

GREEK THEATRICAL SATIRICAL SONGS AS INDICES OF RESISTANCE¹

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INTRODUCTION

SATIRICAL SONG IN GREECE has so far been studied in the context of anthologies and/or as part of broader studies of folk ('demotic') songs². However, the demotic production of Greek satirical songs is only one aspect of a multidimensional phenomenon. This paper aims to shed light on another dimension of it: its theatrical presence.

In the 20th century it seems that the satirical song, much like any living social phenomenon, followed and observed the transformation of society, as well as the pace of this transformation. By the end of the 19th century, with the first tentative attempts at urbanisation, the production of satirical songs ceased to be an exclusive prerogative of the rural populations and now also appeared as a product of the concerns of the urbanites. First, in the daily and periodical press, then on the theatre stage, and later in films, recordings and radio and television shows, satirical verses and songs gradually move away from the one-dimensional theme dictated by the essentially rural life of the countryside — a theme associated with folk customs and festivals — and start to follow the directions that the 20th century progressively dictates: on the one hand, people increasingly perceive themselves as political beings and members of wider social networks; on

¹. This article is part of the research project *Satirical Song in the Greek Theater of the 20th Century: Aspects of Political and Social Criticism – Identity Issues – Stylistics*, which is carried out by Antonis Iliadis, Apostolos Poullos and Manolis Seiragakis. The project is implemented through the Operational Program *Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning* (Act: 'Supporting Researchers with an Emphasis on Young Researchers – Round 2'), and is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and Greek national funds.

². IMELLOS 2000; KARONIS 2016; MICHAÏL-DEDE 1990; VARVOUNIS 2005.

the other hand, new identities emerge that go beyond the narrow, traditional frameworks of the family role or of rural working life, which was until then the most common profession. The new satirical song, created in the new spaces of public gatherings, no longer contributed to by anonymous creators but authored by specific individuals, reflects such transformations, serving and expressing the needs generated by the new conditions.

Thus, playwrights, lyricists and composers wrote satirical songs that reflected individual as well as collective needs and concerns of Greek audiences. Thus, through satire, theatrical stages of the 20th century recorded social transformations as well as the citizens' awareness of political developments. In both cases the creators and the public openly displayed a spirit of resistance which was often a reaction against oppression, whether it was the imposition of a foreign invader or a native dictator, or the oppression of old norms, traditions and institutions. In these cases, satire was perceived as resistance against an enemy that had to be subverted to allow for freedom and progress to thrive. However, social transformations are never unanimously endorsed and, what is more, political change itself may sometimes be met with resistance, albeit of a conservative, even reactionary, nature, or, in any case, hesitation, fear and delay.

Theatre stages reflected all these developments, fermentations and reactions. Satirical songs born on it (and for it) have traced a long trajectory that this paper will examine by sampling themes and concerns that were musically and theatrically expressed in theatrical revues and related genres such as the Variety/Vaudeville and the shows of the *Anapsyktiria* (that is, the leisure/recreational café-restaurants that flourished in Athens for almost seven decades, from the 1930s till the mid-90s), as well as in the descendant form of the latter: the solo musical-theatre performances.

SATIRICAL SONGS FROM THE LATE 1890s TO 1940

Satire functions for societies as an indicator of adulthood, political maturity and liberalisation. 20th-century Greece could not deviate from this norm. Just nine years before the end of the 19th century, one of the most important Greek playwrights of the time, Dimitrios Kokkos, was murdered at the age of 35 by an audience member who — as legend has it — believed that Kokkos's play *Geronikolas's Lyre* satirised the murderer's grandfather and his birthplace, the island of Hydra³. Satire depends on two basic conditions in order to function safely: political immunity through lack of censorship and a satirical tradition, a strong agreement made between transmitters and recipients of satire.

Kokkos's assassination delayed but did not stop the expansion of satire in the Greek theatre. In 1894, *Gran Via*, a Spanish zarzuela presented by an Italian touring Opera troupe,

³. CHATZIPANTAZIS 1981, p. 179.

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upended Greek theatre life. Following the path opened up by *Gran Via*'s bold social satire, Greek playwrights created a vivid genre, the revue⁴. From 1894 to 1909 they were trying step by step to expand the limits of satirical freedom while at the same time being extremely cautious about the decency of persons and institutions.

A milestone year for this process was 1909. On the one hand, Theofrastos Sakellaridis presented the first Greek operetta titled *Sia ki Araksame* (Whoa and we moored) in which librettists Polyvios Dimitrakopoulos and Spiros Grannitsas satirised the bad state of the Greek fleet: as a result of the backlash against the operetta, the Prime Minister demanded that it be retitled and the third act be rewritten⁵. On the other hand, Spiro Samaras, the Greek opera composer who enjoyed a remarkable career in Italy at the time, visited Athens with his troupe and presented his new opera *Rhea* that became the prey of the satire of the most popular Athenian revues. This satire revolved around the similarities between an aria of Samaras's opera and a well-known traditional Greek song. Theatre critics underlined not only the appeal of these particular scenes of the revues, but also the noble gesture of the composer who not only attended these performances, but also laughed his heart out when he watched the relevant scenes.

A cosmopolitan teaches the public good manners when he does not resist but, rather, generously accepts a satirical attack endorsed by the whole of society. This was a breakthrough for Modern Greek theatre. Novelist and playwright Grigoris Xenopoulos devoted an article to this, characteristically titled 'Taming', on the front page of the newspaper he wrote for⁶. The security that gradually prevailed allowed playwrights to expand the limits of permissible satire. They were surprised to find out that certain social groups not only tolerated satire but actually enjoyed it. Taxi drivers, ticket conductors, soothsayers, grocers, maids, typists were all portrayed on the stage. They felt that revues featuring them satirised them but did not ridicule them. On the contrary, it brought them out of obscurity, incorporated them into the city's extended family, and legitimised them. Newly arrived in the capital, most of them, from a village or a smaller urban centre, felt proud that their profession suddenly concerned the public: they tasted the joy of belonging. Satire thus becomes a mechanism of social integration, integrating inhabitants from different professional backgrounds, geographical areas, both refugees and locals.

The main themes exploited by satirical songs until World War II were 'deviant' social attitudes and political life. Satire proved to be relentless against supposedly high art. Highbrow poetry, theatre and avant-garde art suffered from the satirical whiplash of revue and operetta. Theatrical satire thus assumed an important role of capturing — both positive and negative — reactions to social and artistic modernity.

⁴. MARAKA 2000, pp. 167-179.

⁵. SEIRAGAKIS 2009, p. 133.

⁶. XENOPOULOS 1911, p. 1.

As harmless as social satire proved to be, the corresponding political satire proved to be dangerous: under the weight of the consequences of the economic crisis, theatrical revues were filled with numbers and songs whipping politicians (up to 1936 the victims were, predictably and almost stereotypically, Eleftherios Venizelos, Georgios Kafantaris, Georgios Kondylis, Alexandros Papanastasiou, Panagis Tsaldaris, Ioannis Metaxas). However, their satire also resisted the progress of society and its absurd consequences for the most vulnerable social groups. Gunmen shot actor Vassilis Avlonitis while he was performing the number ‘Cosmogony’ (1931), which satirised the Venizelos government and mentioned the names of the persons associated with the three biggest political scandals of the period. The bullet killed the theatre engineer⁷. The reaction of the Venizelos government was to silence revue satire with repressive censorship. Nevertheless, revues continued to satirise the evils of politics (mainly the disputes and the inability of politicians to cooperate), while they accurately prophesied the demise of the democratic constitution. Metaxas’s dictatorship eliminated from the theatre stage any reference to politics and its protagonists, combining preventive and repressive censorship methods. Theatrical satirical song itself lost all reason to exist, was castrated, and, finally, disappeared.

Earlier, women had also been at the centre of satire. With a purely sexist view that reflected the embarrassment of patriarchal society at women’s mass exodus from the home environment, primarily for work and additionally for pleasure, satire takes an unbearably retrograde position, resisting all early feminist achievements and treating the young working woman as an ideal product for sexual consumption, with or without her consent. The trend reflects the harshness of the working conditions faced by the inter-war woman and the associated adversities and inequalities.

WWII SATIRE

Immediately after the beginning of the Greco-Italian War (28 October 1940) satirical pens took over the task of cheering up citizens who remained at home. On 3 November 1940, the parody⁸ of the Italian song ‘Reginella campagnola’, whose Greek version (‘Little peasant girl’) had already been highly successful, was published in the newspaper *Vradini*. The song ‘Oh fool Mussolini’ (original title: ‘In Rome’), the best-known satirical song of the 1940-1941 period, was a basic tool of propaganda against the Italians and was one of the songs that boosted the

⁷. SEIRAGAKIS 2009, p. 313.

⁸. Parody is the main vehicle of revue satire throughout the 20th century (during its last two decades all songs were exclusively parodies of popular tunes). Parody achieves an ‘ironic subversion’ (KOSTIOU 2005, p. 220) of the expectations that are born by a song that is already famous and popular. Especially during the Greek-Italian war (1940-1941) playwright Dimitris Giannoukakis has pointed out that the use of parody helped songs become instant hits (see GIANNOUKAKIS n.d.)

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moral of the audiences of war revues⁹. The song has been performed for more than eighty years as a symbol of the Greek people's resistance against Mussolini's plans. Of course, the invasion of the country by the German troops in April 1941 put an abrupt end to the creation and performance of satirical war songs, but satire was not absent during the German Occupation of Greece: it simply adapted to the new circumstances. While the National Liberation Front (EAM) and other resistance groups were secretly organising resistance against the German and Italian forces, another kind of satirical resistance was organised on theatrical stages. Satire against the Nazis and their Greek collaborators was obviously forbidden by strict censorship regulations — this was of course not the case in the so-called 'theatre of the mountains', that is the performances that were put up in rural areas to entertain partisan troops as well as the inhabitants of these areas, where such satirical songs were often performed¹⁰ — but the conditions created by their invasion were repeatedly satirised: shortage of food and other goods and the black market were a constant theme of satirical songs presented in revues of the period 1941-1944. These topics were often the main theme of these songs' lyrics but could also be hinted at in songs whose theme was seemingly irrelevant. References to hunger (without, of course, putting the blame on the Occupation forces) and the characteristics and deeds of black marketeers were so frequent that theatre critics considered this kind of satire as exaggerated, even bordering on demagoguery.

Unfortunately, the satirical songs that were performed on the stages of Athenian theatres during the last summer of the German occupation (1944) have not yet been discovered: during this period the term 'war/patriotic revue' was reintroduced and the topics of the plays now clearly sent the message that the war was coming to an end, while satirical songs written by left-wing playwrights expressed the people's demand for the renegotiation of social structures and political change¹¹. The issue of national identity was also emphasised in satirical numbers through the use of traditional local costumes and folk songs as well as parodies of old plays that talked about people of the past who wore such costumes and sang such songs (there was a new trend of reviving this kind of plays during the last winter of the occupation). It was also emphasised through jazz music. For example, in the 1943 number 'Flute and Saxophone' jazz, representing the modern contemporary generation, and folk songs, representing the older generation, were satirically juxtaposed¹². Although the lyrics of the song have not been traced yet, theatrical columns inform us that the number featured satirical jazz versions of Greek folk songs, while a photograph depicts actor Orestis Makris in a traditional *fustanella* (the traditional pleated skirt-like garment worn by the Greek *evzones*), the sight of which certainly provoked

⁹. THEODOSSOPOULOS 1940, p. 1.

¹⁰. KAFTANTZIS 1990, p. 107.

¹¹. POULIOS forthcoming.

¹². POULIOS 2011.

applause from the audience — the same audience that also cherished modern jazz rhythms — who discusses these issues with a younger woman who wears a modern dress: Greek folk music versus imported musical genres, tradition versus modernity and the country's glorious past versus current harsh conditions (hinted in *passim*) that will inevitably come to end were topics that permeated satirical lyrics which conveyed a notable spirit of resistance, while German forces were defeated by partisan troops in various areas.

POST-WAR SATIRE

The satire of modern musical trends and rhythms continued after the war. The audiences' steady preference for jazz but also new Latin American rhythms often became the target of the satirical lyrics that talked about the need to resist the younger generation's xenomania by proffering Greek traditional ('demotic') folk music as an alternative. Another musical alternative was the increasing popularity of *rebetiko* song, that is, the urban folk song of the first half of the 20th century that was initially despised by the bourgeoisie¹³, especially after young composer Manos Hadjidakis's famous lecture in 1948 about this genre¹⁴. Both Hadjidakis's lecture and the new appeal of this kind of song, which was usually associated with marginal social groups, could be seen as acts of resistance against musical and social conservatism in general; satirical lyrics, however, satirised the presence of the bourgeois in places where *rebetiko* was sung, which was unheard of before the war.

As far as political satire is concerned, the samples of satirical theatre songs that have survived from the post-war period, the Greek Civil War period and the 1950s come almost exclusively from revues presented in theatres in Athens and therefore echo the views of writers who either openly opposed the Left or spoke of national reconciliation in a way that satisfied neither the Left nor the Right, as the surviving reviews show.

Immediately after the liberation of Greece and the ensuing events of December 1944, during which ELAS (Ethnikos Laikos Apelevtherotikos Stratos, National People's Liberation Army — the communist resistance army that was formed during the German Occupation) fought against British troops in order to seize control of the Greek capital, satirical lyrics referring to the defeat of the Communist party were sung on revue stages. The songs also talked about the Communists being responsible for the destruction of parts of the city, the hostages that were taken by ELAS forces as they left Athens, and the ELAS snipers — but not the British ones. Thus, throughout 1945 all aspects of the so-called 'Battle for Athens' were satirised from the point of view of the victors and at the expense of the defeated resistance army.

¹³. BUTTERWORTH – SCHNEIDER 2014.

¹⁴. SEIRAGAKIS 2011.

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In 1946, as the country was about to hold a plebiscite to decide whether King George of Greece would return to his throne, some satirical songs tried to keep equal distance from leftists and rightists; however, as the civil war between the Democratic Army of Greece and the nationalist forces escalated (1946-1949), most revues would hold the left responsible for the failure to achieve national reconciliation, and the lyrics of satirical songs would devise ways to blame the Greek Communist Party for the continuation of the war. Satirical arrows also targeted Greece's neighbour countries that supported the Greek communist party and were accused of having territorial ambitions against Greece. Satire against the Greek Communist Party can even be found in satirical verses concerning events in China and the US-USSR conflict.

As regards Greece's relations with its two allies, Great Britain and the USA, initially the satirical songs of revues mockingly commented on the presence of the British military forces in the city, their love affairs with Greek women and the way they experienced Athenian life, but also their departure from Athens, and later on the support that Greece requested from the USA — often through reference to the assistance provided by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). However, during the second half of the 1940s, revue lyricists were very often willing to remind the allies of Greece's important role in World War II and the feeling of injustice that was aroused in the public due to the way the 'Big Three' treated Greece — apparently in this case their satire's aim was to help the audience vent their disappointment. This satirical resistance towards the two allies would be revived a few years later, in the mid-1950s, when their involvement in the events in Cyprus — when young Cypriots revolted against British rule — and, by extension, their unsympathetic stance towards the events that took place in Istanbul in September 1955 (a Turkish pogrom against the Greek minority of the city) — caused the Greek public to express their disappointment in what they perceived as indifference or betrayal.

Naturally, satirical songs also dealt with the activities of Greek politicians: prime-ministers, members of the government and mayors were very often the target of satirical arrows. However, the lion's share went to finance ministers whose economic measures always failed to alleviate the difficult conditions the working and middle classes faced — and often exacerbated the situation. However, satirical lyricists were also resistant to some of the people's attempts to complain about the situation: there is at least one satirical song that is critical about strikes and identifies them with laziness.

It is also worth mentioning the way in which women's place in post-war Greece is presented through political-social satirical songs. Lyricists did not choose to resist sexist stereotypes: women are considered 'suitable' for politics because they can bring order to political life with their household skills, whereas regarding women's right to vote (which was only granted in 1952), the criteria by which women vote are often based on the looks of politicians.

Women also appear as the agents of every new fashion, and some satirical lyrics deal with beauty contests that were reintroduced in Greece in 1952, but in this case it is mainly

the mania of the press (especially the newspaper that organised the contest) that is satirised: whole pages were devoted to candidates and winners whereas there were only brief references to crucial political events. Finally, it is worth pointing out that some satirical songs talked about the exploitation of poor young women who worked as servants in the homes of the bourgeoisie, and even their sexual exploitation by their male employers. Unfortunately, in many cases these women could not resist sexual harassment or abuse but satirical lyrics did.

Finally, satirical songs also raised issues of emigration and domestic migration. The former type seems to be less common: one of them satirises the loneliness of women who have been deserted by their emigrant husbands or boyfriends. The latter are considerably more numerous, as the topic of Greeks of rural origin who moved to urban centres, and especially Athens, gave playwrights and actors the opportunity to write and perform numbers that presented social and political life from a domestic migrant's point of view. In many cases satirical lyrics that were written by playwrights who lived themselves in the cities presented an idealised (even idolised) nostalgic image of rural life; however, the comically subversive performance of these songs clearly indicated that the public was embracing the resistance against their rural background.

THE 1960S & THE *METAPOLITEFSI* (REGIME CHANGE)

Moving on to the 1960s, we find relatively early, in the summer of 1962, two significant plays by two men who are widely considered as the most prominent modern Greek composers: Mikis Theodorakis's *Beautiful City* and Manos Hadjidakis's *Street of Dreams*, two revues that aspired to renovate the genre. *Beautiful City* was expected to have an abundance of political commentary, due to the collaboration of Theodorakis and Mentis 'Bost' Bostantzoglou, who were both known for being politically engaged on the Left. Indeed, Bost, who wrote the script and the lyrics of two songs for the first part of the play, used the stage to refer to an issue that he had also touched upon a few months earlier: in the autumn of 1961, the western suburbs of Athens were hit by the worst floods of the 20th century, with dozens of deaths and widespread damage to properties and infrastructure. One week after the disaster, Bost, who was primarily a cartoonist, published in a newspaper a cartoon that featured his three most notable heroes, Mom Greece, her son, Peinaleon (a wordplay that would be translated as 'Always-Hungry'), and her daughter, Anergitsa ('Little Unemployment'), trying to stay afloat among the rubble. The cartoon was linking the great disaster not only to the government's inability to manage it, but also to the elections that this very same government had won only a few days earlier that went down in Greek history as the elections of 'Violence and Fraud', according to the accusations of the Opposition¹⁵. These same heroes were brought onstage in *Beautiful City*,

¹⁵. For the cartoon, see also SARANTAKOS 2013.

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where now Anergitsa mourns because her fiancé has left her. At that point of the play, Mom tries to comfort her daughter by singing a song titled *Bournazi* (that is, the name of the area that suffered the most during the floods). In the song, she tells her daughter that she should hold back and not cry, because should every Athenian express their pain with tears, then the whole city of Athens would turn into a Bournazi (that is, it would be flooded with tears). And on top of that, if all the basements were flooded, then it would be extremely difficult for the firemen to save her. She concludes by reminding her daughter that this is not a good period to have dealings with them. This last reference to the firefighters, a seemingly innocent one, is in fact the climax of criticism towards the government as it brings back the issue of the elections: immediately after the accusations of Violence and Fraud during the election, large protest rallies took place in Athens, which the fire brigade was ordered to disperse by pouring water with extreme pressure onto the gathered people¹⁶.

The second Revue of the same season that was mentioned earlier, *Street of Dreams*, was widely seen as less political, or even apolitical, because of the non-political engagement of its creative team; however, this was not necessarily accurate¹⁷. In at least two of the play's songs we can recognise, in the broad sense, political and social messages or requests that signified resistance to traditional stereotypes. The first song concerns a thirteen-year-old girl who, probably not unwillingly, loses her virginity in *A Black Ford* — this is also the title of the song (with lyrics also written by Manos Hadjidakis). The loss of virginity is not referred to clearly, but is only implied: «I lost something that I kept as a talisman». The sweet, 'innocuous' melody as well as the playful mood with which the female protagonist exclaims ironically «Oh, what a misfortune!» indicates the presence of consent, which is validated by the choice of the word with which she describes that evening she spent in the Black Ford: a *magical* evening. The reference to sexual activity at an age which by today's standards remains well below the legal age of consent, seems audacious and provocative, to say the least. At the same time, considering the fact that — strictly biologically speaking — a 13-year-old female human being is mature enough to bear children, the song reflects on the one hand naturalistic conceptions of sexuality (and, consequently, childbearing) that flourished in Greek society, especially in the countryside, and on the other hand reminds us of certain depictions of these conceptions in the Greek folk tradition¹⁸. To the extent that the *Black Ford*, albeit in a rather controversial way, destigmatises for an urban audience the obedience of humans to their sexual instincts, by reviewing and

¹⁶ Reference to this event is also made in one handwritten note on one of the scores: «Athens was drowned due to the floods and Bournazi was the most recent victim. As for the firemen, they were responsible for dispersing the anti-government demonstrators by pouring water on them». See BOSTANTZOGLOU 2000.

¹⁷ SEIRAGAKIS 2014, p. 121.

¹⁸ See, for example, the well-known folk songs: *Kaneloriza* [«I love a girl, [...] twelve years old, [...] a branch of an apple tree / loaded with apples], *From a foreign land* [«From a foreign land, from a place faraway / there is a girl, my light, twelve years old»].

expanding urban sexual mores, and by challenging sociocultural conventions of the western world, ultimately finds itself in alignment with the most modern societal and political demands of its era, as these were expressed through the movement of the Counterculture in the '60s.

The second song describes how two sisters, the *Tata sisters* (lyrics by Alexis Solomos), firstly became five and then started to disappear one by one until there was none left: in this process of extinction one of the sisters is 'lost' as she is having an operation and becomes male. In Greek dramaturgy this is probably the only reference to a gender reassignment surgery from female to male; interestingly enough, the first such surgery in the real world took place in 1959-1960, that is, only two years before the play was staged¹⁹. It might very well be the case, therefore, that Solomos was aware of the highly sensitive matter of gender identity and incorporated it as a comment in a revue song with a pleasant melody. The same discourse remains absolutely relevant internationally even today, almost 60 years later, thanks to the identity politics agenda.

The twilight of the decade finds Greece 'in the plaster cast'. During the seven-year military dictatorship (from 1967 to 1974), a little fewer than 350 modern Greek plays were produced²⁰. Since the theatrical production of those seven years has already been studied as regards to the resistance to the regime through satire²¹, we will limit ourselves here to pointing out that, especially towards the end of this period, Greek playwrights would not exclude the people from their criticism and their satirical arrows. In one of the most emblematic plays of the century, *Our Grand Circus*, playwright Iakovos Kambanellis recounts the course of Hellenism from the Ottoman Era to the recent past. When the plot reaches a poignant episode of Greek history, the tragic outcome of the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, the author holds responsible not only the authorities (the princes and the courtiers), but also the *bumpkin-bourgeois* who «wanted to advance based on their own legend». He then accompanies this number with a song whose first two verses cheerfully describe the preparations for war as if it were a school excursion: «they polished the buttons, they polished the cannons / and they went for a walk with the cannons». The following thirty verses, clad in a different, 'heavier' and more mournful music, describe the devastating outcome²². In the same spirit of reminding the people of their share of responsibility as long as they do not react, the crew of the Free Theatre, a group formed just a few years earlier by students of the National Theatre, staged in 1973 their first Revue *And You Are Combing Your Hair*. The title is based on a well-known Greek expression which bears some veiled profanity; the opening song of the play had the same title and the same message: «All is cool, all is fine / and we, tonight, don't give a damn / in the Alsos theatre you are cooling

¹⁹. HAESEKER – NICOLAI 2007.

²⁰. GEORGAKAKI 2009.

²¹. VAN STEEN 2015; GEORGAKAKI 2009.

²². See also, VAN STEEN 2015, p. 212; PEFANIS 2005, pp. 285-287.

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off / here the world is burning / and you are combing your hair!»²³. In other words, the lyricists challenge a non-negligible part of the public for their unwillingness to resist the totalitarian regime.

At the same time, in Plaka, a central area of Athens, the so-called 'boites', that is small musical stages where political song was already flourishing from the mid-1960s, presented musico-theatrical shows similar to Variety and the shows of the *Anapsyktiria* (refreshment cafes), which were already familiar to the Athenian audience since the time of Attik (the stage name of songwriter and performer Kleon Triandafyllou) and his Mandra Theatre. Giannis Logothetis (signing as 'LoGó') wrote the script and songs for one such show, whose title was *Variety* (1976-1977)²⁴. Logothetis, who was already a well-known cartoonist and lyricist, established himself in the 1970s as a satirical lyricist, thanks to some landmark LP records that featured Themis Andreadis as the main performer. Logothetis himself prefers the term 'cartoon song' instead of 'satirical', as, in his view, this term reflects more accurately his own intentions and way of creation: he conceives a story and instead of capturing it as a cartoon, he conveys the point he wants to make through lyrics. Nevertheless, his creations have a strong satirical element and socio-political commentary. With allegories, such as that of the family-tyrant, *Variety* featured verses that validated the political sentiments of society. Thus, the concluding line of the chorus of the song *The Mother-in-Law* reminds us that «dictatorships are not tolerated by the people», while the lyrics of the second verse liken the situation the protagonist experiences to a dictatorship («until I count from one to three / inside my house there's a brutal dictatorship»). Besides, the third verse of *Mother-in-Law* was also a direct reminder of the restoration of the Republic, which had taken place only three years before the staging of *Variety* («and when it happens to have a Republic / for three years or even for thirty-three»). A similar allegory to the family-tyrant can be found in the song *No to the Establishment*, which, like the song *When it Happens*, manifests the desire to overthrow the (socio-political) established order.

It is important to mention that there were also songs of which the lyrics did not constitute a socio-political commentary, but could nevertheless be perceived as such by the audience in the highly politicised context of the time. For example, the chorus from the iconic *The Puppy, the Caniche* («The puppy, the Caniche / who stole it? / Nobody!»), which comes from the same show, is often over-interpreted as an acerbic commentary on the general culture of impunity in the country, where nobody is responsible for anything. In reality, however, Logothetis was simply inspired by a slightly unfortunate story that had overwhelmed for a few days the female star of the show, Sperantza Vrana, and which, ultimately, had a happy ending: one night, Vrana appeared distressed in the dressing room, because a little Caniche, a poodle-breed dog she

²³. See also, VAN STEEN 2015, pp. 280-283.

²⁴. Reports on the name of the boite vary. It is the old boite 'Dromos', but at the time when Logothetis's *Variety* was staged there, the venue was probably also renamed to 'Variety', after the title of the show. See: *TA NEA* 1976, p. 4; VASSILIKOS 1976, p. 7.

owned, had gone missing. For several days she shared her anguish with the rest of the company, trying to find who had stolen it, until, a day or two later, the puppy returned to her house after having taken a break for a long walk²⁵. A similar over-interpretation can be detected in the (also emblematic) *Loula* («Loula, Loula, where are you Loula? / Loula, Loula I'll go crazy...»), where the invocation to a fictional female person was equivalent, in the ears of the listeners, to an appeal to what they had been missing for years, and to what was now a socio-political demand, namely an appeal to abstract concepts such as Democracy and Freedom. Although the song-writer had no such intention²⁶, the environment itself — a 1970s *boite* in Plaka, where the political element was omnipresent, consciously or unconsciously — favoured a politicised interpretation even of non-socio-political references.

In this same environment, the Plaka *boites*, satirical verse flourished in shows of a somewhat different form: the one-man shows of artists who combined singing and comic prose. Already since the late 1960s, Yiorgos Marinos had picked up and made extremely popular a genre that was introduced by lesser-known performers (such as Yannis Argyris) and became known as *Floor Revue*, that is, the Greek version of floor shows. After the Regime Change in 1974, during his shows Marinos recalled the recent experiences of the seven-year dictatorship, with the anti-communist rhetoric and the totalitarian methods and practices employed by the Colonels. The song *History Lessons Without a Teacher* not only was reminiscent of a military march sound-wise, but also had a chorus that featured as a catchphrase the motto of the Junta («Greece of the Greek Christians»), which Marinos sang imitating the dictator Papadopoulos.

In the same type of shows two other important figures of Greek comedy from the '80s excelled, namely Harry Klynn, who had returned a few years earlier from America where he was introduced to the genre of stand-up comedy, and Tzimis Panousis, who had previously served in touring companies performing around Greece. Both of them, performing in a decade when a Social-Democratic Party had risen to power, aimed their satirical arrows at the hypocrisy of the political, social and art elites, as well as the gullibility of the people. Panousis, being a songwriter himself, also introduced satirical verse with a rock sound. Had we to isolate strictly one formalistic characteristic of these musical-theatrical one-man shows of the post-Junta era, we would have to point out the fact that the songs were not necessarily associated with the prose or the number that preceded or followed them, but rather operated independently, as a sort of an *Intermedium*.

²⁵. The story behind the creation of the song was told to us by the creator himself in a private conversation in his atelier on October 22, 2018.

²⁶. Logothetis has said in various interviews that *Loula* is nothing more than the result of a request from a neighbour of his, named *Toula*, who had asked him to write a song for her. He also told us the story behind the creation of the song in his atelier, on October 22, 2018.

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CONCLUSION

Through a necessarily selective presentation of themes of satirical songs that were heard throughout the 20th century on Greek theatrical stages, we have attempted to illuminate aspects of the creation of satirical songs and their relation to the socio-political context of their respective eras.

From the moment satire secured its way to the theatre stage at the beginning of the 20th century, it found there an extremely hospitable place where it quickly established itself. Therefore, the theatrical stage became its main place of development, so much so that when Metaxas's dictatorship in 1936 wove a dense net of prohibitions and censorship laws that mainly targeted theatre, satire almost disappeared completely for a while. From the German Occupation onwards, however, satire reclaimed its right to harsh criticism often using songs as vehicles of resistance, as much as the circumstances allowed it — or even a bit more. Thus, although satirical songs may not offer complete records of historical events, they certainly allow us to take a glimpse into the ways certain political and social events of the 20th century were processed through the pen of satiric lyricists, and by extension, through audience members who approved of these songs by rendering them big hits of their time. In addition, these songs contribute to contemporary historians' understanding of the issues that were considered taboos for modern Greek society of the 20th century as well as of the willingness or reluctance of Greek people to resist social change, political reform and national threats.

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