

Trisevgeni Bilia (University of Oxford)

“Translation as a Prism: Reconsidering the Greek Translations of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*”

Since its first introduction in the 1930s until nowadays, *Ulysses* in Greece is constantly revisited by writers, translators, and critics, while also provoking and contributing to issues and debates in Greek literature. After fragmentary translations and short commentaries in Thessaloniki-based journals (1930s-1940s) which contributed to the debate over interior monologue, and the extensive critical work of Manto Aravantinou (1960s-1980s) which concerned issues of transnational authorship, *Ulysses* started appearing in its full form in Greece at the end of the 1960s. The first full-length translation by Leonidas Nikolouzos and Yannis Thomopoulos (ca. 1969-1976) appeared in serialized volumes by Pairidis publications, a marginal publishing house, during and after the seven-year dictatorship. *Ulysses* became more widely known in Greece with its second full-length translation, this time by Sokratis Kapsaskis (1990), which received the *Aristeion* prize (1992), but also caused considerable controversy. The third translation, by Eleftherios Anevlavis (2014) followed the now standardized Gabler edition and included footnotes. In the meantime, work by Aris Marangopoulos, such as *Ulysses: Odigos Anagnosis [Ulysses: A Reader’s Guide]* (1995; 2001; 2010) provided a critical reading of the novel, offering translated excerpts. My presentation will discuss the full-length translations of *Ulysses* into Greek and the discourse around them as an example of struggle with Joyce’s writing, modernism, and language, through the lens of what Matthew Reynolds (2019) has called ‘prismatic agon’.

Developing the metaphor of translation as prism, contrary to the channel image that has been prevalent, Reynolds argues that when the prismatic processes of translation are acknowledged, variety can be seen as harmony. Conversely, when a translator considers her work as a failure in comparison to what could have been done, then ‘the prism of translation is felt as agon’ (23). Prismatic harmony, therefore, is haunted by prismatic agon and this oscillation looms over every translated text. In my paper, I will explore the concept of prismatic agon in relation to the three Greek translations of *Ulysses*. I will focus on the 1990 translation by Kapsaskis, gloss the way he frames his translation with an apologetic account of his practice, and discuss the reviews that followed. It is significant that the controversy over Kapsaskis’ *Odysseas* focused on broader issues such as the role of literary translation in Greek literature and the ethics of translating, rather than the text itself or the study of Joyce in Greece. In my paper, I will use prismatic agon as a productive concept to contextualize and assess criticism surrounding the existing Greek translations of *Ulysses*. I will then return to the idea of prismatic harmony: although considered inadequate and informed by the idea of the channel, Greek translations of *Ulysses* foreground a multiplicity of literary language, along with the very historicity of their practice, to such an extent, as to help us reconsider them as an evolving landscape. Translating *Ulysses* into Greek becomes an opportunity for developing a discourse about translation, but also rethinking contemporary Greek literature.

Trisevgeni Bilia is a fourth-year student at the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, Sub-Faculty of Modern Greek, at the University of Oxford. She holds a BA in Medieval and Modern Greek Philology, a MA in English Literature, and a MSt in Comparative Literature and Critical Translation. Her research focuses on the trajectory of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in Greece, its translations, and critical reception. Her research interests include modernism and translation, Greek and Anglophone modernism, world literature, as well as the presence and use of the Greek language in Joyce’s work and archive. She is also interested in the practice of translation, and she is the recipient of the 2023 *Niki Marangou Translation Prize*. At Oxford, she is involved in the Oxford Comparative Criticism and Translation Research Center (OCCT), based at St Anne’s College, where she is co-editor of the *OCCT Review*. Her article ‘Manto Aravantinou’s Joycean archive’ was recently published in the *Journal of Greek Media & Culture*.