
The Greek Lorca: Translation, Homage, Image

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Abstract

Greece is a case particularly worthy of attention within the panorama of Federico García Lorca's worldwide reception. In comparison to other countries, Lorca's presence in Greece has remained uninterrupted since his first appearance and remains current, with new translations, rewritings, adaptations, and stagings of his plays continually being produced. Lorca has also spurred a wide range of creative responses inspired by his life and death such as essays, music, poetry, and dramas. He has also stimulated debates over aesthetic, literary, cultural, ideological and political issues, and has thus become indissolubly bound to the Greek cultural environment both as a Greek and a Spanish icon. This paper examines the ways Lorca has been received and treated in Greece in relation to the cultural and historical context.

Resumen

Grecia es un caso que merece particular atención dentro del panorama de la recepción internacional de Federico García Lorca. En comparación con otros países, la presencia de Lorca en Grecia ha permanecido ininterrumpida desde su primera aparición y se mantiene viva con nuevas traducciones, versiones, adaptaciones y puestas en escena de sus obras, producidas continuamente. Lorca ha provocado una gran variedad de respuestas creativas inspiradas por su vida y muerte, como ensayos, música, poesía y obras teatrales. También ha estimulado debates sobre temas estéticos, literarios, culturales, ideológicos y políticos, y así se ha vinculado de manera indisoluble con el contexto cultural griego como un ícono griego y español a la vez. Este artículo investiga la manera en la que Lorca ha sido recibido y tratado en Grecia dentro de un contexto histórico y cultural.

Federico García Lorca has been repeatedly acknowledged as Greece's most translated and performed foreign writer and it is also claimed that his work has most been set to music in Greece (Vistonitis 2006). His fame, popularity and impact have transcended generations and political divides and have touched upon all of the intellectual and artistic facets of twentieth-century Greece. The majority of Greek artists and writers have, in some way, contributed to the formation of

the cult of Lorca in Greece through translations, public statements, interviews, publications, performances and, of course, original works of art. Many of the artists who came into contact with Lorca's work (usually in their youth) have revisited him in some way at different stages during their careers. Lorca has thus remained a constant point of reference, although the angle from which Greeks have looked at him has altered as the historical conditions evolved alongside aesthetic and ideological viewpoints.

Surprisingly, despite his significant role in Modern Greek culture, he has not been the object of scholarly attention. Only in recent years have there been a few studies; most of which mainly deal with the history of the translations and the staging of his works.¹ However, there are no in-depth analyses of his reception in Greece or critical studies of his work and biography.

These conditions make the study of Lorca's reception in Greece an arduous task, for which one is obliged to look into diverse and disperse material such as translations and their introductions, articles in literary reviews or the press, theatre, book and disc reviews, programmes of performances and disc inserts. For a study of the more creative side of his impact in Greece, one has to look for Lorquian influences in the actual works of Greek writers and artists.

In this article, I discuss the phenomenon of Lorca's reception in Greece, its particular characteristics, dimensions, and landmarks – as well as its gaps and ellipses – in view of his worldwide reception. This complex process is divided into different stages, following a chronological order, since the themes encountered cut across a historical periodization. There are of course prominent, but not exclusive, characteristics in Lorca's Greek reception in each period, which evolve around aesthetics and ideology. There are three crucial periods: the first contact (1933–1937), the Lorca boom (1940s) and the years of the different Lorcas (1950s onwards).

Why a Greek Lorca?

How are we to explain the Greek phenomenon of Lorca's enormous popularity, recognition, and influence? Lorca has undoubtedly touched something in the national psyche. One might say that, in some ways, he responded fully to aesthetic, cultural and ideological needs; in other words, he came to fulfil the horizon of expectations held by a significant part of Greek intellectuals and the public. Amongst the priorities of a significant part of the political and intellectual elite of this period was the reinvention of national identity after the Asia Minor Disaster.² At the cultural level, a new generation of writers and

1 For an overview of the poetry translations of Lorca in Greece and a discussion of his influence on Modern Greek poets, see Mendi 1990; 2006. For a production history of Lorca's plays in Greece, see López Recio 2006.

2 The Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922 ended with the Asia Minor Catastrophe. These tragic events marked the defeat of the Greek army in Anatolia and the end of the Great Idea, a core concept of Greek nationalism, which promoted an irredentist vision of a restoration of a Greater Greece on both sides of the Aegean, incorporating territories with Greek

artists called for a return to their roots (which included tradition, popular art and folk songs) in order to revitalize Greek art and literature, which they saw as largely decadent and stagnant. At the same time, this generation opened itself up to new European trends, becoming familiar with avant-garde artistic movements, especially modernism and surrealism. They sought an art that would combine these demands, but which would also be alive and in contact with the soul of the people and all things popular, considered as the most pure and authentic expressions of 'Greekness'. These cultural, ideological and aesthetic preoccupations were put forward by the so-called 'Generation of the 30s', among whose most important representatives were the Nobel laureates Yiorgos Seferis and Odysseus Elytis, Yiorgos Theotokas, Nikos Gatsos, Andreas Embiricos, and Nikos Engonopoulos.³ Lorca responded to all the above-mentioned needs thanks to his unique capacity to mix the popular and the learned tradition of his country, as well as his use of elements of European modernism and surrealism both formally and thematically. Simultaneously, he contributed to the creation of the necessary conditions for these demands to grow. In this twofold process, Greek writers and artists came close to Lorca and Lorca approximated their desiderata.

The Spanish writer has also had the good fortune to be revived in the Greek context by the greatest Greek contemporary artists and intellectuals, who have managed to combine local elements together with the Spanish and international elements in their treatment of Lorca. Among the writers, directors, musicians, composers, intellectuals, and artists who have indelibly linked their names with Lorca in Greece are Nikos Kazantzakis, Odysseus Elytis, Nikos Gatsos, Nikos Engonopoulos, Stratis Tsirkas, Nikos Kavvadias, Karolos Koun, Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, to name the most significant ones. Although they belonged to different generations, they were, in their majority, young artists who turned to Lorca with inspiration and creativity. Their versions of Lorca made him famous and popular in Greece, but, at the same time, Lorca also contributed

populations outside the borders of the Kingdom of Greece. The Great Idea was also driven by a strong religious sentiment aiming at the recovery of Constantinople for Christendom and the reestablishment of the Christian Byzantine Empire. After the burning of Smyrna, Greece was obliged to give up all territory gained during the war and was engaged in a population exchange with the newly established state of Turkey under provisions in the Treaty of Lausanne.

- 3 The term 'Generation of the 30s' refers to a young generation of writers and artists who largely made their debuts in the decade of the 1930s and can roughly be considered Greece's avant-garde. It was used at first to refer to the writers gathered around the periodical *Ta Nea Grammata* (1935–1944), but it came to include all artistic experiments that began during this decade. The young writer Yiorgos Theotokas published in 1929 a text entitled *Free Spirit*, which came to be considered as the generation's manifesto. In it, Theotokas heralded the rise of a young group seeking to break with the past and introduce new perceptions and forms of expression. Although there were common preoccupations, members of this generation went about pursuing them in different manners and this has led to heated debates as to who belonged to this generation and whether and to what degree the concept of a homogeneous generation is a construct. For a fuller discussion, see Mario Vitti's classic study (2004) and Dimitris Tziouvas's recent book (2011).

to their recognition and popularity. Their engagement with 'one of the greats' automatically granted them a higher status.

Another factor that can perhaps explain in part Lorca's renown in Greece are the resonances of ancient Greek tragedies and Greek mythology in his work.⁴ In modern times, a similar moral code (i.e. disputes were often settled with the law of the vendettas, especially in rural areas and villages and more specifically in the regions of Andalusia, Crete and Mani) helped the Greek public to identify with Lorca and his works. The setting of many of his plays and poems, as well as some of the characters, although intrinsically bound with Spain and Andalusia, could also be transferred to the Greek landscape with its countryside and villages as a neighbouring Mediterranean country. The Mediterranean setting and Lorca's universe are both inhabited by horses, frogs and cicadas, and overflow with pines, olive groves, fig, orange, and lemon trees, oleanders, vineyards, laurels, and jasmine. The stony mountains, the bountiful rivers and the deep seas, as well as the whitewashed houses and a similar dress code, also create a common substratum of references for the Greek and Spanish publics.

The political and historical conditions in Greece also claim a significant part of Lorca's appeal. The country's unstable trajectory in the twentieth century up to the transition to democracy in 1975 has, in a way, favoured a social, political and ideological appropriation of Lorca, and it is possible to find a correlation between peak points in Lorca's reception and politically charged periods in Greece. As Greece was coming out of the national Disaster of Asia Minor and would be entangled in World War II, the mass antifascist resistance movement, the Greek civil war (1944–1949), the ensuing persecutions for political reasons, and the dictatorship of the Colonels (1967–1974), it became all the more clear that art was connected to the historical reality and society. Depending on the political orientation of each artist, there were of course varying degrees of commitment, according to which Lorca was read in Greece, as happened in many countries, as a symbol of the struggle against suppression. As we shall see below, Stratis Tsirkas was the first Greek to contribute to this view of Lorca through his work.

During the years of the occupation of the Axis powers (1940–1944) in Greece and the resistance of the Greek people, Lorca was strongly identified with the world of antifascist struggle, yet there was a significant turn towards a Hellenized interpretation of this political standpoint. This is chiefly expressed in the poetry of Nikos Kavvadias where Lorca was, for the first time, linked directly to Greek political events and the Greek antifascist struggle. During the Greek civil war and the years that followed it, this Hellenizing trend was further exploited. In the years of the military junta, this Hellenizing tendency, although still very present, also opened itself up to a more universalized view of Lorca as a symbol of world peace and social justice.

A combination of all the above-mentioned factors accounts for the preservation of Lorca in the hearts and minds of the Greeks. Given that translation is an irreducible factor in the reception of a foreign writer in a new context that cuts

4 For the relationship between Lorca and ancient Greek culture, see Camacho Rojo 2006.

across all of its stages, let us take a closer look at the landmarks of the Greek Lorquian trajectory, by starting with some general remarks on the Greek translations of his works.

Translation

The Greek panorama of Lorca's translations is much richer than in other countries, such as Germany and the German-speaking world.⁵ The number of both translations and translators is impressive and is indicative of the impact and admiration for Lorca.⁶ For the Greek translators, who were in most cases writers and especially poets themselves, translations of Lorca's works were a richly creative activity and an interactive venture that helped them shape their poetics. This link between translation and original creation is further proven by the fact that many of his translators composed original works at the same time as translating Lorca at different stages in their careers, as, for example, Elytis and Gatsos. Nevertheless, the Greek contact with Lorca has, in most cases, been a mediated one, always passing through the filter of foreign translations and bibliography, mainly French and English. This was due to the fact that, traditionally, Greece had turned its eyes towards France and England, with which it maintained special cultural, historical, political and economic ties. In addition, these two countries, especially during the last centuries, had also been Europe's cultural and economic centres. Greece had no special relationship with Spain and there were few writers and translators versed in Spanish. This made a French and English mediation indispensable, which, in its turn, often led to

- 5 Particularly interesting within the panorama of Lorca's worldwide reception is the case of Germany where, for many years, Enrique Beck was the only translator of Lorca in the German-speaking world, after securing the right to be the only authorized translator of all Lorca's works that would appear while he was alive (until 1974) from the writer's brother Francisco García Lorca in 1946 (Siebenmann 1989: 673).
- 6 It is difficult to provide an exact number of the translations and translators of Lorca to date since there is no published bibliography of his works in translation. Nevertheless, Kokolis (1996), basing his figures on an unpublished bibliography of Lorca's translations by Antonio Guzmán, gives an estimate of the translations solely of his poetry for the period between 1933 and 1990 to be 34 in book form and 60 in journals, although he does not provide any bibliographical details. Mendi (1990) offers us a detailed bibliography of translations of Lorca's poetry for the same period. According to her research, there are 34 publications of his poems in journals and 15 in independent editions, excluding republications, revised editions and publications in anthologies. As for his plays, López Recio (2006) documents 165 performances of his plays from 1948 to 2005. The most popular of his plays are *Bodas de Sangre*, with 39 representations and 5 different translations (Yiorgos Sevastikoglou, Nikos Gatsos, Danae Stratigopoulou, Panos Kyparissis, Kostas Kotzias), *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, with 36 representations and 8 translations (Nikos Gatsos, St. Triantafyllou, Takis Varvitsiotis, Kostis Kotsiras, Mary Vidali, Pelos Katselis, Marios Laertis, K. Chalkidou) and *Yerma*, with 14 representations and 5 translations (Alexis Solomos, Marios Laertis, Kostas Zaroukas, Stathis Dromazos, Tzeni Mastoraki). However, information on the translation used for each performance is scanty (for example, in the cases where the translator is the same, it is not specified whether there were any kind of adaptations or revisions) and it is not clear whether, when and in what form these versions were published.

mistranslations, *galicismos* and *anglicismos*, and, of course, influenced in some ways the public figure of Lorca in Greece, as we shall also see below.

Another Greek specificity of the Lorca translations is that, for many years, these were only published partly and featured in the press or in literary magazines rather than in books. On one hand, this practice naturally entailed limitations to his broader reception but, on the other hand, it ensured dissemination among literary and artistic circles. At the same time, it did not allow for a more comprehensive acquaintance with Lorca, but only for a fragmented and partial contact with the man and his opus. It is also worth noticing that translations of Lorca (mainly of his poems) appeared in a variety of journals with different ideological and aesthetic agendas. Moreover, he featured in both well-established and more ephemeral journals such as student reviews, which were published in different cities and addressed to different audiences.⁷ This generational, geographical and ideological distribution resulted in Lorca's deeper and expanded penetration within Greek society.

Apart from an aesthetic manifesto, translation was often used as an indirect means of declaring political ideals. Especially at times of censorship and the curtailment of political freedoms, the mere act of translating works of seemingly neutral writers and inoffensive themes was itself a means of concealed resistance. Possible associations with the present and also the very instances of their appearance were politically significant. Lorca was one of the writers used in such a way. His seemingly innocent, naïve and folkloric facet could serve as a smokescreen for a denunciation of social, sexual, cultural, religious and political evils.

The first translations of Lorca into Greek were a selection of poems translated from Spanish by Nikos Kazantzakis, which appeared in the literary periodical *O Kyklos* in 1933. Although these translations did not appear as early as in other countries – for example in the USA, we find poetry translations as early as 1929;⁸ they allowed the Greek readers to form an impression of Lorca before his death that would forever colour his reception. In his translations of Lorca, Kazantzakis included poems from *Canciones*, *Libro de poemas*, *Libro del cante Jondo*, *Romancero gitano*, and *Poeta en Nueva York*,⁹ thus offering a broad spectrum of the extant poetic works of the Spanish writer. As an informed reader, Kazantzakis followed in great part the famous Gerardo Diego's *Antología de la poesía española*

7 It is indicative that in the 1930s and 1940s, Lorca translations appeared in the artistically progressive reviews *O Kyklos*, *Filologika Chronika* and *Tetradio*, as well as in the leftist *Neolinika Grammata*, but also in the oldest, more conservative and most reputable Greek periodical *Nea Estia* and the conservative daily *I Kathimerini*. They also appeared in the leftist, short-lived student review *Xekinima* as well as in the avant-garde *Kochlias*, both in Thessalonica. In the 1950s and 1960s, Lorca translations can be found in the pioneering *Endochora* in Giannena and *Diagonios* in Thessalonica. Significantly, we can also trace translations of Lorca in *Epitheorisi Technis*, the most important periodical of the broader left of the period. From the 1970s onwards, Lorca translations can be found in the most popular and respectable literary reviews, such as *Diavazo* and *I Lexi*.

8 For translations up until 1970, see the Lorca bibliographies of Colecchia 1979–1982 and Laurenti and Siracusa 1974.

9 For a study of the Greek translations of *Poeta en Nueva York* see Rosenberg 2012.

as a source.¹⁰ These translations were completed during his six-month stay in Spain, when he also sent correspondences to the newspaper *I Kathimerini*,¹¹ and reflect his intention to present Spanish literature to Greek audiences. Lorca's poems were thus presented alongside those of Juan Ramón Jiménez, Miguel de Unamuno, Antonio Machado, José Moreno Villa, Rafael Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre, Pedro Salinas, Manuel Altolaguirre, Concha Méndez Cuesta and Ernestina de Champourcín.¹²

Interestingly, the first of Lorca's books to appear in Greek was *Bodas de Sangre*, translated by the young poet Nikos Gatsos in 1945. It was the first of his plays to be staged in Greece three years later and has been his most popular play ever since. As for Lorca's poetry, the first book-length publication was a slim edition entitled *Two Odes*, containing a translation of 'Ode to Walt Whitman' and 'Ode to Salvador Dalí'. The translation (1948) was produced in Thessaloniki, the counter-cultural centre to Athens, by two young poets, Kleitos Kyrou and Manolis Anagnostakis. Surprisingly, none of the most famous poems by Lorca were included, but instead the book contained two of his more complex and experimental works. Both books circulated in a limited edition, but Gatsos' translation of *Bodas de Sangre* received a broader dissemination since it was the translation used for the first representation of the play and became the canonical translation for the majority of subsequent performances. It was not until the 1960s that the Greek public would have the chance to enjoy a fuller taste of Lorca's work with anthologies of his poems and editions of his (up to then known) complete works.

In the 1940s, a Greek Lorca canon was formed, which included a selection of poems from *Romancero gitano*, *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*, *Bodas de Sangre* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. These proved to be the more popular of his works, reaching a broad readership among the erudite community and the general public alike. As a result of this selective reception process, there was also an analogous selective Greek image of Lorca, focusing on the popular, folkloric, romantic and traditional Lorca. The exotic, typically Andalusian and Spanish image of the writer and his work prevailed alongside that of an innocent victim of violence.

The first responses

As we have seen, Greece is one of the countries that became acquainted with Lorca before his death through translations of his poetry in 1933 by Nikos Kazantzakis, probably the only Greek intellectual to have met him in person

10 Diego's anthology was published in 1932, while a revised edition with some significant changes came out in 1934. A copy of the first edition can be found in Kazantzakis's personal library in Crete.

11 Kazantzakis acted as a correspondent from Spain on three occasions: August–September 1926 for the newspaper *To Ethnos*; and October 1932–March 1933 and October–November 1936 for the newspaper *I Kathimerini*.

12 Issues 3, 4, 5 and 6–7 of May, June, July and August–September 1933.

(Kazantzakis 1937). However, it was the outbreak of the Spanish civil war and the death of Lorca during its early stages that ensured his fame around the world.

At the same time in Greece, General Ioannis Metaxas, after a coup in August 1936, imposed a dictatorship. Metaxas and the press controlled by him closely followed the developments in Spain. The example of Spain was used as propaganda for the regime, which was trying to legitimize itself as the only solution for restoring order and avoiding a civil war and an imminent communist threat in Greece (Filippis 2001: 170–171).

In this context, Kazantzakis was once again sent to Spain as a correspondent in order to cover the events of the civil war from the side of the Nationalists. He arrived in Spain in October 1936, a few months after the beginning of the conflict and the death of Lorca.

Kazantzakis's report of Lorca's death appeared in the press belatedly, in January 1937, in an article entitled 'The Spanish poet who died', in which he carefully chose words so as not to take any sides and presented it as news reported from the Nationalist side:

At the big door of the episcopal palace a Spanish friend stopped me: –You know, he said, they killed the poet you loved... –Who? I screamed shuddering. –Federico García Lorca... –Lorca! Who did? –Some say the Reds, others say we did. Nobody knows. –Why? –I don't know. Maybe because of a misunderstanding... he added shrugging his shoulders. (Kazantzakis 1937 and 1999:202)¹³

Soon after Kazantzakis's 'neutral' report of Lorca's death came a Greek response that paid homage to the Spanish poet as a symbol of the world's antifascist struggle. Stratis Tsirkas, a young writer from Cairo, had travelled to Spain and France in order to participate to the Second Congress of Antifascist Writers for the defence of culture in the summer of 1937. Since the Metaxas regime did not allow many Greek intellectuals to leave the country, the Greek representation came through the Diaspora. To this congress flocked intellectuals of great renown from all around the world who expressed their solidarity with Republican Spain. Among them was the African-American poet Langston Hughes, who had travelled to Spain as a correspondent of the *Baltimore Afro-American*. Although he had not had the chance to meet Lorca during his visit to the USA, Hughes was attracted to the man and his work since his poetry and drama touched upon themes of injustice, racism and oppression that related to the black experience and his own views on life and art (Martín Ogunzola 2003:13). Tsirkas, coming from the cosmopolitan and multicultural centre that was Egypt at the time, also viewed Lorca as the embodiment of all writers that are sacrificed for their credos and as a universal icon in the world of antifascist struggle. As he declared in an interview many years later, the Spanish civil war was only a piece in the international puzzle of politics:

I inherited her [my mother's] racial and religious tolerance, which I was able to absorb even more thoroughly when I witnessed her attitude towards the Egyptian

13 All translations are my own.

people in their struggle to gain their independence which began after the First World War. My mother supported the Egyptians whole-heartedly. From then on I was an anti-imperialist, and when I grew up I joined the ranks of those men who tried to block Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia, the advance of the fascists in Spain, and the dictatorship of General Metaxas in Greece. All these events went hand in hand. They were parts of the same picture. Opposing Metaxas was not just a Greek affair, but one that took on a universal meaning: one had to oppose imperialism and fascism everywhere. (Germanacos 1973: 282)

In this vein, Tsirkas composed a short poem-oath to Lorca, by whose name he swore to fight against all types of oppression and tyranny, against all those who curtail freedom around the world and across centuries. The oath, translated into English by Hughes, was signed by 40 writers from 26 countries and was read at the closing ceremony of the Congress by Louis Aragon (Tsirkas 1962: 568–70).

While the Spanish Civil War was raging, Tsirkas republished his oath to Lorca in his first poetic collection, as part of a section entitled 'For Spain and Federico Garcia Lorca' (Tsirkas 1937). Despite the fact that it was published in Egypt, this collection was soon reviewed positively in Greece, although there was no specific mention of Lorca (i.e. Paraschos 1939: 220–21).

At the same time, references to Lorca began to multiply in Greece. These references were not exclusively related to his death but also to the heated aesthetic and literary debates going on in Greece at the time. In this context, the Spanish poet appeared in the writings of the young poet Odysseus Elytis, who would work on Lorca during his entire career,¹⁴ and who was fervently defending surrealism at the time. In 1938, in an open letter to his friend, the novelist and prominent member of the Generation of the 1930s Yiorgos Theotokas, Elytis mentioned Lorca, among other poets of the 'new reality' whom he admired: 'The real poets of the new reality, whether they belong to surrealism or not (Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Eliot, Ungaretti, Eluard, Soupervielle, Jouves, Lorca, Salinas) showed their strength in the eternal themes of Nature, Love and Death' (Elytis 2004: 469).

The Lorca boom: The years of canonization

In the 1940s we witness a real Greek Lorca boom: a plethora of translations of his poems and plays by Mitsos Papanikolaou, Nikos Gatsos, Kleitos Kyrou, Manolis Anagnostakis, Takis Varvitsiotis, Aris Diktaios, G. B. Ioannou, Yiannis Sfakianakis, Odysseus Elytis, and Yianna Christofi among others appear, alongside poetic and dramatic works influenced by Lorca, poetic tributes, and the first extensive article presenting Lorca to Greek audiences. This surge of Lorca's translations was decisive in the formation of the image of a Greek Lorca and paved the way for his subsequent reception in Greece.

14 The 1948 translations of *Romancero gitano* were reprinted in the collected volume of Elytis's translations, *Defteri Grafi (Second Writing)* (1996). Revised as lyrics with the addition of two more poems in *Ta Ro tou Eros (The Ro of Eros)* (1972), they were set to music by Mikis Theodorakis. Lorca also appears in Elytis's various essays now gathered in the volumes *Anoichta Hartia (Open Papers)* and *En Lefko (Carte Blanche)* (1999).

The historical conditions of World War II, the occupation by the Axis powers, and the ensuing civil war resulted in readings of Lorca that were mainly political, but also aesthetic, often blurring the boundaries between the two. In many cases, the very instances of these publications were in themselves indicative of the ideological baggage they carried. Key dates in this process were 1945 and 1948, while the Greek civil war was raging: in 1945, Kavvadias's poems on Lorca first appeared, as well as an essay by Elytis, Tsirkas's reprint of his oath to Lorca together with an account of his participation in the Second Congress of Antifascist Writers, and a translation of Luis Cernuda's 'A un Poeta muerto' by Pantelis Prevelakis. 1948 is marked by Elytis's translations of *Romancero gitano* and the premiere of *Bodas de Sangre* by Theatro Technis (Art Theatre).

With Kavvadias's poem 'Federico Garcia Lorca' (1945a), the Spanish writer was, for the first time, explicitly associated with Greek history and culture. Eight years after Tsirkas's tribute to Lorca, Kavvadias's poem with the same title was the first poetic tribute to the Spanish writer to be published in Greece. Its publication in a leftist review, a few months after the tragic events of the *Dekemvriana* and the Varkiza agreement,¹⁵ was itself a political act. Through images of death, war, abandonment and destruction, Kavvadias mourned the death of Lorca, but also that of thousands of anonymous victims in recent Spanish and Greek history. An implicit but specific allusion to Lorca's tragic end is made through the word 'August' in the poem, which brings to mind the date of Lorca's death (19 August 1936), but also perhaps the imposition of the Metaxas regime (4 August 1936). Spain and the Spanish civil war are also evoked through the references to the bombing of Guernica and the famous Picasso painting, as well as through the figure of the bull, presented as a threatening, brutal and destructive force. Apart from the title, Lorca is never named in the poem, but is metonymically referred to as a gypsy or dead rider, whom Kavvadias prompts Greek girls to mourn as one of their own dead. The references to Kaisariani and Distomo, two highly symbolic places in recent Greek history, associate directly Lorca's assassination with the executions of tens of innocent civilians by the Germans in retaliation for the death of their own soldiers and officers by guerrilla fighters of the National Popular Liberation Army (ELAS).

15 Only a few weeks after the Liberation of the country from the Axis, bloody fights broke out in the capital, which, for many, marked the beginning of the Greek civil war. The left-wing forces of EAM/ELAS (National Liberation Front/National Popular Liberation Army), which had gained considerable power during the resistance, were defiant towards the newly formed Government of National Unity and the role of the British in Greek politics and soon withdrew their ministers. What followed were the 'Dekemvriana' or 'December events', a month of fierce fighting in Athens between police forces and British troops on the one hand and ELAS units on the other. These events remain one of the most contested issues in recent Greek history. In March 1945, a semblance of peace was restored with the Varkiza Agreement, under which most ELAS troops turned over their weapons in exchange for broad political amnesty and the calling of a plebiscite on the constitutional question. However, the government did not fulfil its commitments and a long period of what became known on the political left as the 'White Terror' was initiated (Mazower 2001: 352, 368–377).

A few months later, Kavvadias published another poem with the clearly political title 'Resistance' (1945b), where Lorca appears once again as one of the historical figures that people the poem. In this poem, Kavvadias preached resistance to oppression all around the world and through the centuries. Key figures from the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottomans and the resistance to fascism appear side by side with Lorca and other figures of the Spanish civil war. Thus, the common elements of Spanish and Greek history are emphasized and Lorca is further appropriated as an emblem of the Greek and the international struggle for freedom.

At the same time, Elytis presented the first extensive article on Lorca and introduced his poetics to Greek readers.¹⁶ Although published in the spring of 1945, it was composed a few months earlier and was dated 'ostentatiously' (Vitti 1991: 226) 'November 1944', a month after the Axis forces' withdrawal from Athens and just before the events of the *Dekemvriana* traumatized the capital. As Vitti argues, this dating cannot be fortuitous and could be indicative of Elytis's intention to dissociate his article on Lorca from the events that triggered the Greek civil war. However, one could also read into it an attempt to associate Lorca with the mass resistance movement against the Axis, a period of political unity and heroism by the Greeks against foreign occupation.

Apart from this chronological link, the vocabulary used in this article to describe Lorca and his relationship with society is worth noting. Elytis uses the adjectives 'popular' and 'revolutionary', and the reader is often left in doubt as to whether he is referring to politics or art. Elytis, through his presentation of Lorca, depicts a model poet who is close to the soul of the people and 'a participant in the world' (1945: 24). The poet, who had long been isolated in his ivory tower, yielding to symbolist and parnassian ideals, was, according to Elytis, called once again to unite with the pulse of society and the people.

Elytis's enthusiastic article on Lorca is of great importance in understanding how he viewed the Spanish writer and can also be used as a compass for the way he read his poetry. Elytis seems to be familiar with all facets of Lorca's work; however, he singles out *Romancero gitano* and introduces its themes and characters as the central preoccupations of Lorca. The gypsies, the moon, the dark landscapes, the mystical natural forces, love and blood were central to Elytis's poetry as well and also key aspects of surrealism. Elytis considered Lorca to be, or at least presented him as being, a heretic among the surrealists, who selectively used elements of this avant-garde movement and coupled them with the world and Spanish learned and popular traditions.

These views Elytis expressed about Lorca may, of course, be read as reflecting his own relationship with tradition and surrealism. In this line, Elytis stresses the side of Lorca which is jovial, youthful and full of vitality. Although he makes some reference to the dual aspect of joy and sadness inherent in the Spanish temperament, he foregrounds the first facet. His article can hardly be considered

16 On the relationship of Elytis with Lorca, see Rosenberg 2006a,b and 2007a,b.

literary criticism or an academic essay, but rather as an idiosyncratic, lyrical and romantic account of a folkloristic image of Spain and Lorca invested with the underlying ideological and aesthetic messages mentioned above.

In 1948, at the height of the Greek civil war, the Greek public had its first taste of the plays of Lorca. The work was *Bodas de Sangre*, which unlike at its premiere in 1935 in the USA (Smith 1998: 49–50) and in 1954 in the UK, was a hit. The American and British publics failed to identify with the rural themes of Lorca's play 'partly due to temperament, partly due to culture' (Edwards 1998: 24). These differences, which, for many years, proved to be an unsurpassable obstacle for both actors and the public in the English-speaking productions, were easily surpassed in the Greek context. This natural acclimatization of Lorca was achieved thanks to the talented contributors of the Art Theatre and its young and inspiring director Karolos Koun. Gatsos, who had already translated Lorca's poetry, and who, like Elytis, felt close to the teachings of the Spanish writer, crafted the translation, as we have seen above. The music was composed by Manos Hatzidakis and the costumes by the painter Yiannis Tsarouchis. The cast also included some of the leading actors of the time, something that also contributed to its success.¹⁷

All these artists shared Lorca's vision of theatre as a major educational tool and felt keenly the need for a renewal of the Greek cultural scene through contemporary foreign stimuli coupled with the rich sources of the Greek tradition. Koun was perhaps the only director at the time who was interested in an international repertoire and the new trends in Europe (Krontiris 2007: 206). Koun's production was a landmark in the history of Greek theatre and was turned into a major cultural event, which would influence all subsequent performances. Due to his broad appeal, Lorca reached a wider audience and he gradually became a mainstream author whose plays guaranteed full theatres. He also greatly influenced contemporary young Greek playwrights and writers such as Iakovos Kambanellis and Notis Pergialis both stylistically and thematically (Sideris 1966; Puchner 2000).

An analogous, romantic, folkloristic and *costumbrista* image of Lorca created through Koun's *Bodas de Sangre*, as a gypsy, Andalusian and quintessentially Spanish, was also projected in the translation of almost half of the poems from *Romancero gitano* by Elytis in the same year.¹⁸ These translations were significant in the sense that they were published in *Nea Estia*, a well-established and more conservative review compared to the ones that had published his previous trans-

17 The cast included the young and talented Vasso Metaxa, Vassilis Diamandopoulos, Lykourgos Kalergis, Elli Lambeti and Alexis Damianos, who would play a leading role in the theatrical and cultural life of Greece. The director and most of the actors were ideologically progressive and during the Greek Resistance they had participated in the National Liberation Front (EAM), an organization associated with the communist left. Indeed, many of them continued to follow progressive ideals and be politically engaged in the following years.

18 For a discussion of Elytis's translations of *Romancero*, republished in *Defteri Grafī*, in view also of his translations of Rimbaud, Mayakovsky, Jouve, Éluard, Lautréamont and Ungaretti, see Loulakaki-Moore 2010: 186–205.

lations, a fact that, in its turn, guaranteed a broader dissemination. Moreover, since it was the first time that a significant corpus of Lorca's poems from one collection had appeared together in Greek, a consistent image of the poet could be projected to the public. This image would confirm and reiterate the icon of Lorca as the poet of the gypsies, Andalusia and Spain, similar to the one Elytis had presented in his article a few years earlier. This portrayal of Lorca was also the result of Elytis's translatorial choices, which left out the more difficult and dark poems of the collection as well as those with more religious, violent, and homosexual connotations. Thus, Elytis through his translations and prose presented a unified, joyful, vital, young, uncompromising, rebellious and folkloristic Lorca in tune with his own intellectual interests at the time (Rosenberg 2006b).

The different Lorcas

In the following years, Lorca's poetry and drama continued to be translated and performed and his fame grew. Although in the immediate aftermath of the Greek civil war cultural production declined (Tsoukalas 1984: 588), by the mid-1950s poetic tributes were once again being written in his memory and poets found anew in his work the prime material for their compositions. New plays and poems came to enrich the Lorca canon and in the 1960s Greek audiences for the first time had the chance to get to know the majority of his then-known complete works in anthologies and editions of various volumes. Although these publications were sometimes of low quality in terms of the translations and editions, nevertheless they contributed to his reaching a broader audience.

Lorca also became entangled once again within the ongoing ideological and literary debates (which were fiercely fought especially in the ranks of the left) on surrealism versus socialist realism, engaged versus decadent and bourgeois art. In this context, Lorca was used by a number of revisionist and younger leftist critics who could see in him an icon useful for their renewed stance towards world politics and art. In this light, the young poet and critic Kostas Kouloufakos wrote an article on the poetry of Lorca in the first issue of *Epitheorisi Technis* (1954: 29–35), the most significant cultural periodical of the broad left at the time. Although the folkloric Lorca of the *Romancero gitano* was not dismissed, the centre of attention seems to shift towards *Poeta en Nueva York*, which was now being projected as an example of social commitment and aesthetic renovation. However, although in Greece *Poeta en Nueva York* was 'discovered' in parallel with Lorca's 'discovery' in the 1950s by the Beat generation in the USA, it does not seem to have had such a profound impact on the Greek literary scene. The socio-cultural conjuncture, paired with the need of a new generation of American artists to denounce American cultural and political imperialism, were opportune conditions for the *Poeta en Nueva York* to exercise a significant influence in North America. Modern techniques and surrealistic elements alongside the denunciation of a materialistic, avid, inhuman, racist reality connected with

American poets and artists and especially New American Poetry (Mayhew 2009: 27) in a much more direct manner than it did with their Greek counterparts.

The canonical image of Lorca as a popular artist was also emphasized in these years in the first book-length study in Greek dedicated to his life and work, which appeared in 1964 and was written by the critic Tassos Lignadis. Drawing extensively on foreign bibliography, Lignadis situated Lorca within the Spanish tradition of poets and playwrights. Focusing mainly on the theatre of Lorca and the history of its Greek representations, he made no reference to the historical contexts in which Lorca lived and died in either country. Crucially, by not mentioning his homosexuality nor the details of his execution by 'whichever dark people of the particular present' (Lignadis 1992: 120), he presented an apolitical Lorca and further canonized him as a poet of popular culture. In his book, which was also probably one of the first systematic presentations of the history of Spanish literature in Greece, Lignadis attempted to present cultural and literary parallels with the Greek tradition from the Minoans to Homer, the Byzantine tradition, as well as modern folk songs and dirges. However, these parallels were, in most cases, based on remote historical facts or superficial similarities and were limited to brief references rather than rigorous analyses.

The thirtieth anniversary, in 1966, of Lorca's death inspired the special issue on Lorca of the important progressive periodical *Theatre*. Naturally, emphasis was placed on Lorca's theatre and its significant educative and social role, while Greek theatre professionals, such as translators, directors, actors and critics, shared their own experiences on the representations of Lorca's plays underlying the common cultural characteristics between Greece and Spain. This issue also included first translations of *Los títeres de Cachiporra* and parts of *El Público*. Testimonies of Gerald Brenan, Claude Couffon, Germaine Montero and Carlos Morla Lynch, among others, as well as excerpts of interviews and lectures of Lorca, were translated for the first time into Greek.

During the years of the dictatorship that followed (1967–1974), Lorca was viewed within a broader social and humanistic context, becoming a classical reference within a more universalized movement for peace and justice around the world in a fight against political and cultural imperialism and authoritarianism. Greek Lorquismo in this period had a musical dimension, too, as an extension of his poetic and theatrical reception. Many famous Greek composers, of both older and younger generations, set to music his poetry and plays or released their earlier musicalizations. Mikis Theodorakis, Manos Chatzidakis, Stavros Xarchakos, Christos Leontis, Lefteris Papadopoulos, Nikos Mamagkakis and Giannis Glezos ensured that Lorca reached all Greek homes. Kavvadias's poem on Lorca was also popularly set to music by Thanos Mikroutsikos. Most of these works were released after the restoration of democracy in 1975, although composed shortly before or during the dictatorship, since they could not be officially recorded and distributed due to censorship. However, these songs were circulated illegally and performed by well-known artists during the junta in underground bars, thus being converted into acts of resistance.

Ian Gibson's work on Lorca, which is a seminal point in Lorca studies, as well as Marcelle Auclair's *Enfances et mort de Federico García Lorca*, were published in Greece with the restoration of democracy.¹⁹ New translations and publications of the less known and more experimental Lorca works such as *Sonetos del amor oscuro*, *El público*, *Comedia sin título*, *Viaje a la luna*, *Paseo de Buster Keaton y la muerte de la madre de Charlot* were published in the 1980s and onwards, hand in hand with his more traditional and established poetic and dramatic works. In 1986 the fiftieth anniversary of his death and in 1998 the centenary of his birth were widely celebrated, as in the rest of the world. Since then, the publishing and creative activity around him has shown no sign of abating. However, the new findings on his life and work as well as the new works that have seen the light in recent years do not seem to have had great impact or overturned the first and dominant images of Lorca in Greece.

Gaps, misreadings and misunderstandings

Until recently, the majority of the public and the erudite community in Greece have been largely unacquainted with many aspects of Lorca's biography. The date of his birth, for example, was often given erroneously and it was rather the event of his death that seemed to eclipse all the other information of his life. The vain obsession with the factual details of his assassination rather than the real reasons behind it was famously disparaged in the poem of Nikos Engonopoulos (1956, now in 2004) with the mock-journalistic title 'News on the death of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca on the 19th of August 1936 in the ditch of Camino de la Fuente'.

In addition, for many years Greek audiences have been largely unaware of his homosexuality, an aspect that has undoubtedly influenced his life, work and, also, death. Not only was the homoerotic Lorca left in darkness but also a rather *macho* profile of him was constructed and maintained. Contrary to the USA, where Lorca has been appropriated by homosexual writers, and Spain, where in the post-dictatorship period he came to symbolize the country's sexual and political liberalization (Delgado 2008: 2), in Greece Lorca's homosexuality has remained an untouched subject. In parallel, the Greeks have been to a great extent uninformed about the details of his political and ideological outlook. In addition, the tensions of regionalism in Spain have been overlooked, often leading to a conflation of Andalusianism with 'Spanishness'. This is on the one hand due to a superficial and monolithic folkloric reading of some of Lorca's works and on the other hand to the marketing of Spain abroad for many years as the land of bullfights, gypsies, flamenco, sun, fiesta, black-dressed widows and whitewashed villages. This image has also been established and preserved

19 In 1973, the daily *To Vima* published a series of articles by Ian Gibson on the assassination of Lorca, originally published in *The Times*. *The Death of Lorca* was translated in 1974 and his *Federico García Lorca: A Life*, in 1999. Marcelle Auclair's *Enfances et mort de García Lorca* was also translated in 1976.

through the translation and production styles of many of his works, including their staging and musicalization. Finally, the Greek audience and intellectuals in great part have been uninformed about the textual history of Lorca's works, including the existence of various manuscripts. As a result, the complete works of Lorca that have been published to date never included his conferences, lectures, essays, interviews, articles and letters, but only the majority of his poems and dramas. Only his famous lecture on the duende was translated and only then as late as 1966 (Karagiorga).²⁰

Keeping these gaps and discontinuities in mind when assessing Lorca's reception in Greece, one can understand or explain partly the misreadings or misinterpretations of Lorca's constructed images. At the same time, as we have seen, there have also been conscious attempts on the part of the Greeks to disclose or withhold information in order to meet certain goals, be they personal, collective, ideological, political, cultural or aesthetic. Political and social conditions such as censorship have also shaped and defined the ways in which Lorca has been circulated and read in Greece. It is true that Greeks had their eyes turned to Europe and followed political and artistic developments through the foreign press, publications and contacts. Many of the limitations restricting a more global knowledge of Lorca hold true for other European audiences as well.

Lorca's own disdain and neglect for publishing led to the existence of various manuscripts, which he often gave away to friends, publishers, or relatives. He was also careless in dating his correspondence. These innate problems affecting Lorca studies were aggravated by his sudden death, which left many of his works incomplete and unpublished. The lack of definitive versions undoubtedly adds to the fascination with Lorca but hampers the study of his work and allows for much speculation. For example, *Poeta en Nueva York* was published based on two different manuscripts posthumously and almost simultaneously in New York and Mexico. There are of course also works that have remained unfinished, or other works that we are not sure whether Lorca himself would have published as they were if he were still alive, as, for example, the *Sonetos del amor oscuro*, due to their open homoerotic themes.

Lorca's own concealment of his personal life and his refusal to openly acknowledge his homosexuality, as well as his friends' and family's reticence on the subject, have obfuscated many aspects and details of his life and work. Lorca's first biographers also showed themselves hesitant in treating this facet of his personal life, which has in turn led to many further misinterpretations and gaps. The political parameters of his assassination, together with their local and national implications, have also led to silence, distortion and manipulation.

20 We can find brief excerpts from Lorca's lectures and interviews scattered in journals or books. In the special issue on Lorca of the journal *Theatro* of 1966 we encounter for the first time a significant corpus of his articles, interviews and lectures, as mentioned above.

Conclusions

The great impact of Lorca in Greece has been frequently noticed but not explained. By the early 1960s, Lorca had come into vogue and the Lorca craze was deplored for the rash of sterile imitation it had spawned (Anagnostakis 1960). However, from the above evidence it becomes clear that Lorca remains an elusive subject for whom varying images have been created in the Greek context. Lorca became a versatile commodification, someone who could adapt to different circumstances and serve different goals. His eventful life and diverse work, together with the cultural, ideological and historical conditions, allowed for Lorca to relate in an immediate manner to major debates in Greece, such as the question of 'Greekness', the relationship of Greek literature to tradition as well as to European modernism and surrealism, and the link between art and politics. As we have seen, the image of a facile, popular, romantic, folkloric and touristy Lorca was established early and still holds strong in Greece. There have, however, been proposed different images of an aesthetically progressive, political and social Lorca, which also claim their share of the Greek Lorca.

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