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## From Greek to the Greeks

### Homer (and Pseudo-Homer) in the Greco-Venetian Context between the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century

**Abstract:** In the years following the print revolution, Greek intellectuals adopted the new medium in order to convey the Greek literary heritage to a wider audience. One of the first (if not actually the first) Greek literary texts to be printed was the *Batrachomyomachia*, published in Brescia in 1474: the poem was printed at least three times during the second half of the fifteenth century (1474, 1486, 1488) and the first decades of the sixteenth century. It was also published in a vernacular Greek version (1539?). In 1526 Nikolaos Loukanis published a poetical reworking of the *Iliad* in Greek that included a poem about the fall of Troy. The use and re-use of the Homeric heritage by Greeks who had settled in Venice is symptomatic of reflection on the use of the spoken language and of vernacular literature amongst Greek scholars in the West.

**Keywords:** Greek language and culture in Venice, reception of classical Greek texts in contemporary spoken Greek

In the year 1526 the doge of Venice was Andrea Gritti (1455–1538); Cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) had just published (1525) his *Prose della volgar lingua*, which introduced both a new conception of language and a linguistic comparison between ancient and modern languages; the publisher Niccolò d'Aristotele, known as Zoppino,<sup>1</sup> brought out a vernacular (Italian) edition of Lucian's *I piacevoli dialoghi*. In the same year, Carpaccio (ca.1465–1525/6) died in Capodistria and Titian (1488–1576) completed the Pesaro Altarpiece which still hangs in the Frari Church; Jacopo Sansovino (1486–1570) was engaged in an architectural renewal of the city and new ideas about poetic composition were being introduced from Rome by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556).

In the same year, the print shop run by Aldus Manutius' heirs published the *editio princeps* of Hippocrates with a dedication to the Vicenzan nobleman Gian Giorgio Trissino (1478–1550).<sup>2</sup> Trissino was at the time still working on his *L'Italia*

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<sup>1</sup> Severi 2009.

<sup>2</sup> D'Achille 2011, and Pecci 2015.

*liberata dai Goti*, a heroic poem set in the Greek-Gothic wars in Italy during the age of Justinian and which he would publish in 1547.

The Arsenale, the Venetian shipyards, were growing exponentially and Venice was unquestionably ruler of the Aegean: both Crete and Cyprus were under its jurisdiction, while minor islands of the Aegean such as Astypalaia and Naxos were in the hands of Venetian families or had submitted to Venice. The administration of Ionian islands such as Corfu, Zakynthos, Lefkas and Cephalonia, all important ports on the eastern trading routes, was carried out from Venice.

After conquering Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Turks had occupied most of the Greek-speaking areas, but Venice (from the time of the Fourth Crusade, but also before) ruled and indeed owned many Greek-speaking territories. In the first decades of the sixteenth century, Venice was the capital of Greek studies and books: it was home to Aldus Manutius (as well as to other printers), the Aldine Academy and Erasmus of Rotterdam. But the Greek language that was spoken (and studied) in Venice was not only that of Homer and the ancients. There was a growing market for texts in vernacular Greek and a certain degree of interest in spoken Greek, for commercial, political, social and economic reasons.

In May 1526, the print shop of Master Stefano da Sabbio issued a very interesting publication. It was inscribed *ad instantia di Miser Damiano di Santa Maria da Spici* and bore the weasel device of Andreas Kounadis (Figs. 1 and 2). It was an edition of the *Iliad*<sup>3</sup> in vernacular Greek composed by Nikolaos Loukanis of Corfu/Zakynthos (?), one of the first pupils of the Greek Gymnasium that had been founded in Rome by Leo X on the advice of Ianòs Laskaris. Its author was not unlearned: he had studied during the years in which Laskaris was publishing, at the Gymnasium's print shop in Rome, *Σχόλια παλαιά των πάνυ δοκίμων εις την Ομήρου Ιλιάδα* (1517) and Porphyry's *Ομηρικά ζητήματα* (1518).<sup>4</sup> But nor was he a true innovator: the Homeric poems had been continually issued in Greek, or glossed in simplified terms, from antiquity onwards.

3 On this *Iliad* and its author see Carpinato 1997, Carpinato 1998, Carpinato 1999, Badenas 2002, Dourou 2015, Dourou 2017.

4 I decided to use the monotonic system for Greek here. In the first page of the edition it is written: *Σχόλια παλαιά των πάνυ δοκίμων εις την Ομήρου Ιλιάδα* / Homeri Interpres pervetustus, seu Scholia graeca in Iliadem, addita ipsa Iliade, praemissis duobus Iani Lascaris epigrammatibus, Graece. / [Ετυπώθη εν ρώμη. παρά του κυρίνου λόφον. εν τη οικία του ευγενούς και σοφού ανδρός. προξένου τε των λογίων και κηδεμόνος αρίστου αγγέλου του κολλωτίου των απορρήτων Γραμματέως του άκρου αρχιερέως. έτει της ενσάρκου οικονομίας χιλιοστῶ πεντακοσιοστῶ επτακαιδεκάτω. Της Δε αναρρήσεως του παναγιωτάτου και θεοφιλεστάτου λέοντος πάπα Δεκάτου έτει πέμπτω [...]. On these editions see now Pontani 2017.

His *Iliad* was new in one respect, however, and differed even from the vernacular Greek editions that had appeared since 1509: it was calculated to appeal to middle-class Greeks who bought Sabbio publications for their personal pleasure. It was a synthesis of the Homeric poem based on a number of different sources: Homer *in primis*, but also Ioannis Tzetzes, Konstantinos Ermoniakòs and the *Πόλεμος της Τρωάδος*, the long poem in decapentasyllables that was a reworking of Benoît de Saint Maure's *Roman de Troie*. This work has come down to us in eight codices; the *editio princeps* was produced only in 1996.<sup>5</sup> Theodore of Gaza had also paraphrased the *Iliad* and the *Batrachomyomachia* which are preserved in a Florentine manuscript and published in the early nineteenth century by the Cypriot scholar Nikolaos Theseus: Loukanis probably did not know these reworkings, but it was not unusual to rewrite Homeric poems for many different reasons. His *Iliad* was responding to a new feeling: Greek antiquity belonged to the Greek-speaking people, and also to those who were unable to understand the ancient Greek language profoundly. Greek antiquity was a new world for the western humanists but also a hidden heritage for too many Greek-speaking men and women. This treasure needed to be revealed. So, in the last section of his translation (or of his poetic summary of the Homeric text) a poem, in 478 lines, the *Ἀλωσις της Τροίας*, was added by the author (Fig. 3). Loukanis' didactic and popularising intention is clear from the colophon, which states that the text is a synthesis and has undergone a linguistic revision. Loukanis warns the reader that his *Iliad* has been newly 'reformulated'; he would have been familiar – as we have seen – with at least two other revisitations of the Homeric poem in vernacular Greek. These were:

- 1) The *Iliad* by Konstantinos Ermoniakòs<sup>6</sup> (an obscure 14th-century author who lived in Epirus), three manuscripts of which survive and were published in 1890 by Émile Legrand.
- 2) The *Πόλεμος της Τρωάδος*: he could have had the opportunity to read it, while a manuscript (now in Bologna, Bibl. Univ. *Graec.* 3567) of this reduction of Benoît di Saint Maure's *Roman de Troie* in decapentasyllables and composed around 1170, is known to have been present in Venice in the years in which Loukanis published his *Iliad*.

Loukanis' *Iliad* is not a philological, but a 'communicative' translation, in which the reader's requirements take precedence over fidelity to the source text. It was with his reader's enjoyment in mind that Loukanis added the poem on the *Ἀλωσις*

<sup>5</sup> Jeffreys/Papathomopoulos 1996, and Lavagnini 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Carpinato 2004.

της Τροίας, subdividing it into two large sections: a romantic epic on Achilles' love for Polyxena and a second, more dramatic section on the burning of Troy and the tragic loss of the city (in which there are echoes of lamentations for the fall of Constantinople in 1453, as well as an excerpt from the chorus of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*).

Echoes of the famous love story between Achilles and Polyxena – which was well-known in medieval Europe – can even be found in Crete in the early fifteenth century: these characters of Trojan myth are briefly mentioned in the *Ερωτήματα και Αποκρίσεις Ξένου και Αλήθειας* (1403–1411) by Leonardos Dellaportas (native of Candia/Heraklion, before 1330–1419/20), the first printed edition of which was in 1995.<sup>7</sup>

Between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, such revisitations in vernacular Greek of the Trojan myth had less to do with a rediscovery and didactic reading of Homer than with a phenomenon of cultural exchange that had come about in the Eastern Mediterranean following the arrival of large numbers of men and women during the Age of the Crusades. For the invaders of those lands where Greek was spoken, (and this applied also to Constantinople in 1204), the rediscovery of the Trojan myth at this time was also a way of legitimizing the invasion of Christian lands by other Christians. Legends about the origin of Troy were rediscovered not only in Rome, but also in Padua, for example, and this had the effect of ennobling and justifying the actions of those who were engaged in appropriating those territories where Greek was spoken. Although in recent years there has been renewed scholarly interest in Dares Phrygius, Dictys Cretensis<sup>8</sup> and the various revisitations of the *Iliad*, it might perhaps be more useful to focus less on works of fiction than on the shifting historical perspective of how the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are now viewed.

Brill's *Companion to Latin Greece*<sup>9</sup> allows us to form a clearer picture of a moment in history that often lies outside the competence of classical philologists, but is, however, of great importance, given that many of the Greek manuscripts that have come down to us belong to these years: the survival of Greek manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was not due simply to luck or to the patient work and/or the culture of erudite Byzantines. Rather, the selection of texts and the reasons for certain survivals or losses were determined also by the new political and cultural reality that had formed in Greek-speaking areas in this period, following the arrival of the Franks from the West.

<sup>7</sup> See Manoussakas 1995.

<sup>8</sup> See the huge recent (and not complete) bibliography by Lentano/Zanussi 2016–2017.

<sup>9</sup> Tsougarakis/Lock (eds.) 2014.

The Athens of the Acciaiuoli, Orsini's Epirus, and the Frankish domination of the Peloponnese are the context in which, from the thirteenth century onwards, a new method of 'appropriating' Homer arose. In this sense, the philologically 'incorrect' use of ancient literature was also determined by reasons connected with the expansionist politics of the Western Franks, as well as by more strictly literary interests.

Loukanis' *Iliad* was prefaced with a glossary:

Ομήρου Ιλιάς, μεταβληθείσα πάλαι εις την κοινήν γλώσσαν, νυν δε διορθωθείσα συντόμως, και κατά βιβλία, καθώς έχει η του Ομήρου βίβλος, παρά Νικολάου του Λουκάνου, εστί μεν η βίβλος πάννυ ωφέλιμος, και ωραία τοις αναγνωσομένοις και **επειδή εισίν εν τη δε τη βίβλω πολλαί λέξεις δειναί, ήγουν ομηρικάι εγένετο και πίναξ, εν ω πίνακι, ευρήσι ταύτας τας ομηρικάς λέξεις, απλώς εξηγημεμένας, λάβετε τοιγαρούν πάντες την βίβλον ίνα ειδήτε τα ποικίλα καθορθώματα του Ομήρου** (Fig. 1).<sup>10</sup>

As Loukanis says, it was included to help Greek readers decipher the more difficult terms.

The following year, 1527, the same print shop published the so-called *Corona Preciosa*, a pocket-sized dictionary in 'Vulgar Italian, Vulgar Greek, Latin and Literal Greek' (την ιδιωτικήν και την αττικήν γλώσσαν των Ελλήνων, την γραμματικήν και την ιδιωτικήν γλώσσαν των Λατίνων). A need to re-appropriate the linguistic and cultural patrimony of the Ancient Greeks began slowly to grow among the new Greek readership, composed of exiles from Byzantine territories that had fallen into Ottoman hands and the subjects of Venetian possessions in the Aegean.

This is the historical and cultural context in which Loukanis produced his translation, a compendium in which he eliminated those sections of the work he judged to be extraneous to the culture and taste of the book's readership. If we take it that the interpretation of linguistic signs comes about by means of other signs in the same language, then the result here is a particularly interesting case of *intralinguistic* translation: Homer expresses himself in Greek and Loukanis translates him into Greek. So the 'register of linguistic distancing' (as G. Mounin defined it) is less characterized than the other two registers: the register of 'historic distancing' and the register of 'intercultural distancing.' This historical and intercultural separation brought about a 'trauma' that for sixteenth-century Greek readers was more serious than the trauma of linguistic differences. It was

<sup>10</sup> Glossary Άδε / τραγώδησε, Ατρείδης / ελέγετο ο Αγαμέμνων και ο Μενελάος οι δύο αδελφοί, ότι ήσαν υιοί του Ατρέως, άπειρα / αμέτρητα, απαράμηλοι / ασυύγκριτοι, Αργείοι, Αργείους / οι αυτοί και Έλληνες και Αχαιοί λέγονται [...].

above all this separation that translators strove to help their readers overcome. But in fact, the Greek translators of Homer and their readers were not completely unconnected with the language of the original texts, since their language preserved close ties with ancient Greek. They were, however, very distant from the culture of the original language. For an educated Greek reader of the sixteenth century, the complexity of Homer lay not so much in the morphological and syntactical differences between the languages, or the semantic value of the words, as in deep-seated historical and cultural differences.

Francesco Amadi, author of a *Dialogo sulla lingua* composed in the third decade of the sixteenth century (but published for the first time only in the nineteenth century),<sup>11</sup> wrote that

la lingua greca non ha mai patito tanta alterazione, che la sia diventa aliena come la latina a noi; anzi hanno ritenuti e casi nei nomi e nei verbi persone, modi, tempi e numeri, tanto che femmine, fanciulli, marinai e villani intendono quasi ogni parola della messa.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, even uneducated Greeks could understand the ecclesiastical *koinè*.

The transfer of the Homeric heritage into vernacular Greek was of great significance therefore for the development of Greek literature: the passage from one language to another, the manipulation of the source texts in order to render them more accessible, even the choice of texts to be translated, are all symptomatic of a particular cultural climate that was created in Venice during the first decades of the sixteenth century.

Translating Homer into vernacular Greek in the sixteenth century therefore became a kind of competition on a level playing field.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand this contributed to a wider appreciation of what had been produced in antiquity, and on the other it was tangible proof of increasing independence where literary production in the vernacular was concerned. The fact that re-workings in vernacular Greek of ancient Greek literary works were published in the first half of the century was of particular significance: in these years the Italian language

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<sup>11</sup> See Amadi 1821, 74.

<sup>12</sup> My Engl. trans.: 'The alterations undergone by the Greek language have never been so great as to render it alien, as is the case of Latin for us: indeed they have retained both the cases for nouns and the different tenses, moods, persons and numbers in the verbs, so that women, boys, sailors and peasants can understand almost every single word of the mass.'

<sup>13</sup> I believe that in some cases, such as those examined in the present study, it is legitimate to state that translation is a comparison between equals. The debate on *equivalence* between the source text and its translation, or on the absolute and natural – also qualitative – dependence on the latter, has been the subject of lively discussions.

was the object of widespread discussion, and those Greek intellectuals who translated ancient texts into the vernacular contributed to the debate about the function of language and the specific potential of the spoken language. The vernacular had come of age and was now deemed worthy of transmitting the works of ancient writers.

If around 1530 Francesco Amadi could say that, *quasi tutti gli uomini da bene biasimano questo trasportare da la latina in questa [lingua] più comune* ('almost all right-thinking men condemn this transportation of Latin into this more common [tongue]'), just fifteen years later, Fausto da Longiano (1502–1565?),<sup>14</sup> was able to state, in his *Dialogo del modo de lo tradurre*, that translation into the vernacular was now favoured even by right-thinking men.

Printed editions of works in vernacular Greek published in Venice in the first half of the sixteenth century at the print shop of the Nicolini da Sabbio brothers aroused the interest of several Italian and foreign scholars,<sup>15</sup> but even today they are known only to a restricted circle of specialists. These were the first examples of printing in Greek destined for a Greek-speaking readership and the first inter-linguistic and intercultural dialogue between ancient and vernacular Greek. Greeks of that time had not yet recovered any perception of a historical and cultural continuity with the pagan culture of the ancients: in Venice in the early sixteenth century, while the debate raged about how best to render the ancient literary patrimony, some Greeks began to scrutinize a few ancient texts through a linguistic filter, and some of these texts, such as the *Iliad* and the *Batrachomyomachia*, were printed. A little later, in 1544, Plutarch's *Περὶ παιδων αγωγῆς* received the same treatment by Nikolaos Sophianos (ca. 1500–1551). It was just one year after the first Italian translation by Antonio Massa, of this very famous pedagogical text, printed in Venice by Michele Tramezino in 1543.<sup>16</sup>

The *Batrachomyomachia* was published in Venice in 1486 with interlinear explanatory glosses. Its brevity and its supposedly Homeric authority had certainly contributed to the success of the Brescia edition, printed as early as 1474; it was then included in the *editio princeps* of Homer of 1488, and reprinted several times (thanks also to its limited length) in the early sixteenth century. In 1539 (?) an edition of the *Batrachomyomachia* was produced by Nicolini da Sabbio with a translation into vernacular Greek in rhymed decapentasyllables. It was

<sup>14</sup> On Sebastiano Fausto, see Pignatti 1995.

<sup>15</sup> See the recent monograph by Layton, 1994, 179–222, with extensive bibliography.

<sup>16</sup> See the recent edition Lelli/Pisani 2017, 2507.

edited by Dimitrios Zinos of Zakynthos, who was also a copyist and editor of liturgical texts destined for readers of Greek and those of Orthodox religion.<sup>17</sup>

There were a great number of manuscript copies of this poem on the war between mice and frogs in circulation, thanks to its attribution to Homer and the fact that it was used as a school text. The just over three hundred hexameters of the poem became 458 rhymed decapentasyllables: this was a significant increase in numerical terms, but where content was concerned, it was negligible. The list of foods that Psycharpax glories in, for example, is longer than in the source text (which seems likely to have been the 1486 Venetian version, and to which may be traced the interlinear glosses that have found their way into the translation), but overall the text maintains the same narrative structure. Zinos' poem is preceded by a very interesting dialogue between the bookseller and the φιλομαθής, which is an amusing example of proto-publicity by a publisher, similar to the dialogue that precedes the 1499 edition of Chalkokondyles' *Suda* and that of the *Γέρας περί ονομασίας* published by Arsenios Apostolis in Rome in 1519, both of which works Zinos would certainly have known. The poem was also translated into vernacular Italian in the mid-fifteenth century by the Florentine Antonio Pazzi, but it remained in manuscript (in a Magliabechi codex 1293, cl. VII) and was not published until 1820. Another Italian translation in hendecasyllables of the Latin version was made by Giuseppe Santafiore and, according to Gabriele Bucchi, can be dated to between 1520 and 1550.<sup>18</sup>

Zinos' *Batrachomyomachia* takes on the rhythm of the *rimade* in decapentasyllables and bears witness to a novel and audacious cultural cherry-picking, skilfully adapted to the intellectual needs of those merchants, *stratioti* (soldiers), artisans and Greek students who were seduced by the charms of poetry.

In order better to understand the task undertaken by the translator of the pseudo-Homeric poem, it is useful to see him in the context of the sixteenth century Venetian print shop, in which the editorial role of the copy-editor was growing in importance. To be employed in such an activity meant not only carrying out the duties of a specialized technician, but also becoming a protagonist in a true cultural mediation. Thanks to the vibrant productivity of the Venetian presses and to the dynamic intelligence of the editors, a climate was created that was favourable to the spread of works in the vernacular aimed at a wide readership. This was the ever-broadening perspective in which printed works in vernacular Greek were produced and promoted. They owed their

<sup>17</sup> On Zinos's *Batrachomyomachia* see Carpinato 2014<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See Bucchi 2008, and Bucchi 2015.



existence to a series of happy coincidences: 1) the presence of men of culture and of a new readership and a new audience for literature; 2) from a cultural and religious point of view, the particular political outlook of Venice where outsiders were concerned; 3) the widespread diffusion of printing presses and consumption of the printed word; 4) fruitful contacts between different cultures; and 5) a multi-lingual intellectual climate that was favourable towards the vernacular (or rather, towards the use of vernacular languages).

The number of texts published in vernacular Greek grew steadily during the course of the first half of the sixteenth century: in the same period, in 1529, the Vicenzan nobleman Gian Giorgio Trissino published his Italian translation of Dante's treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* in Venice. Issued under a false name and containing several errors of interpretation, it nevertheless added fuel to the heated debate about the value and function to be attributed to the spoken language. Given his engagement in literary activities, it was inevitable that Zinos too should feel the echoes of this *querelle*, which was particularly animated in erudite Venetian circles.<sup>19</sup> The translation in decapentasyllables of Zinos' *Batrachomyomachia* was republished by Martin Crusius in Tübingen in 1584 within his monumental *Turcograecia* – a work that was also admired by a young Giacomo Leopardi. Loukanis' *Iliad* was reissued twice in the course of the seventeenth century (and known also later to Fabricius and to Melchiorre Cesarotti), but has had few readers in the last fifty years.<sup>20</sup> Today, the work is easily accessible through Google Books.

The translations of Loukanis and Zinos were essentially crafted to appeal to the understanding and sensitivity of the contemporary reader, rather than to provide a scrupulous linguistic transposition of the source text. They oscillate between over-translation (in which details are increased) and under-translation (with inevitable losses).

Loukanis drew from the entire Homeric inheritance (and not only that), reworking literary material according to his needs: in the monologue of the love-struck Achilles, for example, he introduces elements of Odysseus' speech to Nausicaa, and of Achilles disguising himself on Skyros, as well as the invocation to Eros in the *Achilleide*, an anonymous poem in vernacular Greek. Loukanis presents him as a despairing lover, a youth who fears he will be judged harshly

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<sup>19</sup> Carpinato 2017, 147–167.

<sup>20</sup> See Follieri 1969, 119–130, Fischetti 1986, 147–158, Carpinato 1997, Carpinato 1999, Badenas 2002, 159–172, Dourou 2015, 199–218, Dourou 2017, 20–32. I do not agree with the ideological and nationalistic interpretation of Loukanis's *Iliad*. His translation was a very innovative text in the political and cultural context of the time, but Loukanis was a scholar of his time.

by his father and friends, a soldier who has cast aside his spear and wishes only to play his lyre and to sing.

A very similar Achilles, love-struck and unable to decide how to act, appears in the love monologue of the *Πόλεμος της Τρωάδος*. His love for Polyxena brings about the hero's death: Achilles is killed at the hands of Paris who, fearing that he will have to return the beautiful Helen to the Greeks, fatally wounds Achilles just before the celebration of the marriage that would have brought about a peaceful solution to the ten-year war. For Loukanis, the responsibility for Achilles' murder lies entirely with Paris, as it does for Boccaccio in his notes to Canto V of the *Divine Comedy*; in the *Πόλεμος*, instead, the hero's death is caused by Hecuba and Priam, while in the so-called *Iliade bizantina*, as in Ermoniakòs, the killing is carried out by Deiphobus and Paris.

Loukanis was an unfashionable imitator of chivalric epic set in Trojan times whose work had a very wide distribution throughout Greek-speaking lands during the Frankish domination that followed the Fourth Crusade. The poem on the taking of Troy was the last stage of the creative journey of Homeric material in the Greek language. When the ashes of Achilles are deposited in a golden urn that had belonged to Patroclus, the voyage of Peleus' son truly comes to an end. The Greeks are now subservient to Venice and partly assimilated; their community is riven by complicated internal feuds (usually provoked by questions of a religious nature).

From the early seventeenth century until the fall of Crete (1669) and the reconquest of the Peloponnese by the Venetians (1687), the Greek-speaking people do not seem to have taken much notice of Homer. But I would like to remind readers that:

- 1) Loukanis' poem was reprinted at least twice (in Venice 1603 by Antonio Pinelli – no reference – and in 1640 by Giovanni Pietro Pinelli; see also Athens 1870, critical edition by Émile Legrand).<sup>21</sup>
- 2) Homeric scenes (taken from Italian re-workings of the texts) in the Greek vernacular were used in the Jesuit drama developed on Chios. Only in the last few years have these texts begun to be appreciated, not so much for their literary qualities as for their value as historical and linguistic documents.<sup>22</sup>
- 3) Trojan themes are utilized through the mediation of Italian theatrical works, as in the case of the four intermissions in *Fortunatos*, a play written in Crete in the Latin alphabet by Markos Antonios Foskolos during the twenty-year-long siege of Heraklion. It contains episodes from Ludovico Dolce (1508–

<sup>21</sup> Legrand 1870.

<sup>22</sup> See Puchner/White 2017.

1568), a prolific Venetian author who was at the time very fashionable, being the author of as many as 368 books, ranging from art criticism to plays, to re-workings of antique literary material, to actual rewritings with commentaries by contemporaries, from treatises on the language question to literary translations of Greek and Latin texts. These latter included ‘Ulysses from Homer’s *Odyssey* and rendered in iambic pentameters and which includes all the misfortunes and the feats of Ulysses, for a period of twenty years, from his leaving Troy until his return to his homeland’ (Gabriele Giolito 1573).

- 4) The poems continue to be read and to be commented on in an educational context (as is clear from numerous manuscripts dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which are often copies of printed editions).
- 5) A long passage with Trojan themes is to be found in *Κήπος χαρίτων* by Kaesarios Dapontes written in 1768.<sup>23</sup>
- 6) It was only between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, a period during which the intellectual refinement of the classics was being rediscovered all over Europe and Winckelmann’s ideal of beauty was being propounded as the canon both for the figurative arts and for literature, that Greek-speaking intellectuals began to feel a need to retrieve Ancient Greece for themselves. For Greeks, neo-classicism was not simply a recovery of the past but an actual recognition of identity, or even, a (re)discovery of a father. And for Greeks, that father was Homer.
- 7) In Paris, Adamantios Korais worked on an edition of Homer and especially on the *Prolegomena*; in Vienna in 1818–19, the Kozani Greek scholar Gheorgios Rousiadis published a comprehensive edition of the *Iliad* (a work that has not been adequately studied) in *katharevousa*; again in the early nineteenth century Athanasios Christopoulos, Iakovakis Rizos Neroulòs and Dimitrios Gouzelis were working on the recovery of the Homeric heritage and the *Iliad* in particular.<sup>24</sup>

Chronologically, we are now on the threshold of the revolution against the Turks, and the name of Homer is invoked for political reasons. Admiration for the great works of the Greek past and the political enthusiasm for the democratic values of fifth century BCE Athens are not merely concerned with literary models, but also interpret a desire for national dignity and libertarian political allegiance.

Unlike Korais’ neo-classicism, which is mainly of a philological nature, the neo-classicism of Christopoulos, Rizos Rangavis and Gouzelis is a symptom of a

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<sup>23</sup> Angelou 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Carpinato 1997–98, 287–311.

cultural reality in evolution: the Greeks are beginning to feel that they are the worthy heirs of their glorious ancestors. This new-found closeness made their servitude to the Turks even more unbearable. For a people looking for national identity, the rediscovery of Homer meant recognition of the continuity of the γένος.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, most Greek scholars maintained an aristocratic distance from literary production in spoken Greek. These erudite conservatives, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for their contribution towards saving the heritage of classicism, are fairly well known to scholars. However, scholarly contributions on this 'marginal Greekness', which deserves to be seen in the context of the millenarian evolution of Greek literature, have to date been few and far between.

## Appendix

To give a basic idea of the quality of the texts covered by this work, I submit to the reader's attention a passage from the *Iliad* of Nikolaos Loukanis (vv. 39–85), the introductory dialogue to *Batrachomyomachia* by Dimitrios Zinos (vv. 1–14); and several verses of the poems. They are translations of translations, but they still have some taste of the quality of Greek *metafrastes*.

A passage from the Monologue of Achilles from Loukanis, vv. 39–85:

'I have seen the city of Sparta too, and have been to Lacedaemon where there are many beautiful women, (40) but never have I seen a face and a breast like these, nor such beauty as this girl possesses. I am in torment looking at her and my eyes are never satisfied with gazing at her. Oh happy the man who shall have you in marriage! (45) I would not desire to be in heaven or to be a god or a saint if I had a girl like that for myself. For this woman I would turn into wind, so that I might blow upon you and kiss your lips, or I should like to be a rose, that a traveller might pluck me and cast me (50) upon your tender breast. Alas, I am assailed by a great fear: if I am victorious over the city, some soldier might make you his. I must find out where you live, young Trojan girl, so that when we take the city, I can come straight to you and carry you off to the ships (55) But what does reason say to me? I desire evil for this girl, I desire that her homeland be burned, that her father be killed, that she be made a slave. God will not allow me to carry out what this young girl does not want. (60) I would rather go on board the ship and, seated, play the lyre so that the girl cannot blame me for the fall of her city. But what am I saying? What will the Argives say, the valiant Argives, when they see me sitting (65) on the ships like a woman? And what will my father say? Peleus will curse me often because I no longer fight bravely, as I did before. But if I remain on the ships, the other Argives will enter the city and take the women as slaves. (70) Someone will take even her. If such a thing happened, I would want to die immediately. So I think it would be better to go together with these courageous men and surround the city

walls and look as if I'm fighting and then stop in front of her and remain unsatisfied looking at her. (75) Eros, Eros, why do you distil passion in my eyes, why do you afflict me so? Why do you inflame my heart and take away my strength? I don't want to fight and my mind is all directed towards that beautiful girl. Now that I have known love, and I know (80) what it is capable of: it tames even wild beasts and makes the bravest of men more humble than lambs. Ah! If I had never come with the others to Troy, there would not have been such pain in my heart because of you!' Thus spoke Achilles (85) beneath the city walls, ardent with love, before her every day.

D. Zinos, *Batrachomyomachia*, introductory dialogue:

Lover of literature: Have you got any new books to sell me?

Bookseller: Yes, I do have a new one, you can have a look at it if you want.

L. : Which one is it? I don't have much time. I've got to study and I can't start reading it now.

B. : It's the **Batrachomyomachia** by the learned Homer.

L. : No, that's not for me, it's too complicated.

B. : No, it's really easy to read, because it's translated into verses that rhyme.

L. : It's in verse? Give it to me then, quickly, just name your price. But tell me, who translated it and put it into verse?

B. : It was a friend of yours. You know him well: It was Dimitrios Zinos from Zakynthos.

*Batrachomyomachia* by Dimitrios Zinos, incipit:

(vv. 1–6) Invocation:

Before I begin I pray that the great Zeus/ come to my aid in the telling of this story/ by sending me the Muses that live on Mount Helicon/ for alone I cannot recount/ (5) the terrible battle fought by the great Ares/ who is considered a god and a divine hero.

(vv. 7–12) the poet's speech to his audience:

I hope that you are all well,/ that you can pay attention,/ and open your ears/ so that you can hear the reason why the mice/ (10) engaged the frogs in battle and went to war/ and imitated men, the heroes of old,/ as it is told and sung, the terrible giants.

The boast of Psycharpax (vv. 39–104):

The mouse answered him and said:/ 'Why do you ask about my kin?/ Leave my name out of this./ Everybody in Asia and in Europe knows it,/ (40) the birds of the sky, men and the gods./ But if you insist on knowing it,/ I will happily tell you. Listen to my name./ I am Psycharpax, (Crumb-snatcher), and I don't deny it,/ (45) the son of the magnanimous Psomofagus (Bread-nibbler)/ whose beard is as long as a goat's./ My mother is of noble blood, she is called Lichomyli (Millstone-Licker)/ and her lips are usually covered in white dust./ It is said that she is the daughter of King Lardofagus (Lard-Eater)./ (50) She gave birth to me and let me breathe the sweet air/ she was in labour in a hut and my birth was not easy/ and she fed me with the foods that men nourish themselves with,/ with figs, and

walnuts and hazelnuts/ and with good white almonds/ (55) and now a lot of other foods fill my belly./ How can I give you my friendship, Physignathos/ given that our two natures are in every way dissimilar?/ my diet is like that of men/ while you live in water and your life is there/ (60) and your food comes from aquatic plants./ While mine comes from the houses of men/ I eat everything heartily, without any effort./ I never go without well-kneaded bread, nor *lalanghion* made with honey/ (65) nor good pancakes seasoned with sesame,/ or those white, sweetened ones/ nor freshly-curdled cheese, made from milk/ nor soft *misithres* and other dairy products./ I have plentiful sweets, which everybody loves/ (70) and are even desired by the gods in heaven./ nor do I forgot all other foods cooked in pots/ by cooks who are experts in making delicious dainties/ using spices from India, true delicacies./ (75) I have found myself in the midst of battles and I have never avoided/ death that could result from war./ And when necessary, I don't run for cover/ but I join those that are engaged in the thick of battle./ And another thing: I am not afraid of men./ (80) And this is true, I don't say it to boast./ I go to his bed, where he's sleeping/ and I nibble his toes and he doesn't notice./ I even bite his heel, but he doesn't wake,/ he continues to sleep undisturbed, so much so that he snores./ (85) There is nothing in the world that I am afraid of,/ except the cat and the falcon, those above all./ We mice all fear the wooden cat most of all/ which kills us by treachery./ When I see or I sense a cat near/ (90) I am so frightened that I almost faint/ and I run hither and thither wondering how to escape/ and I try to find a hole that I can dive into to get away/ because he could snatch me, corner me and suffocate me,/ and sink his sharp claws into this beautiful body of mine./ (95) These things are to be found in the fields and mountains,/ enemies that bring death to me and my kind./ But you are afraid of everything, of things great and small,/ of animals that crawl, that fly, of men and all other things./ And as the proverb says: you are even afraid of your own shadow./ (100) The only evidence for your existence is your raucous voice./ I neither eat cabbages, nor water plants,/ nor greens or celery, nor leeks, or radishes./ You instead are fond of all these foods and you eat them,/ you who squat in ponds and dwell therein.'

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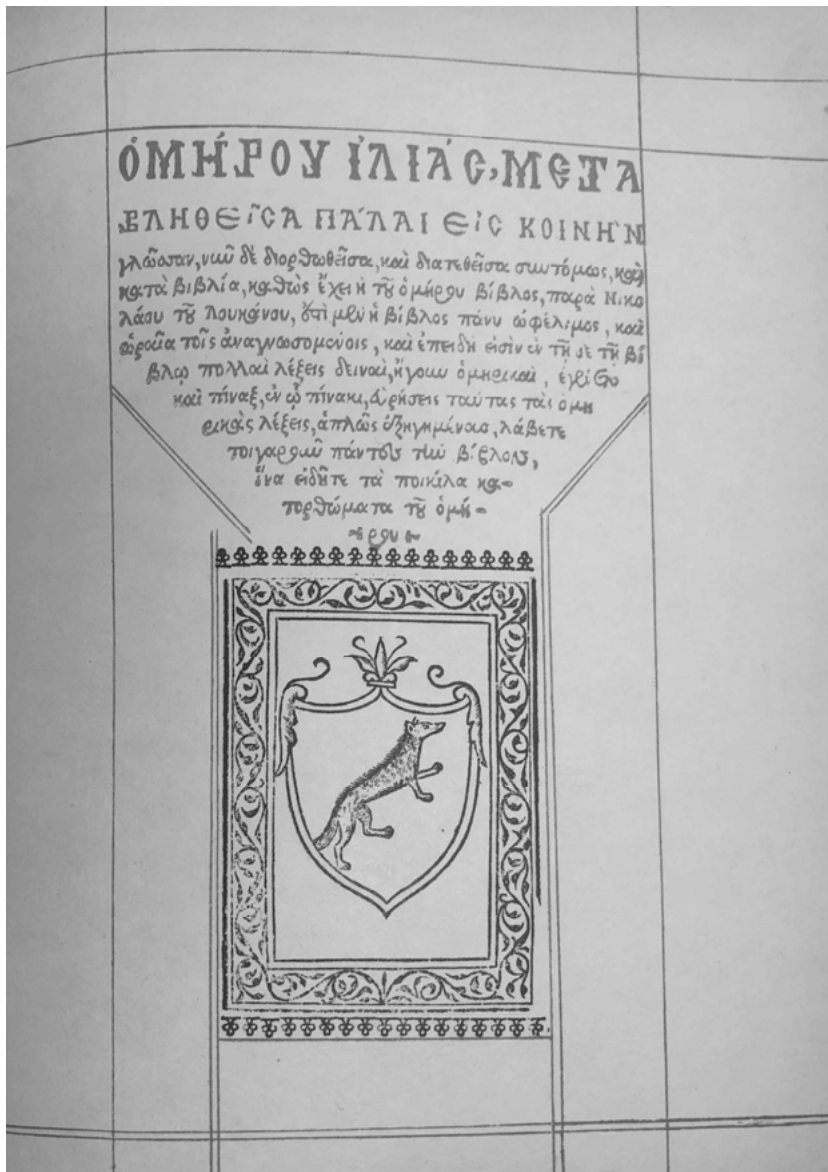
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## Figures



**Fig. 1:** Frontispiece of the edition of the *Iliad* translated into vernacular Greek by Nikolaos Loukanis, Venice 1526. Private collection.

**Stampata in Venetia per Adaeſtro Stefano  
da Sabio: il quale habita a Santa Maria  
formoſa: ad iſtantiſſa di miſer Damian  
di ſanta Maria da Spici.  
AD. D. x x vi. nel  
meſe di maggio.**

**Fig. 2:** Nikolaos Loukanis, *Iliad* translated into vernacular Greek, Venice 1526 (Colophon). Private collection.

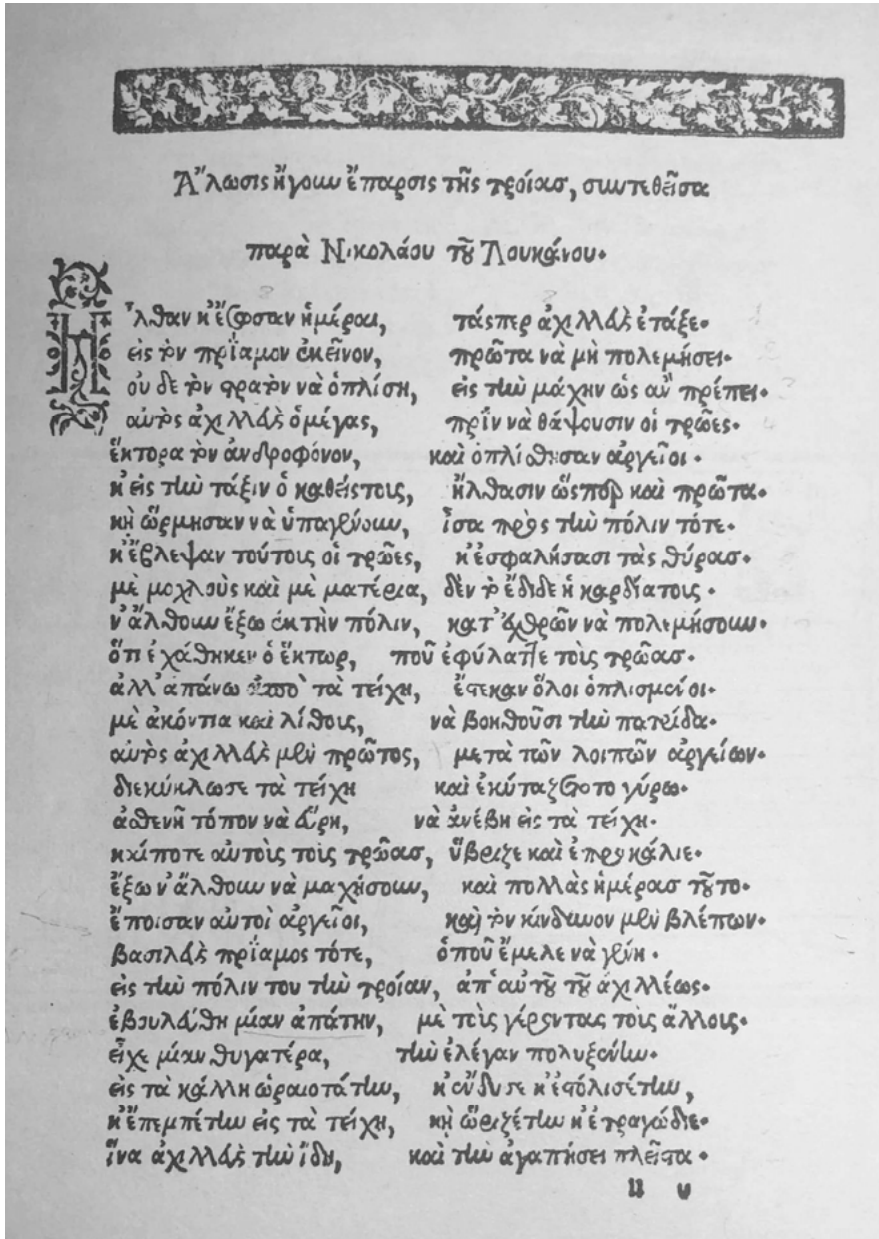
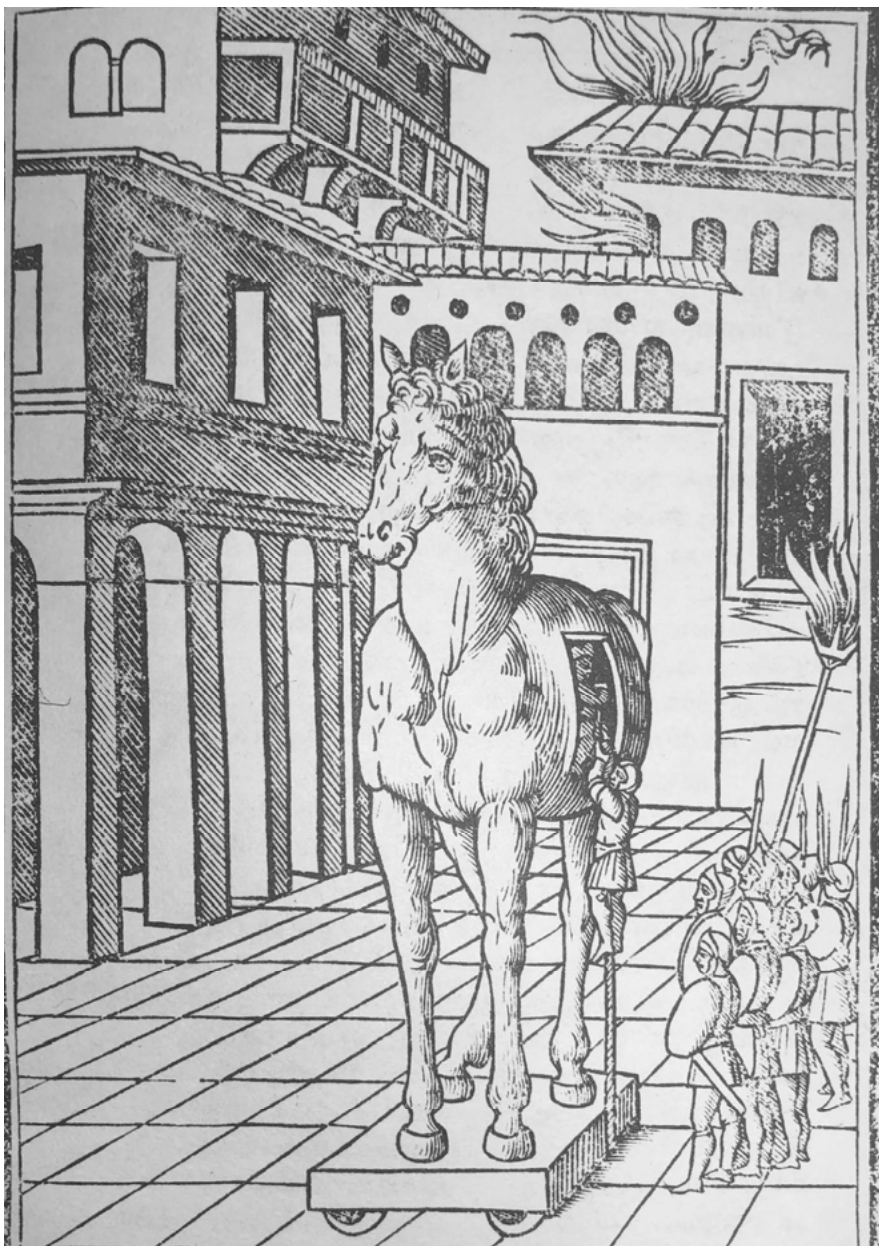


Fig. 3: Nikolaos Loukanis, *Αλωσις της Τρωϊας*, text added to the *Iliad* translated into vernacular Greek by Nikolaos Loukanis, Venice 1526. Private collection.



**Fig. 4:** Nikolaos Loukanis, *Iliad* translated into vernacular Greek, Venice 1526 (woodcut at the end of the book). Private collection.