

Antonios Matesis and the Interplay of Latin, Greek, and European Theatre in the Early Nineteenth-century Ionian Islands

Classics has traditionally been conceived around an opposition between Greek and Latin/Roman literature and history, although interventions such as Feeney 2016 problematize this structure. The history of Latinity within Modern Greece has the potential to demonstrate the limitations of this model for classical reception studies, because the teaching of Latin, translation of its literature, and incorporation of Latin influences into Greek texts since the early nineteenth century cannot easily be classified as belonging to either side of the classical disciplinary binary. A transnational approach to identity, such as that of Zanou 2018, is therefore essential to understanding Greek aspirations to Latinity post-independence; Latin has been viewed by Greek intellectuals at various times both aspirationally, signifying the nation's possession of a European identity, and as a tool for the creation of a Modern Greek literary culture which is an integral part of the European canon by figures whose Greek identities were tempered by ties of culture, education, and experience to other parts of Europe.

Antonios Matesis (1794-1875) is a fascinating case study here, because his translation and adaptation of Latin stage works into vernacular Greek for an Ionian audience can be read in several ways. Through his vernacular translation of Terence's *Hecyra* and the structural influence of that play on his subsequent *Pot of Basil* (1829; Pylarinos 2009, 499), Matesis is an early adherent of the school of translation from Latin into demotic Greek associated with later figures such as Polyklas, Mavilis, and Theotokis. Nevertheless, Terence's own reliance on now-lost Greek texts for the plots of his comedies means that Matesis's translation of his work also functions as a reclamation of material that was appreciated as Greek in antiquity but which survives into modern times only in a Latin version. On a deeper level, Matesis's interest in the Roman theatre did not emerge from a vacuum within an Ionian regional context; evidence of

vernacular Greek translations of the tragedies of Seneca on nearby Kefalonia in the eighteenth century has survived (Evangelatos 1970, 96), while many French and Italian early modern playwrights, as well as literary theorists such as Diderot, were influenced by Latin-language comedy, as Matesis, with his extensive knowledge of European languages and literatures, was surely aware.

Matesis therefore approached this tradition not just as a Greek wishing to provide his compatriots with access to Latin literature in their own language, or a Greek attempting to reclaim a lost part of the Greek literary inheritance from Latin imitations, but also as an intellectual whose transnational European identity had alerted him to the wide reach of Roman comedy within the continent's dramatic traditions, and wished to integrate Greek vernacular literature into this intellectual exchange. This migration of influence from Greece to Rome to Western Europe and back to Greece disrupts any expectation that the Greek and Roman heritages can be seen in isolation from each other within a Modern Greek context, demonstrating that the Latin tradition is vital to understanding Greek interpretations not just of Rome, but of Ancient Greece.

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Christopher Jotischky is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Classics at Brown University. His dissertation, 'The Latin Poetics of Modern Greek Prose Literature, 1820-1960,' argues that, despite the greater importance of the Ancient Greek heritage in the formation of a Modern Greek cultural identity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Latin was a vital element in constructing Greece as a European nation and Latin literature is an identifiable influence on many well-known Greek prose authors during the period. Christopher is the recipient of the 2019 Modern Greek Studies Association Graduate Essay Prize, and has worked for the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* as editorial assistant to Johanna Hanink and as a field bibliographer in Byzantine and Modern Greek literature for the *MLA International Bibliography*. His interests include Greek literary perceptions of classical studies and antiquarianism, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Greek intellectual culture, gender and sexuality in literature, and literary translation. He is proud to be the first student in his home department to produce a dissertation focused on Greece in the modern period.