 2007), make locals justifiably weary at a time of heightened financial insecurity in Europe.

Kotor

If Dubrovnik capitalizes on the experience of war, the coastal town of Kotor –some 90 Km to the South, in neighboring Montenegro– virtually unscathed as it is by the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, has emerged dynamically as a favorite tourist destination in the last decade, capitalizing not only on a diverse heritage (cf. Hall 2003), but also on ‘green’ and ‘eco-tourism’ (Vitic & Ringer 2008),⁶ while also aggressively marketing its coast as an elite, indeed a glamorous, destination (Vujačić (2013).

The latter development has gone hand in hand with the influx of Russian tourists and capital, leaving an indelible imprint on Montenegro’s coastal LL. Cyrillic script has had rather limited currency in recent Montenegrin history, even in Yugoslav times – despite the official status of South Slavic Cyrillic along with Latin (Greenberg 2004: 41-42) – especially on the coast, around Boka Kotorska, where a catholic population presumably feels closer to the Latin alphabet, as a non-referential indexical relation between them is afforded by the confessional character of choice of alphabet in all of ex-Yugoslavia (Bugarski 2012: 227).

If sociopolitical and economic developments are crucial in understanding any LL in historical perspective (cf. Blommaert & Maly 2014), the LL of Kotor has to be considered vis-à-vis the postwar situation in ex-Yugoslav lands (Bieber 2003), and its recent independence (in June 2006), while co-estimating its traditional status as a major affordable holiday destination for Yugoslavs from the landlocked Republics (as local tourism has been the seasonal staple of Montenegrin economy along with livestock farming), especially when compared to the steeper prices in neighboring Croatia. Its present status as a (still affordable) holiday destination on the Adriatic –even though catering to megastars like Madonna, who are nowadays more likely to veer south of Dubrovnik– and the influx of Russian capital have had the fastest effect on the LL, regardless of the permanence/transience and the mobility/fixedness of these signs.

For anyone who visited the area for the first time in 2006 –less than two months after the declaration of Independence and just after USAID started pouring in, has kept on returning on a regular basis since then, and last visited in April 2016– the change of the Montenegrin Litoral is radical, making places like Budva hardly recognizable (cf. Pictures 31-32). For the change in the physical landscape of the area has had a direct impact on the LL. These changes range from the construction of Montenegro’s busiest International Airport, and one of the fastest growing ones in the region, in Tivat (cf. Pictures 33-34) to a glamorously reconstructed entry point at the Albanian border in 2010, high rise buildings in coastal and hinterland urban areas, and they are the result of an unprecedented boom in real estate transactions which brought the country the biggest foreign investment per capita in Europe as of 2008 (Werner 2013: 46).



Picture 31: Budva, September 2006



Picture 32: Budva 2010



Picture 33: Tivat Airport



Picture 34: Tivat Airport

These developments are inscribed in commercial and official signs in the LL of Kotor and Boka Kotorska. The presence of Russian at Tivat airport, for instance, is not limited to the holiday industry since, as soon as passengers reach the conveyor belt for their luggage (Pictures 35-37) they can see billboards and pick up leaflets providing information on travel as well as real estate development in Montenegrin, Russian, and English, (often advertising building 'legalization' services). The ubiquitous monolingual LL signs in Russian may hurt local sensibilities, but as research in other tourist destinations suggests (Torkington 2013: 85), tensions between local identity and highly visible foreign presence due to tourism are balanced in favor of the welcome income entailed by such visibility. This is certainly key to the synchronic study of the surprisingly diverse LL in Boka Kotorska (as semiotically indexed by Picture 38) –and even more so in nearby Budva. Considering these factors while focusing on LL tokens in the area is a prerequisite for an ethnographic approach. And indeed, looking at LL material collected between July 2006 and April 2016 one can document the significant sociopolitical and economic changes in the area (cf. Džankić 2010, 2011).



Picture 35: Tivat Airport, baggage claim area



Picture 36: Tivat Airport, baggage claim area



Picture 37: Tivat Airport, baggage claim area



Picture 38: Stari Grad Kotor

We will limit ourselves to a few more examples. In (Picture 39), the smaller sign on the lower part, *IZDAJE SE SOBA (može po krevetu za radnike) sa upotrebom kuhine, internet, TV [...]* advertises a room specifying that it ‘(may be rented by the bed for workers) with use of kitchen’ and other amenities, could have been seen in central Kotor even in Yugoslav times, as seasonal workers in tourist destinations are no novelty. However, the bigger sign in capitals on the upper part reads *RADIM MAGISTARSKE, DIPLOMSKE, SEMINARSKE I PRAKTIČNE RADOVE ZA STUDENTE EKONOMIJE, UDG, MENADŽMENTA, FPN-a, TURIZMA [...]* ‘I do MA theses, BA, Seminar and Practice theses for students of Economics, UDG [University of Donja Gorica], Management, FPN [Faculty of Political Science], Tourism [...],’ one of many tokens of the same

ad in central Kotor in April 2016 (cf. Picture 40), presupposes an increased demand for higher education, and puts Kotor on a par with other urban European centers, where MAs are often required as proof of higher education and are often written by a booming, albeit infamous, industry of paid professionals.



Picture 39: Kotor, City Center



Picture 40: Kotor, City Center

On the other hand, local identity issues remain and may even suffice *in se* in accounting for LL tokens. For instance, the use of the three extra characters of the once proposed –but never officially accepted– ‘Montenegrin’ alphabet (Greenberg 2000: 639; 2004: 91, 103-104), illustrates this point (and puts knowledge of and about the language of the area investigated in sharp relief): recent independence of an ex-Yugoslav Republic which has been traditionally a satellite of Serbia, a population often referred to as *Serbs* and a language typically called *Serbian* until the (very) recent past are at work here. Montenegrin identity is certainly not a creation of the first decade of the 21st century, as there has been a state of Montenegro long before it ever formed part of Yugoslavia.⁷ And yet, current tokens of Montenegrin identity formation are part and parcel of the procedures that led to (and followed) the demise of Yugoslavia –and, significantly, a response to the staunch state-promoted nationalism of its stronger neighbors: Croatia and Serbia. After all, the construction of ‘identity often involves introspection [...] a look into the past, an inspection and discovery of the Self, in order to determine who we are and where we come from’ (Marschall 2004: 95).

Montenegro’s small size and its position, wedged as it is between Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia, make it a border state. Therefore, an investigation of the LL of any area in Montenegro should take into consideration scholarly work on borders, physical and figurative (cf. Green 2005, 2012a, 2012b) and the special conditions this position

creates for everyday life and the public space it is lived in. To live in Kotor, especially when employed in the tourist industry, means to be in close contact –often on a daily basis for a good part of the year– with the Dubrovnik area in Croatia, the Trebinje and Mostar area in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Ulcinj/Ulqin area by the Albanian border, which has a majority Albanian population. Moreover, locals and visitors may take daytrips to *Skadar* ‘Shkodër’, in Albania, ‘for shopping’ (Picture 41), *Međugorje*, in Croatia, for pilgrimage, and Mostar and Trebinje, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to name just a few places (see Canakis in press). After all, local travel agents, much like their Croatian colleagues in Dubrovnik, sell packages for nearby destinations outside of Montenegro as part of the advantages afforded by a visit to Boka Kotorska. Moreover, populations in ex-Yugoslavia being anything but geographically defined, the presence of other communities is also marked in the LL, as in (Picture 42), where the upper marble plaque at the left-hand entrance of Kotor’s cathedral reads ‘In memory of the First Croatian King, Tomislav, 925-1925 (sic), The Croats of the City of Kotor’. Still, while distances are short, differences among these destinations are anything but negligible; they are both registered in the collective imaginary and put in relief in the respective contemporary LLs.



Picture 41: Kotor, City Center



Picture 42: Stari Grad Kotor

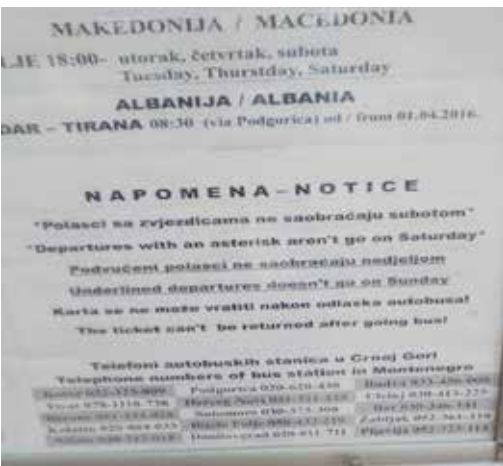
Another point which is nicely illustrated in the LL of Kotor is the political economy of signage. In the old city, Stari Grad, the historical center, bilingual signs abound and the same is true of surrounding areas just outside the city walls. And yet, a more careful look reveals that use of, e.g. English or Montenegrin only (cf. Pictures 38, 45), the order in which two or more languages appear (cf. Pictures 43-44, 46-47), or font size (cf. Picture 43, 46 vs. 44) are significant in identifying the population the sign is primarily targeting –and this despite the well documented symbolic use of English and other major languages in the world’s LL. For instance, Picture 43, shot inside a relatively new shopping mall, where English precedes Montenegrin, indicates that the expected clientele is foreign rather than local. Picture 44, shot at the Mall’s



Picture 45: Kotor Central Bus Station



Picture 46: Kotor Central Bus Station



Picture 47: Kotor Central Bus Station



Picture 48: Kotor, City Center

In a similar vein, in Picture 49 a bakery and burek shop is advertised in Montenegrin only and the same is true of the shoe store advertising 'really low prices' (Picture 50). In the former, the multimodal commercial sign chooses to address locals in Montenegrin and everyone else through the image of bakery goods. In the latter, the sign elaborates and lets the clientele know of a 'pay for 2 get 3 [pairs]' offer. Significantly, and in contrast to many other stores in the area, it does not expect foreign clientele or local clientele with a taste for exclusive foot-

wear (actually abounding in its immediate vicinity). And yet, the shop sign uses linguistic and non-linguistic means, such as the Italian name *UNO* superimposed on an Italian flag, to attract prospective customers for whom Italian shoes spell out prestige (even if what they are most likely to buy is manufactured locally).



Picture 49: Kotor, City Center



Picture 50: Stari Grad Kotor

Indeed, even signs for cultural and leisure services seem to respect the largely implicit local/foreign divide, so well-known to locals in Southern European resort towns. In Picture 51 we have an advertisement for a (nowadays cross-border) day trip to nearby Trebinje in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a performance, or a screening of *The Great Gatsby*; whereas in picture 52 the local Culture Club advertises screenings of American and Italian classics, as 'films for all times', only in Montenegro. Indeed, the screenings are free of charge and are to be held in *Kino Boka*, which is spelt in Latin script on the poster, yet chooses to advertise itself only in Cyrillic (Picture 53).



Picture 51: Stari Grad Kotor



Picture 52: Stari Grad Kotor

It may be that, since this is the program for April, still a cold month and hardly the beginning of the season, a monolingual sign is justified. And yet, since this is not an isolated sign, it is probably a safe guess that the Culture Club does not intend this as a service to everyone. After all, the same Culture Club has another poster out in the same area, advertising a variety of events (exhibitions, concerts, performances, film screenings, literary evenings, etc.) for the month of April (Picture 54), again only in Montenegrin.



Picture 53: Stari Grad Kotor



Picture 54: Kotor, City Center

These and many other examples from the LL of Kotor show that, as many other tourist destinations in the wider area, it is caught in a balancing act between the local and the global, being increasingly dependent on an international population for its livelihood while still only ten years away from national independence.

Mytilene

Greek LL has received virtually no attention before the onset of the economic crisis (Kitis 2011; Canakis 2012; Zaimakis 2013; Knight 2015; Kitis & Milani 2015; Canakis & Kersten-Pejanić 2016; Stampoulidis 2016). Although it is not uncommon for LL research to focus on social strife and resistance as aspects of changing notions of citizenship (cf. Tsitselikis 2006), this tendency is likely to overlook mainstays of the urban Greek LL, such as the ubiquitous presence of the Latin alphabet and English as its most frequent carrier (cf. Canakis 2014), or the notable peculiarities of cities such as Komotini, in Thrace, whose Muslim Greek population documents its presence in the LL (cf. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) on Israel) and areas, such as Chalkidiki, which have become major vacation hubs for speakers of BCMS⁸ and Macedonian (cf. Torkington (2009) on English in the Algarve). Moreover, despite the recent emergence of Lesvos in world news due to the humanitarian crisis which broke out after the war in Syria and led to an unprecedented visibility (Papataxiarchis 2016a, 2016b), nothing is known about its diverse LL.

Mytilene, the capital of Lesvos and administrative seat of the North Aegean district, is a border town with a population of approximately 27.500 (based on the 2011 census). It has been among the first locations in the country to have experienced industrialization, boasts an international airport, and has been the seat of the University of the Aegean since 1984. Its proximity to Turkey has resulted in regular boat service to Ayvalık, which, over the last few years, has been used not only by Greeks to cross over to Turkey but also by a steadily growing number of Turkish tourists, following a bilateral agreement which has significantly decreased the fee for a Schengen visa. Its proximity to the Turkish coast, in actual and symbolic terms, has, in turn, been the main reason why refugees from the Middle East and Asia have opted for Mytilene as the entry point par excellence. Mytilene, whose border town status has been established at least since the treaty of Lausanne and the exchange of populations in 1923, has reestablished close ties with coastal towns across the sea, notably Ayvalık, at the turn of the new millennium (cf. Green 2010 for an examination of political, economic and, social relations).

Having had the opportunity to observe the LL of Mytilene closely since 2000 has been instructive in how language in public space is, unavoidably, interdependent with actuality; notably with major sociopolitical and economic issues, trends, and stakes. As Blommaert & Maly put it, in their defense of ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis (ELLA) as a way of

historicizing LL research, features of the sociolinguistic situation ‘can be read off literacy artefacts’ (2014: 2). In fact, LL research ‘can detect and interpret social change and transformation on several scale-levels, from the very rapid and immediate to the very slow and gradual ones, all gathered in a “synchronic” space’ (Ibid.: 2). What is more, and needs to be stressed here as it relates to all LL research, is that entrenchment of LL types (and even tokens), given time and high frequency, come to stand in an indexical relation to the place they are found in (cf. Canakis 2012, 2014).

Diversity is not a novelty in the LL of Mytilene, which is regularly punctuated by political slogans, often directly indexing its large student population and the advocacy groups they participate in. Administrative and commercial signage, characteristically in the Greek and Latin alphabets, has been visible ever since my first visit in 2000. However, there have been notable changes since 2008. The reradicalization of Greek society,⁹ Greek youth in particular, after the killing of adolescent Alexandros Grigoropoulos by police in December 2008 in Athens, and subsequent resistance against inefficient austerity measures following the economic collapse in 2010 have given new momentum to the part of the population most ravaged by dire prospects for the future: ‘the young’. It goes without saying that, joblessness being no news to Greek youth even in the pre-crisis era, such LL tokens hardly constitute a novelty. What is new, then, is i) the frequent appearance of radical slogans relating to issues of (mostly non-heteronormative) gender and sexuality alongside progressively vociferous protests signs regarding a variety of other issues; ii) the burgeoning presence of Turkish in commercial signage, a result of more favorable terms for travelling in the EU for Turkish citizens; and iii) the ubiquitous presence, since summer 2015, of administrative and commercial signs in the Arabic script.

The intensification of public debate on LGBTQ rights, a concomitant of deliberations on thorny issues such as marriage and cohabitation agreements for same-sex couples in the EU and in the Greek parliament as well as intensified violence against LGBTQ-identified people since 2010 in Greece, has resulted in an interesting development: although anti-LGBTQ signs in the Greek LL are uncommon, there has been a proliferation of signs targeting intolerance –homophobia and transphobia in particular– most likely in response to intolerant discourses circulated through the media and the press. I.e., sexed-signs (cf. Milani 2014) in the Greek context are crucially intertwined with citizenship (Canakis 2012; Milani 2015) and claims for non-precarious citizenship (Butler 2009).

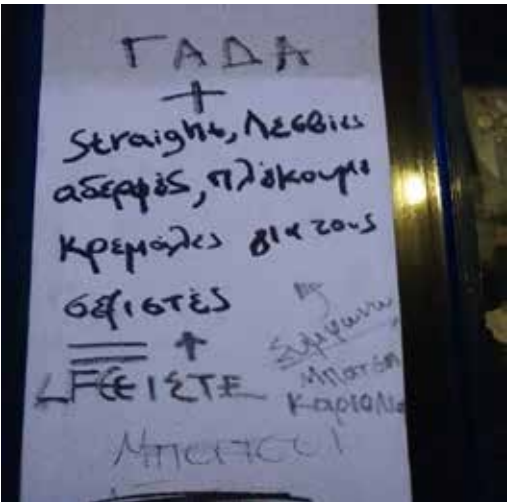
Despite its distance from major urban centers, Mytilene is not lagging behind, as the local LL features both locally produced messages (Pictures 55, 57, 59-60) as well as a variety of stenciled graffitied messages or stickers appearing in other places, such as Athens (Canakis 2012, forthcoming b), at the exact same time (Pictures 56, 58). I find locally produced and disseminated signs, such as those by *Omada Emfilou Mitilinis* ‘Mytilene Gender Group’ (cf. Pictures 55, 59), most interesting for, although they are demonstrably in synch with wider developments in large urban centers, they are still independent and informed by local concerns and events.



Picture 55: Mytilene, 'Bimbos, sluts, and blondes, are chasing sexists'



Picture 56: Mytilene, 'I won't be afraid'



Picture 57: Mytilene



Picture 58: Mytilene



Picture 59: Mytilene, University Campus



Picture 60: Mytilene, University Campus

Progressively larger numbers of Turkish visitors have had the consequence of gradual yet conspicuous presence of Turkish in Mytilene (Pictures 61-63, 67-72). A presence all but erased since the end of Ottoman rule on Lesbos in 1912, due to Greek nationalist language policies. In fact, Turkish is not only to be found along Greek or/and English (Pictures 62-62, 68, 70-72, 76-78) but, nowadays, it is even possible to find Turkish-only commercial signs obviously put up by local business (Pictures 61, 67, 69). In Picture 61, *dondurma*, Turkish for ‘ice-cream’, is almost erased, but i) the name of the business spelled in Turkish fashion (cf. *Maskotiça* vs. e.g. *Maskotitsa*), ii) the prestige index *1976 dan ber* ‘since 1976’, and iii) names of various local delicacies in Turkish indicate that the owners are targeting the Turkish market (uncannily, in a way that reminds Greek travellers to Ayvalık, ‘on the other side’, of the many specialty food stores advertising their fare in Greek –often exclusively in Greek). Once inside the store, one finds ice cream tubs bearing a sign in which Greek, English, and Turkish appear in this order (cf. Picture 62, *ρόδι*, *pomegranate*, *nar*).



Picture 61: Ice-cream store



Picture 62: Ice-cream store

But there are also less obvious –and in my opinion more interesting– manifestations of the presence of Turkish visitors which go beyond this (or Picture 64) and whose interpretation calls for inferential procedures. The sign reading *SMOKED TURKEY*, right above a platter of cold cuts in a hotel breakfast buffet in town (Picture 64), is such a sign. Note that the sign is placed right above one of two platters of cold cuts (the one to its left being a platter of ham). As a regular visitor of this hotel since 2014, I know the sign first appeared after Spring 2016, when Turkish but also Arab and other foreign visitors had already become a significant part of the hotel's clientele.



Picture 63: Hotel breakfast table



Picture 64: Hotel breakfast table

It is significant that, unless we reason like this, the *smoked turkey* sign makes no sense since it is the only foodstuff that bears a name tag. Things are different in Picture 63, where the owners of this family-run hotel proudly advertise the apples they offer at breakfast as organic produce, in which Turkish as a third language suggests itself given the specific *chronotope* (Blommaert & De Fina 2015). Last, the sign over the smoked turkey plate along with the one on organic apples is part of the same setting; placed just a couple of feet apart– it connects Turkish visitors and the Turkish language with other populations and languages: Arab and non-Arab Muslims who came to Lesbos as immigrants or refugees during 2015-2016 and a significant number of other foreigners who arrived on a variety of missions as a result of this and who spoke primarily English. Therefore, a set of pictures in a small central Hotel is also an indirect index of the interplay of tourism with forced immigration –and the reason why a quantitative, only superficially contextualized approach to the LL, can hardly be said to exploit the full potential of the LL (cf. Blommaert & Maly 2014: 3).



Picture 65: Mytilene, Social Security, Headquarters (IKA) - Arabic on a sign



Picture 66: Mytilene, Refugee welcome center



Picture 71: Car rental agency



Picture 72: Damas, closed since August 2016



Picture 73: Damas, advertising its fare in Arabic



Picture 74: Bus tickets from Athens to Idomeni



Picture 75: Graffiti in Arabic script



Picture 76: Multilingual store signs

However, looking at commercial signage carefully, we may notice another telling detail in the LL of Mytilene: while Greek, English, and Turkish figure prominently in souvenir and specialty food stores (cf. Picture 77), we have yet to find such a store advertising its fare in Arabic. This is understandable, since speakers of Arabic in Mytilene hardly qualify as a major population targeted by the tourist industry. On the other hand, Arabic was indeed common, and with good reason, in fast food restaurants and the several mini markets which opened – and thrived– during the period of the refugee crisis and sold canned and fresh food as well as socks, caps, gloves, underwear, etc. Nevertheless, it has progressively disappeared from such businesses (Picture 78) since summer 2016.



Picture 77: Souvenir shop advertisement



Picture 78: Mini market advertisement billboards

Tourism and the refugee crisis may have superficially similar effect on the LL, but the LL tokens they occasion do not have the same trajectories. Tourism, immigration, and the refugee experience as forms of dislocation and border-crossing have occupied social scientists and led to lines of inquiry that are worth exploiting in LL research. Röslmaier (2016), for instance, investigating tourism and refugees from the viewpoint of the cultural geographer, writes about tourists, making special reference to ‘destination weddings’ and refugees on islands such as Lesbos and Kos. Concentrating on the destination-wedding industry on Kos and the glamorous videos shot on these happy occasions, he notices that

[t]here is one thing missing from the videos [...]. These videos lack any indication of the thousands of arriving refugees who make the dangerous nighttime journey from Turkey, attempting to cross Europe. It is as if these visitors exist in a parallel world with far less champagne and dancing. They, now, command the beaches by night while, by day, weddings go on uninterrupted. (2016: 10)

Talking of Lesvos, Röslmaier remarks that

the mechanisms that made the island appealing for refugees have also shaped its popularity with tourists; two groups having much in common no matter their circumstances. [...] [And yet], as violent confrontations between locals and refugees attest, the two groups are not always seen as similar, nor are they treated the same. They are subject to different rules and welcomes, making their experiences very different as well (ibid: 13).

In this section, I have tried to show how the presence of refugees and tourists is also differentially inscribed in the LL. If mobility *qua* border-crossing and travel-bookings are a common denominator, what differentiates the two groups is much more poignant. In the case of Lesvos, the opportunity presented by the refugees (and the NGOs) may have been god-sent for the travel industry during crisis, and yet the swift establishment of Arabic (script) in the LL was almost as swiftly erased –for, while there is more and more talk of a ‘sustainable’ tourist industry, one has yet to come up with the concept of ‘sustainable’ refugee fluxes. Therefore, the perceived similarities of tourists and refugees vis-à-vis mobility are just as superficial as is their impact on the LL.

Conclusions

In this paper, I approached the LL of three Balkan coastal towns: Dubrovnik in Croatia, Kotor in Montenegro, and Mytilene in Greece, while highlighting the importance of the long term involvement afforded by an ethnographic approach which characteristically yields fine-grained and historicized results. I have theorized my findings at the intersection of sociolinguistics, ethnography, and semiotics, which has gained ground as the platform of choice in second wave LL research, and I have argued that the influx of tourists and refugees, despite obvious differences between the two groups, has had radical consequences for the LL which can be adequately investigated by systematic ethnographic study of the semiotic means employed in inscribing it.

Tourism is a driving force in the LLs of all three locations examined. Yet, while all three are border towns (functionally, if not strictly geographically), only in the LL of Mytilene do we find evidence of refugee presence. This is not to say that Dubrovnik and Kotor lack such populations, but those are predominantly BCMS-speaking people who were relocated after the latest war in ex-Yugoslavia, while both areas remain largely unaffected by the current refugee fluxes. The importance of a historicized ethnographic perspective –a periodization and historicization of the LL– lies in identifying precisely these common and diverging trajectories while

drawing on extralinguistic information as a resource in sociolinguistic scholarship. In order to approach these three LLs sensibly, one needs to focus on a (succession of) chronotope(s) and position oneself with respect to it.

And yet ethnography, as a methodological sociolinguistic tool, cannot substitute or supersede cognitive aspects of language. If doing LL research means doing semiotic landscape research, then we also have to consider semiosis and indexicality *qua* categorization (keeping in mind that categorization, itself, rests on categorical perception; cf. Stjernfelt 1992). The kind of indexicality which interests us here is 'higher order indexicality'. Silverstein defines indexical order as 'the concept necessary to showing us how to relate the micro-social to the macro-social frames of analysis of any sociolinguistic phenomenon' (2003: 193) and claims that

[a]n illuminating indexical analysis [...] has to take account of the dialectical plentitude of indexicality in microcontextual realtime, and has to situate itself with respect to the duplex quality of language use, always already both 'pragmatic', i.e. presuppositionally/entailingly indexical, and metapragmatic, i.e., in particular, ideologically informed (ibid: 227).

I understand the merits of ethnographic LL research as contributing to a better comprehension of the indexical relation between language and physical space (turned into place through human agency). Just as a certain accent and particular morphosyntactic choices may index the place of origin of a speaker, a specific LL may index populations and their socio-economic relations. This, in turn, has consequences for the sociolinguistics of superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton 2011) as a way of making sense of language-in-society.

Last, my own positioning vis-à-vis these three LLs is not the same. I have had a long lasting relationship with Mytilene (from 2000 to the present) and was a permanent resident there for over five years (2001-2006). Dubrovnik is the place I know best compared to Kotor; and knowledge of the local variety of Croatian (and a network of social relations with locals since 2006) grants me a kind of access in Dubrovnik that I have to try harder to achieve in Kotor. Therefore, my positioning in each case conditions my categorization and inferences as well as the indexical relations I perceive. This positioning has specific (yet not always obvious) advantages and disadvantages, including as it does the very chronotope in which I conduct my research –in itself, both an empowering and a limiting factor.

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NOTES

1 Indeed, to reach Dubrovnik by car from the north, one still has to go through an 8km stretch of Bosnia and Herzegovina before reentering Croatian territory. To this effect, a bridge (Pelješki most) which will, eventually, connect the Pelješac Peninsula and the Croatian mainland, avoiding the Neum Corridor in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been under construction since 2007. Construction was, however, halted in 2012.

2 For Star Wars shootings in Dubrovnik see,

https://www.google.gr/search?q=Dubrovnik+Star+Wars&espv=2&biw=1517&bih=708&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi1jOnekb_PAhWIShQKHe-NBSYQsAQI-GQ&dpr=0.9. For a telling advertisement of Dubrovnik *qua* King's Landing, see <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/game-of-thrones-filming-locations-guide/>. The following excerpts deserve attention for our purposes:

For Game of Thrones fans, Dubrovnik is King's Landing, capital of Westeros, and its constant presence since series two has only heightened the appeal of a city that already creaks under the weight of tourist numbers. There are recognisable locations galore in the heart of the crowded Old City, including St Dominika Street, used for numerous market scenes, Stradun, along which Cersei Lannister takes her walk of penance, Minceta Tower, the highest point in Dubrovnik, and Fort St. Lawrence. [...]

A couple of sights in Croatia combined to create this great city - including Dubrovnik's Minčeta Tower (that's the House of the Undying) and the gardens of Lokrum Island. [...]

Other key Croatian sites include Diocletian's Palace in Split, which becomes the former slave city of Meereen, Trogir, which appears as Qarth, "greatest city that ever was or will be", and Kastel Gomilica, otherwise known as Braavos.

For a complete guide to visiting Dubrovnik, see telegraph.co.uk/dubrovnikguide

3 This slogan has inspired self-deprecating portrayals of Croats and Dubrovčani in particular, as time honored holiday purveyors to ex-Yugoslavia, Mitteleuropa --and, more recently, far beyond; cf. the recent pop song of the same title <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv1FkUFFJ5c> (last accessed 30 September 2106) by the Montenegrin group *Who See*, as well as a painting by Dubrovnik artist Ivona Vlašić. Such (arte)facts manifest an awareness on the part of the locals that is, unfortunately, often lost on visitors.

4 Cf. <https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glagoljica> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glagolitic_alphabet (last accessed September 30, 2016).

5 Apparently alluding to the impertinently irreverent faux travel-guide book *Molvanîa: A Land Untouched by Modern Dentistry* (2004).

6 Since June 2008, foreign cars entering Montenegro are required to pay a new green tax and acquire a stamp at a cost of 10 euro.

7 A variety of 19th and 20th century buildings owned by foreign embassies in the old capital of Cetinje, testify to this.

8 This acronym stands for “Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian” and corresponds to what many linguists still call *Serbo-Croatian* or (in ex-Yugoslav contexts) *Croato-Serbian* (Canakis 2011).

9 This radicalization process is to be understood as polar, for while the majority of the Greek public was progressively moving towards “the left” (as evidenced by the latest parliamentary elections) it also gave an unprecedented percentage of its vote to the extreme right *Xrisí Avgí*, a party catering to the brand of xenophobic nationalism (cf. Sotiris 2015) which has by now become a staple of European political life and has effectively crossed the Atlantic.

10 Although the presence of immigrants and refugees goes further back. According to Trumbetta (2012: 21), these newcomers have been a part of the everyday experience of locals on Lesbos since 2008-2009.

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APPENDIX I: The Glagolitic alphabet <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/glagolitic.htm>

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ⲑⲓⲕ | Ⲟⲩⲩ | Ⲡⲓⲩ | Ⲣⲓⲩ | Ⲥⲓⲩ | Ⲧⲓⲩ | Ⲩⲓⲩ |
| Ⲑⲓⲕⲉ | Ⲟⲩⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲡⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲣⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲕⲓⲩ | Ⲥⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓ | Ⲧⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓ | Ⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲓ |
| Azъ | Buky | Vědě | Glagoli | Dobro | Jestъ | Živěte |
| A | B | B | Г | Д | Є/Е/Є | Ж |
| [a] | [b] | [v] | [g] | [d] | [e] | [ʒ] |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ/Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ |
| Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ |
| Dzělo | Zemlja | Iže | I | Djervъ | Kako | Ljudie |
| S | 3 | И/И | I/I | Т/Т | K | Л |
| [dz] | [z] | [ij] | [ij] | [dz] | [k] | [l] |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 |
| Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ |
| Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲓⲩⲓⲩⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ |
| Myslite | Naše | Onъ | Pokoi | Rъci | Slovo | Tvrdo |
| M | H | O | П | P | C | T |
| [m] | [n/ɲ] | [o] | [p] | [r] | [s] | [t] |
| 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ |
| Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ |
| Ukъ | Frstъ | Xěrnъ | Otъ | Šta | Ci | Črnъ |
| Y | Ф | X | Ω | Ш | Ц | Ч |
| [u] | [f] | [x] | [ɔ] | [ʃ/ʃ] | [ts] | [tʃ] |
| 400 | 500 | 600 | 700 | 800 | 900 | 1000 |
| Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ |
| Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ |
| Ša | Erъ | Ery | Erъ | Jatъ | Jo | Ju |
| Ш | Ъ | Ы | Ь | Ѣ | Ѥ | Ю |
| [ʃ] | [w] | [ɨ] | [ə] | [æ/jo] | [jo] | [ju] |
| Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩ |
| Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ | Ⲛⲓⲩⲉⲩⲓⲩⲉⲩ |
| [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] |
| [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] | [ɛz] |
| A/Я | И | Х | И | Ѣ | Ѥ | |
| [ɛ] | [ɛ] | [ɛ] | [ɛ] | [θ] | [ɣ/ɨ] | |

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Youth Precariat Worlds and Protest Graffiti in The Dystopia of the Greek Economic Crisis: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective

Yiannis Zaimakis

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork during the times of economic crisis, this article addresses protest graffiti created by young people, often living in precarious conditions. The text explores the uncertain living conditions of Greek youth in the era of austerity and investigates the graffiti act as a cultural tool through which a young graffitiists seeks alternative modes to express its dissatisfaction, protest and, often, readiness for social change. It employs a socio-semiotic analysis combining a biographical approach of graffiti writers' lived experiences and the semiotic analysis of graffiti creation within the specific social and cultural context in which the very act of graffiti is performed. Exploring the social world of politically themed or existentialism-oriented graffiti in various Greek cities, the analysis shed light on the structures of feeling of young people living under adverse conditions, revealing social and aesthetic trends, expressive forms of social protest, and existential quests within Greek youth. The research findings show that the scene of political-existential graffiti is an encounter between the subversive aesthetic aura of graffiti with the counter-austerity movement's repertory of collective action in the ongoing struggle against austerity policies.

KEYWORDS Youth, precariat, political graffiti, socio-semiotic analysis, biographical approach

Youth, protest graffiti, and precariat activism

Making graffiti under circumstances of crisis is a meaningful activity among youth. Young people often have lack of power to engage in more institutionalized means of political discourse and the subversive aura of graffiti, a physically demanding and risky activity, allowing them to make space for alternative kinds of aesthetic (dis)order, dialogue and urban encoun-

ter (Iverson 2010). In the context of the long-standing economic crisis in Greece, the proliferation of protest graffiti has become a striking feature of the visual space of Greek cities. Young writers visualize their own readings of an unexpected crisis, engaging in anti-austerity mobilizations.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork during the times of economic crisis, this article addresses protest graffiti created by young people, often living in precarious conditions. Drawing on a semiotically informed ethnography based on multimethod research, the article uses different styles of research methods and data collection techniques (Hunter & Brewer 2003). It employs a specific socio-semiotic analysis that allows the convergence between semiotic exploration of graffiti creations on the visual palimpsest of Greek cities and a biographical approach focusing on young graffiti writers' lived experiences of meaning. In doing so, it reveals fruitful links between (critical) discourse analysis and semiotics in the interpretation of an invisible youth world, not discernible by other means of research.

The research data consists of field observation, photographs of graffiti, and biographical materials, including informal discussions and life story interviews with graffiti writers. The sources were gathered through fieldwork in communities of graffiti writers in ten major Greek cities during the period of the crisis.¹ The analysis of multiple sources of fieldwork, including narrations and visual text or images, in relation to the associated surrounding offers new possibilities for understanding human experience and lived realities (Keats 2006: 194; Mason 2006; Hunter and Brewer 2003) and the meaning of doing political or existential graffiti within an unpleasant social environment.

The article explores briefly the use of graffiti by precariat young people under circumstances of crisis focusing on the case of Greek graffiti scene in the era of the memoranda. The main part of this text is divided into two sections. The first employs a socio-semiotic analysis of protest graffiti in the visual palimpsest of Greek cities focusing on some striking exemplars that shed light on aesthetic trends, political claims, and existential quests within Greek youth. The second brings in the foreground the voices of young graffiti artists exploring the ways by which the actors of an invisible social world define, evaluate and understand the meaning of graffiti activity. The final section of the article discusses on the importance of fertile cross-disciplinary ethnography combining semiotic analysis and biographical approach in the study of graffiti youth worlds.

The intersection between spatial activism of young graffiti artists and the unpleasant social contexts that surround their communities has inspired a varied academic body of literature (Khosravi 2013; Luna 1987; Luzzatto and Jakobson 2001; Nayak 2010). Ferrel has argued that young people create graffiti in order to resist the increasing segregation and control of urban environments, constructing alternative cultural spaces and undermining the effort of legal and political authorities to control those (Ferrel 1995). Young people, who feel socially and culturally excluded, have been using graffiti-saturated walls to raise their voice in protest against a

more powerful Other, for example a non-responsive state, the political elites, and the mainstream media (Pettet 1996; Austin 2002; Waldner and Dobratz 2013).

Drawing upon Fromm's theory, Christopher Williams suggests that, when opportunities for meaningful engagements with the world are limited by social circumstances and biographical realities, human beings tend to seek out or construct alternative spaces for fulfillment of their needs and creative interplay (Williams 2007). Potential spaces, such as protest graffiti, offer young people opportunities to playfully explore them, freed from the fetters and limitation imposed by material existence and the normative structuration of experience (Williams 2007: 55).

For precariat young people, the protest graffiti act is an expressive response to the condition of existential despair and increasing hazardous conditions of precariousness they experience in moments of crisis. Precarity can be understood as the experience of material and existential uncertainty of workers and young people as a result of flexible employment arrangement (Bain and McLean 2013: 97; Waite 2009). In the context of European anticapitalist/globalization social movements, the terms precarious labor and precarity come to represent an emancipatory terminology used by political activists as a critical way of addressing the neoliberal conditions of labor deregulation (Matos 2012: 221).

According to the challenging approach of Guy Standing, the precariat is a class in-the-making, consisting of people who lack the labor-related security that characterized post-war industrial citizenship (Standing 2011: 9). Living in poverty without employment and work security, income earning opportunities and collective rights the precariat become 'alienated, anxious and prone to anger' and tend towards opportunism in their attitudes and decisions. As *denizens*, not citizens, they do not have a clear vision of what type of society they wish to usher in, they do not recognize themselves as 'part of any solidaristic labour community' with a long-established social memory and ethical norms (Standing 2011:12).

The consumer-driven global economy of advanced capitalism spawns a young, peripatetic army of low-wage service and retail workers who drift between part time jobs and temporary housing and have a life defined by precarious prospects and constant uncertainty (Ferrel 2012: 1696-7). For Standing, the prospect of a viable future for youth needs an alternative political scenario that moves beyond the negative trends of neoliberal austerity policies, providing young people with opportunities to recover their identities and to fulfill their occupational role expectations (Standing 2011:12).

Precarity politics, which identify or imagine precarious workers as a new kind of political subject, exploring alternative ways of collective living and being (Ferrel 2012: 1696-7), quickly has given genesis to new forms of cultural expression and social protest. For Gill and Pratt, precarity signifies both the multiplication of precarious, unstable, insecure forms of living and, simultaneously, new forms of political struggle and solidarity that reach beyond the traditional models of political party or trade union. This double meaning of the ideas and politics associated with precarity, offers the chance to explore precariousness not only as oppressive situ-

ation but also as opportunity for new subjectivities, new socialities and new kinds of politics' (Gill and Pratt 2008: 3).

Indeed, in the context of advanced capitalism new forms of precarity activism have emerged using theater, cinema, music, graffiti writing, and street art to effect political change and propose alternatives (Gill and Pratt 2008; Ferrel 2012; Bodnar 2006; Schuster 2015). Artists and other cultural workers are among the protagonists of current struggles against exploitative working conditions in art world participating in social movements actions, such as the transnational Euro May Day mobilizations, the Occupy Wall Street protests, and the Milanese cultural workers' activism against the neoliberal model of competitive creative city (de Peuter 2014; d'Ovidio and Cossu 2016; Gill and Pratt 2008; Mattoni and Doerr 2007; Mattoni 2008).

In the case of Greece, the combined effects of the recession and the sweeping austerity measures have dramatically increased the level of precarity among young people (Gouglas 2013). The majority of young people in Greece are trapped in persistent unemployment or low-paid contingent jobs with limited and not idyllic prospects for upward social mobility. Although this condition used to be the case since the 1980s, the crisis has acted as a catalyst for deteriorating further the working conditions of young people. Austerity policies make previous models of intergenerational solidarity unsustainable, because they reduce young people's access to economic resources (e.g. family income and fewer job opportunities) and social transfers (Kretsos 2014: 41).

During the period of economic crisis, youth unemployment climbed abruptly and many young people who have a job tend to be in low-paid and/or precarious employment, struggling to meet the rising costs of living. Many young people, especially those coming out of the educational system with higher skills, have migrated to other countries. In a segmented labor market many young people attempt to enter as 'beneficiaries' of flexible work programs funded by the EU, or to find any available job, often trapped in flexible work schemes in black market economy without social security.

Young Greek people frustrated by strict austerity policies have expanded unrest and public anger at the mainstream political institution (Kretsos 2014: 41). Squatters have occupied various old, abandoned buildings all over Greece, transforming them into cultural and political hubs of grassroots resistance activities. A remarkable example of this type of cultural activism is the long-term occupation and activation of the disused theater *Empros* in the center of Athens by precariat cultural workers (Kompatsiaris 2014: 15) who use it as self-managed space for free cultural expression and social action. Similarly, during the 2011 protests in Greece, thousands of people across classes, ages and political beliefs had a strong presence in 'occupation of piazzas', thus constituting a type of contentious politics through which Greeks expressed their protest against austerity and neo-liberal restructuring (Diani and Kousis 2014: 395). Within this context, street artists and graffitiists were at the forefront of fights against hostile austerity policies, and young writers used graffiti as a means of political activism.

Images of crisis: protest, revolt and existential quest on walls

The protest graffiti scene provides young people living in turbulent times with the opportunity to react to social pressures of crisis, sometimes in a remarkably creative way. The urban walls have been an experimental space by which young people utilize poetic language and paradox linguistic elements that twist conventional writings in order to express philosophical musings, political ideas, existential quests, and emotions. They use playfully, intriguing images and/or texts conveying linguistic or semantic novelty, and often, address introspective and reflexive statements focusing either on existential and self-conscious musings (Islam 2010: 251-2), or societal issues articulating a counter hegemonic discourse in the public sphere.

As Anti Randriir has argued, the pragmatic aspect of graffiti meaning has to do with the very conditions under which graffiti creation emerges: the place of occurrence and the time of emergence. The specific place and its temporary nature in combination with the linguistic and pictorial representation of each graffiti, assigns its meaning, and stresses its stagedness and theatricality (Randviir 2015: 97-98).

Many young graffiti writers articulate visual counter-sites around local social movement networks. They choose distinctive urban areas with vivid political symbolism to transmit their messages to their audience, squares associated with the Greek 'Indignados' anti-austerity movement, high schools and universities, squatted centers, downtown areas, and working-class districts. Surfaces on historical buildings and banks, shabby walls, viaduct poles, rubbish bins, shop windows and derelict houses are used by graffitiists to make the visualized city more vibrant, intriguing, and protesting.

The semiotics of the place and the appropriate choice of street objects is part of the writers' spatial strategy to convey meaningful messages and to provoke the interest of passers-by. In this vein, a slogan reading 'Our dreams are here' inscribed on a rubbish-bin out of a secondary school in the center of *Patra* reflect the sense of frustration of a young generation experiencing the effects of the worsening living standards, the rising level of unemployment and the dismantling of social welfare services (Spyridakis 2013). In another case, the wall of a derelict, humble house in Exarchia –a notorious and rebel neighborhood of downtown Athens, where many students, artists, writers, intellectuals, anarchists and leftists hang out-has become the realistic decor of an imaginative piece. It depicts a melancholic figure of an old man at the 'window' of the house, conveying a meaningful message that warns: 'Don't underestimate hunger'.

Young people use an intriguing texture to express the experience of unemployment or precariousness through protest graffiti. This is the case of a graffiti by WD (Wild Drawing; he is an important street artist from Indonesia who lives in Athens) that depicts an aged unemployed beggar saying (in English) 'I need job, not speech'.² It reminds us of the painful experience of unemployment, criticizing in a playful mood mainstream politicians, who, despite their

rhetoric, have not managed to tackle rising unemployment and social exclusion effectively. Another impressive creation of WD covered the first-floor wall of a house in Exarchia and displays a huge figure of a half-alive homeless man who is sleeping. The piece is accompanied by a meaningful message: 'Dedicated to the Poor and Homeless here and worldwide'. The use of combined pictorial and linguistic elements provides the writer with the opportunity to make a caustic comment on social and economic inequality endowing it with affect and emotion.

The frequent use of foreign languages in political graffiti reflects the influence of technological advancements on writers' interactions, mediations, and spatialities (Avramidis and Drakopoulou 2015: 135). Since some intriguing graffiti that depict images of everyday life within the dystopia of Greek society have attracted the international media, a network of communication has been developed between foreign and domestic graffitists allowing Greek writers to expand the horizons of their subculture carrier beyond the Greek borders. Moreover, various iconic representations of the crisis in elaborate murals painted by eminent European street artists have been exhibited in street art festivals in Athens and Thessaloniki, funded by private enterprises and state organizations.³ The rise of a new kind of corporate, sponsor-based graffiti action has incited a furious debate within graffiti worlds. For some graffitists these changes reflect an effort of powerful organizations to incorporate graffiti activism into mainstream culture, spreading consumerism and commercialism in street art.

Beyond these cultural disputes, some huge murals painted by European artists attracted the interest of graffiti communities. This is the case of an impressive mural by Goin, a prestigious French street artist, which has covered two external corner walls of the School of Fine Arts in Piraeus. On the first wall a barefoot, skinny child with a ball beside his foot is depicted saying: *I need food not football*. On the other wall images of cameras and a satellite antenna are displayed, criticizing allusively the consumer-driven and media-oriented worlds of professional football competitions all over the world. The graffiti was painted during the 1st street art graffiti festival in Athens and calls into mind the 2014 FIFA world cup in Brazil, raising a voice of protest against the organizers of the economically powerful sports mega-events who neglect the needs of the poor. The mural recalls related ideas concerning the impacts of 2004 Greek Olympic Games in Athens on the Greek economy and the situation of impoverishment of Greek people.

In the same vein, an imaginative stencil by *Antifa Babies* criticizes the penetration of nationalism into football worlds parodying the ephemeral Greek football fans' enthusiasm for their national football team achievement to reach the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. It depicts a group of fans celebrating the victory of the national teams adding a caustic comment: 'When you have no dignity, then you degrade yourself by supporting the national team'. Young writers to comment on their precarious living conditions often use subversion, irony, and parody of conventional popular images. In this regard, a past-up near the National Technical University of Athens comments on the dramatic increase in homelessness and poverty during the era of

austerity. It portrays a seditious image of Santa Claus in shabby clothes grilling a sausage in a pot with a caption reading: 'Empty Saint Claus'.

As graffiti is usually performed as a politically conscious act of resistance, locations with high political symbolism have become sites of artistic experimentations. For example, the walls of the occupied self-managed factory of VIOME⁴ in Thessaloniki, have transformed into sites of meaningful political graffiti. On the frontage of the building an inventive graffiti by Skitsofrenis depicts a young refugee in black and white, wearing a colorful crash helmet with a boat painted on it. The contrast between the melancholic glance of the boy and the colorful boat on his helmet seems to signify the mixed feelings of the refugees: the fear of the unknown and the hope of a better life somewhere else. In the background one can see pictorial elements of working class life (factory funnels and gears).

In the bottom right hand corner there is a couplet from a poem of left-wing Tasos Leivaditis, which was set to music by the famous composer Mikis Theodorakis, saying: '[the world] is small and there is no room for my groan'. The song refers to the social life of Greek refugees in the slam areas of Piraeus, bringing to memory the disagreeable experience of Asia Minor refugees during their exodus to Greece (1922-1923). Using a significant historical account, the writer assigns a sentimental tone to the meaning of graffiti, stimulating the viewers to turn their attention to the contemporary tragedy of the Middle East Refugees on their painful way to the alleged paradise of the developed West.

The grim picture of a young generation living under conditions of sustained uncertainty without positive future prospects has inspired many stencillers. For example, in downtown Thessaloniki a stencil depicts a bent man who is dressed formally and carries a bag with a winding key in his back. This iconic figure is accompanied by an existential question: 'Are you alive?'. Another one portrays a barefoot, doleful child that holds a cord, which ends up in a red-colored inscription saying: 'No future'. Likewise, stencils and past-ups expound noticeable representations of trapped young bodies and emotions, figures of vagabond children with sorrowful looks, accompanied by verbal expressions of disappointment: 'It is certain; I will never find a job', 'Has anyone seen my future?'. Moreover, the young people's loss of confidence in the repeated governmental promises of saving the country has found expression in series of playful, ironic slogans, such as 'No more rescuing', 'No more heroes'.

In a similar vein, inner feelings and beliefs found an outlet for expression on urban surfaces all around the country. A slogan in the center of Herakleion says, 'Let us aestheticise our grief' and a graffiti in Exarchia depicts a disappointed weeping girl reading, 'Like lost children we live our uncompleted adventures'. Using black and white words in the phrase 'uncompleted adventures' and omitting a few letters, the writer attempts to render expressively the sense of uncertainty and the feelings of unfulfilled desires.

Slogans full of playful irony and rhetorical subversion transmit youth discontent across Greek cities. One slogan written by a young woman paraphrases the well-known saying of the

famous Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis, 'I hope for nothing, I fear for nothing, I am free,' replacing the last phrase to 'I am unemployed' in order to express sarcastically the feeling of exclusion and futility. Other series of slogans juxtapose words that signify feelings of vulnerability and despair (e.g. 'Abasement, loneliness, desperation' 'Wretchedness, misery, depression'), or expound negative sentiment expressions ('Fear is rising everywhere,' 'I am suffering'), endowing public spaces with unmistakable signs of the social and psychological tensions of young people who live in a 'risk society' experience.

Sometimes this type of affect graffiti with its melancholic tone leaves space for more politicized voices of protest. This is the case of a piece by the socially engaged graffitist Bleeps in Metaxourgeio, a neighborhood located north of the historical centre of Athens. It represents a child who holds a placard reading, 'Hopeless'. Words on the background of the graffiti signify either dystopian conditions of social life ('immorality', 'loneliness', 'pollution', 'injustice' 'selfishness'), or structural systems of power ('monetary system', 'capitalism', 'aristocracy', 'religion', and 'globalization'). Following a linguistic convention of the juxtaposition of words with a similar meaning, the graffitist strengthens the meaning of the message, underlining the systemic structures of socio-political domination that surrounds the social context in which the semiosis takes place (Vannini 2007: 117).

Beyond the realm of affect graffiti, many political slogans and stencils incite young people to take part in acts of resistance against austerity policies and the corrupted political system. Young writers articulate a revolutionary rhetoric ('Wake up- rise up') and often, a raw anti-systemic texture (e.g. 'Generation of 300 Euros set fire to the State', 'School lights up only when it is on fire', 'Eat the Rich'). Grassroots political activists seek to transgress the dystopia of crisis proclaiming their faith in an alleged possible non-capitalist future society using a language of revolt: 'There will be a day when revolution will not be a utopia,' 'Towards working emancipation for an autonomous society', 'One solution: revolution'.

Young activists make use of catchphrases and visual images to excite the public interest around the issue of social inequality and injustice in slogans: 'Guards everywhere, justice nowhere', 'In the world of bosses we are all foreigners'. Similarly, a mural in Exarchia allusively comments on power relationship, criticizing the ideological domination of elites and the subordination of non-privileged groups. It depicts a distorted figure of man, who looks like a quadruped held by a hand on a leash and accompanied by the slogan: 'The trouble is that people learn to love their chains.'

Gender inequality issues in the context of crisis are also depicted in the protest graffiti scene. Graffiti written by feminist groups portrays images of precariat and unemployed girls protesting for the deterioration of the living conditions, while other present non-conformist girls in conflict to the dominant images of girlhood. For example, a painted graffiti at the University of Crete shows a fighting girl with an unconventional way of dressing saying: 'The girls spend the night out fighting fascism.'

Other graffiti comment on the manipulation of young people's consciousness by mass media, criticizing their prejudiced, one-sided coverage of the crisis events. The writers employ the poetic geography of free space as counterpoint to the neo-liberal logic of tightly controlled public spaces (Ferrel 2012: 1689) to criticize the existing structures of power and domination. Various slogans assert rights of free expression claiming 'More free space', and criticize the mass media through caustic and sarcastic mottos: 'Police talks to you through news broadcasting,' and 'I am sorry that I am writing on walls, I am not called in reality shows.'

Some graffiti illustrate social commentaries on embarrassing political events, acting as a unique memorial and a medium of healing in communal grief and trauma caused by regrettable incidents (Klingman and Shalev 2001). In doing so, young writers bring to the foreground memories of youthful traumatic events of rebellions in the past, attempting to prompt their readers to get involved in direct action towards a desirable youth uprising. A variety of graffiti across the country illustrates iconic images of 15-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos, reminding of his fatal shooting by a police officer in Exarchia in December 2008. These are often accompanied by catchphrases with reference to the youth riot that occurred in its aftermath all over the country, attempting to raise the spirit of revolt: 'How many Alexises do you expect to die to make you go out on the streets?'; 'I live through your fights.'

The assassination of the young leftist rapper Pavlos Fissas by a member of the neo-fascist political party Golden Dawn on September 14, 2013, is another case in point. The dreadful event triggered a strong reaction, including protest marches and antifascist events organized by youth activist groups. Under these circumstances, many graffiti have appeared in visual landscapes of Greek cities adorning them with elaborate pictures of Fissas and, often, poetic inscriptions or antifascist slogans, articulating a space of expressive commemoration in his memory.

Elaborated, colorful murals, intriguing stencils and playful slogans in the visual palimpsest of Greek cities are signs of the existing structures of feelings of a society in crisis. They are visual embodiments of young people's perception of feelings of loss, precariousness, distress and insecurity. The graffiti scene shows the ways through which youth react to the dystopia of crisis employing space activism and artistic experimentation to present their understanding of crisis and to produce a social critique in terms of resistance.

The voices of writers: making graffiti in context of crisis

Researching the young precariat artistic world from the subject's own perspective is important to grasp their ways of thinking and structures of feeling. Ethnography fieldwork allows us to shed light on the interpretive framework that guides their actions. The study utilizes a combination of open-ended biographical interviews or unstructured conversation with young

writers conducted by the research team⁵ and field observation. With a few exceptions, they are well-educated and have job-related experiences and skills, frequently as cultural workers. Some of them experience frustration and despair due to the lack of employment and educational prospects under the present condition of crisis. For ethical reasons, in the stage of analysis the writers' real names have been hidden, and respecting their specific preferences, we have used either pseudonyms or, in the cases of interviewees who wanted to retain a full anonymity, a capital letter. The analysis of interview data presupposed the organization of consistent material on the basis of several criteria: chronological order, thematic field, context (della Porta 2014: 249). Here the analysis pays attention to the process of comparing and contrasting the different ways by which narrators interpret the graffiti activities and tell their stories to make sense of their life, revealing varied visions, beliefs, meanings, motivations and experiences that lie behind the scene of graffiti.

The context of the harsh and extremely pressurized conditions of austerity seems to be a hallmark in young people's life trajectories in Greece. Doing graffiti is a meaningful, affective activity that offers opportunities for imaginative expression and a chance to stand up to those power holders considered to be responsible for the unfavorable modifications of surrounding environments (Zaimakis 2015).

For many writers, political graffiti is perceived as an act of creative resistance against the rise of authoritarianism, racism, and fascism during the austerity era. *Skitsofrenis*, a well-known spray-painting writer, uses street art both as a bread-winning job and as means to sustain or reinforce an activist identity. He began his career in street art worlds as a member of a hip-hop band to move later to the graffiti scene creating elaborate murals in Kalamata and other Greek cities. According to his statement, graffiti provide an expressive instrumental tool with which you can adequately combat fascism:

'Young people should understand that we must change the game. [...] If you fight fascists with your own weapons [of artistic graffiti] you will disarm them. [...] It is the power of poetry, education, the ennoblement of instinct.'

Skitsofrenis employs a poetics of assemblage using selected combinations of pictorial and linguistic elements. The represented persons can be eminent persons from the world of (popular) art, science and politics or ordinary people from specific social groups, such as refugees, young people, and children. The pictorial elements are often accompanied by slogans inspired from the vocabulary of popular music, Greek art-popular song, rebetika and low-bap scene. Besides the meaningful use of the combined pictorial and linguistic elements, he employs various spatial tactics to draw the viewers' attention:

'I was walking down a pedestrian street closed to the Acropolis in Athens and beside I notice a homeless man who was seated. Passers-by were walking with bowed

heads and holding empty bags. I was thinking of what to create there. [...] I made a representation of Socrates gazing at us and I wrote on it: "Conium, conium, conium is free." Many tourists, such as Russians, Americans etc. gathered around capturing photos but a (shopkeeper) came and told me, "Do not do such things, man. We have to offer them some happiness" [...]. However, the foreigners showed their appreciation: "We came to Greece and [for the first time] we saw a graffiti representing the reality".'

The quotation reveals the meaningful spatio-temporal tactics of the writer. He chose a popular historical area in central Athens to present his creation to an international public, employing the historical figure of the ancient philosopher Socrates to intrigue the curiosity of passers-by. Replacing the title of the controversial song 'Alcohol is free' that represented Greece in the 2013 Eurovision song contest, with the slogan 'conium is free' he offered a sarcastic and timely remark on social inequality. While people's discontent was on the rise, the costly campaign of the song with its showy superficiality and empty pretentiousness was seen as a provocation for a society living in hard times.

For V., a social science student, graffiti is part of the everyday politics of a local LGBTQ youth group in its effort to sensitize people to issues of body, sexuality, and human rights. During a student occupation of the University of Crete in Rethymnon in autumn 2015, the group wrote a variety of slogans with derisive catchphrases against the rise of racist and xenophobic attitudes in the era of memoranda. Moreover, it creates murals depicting non-conformist girls that challenge the dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions.

'Beyond the issues of housing and food, we had to assert the right of our existence and visibility within a general assembly of students. [...] seeing a depiction, especially a political one, a person may think of several political issues [...] these paintings draw the attention of people [...] simply because when we discuss about antifascism and activism we have men on our minds. Women live in obscurity because of discrimination or sexism.'

Employing carnivalesque representations full of irony, transgression, sarcasm and artistic innovation, the activists of human rights attempt to attract the viewer's attention and to convey political messages in an expressive way. Other activists focus on the political role of street art and highlight the lived experience of risky pleasure. For instance, WD has drawn inspiration from recent political protests against austerity measures and comments on the emotional and pleasurable sensation of graffiti performance. He views graffiti as a politicized street art, an effective tool to the re-appropriation of public space.

'I like painting in the streets very much. [...] there are a lot of difficulties: it is illegal and

costly, you are exposed to the cold and heat, or the public gaze. [...] and finally this kind of art in public space is ephemeral. Tomorrow, your work may have already been destroyed. However, all these are counterbalanced with the pleasure I feel when I finish a piece and a passerby who stands beside it smiles and says 'bravo'. [...] [Graffiti] should adopt a view of contemporary social reality and it should be active, making its presence be felt in order to sensitize people on societal issues opening up new modes of thinking, communication, and action.'

The repertory of WD ranges from timely political graffiti focused on social issues such as poverty, homelessness, and authoritarianism to wider existential pieces dealing with themes of consumerism, life style, and conformism. A watershed moment in his carrier was the assassination of Alexis Grigoropoulos and the following spontaneous young revolt with mass demonstrations and violent protests all over Greece.

'The revolt, thousands of people, slogans, struggles, metropolitan violence, and a society ready to rise up. I felt it intensively in the streets; I was living in the center of Athens feeling this rebellious vibration. [...] Athens was a laboratory, something that seemed to produce; it produced what had been inside [people's lives] for a lot of years: an anti against the assassination, the State, the Police, the institutions. It was an image from the future.'

Another graffitiist and unemployed activist, P, connects the very action of graffiti with the psycho-social pressures of the economic crisis. The act of graffiti is experienced as a meaningful political action that has a cathartic function.

'During the years of crisis many people feeling a deadlock have the need of externalizing it. Graffiti is an appropriate way to do this, because you can address more people. It helps to overcome fear and insecurity. Whoever has tried to externalize this fear by sticking a poster, writing a slogan and then chanting a slogan in a protest march he feels that he is not alone and he is escaping from the fear.'

P. employs graffiti in the context of the tactical repertoires of radical political groups, often in protest marches where he takes the responsibility of writing on the walls, conveying political messages to the readers. Employing graffiti as a visual political speech, he seeks places that might be seen as sites of modern governmentality, finance capitalism, and uncontrolled free markets. He selects meaningful spatial locations, such as 'banks', 'public buildings and city halls', 'open shops on Sundays that infringe working people's rights,' and 'multinational companies that impose unfavorable social conditions on labor' to transmit political messages concerning issues of oppression and exploitation.

While some activists perform graffiti for their own political purposes, other creators employ it as a medium of personal expression and existential quest. Usually, they create elaborate pieces addressing wider existential issues imbued with philosophical musing. For the street artist B., a graffiti act is a 'personal expression where someone 'performs his identity'. Similar to many other graffitiists, he uses the practice of spray-painting during the austerity era not only as a medium of expression exposing inner feeling to the public view, but also as a means of livelihood. Graffiti offers opportunities for temporary work paid by piece. However, as several writers say, agreements with their employers do not always include payments but purchases of material goods (e.g. spray-colors), the remnant of which they can use to paint their own pieces. Under these circumstances, V. illustrates elaborate pieces both on walls of back streets and on the surfaces of derelict factories. In his narrative he links the act of graffiti with inner feelings and existential motives:

'It is a circle of artistic work that addresses the issue of the relationship between life and death, as well as the fragility of human existence. Moreover, I like to play with the location of graffiti, placing them on unexpected sites.'

The spatial politics of the visualized city is a major topic in the narrative of N., a member of a young crew in Thessaloniki. According to his argument, a graffiti act is a spatial exploration within urban landscape:

'You get in the mood of exploration, looking for abandoned buildings, tunnels, and places to leave your signs. I find places and locations, through the exploration and curiosity that I would have never experienced otherwise. [...] The choice of the place depends on several criteria: How central this location is? How many people are expected to see it? How dangerous is it? In the last case you do it something like as a conversation with other graffiti writers who will pass by and might see it. Then, you gain appreciation other street artists [...] the material is also important. Maybe it is an available canvas, for example the blind of a shop, or a vast wall.'

The creators' tactics are often directed to the graffiti communities, attempting to obtain symbolic capital in terms of prestige and fame. They use graffiti landscapes as a public forum where artistic novelties, linguistic peculiarity, affect expectation, existential quest, and deviant political ideas can circulate freely. The act of doing graffiti enhances writers' self esteem and gives them a way to visualize ideological imagery concerning identity-based issues. The voices of precariat young writers reveal the young underground currents of the city that seek an outlet in a fragmented and insecure society badly stricken by austerity policies.

Bleeps is a cultural worker and graffitiist influenced by postmodernist approaches and aesthetic trends. His intriguing graffiti has drawn the attention of international mass media, in-

cluding the Guardian and the New York Times. During the austerity era he has moved from a political-themed graffiti to an existentialism-oriented creation with more introvert orientation and a focus on the everyday lives of ordinary people. Part of his graffiti activism turns against the mainstream consumer-driven street art, which is prevalent in contemporary funded graffiti festivals projects. Unlike many other politicized graffitiists in Athens, he acts beyond the iconosphere of Exarchia, seeking more common graffiti sites: places of social and commercial gathering, popular streets and squares, lower-class areas, and even disreputable districts:

‘There are areas that constitute the genuine expression of the city, where junkies shoot freely [...] I had been active in [areas] where one could see black [sex workers] women working in the street.’

The writer chooses specific locations to display his creations assigning them with particular meanings. This significant spatial tactic is attuned to Bleeps’ wider interpretation of graffiti act as street poetry. For him graffiti is a discourse on the conditions of everyday life that gets poetry back into the realm of streets. Moreover, he is aware of the role of the exchanges of knowledge and graffiti-related techniques within cyberspace in the dissemination of his work and the highly competitive context of graffiti worlds.

‘The dynamism of an artist is strengthened through his presence within networks and social media. [...] I do not share the accusation on art, I like allegory. [...] Art in public place is a discourse. I do not use slogans that were outside of my interests. Even if I used mottos, such as ‘viva la revolution’, there is something hidden beyond that. I see my writing as street poetry. [...] What annoys me is that graffitiists function competitively in public space attempting to appropriate even the last corner of the city in order to ‘announce’ themselves. I prefer the public dialogue.’

The protest graffiti scene brings about the meeting of distinctive, often contrary and contradictory, voices and intentionalities that have to do with diverse forms of social protest. Many graffitiists turn their interest towards a solitary activism using graffiti as a playful and emotional activity and a way of an underground communication among unaligned writers and readers. They have built their own communities of interests within urban space promoting displays of subjectivity that respond to personal impulses and desires embedded in the particular social context of crisis. Other young activists attempt to convert the feeling of exclusion into a visual form of protest. Graffiti creation process signifies the readiness of young people for changes towards a better world; even though the vast majority of them do not have a clear view of what types of policies and reforms should be implemented to overcome the crisis effectively.

Discussion

Graffiti has been used by young writers as a unique tool for materializing contentious politics and influencing social experience. Employing a cross-disciplinary research combining biographical and semiotic elements, the analysis shed light on the spatial politics of the writers and the varied strategies of cultural representation of social life in the era of austerity. The research findings show that protest graffiti signifies both a meaningful activity with sentimental value, allowing the expression of feelings, and simultaneously, a political, vociferous youthful protest against unfavorable chances that frustrate the life expectations of youth.

The meaning of graffiti is established through discursive and interpretive conventions that are socially constructed and framed by the intense politicization of everyday life during the austerity era. The creators employ politics of assemblance, drawing upon a rich repertoire of pictorial or linguistic elements, such as iconic figures, traditional and historical references, social movement vocabulary, timely social questions, popular songs, and revolutionary mottos. The narratives of interviewees show the multiplicity of meanings associated with the graffiti act. All graffiti writers understand the act of making-graffiti as a deep emotional and creative activity that gives meaning to their lives. Nevertheless, some of them perform graffiti as a politically conscious resistance to existing forms of domination and as a kind of cultural response to dystopian conditions of crisis. Other writers use it as an expression of inner feelings, employing more existential and emotional aspects of everyday life.

The socio-semiotic analysis of protest graffiti shows a variety of modes of expression, aesthetic quests, and demands of graffiti world, revealing a dissenting underground culture that contests and subverts mainstream narratives and dominant cultural meanings. Several murals and stencils are sophisticated, playful and innovative creations, which excite the curiosity of passers-by galvanizing them into collective action. Existential graffiti imbued with melancholic poetry serve as reminders of isolation, anomie, hopelessness, and the loss of vision of a new life in a risk society. Utopian and revolt graffiti employ images of a desirable oncoming revolt and philosophical musing towards future utopian worlds revealing the desire of young activists to make alternative urban spaces. It is a grassroots activism of invisible young people that aspires to become a revitalizing agent in the fights against social disruption and austerity.

Many graffitiists are young activists who have affiliations with politically oriented groups, mainly leftist and anarchist collectivities, beyond mainstream parties. Usually their actions are inextricably linked to the social movement of politics of everyday life. Other graffitiists employ more playful and allusive ways of expression, conveying existential and/or pessimistic messages imbued with emotional resonance and affect. They usually are unaligned writers or members of grassroots artist collectivities, often well-educated, fostering more individualist and emotional reactions to the dystopian condition of crisis.

Precariat young people with no faith that any political savior will appear any time soon

and trapped in the vicious cycle of austerity into insecurity, unemployment, and poverty, express their sense of existential stalemate. The poetic of precariousness is a new phenomenon in the domestic graffiti scene, reflecting public discontent and social despair. Writing on walls has become a cultural response of a young artistic precariat to the context of crisis, expressing in a creative way the particular traumatic national experience of financial crisis and its feeling of loss. Graffiti not only convey highly visible, often provocative, political messages and cultural expressions, but also has a cathartic function. Existential graffiti, reflecting one person's inner state and feelings, offer the opportunity of engaging in an open dialogue with the reactions of other participants and passers-by, provoking a kind of catharsis, since the thoughts, no longer secret, are written in public on walls easing the conscience (Dragičević-Šešić 2001: 83).

Usually politicized young graffitiists are motivated by feeling excluded from the politics or that politics as usual (Waldner and Dobratz 2013: 377). Moreover, artistic expression, desire for recognition, reputation among peers and fame can stimulate graffiti creation. For young writers, graffiti is a meaningful way to make a statement to the world of adults reminding them the texture of their living conditions and sometimes their desire to stand up against domination and injustice. They negotiate their identities and make graffiti within the process of context-bound and conflict-laden interpersonal interactions of graffiti worlds within and across local communities and virtual-based global networks.

Graffiti scene provide us with the opportunity to learn about the ways that young people attempt to transcend the unfavorable social conditions of crisis, understanding it, in Schuster's terms (2015), as an intensity of artist and political practices that link the public, the particular, and the intimate in contentious spaces of graffiti. Writing on urban surfaces allows invisible young writers to expose publicly their visual imageries, reminding us the existence of a young artistic precariat living in high-risk and ever changing conditions. By transforming boring spatial locations into vibrant graffiti-saturated sites, young writers attempt to convert their dissatisfaction into festivals of visual protest displaying an alternative network of cultural knowledge outside institutional settings.

NOTES

1 The fieldwork was conducted in the framework of two research projects of the Laboratory of Social Analysis and Applied Social Research, Department of Sociology, University of Crete. The first was carried out between April 2011- March 2014. The second is an ongoing project that started in October 2015 in the cities of Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Patra, Larisa, Volos, Mytilene, Herakleion, Chania and Rethymnon.

2 The majority of writers use Greek but some employ foreign languages in an effort to communicate their art to an international audience of readers and writers.

3 A striking example was the 1st Athens Street Art Festival: Crisis? What Crisis. It was organized by the School of Fine Arts, the Municipality of Nikea- Piraeus, and private galleries, with the participation of twenty famous international European street artists.

4 Since May 2011, the workers of VIO.ME have occupied the factory after a decision of their general assembly. The bankrupted factory had abandoned by its owners. Nowadays they produce and sell ecological cleaning products, which they distribute and sell through a network of cooperatives, squatting centers, and solidarity economy groups.

5 The research team comprised of the experienced interviewers Christina-Marily Bourma, Antonis Drakonakis, Vaggelis Gaggelis, Melpo Vardaki, and their supervisor Yiannis Zaimakis.

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Cooking, swallowing, chewing: ‘culinary semi-otics’ and the political economy of witchcraft in the Cameroon Grassfields^{1 2}

Emile Tsékénis

In the Cameroon Grassfields, persons are conceived of as the outcome of culinary processes: exchange, cooking and ingestion. Food appears as a gendered medium which, by being exchanged, cooked and ingested by persons has the power to transform others and make them act. The first part of the paper aims at deciphering this culinary idiom, while the second part examines how key terms such as cooking, eating and exchanging (food) easily switch to a lexicon pertaining to political economy, and links this culinary idiom to witchcraft conceptions, arguing that the latter is anti-production, anti-cooking, anti-exchange, and anti-consumption. It will be shown that the key terms of both these languages cover a wide semantic field and that they can be easily substituted for one another. This interchangeability and ‘semantic volatility’ can explain, at least in part, the widely acknowledged ambiguity/ambivalence of witchcraft discourses. This ambiguity/ambivalence, in turn, accounts for the ability of witchcraft discourses to translate abstract/remote/global ideas and forces into local terms and accommodating historical changes. This is what I intend to illustrate in the third and final section of the paper, arguing that witchcraft can be understood not so much as a ‘belief’ but, rather, as a modality of ‘mediating the imagination’. Overall, the paper argues that the exploration of such themes calls for the combination of both discursive (e.g. the culinary metaphors used by people when talking about persons and/or witchcraft) and non-discursive (culinary practices and ritual performance) approaches since, as it will be made clear, knowledge of the self, others and the world emerges to a great extent through culinary imagery and practices.

KEYWORDS witchcraft, personhood, culinary metaphors and practices,
postcolonial Cameroon, Cameroon Grassfields

Introduction

The argument of this paper focuses on two common topics in social anthropology: personhood and witchcraft. Its aim is, first, to decipher the culinary idiom in which these concepts are couched, and, second, to examine how the key terms of this idiom switch to a lexicon pertaining to political economy. In particular, it will be shown that the key terms of both these languages cover a wide semantic field and that they can be easily substituted for one another. This interchangeability and 'semantic volatility' can explain, at least in part, the widely acknowledged ambiguity/ ambivalence of witchcraft discourses (Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998; de Rosny 1981; Geschiere 1994: 78; 1997: 9; 2014; Nyamnjoh 2002: 119; Rowlands and Warnier 1988: 129; Warnier 1993). This ambiguity/ambivalence, in turn, accounts for the ability of witchcraft discourses to translate abstract/remote/global ideas and forces into local terms and accommodating historical changes.³ This is what I intend to illustrate in the third and final section, arguing that witchcraft can be understood not so much as a 'belief' but, rather, as 'a modality of mediating the imagination' (Englund 2007: 297).

In terms of methodology, the paper argues that the exploration of such themes calls for the combination of both discursive (e.g. the culinary metaphors used by people when talking about persons and/or witchcraft) and non-discursive (culinary practices and ritual performance) approaches since, as it will be made clear, knowledge of the self, others and the world emerges to a great extent through culinary imagery and practices.

I shall begin with eating.

From culinary metaphors to the political economy of persons Cooking, eating, and exchanging

The Batié, like all Grassfielders of West Cameroon, make a sharp distinction between swallowing with and without chewing: *pfuo* and *ndzə*.⁴ *Ndzə* has positive connotations and refers to 'good eating', i.e. nourishing and unifying: it connotes the well-being procured by sharing and eating food, cooked in the compound, that is, to socialized eating (such food includes domesticated meat such as poultry and vegetarian staples such as *fufu*). A man who succeeds/ inherits his father is called: *ndzə dyə* '[him who] swallows the house', meaning: he who inherits all his material and immaterial assets. *Pfuo*, by contrast is, prototypically, the antisocial and violent way a hunter eats since he kills/ slaughters game and eats alone in the bush. Chewing is also the way witches/sorcerers eat, thus the Batié say of a bewitched person: *də pfuo a*, 'd~~ə~~-witchcraft [the vampire-owl] has chewed him'.⁵ Only when I was introduced to witchcraft beliefs did I understand the reason why some people with whom I shared a meal either laughed at me or seemed annoyed by the way I was eating: chewing almost every kind of food

I was offered, I was perceived either as a child or as a 'bad person', if not a sorcerer.⁶ But there is much more to culinary metaphors/practices than the ways of eating.

In order to fully understand the culinary metaphors and practices deployed by the inhabitants of the Cameroon Grassfields, we must first delineate the gendered division of labor. Besides being otherworldly (see subsequent sections) (Argenti 2001 and 2011 for Oku; Diduk 2001 for the Kedjom), neonates in the Cameroon Grassfields are also considered androgynous (Tsékénis 2015: 340-341). Up to the age of approximately eight or nine Batié boys and girls perform both 'male' and 'female' work. Thus, boys and girls alike: fetch water, gather firewood, sweep the yard and on school holidays help in the fields. Moreover, children do not follow sexualized (eating) taboos. However, as they grow older and reach puberty, boys and girls comply with the gendered division of labor.⁷ Therefore the gendering of children begins by performing proper (gendered) activities, gradually leaving behind their androgynous (or at least ambiguous) state. In everyday life, men and women acquire their gender by performing 'male' or 'female' agricultural activities. The products of these activities are gendered as well and persons embody them. This is exemplified particularly in ritualized marriage exchanges where men give 'male' products and in so doing reveal their ('male') part (simultaneously eclipsing their female part) and, by contrast, the women's 'female' part (Tsékénis 2015: 340-342). Conversely, women give 'female' products and in so doing reveal both their gender and the men's 'male' part. Therefore, not only is gender performed, but in fact, it is also elicited by others. The person is not the sole author of its acts but is somehow also compelled to act by others, therefore 'revealing' its gendered self as well as the relations of which it is composed.

As one could expect, ideas/practices of procreation and gestation are also imbued with culinary imagery. Batié women describe that during sex the husband provides his wife with 'water' *shyə* while women provide 'blood' *cyə* in order to 'cook' *lom* a child. Batié women use the same verb to denote the measuring of ingredients necessary for the preparation of a meal and for the 'cooking of a child'.⁸ Gestation, like procreation, is talked about and experienced in terms of cooking. Just as the right measure, mixing, and cooking of 'water' and 'blood' is necessary for procreation, so too the mixing of these elements is essential to produce a 'good meal', and for the proper gestation of the fetus. It should therefore come as no surprise that the term for marriage – *lom ndyə* – lit. 'cooking [inside the] house' – bears a literal and a metaphorical meaning: in the first sense it refers to the cooking of food; in the second sense, it refers to the 'marital or conjugal cooking'. In the literal sense, children (persons) are the products of their mother's cooking. However, we should bear in mind that the processed food includes both male and female products and as such, cooking, while being a fundamentally female activity incorporates the (agricultural) work of women as well as men.⁹

As already suggested, the use of culinary imagery is restricted neither to the domestic domain nor to everyday life but also pervades the ritual realm. Thus, for example, a newborn child is incorporated into his father's compound by being 'eaten' during a birth ritual called

'plantains of the umbilical cord of the child' while *lom ndyə* does not only denote the conjugal bond, since it refers to the sum total (ritualized) marriage exchanges. Culinary imagery and practices therefore extend well beyond individuals and include groups of various size (Tsékénis 2015: 341-343). To sum up, parents are seen as 'cooking' children, newborns are incorporated into the household by being 'eaten' and throughout their lives persons exchange and share food, in both mundane and ritual contexts. In so doing, they constitute (and de-constitute) others revealing at the same time the nature of their relations. Culinary ingredients and food, as gendered (embodied) parcels of persons/groups/bodies and persons as part of groups transform other persons/groups/bodies. Food therefore appears as a means, which, because it is cooked, exchanged, and ingested, has the power to transform others and make them act.

The political economy of persons

The reader cannot but have noticed how easily one switches from notions such as 'cooking' and 'eating' to others such as producing, consuming or working. The culinary imagery and practices deployed by Grassfielders can be easily substituted for a vocabulary and practices relating to political economy. Thus, one can either speak of the cooking or the production of persons. This cooking/production requires both food (literal sense of the term) and sex (metaphorical sense of the term); food, in turn, incorporates the work/production of husband (farming, herding, trading, hunting) and wife (farming, herding); but procreation requires marriage exchanges, which mobilize multiple groups of relatives and/or friends; finally, 'eating' may refer either to the ingestion of food or of persons (recall the ritual ingestion of the newborn): as we shall see in the next section, a bewitched person is said to have been 'eaten [chewed]' by the sorcerer/witch, in which case 'eating' becomes mere consumption. In this context, terms such as production, reproduction and consumption may refer for example to agricultural activities, as well as to the production and reproduction of persons, products and social relations. Therefore, not only are these idioms easily interchangeable, but they also cover a wide semantic field.¹⁰

These features – high interchangeability and 'semantic volatility' – explain, in part, the inherent and widely acknowledged ambiguity of witchcraft discourses. This ambiguity is further doubled with ambivalence, in our case, because of the existence of another idiom which provides a kind of conceptual bridge between the culinary idiom and the language of political economy. Indeed, men sometimes use an ambivalent vocabulary when talking about marriage (Tsékénis 2000: 75-84; also Brain 1976: 119 and Pradelles de Latour 1991: 22, for the western and the southern Bangwa respectively). Thus, the word *don* 'price/cost' can refer to both a woman and a commodity: 'bride price' is *don məjwiɛ*, lit. 'price/cost [of the] woman'. However, first: Batié men say that they 'exchange' *kwiapnyə* women, a slightly different term

from the one referring to the exchange of goods *kwiap*; second: there exists a specific and exclusive expression for 'paying the price of a bride': *ŋku məjwiɛ*. Rather than suggesting an equation of marriage with a commercial transaction (and of women with commodities) then, what could be labelled the 'trading idiom' used by men, and amongst men exclusively, must be seen as a means of differentiating men's from women's perspectives on marriage, expressing gender complementarity. This link between the 'trading idiom' and gender becomes even more obvious when one recalls that long-distance trade was – and still is to a great extent – an exclusively male activity.

Despite the fact that marriage can by no means be equated to a commercial transaction any more than women can be compared with commodities, this trading idiom further enhances the inherent ambiguity of discourses on, and practices of personhood with ambivalence. Not surprisingly perhaps, this ambiguity and ambivalence, which many scholars also label 'indeterminacy of meaning' (Geschiere 1998; Englund 2007: 296-297; Niehaus 2005), is also reflected in witchcraft discourses, which draw heavily on both culinary metaphors and a lexicon pertaining to political economy.

... and from the political economy of persons to the political economy of witchcraft

***Dɔ*: the vampire-owl or: witchcraft as anti-cooking**

There is no better way to introduce the reader to the occult world of witchcraft than to narrate the stories that Grassfields teenagers tell each other during the long evenings of the rainy season:

A head of a household had several wives. His first wife, who had given birth to four children, was envious of his second wife, whose children were prettier. She transformed into an owl, so as to drink their blood. The children began to lose weight and got sick. Their mother took them to a healer and then to the hospital but nobody could cure them. Her sister advised her: 'There is a reason why your children are losing weight, you should pay a visit to another healer'. The women reported this advice to her husband who decided to consult a diviner. The latter consulted the spider (which mediates between God and the humans), which revealed that the children were being 'eaten' ('munched') by his first spouse. The husband would not believe the diviner. The latter replied: 'Soon you will be given the proof of my sayings'. The following night, the husband dreamed of being seized by nightmares and fever. He woke up with a start and asked his first wife to bring him a glass of water. When she handed him the glass he noticed that drops of blood were dripping from her lips. He

said nothing. At the crack of dawn he paid a visit to the diviner, seeking his advice. The latter replied: 'Cover the window of your first wife's house with a wired fence and should something abnormal happen, come and see me'. The husband complied. During the night, an owl attempted to pass through the window, got caught into the wire fence and struggled to liberate itself. Frightened by this unusual noise, the second wife rushed outside her house alerting the neighbors. The husband asked his sons to call for his first wife. When they entered her bedroom she was in a coma, moaning on her bed. The healer, who had been called upon, lighted a fire and drove out the owl. Immediately, the woman got up saying: 'What has been hurting me so much?' Her husband, raging mad, publically accused her of being *du*. She pleaded her innocence, but no one would believe her. She was forced to return to her family. After a while the owl, weakened by its wounds, reappeared one night in the compound. The children immediately reported its presence to their father, who killed it with a wooden stick. It was later reported that the witch had died simultaneously in her father's compound' (Pradelles de Latour 1991: 72; my translation).

I shall skip the contingent aspects of witchcraft accusations (actual relations between accuser and accused – kinship, social category, etc., how witchcraft cases/affairs evolve according to context, etc.) and focus instead on the more abstract, formal aspects relevant to the idioms they mobilize.

Du witchcraft relies on the idea that every person has an alter ego which, from the moment of birth and until death, is said to wander on the river banks, inside the dark galleries formed by raffia palm trees. The Batié call this alter ego: *jiè*. Although the relation of a person to its *jiè* weakens as time passes by it is never fully severed. The person, at one moment in time, simply stops being aware of this bond. *Du* witchcraft is activated through the identification – most of the time unconscious – of the person with its *jiè*. This explains the witch-spouse claiming her innocence: she drunk the blood of her co-wife's children without 'being aware' of it. Her alter ego, in this instance a vampire-owl, acted *in abstentia*.

The vampire-owl transgresses the domestic domain and eats/consumes the product of the 'marital cooking'. *Du*-witchcraft is therefore anti-cooking, abolishing the very foundation of production and reproduction.

But there is another, more imperceptible, disruptive effect of *du*-witchcraft. In the story mentioned before, the healer fights the vampire-owl with fire. When this nocturnal bird howls hidden in the trees, along the creeks nearby the compound, women usually react by throwing burning charcoal towards it, shouting: 'We owe nothing to anyone, the bride price of each woman of this compound has been paid'.¹¹ Here too, *du*-witchcraft is seen as a blow to the conjugal bond and, aside from that, to the relation of affinity, itself founded on exchanges. Seen from this perspective *du*-witchcraft is also anti-exchange.

Siè: a coven of cannibal-witches or: witchcraft as anti-trading

The son of a king was the owner of a lucrative coffee plantation the profits of which he had invested in the building of a beautiful house roofed with sheets of metal, while he had also undertaken the construction of a department store in town. Everybody wondered where he would get the money to make such an investment. At this very moment, some providential friends lent him an important sum of money and, from that moment on, on the first day of every week, he would leave his compound and join the members of his association who gathered near a murky waterfall. During the rest of the week, while cultivating his fields, he would send his children away, hand over his cutlass to ghost-like figures only he could see, and put them to work. Once his department store was finished his friends kindly asked him to repay them. As he was unable to give back the money, they asked him to deliver instead his first born child which was destined to be eaten by the other members of the association. He then realized that he had been caught in the coven of *siè* but it was too late and he was forced to deliver one of his sons. When they asked for a second one, he refused. When he got back home he said to his wives: 'I don't want to see anybody'. Loaded with despair, he took a rope and hanged himself behind his house. His family buried him far away from his house, aside a fence, and did not mourn for him. Every night, white butterflies flitted above his grave. His second son died after a while. The *siè* adepts were momentarily replete, and the white butterflies disappeared (Pradelles de Latour 1991: 74-75; my translation).

The accusation of belonging to the *siè*-coven is the most daunting of all. It is directed *post mortem* towards men who die under strange circumstances and, in life, towards wealthy and powerful men whose children die consecutively. Such an accusation rests upon the equation: dead children = occult acquisition of wealth. It is said that a *siè*-sorcerer is never replete, his insatiable appetite compels him to sacrifice his own children. This appalling transaction is the sign of both insatiable desire and parental failure. Contrary to *du*-witches, *siè*-sorcerers cannot be killed with fire and have the power of clairvoyance. Again, contrary to *du*-witches, *siè*-sorcerers are held fully responsible for the death of their children. *Siè*-witchcraft is obviously anti-trading.

It is clear by now that witchcraft discourses, like conceptualizations and practices of personhood, make extensive use of culinary imagery and a vocabulary of political economy, and that these terms refer to both the material and immaterial production and reproduction of persons, goods and social relations.

Instantiations of witchcraft

The witchcraft stories Grassfields teenagers tell each other sound misleadingly parochial in that, as I will try to show, witchcraft discourses have the ability to 'bring the remote close' – therefore 'shrinking' space – and accommodating historical changes (Argenti 2007; Austen 1993; Shaw 2002) – often bringing the past into the present (Argenti 2006, 2007). In so doing, witchcraft discourses function as a 'glocal' idiom, making sense of modern, global, remote, and abstract forces in local terms (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xxii; 1999: 286; Geschiere 1997, 2014; Piot 1999; Shaw 2002).

The Atlantic slave trade and colonialism Cannibal-witchcraft and the slave trade

One can illustrate both the ability of witchcraft discourses to incorporate historical changes and to make sense of remote and abstract phenomena by drawing on analogies between the practices of the Atlantic slave-trade and forced labor under German colonial rule on the one hand, and specific forms of witchcraft discourses unfolding in colonial and postcolonial Cameroon on the other.

The southern Grassfields fed the Atlantic slave-trade first via Duala (from 1614 to 1670) then via Calabar (1820-1830 up to the early twentieth century) by the beginning of the seventeenth century (Warnier 1985: 151 and 1989: 9). The majority of the slaves sold from the Grassfields in the precolonial era were not captured as prisoners of war. Rather, they were abducted for sale by elders from their own kin (Warnier 1989),¹² hence the name given by Warnier to this figure: the Judas.

Cannibal witchcraft is widespread in contemporary Cameroon Grassfields. It is called *siè* in Batié, *süe* in Bangwa (Pradelles de Latour 1991: 75-77); *nzo* in Bangangté (Feldman-Savelsberg 1999: 109); *tvu'* in the Grassfields village Wimbum of Tabenken (Pool 1994: 150-67); *kəvuŋ* in Oku (Argenti 2007: 109). Cannibal-witches are said to band together in *njangi* associations. They offer their family members to be 'eaten' by the group.¹³ The victims were traded in exchange for goods imported by the Europeans: guns, gunpowder, beads, etc. during the precolonial era; and all sorts of European consumption goods that flooded into the sub-continent during the colonial era and in the subsequent decades. This trade in human flesh is said to generally occur in the forest (see narratives above). The eaten person does not die outright but rather weakens gradually, becoming frail, confused, and sickly. When juxtaposing the practices of the slave trade to witchcraft discourses in a chart, it can be seen that cannibal-witch discourse is a metaphor of the slave-trade and at the same time that the cannibal-witch stands as a metaphoric figure of the Judas:¹⁴

| Atlantic slave-trade | Cannibal-witchcraft |
|---|---|
| <p>1. The Judas sold his own kin into slavery in exchange for European prestige goods (rifles, beads, gunpowder, etc.)</p> <p>2. The slave owner would grow fat from the wealth he earned from his slaves</p> <p>3. European slave traders were widely understood to be buying slaves as food. Ship's captains were conceived of as amphibious creatures that took the slaves back to their undersea redoubts where they would eat them</p> <p>4. The victim continued to live in the compound for a time after being sold, unaware that arrangements were being made for his abduction</p> | <p>1. The cannibal-witch sells his kin to his co-members in exchange for European consumption goods</p> <p>2. The witch fattens/grows wealthy in equal proportion to the wasting away or impoverishment of the victim</p> <p>3. The cannibal-witches consume their victims, typically in the other world of the night</p> <p>4. The victim still roams for a time about the village after being feasted upon unaware of his/her tragic fate</p> |

Famla, colonialism and forced labour

In the first decade of the 20th century a new form of witchcraft discourse known as *nyongo* emerged among the coastal people of Cameroon (Ardener 1996 [1970]). According to Bakweri beliefs *nyongo* adepts were believed to sell their close kin to (*nyongo*) associations in exchange for goods. Those sold were believed to be dead but were actually being spirited away (e.g., 'zombified') by the other members of the coven to work on an invisible plantation (Ardener 1996 [1970]: 248; Argenti 2007: 105; Warnier 1989). These witches were said to carry their zombie victims in lorries to Mount Kupe.¹⁵ The Bakweri apparently invented this (then) new form of witchcraft belief to accommodate their (then) changing economic environment, eg. the introduction of plantation economy by the Germans; the exactions of forced labor of the

colonial era under German rule, followed by the British and the French who replaced them after the First World War. These discourses later spread into the Hinterlands, reaching the Southern Grassfields toward the end of the colonial era (c.a. 1950's) (Geschiere 1994: 78). Adepts of these new associations in the Southern Grassfields were said to gather in *Fepla*, a residential quarter of Bafoussam that suffered rapid urbanization in the early 1950's, hence, *famla*, the term which designates this kind of witch association. In the subsequent decades, *famla* spread to the main urban centers of the country and especially to Douala and Yaoundé.¹⁶ As with the Bakweri *nyongo*, *famla* adepts are believed to sell their close kin to these associations in exchange for great wealth. Again, as with *nyongo*, those sold appear to die, but, in fact, they have been spirited away by the other members of the coven to work on an invisible plantation in the Manenguba mountains (de Rosny 1981: 87-111; Warnier 1989: 26).

Zombie and cannibal-witch discourses coexist in contemporary Cameroon Grassfields. But while the former remain a local/regional idiom, the latter appear in both urban and rural settings.¹⁷ As a result, both continuities and discontinuities in witchcraft discourses can be observed.

Indeed, *famla* discourses build on cannibal-witch discourses and at the same time they encapsulate Bakweri features (*nyongo*) taking into account and addressing the introduction of plantation economy and the traumatic experience of forced labor. These discourses reveal the fact that the experiences of slavery and forced labour are perceived by Grassfields inhabitants in similar terms (Argenti 2007: 288 n. 27; see also Geschiere 1994: 78; Warnier 1989: 26-27).

At the same time however, witchcraft discourses account for historical contingencies: *famla* as a metamorphosis of cannibal witchcraft had to account for the fact that unlike victims of cannibal witches, *famla*'s 'zombies' did not disappear ('eaten' by the cannibal witches) but eventually returned back to their villages.¹⁸ Hence, *famla*'s victims are said to work as zombies on invisible plantations keeping the possibility of their coming back alive. *Famla* beliefs also account for rapid urbanization and the spread of market capitalism in urban settings. Contemporary Grassfields imaginary has therefore expanded beyond the mysterious and mystical world of the forest – the conventional *topos* of witchcraft – to the cities (Argenti 2001: 84; Pradelles de Latour 1991: 76).

Allegories of capitalism

The analogies between witchcraft beliefs/discourses and the market have been noticed and documented by many authors working in Cameroon (Geschiere 1997 [1992]; Nyamnjoh 2002: 122-123; Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998: 5; Pool 1994: chapter 6) as well as in other parts of Africa (Austen 1993; Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998: 5-6; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). Ciekawy and Geschiere, for example, notice that 'in many parts of the continent, people com-

monly use expressions such as ‘the market of sorcery’ (1998: 5). Interestingly enough, there is such a place in Batié, a community of the southern Grassfields where I conducted fieldwork in the mid-1990s: *sim siè* – literally: the ‘market of *siè*-witchcraft’, is situated in the heart of the polity, nearby the king’s palace. The Batié therefore, like many Grassfielders (see Nyamnjoh 2002 for Bum people; Poole 1994: 159 for the Winbum people), make a direct (linguistic) link between witchcraft and the market. But what are the analogies between witchcraft and the market sustaining such an identification?

As the reader may have noticed, witches and sorcerers belong to the nocturnal and secret kind: indeed, vampire-owls raid the compounds at night and, more relevant to the witchcraft/market analogy, adepts of the *siè* and *famla* covens hold secret, nocturnal meetings.¹⁹ One can easily perceive in witchcraft beliefs three fundamental properties of market capitalism: secrecy, invisibility and anonymity.

Like capitalism, *siè* and *famla* offer opportunities only to a limited minority. Like global capitalism, the pursuit of wealth and power by occult means enhances self-seeking individuals at the expense of the household and the wider community: it is only by marginalizing family and the collective interest that *siè* and *famla* adepts can attain personal success (the acquisition of power and wealth) of the type studied by Rowlands (1995) and Warnier (1993: 163-196) in the Grassfields and among the diasporic Grassfielders (Nyamnjoh 2002: 123). But, again like consumer capitalism, *siè* and *famla* adepts are caught in ‘an eternal cycle of indebtedness’ and insatiable desire and ‘become ultimately consumed themselves’ (Nyamnjoh 2002: 123).

Witchcraft discourses therefore portray a kind of negative political economy where human (and non-human) agency and subjectivity reign undomesticated, to borrow Francis Nyamnjoh’s phraseology (Nyamnjoh 2002). It is a world in which ‘short-term individual acquisitiveness subordinates the long-term reproduction of the social and cosmic order’ (Austen 1993: 96). This reflects a kind of ‘moral economy’ diametrically opposed to the one proffered by capitalist and neo-liberal cosmology.²⁰ In order to better understand how and why witchcraft beliefs instantiate such values, then, we must turn to the West African cosmologies underpinning witchcraft beliefs, that is: the interrelated notions of a ‘second world’ and a ‘zero-sum universe’, which remain central themes right through contemporary Africa in both rural and urban settings.²¹

Grassfields imagination of the ‘second world’ and the ‘zero-sum universe’

I shall begin by fleshing out the rather abstract idea of the ‘second world’, then sketch some properties of the more concrete ‘zero-sum universe’, and at the same time illustrate how these notions intertwine through different instantiations of witchcraft.

In order to grasp how Grassfielders imagine the second world, one must delineate the local cosmology and topography. Batié 'compounds' (*mbe*) like in most parts of the Cameroon Grassfields, slope down from grassy hilltops to rivers flowing through forest-galleries. [see Figure 1. The compound of *Dzə Tanyə Tenk^hhə* in Batié]. One accesses the compound from the top of the hill. The women's houses cluster around the husband's house, while their fields stretch on the right and the left side of the 'descending alley' (*kwɔ bu?*), which ends in a small courtyard. The house of the family's head is built on the right side of the courtyard; further left is the house of the ancestors, where each of the lineage successors' and their mothers' skulls are buried. Further down is located the tree where the 'god of the compound' resides.

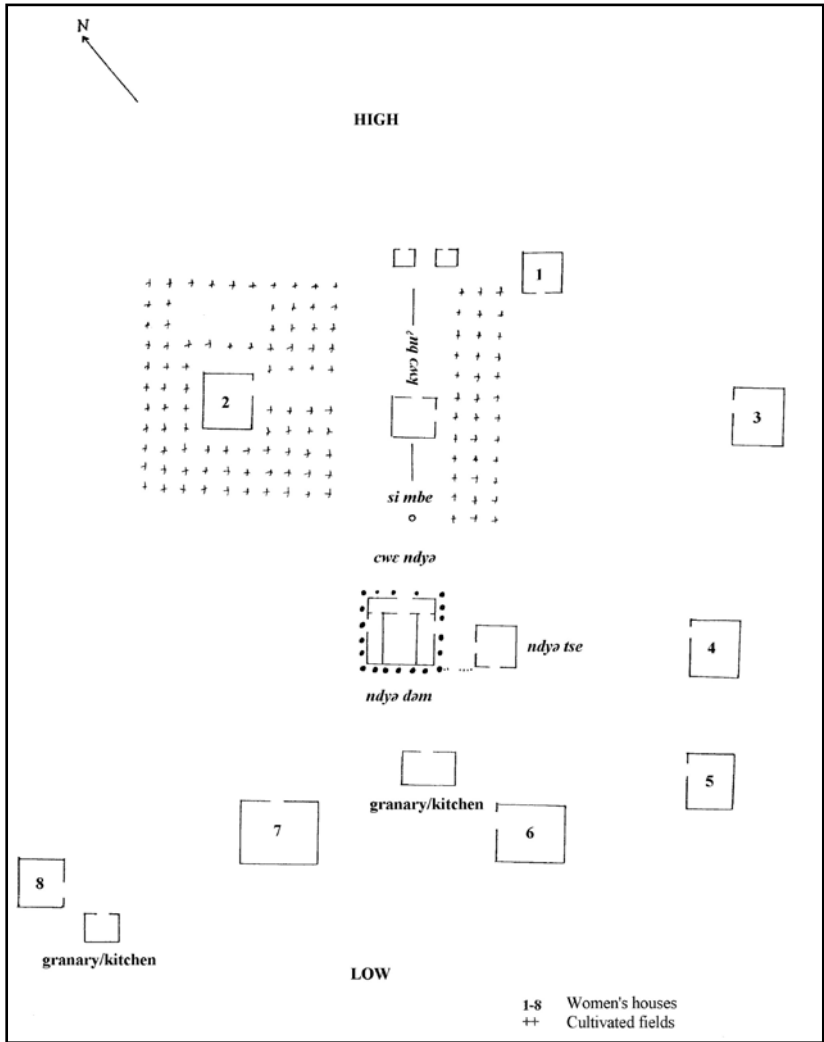


Figure 1. The compound of *Dzə Tanyə Tenk^hhə* in Batié

Compounds, as inhabited places, are conceptually opposed, both in symbolic and topographical terms, to the 'bush' *gu* (high/above) and the 'rivers' *kwə* (low/below). Compounds, where human activities take place, are differentiated from spaces where human activities occur only temporarily during daylight (*gu*), and spaces inhabited by ancestors and benign or malevolent spirits (*kwə*). However, *gu* and *kwə* are not conceived of in absolute dual terms. First, *gu* does not refer only to the top of the hills and its immediate surroundings where human activities take place, but is to be understood as the outer limit separating the compound – permanently inhabited place – from the outside, the unknown and dangerous world of the forest. In that sense, *gu* is a kind of extension of the wild into the compound – a liminal space. Likewise, spaces such as *kwə* are not strictly restricted to the lower areas surrounding the compound, but extend to the earth beneath the surface of the inhabited space. Second, as natural boundaries, streams evoke the borders of the polity and are conceived of as transitory spaces facilitating the passage between the forest and the village (see also Argenti 2010: 231 and 2011: 280 for Oku). Third, the Batié speak of the 'ground (*nyɛ*) of the day' and the 'ground of the night' as two aspects of the same place, while the night/day or dark/light opposition is equally expressed in terms of above/below ground (Argenti 2011: 289 n. 31 for Oku; Diduk 2001: 32 for the Kedjom). 'Night' therefore does not refer only to actual nighttime but, more substantially, to a 'second world' conceived as coeval with the 'world of the day.'²²

The zero-sum universe, in which the world is conceived of as containing only a finite and fixed amount of wealth or resources, is a corollary of the second world (or vice-versa). Paraphrasing Rowlands and Warnier, we could define it as a world where 'what someone possesses can be appropriated only at the expense of someone else' (Rowlands and Warnier 1988: 123). The belief, already mentioned above, according to which every person has an alter ego and how this relates to notions of conception and human reproduction allows one to grasp the workings of both the zero-sum universe and the second world.

The alter ego of a person is materialized by an earthworm, or a subterranean snake called *mobiap nyə* 'snake of the backwater'.²³ These chthonian creatures, which are metaphorically amphibious – 'swimming,' as it were, beneath the surface of the inhabited spaces, where the watery realm of *kwə* extends to – are said to venture in pairs like 'brothers' into the compounds at night. One of them eventually enters a woman's house, while the other returns back to the 'other world' (see Argenti 2011: 280 and Pradelles de Latour 1991: 55-56 for similar beliefs in Oku and eastern Bangwa respectively). In the act of giving birth a woman actually separates two 'kin' and is perceived as wresting souls from the 'other world'. Indeed, in a cosmology based upon the premises of two parallel worlds and a zero-sum universe, birth is merely a death seen from the perspective of the other world: what is the birth of a child to his alter ego if not the death of a kinsman? (Argenti 2011: 283)

Likewise, in the seemingly mundane activity of farming a woman breaches the surface of the ground every working day, transgressing the boundaries between the two worlds, and

reaps a harvest by extracting it from the 'other world' (Argenti 2011: 280). The production of food and children in a zero-sum universe, where one's profit is gained at someone else's loss, inevitably implies the transgression of boundaries and the incurring of a debt.

Cannibal witchcraft (*siè* and *famla*) and vampirism (*du*-witchcraft) are perfect instantiations of a zero-sum universe. The vampire-owl increases its life-force at the expense of her co-wife's children who get sick and eventually die, while *siè* and *famla* adepts acquire wealth by selling their own kin and even their children. While in the case of *famla* and *nyongo*, adepts sell their kin in exchange for wealth (in the 'real world'), and those sold appear to die but in fact are spirited away by the other members of the coven to work on invisible plantations (in the 'other world'). Here too, witchcraft, like the market 'conjures up the idea of an opening, a leakage through which people as resources are withdrawn from the community and disappear into the outer world' (Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998: 5).

To return to the culinary metaphors, we can contrast the woman who takes a life from the other world and 'cooks' children – a pro-social activity equated with the food she cultivates and cooks that is swallowed –, with witches who take life from the real world (world of the day) like (male) hunters do (and as warriors once did), 'chewing' their victims like the hunter chews the meat he has caught and slaughtered in the forest (and as the warrior was said to have 'eaten' his vanquished enemy), outside the domestic sphere, through violence.

Conclusion: a 'gastronomic' knowledge of the world

The culinary metaphors examined in this article are not specific to the Grassfields or even to Cameroon, but constitute a fundamental feature of the post-colonial state in Africa (Mbembe 1985; Bayart 2006 [1989], although it must be noticed that the emphasis, in this context, is on eating/consuming.²⁴ The Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe is probably the first scholar who used the metaphor of hunger, linking its pervasiveness to food shortage in post-independent Africa (Mbembe 1985) and arguing that it has turned the state into 'a vast space where one lives and expresses a *gastronomy of poverty*' (*op. cit.*, p. 125; emphasis mine).²⁵ French political scientist Jean-Francois Bayart developed Mbembe's idea in his book *The state in Africa (L'état en Afrique, 2006 [1989])* which he characteristically subtitled *The Politics of the belly (La politique du ventre)*, an expression often heard in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. Cameroon's political life is so imbued with the metaphor of eating that Bayart calls it a 'total social phenomenon' in Mauss' sense (Mauss 1990 [1950]) (Bayart 2006 [1989]: 12). Therefore, not only is the desire for food seen as a form of hunger, but also the quest for wealth and power.²⁶

What could be seen as a parochial phenomenon is therefore a nation-wide reality and even an African one; one that is rooted in a specific historical experience. My purpose in this

paper, however, was rather modest as I only wanted to show, first: that in order to grasp the complexities of personhood and witchcraft in the particular cultural context of the Cameroon Grassfields, one must both decipher the culinary idiom and ‘follow the food’; second, that Grassfielders easily switch from the culinary idiom to a lexicon pertaining to political economy; third, that this interchangeability and the ‘semantic volatility’ of these languages explain, if only in part, their ambiguity and ambivalence. They also account for the genius of witches for ‘making the language of intimate, interpersonal affect speak of more abstract social forces’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 286), and accommodating historical changes.²⁷ In this sense, witchcraft stories/discourses which may sound ‘parochial’ or even ‘exotic’ are in fact (also) ‘an aspect of experiencing and imagining the world, comparable to other modalities of mediation’ (Englund 2007: 298) – albeit gastronomic ones!

NOTES

1 I am very grateful to Nicolas Argenti for his comments and suggestions for revision.

2 The Cameroon Grassfields area roughly extends to the present North West and South West provinces of Cameroon. Batié is a polity of the southern Grassfields. The bulk of the Batié material presented in this paper was collected during fieldwork conducted from 1995 to 1997 and a one month fieldtrip in 2011. References to other works of scholars working in this region of Africa are introduced in order to complete my ethnography and to enhance and generalize my argument.

3 Witchcraft discourses/beliefs and notions/practices of personhood as well as the idioms within which they are couched and the realities they portray both shape and are shaped by history (see next sections).

4 This distinction is common to most African languages, and Bantu languages in particular. The distinction holds equally in Oku (Argenti 2007: 110-111 and personal communication) and Mankon (Nyamnjoh & Rowlands 2013: 145).

5 Similar expressions are to be found in many parts of the continent of course. For example, among the Maka monetization has altered the relations between generations with the young men complaining about ‘the elders ‘eating’ the bridewealth’ (Geschiere 1997 [1992]: 350).

6 Chewing one’s fufu leads to outbursts of hilarity all around and being called a small child.

7 Boys help in animal husbandry (medium livestock: goats principally but also pigs) and help their father in the maintenance of the compound’s structures (houses, fences), while girls usually feed poultry (small livestock), help their mothers in the fields and may sometimes cook the evening meal on their mother’s hearth.

8 The term for 'semen' is the same as 'water' (*shyə*) while the term for 'blood' (*cyə*) is almost the same as the one for 'palm oil' *naʔ cyə* (see also Brain 1972: 59 for western Bangwa; Feldman-Savelsberg 1999: note 9, p. 211 for Bangangté).

9 Furthermore one can notice that 'blood', the 'female reproductive ingredient' is strongly associated – not only linguistically but also sensually and visually – to palm oil. Palm oil, in turn, is provided by the husband through trading. It seems therefore that each gender contains the other, and this, at every stage of production and reproduction.

10 One cannot but notice, beside the ambiguity of witchcraft discourse, ambivalent interpretations towards both power and wealth. Rowlands and Warnier notice that 'sorcery and power are perceived as the two sides of the same coin. As a result, power is ambiguous' (Rowlands and Warnier 1988:121) while as regard to wealth 'the public recognition of personal possession of socialized occult powers is an integral component in the evaluation of success and achievement in contemporary Cameroon' (*ibid.*, p. 129). See also the ambivalent notions of *msa* and *uwung* among the Bum studied by Francis Nyamnjoh (Nyamnjoh 2002: 121). Among the Maka witchcraft is perceived as a weapon of the weak against the state and its projects whereas the villagers themselves see it as an indispensable form of support of the new elites.' (Geschiere 1997: 10). Witchcraft discourses, Geschiere goes on: 'express (...) both the desire to level inequalities and the ambition to accumulate power and wealth' (*ibid.*). In South Africa, Issak Niehaus notices: 'stories of witches and zombies capture the desire to dominate' but at the same time: 'Discourses about zombies also capture the intense fear of excessive domination' (Niehaus 2005: 197).

11 This is one of the rare occasions where women adopt the 'trading idiom', usually used by men and amongst men exclusively. But it must be noticed that, in this instance, women talk on behalf of the household – if not of their husband, who actually stands for the whole compound.

12 Warnier (1989: 10) estimates that 0.5 per cent of the Grassfields total population – three hundred thousand – left its homeland in caravans which represents no less than fifteen thousand individuals per year.

13 These cannibal-witch associations replicate the ordinary saving associations common throughout the littoral and the Hinterland known as *njangi* in pidgin, tontines in Francophone Cameroon Grassfields; but while the members of the later contribute in money or gift in kind, *famla* adepts contribute in kin.

14 Analogies 1 and 4 are elicited by juxtaposing practices of the slave trade with the cannibal-witchcraft discourses. To these I added analogies 2 and 3 which further enhance the argument (Argenti, personal communication). Further analogies in other sub-Saharan countries and on a continental scale can be found in Austen 1993: 92; de Rosny 1981: 93-95; MacGaffey 1986; Miller 1988: 4-5, 201-202, 674.

15 100 km to the north of Douala, Cameroon's major city and economic center.

16 Bafoussam is a chiefdom of the Southern Grassfields and the current capital of the West Province.

17 According to Argenti, the reason of the prevalence of cannibal-witch discourse is due to the fact that they focus on the experience of slavery which marked Grassfielders as these 'produced' slaves while communities to the south of the Grassfields and along the coast were middleman societies, *buying and selling slaves* (Argenti 2007, 114).

18 Forced laborers on the German plantations on the coast were sent back by the German managers when an epidemic broke out on the plantation. This had the consequence of spreading the disease in the hinterland villages as the sick laborers returned home. As they most often died soon after returning, the local villagers understood them to have been bewitched on the plantations.

19 Among the Maka, *shumbu* is the withes' nightly meeting (Geschiere 1997: 40sq.).

20 The moral aspects of witchcraft have been underlined by many scholars, beginning with the seminal study of Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Evans-Pritchard 1976 [1937]). In the witchcraft stories Grassfielders tell each other, one cannot but notice that *du*-witchcraft is triggered by jealousy while *siè*-witchcraft originates in greed.

21 For the notions of the 'second world' (and alternatively: 'invisible world' or 'other world') in the Cameroon Grassfields see Argenti 2011: 281, 283, 289 and Nyamnjoh 2002: 119; for the Duala of Cameroon see de Rosny 1981: 59-63; for central Africa: MacGaffey 1986 and Miller 1985: 4-5; for Zaïre: De Boeck 2002. For the 'zero-sum' universe see Argenti 2001: esp. p. 79 sq., 2007: 116 and 2011: 283; Nyamnjoh 2002: 119-120; Rowlands and Warnier 1988: 123; for South Africa: Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 289.

22 '(...) the ancestral afterworld is located beneath the earth (...) the mystical world more generally is portrayed as a plane parallel but invisible to mundane existence' (Diduk 2001: 32). Not surprisingly witchcraft, being a 'business of the night/dark/below', belongs to a world 'lying behind the daily world' (Pradelles de Latour 1995: 604). See also *msa* among the Bum (Nyamnjoh 1985: 15; cited in Geschiere 1997: 257 n. 28).

23 I was not able to witness any of these creatures during my sixteen months stay in Batié, but the description given to me by Batié men and women fit the one mentioned by Argenti as a creature 'which burrows in the ground and resembles a large black worm' and which he categorizes as probably the West African blind snake *laptotyphlops debilis* (Argenti 2011: 280 n. 15). Brain mentions a similar belief in western Bangwa (Brain 1972: 60). In Bandjoun, these are called *mu nok* (lit. 'child snake') and it is equally believed that each child has an *alter ego* living in the forest-galleries (Malaquais 2002: 98 n. 12). Women potters in Babessi (in the northeastern Grassfields) portray snakes with arms on their pots, and when asked by Argenti why they did so, they told him that snakes do have arms, but that they know how to hide them from humans (Argenti 1999: 279). This ambiguous, doubled representation perhaps suggests a conceptual slippage between the categories of the snake and the mole.

24 I place "consumption" next to "eating" advisedly since it has become, at least in the Euroamerican imagination and since the end of the twentieth century, the prime site for the cre-

ation of value and identity. This has resulted in a concomitant eclipse of production (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000: 294-295). This, of course, has impacted Africa as well.

25 Mbembe writes: 'Africans have never eaten as badly as we have since the independences' (Mbembe 1985: 122). Not surprisingly, perhaps, in an environment dominated by the fear of hunger, eating has become a fixation that takes on political dimensions.

26 Bayart records the following significations for hunger: the situation of food shortage, (cf. Mbembe 1985); but, more often, it describes practices of accumulation which pave the way for social distinction; it is also used as a sexual metaphor; 'belly' refers to stoutness, a sign of power and to lineage, a kin group with political influence sometimes even on a national level; last, and maybe more relevant for my argument, the belly is where the occult forces are located, and these are a prerequisite if one wants to acquire wealth and power (Bayart 2006 [1989]: 12; see also Rowlands and Warnier 1988).

27 Of course witchcraft discourses do not only translate 'global' phenomena into 'local' terms but also enable people to imagine intermediate scales of reality. Thus, for example witchcraft discourses bring into play multiple cleavages of Malawian society: African/whites, Malawians/Asians, Malawi/other African countries, and Christians/Muslims (Englund 2007: 303). Likewise, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh show how witchcraft discourses express the complex urban-rural relations and trigger issues of 'belonging' and 'autochthony' in contemporary Cameroon (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998). Geschiere also notices that ethnic stereotypes contrasting the Beti of the Center and the South with People of the West and Northwest provinces (Bamiléké and Bamen-da) refer to particular forms of witchcraft: thus, '*famla* supposedly explains the success of the Bamiléké entrepreneurs' while *evu*-witchcraft 'makes Beti civil servants 'eat the State' in order to appease the jealousy of their greedy kin' (Geschiere 1997:11; see also Warnier 1993).

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Prisoner (Once Again) of the Caucasus: An Ethnography of Film

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Much of the debate regarding the relation between film and semiotics, which marked the early years of film theory (see Metz 1974), limited itself to a textual analysis of films as closed symbolic systems. On the contrary, taking film as a living microcosm where various and even contradictory multi-directional and multi-level processes take place, open up new possibilities. This paper will start its analysis from the film Mandariniid (Tangerines) (2013, Zaza Uru-shadze) in order to explore historically different meanings of captivity and hospitality. The examination of these historical categories in relation to film representation and policies will help us reveal national, regional or transnational processes which contribute today to the understanding of how a film can be the context of multiple meanings and power relations, but could allow a ground of a fertile dialogue between anthropology, semiotics and film studies.

KEYWORDS

Film analysis, ethnography, semiotics, Georgian cinema

Introduction

Abkhazia used to be part of the Soviet Riviera on the Black Sea. Organised groups of socialist labor workers or young pioneers were sent there to enjoy the white-pebble-beaches and the eternally-covered-with-snow Caucasian ranges. At the same time, hidden by the proletarian classes among the eucalypti and the citrus trees, the party elite enjoyed the nineteenth century dachas (summer houses) (see Sideri 2012). The war between the Georgian and the Abkhazian armies (1991-1993) almost obliterated that past. The results were a massive flow of internally displaced people and refugees of different ethnicities (Georgian, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Russians).

For the Georgian cinema, that war did not only turn to a source of inspiration, but it also created heroes. Georgian directors fought and died in Abkhazia, such as Levan Abashidze and

Giorgi Revishvili (Dönmez Colin 1998). The Georgian cinema with its long history dated since 1896 (see Makharadze 2014), its unique voice and style (a combination of Caucasian cultures, surrealism and allegory, see Rollberg 2008: 174-177) and a line of auteurs, like Paradzanov, Iosseliani, Abuladze, was one of the few national cinematographies from the former Soviet Union known abroad as a distinctive film tradition.¹

Mandariinid (Tangerines 2013, Zaza Urushadze), a film inspired by the war in Abkhazia, won the international acclaim. The success was considered as part of the renaissance of the post-Soviet Georgian cinema. 'The dynamic was put in place', according to Nika Rurua, Minister of Culture of Georgia (2008-2012), when the Georgian National Film Centre (GNFC) became member of the European Cinema Support Fund (EURIMAGES) in 2011. Since then, a new generation of filmmakers specialized either in fiction or in documentary emerged (Ovashvili, Ekvimishvili, Urushadze) (Rimple 2015). Currently, Tbilisi hosts two international film festivals and another one is organised in Batumi, turning Georgia to the film capital of the Caucasus.²

Since the 1960s, when the linguist turn, the consideration of language as vehicle of symbols and meanings for the formation of reality, emerged in the social sciences, the study of film through the lenses of ethnography remained marginal. This paper will enter the world of Mandariinid, as a field where meanings and their interpretations are construed in relation to different, but interrelated local, national and transnational contexts. My analysis paper will take into account the filmic text (form/content), the history of the Caucasus, but also, the European media policies. This exploration of Mandariinid will postulate how an ethnography of film could cross-fertilize both fields: Film studies could benefit from the inter-dependent exploration of different cultural dis/articulations; Ethnography could discover in film a new field of highly mediatized interactions that inter-connect different systems of production and consumption of pictures, words, and sounds.

Film and Ethnography

Saussure's theory (1966), which underlined the importance of synchronic analysis of linguistic signs in comparison to the historical approaches of the past, put the stress on the cultural than the natural designation of meaning (arbitrariness of sign). Splitting signs between form (signifiers) and content (signified), and narrowing their diversity down to few binary oppositions, which could produce meaning, Saussure provided a method to uncover the underlying structure of human cultures. Thus, the vast differentiation of words, symbols, ideas, images could be organized, analyzed and understood as structure, a whole that in itself became a sign of an absence. In Roland Barthes' words,

[s]tructure is therefore actually a simulacrum of the object, but a directed, interest-ed simulacrum, since the imitated object makes something appear which remained

invisible, or if one prefers, unintelligible in the natural object". But how did this approach influence film studies? (1964: 213)

The formation of film studies as scientific field was impeded by the strict distinction between art and sciences. It was further burdened by the dominant perception that distinguished arts and culture between High (traditional arts, like literature and painting) and Mass Culture Low (photography, film) (see O' Connor 2010). The former had an almost transcendental mission. The latter, in particular cinema, was considered an industrial populatization of 'true' art. Moreover, this commodification was connected to political propaganda and the development of consumers' culture (Horkheimer and Adorno [1972] 2006: 41-72). Turning the 'popular' and the 'lived' to significant categories of social and cultural meaning, had an impact on film studies and the study of cultural dualism as well, where the 'ordinary' was studied by ethnography and the 'cultural' and the 'artistic' by arts (see Williams 1958; Barthes 1962). First, it legitimized media and their impact on society as a field of study. Second, it shifted the attention from the examination of the author as a charismatic figure whose ingenuity contributed to the aura of the work of art (see Benjamin [1969] 2006: 18-41) towards the film text, as a closed system where personal creation, form and artistic value were mutually constructed within the specific codes of production (Dyer 2000: 23).

Christian Metz (1962) examined film codes as linguistic one (form/content). However, the dependence of film on reality³ circumvented any notion of arbitrariness found in linguistic signs. At the same time, film was not a one-modal language, but it was produced by the articulation of different semantic codes (narrative, image, sound), which increased its complexity as a sign. To address this complexity, film was further textualized. In each screening a space was produced between the individual viewer and the visual text (Kolker 2000: 38).⁴ This more dynamic and historical consideration took into account multiple 'readings' of film. Nevertheless, emphasis on text did not address the multi-scalar and interwoven relations of the manifold re-contextualization of film.

At the same time, the linguistic turn did not leave social anthropology unaffected. Structural anthropology⁵ reduced ethnographic experience to models and schemas that could provide access to the natives' understanding of 'their' culture. Clifford Geertz, criticizing the functionalist ethnography for observing cultures at a distance, considered deep immersion in the cultural subject matter as a way for ethnographic texts to postulate the interconnected networks of cultural meanings and actions (thick description) (1973). The internal duality in ethnography had an impact on its relation to film, as it consists of two interlinked parts: the practice in the field, which is always subjective, elliptic, as human experience always is, and the text (see Clifford and Marcus 1986).

Although for a long time ethnographic practice used film as a way to document reality (ethnographic film) (see Nikolakakis 1998, Stefani 2007), fiction films remained outside the radar of anthropological research.⁶ Anthropology's crisis of representation in the 1980s shifted

the attention to ethnography both as writing and practice. 'Twentieth-century ethnography (...) has become increasingly wary of localizing strategies in the construction and representation of "cultures"' (Clifford 1997: 19). Post-colonial critique regarding the embedded power relations and hierarchies found in many widely believed 'objective' texts and their language made urgent the re-examination of ethnographic texts and the modalities of ethnographic writing (a-historical present tense, language style and text organization) (see Clifford and Marcus 1986). In this context, anthropologists resorted to 'new' techniques, often borrowed from the early 20th avant-garde art (surrealism, Dadaism), like montage, allegory, pastiche (see Clifford 1986: 98-122; Tyler 1986: 122-141). These techniques aspired to reproduce the more fragmented reality of the field, instead of 'faking' a skillfully wrapped up 'objective' whole (Marcus 1998).⁷ However, social anthropology's endeavor into cinema as art and industry still remained occasional.

An exception was Steven Canton's study of *Lawrence of Arabia* (1999). Canton applied a fruitful dialogue between the social, the cultural and the artistic in different historical periods from the 1960s to the 1990s studying issues of travel and colonialism in fieldwork and film-making; orientalist representations of the Middle East; hetero/homosexual Otherness. In this way, the film shifted from being a text to becoming a context, a space which was not produced by bounded and homogenous territories, cultures and communities, but by the inter-dependencies of different and history-sensitive locales constructed by 'complex systems such as colonialism or market economies' (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 91). In this framework, film could turn to ethnographic field in the sense of an interwoven space of meanings (resulting both from form and content) produced, interacted, but also, circulated within uneven relations of power in different phases of production, distribution and reception. The emerging anthropology of cinema becomes sensitive both of the 'context' (local constructions of meaning, power, and politics) and 'their analytical value (cultural embeddedness) and for their dialogue with the audience' (Gray 2010: 106). How could this approach help us explore *Mandariinid*?

***Mandariinid* as an ethnographic field**

Mandariinid relates the story of three men who, due to the Abkhazian-Georgian war, became captive in Abkhazia, in a wooden house surrounded by a tangerine orchard. Who are these three men? Ivo, the eldest is Estonian; Ahmed, a Chechen mercenary and Nika, a Georgian soldier. The film starts with a historical notice: two lines inform us of the history of the Estonian presence in Abkhazia. What is the need for that? Grant and Yalçin-Heckman (2007) argued that the imperial agendas (Russian, Ottoman, Persian among others) treated the region as an 'absent presence'. The Caucasus⁸ was taken into account only as part of imperial politics overlooking local interests and strategies. In this way, the Caucasus, its populations

and cultures remained to great extent unknown for the rest of the world. What were these ambitions? The Caucasus would be used as a buffer zone between the great empires of the region: Russian, Ottoman and Persian empires. What is the relation of the filmic text to the historical context?

The first scene opens with a close-up to an old male hand and then, to a man (Ivo) cutting a piece of wood with a machine under a yellowish light. The composition of frame transmits warmth, intimacy, and a sense of hominess. The sound of the machine is fused with that of *panduri*⁹ (a traditional Georgian string instrument which used to accompany folk poetry and dances). Pieces of wood are thrown all over. A man with a gun (Ahmed) evades this intimate space and asks Ivo to come out. Cut. The atmosphere of the first scene is overturned by the next one. Long shot. The setting is a humid and misty exterior.¹⁰ The warmth is lost; home is lost. The dialogue is short and abrupt. The man with the gun tries to identify the old man. Ivo is Estonian. 'What is an Estonian doing here?', Ahmed asks.

Estonia became a frontier among the dominant powers of the Baltic region (Sweden, Russia and Poland) since the sixteenth century. The Great Northern War (1700-1721) between the Russian and Swedish Empires sealed the fate of the small rural nation. The gradual expansion of the Russian Empire to the East and the South as well as the emancipation of the serfs (1861) produced challenges, but also opportunities for landless farmers. In the Caucasus, Estonians were mostly settled in Abkhazia between 1864 and 1885, founding small villages north of Gagra near the Psou river, but also in Sukhumi, the capital. Estonians in Abkhazia comprised almost 608 persons according to the 1897 census (see Viikberg 2014).

But what was the situation in Abkhazia when Ivo's ancestors arrived? The Treaty of Georgievsk in 1783 established Kartli-Kakheti (approximately today's Georgia) as a protectorate of the Russian Empire. The western parts were gradually incorporated in this protectorate. The war of resistance against the Russian imperialism in the North Caucasus further militarized the southern borders. Moreover, it systematized the religious differences deepening the division between the Islamic and Christian Caucasus. It enforced a policy of exchange of populations between the Muslims and the Christians by altering the demographics of the area and trying to produce an area dominated by friendly Christian population (in 1784, 50.000 Muslim Abkhazians were expelled to the Ottoman Empire¹¹). The Tsarist administration developed and enforced a program of categorization of the imperial subjects, cultures and languages, according to the emerging biopolitics, where quantification, bounded-ness and essentialism were indispensable for modern governmentality (Burbank 2006). As a result, land (territory), religion and language (culture) became almost intrinsic to the imperial and later Soviet ethnicities.

The Soviet Nationality Policy was based on 'territorialized ethnicity' (Sokolovskii 2005). In other words, the Soviet administration continued and further entrenched identity to land. However, the ethnic and cultural pluralism of the Caucasus -and other areas of the former empire - could be contained in ethnically homogenous territories. As a result, the Soviet au-

thorities organized a plan of different land hierarchies (independent republics autonomous, regions, areas) that corresponded to different ethnic groups. These groups enjoyed similar rights under the Soviet statehood, but were bounded to their territories. Georgians, a titular nationality, were considered, according to the Bolsheviks ideology of nations, as one of the advanced nations (*natsia*) in comparison to other often non-Indo European groups, which were recognised as *inorodtsy* (lower rank nations in the national hierarchy of nations), for example, the Abkhazians or the Chechens. The issues of belonging and ownership, but also of inherent perceptions of cultural hierarchy are central in the film. What are the representation strategies that *Mandariinid* uses in order to portray this historical complexity?

From the above it seems that the choice of an Estonian as central character is not random. Every movie has an entry point, usually the main character who drives action, whom the audience identifies with. The central character of *Madariinid* Ivo is considered as an 'outsider' to the region, an ethnic Estonian. Ethnographers usually are. This quality generated the necessary for functionalist ethnography distance and objectivity. It also allowed ethnographers to construct an ambiguous, 'strange', in Simmel's sense (1908), dual position within the community: that of a person extraneous to group, often provoking fear and/or admiration. This ambiguous position is key for the script development, but also for any ethnographic narrative.

When Ahmed and a fellow Chechen bump into a Georgian group of soldiers, Ahmed is hurt by the exchange of fire between the two parties. His friend ends dead. All Georgians are believed dead, but miraculously, one of them, Nika, is saved. Both men are found by Ivo and Magus, Ivo's neighbor, and are taken to Ivo's wooden house. The realization of Ahmed and Nika, the two enemies that cohabit under the same roof, makes them seek for revenge for their friends' death. But they can proceed with their plans. Hospitality and honor canon dictate that no blood should be shed under the host's roof. Hence, revenge is forbidden as long as they remain at Ivo's house. Their injuries do not allow them to go out. Ivo removes their guns and he locks them up in separate rooms. As a result, they are guests, but also captives of their host, as the code of honor prescribes (see Herzfeld 1988, Papataxiarchis 1992).

This captivity opens the floor to a series of verbal struggle between Ahmed and Nika. In medium shots, which produce a deadlock atmosphere, the two men/soldiers confront each other. They debate about the issues they feel that separate them. Nika stresses the significance of Georgian culture in comparison to the mountaineer Chechen. Ahmed rejects the argument. Nika wonders about the legitimacy of Ahmed's presence in Abkhazia arguing that the land belongs to the Georgians. Ahmed challenges it. 'This is an Estonian chair', he responds. Nika accuses Ahmed for lacking knowledge and manners.

The symbolic interaction between the two men and their cultures gives a glimpse to the cultural competition of the Soviet years, which often veiled nationalist ideas behind a vocabulary of cultural difference. For example, the Georgian intellectual Akaki Bakradze (2004), writing about the proposed by the Soviet authorities reforms relegating the Georgian language (in

the late 1970s), underlined the fact that whereas Georgians had no other homeland (*samsh-oblo*), other ethnic groups living in Georgia had homelands elsewhere. To illustrate this he used the metaphor of an apartment (Georgia) whose owners (the Georgians) should have full rights, even when they received '*stumrebi*' (guests). The latter were not '*aborigheni mosakhleoba*' (indigenous peoples). This division of cultural difference was reproduced in the early 1990s when Georgia declared its independence with the emergence of nationalist discourses.

The vocabulary of 'hospitality' (*stumar-maspindzobla*, guest-host) is far from unknown in the Georgian and the wider Caucasian, cultural traditions. '*Stumar ghvtisaa*' says a Georgian proverb (the guest is God sent) and enjoys the devotion of the entire family of his *maspindzobla* (host). In this way, through a variety of cultural practices which are frequently labeled as honor code, different groups in the Caucasus negotiated economic, political and cultural capital not only among themselves, but also between them and the colonial outsiders (Persian or Russian armies). But what seemed to change in the 19th century, according to Gordadze (2001: 161-176), was the passage of this tradition in the collective imaginary of the nation with the emergence of the Georgian nationalism. In other words, that period transformed custom(s) to tradition (see Hobsbawm 1992: 1-15). It is in this process that the above division (*stumar/maspindzobla*) became metonymic of the generosity and tolerance of the Georgian nation. Moreover, the *aborigheni mosakhleoba* that was identified in ethnic terms (same language, culture, religion), included cultural variations, branches (*shto*) which, nevertheless, belonged to the same root, for instance the Svans, the Mingrelians and the Lazs.¹² However, for Georgian nationalism Abkhazians were often considered as non-indigenous to the land they inhabited.¹³ But Ahmed and Nika seemed to be not only guests but also captives in Ivo's house, as they were unarmed and not allowed to go out. This situation seems, extreme due to war, however, it is not irrelevant to nationalist narratives that try to define who can go in/out of national borders, renegotiating regimes of mobility in relation to national categories (religion, ethnicity etc.).

Captivity is a theme that became endemic in the representation of the Caucasus since antiquity (see Khodarkovsky 1999: 394-330). The Prometheus myth is one of the most persistent representations of the region: circulation of goods, such as fire, is restricted by a power regime (the Gods) leading to smuggling (the act of stealing); after that the punishment: exile, captivity and torture. However, as Bruce Grant (2005: 41) underlined, in this myth the local Caucasian people remain bystanders - 'hosting' the foreign Titan, the benefactor of humans, without having any say. However, it was another exile that connected the Caucasus to captivity. Young Alexander Pushkin's socially liberal worldview, expressed in the poem *Ode to Liberty* (1820), along with his popularity made the Tsarist regime nervous. They sent the poet to exile in Ekaterinoslav (today's Dnipro-Ukraine) in 1820.

While in exile, he wrote a series of poems which used the local settings as their framework, 'The Prisoner of the Caucasus' (1820-1821), 'The Bandit Brothers' (1821-1822), and 'The Fountain of Bakhchisaray' (1821-1823). The first one remained the most influential for the region. The

poem depicted the Orientalist fascination of the Russians with the Caucasus, which oscillated between admiration of the pristine natural beauty and the braveness of the Caucasian male, but also, fear of their alleged savagery. For the readership of that period, the poem became a big success. Later it was adapted by Lermontov in verse and by Tolstoy as short story in 1872; it also became a popular opera in 1879. Grant stressed the fact that Tolstoy's story was reissued 28 times and sold more than 2 million copies by the time of his death in 1910 (ibid: 41).

The story was also an early hit in the movies. Despite Sergei Eisenstein's reservations regarding the possibility for *The Prisoner* to become a film due to Pushkin's flat characters that seemed to be more archetypal than having real emotional interest, *The Prisoner* made a career in the movies: it turned to the satirical blockbuster motion-picture comedy *Kavkazskaia plennitsa* (Girl Prisoner of the Caucasus, 1966), and the Oscar-nominated film *Kavkazskii plenik* (released as *Prisoner of the Mountains*, 1996). According to Grant, the circulation of the theme of captivity and its persistence in the Russian culture was a sign of an imperial longing and belonging (2005: 47).

However, *Mandariinid* is a Caucasian myth, in the sense that it negotiates the myth of captivity not in order to restore the binary oppositions of insiders/outsideers, locals/foreigners, hosts/guests, guardians/prisoners. It uses captivity not for creating familiarity through genealogy, but for de-familiarizing stereotypes when action takes place. The film takes an experiential approach, close to the ethnographic observant participations, which focuses on social practices and informant's agency. The characters experience the events for themselves. Ivo is a first-person narrator: he is an eyewitness, he suffers, he feels, he acts. His eyes are the dominant point of view in the film. Through this experiential approach, history is personalized (see Erll 2008) and, as such, it affects audiences who are not necessarily familiar with the historical facts. Affect helps audiences to overcome the unknowability of the region. Cinematography through contrast in light, tight shots focusing on the relations amongst characters and with their environment, but also script privileges affect. Through affect, audiences overcome the unknowability of the region, become interested, and create connections.

In spite of being the host, Ivo shares the same fate with his guests: the loss, the pain, the suffering. He is also a captive in the land of tangerines, as he feels that he cannot live far from his home.¹⁴ How does the film represent this ambiguous position and what is its significance for the film narrative? Although in the beginning Ivo defends his roots and his land, he does not name it with a political designation. He, instead, talks about his cabin, his workshop, his home. Many establishing shots, which describe a situation, a setting or a dominant feeling, place Ivo within its environment by stressing textures, nature (wood, fire), objects (household equipment). This strategy of personalizing home without naming increases audience identification with Ivo through setting, emotions, and objects that all humans can feel as part of their home. Ivo's home becomes ours.

In this sense, Ivo distinguishes himself from the other two central characters. Ahmed and

Nika claim rights to their (home)land, because they belong to a certain ethnicity and territory. Ivo is at home because all humans have one. His belonging-ness stems not from the particular cultural identity claims, but from the universal human right. As a result, Ivo is both an outsider and insider in Abkhazia. He was born and raised there. This inside-ness allows him to develop compassion for his compatriots. This compassion in a period of war makes him different from the other two. This double quality of insider/outsider brings him closer to ethnography, especially the ethnography at home where the process of de-familiarization is central in order to unpack dominant and often hegemonic categories of the Self and the Other. This perspective of inside/out allows the formation of an understanding 'in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations' (Narayan 1993: 671).

Another issue that seems to be challenged in the film is the characters' masculinity. The representation of the land through binarisms, such as savage/noble and brave/weak is connected to gender perceptions and stereotypes. Masculinity and the so-called macho culture were identified with the Caucasian region (see Layton 1995). Often these representations were connected to the image of the male Caucasian fighter due to all those years of conflict. Social etiquette and cultural canon based on the dominant axis of honor and pride were significant for the management of social and economic issues in the Caucasus through, for example, the exchange of bodies in circuits of kinship alliances or even slavery (Shami 2000). The Soviet ruling, although it introduced ideologically and socially the emancipation of women in the public sphere, did not bring changes in intimate environments (Heyat 1999, Aswin 2000). *Mandariinid* as a war film lacks female presence. Nevertheless, Ahmed and Nika's admiration for Ivo's granddaughter, pictured in a photograph on an old chest of drawers, still identified femininity with Beauty and the ideal of family and peace, which, however, remained under the protection/threat of (foreign) male presence. However, the film, even if it objectifies femininity, does not praise masculinity through violence. It rather challenges macho culture.

In the scenes where Nika and Ahmed come out of their rooms to eat, they sit on opposite sides of the table, like the characters of western films. However, the two characters can hardly walk; they are covered in bandages and, instead of guns, they have a bowl of hot boiled eggs between them. Moreover, their host almost infantilizes them by removing their guns and trying to tame their passion and lack of logic. In the film, Ahmed and Nika's fight are mostly rhetorical and symbolic debates about the superiority of the one or the other side. However, Urashadze's cinematographic choices rather challenge, if not undermine, virility, stripping the (visual) poetics of the Caucasian manhood (Herzfeld 1988) from older stereotypes, leaving his characters naked in their human fragility.

Urashadze crafts characters in an aesthetic realism supported by a cinematography and a script that follow a classic linear narrative and editing, and by articulating distinctive voices stories and experiences. He challenges them by constantly focusing on a common human destiny through affect. The film refers to the Caucasus to critically reflect on humanity. In this

sense, Urushadze essentially talks about history as a human experience and not an ethnic one. To reinforce this humanistic approach, Urushadze does not make references to the Russians, who in many post-independence Georgian war films are the Archenemy. Twice soldiers visit Ivo's house. The first time they are Abkhazians, tricked by Ahmed and Ivo to believe that Nika is a Chechen mercenary who cannot speak due to his injuries. The second time things are more ambiguous, as the unnamed soldiers – who seem more professional, however, than the previous ones – challenge Ahmed's identity. As the director stated in one of his interviews, 'these brutal drunk soldiers, can belong to anybody. I am trying to avoid politics.'

Urushadze's film uses Ivo as a central character in order to narrate the story. The viewers enter the film world as outsiders to the land, to the conflict, to the traditions. Ivo becomes their guide. He does not turn the unfamiliar to familiar, explaining it to them. In such a violent context, explanation could become attribution. Instead, Ivo uses affect in order to touch audiences: his memories, the photographs of the family, his things, his relations to neighbors and friends, his loss, his compassion, his pain, a 'vocabulary' understood by all humans. Purposely, Urushadze does not adopt the dichotomous juxtaposition of Abkhazian/Georgian sides, but his leading character is an ethnic Estonian. As Urushadze says, he believes that the choice of an 'alien' to the conflict is central for the construction of the film's narrative. His ideas are in line with western secularism, which postulates neutrality as a critical political category, especially in the context of conflict resolution. 'Which is my land?', Ivo wonders. Is it Estonia, where he had never been and where his family fled¹⁵ because of the war? Or is it the estate of tangerines where his son is buried, as he reveals in the end of the film? Ivo's narrow house and land full of tangerines become a metaphor for the Caucasus and its history, and finally, a metaphor for humanity as a whole: aren't all human captives of the same mortal fate?

***Mandariinid* and the European Media-scapes**

Up to here, the ethnography of *Mandariinid*, helped me explore imperial colonialism and national formation in the Soviet and the post-Soviet politics through a cultural semiotics of the notions of hospitality and captivity, and how they travelled through the history of the region. This exploration followed film codes, its cinematography and narrative as well as the creator's intentions regarding its film. However, media landscapes today are shaped through the inter-connect-edness of different scales, which should be considered more carefully. How did these landscapes influence the Georgian cinema? In the 1990s, the former Soviet cinema moved from an entirely subsidized and controlled film market to a so-called free one (Bahun and Haynes 2014: 1-7). As Youngblood (2008) emphasized, film was considered as the highest form of art in the former Soviet Union. This was not unrelated to the first avant-garde nature of the medium, which was embraced by the Russian circles of the 1920s and which tested the transformative relationship

between art and reality. Secondly, film was considered a key instrument of socialist propaganda, when literacy levels were very low and there was no other way for ideological indoctrination. The framework of the Soviet cinema that the national cinemas developed into, produced both a domestic marketplace, as well as, according to Eric Scott (2016), a 'domestic internationalism,' where the movies of the different republics dubbed in Russian, as well as other forms of arts, could move freely, as long as they respected the premises of socialism.

In that context, the 'Georgian cinema' was engaged with a 'self-fashioning' (Radunović 2014: 23) vis-à-vis a supra-national political and cultural context. The cultural antagonism between the different republics that had replaced the economic one, struggled with ideological loyalty and national pursuits within a transnational imagination of nationalities, which was formed within the idea of a Soviet brotherhood. In this imagination, the Caucasians and especially the Georgians were categorized in distinctive, territorialized cultural characteristics (Scott 2016). In that context, the specific and the local were shaped within a vocabulary of difference, outlined in general-national-traits, which could travel and become consumed among the Soviet republics.

At the same time, the 'Soviet cinema' became a brand name in the post-war European cinematic landscape (1950s). The successes of the early Soviet auteurs, like Eisenstein, turned today to an important pillar of the European cinema, which was branded under the signifier of art cinema within the global market competition. The European cinema recognized the Georgian cinema of creators, for example Shengelaia, Abuladze, Iosseliani, for their professional mastership. This recognition gave critical acclaim to the Soviet art production, even if the regime had its doubts about those creators' artistic innovations. These doubts were influenced by the Cold War ideology, which deepened the distinction between totalitarianism and dissident creators, and created suspicion for any form of art that declined the ideological canon expressed through socialist realism (Bahun and Hanes 2014: 1-7).

Zaza Urushadze was born in 1966 and he was educated in the prestigious State Rustaveli Theatre, Film Georgian State University. *Tangerines* was his fifth film. For the film Urushadze underlined that 'the war is not the main focus. It is rather an intimate drama about maintaining our humanity in a difficult situation'.¹⁶ *Tangerines* was a co-production between Estonia and Georgia with the Estonian production company All Film, the Estonian Institute (Eesti Film Institut) and the Estonian Ministry of Culture contributing the lion share. As the director underlined, when the entire Georgian budget for cinema was 2.000.000 euros and the budget of the film reached more than half a million, a co-production was the only way for Georgian creators to produce films (see IMDB¹⁷).¹⁸

This culture of co-production is at the heart of the emerging transnational European landscape. Since the 1950s, the formation of this landscape in Europe has become a project of economic, political and cultural agendas, ambitions and desires. Although culture as a field of applied policies and political technologies remained marginal in the inception of the EU

(Shore 1983), it was the epicenter of the Council of Europe. Since its inception (1949), it constructed a profile based on soft politics defending the European values (democracy, justices, human rights, European culture). Stripped from any capacity to enforce or politically intervene, the Council became the moral heart of extended Europe (beyond the EU). In this framework, the Council became the first European institution that supported the European cinema financially through EURIMAGES (1989). EURIMAGES became important for the development of the film industry in the post-socialist countries of the European eastern peripheries, like Georgia.

Through these cultural technologies, as Luisa Rivi (2003: 2) underlined, 'a European identity was mobilized by the European Union (EU) through new mechanisms like MEDIA and EURIMAGES'. Moreover, the global economic transformations (Bondenbjerg and Redvall 2015: 1-25) promoted a culture of collaboration and co-production that transcended national borders and generated transnational media-scapes that 'avoid narratives and discourses of containment, replacing these with critical travelogues, charting the fluidity of identities, and tracing the brief encounters between films and shifting audience formations' (Bergfelder 2012: 329). In this way, the emerging transnational space in Europe did not try to praise a brotherhood, like the Soviet one, which reiterated exotic identities and communities. It rather depicted differences produced by de-centered identities and power inequalities, opening the space for less recognized, if not marginal voices to be heard under the umbrella of European diversity.

These changes were fundamental for Georgian cinema: first, it found the necessary funding for films to be made and to become available to festivals and theatres in wider distribution, all around Europe and beyond; second, it cultivated a culture of collaboration with others (see also Yilmazok 2010). The emphasis of Urushadze on humanity and his decision to stay away from local, national, and supranational politics seems to become a different form of re-fashioning his work from what Georgian artists used to do in the past in order to have access to Soviet funding. The humanism of *Madariinid* turned the local into universal. It opened a dialogue with the poignant issues of the past of the Caucasus. But this past was represented through modalities that could become understood by universal human categories of traumatic experience: loss, pain, death, home, war and peace. *Madariinid* is specific; it inter-connects, instead of separating, but also it does not take accountability, a necessary step for transitional justice¹⁹ through recognition. In a presentation of some of these ideas in a workshop in Sofia, a Georgian student told me that *Mandariinid* is '[their] way to say to [their] neighbors to come back, to stay altogether.'

His statement recognized the power of film as advocate for critical political issues and diplomacy in a society, where wounds of the past are still oozing. However, the road is not covered with rose petals. Urushadze admits, when interviewed by a Georgian journalist, that he himself 'cannot stay calm when [the Georgians] are depriving us from a part of our territory'.²⁰ His decision to avoid national politics helped his strategic production plan to open up to new funding bodies, Estonian and European, but it provoked reactions among Georgians, as

many found the film 'less Georgian'. However, it was this quality that made the film European. *Mandariinid* found a way to speak to multiple audiences by negotiating poignant experiences as part of the human fate. However, these other voices that criticized his decision should not be dismissed, because they challenge the 'all-inclusive' European narrative. Addressing them might allow a critical negotiation of the European past and present, but also a re-examination of the new European vision.

According to Roland Barthes, 'of all learned discourse, the ethnological seems to come closest to Fiction' (1975: 84). *Mandariinid* made the opposite happen; fiction came closer to ethnography. De-familiarizing the known and familiar is a technique that inspired both the narrative (Ivo's character role, multiple perspectives/voices) and the cinematography (slow pace, contrasts between inside/outside in light, tilting, avoiding close-ups). Although these techniques are not 'ethnographic' decisions, but creative ones, they reveal an intention: the creator's determination to communicate with wider audiences. This made Urushadze apt 'listener' to various voices, experiences, and histories. This also bestowed the film with an 'ethnographicness' (Banks 1992: 127). The latter 'is not a thing out there which is captured by the camera but a thing we construct for ourselves in our relation to the film.' *Mandariinid* seems to have this quality embedded. However, this quality is not irrelevant to the European media agendas that often marginalize anxieties related both to past wounds, but also, to present disillusionment.

The paper tried to enter the world of the film as a viewer decoding its characters, its cinematography, and the narrative, in other words, the text (form and content) in relation to the history of the Caucasus, in particular that of Abkhazia and Georgia, but also to imperial colonialism, the Soviet engineering, and post-socialist agendas. Moreover, it explored the themes of hospitality and captivity as signifiers of different symbolic interpretations of culture. The paper also postulated the interconnections of the film as cultural space to the contemporary national and transnational European media policies and the quest of a European cinema. The starting point of the paper was the still hesitant ethnographic exploration of film. Exploring film with the ethnographic method that postulates the complexities and constraints of global capitalism could be a fruitful way to examine how stories are re/produced, circulate, and are consumed in a highly mediatized world.

NOTES

1 The Georgian cinema since its inception followed storylines such as war and resistance, family honor and community values. Films had to 'testify' on the Soviet progress of the former subjugated to imperial colonialism societies, especially in the 1930s-1940s (Stalinization). The 1960s was considered as a period of film renaissance, which allowed national authenticity and individual visions to emerge (Radunović 2014: 20).

2 <http://www.tbilisifilmfestival.ge/>, <http://www.cinedoc-tbilisi.com/>, <http://www.biaff.org/>

3 Visual signs have a much stronger reference to reality than linguistic ones.

4 Yuri Lotman who represented the Soviet take on structuralism and cultural semiotics replaced the notion of text with that of semiotic space. In this framework, there is always (in each screening) an active interpretation of film based on “a comparison of the visual image/icon (image as imitation) to its correspondence in ‘real life’” (Grossvogel 1980: 89-93).

5 Marcus and Fischer (1986: 28-30) discuss the different approaches found within structural anthropology.

6 One early exception is the study of Hollywood by Hortense Powdermaker ([1950] 2002). In 1970s and 1980s anthropologists seemed to turn to ‘third’ world cinemas in order to study film as cultural texts, often applying western-centric theories and esthetic models (see Gray 2010: 99-100).

7 This shift also gave a significant push to the development of visual anthropology and ethnographic film.

8 The Caucasus extends in 440 thousand square kilometers expanding between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It is the natural border between Europe and Asia. The Caucasian ranges lies in 1,100 km in length and 160km in width. The highest summit is Elbruz (5,642 meters) and five other summits exceed the 5,000 meters. The Caucasus hosts 150 languages which belong in five different linguistic family groups (Indo-European, Altaic, Semitic, the North and South Caucasian languages), three monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and various other less known or popular. Politically, it is divided into two parts. In the North, there are several polities that belong to the Russian Federation, whereas in the South, since the 1990s, there are three independent republics, which, however, comprise disputed territories (Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh).

9 The original music of the film was composed by Niaz Diasamidze.

10 The film's location is Racha, a mountainous region of Georgia.

11 The Abkhazians are considered as an indigenous group of the North Caucasus known to ancient and Byzantine sources divided between Christianity and Islam, but also with strong animistic traditions. The Abkhazians are included in the speakers of the Cherkess/ Circassians dialects.

12 Ethnic groups who are considered art of the Georgian nation.

13 This alleged inferiority created alliances among the nations of the North Caucasus (the Circassians, the Abkhazians, the Chechens and the others). That is why Ahmed is found fighting on the Abkhazian side.

14 Ivo received an ultimatum to ‘return home’ (to Estonia) but he postponed. His excuse was the tangerines.

15 According to Soviet census data (1989) there were 2,316 Estonians in Georgia of which approximately 1,500 in Abkhazia, and most other Estonians living in other cities of Georgia,

especially in Tbilisi. Due to the 1992-93 war in Abkhazia, most Estonians have left the region, Hundreds of Estonians left the country, and most of them moved to their kin state, Estonia. Worst affected was the Estonian community in Abkhazia, some 1,500 persons in numbers, directly facing the consequences of the civil war. In total, it is estimated there are less than 300 Estonians left in Abkhazia, mostly elderly, who do not wish to resettle to Estonia, while there have also been a few cases of return migration from Estonia to Abkhazia.

16 Matt Grobar Director Zaza Urushadze makes Oscar history with foreign language film 'Tangerines' (February 13 2015) <http://deadline.com/2015/02/zaza-urushadze-director-tangerines-oscar-nominated-foreign-language-film-1201374843/>

17 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2991224/>

18 Co-productions in South East Europe and their relation to ideas about a European identity is the subject of my post-doctoral research at the department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia.

19 The term refers to judicial and non-judicial forms of recognizing and alleviating differences after periods of conflicts and political instability or totalitarianism by taking accountability and providing restitution.

20 The Most Important Thing Is to Retain Humanity. Interview with Zaza Urushadze (November 19, 2013) <http://www.eastbook.eu/en/blog/2013/11/19/the-most-important-thing-zaza-Urushadze/>

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Urushadze, Zaza 2013. *Madariinid (Tangerines)*. Ivo Felt Production

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Conference Report

From culture to biology (and back?): towards a semiotics of the senses

Lia Yoka

XI International Semiotics Conference on *The Fugue of the Five Senses: Semiotics of the Shifting Sensorium*. Hellenic Semiotic Society, October 14-16, 2016, Thessaloniki, Greece

Upon revisiting the origins of modern, instrumentalist and positivist conceptualizations of the sensorium, what becomes apparent is the fragility of the model of the five senses. Until the 18th century, the processes shaping perception were imagined along more nuanced tonalities, engaging not only religious-metaphysical forces, but also sociocultural factors such as ethical and behavioral systems. The uses of the term to describe ‘meaning, import and interpretation’ (*this makes sense*), to denote the ‘capacity for perception and appreciation’ (*sense of shame, sense of humor*), to refer to a physiological process (*we sense the cold*), to the result of intuition (*I sense danger*), or to the stimulation of desire (*what a sensual fragrance*), all point to different ordering systems that have developed in their own right. And if the etymology of this Latin root takes us down enlightening analytical paths, the linguistic and philosophical genealogies of the Greek term αἴσθησις (aesthesis) are even more adventurous.

Despite the richness of modern accounts of the world of the senses from Karl Marx to Georg Simmel, and the structuralist and post-structuralist efforts to reunite the senses and conceptualize the full sensorium as the human perceptual apparatus from Levi-Strauss (1969) to sound studies (Shafer 1973; Corbin 1994; Thibaud 2011), it is not until the 1980s that the humanities overcame their reluctance to tackle the senses and give rise to what has been called the *sensory turn* (Howes 2006). The senses seem to have recast the raw material of phenomenological philosophical and psychological discourse (Gibson 1966; Stoller 1997). They lie at the heart of the inquiry on the nature of consciousness, point to an ‘ecology of perception’ (Sonesson 2005), and force us to reconceptualize memory and its relationships to truth, reality, embodiment, and agency (Merleau-Ponty 1948). Numerous studies in anthropology, geography, art and archaeology – e.g. the studies by Nadia Seremetakis (1996) and Yannis Hamilakis

(2015) on the modern Greek context - as well as architecture (Pallasmaa 1994; Rasmussen 2001), point to the fact that completely different formations and imaginings of the sensorium invite us to reconsider the very fundamentals of psychosocial and cultural mechanisms. Think for instance of 'participant sensation' as opposed to the ethnographer's 'participant observation', or of 'intimate sensing' as opposed to a GPS analyst's 'remote sensing' (Robben and Sluka 2007; Porteous 1990).

Notwithstanding the significance of these contributions and despite the wealth of university curricula on the senses in several US universities as well as some in Europe and Japan, the sensorium has not grown into an established cross-disciplinary field, with important institutional exceptions in Canada (most notably in Concordia and York Universities) and France and Austria (mainly in music departments). The prevailing fragmentation of the field as well as the relative dearth of semiotic research on the senses – with the exception of vision, of course – have been the primary reasons for designating the contemporary transformations of the sensorium as the topic of the XI International Conference of the Hellenic Semiotic Society, back in the autumn of 2015. As is often the case in broadly themed semiotics conferences, the contributions concerned a wide range of areas and issues of interest.

The Conference's main theme, the questioning and going beyond, that is, of the hegemony of vision that the post-Renaissance paradigm has bequeathed us, was an idea that was approached and elaborated in different ways by more or less all the contributors. A common emphasis of the papers that tackled the issue most directly (M. Frangopoulos, M. Chronaki, Y. Skarpeles) was on the phenomenologically inspired re-embodiment of visual perception. Complementary approaches to the issue were suggested either through the re-valorization of touch (A. Lambropoulos) and hearing (J. Gratale) or by exposing the verbal anchoring of our colour systems (M. Almalech). The interrogation of the visual prerogative and the highlighting of various forms of multisensoriality and synesthesia was pursued also in a variety of cultural texts and contexts. Starting with literature, papers variously focused on the coding of smell in Süskind's *Perfume* (A. Blioumis), the Greimasian reading of the multi-sensual realism of Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (K. Boklund-Lagopoulou), the synesthetic poetics of modernism (M. Kakavoulia - P. Politis, S. Iakovidou, M. Armyra, M. Papadopoulos - L. Christodoulidou), the kinesthetic poetics of digital 'new literariness' (T. Dimitroulia) and the semiotics of scribbles (P. Thomas). A particularly fertile contribution to this problematic of multimodality and synesthesia was made by the papers which dealt with the visual arts, like painting (T. L. Gobbett, E. Angouras) and sculpture (I. Vamvakidou, S. Nikula), the performing arts, like theatre (M. Dimaki-Zora), dance (S. Bekakos) and music (M. Kokkidou-V. E. Paschali), as well as with current multi-media art criticizing techno-science (L. Yoka).

Quite predictably, the radical reconfiguration of the sensorium in the age of the digital media has attracted the biggest group of papers. It was, after all, Marshall McLuhan's pioneering conceptualization of the electronic media-induced new sensorium that formed the

starting point of the Conference's Call for Papers. Starting with the semiosis of multi-sensual storyworlds (M. Kokonis) and the sensory interchanges in film (L. Kostopoulou, M. Kokkidou - C. Tsigka, N. Terzis), as well as the semiotic complexity of popular television narratives and programs (C. Adamou, T. Saltidou - A. Stamou, E. Kourdis, S. Grammenidis, N. S. Dragan) a variety of digital environments and products were examined: museums (C. Chatzimichali, N. Chourmouziadi), virtual reality (S. Polimeris - C. Calfoglou, R. Yankova, M. Katsaridou - K. Stergiou), social media (E. Yoshikawa, A. Bahroun, M. Troullou, A. Kasabova, M. Georgalou), videogames (I. Fotiou - T. Maniou, I. Mazarakis) and multimedia journalism (N. Holivatou).

The 'Senses in Culture' section of the Conference hosted a range of approaches. The anthropological perspective that, from very early on, has consistently been a vital source of insight into the 'fugue of the five senses', was represented by analyses of political and religious ritual (T. Halonen) and the political economy of witchcraft (E. Tsekenis). The sociological perspective prevailed in the investigation of the rhetoric of the senses in social campaigns against racism (K. Fragkioudaki-A. Dimitrakopoulou - M. Papadopoulou), nation branding practices (S. Andreou, S. Stylianou), war propaganda posters (G. Damaskinidis) and advertising images (P. Xouplidis, V. Vamvakas). The techniques of multi-sensual design were examined both in their graphic (E. Zantides) and industrial (G. Liamadis) applications. Next to papers on advertising and design, the area of consumer culture was also approached by contributors that focused on marketing tools and techniques (M. Tsoumari). Scholars, in particular, from the Southeast European Center for Semiotic Studies of the New Bulgarian University, a long-time partner of the HSS, addressed immersion techniques and multisensoriality in VR, e-commerce and branding (K. Bankov, G. Tsonev, D. Trendafilov, I. Velinov). Another group of papers, finally, focused on interactivity and multisensory communication at school. Heavily relying on the performative aspects of the educational process, the contributions dealt with new language learning methods (P. Manoli) and the 'signs of childhood' that produce the *childsphere* (P. Kukkonen). The senses in the classroom – an 'open interpretative system' according to *edusemiotics* – were investigated both as sensory reality (A. Christodoulou), as representational language (A. Papakosta, I. Mendrinou) and as alternative, purpose-built teaching practice that mobilizes the 'logic of the senses' (S.-E. Tsala, A. Smyrnaio, Ch. Lemonidis - A. Stavrou - L. Papoutzis).

The area of urban studies has traditionally a powerful presence in the HSS conferences. Its holistic ambition and critical import made once again a strong impact, especially as it was represented by a sizeable group of contributors who approached the city through the prism of the sensorium in innovative and challenging ways. Among the issues addressed were the multimodal and multisensorial experience of walking in the city (A. Stamatopoulou, N. Boubaris) or of visiting its market places (E. Battistini – M. Mondino), people's mental images of their city center (P. Kosmopoulos - K. Kleskas) and the significance of smell in city identity and planning (C. Kousidonis). Scholars, in particular, from the Architecture Department of Athens Polytechnic explored the path-breaking implications of the concept of movement for urban

and landscape planning (K. Moraitis, A. Verykiou, N. Kyrkitsou). Their research converged in an illuminating way, with the empirical material from Estonia that was provided by the Tartu semiotician Tiit Remm, who highlighted the dynamic interaction between place-making and society-making.

The cultural semiotic perspective was definitely prevalent at the October 2016 HSS conference. Yet, the theme of the conference itself grew out of an awareness that we need to delineate anew the relationships between the senses and the Lifeworld, between the body and its artificial extensions, between the cognitive software of the mind and its biological hardware. During the well-attended four keynote speeches that brought all participants together in one room, while at the same time it attracted a large online audience who watched them on the web through live streaming, it became clear that semiotics, as an intra-disciplinary tool, helps pinpoint the disjunctures between theoretical approaches in different fields of inquiry, but can also highlight the near irreconcilability of certain stances.

It might seem quite hard to keep a conversation going between, for instance, on the one hand scholars who believe semiosis is a faculty of humans after a certain developmental stage, and therefore foreground questions concerning (human) culture, and on the other, scholars who would attribute the sign-producing faculty to all living beings and thus would rather focus on *life itself* as the realm of communication. The point, however, is not to bridge the differences and reconcile approaches, neither to celebrate some kind of circus of diversity. It is, at this stage, to understand the strengths and the rhetorical-cognitive habitat of each approach, as well as its epistemic-historical background, and to appreciate it for what it is and has yet to achieve.

For the HSS, the exchange between social and cultural semiotics on the one hand, and biosemiotics on the other was long due. The densely crafted history of ideas underpinning cultural semiotics in the first keynote speech by the Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics at the University of Tartu Professor Peeter Torop made the case in point. Professor Torop traced a series of overlapping and also radically divergent steps away from the study of literary and artistic reception as an aesthetic-psychological experience, to the establishment of the semiotics of culture that also engages the sensory aspects of perception. The echo of experimental psychology was far from absent in this account. It emerges for example, when Lotman's notion of explosion is traced back to Lev Vygotsky (Torop 2012). If, as Vygotsky suggested, explosion is a moment where individual psychological processes lead to a collective 'catharsis' as the 'highest form of ...aesthetic response', then explosion is a highly mediated event, that can never be fully predicted by some cultural algorithm. Terms like 'creative, emotional, intellectual tension' and 'inspiration' cannot be fully separated on the one hand from their origin in idealist descriptions of art appreciation, and on the other from the psychological tradition that attempts to measure and describe the effects of individual confrontation with cultural products. So indeed, for this approach, the field of cultural semiotics is not merely circumscribed by the 'social production of signs'.

The keynote speeches by Paul Copley, President of the International Society for Semiotic Studies and by Luis Emilio Bruni, President of the Nordic Society for Semiotic Studies, both offered occasions for the launch of an intersectional dialogue. Copley presented a series of challenging theses from his latest book (Copley 2016), suggesting we embrace a 'synechist' approach to cultural and biological phenomena. His 'biosemiotic cultural analysis' sets out to forge a path between overinterpretation (the risk run by the non-science disciplines) and comfortable reductionism (to which the hard sciences often resort to). No easy task, indeed.

Luis Emilio Bruni offered what could be understood as an epistemological overview of the central theme of the conference. His keynote addressed the links that have to be drawn across the life sciences, cognitive semiotics and discourses of culture with an aim to flesh out a field of multimodal perception and cognition for the theorization of the sensorium. Despite its high abstractions, Bruni's talk carefully navigated the maze and avoided toxic stereotypes. Instead of forcedly aligning strictly pre-defined clusters of thought about the content and dynamics of sign systems, he suggests that one should reconsider the technosphere, the semiosphere and the *Umwelt* from the perspective of their semi-autonomous and *heterarchical* organization (Bruni 2015) and development.

With an interest in employing the insights of experimental science for further establishing his *Bildwissenschaft*, the keynote speech by Klaus Sachs-Hombach on 'Visual Communication and Multimodality' explored the difference between the *perception* and the *use* of signs. The audience was treated to a new project embarked on by the Tübingen professor, that builds upon a 'picture theory' he has been developing over the years in several books, and as editor of the journal *Image*. This time leaving aside his elaborate analogies of 'image [or picture] act theory' with 'speech act theory' to describe the process of pictorial communication (Sachs-Hombach 2011), Sachs-Hombach pointed to the 'fundamental nature of the use of pictures as a language' and the 'deeper anchoring of visual perception' than other kinds of perception. In culture at large, communication (use and perception of signs) can only be understood multimodally. The task, then, becomes to define the sensory dynamics, and specifically the relationship of visual perception to other kinds of perception- in (mass) communication.

In dialogue with these positions presented at the conference, the leading figure of what has been termed the 'School of Thessaloniki', the founding member and honorary president of the HSS, Alexandros Phaidon Lagopoulos, seized the opportunity to revisit, in his paper, the discussion on the biological basis for the birth of semiotic systems. He delineated, building upon theses he has published in several studies (Lagopoulos 2009, 1993), the theoretical premises of a Social Semiotics (as opposed to 'socio-semiotics', as he himself would argue), for which the proprioceptive senses in the body, as well as the rest of the body's biological/physiological hardwiring, cannot be linked to their corresponding concepts, i.e. to what the 'mind', a social construction, makes of the 'brain', a biological given, in any direct way. Concepts

are cultural, and culture is dependent on the material conditions of social existence – a view that insists that semiotics is primarily a social science, and that it is only through this itinerary of culturally determined definitions of the sensorium that one could hypothetically arrive at a legitimate semiotics of the senses.

The conference hosted over 90 papers by scholars based in several countries in Europe and beyond. However stressful it can be to have to choose one of four or five promising sessions every couple of hours during three action-packed days, on the whole, the structure of the conference was articulate and comprehensible. Glancing at the program one could anticipate what would in the end turn out to be a dense and rewarding intellectual and social experience. The simultaneous exposure to different approaches and kinds of inquiry offered the possibility for manifold tangential associations (but also actual connections) between literature and arts, digital media and translation theory, affect and immersion.

Did some general principle for theorizing the sensorium emerge from the conference? Even if that had been the aim of the whole endeavor in the first place, which it had not, one would have to be suspicious of any definite answer. The discussions last October often incited our enthusiasm and curiosity, and at times touched upon fundamental questions in semiotics. Studying the senses was recognized as a way to test not only definitions of the sign and of semiosis, but, more relevantly, to explore the mechanisms through which semiotic categories and concepts emerge, rise, fall, get promoted, engineered and institutionalized – or, possibly, interact and mutually enhance one another in new constellations.

The Hellenic Semiotics Society is turning 40 this year and seems to be responding to the economic crisis with resilience. Its last triennial gatherings (in Nicosia, Cyprus, in Volos and Thessaloniki, Greece) have hosted a steadily growing number of papers, with an increasingly international participation. The extrovert profile methodically cultivated by Hellenic semiotics comes with a resolution for more intersectional exchanges of this kind.

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Obituary: John Deely (1942-2017)

Paul Cobley

John Deely was born on 26 April 1942 in Chicago, Illinois and died on 6 January 2017 in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. He had staged a courageous battle against pancreatic cancer from 2015-2016, continuing to work for part of that year and coping in a fashion that he and close onlookers considered 'miraculous'. Closest of all these onlookers was his wife, the semiotician Brooke Williams.

Deely was educated at the Aquinas Institute School of Philosophy, River Forest, Illinois receiving a BA in 1965, an MA in 1966 (with his thesis published in article form the same year), and a PhD in 1967 (with the thesis published in monograph form 1971 as *The Tradition via Heidegger*). He held early positions at Saint Mary's College, South Bend (1974-1976), University of Ottawa (1968-1969), St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick (1967-1968) and St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana (1966-1967). Later, he was appointed at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa (1976-1999), along with a number of visiting posts including Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Fall 1988-Spring 1989), Fulbright Professor; Pontificia Universidade de São Paulo, 22-26 May 1989, Fulbright-Garcia Robles Professor, Anáhuac University, México City (Fall 1994-Spring 1995). Since being appointed at the University of St. Thomas, Houston (1999-present), where he has held the Rudman Chair in Philosophy since (2007), he has been a visiting scholar at the University of Helsinki, Finland (Fall 2000), Visiting Fulbright Professor, Southeast European Center for Semiotic Studies, New Bulgarian University, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria (Spring 2005) and Visiting Professor of Semiotics, Tartu University, Estonia (2009 spring semester).

His book-length monographs include *The Problem of Evolution: Philosophical Repercussions of Evolutionary Science* (with Raymond Nogar, 1973), his scholarly edition of *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinsett* (1985 and 2013), *Basics of Semiotics* (1990), *Four Ages of Understanding. The First Postmodern History of Philosophy from Ancient Times to the Turn of the 21st Century* (2001), *What Distinguishes Human Understanding* (2002), *The Semiotic Animal* (with Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio, 2005), *Purely Objective Reality* (2009a), *Medieval Philosophy Redefined* (2010a) and the 'Poinsett trilogy' (2008a, 2008b, 2015). This body of work is complemented by over 200 articles and a number of book series that Deely edited, including the yearbooks of the Semiotic Society of America (from 1980), *The American Journal of Semi-*

otics (from 2001), *Sources in Semiotics* (University Press of America/Rowman & Littlefield) and *Approaches to Postmodernity* (Scranton University Press 2007–2010).

An authority on the work of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and a major figure in both contemporary semiotics, Scholastic Realism, Thomism and, more broadly, Catholic philosophy, Deely's thinking has demonstrated how awareness of signs has heralded a new, genuinely 'postmodern' epoch in the history of human thought. 'Postmodern' here means 'after the modern' rather than the fashionable intellectual and publishing movement emanating mainly from Paris and associated with the academic trend of poststructuralism from the 1960s onwards (the postmoderns 'falsely so called' – Deely 2003). Deely's writing on signs calls for a thoroughgoing superseding of the 'modern', proposing an understanding of humans as the 'semiotic animal' to replace the modern definition as 'res cogitans' (see Deely 2005).

Central to Deely's work, but certainly not the whole of it, is his excavating of the semiotic of João Poinset (also known as John Poinset and St. John of Thomas, 1589–1644). In Poinset and the heritage of Late Latin thought, Deely saw a triadic theory of semiosis pre-dating Peirce, as well as a Thomist logic. Deely also draws on the 'antimodernism' and 'ultramodernism' of Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), the whole of Peirce's philosophy and logic, as well as the writings of the theoretical biologist, Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944) and the work of the semiotician and 'biologist manqué', Thomas A. Sebeok (1920–2001). Tracking the development of a 'pragmaticist' realism, following Peirce, Deely's work would address questions of knowledge – how humans come to know (realism) and how they remember (or repeatedly forget) what they might know (the history of pre-modern, modern and postmodern thought; cf. Deely 1985, 1988). Yet he is very suspicious of the term epistemology and its deployment in philosophy and in thinking in general (see Deely 2010b). His early articles focused on the problems that the idea of evolution posed for conceptions of what it is to be human. This concern runs through all of his work, including his most recent discussions of the human as the animal possessing a semiotic consciousness.

As with Jakob von Uexküll, what unites human and non-human animals for Deely is the habitation of both in an *Umwelt*. An animal's *Umwelt* is its 'objective' world: it is the world that the animal lives in, how it apprehends everything around itself (and even within itself); yet, at the same time, that very apprehension takes place on the basis of the sensory apparatus that it possesses and, consequently, the signs that it is able to emit and receive (Deely 2009b). A dog's hearing, for example, a key part of its sensory apparatus, is much more honed to high frequencies than a human's; for this reason, a dog inhabits a different *Umwelt* to a human and uses largely different signs. If an animal's *Umwelt* is its 'objective' world and it is where an animal relates to 'objects' then there is a need to distinguish 'objects' from 'signs'. Customarily, 'objective' implies phenomena completely separate and closed off from the vagaries of subjects' apprehensions. Commonly, in speech, there is reference to an 'objective view' or that which is untrammelled by opinion and partisan perspectives. Deely, by contrast, performs a logical re-figuration of objectivity. He demonstrates that the world that seems to be wholly independent of humans – 'objective' – can never be such

(see Deely 2009a). Deely offers a thorough re-orientation of what is commonly understood as the dependency of the world on its subjects, a re-orientation derived, principally, from the distinction between 'signs', 'objects' and 'things'. As Deely maintains (1994a: 11),

There are signs and there are other things besides: things which are unknown to us at the moment and perhaps for all our individual life; things which existed before us and other things which will exist after us; things which exist only as a result of our social interactions, like governments and flags; and things which exist within our round of interactions — like daytime and night — but without being produced exactly by those interactions, or at least not inasmuch as they are 'ours', i.e. springing from us in some primary sense.

Objects, on the other hand, are 'what the things become once experienced' (1994a: 11), bearing in mind also that experience takes place through a physical, sensory modality. In this sense, even such entities as unicorns or the minotaur can be considered objects *embodied* in the physical marks of a text. But Deely argues that a 'thing of experience' — an object — requires more than just embodiment: the Colosseum and the Arc de Triomphe preceded us and are expected to exist after us; but the point is that their existence as such is the product of *anthroposemiosis*. There are plenty of things — such as some metals in the earth and some things in the universe, as Deely suggests (1994a: 16) — that anthroposemiosis has not yet touched. Objects are thus sometimes identical with things and can even 'present themselves "as if" they were simply things' (1994a: 18). Likewise, signs seem to be just objects of experience — the light from a candle, the scent of a rose, the shining metal of a gun; but a sign also signifies *beyond itself*. In order for it to do so, a sign must be: not just a physical thing; not just an experienced object; but experienced as 'doubly related' (Deely 1994a: 22), standing for something else in some respect or capacity (or, for short: in a context).

To demonstrate the sign/object/thing relation and the shift in dependency, Deely employs the image of an iceberg's tip: to be sure, the tip protrudes into experience as an object (a mind-dependent entity, in the order of *ens rationis*); moreover, it is, as such, a thing (mind-independent, in the order of *ens reale*); but, above all, as is known from the popular phrase, the tip is a *sign* that there is much more below (1994a: 144). An important corollary of this, though, is that whatever is beneath the tip of the iceberg cannot be *approached* as a thing. It is possible that experience could make it an object but, even then, through the sensations it provokes, the feelings about them and its consequence, it is only available as a sign. It is simultaneously of the order of *ens reale* and *ens rationis* and it would be folly to bracket off one or the other in an attempt to render it as either solely object or thing. Hence Peirce's statement that "to try to peel off signs & get down to the real thing is like trying to peel an onion and get down to the onion itself" (see Brent 1993: 300 n. 84).

This realism of Deely implies, in consonance with von Uexküll, that non-human animals inhabit a world of objects. Humans, by contrast, in their awareness that there are such things as signs – as opposed to simply responding to or emanating signs – are compelled to inhabit the bio/semiosphere ethically. This is developed in Deely's later work (especially 2010c). As a whole, Deely's work has been most closely concerned with the definition of signs and the sign/object/thing distinction may yet be his most enduring contribution – among many – to the technical aspects of semiotics (Cobley and Stjernfelt 2016). Certainly, his theory of signification, while also being crucial to general semiotics, was absolutely indispensable to biosemiotics (see Cobley, Favareau and Kull 2017). However, he contributed so much more than this that will be equally enduring. His work ranges over analytic concerns in the history of philosophy (for example, 'relation' and 'intentionality') as well as the general history and historiography of ideas. Many will see the pinnacle of Deely's work in the volume, *Four Ages of Understanding*. Yet, unlike many scholars who produce a single landmark work, Deely has repeatedly published books and articles that have broken new ground (see Cobley 2016). These include *Introducing Semiotic* (1982 – an extension of his groundbreaking 1981 article, 'The relation of logic to semiotics'), *New Beginnings* (1994b), *Intentionality and Semiotics* (2007) and, of course, the aforementioned bestselling, *Basics of Semiotics* (1990). While Peirce is acknowledged as the greatest American philosopher, John Deely in his wake, will be remembered not just as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of semiotics, but will be recognized as the most important American philosopher of the last hundred years.

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Book Reviews

Mapping translation spaces in motion

Titika Dimitroulia

SIGNATA. *Annales des sémiotiques/Annals of semiotics* 7/2016. Traduire: signes, textes, pratiques/Translating: Signs, Texts, Practices. Dossier dirigé par J. Fontanille, M. Songogni & R. Troqe. Liège : Presses Universitaires de Liège.

Whether it is called 'Translation Semiotics', 'Semiotics of Translation' or 'Semiotics and Translation' and irrespective of its conception as a proper discipline or a distinct approach, the contribution of semiotics to Translation Studies is becoming more and more visible nowadays. Semiotics seems entangled with translation studies in the context of a Bakhtinian dialogue and dialogism. If every turn in Translation Studies highlights the interdisciplinary character of the field, the nature and dynamics of each encounter needs to be circumscribed and defined, as there are many ways, levels and degrees of interdisciplinarity, while transdisciplinarity itself seems to be the more complex and fruitful form of collaboration between fields and disciplines, as a process of mutual enrichment through a common development (Gambier 2006; Klein 2010; Lambert 2012). Synchrony and diachrony appear, though, to alter the conception of those turns and confluences as separate and distinctive moments in theory and practice, bringing out analogies and similarities and illustrating new entities, informed over a long period and through very complex exchanges – or even with no exchanges and influences but in similar cultural contexts, reminding us of the similarities without influence in literature and the suggestion to address them through the explanation of their common causes (Van Tieghem 1931).

This is the case, for example, with the sociology of translation, as described by Chesterman (2006), examining the social features in many translation theories and starting her historical account from Polysystem Theory and Descriptive Translation Studies in the context of a broad sociocultural approach; or by other translation scholars who stress the interweaving between systemic theories, from Russian Formalism, Structuralism and Polysystem Theory to the sociological theories of Bourdieu or McLuhan, systematically used in Translation Studies (Codde 2003; Wolf 2010). This diachronic consideration of the convergences of the disciplines and, even more, their results and impact, is the most probable place to look for support for transdisciplinary approaches.

The current volume of *Signata* seems to stress the need for this reconsideration of the relationship between translation studies and semiotics-semiology – terms with reference to different theories that are all of great interest for the study of translation. Combining theory and practice with concrete case studies that explore semiotic tools in different research areas, the 18 texts of the volume, coming all from experts in their respective field, present *in extensis* the semiotic turn in translation, its concepts and tools, inciting the reader to uncover similarities between the semiotic and the other translation turns; and to a more complex use of models and tools coming from different approaches in the study of translation, whether situated in the Lotmanian semiosphere, or Even-Zohar's polysystem, or in culture conceived as an autopoietic system, etc. Thus, transdisciplinarity meets and enhances transculturality, broadening and enriching the sociocultural perspective in Translation Studies.

The two texts opening the volume, by Susan Petrilli and Dinda Gorré, outline the state of the art in the semiotics of translation and explore the semiotranslational perspectives as a contribution to the definition and consequently the practice of translation, with emphasis on its sociopolitical and cultural dynamics. Petrilli considers translation as the essence of thinking and communication, taking into account the inherent communicational entropy. Just as a sign can only live among signs and in interaction with them, she suggests 'vital' translation as a new type of translation which, in completing Jakobson's model, describes this vital process of the sign being in dialogue with the other and the world. She proposes a dialogical philosophical examination of the notion of translation, which places emphasis on ethics and ideology. In this respect, she covers with scholars who examine the question of with ethics in Translation Studies from different points of view, such as Antoine Berman, Lawrence Venuti or Mona Baker, especially in conflict situations; with the hermeneutics of translation and George Steiner in particular, who in *After Babel* argues that 'any model of communication is at the same time a model of translation, of a vertical or horizontal transfer of significance' (1975: 45); or with the global translation theory proposed by Michel Serres, in *Hermes III* (1974).

From a different perspective but still from a Peircean point of view, Gorré refutes the Saussurian dualisms for their application to translation tends to obfuscate its cultural dynamics. Referring to the popular model of Vinay and Darbelnet, she attempts to show how much more complicated are translation phenomena, deeply rooted in concrete historical conditions, inextricably interrelated to the human translator, and therefore open to constant modifications that support creative, dynamic responses. Sociotranslation, as semiosis in all types of translation, opens the interpretative perspectives either from the translator's or the reader's point of view, in a complex dialogical movement. Considering translation as re-creation, Gorré puts forward the role of the translator in the complex, systemic, cultural process of translation. Supporting, moreover, the encounter of semiotranslation with the sociology of translation, on the grounds of the latter's engagement with norms, *habitus* and social practices, Gorré insists on the dynamics of cultural semiotic formations, in the context of which translation, as interpretation and signification, is situated.

Reconsidering texts in a broad semiotic sense, as all units, verbal and non-verbal, which carry an integral meaning, Gambier contributes to the intense dialogue on the complexification of the translation's perception by integrating the history of the text as well as the media perspective, with particular reference to the multisemioticity on the current digital paradigm. Revisiting both the text type models and exploring the new multisemiotic digital paradigm, he connects Jakobson's types of translation with the study of hybrid translation practices, highlighting the need for collaborative, polysemiotic tools in the theory and the practice of translation. In his persistent exploration of the textual and the digital, Gambier meets Federico Pellizzi's assumptions on digital textuality (2006) and enters into dialogue with Kay O'Halloran, Sabine Tan and Peter Wingell, in addressing the web of meanings informed through intersemiosis, conceived as resemiotisation. Semiotic resources are modeled as multilevel systems of meaning and the shifts occurring in and across them are analyzed according to a systemic functional approach and with customized software tools, with emphasis on the multiple decisions taken during the process of resemiotisation, according to which some meanings remain and new meanings come across, in a dynamic semantic expansion that defines cultural communication. Setting up a theoretical model and applying it to concrete case studies, the article offers an integrated approach to the dominant multimodal texts, all the while assisting translators to realize the complex formation of meaning and its rendering in translation.

What seems very important in this volume is that even the more theoretical approaches give, or may give, practical solutions to translators, proving that semiotics of translation can very well serve the practical orientation of translation studies, underlined by Roya Jabaruti with reference to the pioneers of the cultural turn, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. Both her study on conceptual metaphors of body parts and their translation from Persian into English, and Mohammad Ahmad Thawabteh's study on intertextuality as rhetorical device in a speech of Bin Laden make fruitful contributions to the debate about the translation of culture-bound elements and cultural translation.

All of the volume's articles converge in their systematic contextualization of translation practice, by taking into account both explicit and implicit sociopolitical and cultural parameters in mainly interlingual and intersemiotic translations, through various transpositions, situated on the micro- and macro-level. For example, as regards literature, Allesandra Chiappori's article on translating the Oulipian narrative practices and rhetorical devices of Raymond Queneau's works challenges the untranslatability of his experimental writing, identifying linguistic and cultural translation difficulties that cannot be resolved without creative cultural rewriting. In doing so, she enters into dialogue with Gorré, who refers to Barbara Cassin and her dictionary of untranslatable utterances and stresses the centrality of the translator in creative recreation; but also with Richard Dixon, who discusses the range and depth of shifts in all literary translation in order to naturalize a work in a new culture, with reference to Umberto Eco's last book and special reference to the author–translator collaboration that offers greater freedom

to the translator to adapt the work into a new cultural context. Dixon's views harmonise with those of Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (2007) or of Gabriela Saldanha (2014) on creativity and style in translation. Federica Massia explores similar transpositions, focusing both on creativity and on the ideological aspects of the shifts introduced by Collodi when he confronts the issue of national identity when he translates Perrault's *contes* into Italian during the period of Italian reunification. His translation is qualified as a *belle infidèle*, like those described by Georges Mounin as shaping, elevating and enriching the French language two centuries before. It must be stressed that all these interlingual analyses foreground the autonomy of the translations in the literary field, as well as the major importance of the translating subject, unveiling the potential of semiotic approaches as regards the study of this very specific translation type. In addition, corpus-based analysis in the education of the literary translator, with a parallel corpus and language technology tools, as described by Diva Cardoso de Camargo, appears as a very effective method in translation teaching, pointing out linguistic and cultural similarities and differences through authentic translated discourse and its proper modalities. From a semiotic perspective, this practice meets the long and heated debate on the use of corpora in translation studies and translator's education (Baker 1993; Laviosa 2002; Zannettin, Bernardini and Stewart 2003; Olohan 2004; Kruger, Wallmach and Munday 2011; Fantinuoli and Zanettin 2015)

There is no doubt, though, that this potential is much more important when it comes to polysemiotic texts and even more in social practices – at which point semiotics meets sociology. Miguel A. Bernal-Merino's article on videogame localization explores the gaming experience as a whole, in its material and immaterial modalities and in its cultural and intercultural context. Pointing out the deficiencies of the current videogame localization system, Bernal-Merino suggests a holistic approach to the transposition of videogames to another linguistic and cultural system, as a prerequisite for a felicitous gaming experience, but also for the international commercial success of the games. Sabrina Baldo de Brébisson's typology of special subtitles offers insight into the verbal-nonverbal interaction in movies, by highlighting in detail how different techniques and expressive alternatives enhance the possibilities of verbal expression by integrating the connotations and the communication context, and allowing for the flexible interaction between the different semiotic systems responsible for the spectator's experience. Given the technological affordances, what must be done is to train translators adequately, so that they can explore fully the new possibilities offered by the digital media. Evangelos Kourdis deals with interlingual and intersemiotic translation, studying Greek lithographs of the Balkan wars period, whose captions contain both the Greek text and its French translation. Reading the iconic content and finding, at the text level, important differences between the original and the translation, Kourdis strives to explain these transpositions with reference to national identity and ideology, as well as to the different target groups and objectives aimed by each language.

Intersemiotic translation is not reduced to verbal and iconic elements. Halloran, Tan and Wingell examine graphs as a translation of verbal information in the same text. Loveday Kempthorne and Peter Donolan present the Romanian poet and mathematician Ion Barbu-Dan Barbilian, who conceived his work as a continuous intersemiotic translation between poetry and mathematics and outlined both his productions accordingly. Although the study of Richard Stiff on representation and the tension between artifact (analog and digital) and reality, the medium and the message, addresses the issues of Translation Studies from a mere theoretical point of view, his analysis concerning the modes of perception in the public sphere and the arbitrary nature of cultural codes, by engaging with media theory's concerns on transparent immediacy, hypermediacy and remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 1999) offers exciting new ideas for research. The practice of cosplay, and the translation of costume between comics or film or literary characters and its reconstruction is described and analysed by Emerald L. King. The volume concludes with a history of the semiotic debate in comics theory in France and Belgium and an article defining sports practice, and especially tennis, as a multilevel system of resistance.

Any review is necessarily reductive but this is particularly so in the case of a volume with such a broad range and scope, that endeavors to present the state of the art in Semiotics of Translation and explore the dynamics of the encounter of semiotics with translation and translation studies, especially in the new, digital landscape. An exciting, insightful, inspiring reading.

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Consuming Translations: Eating the Food of the Other

Sabrina Mazzali-Lurati

Stano, Simona, *Eating the Other. Translations of the Culinary Code*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, 279 pp., \$47.99 (hardcover), ISBN (10): 1-4438-7793-X, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7793-0.

Simona Stano's *Eating the Other* is an important contribution in the field of semiotics of food. It analyzes the translation processes undergone by *washoku*, 'the traditional dietary cultures of Japanese' (Stano 2015: 52), when presented in Western Japanese restaurants. More precisely, the object of this study is the Japanese meal in its Western translations as ethnic meal 'as it is consumed in public *restaurants*, particularly focusing on the *dinner*' (Stano 2015: 50), i.e. the meal which, in Western cultures, is conceived of 'as a moment of *enjoyment* and *relaxation*', mainly observed from the point of view of the consumer (Stano 2015: 51, 57). This socio-cultural practice is a manifestation of the broader phenomenon of ethnic food, which, in our contemporary and globalized world, is becoming increasingly common. Simona Stano analyses six among the most known and renowned Japanese restaurants abroad, located in contexts of different food cultures (Italy, Switzerland and Canada).

The aim is, on the one hand, to observe and understand the processes of translation between culinary systems, considering the effects arising at the level of signification (Stano 2015: 48). On the other hand, this work provides methodological and epistemological contributions to the field of semiotics of food.

Indeed, the most impressive aspect of Simona Stano's work is the complex articulation of the theoretical and methodological framework, developed by the author in the first part of the book, by drawing relevant conceptual tools from several different approaches and streams of research within the semiotic field and beyond (anthropology, sociology, ethnology, ethnography). This reveals a fundamental epistemological position: what counts is the understanding of signification and the discovery of meaning of the object of study by making use of all useful means. At the same time, by adopting models, concepts and tools from other relevant disciplines, the researcher acts like Lévy-Strauss's bricoleur, i.e. as someone 'who invents new contingent solutions by reusing and readjusting the various tools at his or her disposal' (Stano 2015: 216). The inher-

ent interdisciplinarity of semiotics (widely discussed and stressed by different scholars, starting from Charles Morris; cf. Withalm 2016, Boris Uspenskij in Mazzali-Lurati 2014) is richly deployed here. As Stano declares repeatedly, methodological and theoretical *transversality* is essential in order to analyze signs, discourses and practices related to food (Stano 2015: 215).

Food is 'such a complex phenomenon', presenting 'variety and variability' and requiring 'such a composite set of methodological approaches' that one can easily get lost (Stano 2015: 27). Chapter 1 provides a critical review of contributions to the study of food, food symbolism and food systems from the point of view of 'traditional approaches, such as structuralism and text semiotics' (Stano 2015: 26), highlighting their lacunae and limitations.

In Chapter 2, these preliminary analytical tools are complemented with 'new branches' of semiotic investigation. Lotman's work on culture is presented as 'an inescapable reference frame', that leads to take into consideration not only texts, but also 'how texts are produced, re-produced, interpreted, and translated among different cultures' (Stano 2015: 25, 30). Following 'the so-called turning point of semiotics', a wide conception of textuality as social acts and practices is adopted, 'exceed[ing] the limits of the structuralist notion of text' (Stano 2015: 212). This calls for analytical models and tools proposed within the field of sociosemiotics. The importance of the approach of ethnosemiotics is then underlined, where observation, i.e. fieldwork, (instead of deduction of theoretical models) is essential.

The analysis is presented in the second part of the book. Based on 'the research, synthesis, and comparison of information on the Japanese culinary culture, specifically focusing on some of its most significant elements *par excellence*', Chapters 3 and 4 attempt to decipher the grammar of the traditional Japanese meal (Stano 2015: 210). Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to the fieldwork in the six chosen restaurants and its analysis. In Chapter 5, the restaurants are introduced and their logos and menus are analyzed. In Chapter 6, the spatial dimension is analyzed at three different levels of observation '[f]rom the macro-level of the eating place and the practices related to it' (Stano 2015: 117), to the intermediate level of the table and proxemics, reaching the micro-level of plates and food.

The analysis highlights important features of the Japanese meal and important changes undergone by *washoku* in the processes of its Western translation. In particular, changes involving the re-shaping and re-semantization affect the action of two principles generally shaping the Japanese semiosphere: the 'wrapping principle' and 'ma'. The 'wrapping principle' (the idea of *tsutsumi*) 'is primarily connected to concepts such as *containing* and *protecting*, in addition to the idea of *concealing*' (Stano 2015: 67). It shapes different elements and aspects of *washoku*, from the conception and organization of the eating place to the structure of dishes and of sushi. Being the Japanese word meaning gap, pause, the space between two structural parts, 'Ma' refers to a conception of space that focuses not on 'compositional elements, but rather [on] the intervals between them, which are considered the basis of spatial progressive experience and designation' (Stano 2015: 168).

General conclusive remarks are drawn in Chapter 7 and 8. Two main tendencies in Western processes of translation of *washoku* are identified: cases in which the processes of translation are 'explicitly displayed to "reassure" the customer', thus 'enhancing activities of desemantisation and resemantisation of the ethnic eating experience' (Stano 2015: 203) and cases in which these processes as well as the local sphere are concealed 'in order to create a total and completely absorbing experience' and 'to keep as faithful as possible to the source foodsphere' (Stano 2015: 203). However, even in these cases, translation emerges and presents itself as unavoidable: in order to 'eat the Other' (Stano 2015: 203), the source foodsphere has to be preserved, but the local foodsphere cannot be neglected.

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Nothing is sacred

Gregory Paschalidis

Paul Bouissac, *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning. Rituals of Transgression and the Theory of Laughter*. London: Bloomsbury, Bloomsbury Advances in Semiotics, 2015, 232 pp, \$ 128.00 (Hardcover), ISBN: 9781472521736, \$43.95 (Paperback), ISBN: 9781472532787, \$32.99 (EPUB/PDF eBook), ISBN: 9781472525086/9781472531117.

As a child, the circus was the source of rather ambivalent feelings. I was mesmerized by the feats of the acrobats, revolted at the sight of once wild tigers or elephants turned into trained pets, and saddened rather than merry with the absurd antics of the clowns. Childhood memories of clowns seem to make the elegiac trope almost the rule in modern treatments of clowns, set as early as Charles Dickens' comprehensive rewriting, during the post-Regency decline of the pantomime shows, of the memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi (1778-1837), the father of modern-day clowns. More recently, the feeling of a long-gone golden era of clowns suffuses Federico Fellini's mockumentary *The Clowns* (1970), inspired by his early memories of circus and clowns. Featuring famous clowns and clown acts, the film's final part is appropriately devoted to a lengthy and extravagant restaging of the celebrated Fratellini brothers' 'funeral of a clown' act. Half way through the film, the French circus historian Tristan Rémy (1897-1977), the first to chronicle the life, work and techniques of the great clowns (*Les Clowns*, 1945) and record in detail many of their most memorable acts and gags (*Entrées clownesques*, 1962), tells Fellini he shouldn't bother with a now defunct art, for 'the circus has no longer meaning in the modern world'. No such elegiac mood is to be found in the work of Paul Bouissac, however, for whom the world of the circus and its clowns forms a vital part of his scientific autobiography, since it has been the principal preoccupation of his ethnographic research for the past forty years, in the circus rings and stages of Europe, Asia and the Americas. His *Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning* is generously interlaced with fieldnotes, detailed descriptions of clown acts, interviews and photographs taken during his globetrotting fieldwork. Most importantly, it represents the latest installment of a series of publications which, starting with *Circus and Culture: A semiotic approach* (Indiana UP, 1976), includes also *Semiotics of the Circus* (De Gruyter, 2010) and *Circus as Multimodal Discourse* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012). Taken as a whole, this tetralogy establishes Bouissac as the leading scholar of circus studies, all the while offering

the most forceful demonstration of the analytical and interpretative potential of interweaving ethnography and semiotics.

The book focuses on the European clown tradition from Joseph Grimaldi to contemporary performers. The first four chapters cover the elements that, according to Bouissac, comprise the 'lexicon of the multimodal language of clowning', i.e. makeup, costumes, props and gags. The detailed recording and analysis of the appearance of clowns reveals that the variations in makeup and costume that different performers adopt as their signatures, follow two highly codified generic patterns broadly known in the circus jargon as the *whiteface* clowns and the *augustes*. More specifically, the whiteface and the auguste 'form a semiotic couple in which the signs that define one are inverted in the other' (Bouissac 2015: 39). The former's makeup expresses arrogance and anger, while his costume is distinguished by its elaborate decoration and bright colours. The auguste's makeup, on the other hand, suggests 'innocence, positive feelings, playfulness, and submission' (Bouissac 2015: 36), while his attire consists in an ill-fitting mishmash of shabby and ragged clothes. With the whiteface's haughtiness, splendor and deftness expressing social dominance and cultural authority, played out in his systematic bullying and victimisation of an inept, naïve and awkward auguste, the whiteface/auguste couple represents 'a stereotypical icon of social differences' (Bouissac 2015: 55).

If the whiteface/auguste dyad is a caricatured depiction of status and class differences, the world of clown props and gags is our world 'turned upside down'. The objects and artifacts used in clown acts are typically unmoored from their normal function, defamiliarizing the everyday world of habit and utility. Their use-value is twisted and corrupted by the surprising and, sometimes, even shocking meaning they assume in the ring, in a manner similar to the images of surrealist poetry and art (Bouissac 2015: 62-63). An analogous principle of radical incongruity marks the rhetorical structure of clown gags, which are generated by the same basic semiotic logic of 'connecting two strongly disconnected cultural objects (artifacts, behaviors, concepts, or ontological categories) that nevertheless are part of a formal or material continuum' (Bouissac 2015: 94).

The next four chapters outline the grammar of clowning, the cultural rules and codes at play in the production of clown acts. At the core of this purposely anti-grammatical grammar is the playful breaking of socio-cultural norms and rules, the 'ritualistic flouting of the social order' (Bouissac 2015: 114). Uniquely qualified for unveiling the arbitrariness of authority and institutional violence is the auguste, the non-normalised outsider. Not accidentally, the solo clown performers, who emerged since the 1960s and subsequently led the novel type of immersive performances whereby members of the audience are selectively invited to take part in the comic process, are exclusively augustes. In this case, though, Bouissac points out, the clown combines elements of the whiteface and the auguste by playing tricks of his own, this time at the expense of the audience. Far from representing a latterday synthesis, moreover, it is this yet undivided into the whiteface/auguste dyad type of clown which is genealogically linked to the archetypal type of the trickster.

Widening his initial geocultural focus on the European clown tradition, Bouissac proceeds to trace the trickster's diverse avatars in widely different historical eras and cultural regions of the world. Mustering a wide range of mythological and ethnographic evidence, he suggests that the European clown tradition is generated by a more fundamental dynamic structure that can be traced back at the heart of all cultures. All the clown acts that have been performed in European circuses over the last two centuries are but fragments of a grand narrative, 'mere episodes of a much larger story in which the clown tricks humans into coming face to face with the arbitrariness of their culture and the fragility of their identity' (Bouissac 2015: 136). Combining the meticulous attention to the contingent, context-bound character of clown acts and performances, their endless variations, transformations and innovations, with the steadfast search for underlying fundamental rules and similarities, Bouissac's work is clearly part of another grand, this time scientific narrative, inaugurated by Claude Levi-Strauss in *La Pensee Sauvage* and *Mythologiques*. His *Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning* suggests that next to the universality of reason we should also admit the universality of anti-reason, while the trickster, by virtue of being the ambiguous, unpredictable and equivocal character that mediates polar opposites – such as life and death, inside and outside, order and disorder (Levi-Strauss 1963) – has the inherently metacultural function of reminding us that 'nothing is sacred'.

Recently, we have seen once again announcements of the imminent end of the clown (see e.g. Walker 2014). The closure, after 146 years, of the Ringling Brothers, Burnum & Bailey Circus, the oldest and most famous circus in the United States, has certainly provoked a nostalgia-infused spate of articles on the dying art of the circus (see e.g. Zinoman 2017). As on previous occasions, the announcements seem rather exaggerated. Next to a wave of important recent studies on the circus and the clowns (e.g. Albrecht 2006; Carlyon 2016; Peacock 2009; Weber et al. 2012), often induced by the rise of performance studies, we are witnessing a profusion of circus and clown culture. In his rather sceptical survey of the latter, Bouissac notes that the clown has become a stock character in children parties, parades, charity events, marketing campaigns and even an acclaimed part of therapeutic entertainment programmes in hospitals. Some of these practices inevitably raise the issue of the rampant banalization of clowning. Perhaps the most telling example is the ubiquitous Ronald McDonald clown figure, officially styled as the Chief Happiness Officer of the McDonald fast-food corporation. Still others, like the development of the rebel clown in contemporary cultural activism, seem to tap directly into the iconoclastic tradition of the trickster. At the same time, the last quarter of the twentieth century has seen the worldwide burgeoning of clown festivals and organizations, as well as of clown and circus schools and colleges (Sugarman 2001). The latter developments have unwittingly fostered the globalisation of western clown culture. The auguste type, in particular, has become part of an international lingua franca adopted in areas as varied as Japan, China and Africa, leading inevitably to the marginalization of the indigeneous clowning traditions.

Bouissac concludes with an excursus on the most controversial question of all, the nature

and the causes of humor and laughter. In what is admittedly the most tentative part of his book, the hypotheses he puts forward, inspired as they are by neuroscience, inevitably raise the thorny mind/body issue. His masterful ethno-semiotic analysis of the 'laughing culture' of clowning certainly has no need of the obscure riddle of the *homo ridens*.

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