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DICTATORSHIP AND THEATRE: THE SEVEN-YEAR JUNTA AND THE PERFORMANCES OF GREEK TRAGEDY AT EPIDAUROS*



ABSTRACT: The paper examines the impact of the seven-year dictatorship (1967–1974) on the performances of ancient Greek tragedy by the National Theatre of Greece at the summer festival of Epidaurus and in association with the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Science in 1971. The discussion concludes that during the dictatorship the summer festival of Epidaurus turned into a tourist attraction and a vehicle for the manipulation of audiences through the “ancient-maniac” ideology of the dictators expressed through the performances of tragedy. The establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Science intensified the political appropriation of tragedy as a carrier of ideology and aesthetics.

A GENERALIZED, ELEMENTARY VIEW prevails over the relationship of dictatorial regimes with culture as it is considered that there is a more or less straightforward relationship between oppression imposed on political life and despotism enforced on cultural life. The above connection concerns, in principal, the way politics is applied rather than the substance of its application. Furthermore, it has to be stated clearly from the beginning, that, even under the rule of dictatorial regimes, progress does exist and it can be detected through time. Within this context I shall try to investigate the impact of dictatorship to theatre performances and more specifically to the performances of ancient Greek tragedy by the National Theatre of Greece resulting from the regime’s declared “ancient-maniac” ideolo-

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gy. Moreover, the National Theatre forms “par excellence” the ideological constitution in relation to theatre and therefore, through its study, one can investigate official politics and their influence on theatre in general. Besides, dictatorship and theatre as a topic is connected to propaganda in a straightforward way. Colonels used censorship in order to manipulate Greek people by promoting the superiority of the Greek spirit.

Moreover, the topic is interesting for an additional reason, namely the fact that the dictatorial regime in Greece, from 1971 onwards, through the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Science raised expectations to the people for its supposedly high consideration of culture. Tracing back the events, the Ministry of Culture and Science was founded for the first time in Greece on the 26th of August 1971 during a cabinet reshuffle as a result of a legislative decree which provided for only a limited number of thirteen Ministries (Legislative Decree 957/1971). Therefore, one could expect that the handling of culture and theatre from the State would be more systematic. With reference to the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Science, I will try to approach in an effective way — in order to distinguish potential diversifications and their ideological background — the performances of ancient Greek tragedy by the National Theatre directors produced for the summer festival of Epidaurus, a festival which, until 1975, had been the exclusive privilege of the National Theatre. In my opinion, the questions raised here are the following: Did the regime consciously try to drive ideologically the performances of ancient Greek tragedy or did its attempts at manipulation remain superficial and shallow? Was the colonels’ way of approaching the performances of ancient Greek tragedy consistent throughout the years of their authority or was it diversified during their last years of power? How did the establishment of the Ministry of Culture contribute to the above process?

Before analyzing the directorial approaches to ancient Greek tragedy for the summer festival of Epidaurus during the period of dictatorship, one should refer to certain events of great importance that took place and led to the redefinition of public policy towards culture from 1969 onwards. On the 28th of March 1969 Giorgos Seferis gave a public speech in BBC condemning the Junta regime. As an immediate result, a few months later, in October 1969 preventive censorship in literature ceased to exist. After Seferis’ public condemnation of the junta, eighteen literary texts were published, in a book printed by “Kedros”, against the dictatorial oppression¹ which had been im-

1. Most of the contributors were writers, poets as well as academics: G. Seferis with the poem *The Cats of Saint Nicolas (Oi gates t’ Ai Nikola)*, Kay Tsietselis with the short story

posed in April 1967. It is worth mentioning though, that censorship imposed on theatre productions continued to exist during the whole seven years of dictatorship.² Furthermore, on the 18th of February 1970 the junta government established, through a legislative decree, the Organization of National Theatres of Greece, in order to interfere directly to the work of State Theatres (the National Theatre of Greece, the Greek National Opera, the State Theatre of Northern Greece). The reactions and the overall resistance in the field of arts as well as the colonels' effort to reduce tension and at the same time to improve the effectiveness of the ideological control led to the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Science under the control of which the Organization of National Theatres of Greece was eventually subsumed.

With regard to the National Theatre, the *coup d'état* of 1967 found it under the joint direction of Ilias Venezis and Alexis Minotis. The program of Epidaurus festival had already been drafted.³ By the end of autumn of 1967,

Short Dialogue (Mikros dialogos), Takis Koufopoulos with the short story, *The Actor (O ithopios)*, Spyros Plaskovitis with the short story *The Radar (To radar)*, Alexandros Kotzias with a fragment of a novel under the title *Coming Back (Epistrephontas)*, Takis Sinopoulos with the poem *Nights (Nyktes)*, Nora Anagnostaki with *A Testimony (Mia martyria)*, Rodis Roufos with the short story *The Candidate (O ypopsiphios)*, Giorgos Chimonas with *Doctor Ineotis (O giatros Ineotis)*, Th. D. Fragopoulos with the short story *El Prokarador*, Stratis Tsirkas with the short story *Weather Change (Allaxokeria)*, Manolis Anagnostakis with fourteen poems under the title *The Target (O stochos)*, D. N. Maronitis with the philological essay *Arrogance and Intoxication (Yperopsia kai methi)*, Nikos Kasdaglis with a diary from his visit to Mount Athos under the title *Athos*, Thanasis Valtinos with the short story *The Plaster Cast (O gypos)*, Menis Koumandareas, *Saint Ciriaca on the Rock (Agia Kyriaki sto Vracho)*, Lina Kasdagli with the poem *Signals of Pedestrian Crossings (Simata diavaseon)* and Alex. Argyriou with the philological essay *The Style of a Language and the Language of a Style (To yphos mias glossas kai i glossa enos yphous)*.

2. On the 30th of May 1967 a circular was sent by the Ministry of Cooperative Affairs (Protocol Code Number 2397/D) to "all theatre managers and impressarios" in order to establish the preventive censorship to all spectacles so that "nobody could be authorized in the name of the art to forge it and exploit it for the purpose of flagrant and impermissible speculation which would lead to malicious damage of healthy Greek customs and culture, and to the seduction of Greek people and more specifically of the Greek youth". On the contrary, the trusted application of preventive censorship could result in "the comfortable and seamless activity of those who deal with art seriously and honestly in order to ensure that art would be better adapted to the current conditions and to the future perspectives". The circular was signed by Georgios Papadopoulos.
3. After Venezis' resignation Tassos Athanasiades was introduced as a temporary administrative officer while Minotis continued to exercise his directorial duties mainly because he had accepted an invitation by Canada's government in order to present, together with the National Theatre Company, ancient Greek plays in the context of

the military regime reinstated the position of General Director and accordingly placed the philologist Evangelos Fotiadis in that position. Consequently, Alexis Minotis resigned and the summer festival of Epidaurus was monopolized by the National Theatre's remaining directors, namely Takis Mouzenidis, Alexis Solomos,⁴ and Lambros Kostopoulos (Minotis's assistant director). Moreover, in 1971 Spyros Evangelatos becomes part of the National Theatre's manpower with a dynamic presence at the summer festival of Epidaurus.⁵ Besides, Sokratis Karandinos had already been added to the directors working with the National Theatre after his return to Greece, during the winter season of 1967–1968.⁶ The establishment of the Organization of National Theatres of Greece (1970) brought the veteran brigadier-general Vasilios Paxinos to the position of the Director of the Organization and Vasilios Fraggos to the position of General Director of the National Theatre. It is noteworthy that the consolidation of the three state stages had been circulating as a draft bill since 1962. The paternity of the idea belonged to Kostis Bastias who was eventually entrusted with its realization in 1971. Amongst the Organisation's first goals was the reintegration of Alexis Minotis and Katina Paxinou into the National Theatre, something which both artists had accepted. But the whole project was cancelled since neither Bastias became the Director of the Organization nor Minotis took over the position of the General Director of National Theatre.

Until 1975 the Epidaurus festival of ancient Greek drama was monopolized by the National Theatre and mainly involved restagings of past years' productions.⁷ Thus, it featured a repetition of older scenic realizations and only few new plays addressed to the broad, but uneven in quality, audience

Expo '67 in Montreal. The plays were Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, both directed by Alexis Minotis, as well as Aristophanes' *Wealth* directed by Leonidas Trivizas.

4. In 1967, after Minotis' departure, Alexis Solomos was reintegrated into the National Theatre from which he had been forced to withdraw in 1964 when he was accused for alterations in the translation of Aristophanes' *Peace* which he had directed for the summer festival of Epidaurus.
5. Spyros Evangelatos was the youngest director to participate in the festival of ancient Greek drama at Epidaurus, at the age of 23.
6. Sokratis Karandinos was first ostracized from the National Theatre in 1946 when Dimitris Rondiris assumed the position of General Director. He returned to the National Theatre in 1950 when G. Theotokas took the helm of the Organization and was removed again in 1953 when Rondiris became again its head (see Arvaniti [2010] 174-77).
7. In 1975 the summer festival of Epidaurus opened its gates to the State Theatre of Northern Greece and to the Theatro Technis (Art Theatre).

of the theatre of Epidaurus. In 1967, the only new production staged at the ancient theatre, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, directed by Alexis Minotis,⁸ was followed by the restaging of Euripides' *Ion*, directed by Takis Mouzenidis.⁹ *Ion* was originally staged in 1964 and was repeated the following year. For the summer festival of 1967, the directors' committee of the National Theatre had decided to restage Sophocles' *Ajax*,¹⁰ directed by Takis Mouzenidis as well, but after the intervention of the dictatorship the staging of *Ajax* was cancelled, mainly because Mikis Theodorakis had composed the music of the play, and it was replaced by *Ion*. The enforced decision of replacing *Ajax* because a left-wing artist had composed the music of the production was the first act of censorship imposed on the National Theatre in relation to Greek tragedy. It is worth mentioning though that Alexis Minotis had written an official letter addressed to the Ministry of State (6th of July 1967) explaining that he himself as a theatre director and former artistic director of the National Theatre considered his duty to declare that "it is absolutely inaccurate that censorship was exercised on the texts of ancient Greek tragedy and comedy. The State did not want the music of the composer Mikis Theodorakis. Nothing more. And since three of the scheduled productions of ancient Greek tragedy for the summer festival of Epidaurus and Athens featured Theodorakis's music, they were not included in the program due to the initiative of the former board of directors of National Theatre appointed by the former government and in accordance with the [former] Ministry of Education".¹¹ Thus, Minotis offered to the Colonels the justification they needed in order to avoid the immediate reaction of the cultural world. This can be noticed in the direct response which came from reliable governmental sources welcoming Minotis's statement with the following words: "Through Minotis, who is the most reliable, authoritative person to express himself on the issue, the slanderous campaign against the National Government and Greece is completely dissolved. The libel accusation that the national government allegedly intervened in the program of the Athens festival and banned the performance of Greek classical

8. The performance was based on the translation of Tassos Rousos. The set was designed by Vasilis Vasileiadis and the costumes by Antonis Fokas. The music of the piece was composed by Theodoros Antoniou and the choreography was by Maria Hors.

9. The play was translated by Nikos Poriotis while the setting and the costumes were designed by Kleovoulos Klonis, the permanent set designer of the National Theatre. Menelaos Pallandios composed the music and Rallou Manou choreographed the piece.

10. The play was originally staged in 1965 in the translation of Giannis Gryparis. Apart from Mikis Theodorakis, Kleovoulos Klonis and Antonis Fokas designed the scenery and the costumes respectively, while Zouzou Nikoloudi choreographed the Chorus.

11. *CEp* 201.

writers has been debunked. Nothing is more untrue. Minotis confirms it in written form.”¹² The statement also underlines that “the members of the board of directors of the National Theatre, appointed by the former government (Center Union), voluntarily, right after the ‘Revolution’ banned the performance of classical plays not because of their content but because of their music which was composed by a known communist, leader of ‘Lambrakides’, Mikis Theodorakis.”¹³ Finally, the open letter points out that “among the members of the board of directors who took the above decision was, in the post of vice president, the outstanding Greek actress, Mrs Kyveli, former wife of Mr. Georgios Papandreou”.¹⁴ Therefore, preventive censorship did apply to the selection of the plays for the summer festival, even if it was exercised by the former board of directors in accordance with the authoritarian rulers.

However, during the following year’s festival, in summer 1968, censorship was imposed in the form of an enforcement of the General Director’s view on Takis Mouzenidis who directed Euripides’ *Rhesus*.¹⁵ Mouzenidis had decided to abandon, in the second performance of the new production of *Rhesus*,¹⁶ at the opening night, the idea of using *tableau vivant* in order to freeze the images of the actors in a characteristic position at the end of the play. After the General Director’s written statement Mouzenidis was forced to withdraw his decision and adopt *tableau vivant* in the next performance.¹⁷

The enforcement of Fotiadis’ aesthetic view on Mouzenidis would culminate, the following year (1969) in the ideological intervention which would result in the banning of the performance of Euripides’ *Electra*.¹⁸ The reason

12. *To Vima* 9.7.1967.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. The play was translated by Tassos Rousos. Pavlos Mandoudis designed the set as well as the costumes. The music was composed by Giorgos Kouroupos. The play was choreographed by Maria Hors.

16. Apart from *Rhesus*, the 1968 Epidaurus festival included two more new productions of ancient Greek tragedy: Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes* directed by Alexis Solomos and Euripides’ *Medea* directed by Lambros Kostopoulos. It is also worth mentioning that during the same festival a new production of Aristophanes’ comedy was performed, *Knights*, directed by Alexis Solomos, after three consequent years of restagings. Christophoros Nezer, the great Aristophanic actor, held the key role of Agoracritus (sausage seller) at the age of 90, fulfilling his lifelong dream to play in all eleven surviving comedies of Aristophanes. See *To Vima* 4.8.1968.

17. Fotiadis’ intervention in Mouzenidis’ approach to the play is described in the book of V. Kanakis (1999) who held the leading role in the performances of the play.

18. Tassos Rousos translated the play and Pavlos Mandoudis designed the set and the



FIG. 1

was the costumes of the production, especially the male costumes, designed by Pavlos Mandoudis, which were considered inappropriate and, thus, unacceptable (FIG. 1) by the directors' committee of the National Theatre, because "in those costumes one looked like a matador, [...] the other as a character who escaped from *Cherry Orchard*" and thus people confronted a situation of "Alban-like, Slav-like, Turkish-like appearance [...]" far from "the Greek line, the line of national heritage which used to be respected as heirloom by the Organisation of the National Theatre". The official letter signed by Evangelos Fotiadis, the Administrative Director of the National Theatre, after the play's world premiere, ordered the people involved "to change everything which went against the tradition of the National Theatre and to submit their new plans under the review of the directorial committee as it should happen henceforward in every similar case".¹⁹ Both Mandoudis and Mouzenidis refused to comply with Fotiadis' command and proceed with the necessary changes for the play's performance. Mouzenidis sent an extrajudicial letter to the management of the Institution refusing to accept any change in the

controversial costumes. Antiochos Evangelatos composed the music and Maria Hors choreographed the play.

19. The three pages of the official letter which was addressed to P. Mandoudis and posted outside the main theatre building were republished in the tribute volume *The Chronicles of Epidaurus Festival 1954-1976 (To Chroniko ton Epidavrion)*, 240.

costumes and putting in a claim for copyright.²⁰ Mandoudis also answered the offensive open letter of Fotiadis stating that he followed the director's wish to invest the play with a contemporary spirit and therefore he tried to combine contemporary Greek elements of the countryside with those of the Mycenaean age, strongly rejecting the accusations that he was influenced by other traditions apart from the national Greek one. Moreover, he explicitly stated that any change in the costumes after the first performance, not to mention without the consent of the costume designer, would be totally unacceptable.²¹ However, censorship did work and the production was revised by Stelios Vokovits and Mary Vostantzi, Mouzenidis' assistant, who decided to use the costumes designed by Antonis Fokas for Sophocles' *Electra*.²² Antonis Fokas and Eleni Hatziargiri, who held the role of Electra, protested in written form against the use of different costumes, reserving all their legal rights.²³ However, the play was performed on the 10th of August 1969 with modified costumes in accordance with Fotiadis' will. But during the play's restaging in the summer festival of 1971 Spyros Vasileiou designed the costumes, as well as the setting of the production.

The summer festival of 1969 included two more new productions of ancient Greek tragedy, Euripides' *Bacchae*, directed by Alexis Solomos,²⁴ and Sophocles' *Antigone*, directed by Lambros Kostopoulos.²⁵ Of the two, *Antigone* could have caused uneasiness, embarrassment and even annoyance to the dictatorial regime because of its emancipated heroine (FIG. 2). Contrary to expectations, the production did not provoke any reaction by the dictatorial regime. Even more, the performance attracted crowds of people, around seventeen thousand.²⁶ Among the viewers were members of the government

20. See *O Eleutheros Kosmos* 27.7.1969.

21. See *O Eleutheros Kosmos* 31.7.1969.

22. Antonis Fokas designed the costumes of Sophocles' *Electra* for the summer festival of Epidaurus 1961. Takis Mouzenidis directed Anna Synodinou in the leading role, in which Katina Paxinou had earlier been widely applauded.

23. See *O Eleutheros Kosmos* 31.7.1969 and *O Eleutheros Kosmos* 2.8.1969.

24. The production was based on Pantelis Prevelakis' translation and Manos Hatzidakis' music. George Vakalo designed the scenery and the costumes, while Agapi Evangelidis choreographed it.

25. Kostopoulos used Ioannis Gryparis' translation and Dimitris Dragatakis' music. Kleovoulos Klonis designed both the scenery and the costumes while Eleuthera Milisi choreographed the production.

26. The festival of Epidaurus grew to become a tourist attraction as shown in newspaper reports about the crowds that filled the theatre. In 1971 the production of Euripides' *Orestes*, directed by Alexis Solomos, with the renowned Nikos Kourkoulos in the leading role, was attended by "fifteen thousand viewers (35% foreign tourists), while many



FIG. 2

as well as people of letters and artists.²⁷ The festival of Epidaurus had acquired a “cynical, touristic character” which excluded “any possible attempt of artistic pursuing”.²⁸ The lack of artistic pursuing was acknowledged by the director who more or less identified artistic freedom and experimentation with unauthorized intervention to the text’s meaning. Therefore, the colonels did not have anything to fear from the director’s approach to the play. Besides, as it was stated in an anonymous newspaper comment, in the 1969 production of *Antigone* “the right was on Creon’s side”.²⁹

As has already been mentioned, the 1970’s festival of Epidaurus took place under the aegis and the control of the Organization of State Theatres of Greece. Takis Mouzenidis had become the leading director of the National Theatre and his position was strengthened during the following years of the junta regime. Moreover, when Vasileios Fraggos became the General Director of the Institution, Mouzenidis assumed more power. From 1970 onwards, he gave the opening address at the festival of Epidaurus, chose the

had to stay outside because the theatre was overcrowded” (*I Apogeumatini* 12.7.1971). In many cases there were references to famous people among the audience (“Katherine Hepburn was among the viewers”, *I Nea Politeia* 7.7.1970).

27. Stylianos Pattakos, the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as Manos Katrakis, the leftist actor, were included in the audience of Epidaurus. See, *I Apogeumatini*, 8.7.1969 and *I Nea Politeia*, 8.7.1969.

28. Thodoros Kritikos, “Sophocles’ *Antigone*”, *I Acropolis* 12.7.1969.

29. *I Nea Politeia* 8.7.1969.

tragedies he wanted to direct, as well as the actors and the actresses who performed in his plays. Thus, the censorial incidents of the previous years did not undermine his position and they were never repeated since the director collaborated with the officials of the regime and gained their trust.

In 1972 the Ministry of Culture assumed the responsibility of organizing the summer festival, since the Organization of State Theatres of Greece was incorporated into it.³⁰ During that festival, two long-awaited productions, each one for different reasons, initially gave the impression of a new, more innovative start. These were Aeschylus' *Oresteia*,³¹ directed by Takis Mouzenidis,³² and Sophocles' *Electra*, directed by Spyros Evangelatos, a young and successful director of the independent theatre.³³

The 1972 festival of Epidaurus opened with *Agamemnon*. The importance attributed to the play by the National Theatre's administration was testified by the trip to Epidaurus organized by the Theatre for the members of Greek and foreign press.³⁴ However, the disoriented and indiscriminate statement of the National theatre's General Director that the trilogy "provides comprehensively the Greek spiritual sense of life [...] and may provide the only

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30. At the 16th year of Epidaurus' festival (1970), T. Mouzenidis directed Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, A. Solomos Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Aristophanes' *Clouds* and L. Kostopoulos Euripides' *Children of Heracles*. Apart from the massive turnout at the theatre, the only other interesting fact of the project was that with the production of Euripides' *Children of Heracles*, all thirty-one surviving Greek tragedies had by then been put on stage by the National Theatre. The summer festival of 1971 was defined by the production of Euripides' *Orestes* directed by A. Solomos, because of the guest appearance of N. Kourkoulos in the name role. T. Mouzenidis directed Aeschylus' *Persae*, in "a performance which could not provoke either opposition or vivid enthusiasm" (Alkis Thrylos, *I Nea Estia* 1.8.1971).
31. The only surviving trilogy was first produced in modern times in 1903 by the Royal Theatre of Greece, directed by Thomas Oikonomou. Subsequently Fotos Politis directed *Agamemnon* for the reopening of the National Theatre in 1932. Dimitris Rondiris took over and directed the whole trilogy in 1949 for the Week of Ancient Greek Drama at Herodes Atticus Theatre. The trilogy was presented again at the same theatre in 1954 and at the theatre of Epidaurus in 1959. Finally, Alexis Minotis directed *Agamemnon* for the 1965 festival of Epidaurus.
32. The Aeschylean trilogy was initially presented at the International Theatre Season Festival in London. It was based on the translation by T. Roussos, with set design by Kl. Klonis, costumes by D. Fotopoulos, music by S. Vasileiadis and choreography by Z. Nikoloudi.
33. Spyros Evangelatos co-operated with K.Ch. Myris in the translation of the play, Giorgos Patsas in the scenery and costumes, Dimitris Terzakis in the music and Maria Hors in the choreography.
34. *I Vradini* 1.7.1972.



FIG. 3

answer to the social and spiritual drama of our time”,³⁵ underlined the director’s neutral and indifferent approach to the play which was also emphasized by the critics who confirmed that the production denied any anticipation for renewal. In the same vein, the critics commented on “the awkward performance [...] indicative of the whole festival’s quality”.³⁶ They also criticised the “polished surface, made mirage [...] Hollywood style oasis.”³⁷ In the end, the only surprise in Mouzenidis’s absolutely predictable performance was the choice of Mary Aronis,³⁸ a great female comedian who used to hold leading Aristophanic roles in the National Theatre Epidaurus festival performances directed by Alexis Solomos, to play Clytemnestra (FIG. 3).³⁹ Besides, *Oresteia*, according to the traditional interpretation, was about the ultimate

35. *Ibid.*

36. Th. Kritikós, “Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* by the National Theatre”, *I Acropolis* 10.7.1972.

37. K. Georgousopoulos, “The Criterion of the *Oresteia*”, *To Vima tis Kyriakis* 23.7.1972. Georgousopoulos also characterized Mouzenidis as an “excellent organizer of spectacles” pointing out that the director approached the play horizontally, without considering “the other aspect” ensuing from the vertical reading of the play.

38. See Van Steen (2002) 199.

39. Among the innovative elements of the production were considered to be Tassos Rousos’s translation, Stephanos Vasileiadis’ music, Dionysis Fotopoulos’ costumes and mostly the performance of Mary Aronis in the leading role of Clytemnestra (*Eleutheros Kosmos* 2.7.1972). However, the majority of critics did not praise Aronis’ performance; cf. Kritikós, *op. cit.*, and Georgousopoulos, *op. cit.*

prevalence of law and order in the human world, a view which was shared by the military regime as well as by the board of the National Theatre's directors.

On the contrary, Evangelatos' approach to Sophocles' *Electra* was considered to be, by the majority of critics,⁴⁰ a positive contribution to the festival's renewal which otherwise, during the seven years of dictatorship, had become indifferent because of the conservative approaches of the permanent directors of the Institution. Critics praised "the self-restrained use of expressive means and of any other invention" by the director as well as his exemplary collaboration with actors and actresses such as Antigone Valakou and Petros Fyssoun (FIG. 4), who played leading tragic roles for the first time.⁴¹ Evangelatos directed, for the following year's festival (1973), Euripides' *Hippolytus* in a ritualistic approach, using masks for the roles of the gods. All the other roles appeared to be part of a Bacchic company. Some critics believed that Evangelatos could bring fresh wind to the Epidaurus' festival.⁴² The same critical evaluation was acknowledged in Evangelatos's third approach to ancient Greek tragedy which included Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Cyclops* (1974).⁴³ In general, most critics largely praised the fluidity and plasticity of the chorus' movements in Evangelatos' approaches.⁴⁴ Moreover, they evaluated the accurate collaboration of the director with set designer Giorgos Patsas, Evangelatos' permanent collaborator.⁴⁵ Finally, critics seemed to praise the director's well-documented view that in reality no particular school of approach to Greek tragedy existed since each play imposed its own way of production.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there were critics who stressed the director's "complete subservience to the arteriosclerotic rules that governed the National Theatre's productions".⁴⁷ Additionally, a critic pointed out that Evangelatos, in his effort to avoid the well-attested "pompousness" which

40. See Irene Kalkanis, "Sophocles' *Electra*", *I Apogeumatini* 15.7.1972, Tonis Tsirbinos, "Sophocles' *Electra* at Epidaurus' festival of 1972", *Ta Simerina* 12.7.1972 and Niki Dekavalla, "A revived *Electra* by the National Theatre", *O Eleutheros Kosmos* 6.7.1972.

41. See T. Tsirbinos, "Sophocles' *Electra* at Epidaurus' festival of 1972", *Ta Simerina* 12.7.1972.

42. See K. Georgousopoulos, "*Oedipus* and *Hippolytus*", *To Vima* 22.7.1973.

43. See K. Georgousopoulos, "Epidauria 74", *To Vima* 3.8.1974.

44. See Irene Kalkanis, "Sophocles' *Electra*", *I Apogeumatini* 15.7.1972 and "The vertigo of virtue", *I Apogeumatini* 21.7.1973. See also T. Tsirbinos, "Euripides' *Hippolytus* at Epidaurus by the National Theatre", *Ta Simerina* 10.7.1973.

45. *I Apogeumatini* 15.7.1972.

46. S. A. Evangelatos' "Epidaurus – *Electra*", *To Vima* 2.7.1972. See also E. Papazoglou's analysis of the critical reception of the play in Papazoglou (2014) 287-309.

47. Th. Kritikou, "Sophocles' *Electra*", *I Acropolis* 15.7.1972.



FIG. 4



FIG. 5

characterized the approaches of National Theatre’s directors, resorted to “an even more conservative reading of the play” hidden behind an outdated psychological realism.⁴⁸

The touristic character of the Epidaurus festival of ancient Greek drama was reflected in the excessive number of ten plays that were presented during a period of seven weekends in the summer of 1973.⁴⁹ Critics referred to the festival as an “industry of spectacle”.⁵⁰ It was apparent that the institution had ceased for many years to be an artistic event and instead it had become a tourist attraction, “an illuminated showcase within which some indisputable artistic gains of the past had been placed in order to be devoured by the crowd of tourists”.⁵¹ Besides, spectacle without critical and intellectual concern was the approved mechanism applied by the junta.

In the aforementioned key frame Euripides’ *Hippolytus* directed by Spyros Evangelatos should also be included,⁵² as well as the overpraised and much-lauded production of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* directed by Takis

48. *Ibid.*

49. Apart from the three new productions, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, directed by T. Mouzenidis, Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, directed by Sp. Evangelatos and Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, directed by A. Solomos, the following, remaining 7 plays were performed at the festival: Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*, *Eumenides*, directed by T. Mouzenidis, Euripides’ *Medea*, directed by L. Kostopoulos and *Orestes*, directed by A. Solomos, Sophocles’ *Electra*, directed by Sp. Evangelatos and Aristophanes’ *Women at the Assembly (Ecclesiazusae)*, were reproductions.

50. K. Georgousopoulos, “*Oedipus Tyrannus – Hippolytus*”, *To Vima* 22.7.1973.

51. Th. Kritikos, “Epidaurus festival of 1973”, *I Acropolis* 2.7.1973.

52. The production was based on the translation of Kostas Varnalis, the costumes and the

Mouzenidis,⁵³ with Manos Katrakis in the role of Oedipus (FIG. 5). It was unexpectedly surprising that a left-wing actor, who forcibly resisted the dictatorial regime, cooperated with Mouzenidis in the production of *Oedipus Tyrannus* with the blessings of the dictators. Moreover, in July 1971 Katrakis submitted a project to the directorial committee of the National Theatre, according to which “the state subsidy to the Institution should be cut in half and the amount saved had better be given to partly-public theatres with controlled repertoire” which would perform in Athens and in the countryside.⁵⁴ However, for the sake of the argument, Katrakis returned to the manpower of National Theatre, as a permanent actor, during the winter of 1972–1973, after twenty-five years of absence, following Mouzenidis’ immense efforts and against his initial reluctance to cooperate with the military administration of the theatre.⁵⁵ Critics deplored the “early festivalisation of Greek tragedy”, apparent in the clapping of the audience on the occasion of exits and entrances, as well as in Katrakis’ provocative raising and lowering of his hands so that the amateur photographers could capture the right pose and keep it as a souvenir.⁵⁶

The second *Antigone* of the seven-year period of dictatorship was scheduled for the summer festival of 1974.⁵⁷ The play was directed by Alexis Solomos with Anna Synodinou in the leading role.⁵⁸ The actress had returned to the National Theatre after ten years of absence. As it happened in the case of the 1969 production of the play directed by Kostopoulos, Solomos focused his approach on Creon, who appeared to be a “human” and “logocentric tyrant”.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Synodinou as Antigone “forcefully

scenery were by Giorgos Patsas, the music by Stephanos Gazouleas and the choreography by Maria Hors.

53. Takis Mouzenidis used the historic translation of Fotos Politis, written for the 1919 production of the play, directed by Fotos Politis himself. The scenery and the costumes of the production were designed by Dionysis Fotopoulos. The music was composed by Stephanos Vasileiadis and the choral odes were choreographed by Maria Chors.
54. See the Calendar of the Chronicle '71 (*CEp* 1971, 186).
55. See Kanakis (1999) 528.
56. See Th. Kritikos, “*Oedipus and Hippolytus*”, *I Acropolis* 27.7.1973.
57. The play was based on the translation by Ioannis Gryparis, the scenery and costumes were by Nikos Nikolaou and the music by Vasilis Tenidis.
58. In 1967, Anna Synodinou directed for her company, the Hellenic Stage (Elliniki Skini) Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, but the junta censor of the National Tourist Organization (EOT) banned the production and Synodinou deliberately withdrew from her career. In May 1969, Synodinou spoke out against the dictatorship in a statement which was published in Britain by *Greek Report*. See Van Steen (2015) 12-125.
59. K. Georgousopoulos, “Epidaurus Festival of '74. Sophocles’ *Antigone*”, *To Vima*

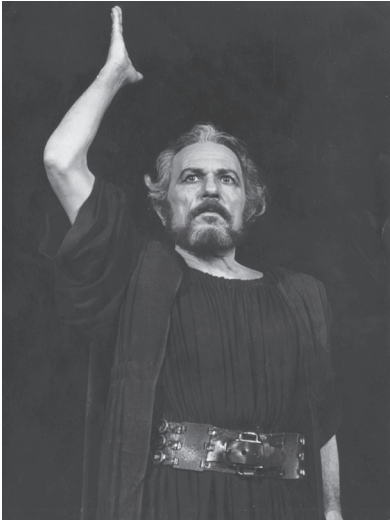


FIG. 6



FIG. 7

projected her masculine self and performed an Antigone inhuman and thus, unjustified”.⁶⁰ The discrepancy became apparent when Stelios Vokovits as Creon received a loud, justifiable applause in the scene with Teiresias (FIG. 6). Expectedly enough, the director’s approach to *Antigone* was eventually characterized as a neutral and indifferent reading of the play.

The other production which could have provoked strong, effective dissident symbolisms against the dictatorship was Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* directed by Takis Mouzenidis with the leftist actor, Manos Katrakis, in the leading role (FIG. 7).⁶¹ Mouzenidis, instead, according to K. Georgousopoulos, left M. Katrakis “without guidance [...] to follow his instinct and finally to acquire a simplistic approach to the hero”.⁶² Irene Kalkanis, another critic, expressed her surprise as to how the directorial approach managed “to degrade the play’s holy shiver into simple rhetoric”.⁶³

30.8.1974.

60. *Ibid.*

61. T. Mouzenidis used the translation by T. Roussos. The set design and the costumes of the production were designed by D. Fotopoulos. The music was composed by Michalis Adamis and the choreography was by Maria Hors.

62. K. Georgousopoulos, “Epidaurus Festival of ’74. *Prometheus, Alcestis, Cyclops*”, *To Vima* 3.8.1974.

63. Irene Kalkanis, “*Prometheus Bound* at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus”, *I Apogeu-matini* 18.7.1974. Kalkanis’ critical view arose from the fact that the production initially had two main advantages: “the ideal Prometheus in the face of Manos Katrakis – the

To sum up, the Colonels' efforts to control artistic creativity, concerning the productions of ancient Greek tragedy for the summer festival of Epidaurus were neither consciously planned nor systematic. And the reason was that in no case did the representatives of the regime wish to oppose the National Theatre's directors, who were never replaced. Besides, there was no need for such dismissals since the directors always complied with the requirements of the appointed administration of the Theatre. With the exemption of Alexis Minotis, who left the National Theatre in 1968 for strictly personal reasons, as it was mentioned above, the rest of them continued their work during the seven-year period of dictatorship and later, after the restoration of democracy. The conservative and neutral approach to Greek tragedy remained unchanged, even to plays which drew attention to politics, or when the cast could create leftist connotations. The non-ideological approach to tragic plays was never questioned by the National Theatre's directors.

Moreover, the preceding analysis indicates that the institution of the Epidaurus summer festival, during the seven-year period of the junta, slowly but firmly, morphed into a tourist attraction and a vehicle for the manipulation of an audience obsessed with false idealistic talk of degenerated patriotism, falsified ethics and kitsch aesthetics. The establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Science further intensified the deeply political treatment of tragedy as a carrier of ideology and aesthetics. Furthermore, the intermittently testified "openness" to plays, directors and other contributors was impeded since the essence of the prevailing approach to ancient drama never changed and in fact remained deliberately frivolous and conservative.

tragic hero" and Anna Synodinou in the role of Io. Gonda van Steen (2015) however, considered that the production opened "when the first signs of junta's rapid decline were showing and protest voices were growing louder and bolder" (129). She also pointed out that Katrakis "was refigured as Prometheus: his stage incarnation recalled his personal fate but, as intended, the sympathetic audience applied the lines to the common Greek experience under the junta" (*Ibid.*).

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