

Kyriaki Frantzi (Macquarie University, Australia): Dimitris  
Dimitriadis/Michael Marmarinos, *Dying as a Country* – A Presentation

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Kyriaki Frantzi has chosen to present a theatrical adaptation by a renowned stage director, M. Marmarinos, of an influential novel by an equally renowned contemporary writer, D. Dimitriadis.

The novel, *Dying as a Country* (an English rendering as "I Am Dying as a Country" would have been more exact) was written 30 years ago whereas the staging is recent. What has attracted the attention of the Author (Frantzi) is a contextualization (i.e. she thinks that Dimitriadis, held for unimportant three decades ago, had foreseen the problems accumulated in present day Greece), and a double play on the meanings of the word "displacement". This word means in everyday social usage a transfer in place, and figuratively, in psychology the transfer of emotions from the object that originally evoked them to a substitute, as e.g. in dreams. A displacement activity, in this way, would be another form of behaviour for what is normal or expected, typically when there is a conflict of impulses.

With regard to contextualization, relying on Bakhtin's and Genet's literary considerations, the author thinks the Marmarinos production not only reflects what is happening in actual Greece but goes even beyond Greek space and time since what characterizes our age is a situation with which many people around the globe can identify themselves.

Theatrical adaptations are not a rarity in Greece and Marmarinos, a prolific director, has a rich repertoire from antique works down to our times like "Akropolis", a Polish play, on which he is working now. Adaptations always bring also modifications. In this way, the opening scene of the Marmarinos performance is not found in the original text. There is a long queue of Athenians which moves from the street, crossing the stage, to the interior of an old factory, implying an immigrant woman's complaints. As I read in an interview, Dimitriadis, having been invited to a rehearsal in 2007, remarked that he had the feeling that his work had been taken away from him. Yet, the problem with the immigrants has become one of the burning questions in Greece, mainly in Athens. Drawing on Dimitriadis free-tongued text, the possibilities of stage-craft, and the actual situation in his city that cannot be minimized, Marmarinos creates a two-level framework, where the main idea is life and death revolving in a never ending cycle with a peak where a monologue informs the audience that this country is hateful. This is the pessimistic moral Dimitriadis conveys to his audience and Marmarinos transfers to us.

Kyriaki Frantzi, in her presentation, insightfully exploits the theoretical arsenal necessary to tackle the problems in interpreting theatrical adaptations drawing on e.g. the Bakhtinian concepts (such as the chronotope), that of the metanarrative, the archetypal elements and the many faces of displacement in time and space that can mean both a transfer from the playwright's epoch to the present and a transfer of forms of migration which is an actual problem not only in Greece but also world-wide.

What I would question, if I understood the solution suggested for the rather negative actual situation at all, is that peremptory radicalism which surfaces in the Epilogue summoning even mythical forces of rage to redeem life. Of course, the moral of both the staging and the original is that "one must be absolutely modern", and one of the reasons of the problems in this world, and especially of Greece, is the lack of this quality. Shockingly, Greece is accused of having become "necrophile", "gerontophile", and more. Does this mean, once again, that "one must look forward", and only forward, and not at all back? This already has been suggested by some thinkers. In a country like Greece, with such a prestigious cultural heritage, this advice, in my opinion, musn't be given and cannot be accepted. On the contrary, I would say, *unfortunately*, there already is a heavy gap in the everyday life of this country between the present and its worthy past. Past values do not do any harm, they help the present and the future, have a look at neighbouring Italy! Much more, as Marmarinos complains himself, it is education that must be upgraded.