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Memory and Performance.
Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals

Edited by Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino,
and Eugenio Refini

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info@skeneproject.it

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Giovanna Di Martino*

Introduction. (Mis)Remembering Greece and Rome in Early Modern Performance

The present special issue is part of a double bill on the topic of *Memory and Performance. Early Modern Festivals and Classical Reception*, of which this is the second and conclusive instalment. It engages with how performances within the context of festivals, whether a one-time courtly or noble celebration (such as a wedding) or a commemorative ceremony (such as a funeral), or part of an established festive event, preserved and transmitted collective memories. It does so by exploring the materiality, outlook and politics of the repositories of said memories around such events, i.e. the newly formed "memory texts" (*lato sensu*), to use the terms of archivistics theory (Ketelaar 2005, 45), that, whether explicitly or implicitly, reactivated, as well as elaborated upon, Graeco-Roman material through performance. If, on the one hand, such performances were themselves drawing on the "memory texts" of the Graeco-Roman repertoire, whether that be myths, whole plays, or epics, they also contributed to the creation of new "bodily texts" that were then codified into words (ibid.; Bortoletti 2008). Such repositories, in addition to documenting through memory performances that did indeed occur, became themselves *memorabilia*, i.e. containers for the forging of new memories.

In many ways, all contributions in this issue have identified translation / translating as a primary mode of '(mis)remembering' ancient material in this period and a basis for the development of new memories. Its intrinsic connections with performance in the various contexts presented in this issue, together with the relative freedom with which early modern scholars, playwrights, and creative artists dealt with the ancient source texts, call for an understanding of translation that, in addition to the interlingual and intercultural dimensions, also includes various sign systems ("intersemiotic"), including verbal to non-verbal signs and vice versa (Jakobson 1959, 127).

* University College London (UCL) — g.dimartino@ucl.ac.uk

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In this sense, translation and memory are necessarily complementary: the former could not exist without activating memories, distant and present, while the latter could not be created without the medium of the former, i.e. without somehow being 'understood' and transposed into the signs of the codifier who is sharing it with their own (new) community.[1]

Indeed, translation is central to the first of the contributions collected in this issue by Nicola Bonazzi, who identifies the birth of Italian theatre with a form of translation. His case studies are part of a wider "*volgarizzamento* (i.e. put into the vernacular) project" (28) promoted at the Este court in Italy's Ferrara by the Duke Ercole I during his reign (1471-1505). Translating here featured as a necessary dramaturgical 'training' that eventually led to Ludovico Ariosto's famous *Cassaria* (1525). If a reworked version of Plautus' *Menaechmi* into the vernacular signalled the beginnings of Ercole I's extraordinary intuition of the importance of translation in the (re)founding of theatre; the two Plautine comedies at the heart of Bonazzi's analysis marked its very ends, performed in occasion of Alfonso D'Este and Lucrezia Borgia's wedding celebrations in 1502 (*Cassina*, Girolamo Berardi), and the carnival of 1503 (*Mustellaria*, Girolamo Berardi), when the applications and functions of translation within this particular endeavour had been amply codified and fully mastered.

The translation strategies at play in the Este court's project are recognisable in many other engagements with the Graeco-Roman material that are analysed in this issue. If *amplificatio* is the key-term that has been employed by scholars to define the adaptation techniques used in these early modern (Plautine and Terentian) plays to meet the tastes of their contemporaries; the (rather Terentian) author/character Anello Paulilli featuring in the prologue to his 1566 tragedy *Fire of Troy*, and analysed in Anne Morvan's contribution, openly situates the ancient source (*Aeneid* 2) as inextricably weaved in together with his own "caprices" and "lies" (43). Indeed, the play is as much a retelling of the ancient tale with additions and changes as a translation into Aristotelian 'rules' of playwriting (excitingly codified through the newly 'rediscovered' *Poetics* and extensively discussed in the numerous poetics treatises published at the time; see Refini 2020 and Di Martino 2023). But the tragedy is also deeply rooted in the performance practices of Naples' noble courts and their literary culture (as evidenced by the use of musical interludes rather than Choruses, monumentally spectacular sceneries, and grand costumes), and performed as episode three of a trilogy that included the *Judgment of Paris* and *Helen's Abduction*. In addition to operating on the ancient-early modern memory exchange, Paulilli also

[1] On the intersection(s) between Memory Studies and Translation Studies, see, amongst others, Brodzki 2007, Brownlie 2016, Radston and Wilson 2020, and Jünke 2021.

leaned on audience members' memories of episodes one and two, and the communal experience which must have resulted from this vision two weeks prior to the presentation of *Fire of Troy*. The performance framework within which this play was produced is clearly delineated and 'remembered' by the trilogy's printer, Giovanni Maria Scotto, in his lengthy preface.

The tension between translation and new play are at the centre of Francesco Dall'Olio's analysis of John Pickering's *Horestes*, which, as he demonstrates throughout his piece, may have been performed at the presence of Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall in 1567-68 (if we are to identify the *Revels' Accounts* mysterious "Orestes and a Tragedie of the kinge of Scottes" with his *Horestes*). Read within this context, the play subsumes immediate political affordances; indeed, it becomes a commentary on most recent events (1567), i.e. Queen Mary Stuart of Scotland's demise following her (alleged) murder of her second husband Henry Stuart Lord Darnley, supposedly with the help of her future husband James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. It also serves as a form of diplomatic advice to the Queen (in perfect continuity with many other Tudor plays) that regal status should never suggest that personal gain can take precedence over the protection of the law. The ancient tale maps onto the modern through the Medieval versions available to Pickering at the time. If Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* provided our first version of what would become a well-known revenge plot about a queen who murders her own husband while 'in bed' with another man,[2] that story had travelled far and wide through the Middle Ages via Benoît de Sainte-Maure's twelfth-century *Roman de Troie*, Guido dalla Colonna's thirteenth-century *Historia destructionis Troiae*, and into Raoul Lefèvre's *Recueil des Histoires de Troie* (1464), whose English translation by William Caxton was the first book printed in English (1473-1474) and which, together with John Lydgate's *Troy Book* (reprinted 1555), represented Pickering's sources for his own modern tale. Translation here goes hand in hand with dramaturgy: not only did Pickering root these stories into his contemporary world, he also transposed them onto a different medium, that itself was in dialogue with and counted on the audience's memories of these multi-layered, ancient-modern stories.

Much like Paulilli's translation of the *Aeneid* episode into Aristotelian rules, Giovanna Casali speaks of another 'Aristotelian' translation, this time in an opera (*Ercole in Cielo*, 1696) by Frigimelica Roberti, the most "radical" of the reformers in the seventeenth-century restructuring of melodrama (78). If the five-act division together with the three unities (time, place and action) and the presence of a Chorus make Roberti and his *Tragedia* amongst the

[2] For more information on how Aeschylus infused significantly more agency into Clytemnestra compared to previous versions of the myth, see Raeburn and Thomas 2011, xviii.

most "orthodox" products of "Aristotelianism" in libretto-writing at the time (81), Frigimelica in no way eschews the inherently hybrid and combinative relationship with ancient sources found in all the other plays analysed so far. Casali talks about his adaptive techniques as an *ars combinatoria* whereby, while claiming complete adherence to the classical model (Sophocles' *Trachiniae*), he contaminates the story with multiple other sources (with *amplificatio*), ancient and contemporary, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*, as well as Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris*.

Both Christopher Jotischky and Raf Van Rooy touch upon the use of language as a form of translation: one that while openly functioning as a political move also specifically relies on audiences' memories around the stratified meanings of that language and the communities that it enables to create, select and nurture.

Jotischky's three case studies across the Ionian islands well exemplify the interplay between language, translation and audiences. A performance of an Italian translation of Aeschylus' *Persians* in Zakynthos celebrating Venetian victory against the Ottoman Empire in the battle of Lepanto (1571) is testament to the political function that language inevitably took on in this colonial context (interestingly, the only piece of evidence that this performance ever took place comes from a scholarly essay by Spyridon De Viazis in 1895, well after the collapse of Venetian rule in 1797). The linguistic hybridity of the Ionian islands is further proved by Jotischky's second and third case studies, a fragment from Kefalonia (1732) containing a vernacular translation of a Roman play, Seneca's *Troades*, and a play that contains a translation of Terence's *Hecyra*, written by Antonios Matesis in Zakynthos during the 1820s. Here again we find the usual combinative-amplificative translation strategies that have emerged in the other plays discussed in this issue: though the stories are borrowed from the Romans, Seneca's play has been 'composed anew' and translated into the rules of Cretan theatre, while Terence's play has been 'contaminated' with other source texts. In both cases, the language employed is vernacular Greek, which functions as a powerful medium for writing these stories into local theatrical repertoires.

If these last two case studies describe a shift from top to bottom, i.e. from a selective Latin-speaking audience and readership to a local vernacular one, Raf Van Rooy's contribution illustrates the opposite effort in the use of ancient Greek in Antwerp during the 1640s. This "new humanist form of Ancient Greek" (Van Rooy 2023, 4), that some scholars have recently named New Ancient Greek, served as a marker of elevated culture and capital during this period of great scholarly interest in Greek composition in the Low Countries (1550s-1650s). It is in this context that Van Rooy analyses two compositions in New Ancient Greek, probably performed for two solemn occasions, a funeral and a wedding in the Plantin-Moretus family, one of the

most important representatives of that cultural capital at the time. Indeed, they owned the *Officina Palatina*, whose printing centres in Antwerp and Leiden were at the very centre of this composition frenzy. The Greek dirge for Balthasar I's death (Platin's grandson and business owner) is paired with a Latin prose subscription, playing on the functions of each language: whereas the former is meant to remind the audience that it is a funerary service, the latter is meant to emphasise the exceptionality of the dead, who, rather than being prayed for in Latin as customary on these occasions, is prayed for in the "language of the New Testament" (123). The other poem, instead, features in a multi-lingual collection alongside other compositions and translations by learned men in and from Greek, Latin and Hebrew, as well as a variety of vernacular languages, printed under the title *Acroamata nuptialia* by the press itself, and probably recited during the three-day feast celebrating the marriage of Balthasar II (heir to the family business) with Anna Goos on 23 July 1645. In both cases, by means of its intimate, exclusive status as a language, whose codes and meanings must have highly resonated with the audiences it was inevitably selected for, New Ancient Greek is employed to mark the solemnity of the two events.

Translation and memories, old and new, are the core of the last two contributions. In many ways, these spring from the pedagogical desire to integrate research and teaching practices into a comprehensive exploration of this rich tapestry of interconnected and multilayered 'memory texts', which (originally designed for performance) require performance as one possible method of analysis. Integral to the two-stage conference on *Memory and Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals* that this double special issue largely draws from was the inclusion of a workshop on early modern translations of Aristophanes' *Plutus*, led by Marco Martinelli, and including school and university students from London and Parma, with which the last two contributions collected here are in dialogue. If Bortoletti and Refini (133-65) illustrate early modern performance pedagogies and how they call for a contemporary practice-based approach such as that developed by Martinelli over decades of experience working with young adults (his 'non-school' methodology); Di Martino presents findings from her dramaturgical research of the translations used for the workshop, as well as how the translators' contexts, linguistic choices and political choices operated in the creation of the final script presented in a demonstration-performance at the end of this work (167-213).

More specifically, Bortoletti and Refini explore the interconnection between early modern learning and educational hubs and the theatre, where the need for a dramaturgical rewriting of the source texts to suit contemporary audiences well combined with a pedagogical imperative to understand as well as extract 'skills' from these texts. Indeed, education sat at the heart of

the dialogue surrounding early modern performance, with scholars like the Venetian Tito Livio Frulovisi championing theatrical practices as essential tools for moral and civic training. As illustrated in discussions of Frulovisi's school dramas, theatre was intertwined with rhetorical education, providing students with the skills necessary to engage meaningfully in public life. The incorporation of comedic and dramatic elements in educational settings served to enrich students' oratory skills while fostering a sense of community among participants. Lastly, Bortoletti and Refini provide a brief overview of Martinelli's own combination of pedagogy and theatre practice, stressing the importance of feeding off one another to ensure that both are alive.

Following on from Bortoletti and Refini, Di Martino digs deeper into the means and methods of the workshop with Martinelli. After providing an overview of early modern translations and performances of *Plutus*, Di Martino analyses the 'memory texts' that were reactivated in the context of the workshop: Eufrosino Bonini's *Comedia di Iustitia* (1513), Thomas Randolph's *Πλουτοφθαλμία Πλουτογαμία. A Pleasant Comedy Entituled Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (1651); and H.H.B's *The World's Idol, Plutus a Comedy* (1659). Also included in the article is an appendix which offers Marco Martinelli's perspective on the workshop: how he envisioned the scenes and constructed the Chorus, as well as an appendix containing the final script.

Indeed, all of the 'memory texts' discussed in this issue have as their basis the interplay between translation and performance. These emerge as not merely a stage for new dramatisation, but as a significant site for the ongoing negotiation of cultural heritage and identity, inscribed within, while also heavily relying on, contemporary audiences' memories, of both the past and the present.

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