

Traditional oral theatre meets popular middle-class melodrama: the Greek shadow-theatre puppeteer Vasilaros¹

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Vasilaros (1899–1979), a moderately educated Greek shadow-theatre puppeteer, adapted popular melodramas and novels with strong bourgeois morality, such as Οι δύο λοχία in 1931, Η άγνωστος in 1937, Αι δύο ορφαναί in 1944, and Οι άθλιοι in 1955. The adaptations indicate that by the mid-1930s, the borderline between the traditional oral art of shadow theatre and mainstream culture had become considerably blurred. This article explores the convergence of these two cultures in terms of dramatic structure and ideology.

The Greek karaghiozis,² in the form in which it developed from the 1890s until the 1950s, was a traditional type of shadow theatre that articulated the worldview of the lower social strata of Greece during the early phases of the country's urbanization. Its popularity peaked in the 1930s, when it became the favourite spectacle for peasants and plebeian townspeople.³ Named after its principal character, which originated from the Ottoman Karagöz,⁴ karaghiozis was an oral form of art: its composition,

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2 In the text the capitalized term 'Karaghiozis' will indicate the name of the principal character, while the term 'karaghiozis' will denote the genre of Greek shadow theatre in which Karaghiozis is that character.

3 For the characteristics and tradition of karaghiozis performance, see the following studies in English: L. S. Myrsiades and K. Myrsiades, *The Karagiozis Heroic Performance in Greek Shadow Theater* (Hanover NH 1988); L. S. Myrsiades and K. Myrsiades, *Karagiozis: Culture and Comedy in Greek Puppet Theatre* (Lexington KY 1992); R. Gudas, *The Bitter-Sweet Art: Karaghiozis, the Greek Shadow Theater* (Athens 1986).

4 A. Mystakidou, *Karagöz: Το θέατρο σκιών στην Ελλάδα και στην Τουρκία* (Athens 1982); A. Stavrakopoulou, 'Ottoman Karagöz and Greek shadow theater: Communicational shifts and variants in a multi-ethnic and ethnic context', in D. P. Brookshaw (ed.), *Ruse and Wit: The Humorous in Arabic, Persian and Turkish Narrative* (Cambridge MA 2012) 146–57.

performance and transmission were achieved by word of mouth, even though there was a certain degree of reliance on 'the written or printed word'.⁵ New performances were the result of a collective process and the issue of copyright was therefore irrelevant to the craft's conventions.

Any innovative element introduced by a puppeteer became part of that tradition only with the audience's approval and its adoption by the other members of the guild.⁶ In the process of assimilation, the new material gradually lost many of its original features, conforming to the conventions of *karaghiozis*. The most common conventions were the typical stage design, which represented *Karaghiozis'* hut on one side of the *berdés* (the illuminated cloth screen) and the Pasha's palace on the other; the location of the action in undefined public spaces; the vague historical time of the Ottoman occupation; and the standard characters (approximately twelve in total). The shadow-theatre puppeteer Giorgos Charidimos stated, as recently as 1971, that non-traditional texts – those that were excessively personal and improvisatory, as well as those that were literary and derivative – ultimately dropped out of the tradition as invariants and were rejected by the larger body of players and the *karaghiozis* audience.⁷

Although *karaghiozis* was collectively produced, the heart of the performance was (and still is) a single man: the *karaghiozopaichtis* (*karaghiozis* performer), who voiced and manipulated the two-dimensional figures behind the *berdés*. Typically, he belonged to the lower social strata, and his repertoire consisted mainly of comedies in which *Karaghiozis* was the protagonist. Apart from comedies, the art form included a significant number of patriotic, historical, and social dramas, bandit plays, bucolic idylls, and some performances originating from popular tales and detective stories. The role of *Karaghiozis* himself in the non-comedic performances was not always significant. The subjects of the plays were primarily drawn from glove-puppet theatre, daily life and history. They also drew inspiration from pantomime, weekly pulp novels and dramatic theatre and cinema.⁸ The adaptation of the borrowed material was mainly achieved by means of oral communication as the majority of puppeteers were illiterate.⁹

In contrast to his illiterate fellow performers the puppeteer Vasilaros (Vasileios Andrikopoulos, born Rododafni, Aigio, 1899, died Alissos, Achaia, 1979: see

5 R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Bloomington and Indianapolis IN 1992) 16.

6 This term translates the Greek word 'συντεχνία' which is used by T. Hadzipantazis, *Η εισβολή του Καραγκιόζη στην Αθήνα του 1890* (Athens 1984) 51.

7 L. Myrsiades, 'Oral traditional form in the *Karaghiozis* performance', *Ελληνικά* 36 (1985) 129, on the basis of J. Beech-Braithwaite, *Taped Performances and Interviews with Seven Karaghiozis Players*, nine tapes, Greece 1971 (deposited in Center for the Study of Oral Literature, Harvard University).

8 Hatzipantazis, *Εισβολή του Καραγκιόζη*, 50.

9 Mimaros (who performed during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century), Dinos Theodoropoulos (1890-1975) and Vasilaros were known exceptions of literate shadow-theatre puppeteers in the pre-war era. For Theodoropoulos, see A. Stavrakopoulou, 'Παράδοση και ανανέωση: ο καραγκιοζοπαίχτης Ντίνος Θεοδωρόπουλος στην Πάτρα της δεκαετίας του 1930', in I. Vivilakis (ed.), *Το ελληνικό θέατρο από τον 17^ο στον 20^ό αιώνα* (Athens 2002) 264.



Fig. 1. Vasilaros. Cutting glued to Notebook no. 17. Courtesy of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno

Figure 1) was relatively well-educated, having attended high school in the years before the First World War.¹⁰ His career extended from 1918 to 1968, when he retired.¹¹ His education enabled him to have immediate access to written sources. Facing strong competition from contemporary theatre and cinema, Vasilaros attempted to update the

10 According to his daughter Aikaterini Alexandropoulou, Vasilaros actually graduated from the Σχολαρχείον, a three-year school of the pre-war Greek educational system that stood on an intermediary level between the four-year primary school and the three-year high school (see A. Milionis, *Σκιές στο φως των κερών*, ed. M. Nikolopoulou [Patras 2001] 63).

11 Milionis, *Σκιές στο φως των κερών*, 70.

traditional repertoire of *karaghiozis* by adapting – among other written sources – French popular melodramas and novels with strong bourgeois morality, such as Baudouin d’Aubigny and August Maillard’s *Les deux sergents* (*Οι δύο λοχία*) in 1931, Alexandre Bisson’s *La Femme X...* (*Η άγνωστος*) in 1937, Adolphe d’Ennery and Eugène Cormon’s *Les deux orphelines* (*Αι δύο ορφαναί*) in 1944, and Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* (*Οι άθλιοι*) in 1955.

The texts discussed in this article are not transcriptions of performances. They were recorded by Vasilaros in notebooks, which, after having changed hands several times, are now preserved in the collections of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies (IMS) in Rethymno and the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, National Bank Cultural Foundation (ELIA–MIET) in Athens. The first manuscript of *Οι δύο λοχία* dates from 1931. It was composed in collaboration with the actor Petros Vlachos, who probably dictated the text of the translated drama. Vasilaros made the necessary alterations to the play according to the conventions of shadow theatre.¹² The only manuscript of *Αι δύο ορφαναί* dates from 1950.¹³ Both notebooks contain diary comments describing the *karaghiozopaichtis*’ adventures during his tours around the villages and towns of southern Greece. The dates and diary entries indicate that Vasilaros consulted his manuscripts regularly, but do not offer any insight into the way in which he converted the scripts into performances. The manuscripts of *Οι άθλιοι*¹⁴ and

12 The original French melodrama *Les Deux Sergents* was first published in 1823. It was initially translated and performed by a Greek theatre company in 1862 (see T. Hatzipantazis, *Από του Νείλου μέχρι του Δουνάβεως*, vol. A1 [Herakleion 2002] 514). During the 1880s it was adapted for pantomime, and in 1899 for puppet theatre (see T. Hatzipantazis, *Από του Νείλου μέχρι του Δουνάβεως*, vol. B1 [Herakleion 2012] 190; A. Magouliotis, *Ιστορία του νεοελληνικού κουκλοθέατρου (1870–1938)* [Athens 2012] 119–20). Vasilaros’ play has survived in three manuscripts preserved in the Collection of the IMS, although there is a fourth written version of the same play, dated 23 April 1934, in the private collection of shadow-theatre puppeteer Kostas Makris in Patras, which is not available for inspection. The earliest text of the play in IMS was written in 1931 (*Οι δύο λοχία*, Notebook no. 1). It was followed by a long section of the second act of the play, which was added at some time between 4 November 1932 and 1 June 1933, and was a more thorough reworking of the beginning of the original’s third act (the family reunion and separation). The third version of the same play was created in April 1974 (*Οι δύο λοχία*, IMS, Notebook no. 6). The first and third versions are both structured in three acts. The adapted texts have a number of similarities with the dramatic translation of the French original (see the anonymous Greek translation of the drama: B. Daubigny, *Οι δύο λοχία* [Athens 1924]). The play was first performed by Vasilaros at Patras on 29 and 30 May and 3 June 1934 (*Νεολόγος Πατρών*, 29 and 30 May 1934, and 3 June 1934).

13 *Αι δύο ορφαναί* was adapted from an anonymous Greek translation of *Les deux orphelines* (1874) and is preserved in the Performing Arts Documents Collection, ELIA–MIET, Notebook no. 47 (1950). Vasilaros asserted that he initially created it on 18 June 1944 (*ibid.*, unnumbered page before p. 1). He made some significant changes to the original dramatic text. The comparison of the texts was made with the Greek translation: A. d’Ennery, *Αι δύο ορφαναί*, trans. S. Lambros (Athens 1903).

14 At the end of the text, Vasilaros noted that initially he wrote the play in 1955 without mentioning any source apart from Hugo’s novel (see *Οι άθλιοι*, IMS, Notebook no. 37 [(1970)] 40). The specific Greek translation of the French original used by Vasilaros has not yet been identified. However, a dramatic adaptation of the novel (which has not yet been found) was performed by Greek theatre companies after 1878 and during

*Η άγνωστος*¹⁵ date from 1970 and 1975 respectively, but the plays were initially created in 1955 and 1937. In all likelihood, this suggests that they were revised at the leisure of a retired man. Indeed, Vasilaros probably had a translation of the original drama *La Femme X...* at hand, as in many cases he repeated its dialogue almost verbatim. In other words, all the texts either underwent a more thorough process of written composition or did not depart significantly from their literary sources. The characters, language and structure are more complex and rigid than in typical performances of karaghiozis, which usually have a linear plot development.¹⁶ Inevitably, current research can only provide indirect clues with regard to the actual performances of these plays. Yet, as we shall see, the deviation of the texts from the karaghiozis tradition derived not so much from the way in which they were recorded as from the incongruity of the perspectives the two genres represented.

Definition of the terms ‘melodrama’ and ‘melodramatic’

Before commencing the analysis, and for the sake of accuracy, the meaning of the terms ‘melodrama’ and ‘melodramatic’, as used in this article, should be clarified. According to *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, the term ‘melodrama’ now denotes ‘a dramatic piece characterised by sensational incident and violent appeals to emotions, but with a happy ending’.¹⁷ In the context of this article, the term will describe the specific dramatic genre that appeared in European theatre at the end of the eighteenth century and reached its full expression in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Oscar Brockett, whose description of melodrama includes the content, play structure and stage production of the genre, the characteristics of melodrama can be summarized briefly as a story-pattern of a virtuous hero or heroine who is relentlessly hounded by a villain and is rescued from apparently insurmountable difficulties only after facing a series of threats to life, reputation or happiness. Strict poetic justice is always meted out: although the villains appear to succeed until the final scene, they are always defeated. After some further structural analysis Brockett concludes by emphasizing the ‘simple, powerful

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the interwar years (see Hatzipantazis, *Από τον Νείλου*, B2, 394; A. Vasileiou, *Εκσυγχρονισμός ή παράδοση; Το θέατρο πρόσας στην Αθήνα του Μεσοπολέμου* [(Athens 2004)], supplementary CD, entry: *Οι άθλιοι*).

15 Vasilaros, *Η άγνωστος*, IMS, Notebook no. 47 (1975). Vasilaros dated the initial creation of the play to 1937 (*ibid.*, 75). The shadow-theatre puppeteer Giannaros asserted that *La Femme X...* was adapted for the shadow theatre by public servant Michail Margaritis, who wrote several other plays for Vasilaros. (This information was provided to the author during an interview with Giannaros on 24 June 2012.) For the comparison between Vasilaros’ text and the dramatic play, the French edition of the play was used because the translated drama has not been found (see A. Bisson, *La Femme X..., drame en cinq actes dont un prologue* [(Paris 1908)]).

16 For the structure of comedies in traditional karaghiozis, see G. Sifakis, *Η παραδοσιακή δραματολογία του Καραγκιόζη* (Athens 1984).

17 See entry ‘melodrama’ in *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Glasgow 1971), I, 321–22.

stories' and the 'unequivocal moral tone' of the genre.¹⁸ It should be noted that the moral tone, although unequivocal, did not remain unaltered during the genre's historical development, but was adapted to the moral values of the audience that patronized it. In the early melodramas of August von Kotzebue and Guilbert de Pixérécourt, bourgeois morality was strong,¹⁹ but for a short period melodramas that expressed working people's beliefs were seen on stage as well.²⁰ Eventually the bourgeois ethic prevailed, and it was this type of melodrama that Greek theatre companies introduced into their repertoire around 1875.²¹

In the context of melodrama, women were usually at the centre of the plot, not only because they offered an impressive spectacle of suffering due to their perceived weakness, but also because melodrama writers had adopted the ideas of the nineteenth-century bourgeois moralists, who viewed women as the defenders of social morality.²²

Recalling Peter Brooks' analysis of the melodramatic imagination, the adjective 'melodramatic' will be used here to indicate the use of over-dramatized sensations and feelings, as well as a moral polarization in the motif of pure evil threatening untainted good, as represented in other genres of drama or literature.²³ A systematic examination of the karaghiozis repertoire, which possibly consists of three to four hundred plays, would probably reveal that the melodramatic battle between good and evil is a recurrent motif in the non-comedic performances. Evil is usually embodied in national enemies or invaders of Greece in the numerous heroic plays. Depending on the historical period of the action, the enemies may be Persians, Turks, French, English or Germans. However, malevolent figures appear in some other plays as well, in the form of vampires, beasts, sorceresses, wicked women, molesters of female honour, hardened criminals, pirates,

18 O. Brockett, *History of the Theatre* (Boston 1991) 386. See also D. Gerould, 'Russian formalist theories of melodrama', *Journal of American Culture* 1 (1987) 152–68; J. Smith, *Μελόδραμα*, trans. I. Ralli and K. Chatzidimou (Athens 1981) 29; W. P. Steele, *The Character of Melodrama: An Examination through Dion Boucicault's 'The Poor of New York'* (Orono ME 1968) 4–9. Brockett's description of melodrama, although contained in a general history of theatre, is accurate and comprehensive.

19 G. Hyslop, 'Pixérécourt and the French melodrama debate: Instructing boulevard theatre audiences', in J. Redmond (ed.), *Themes in Drama, 14: Melodrama* (Cambridge 1992) 61–85; G. Williamson, 'What killed August von Kotzebue? The temptations of virtue and the political theology of German nationalism, 1789–1819', *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000) 890–943.

20 A. Denis, 'L'influence dramatique allemande: 1798–1820', *Europe* 703/704: *Le Mélodrame* (1987) 33–8; M. Hays, 'Αναπαραστάσεις της αυτοκρατορίας: Τάξεις, κουλτούρα και το λαϊκό θέατρο του 19^{ου} αιώνα', in A. Nikolopoulou and S. Patsalidis (eds.), *Μελόδραμα: Ειδολογικοί και ιδεολογικοί μετασχηματισμοί* (Thessaloniki 2001) 63–92; A. Nikolopoulou, "'Η τελευταία εξέγερση των εργατών": Αγροτικά και λουδιτικά μελοδράματα στην Αγγλία', *ibid.*, 93–122.

21 Hatzipantazis, *Από τον Νείλου*, A1, 248–54.

22 I. Papageorgiou, 'Οι αποκλίνοσες ηρωίδες του μυθιστορηματικού δράματος ως αφετηρία διαλόγου για τον ρόλο της γυναίκας (1871–1879)', in N. Papandreou and E. Vafeiadi (eds.), *Ζητήματα ιστορίας του νεοελληνικού θεάτρου* (Herakleion 2007) 135–51, and L. Métayer, 'La leçon de l'héroïne (1830–1870)', *Europe*, *ibid.*, 39–40.

23 P. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven and London 1995) viii–xii.

or jealous husbands. In some comic plays even the devil appears in person (for example, *Ο ερωτευμένος διάβολος, Ο διάβολος στο μπουκάλι*).

The 'ethic' of karaghiozis

Notwithstanding the strong melodramatic character of many plays, the aesthetics, morals and plot structure of melodrama differ significantly from the conventions of traditional Greek shadow theatre. Karaghiozis could probably be classified among the last European spectacles that bore strong features of the carnival tradition, as described by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*.²⁴ It was a spectacle that depicted the world turned upside-down, as many pre-industrial, popular Western entertainments did (sotties, feasts of fools, farces, puppet theatre, early *commedia dell'arte* and suchlike). In some performances, such as *Χαμάμι*, a play belonging to the Ottoman Karagöz repertoire that was performed in Greece until the 1880s, Karagöz bore noticeable fertility symbols and used shockingly obscene language.²⁵ These traits were partly inherited by his Greek descendant, who was a hunchback with a lavishly long arm that symbolized fertility. A large portion of the Ottoman Karagöz's sexually charged content vanished in the process of its adaptation to Greece. For example, *Χαμάμι* disappeared from the repertoire and karaghiozis became more suitable for family entertainment.²⁶ However, it never fully lost its vulgar character. Even in the 1930s, some *karaghiozopaichtes* used a rather rude vocabulary when the audience was exclusively male. Dimitrios Pangalos and Dimitrios Manolopoulos, two of the most popular puppeteers of that time, were famous for their billingsgate,²⁷ and Giannaros, Nikos Panagiotaras, and Sotiris Kaproulias often performed the play *Το εργαλείον του Καραγκιόζη*, which contained explicit sexual connotations. Similar content can be found in the song *Ο φωτογράφος* performed by Panagiotaras.²⁸

From a certain point of view, even the moderate carnival humour of karaghiozis paid little respect to the Western bourgeois morality that had only recently been introduced to Greece, such as the values of the nuclear family, perseverance, abstinence, self-restraint, diligence, philanthropy and conformity to state law and social hierarchy (i.e. to the moral codes propagated by middle-class melodrama).²⁹ Karaghiozis remained an iconoclastic hero whose ethical approach lacked the moral polarization of melodrama.

24 G. Kiourtsakis, *Καρναβάλι και Καραγκιόζης. Οι ρίζες και οι μεταμορφώσεις του λαϊκού γέλιου* (Athens 1985).

25 W. Puchner, *Λαϊκό θέατρο στην Ελλάδα και στα Βαλκάνια* (Athens 1988) 167–9; Hatzipantazis, *Από του Νείλου*, B1, 220; Myrsiades, *Heroic Performance*, 14–15.

26 Hatzipantazis, *Εισβολή του Καραγκιόζη*, 34–6.

27 V. Christopoulos, *Ορέστης: Ο Πατρινός καραγκιοζοπαίχτης Ανέστης Βακάλογλου* (Patras 1999) 14, 82.

28 K. Tsipiras, *Έλληνες καραγκιοζοπαίχτες πίσω από τα φώτα του μπερντέ* (Athens 2002) supplementary CD, recording no. 4.

29 M. Korasidou, *Οι άθλιοι των Αθηνών και οι θεραπευτές τους: Φτώχεια και φιλανθρωπία στην ελληνική πρωτεύουσα τον 19ο αιώνα* (Athens 2000); E. Varika, *Η εξέγερση των κυριών: Η γένεση μιας φεμινιστικής συνειδησης στην Ελλάδα 1833–1907* (Athens 2004) 49–56.

Although the mere act of stage mockery does not necessarily entail actual disobedience to prevalent values, audiences must have felt great relief watching Karaghiozis' attempts to avoid work, provided he could find an alternative way to satisfy his insatiable hunger – including stealing. Similarly, spectators were not appalled by the protagonist's habit of having his children sleep for a couple of days in order to avoid feeding them; nor were they shocked by his violent and abusive behaviour towards his perpetually starving family.³⁰ Moreover, his voracious appetite stood in stark contrast to the bourgeois values of abstinence and self-restraint. Instead of causing aversion, those images functioned as a glorification of the denigrated bodily aspect of human existence, as Bakhtin argues with regard to the popular comic tradition in Europe.³¹

One could argue that the only high values remaining relatively intact in karaghiozis satire were God and the fatherland. Patriotic performances, with stories drawn mostly from the struggle of the Greeks against Ottoman occupation, articulated the common people's hatred of the Turks. Such performances actually consolidated the phenomenon of parallel worldviews co-existing in the same performance. Abutting the iconoclastic and comic themes stood sanctified patriotic sentiments,³² albeit without having a substantial effect on the protagonist's amoral aspects.

In the case of Vasilaros, the fusion of the comic tradition of karaghiozis with more serious themes became the particular feature of his repertoire because of his solemn acting style, which was inadequate for comedic performance.³³ However, the adaptation of middle-class melodramas indicates that by the mid-1930s – when Vasilaros created his first play of that type – the boundaries between traditional oral art and mainstream culture had been considerably blurred. Through an analysis of Vasilaros' melodramas, this article examines the features of the convergence between these two traditions.³⁴ Did Vasilaros' innovations push the oral art of karaghiozis to its limits – that is, to the border of a middle-class system of values and aesthetics that constituted the 'official culture' of the time?³⁵

Early melodramas in the repertoire of karaghiozis

In the 1890s, melodramas and plays with strong melodramatic elements had already made their way into Greek shadow theatre. The first successful shadow-theatre

30 L. Myrsiades, 'The female role in the Karaghiozis performance', *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 44 (1980) 48–154.

31 M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington 1965) 62–4; Kiourtsakis, *Καρναβάλι και Καραγκιόζης*.

32 L. Myrsiades, 'Theater and society: Social content and effect in the Karaghiozis performance', *Folia Neohellenica* 4 (1982) 150–2.

33 Christopoulos, *Ορέστης*, 157–8.

34 For a discussion of the terms 'oral tradition' and 'written tradition', see J. Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge 1987) 80–1.

35 Myrsiades and Myrsiades, *Culture and Comedy*, 15–17.

melodrama was *Γενοβέφα*. It belongs to the type of dramas regarding virtuous women who are accused unjustly, suffer for long periods of time and are eventually reinstated to their former honour. The plot originated from Christoph von Schmid's juvenile novel *Genovefa* (1825), which was translated into Greek as early as 1846.³⁶ It underwent several additional translations and was adapted for pantomime in the 1880s³⁷ and for glove-puppet theatre performances around 1899.³⁸ It is likely that the story was transferred to the shadow theatre from the puppet-theatre version.³⁹ The novel itself was based on the folktale motif of the maiden or wife whose hands are cut off, which had long-term appeal in various forms in the fantasy tales of Europe. The Greek variants, under the name *Κουτσοχέρα* or *Κουλοχέρα*, were well known in traditional culture.⁴⁰

Another popular tale with strong melodramatic features that was adapted early on for the shadow theatre – probably having been drawn from pantomime and glove-puppet theatre – was the story of the victorious Byzantine general Belisarius, who, like Genovefa, was unjustly slandered.⁴¹ In his case, the slanderer was the general's degenerate and malicious wife, who is called Antonina in most versions of the karaghiozis play. Belisarius was blinded by the emperor Justinian, and wandered around as a beggar (see Figure 2). His name was eventually cleared, and he was restored to his previous honourable position shortly before his death.⁴² The success of the karaghiozis play

36 C. Schmid, *Γενοβέφα, ή Η αρετή θριαμβεύουσα: Ιστορία αρχαία*, trans. and adapted from the German by I. Apostolos (Hermoupolis 1846).

37 Hatzipantazis, *Από του Νείλου*, B1, 190.

38 T. Hatzipantazis, 'Προσαρμογή λογίων κειμένων στο δραματολόγιο του Καραγκιόζη', in *Όψεις της λαϊκής και της λόγιας νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας: 5η επιστημονική Συνάντηση αφιερωμένη στον Γιάννη Αποστολάκη, Θεσσαλονίκη, 14–16 Μαΐου 1992* (Thessaloniki 1984) 50.

39 Two texts of *Γενοβέφα* for karaghiozis performances have been found. The first is a summary written by the puppeteer Sotiris Spatharis. The second was written by Vasilaros. A third version, written by Vasilaros and dated 1937, is preserved in the private archive of Kostas Makris and is not accessible to the public. The play remained in the post-war repertoire of Nionios Patras and Manthos Athinaios (see S. and E. Spatharis, *Ο Καραγκιόζης των Σπαθάρηδων*, ed. G. Soldatos [Athens 1979] 149–50; Vasilaros, *Γενοβέφα*, IMS, Notebook no. 27 [1975]; K. Tsipiras, *Ο ήχος του Καραγκιόζη* [Athens 2001] 200, 303).

40 G. Pefanis, *Το βασίλειο της Ευγένιας: Λογοτεχνικά διακείμενα και ανθρωπολογικά περιεχόμενα στην Ευγένια του Θεόδωρου Μοντσελέζε* (Athens 2005) 114–26.

41 For the popular narratives regarding Belisarius and its adaptations to karaghiozis theatre, see G. Andreadis, *Τα παιδιά της Αντιγόνης: Μνήμη και ιδεολογία στην νεώτερη Ελλάδα* (Athens 1989) 301–9; Hatzipantazis, 'Προσαρμογή λογίων κειμένων', 123; A. Chotzakoglou, 'Βυζαντινές πηγές της λαογραφίας: Το παράδειγμα της "μετάγγισης" του μύθου της τύφλωσης του στρατηγού Βελισάριου στο θέατρο σκιών', in *Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου («Λαϊκός πολιτισμός και έντεχνος λόγος, Αθήνα 08-12/12/2010»)*, Κέντρον Ερεύνης της Ελληνικής Λαογραφίας, II (Athens 2013) 585–608, 708.

42 There are seven recorded versions of *Βελισάριος* for karaghiozis, four of them written by Vasilaros. See *Ο Βελισάριος και ο Αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός*, ELIA–MIET, Notebook no. 105 [part of the play] (1940); *Ο Βελισάριος και ο Αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός*, ELIA–MIET, Notebook no. 164 (1955); *Ο στρατάρχης Βελισάριος των Βυζαντίου και ο αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός, 554 μ. Χριστόν*, IMS, Notebook no. 8 (1971); *Ο στρατάρχης Βελισάριος των Βυζαντίου και ο αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός, 554 μ. Χριστόν*, IMS, no. 9 (1973). A summary of the play was made by Tsipiras (*Ήχος του Καραγκιόζη*, 139–40) from a tape recording of the dictation of the play by Vasilaros in the period 1974 to 1977. The version of the play that Vasilaros

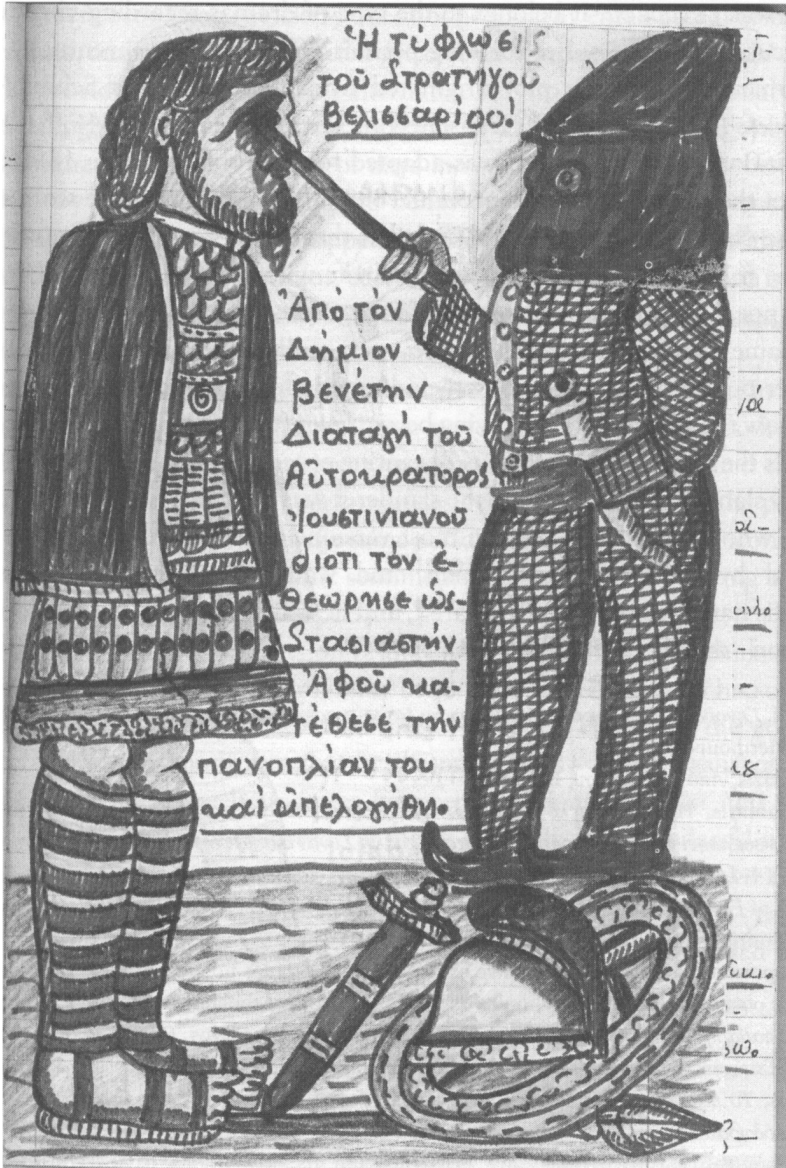


Fig. 2. Ο Βελισσάριος και ο Αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός. Vasilaros' drawing in Notebook no. 8. Courtesy of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno

Continued

performed after 1939, according to his own testimony, was composed by the learned shadow-theatre puppeteer and high-school teacher Ioannis Bobotinos (Ioannis Georgiopoulos). Later, Vasilaros included some additions made by Michail Margaritis. The version he used from 1932 until 1939 was composed by the actor Petros Vlachos (see Vasilaros, *Βελισσάριος*, IMS, Notebook no. 8, 71–2). Tsipiras has also recorded and transcribed, in the form of short summaries, the performances of Kouzaros, Manthos Athinaios and Orestis (see Tsipiras, *Ἦχος του Καραγκιόζη*, 138–40).

Ο Βελισσάριος και ο Αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός, or Ο στρατάρχης Βελισσάριος του Βυζαντίου και ο αυτοκράτωρ Ιουστινιανός (Βελισσάριος for short), was partly due to the parallel story of the victorious battle of the Byzantine Empire against the Persians. From a certain point of view, Βελισσάριος could be classified within the major category of patriotic (or heroic) plays, the only difference being that the Turks were replaced by the previous Eastern enemies of Byzantium.

Γενοβέφα glorified the male fantasy of the virtuous woman who sacrifices herself in the name of chastity. Βελισσάριος, on the other hand, expresses the male fear of the threatening female. The two plays utilized the binary patriarchal construction of woman as either Madonna or Eve that was widespread in European popular tradition and middle-class melodramas.⁴³ However, at this early stage, the appeal of those plays, and their polarized images of women, can be attributed to the long-standing presence of 'melodramatic' features in pre-industrial popular narratives. Consequently, these features should not be associated with any supposed influence of middle-class ideology on the lower social orders. Indeed, the French bourgeois melodrama *La foi, l'espérance, la charité*, written by Joseph-Bernard Rosier in 1848 and adapted for karaghiozis in 1892 as *Πίστις, ελπίς και έλεος*, turned out to be a short-lived endeavour on the *berdés*.⁴⁴ Obviously the sentiments of charity and pity did not appeal strongly to the lower-class audience of early 1890s Greece.

The binary construction of femininity reappears in a court melodrama with the long title *Το Δικαστήριο των ενόρκων. Εις το δικαστήριο του Ερρίκου – και Η κακούργος μητέρα. Απάτη φιλίας*, which probably entered the karaghiozis repertoire in the 1920s. The source of this karaghiozis play, which is the story of a cold-blooded mother who attempts to kill her child (who eventually survives) and accuses her husband of the attempted murder, has not been identified.⁴⁵

The clear-cut ethic of *Η κακούργος μητέρα* is not repeated in *Το ναύαγιον της παωχής Μαρίας*, whose origin is also unknown. The play was relatively popular in karaghiozis performances and had been an enduring success in puppet theatre.⁴⁶ The shadow-theatre version of *Το ναύαγιον* first appeared some time before 1930.⁴⁷ Maria is an ambiguous

43 Métayer, 'La leçon de l'héroïne', 42.

44 In the newspapers of the period only one reference has been found to a karaghiozis performance of *Πίστις, ελπίς και έλεος* in 1892. The play was probably borrowed from the glove-puppet theatre. For the theatrical melodrama see D. Spathis, 'Η εμφάνιση και καθιέρωση του μελοδράματος στην ελληνική σκηνή', in Nikolopoulou and Patsalidis, *Μελόδραμα*, 199–200.

45 *Η κακούργος μητέρα* was performed by Vasilaros and Dimitris Manolopoulos (see *Νεολόγος Πατρών*, 3 May 1930 and 4 June 1930). Vasilaros' version of the play was originally composed in 1934 with the collaboration of the lawyer Ioannis Bezerianos (Vasilaros, *Το Δικαστήριο των ενόρκων εις το δικαστήριο του Ερρίκου – και Η κακούργος μητέρα απάτη φιλίας*, IMS, Notebook no. 1 [1934] 24).

46 Magouliotis, *Ιστορία του νεοελληνικού κουκλοθέατρου*, 118, 119, 132.

47 *Το ναύαγιον της παωχής Μαρίας* was performed with various titles on the karaghiozis *berdés*. A play entitled *Η ανεύρεσις του Γιού εν μέσω τω ωκεανώ* was performed in 1930 in Patras, and *Ο Καραγκιόζης ναυαγός και το ταξίδι του στην Αγγλία* was performed in the same city in 1937 and 1939 by Dinos Theodoropoulos (*Νεολόγος Πατρών*, 5 August 1930 and 29 and 30 May 1937, *Τηλέγραφος*, Patras, 3 December 1939).

character in terms of melodrama. According to the performance by Vasilaros, Maria, an unmarried yet adorable woman and mother, lives with the British naval officer Wilielmos (Γουλιέλμος), who brutally abuses her.⁴⁸ After years of living together, he abandons her and abducts their child. Eventually the family is reunited, but Maria has to bear many misfortunes before this occurs, including a shipwreck. In another, shorter, recorded version by the shadow-theatre puppeteer Sotiris Spatharis, the British officer is eventually killed.⁴⁹ The play offers an impressive spectacle of female suffering, but it is mainly a lesson regarding the mistreatment of women. Karaghiozis – with whom both the artist and the audience identify – calls Wilielmos a ‘παλιάνθρωπο’ [sic], and repeatedly tries to reason with him.⁵⁰ The presentation of such a topic – single mothers and women’s claims to respect – constituted a veritable adoption of middle-class anxieties into the popular comic tradition. The issue of women’s social status had become a generic feature of melodrama, and the introduction of the genre into the repertoire of shadow theatre reinforced a preoccupation with the trope. Traditionally, karaghiozis and *commedia dell’arte* paid little attention to motherhood and the few female heroines were restricted to the roles of daughters, lovers, or potential wives.⁵¹

In his own version of the play Vasilaros attempted to place the theme of *To ναύγιον της πωχής Μαρίας* within the context of traditional rural life by adding a clumsy prologue in which the local authorities, represented by the Pasha, try but fail to force Wilielmos to marry Maria. Despite the obvious unsuitability of the subject to the spirit of karaghiozis, Vasilaros, in his incessant search for new plays, was to add another melodrama covering similar ground to the karaghiozis repertoire in the years to come.

Vasilaros’ adaptations

In its original version, Bisson’s *La Femme X...* (1908, adapted by Vasilaros in 1937) was a melodrama on the borders of the genre, bringing forth the theme of a woman’s mistreatment. It concerns Jacqueline (Ζακελίνα), a morally deviant woman who abandons her family for a lover. Although she eventually becomes a whore and suffers cruelty, no severe blame is placed on her, in contrast to what happens in other, similarly themed melodramas.⁵² Instead, the responsibility is laid on her inflexible and unfeeling

48 According to Hatziaivatis, Maria is ‘πολύ καλή, ευγενικιά, γλυκομίλητη, φιλόξενη, και αξιοπρεπεστάτη [γυναίκα]’ (Vasilaros, *Το ναύγιον της πωχής Μαρίας*, IMS, Notebook no. 35 [1972] 4).

49 Spatharis, *Καραγκιόζης των Σπαθάρηδων*, 155–6.

50 Vasilaros, *Ναύγιον*, 9.

51 I. Papageorgiou, ‘Η γυναικεία ταυτότητα στο ελληνικό θέατρο σκιών κατά την περίοδο του Μεσοπολέμου (1918–1940): Η διεκδίκηση της ερωτικής αυτοδιάθεσης’, in K. A. Dimadis (ed.), *Identities in the Greek World (from 1204 to the Present Day): Papers Read in the Fourth Congress of the European Society of Modern Greek Studies (Granada 9–12 September 2010)*, IV (Athens 2011) 208–9. Retrieved 22 January 2013 from http://www.eens.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Identities-in-the-Greek-world-Granada-2010-Congress-Vol_4-2011-isbn_978-960-99699-6-31.pdf.

52 Papageorgiou, ‘Οι αποκλινουσες ηρωίδες’.

husband, who did not guide her properly.⁵³ The play ends with the husband's regret at not having received his wife's forgiveness before she died.

The themes of this play were far too progressive for a society that often resorted to capital punishment for women who did not protect their chastity or for men who abused women.⁵⁴ To a certain degree, the play – especially in Vasilaros' adaptation – remains a drama of family honour, like many other Greek theatrical plays of the period,⁵⁵ and it was undoubtedly intended for a family audience.⁵⁶ Jacqueline kills her blackmailing lover in order to protect her son's honour. At the beginning of the play, Hatziavatis mentions that Jacqueline's scandalous behaviour had become the subject of public scrutiny, a comment that was not in the French original.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Vasilaros is careful to add the issue of social shame in the husband's speech that refers to the impact of his wife's act on his personal status in society; he omits Jacqueline's references that reveal her hatred of him.⁵⁸

Greek puppeteers of the period between the two world wars who tackled the issue of unmarried mothers or deviant women were less preoccupied by strong moral reservations. Middle-class playwrights of the same period (with some exceptions) preferred to offer unambiguous moral lessons by condemning unruly female behaviour.⁵⁹ The puppeteers' attitudes may have been radical in the solutions they offered, but they tended to be realistic. In the comic play *Το διαζύγιο του Καραγκιόζη ή Μπαγλαϊμ κουκιά*, Karaghiozis kills his unfaithful wife, while Hatziavatis forgives his own spouse.⁶⁰

The issue of the mistreatment of women that appears in *Το νανάγιον της πτωχής Μαρίας* and *Η άγνωστος* re-emerges in the popular melodrama *Αι δύο ορφανί* (adapted by Vasilaros in 1944 from the melodrama *Les deux orphelines* by Adolphe d'Ennery and Eugène Cormon), but for purely emotional purposes. Enrieti and her adopted sister Louiza come to Paris in search of a cure for the latter's blindness. In the big city, Enrieti is abducted by a debauched aristocrat and Louiza is victimized by a professional beggar, Kyra Frosar. The reunion of the two sisters and the healing of Louiza are delayed for several acts, but Enrieti is eventually rewarded with a husband and Louiza with a mother. Through the motif of threatened virtue, the French writers propagate bourgeois morality, juxtaposing it against the manners of two other social groups: lecherous aristocrats living a life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, and social outsiders

53 Vasilaros, *Η άγνωστος*, 47 and Bisson, *La Femme X...*, 65.

54 E. Avdela, *Διά λόγους τιμής: Βία, συναισθήματα και αξίες σε μια μετεμφυλιακή Ελλάδα* (Athens 2002).

55 M. Mavrogeni, 'Αμαρτωλές και παραστρατημένες γυναίκες στη νεοελληνική δραματολογία του Μεσοπολέμου', in A. Fotopoulos (ed.), *Η νεοελληνική λογοτεχνία στον Μεσοπόλεμο. Ιστορική και φιλολογική προσέγγιση, Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου (Πύργος Ηλείας 14-16 Μαΐου 2010)* (Pyrgos 2012) 497–510.

56 A play 'αποκλειστικώς για οικογένειες', see Vasilaros' note in *Η άγνωστος*, 74.

57 *Η άγνωστος*, 2.

58 *Η άγνωστος*, 17, 30–4; Bisson, *La Femme X...*, 48, 99.

59 Vasileiou, *Εκσυγχρονισμός ή παράδοση*; 81–2, 98–9, 223–6; Mavrogeni, 'Αμαρτωλές και παραστρατημένες', 508–10.

60 I. Moustakas, *Το διαζύγιο του Καραγκιόζη* (Athens 1939–40).

who 'prefer' begging and heavy drinking to an honest day's work. In addition to praising employment, the writers promote the ideas of mercy, penitence and philanthropy.⁶¹ Nevertheless, when performed in twentieth-century Greece, the social meaning of the play was lost, offering instead a simple spectacle of pathos and unjust suffering.

Baudouin d'Aubigny and August Maillard's melodrama *Les deux sergents* (1823), which Vasilaros adapted in 1931 under the title *Οι δύο λοχία*, represents a clearly bourgeois worldview. It is a play about manly companionship between soldiers, appropriate for the male-dominated audience of karaghiozis. In the play, Sergeant Wilielmos sacrifices the second most sacred value in his life, the nuclear family, in the name of friendship. He is another honest man who is falsely accused and condemned to death. In the adaptation, Vasilaros alters the original text on several occasions, mostly aiming to abbreviate it or to upgrade the comic role of the prison guard Alypitos, who is played by the Karaghiozis puppet (see Figure 3). The lengthy dialogues are shortened, and the references to philanthropy, sympathy, forgiveness, pity and gratitude are omitted. Vasilaros preferred to emphasize the underlying message of class struggle by modifying the part of the original text in which Wilielmos' young son relates the injustice he suffered at the hands of a rich woman. At this point, Vasilaros alters the response from the boy's mother: instead of instructing him to behave with humility, as she does in the original, she merely advises him to be careful and industrious.⁶²

In the play *Οι άθλιοι*, an adaptation of Victor Hugo's 'social Gospel' *Les Misérables* (1862), Vasilaros broadens the scope of his social commentary without resorting to blatant sermonizing.⁶³ He is quite detached from the revolutionary overtones of the original but emphasizes the problem of social injustice, which sent poor Giannis Agiannis (Jean Valjean in the French text) to prison for stealing a loaf of bread in order to feed his starving nephews.⁶⁴ Karaghiozis – having served his own sentence, for an unspecified reason, with Agiannis – can only sympathize with him. However, he does not express the same compassion for the revolutionaries of Paris. He mocks Gavrias (Gavroche in the French text) and, together with Hatziavatis, complains about the riots and strikes by the rebellious Parisians (see Figure 4).⁶⁵

Reception of Vasilaros' adaptations

The four plays selected by Vasilaros manifest a relatively large range of subjects. This fact suggests that the main criteria for their choice, apart from their popularity as dramatic plays and novels, were probably their ability to stir strong emotional reactions among the spectators and their potential appeal to family or female audiences. Moreover, the desire to reflect on the social issues of justice and women's treatment by men is apparent

61 D'Ennery, *Δύο ορφανά*, 17–18, 27–8, 33–5, 73–5.

62 Vasilaros, *Οι δύο λοχία*, Notebook 1; Daubigny, *Δύο λοχία*, 42.

63 Vasilaros, *Άθλιοι*, 1.

64 Vasilaros, *Άθλιοι*, 6–8.

65 Vasilaros, *Άθλιοι*, 1–6, 18–19, 35–7.



Fig. 3. *Οἱ δύο λοχία*. Vasilaros' drawing in Notebook no. 6. Courtesy of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno

in the manuscripts. However, the choice of these plays, especially *Η άγνωστος* and *Οι άθλιοι*, was not encouraged by other puppeteers, who rarely performed them. They were complex productions, requiring the construction of many new puppets. Even as late as the 1950s and 1960s, according to evidence provided by the *karaghiozopaichtis* Giannaros, the puppeteers avoided staging them in small villages because the mostly



Fig. 4. *Οι ἄθλιοι*. Vasilaros' drawing in Notebook no. 38. Courtesy of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno

male peasant audiences did not like them.⁶⁶ The plays were considered excessively serious

66 *Η άγνωστος* was adapted for the cinema and directed by Orestis Laskos in 1956. Vasilaros' melodramas were mostly performed by his own pupils, such as Giannaros and Orestis. Giannaros, according to his own oral testimony, used to perform *Οι δύο λοχιαί*, *Η άγνωστος*, and *Αι δύο ορφαναί*. He recalled that, except for *Η άγνωστος*, these plays were performed by his colleagues (Giannaros, interview). *Αι δύο ορφαναί* was also played by Thanasis Spyropoulos (see his notes in Vasilaros' notebook). *Οι άθλιοι* belonged to the repertoire

and the puppeteers had to intervene with comic improvisations in order to render them more joyful.⁶⁷ The Greek-Cypriot shadow-theatre puppeteer A. P. Kokonas (1920–83) created another melodrama, *Φτώχεια και ορφάνια*, in 1946, but, as in the case of Vasilaros' adaptations, the new play remained a solitary effort that was not performed by his colleagues.⁶⁸ Later in the twentieth century, some Athenian shadow-theatre puppeteers included more melodramas or plays with strong melodramatic features in their repertoire in an attempt to increase female attendance.⁶⁹ However, taste changed after the 1970s, with audiences preferring to see comic plays on the karaghiozis screen.

The puppeteers' repertoire was a direct reflection of their audiences' expectations because the content and style of each performance were the immediate results of the interaction between the puppeteer and the audience attending each performance.⁷⁰ The spectators of karaghiozis consisted mainly of peasants and former peasants. The latter flooded into the suburbs of the big cities of Athens and Patras, looking for a better life. These migrants, unemployed and neglected by the state, lived in conditions similar to those of the shantytowns of contemporary Africa or South America. In order to cope with the hardships of life they organized themselves into small communities based on mutual help, preserving the habits, rituals and beliefs of their previous rural lives.⁷¹ On the other hand, they were not left untouched by the allure of urban culture, especially after the advent of cinema and the dissemination of the cheap, popularized press. In fact, they experienced the anxiety of living at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. They were the victims of industrialization in its early phase, and most of them had not yet become proletarians. They were maladapted members of a society in transition. The middle-class ethic was instilled in them through a variety of channels, but they had not yet thoroughly assimilated it, most obviously because their primary concern was mere survival.⁷² The karaghiozis theatre flourished among these urban peasants. When they were eventually assimilated into city life, karaghiozis ceased to flourish.

To gain a deeper understanding of these people, we should attempt to comprehend the ethic conveyed by the bandit plays of shadow theatre. This sub-genre bears close similarities to the robber plays of melodrama, such as Jean-Henri-Ferdinand La Martelière's

Continued

of Kouzaros (see private archive of his son Anastasios Kouzis, Athens), and, according to Giannaros, of Panagiotaras. *Η άγνωστος* was performed by Kostaros (Kostas Palaiothodoros).

67 Giannaros, interview.

68 A. Chotzakoglou, "'Φτώχεια και ορφάνια': άγνωστο χειρόγραφο έργου (1946) του παραγκιοζοπαίχτη Α. Π. Κοκωνά', *Κυπριακαί Σπουδαί* 74 (2012) 263.

69 See the relevant passage from an interview with Athenian *karaghiozopaichtis* Vangos (1922–2008) by researcher Anthi Chotzakoglou in 2007. Vangos does not specify the period during which he decided to increase the number of melodramas in his repertoire (see Chotzakoglou, 'Φτώχεια και ορφάνια', 264).

70 G. Kiourtsakis, *Προφορική παράδοση και ομαδική δημιουργία: Το παράδειγμα του Καραγκιόζη* (Athens 1983) 144–217; Myrsiades and Myrsiades, *Culture and Comedy*, 79–91.

71 Myrsiades and Myrsiades, *Culture and Comedy*, 17–18.

72 Kiourtsakis, *Προφορική παράδοση*, 122–4; Myrsiades and Myrsiades, *Culture and Comedy*, 17–30; St. Damianakos, *Κοινωνιολογία του ρεμπέτικου* (Athens 2001) 83–118, 241–4, 260–4.

Robert, chef de brigands.⁷³ They were based on the exploits of both real-life and fictional bandits who operated in the Greek countryside until 1936.⁷⁴ These plays related the stories of men who, condemned by the law or facing the threat of extreme poverty and starvation, took refuge in the mountains. There, they formed bands of outlaws, many of whom, according to popular imagination, stole from the rich and helped the poor, or avenged the injustices committed by the powerful against the powerless.⁷⁵ Vasilaros and his colleagues usually derived the stories of these bandits from cheap pulp literature.

Despite the cruelty of the real or fictional bandits, their adventures fascinated karaghiozis spectators. The unfortunate urban dwellers, who struggled to survive in a hostile city, were watching their traditional system of values collapse during the process of modernization, and felt that official justice had forsaken them. Frustrated by reality, they were not indifferent to the possibility of retribution that bandits had put into practice. However, the retribution practised by the bandits had nothing to do with middle-class sentimentality. The fate of the oppressor or the seducer was often a cruel death. In a society in which crimes of honour were often committed, even women did not hesitate to resort to murder when they sought to avenge an injury against them. Maria Pentagiotissa was a historical femme fatale who lived in a mountain village in the mid-nineteenth century and was accused, together with her lover, of her brother's murder. In the karaghiozis play derived from a novel based on the historical events, Maria is transformed into a cruel bandit after having been unjustly charged with the murder of her brother. Meanwhile, Pagona in *Γιάννος και Παγώνα* turns against her betrothed, believing that he killed her father, and Angelo in *Ο λήσταρχος Ντελής και η Αγγέλω του παπά* follows the officers who pursue the bandit Delis because he threatened her chastity.⁷⁶ In this way, neither the clear distinction melodrama made between good and evil in terms of bourgeois morality, nor its explicit sentimentalism, accorded with the reality experienced by the karaghiozis audience. The fact that two plays introduced by Vasilaros involve the oppressed killing their oppressors may be significant, in light of the passivity of the virtuous heroes of melodrama. Jacqueline in *Η άγνωστος* kills the man who threatens to reveal her pitiful situation to her son, while the invalid and cowardly Peter, in *Αι δύο*

73 *Robert, chef de brigands* (1793) was a melodramatic adaptation of Friedrich Schiller's *The Brigands* (1781).

74 More than 40 bandit plays have been composed for the karaghiozis *berdés*. Some popular titles were: *Βάγγος ο αρχιληστής*, *Φώτης Γιαγκούλας*, *Ο λήσταρχος Καλπούζος*, *Ο λήσταρχος Αγγελόγιαννος*, *Ο λήσταρχος Ντελής και η Αγγέλω του Παπά*, *Ο λήσταρχος Τρομάρας*, *Ο λήσταρχος Νταβέλης*, *Μαρία Πενταγιώτισσα*, *Γιάννος και Παγώνα*, *Ο λήσταρχος Τσακιτζής* and *Ο λήσταρχος Πανόπουλος*.

75 Myrsiades and Myrsiades, *Culture and Comedy*, 72–5; I. Papageorgiou, 'The mountain-bandits of the Hellenic shadow theatre of Karaghiozis: Criminals or heroes?', *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 5.2 (Sept. 2014) 79–102, available at <https://novaajs.newcastle.edu.au/ojs/index.php/pes/article/view/125>.

76 Tolia (Apostolos Karastergiopoulos), *Μαρία Πενταγιώτισσα*, ELIA–MIET, unclassified notebook (1939); various performers, *Γιάννος και Παγώνα*, Tsipiras, *Ήχος του Καραγκιόζη*, 11–14; Vasilaros, *Ο λήσταρχος Ντελής και η Αγγέλω του Παπά*, ELIA–MIET, Notebook no. 12 (1967).

ορφαναί, murders his own brother when the latter tries to hinder the rescue of the poor sisters.

Vasilaros probably sensed that melodrama neither matched the worldview of his audience nor the spirit of *karaghiozis*. For those reasons, he tended to select plays that dealt with social injustice, and to eliminate some of the moral lessons of the original texts in his own adaptations – for example, omitting most of the precepts on honesty, gratitude, diligence, philanthropy and pity, as in the case of *Οι δύο λοχίαι*. The choice of *Η άγνωστος* indicates a growing concern regarding the role of women in a changing society – a concern that was not entirely shared by his colleagues.

Structure of the adaptations

Genuine bourgeois melodramas were not fully accepted into the collective tradition of the art of *karaghiozis*, and this affected their structure as well. The melodramas examined here, like many other *karaghiozis* plays, were drawn from tightly structured texts, a condition that imposed certain restrictions on the adaptation process, as it impeded the utilization of established plot patterns or the integration of the typical figures of the *berdés*.⁷⁷ To a considerable degree, Vasilaros' new plays remained the only works of a single artist who experienced the satisfaction of a mainstream writer with his own unique creations. Proud of the fact that, as he believed, no one else had performed *Οι άθλιοι*, he noted: 'Το έργον οι άθλιοι [sic], είναι πολλοί τόμοι- τάχουν διαβάσει εκατομμύρια κόσμος, εγώ τώ-βγαλα, για το Θίασο Σκιών - κανένας δεν το παίζει, μόνον ο υποφαινόμενος που γράφει, και ονομάζεται Βασίλειος Ανδρικόπουλος- Καλλιτεχνικόν- Ψευδώνυμον Βασίλαρος'.⁷⁸

As a result, the specific plays did not undergo the process of collective treatment that might have enabled their effective adjustment to the comic norms of *karaghiozis*. Instead, in many cases it seemed that the conventions of shadow theatre had to be adapted to the structure of melodrama. The structure of the dramatic genre followed fixed patterns of plot development and characterization in order to arouse strong emotions and suspense, ameliorated by comic episodes.⁷⁹ In contrast, the plot of the traditional plays of *karaghiozis* served merely as a basis upon which comic scenes and dialogues, derived from the common tradition of the craft or improvised in the moment, built up the performance.⁸⁰ Moreover, apart from *Karaghiozis*, in the melodramatic adaptations hardly any of the typical traditional figures are used. *Hatziavatis* (see Figure 5) appears occasionally at the beginning and the end of *Η άγνωστος*, *Οι άθλιοι*, and *Αι δύο ορφαναί*, but he does not participate in the action. Even the figure of *Karaghiozis* himself was successfully integrated only into *Οι δύο λοχίαι* by impersonating the comic hero of the original text. In the other plays, where he assumes the roles of minor servants, he acts as the traditional

77 Hatzipantazis, *Εισβολή του Καραγκιόζη*, 75–7; Hatzipantazis, 'Προσαρμογή λογίων κειμένων', 124–5.

78 Vasilaros, *Οι άθλιοι*, separate sheet glued to p. 40.

79 Gerould, 'Russian formalist theories', 158–61.

80 Sifakis, *Παραδοσιακή δραματολογία του Καραγκιόζη*, 45–6.



Fig. 5. Hatziavatis. Vasilaros' drawing in Notebook no. 3. Courtesy of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno

Fool who makes subversive comments on events without actually playing a crucial part in the plot. Furthermore, the middle-class setting of the original texts required interior scenery, obligating Vasilaros to deviate from the craft's tradition, which located the action in public spaces (the action of some scenes in *Οι δύο λοχίαι*, *Οι άθλιοι*, and *Η άγνωστος* takes place in closed rooms).⁸¹

81 Kιourtsakis, *Προφορική παράδοση*, 244.

Finally, the specific location of the action of *Αι δύο ορφαναί*, *Οι άθλιοι*, and *Η άγνωστος* in France transformed Karaghiozis and Hatziavatis into immigrants. This significant deviation from the typical setting of karaghiozis performances could be regarded as evidence of the puppeteer's concern with the serious social problem of emigration from Greece. Indeed, in many instances during the action, Karaghiozis and Hatziavatis express longing for the mother country they left in search of a better life. However, the issue of emigration was rarely confronted by other shadow-theatre puppeteers, or by Vasilaros himself. Therefore, its presence in specific melodramas suggests Vasilaros' failure to adapt the original plot to the conventions of his craft, rather than his intention to address a social issue.

With the exception of older melodramas, such as *Γενοβέφα*, *Το ναύαγιον της πτωχής Μαρίας* and *Η κακούργος μητέρα*, which had moderate appeal for shadow-theatre audiences (and very few overtones of middle-class morality), the genre of melodrama failed to conquer the karaghiozis repertoire, although it remained popular in mainstream theatre. Shadow-theatre puppeteers may have experimented with various forms of drama, but the collective process of integrating the innovations into guild tradition remained vigorous from the 1930s until the 1950s, preventing any radical alteration of the karaghiozis value system. Vasilaros' dramaturgical innovations did not alter the immediate course of his craft's practices because he had very few imitators among his colleagues. On the other hand, bearing in mind that karaghiozis was an oral tradition that developed alongside the dominant learned tradition – by which it was inevitably affected until it went into decline – the long-term consequences of these innovations cannot be overlooked. Vasilaros was a popular shadow-theatre puppeteer and, for that reason, the enduring nature of these relatively solitary creations in his repertoire indicates that some of his lower-class audience gradually developed a penchant for bourgeois cultural products. In the long term, the viewing of such dramas – in connection with the dissemination of other forms of commercial popular culture such as cinema and television – enhanced the control of 'official' culture among the spectators of karaghiozis, gradually transforming their taste and distancing them from their formerly favoured entertainment.