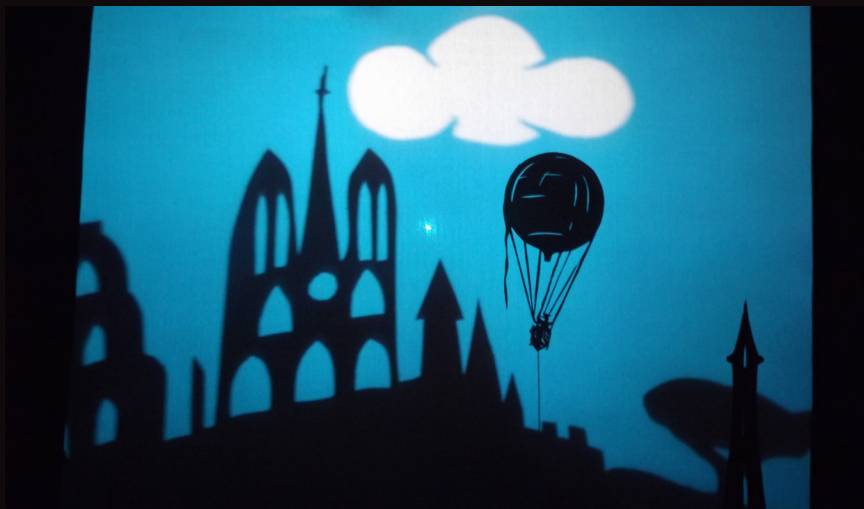


Speech and Voice in the Comic Performances of the Traditional Greek Shadow Theatre of Karaghiozis

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Alberto, o menino que queria voar - (2012). Companhia Karagozkw.
Foto Vicente Salles dos Santos.



Buanga, a noiva da chuva - (2011). Companhia Karagozkw.
Foto Luiz Roberto Meira.



Buanga, a noiva da chuva - (2011). Companhia Karagozvk. Foto Luiz Roberto



Buanga, a noiva da chuva - (2011). Companhia Karagozvk. Foto Luiz Roberto Meira.

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Abstract: The article presents the aesthetics and the main features of speech and voice of the Modern Greek shadow theatre of Karaghiozis, concentrating mainly on the comic repertoire. The period of reference is the years of its peak from the 1890s to the 1960s. The article argues that speech and voice were the primary mediums of expression. The shadow-theatre player, hidden behind the screen, used mostly linguistic signs to animate the two-dimensional flat puppets and narrate the story.

Keywords: Modern Greek Shadow Theatre, Oral Culture, Urban Culture.

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Karaghiozis is the name of the principal character of Modern Greek shadow theatre. He is a constantly ravenous hunchbacked anti-hero [plates 1 and 3], and ‘the one always at the centre of everything happening on the white screen; nothing can happen without him’ (Puchner 2015: 513). His name has become a synonym of the theatre he belongs to. In Turkish it means “dark-eyed”.

Both Modern Greek and its close relative, Turkish shadow theatre, originate in the Ottoman Karagöz-Hacivat shadow theatre. Notwithstanding its Ottoman derivation, Karaghiozis has acquired an indigenous Greek identity through a long process of adaptation to the culture of the lower social strata of Greece (Hellas). It has become a fully integrated spectacle amongst the Modern Greek population, flourishing mainly during the years between 1890-1960.

In the following pages we will present the aesthetics and the main features of speech and voice in the Karaghiozis performances, concentrating mainly on the comic repertoire, since the serious plays developed a distinct fashion of speaking that requires a special approach. The period of reference will be the peak years of Karaghiozis.

A Short History of Greek Shadow Theatre

The specific characteristics of Karaghiozis were formed over the years of its development. Therefore, the knowledge of its history is essential in understanding this distinctive form of art. The Ottoman ancestor of Karaghiozis is the offspring of a long tradition of shadow theatre that goes back at least to 10th- or 11th-century Indonesia [Mystakidou 1982: 27]. The Asian shadow theatre somehow spread westwards and entered the Ottoman Empire from Egypt around the 16th century. The first evidence regarding the existence of a shadow-theatre character named Karagöz dates back to the 17th century. The form of shadow theatre that has Karagöz and his companion Hacivat as the main character-types is still performed in Turkey, especially during Ramadan celebrations. However, it is no longer a vivid spectacle (Gayé 1986). It flourished until the late 19th century and featured scatological and profane language.

Karagöz often bore a protruding phallus, and many of the plots explored the comic effects of the adventures of that part of male body (And 1979: 83-87; Stavrakopoulou 2012: 146-57).

As the Ottoman Empire included several regions of the East Mediterranean, the Karagöz-Hacivat shadow theatre spread throughout that area (Asia Minor, Near East, the Balkans and North Africa)¹. Around the end of the 18th century it became known in the southern Balkans and, in its original Ottoman tradition, continued to be performed for several decades, well after Greek independence in 1830 (Hadjipantazis 2014: 287; Myrsiades 1988: 1-26). Gradually, the Ottoman shadow theatre disappeared from Athens because the authorities considered it to be indecent and, therefore, unsuitable for a European capital. After two decades of gradual change in the provinces, it reappeared in Athens in 1894. This time it was transformed into a family entertainment, without any indecent attributes. By that time, it had acquired strong national elements. During the years before its reappearance in Athens it had undergone a collective process of Hellenization, mainly in the city of Patras (Hadjipantazis 2014: 287-90).

During the last two decades of the 19th century, the Greek shadow-theatre players, known as *karaghiozopaichtes*, managed to cleanse the spectacle of any sexual overtones, created new plots inspired by the War of Independence, and invented many new characters, some of whom represented Greek regional types. Most importantly, they succeeded in creating descriptive symbols of the national conflict between Greeks and Turks. The Ottoman power was represented by the Pasha or Vizier, his beautiful daughter, and his henchman, the Albanian Velighekas. Karaghiozis, his family, and his friends were the constantly rebellious subjects of the Turks. What is more remarkable is that the Greek shadow-theatre players succeeded in associating national conflict with class conflict. This

¹ Karaghiozis had ceased to be performed everywhere except Turkey, Greece and Cyprus by the early 20th century.

twofold struggle was expressively conveyed on the scenographic level. On the left side of the screen (from the spectator's point of view), we see Karaghiozis's derelict hut (paranga), and on the right, the Vizier's luxurious seraglio. In this way, national division also signified class hierarchy (Hadjipantazis 2014: 290-93). [Plate 2].

In the years to follow, until the 1960s, Greek shadow theatre literally overshadowed 'all the other theatre genres, by gathering in its makeshift theatre spaces and the coffee shops an audience much bigger than all the other "theatre audiences" put together' (Puchner 2015: 511-12). People from the upper classes also attended it but its stronghold was the lower-class neighbourhoods of the major Greek cities. These neighbourhoods were populated by former peasants and refugees from Asia Minor who moved to the big cities looking for jobs in the newly built factories. The newcomers could not be easily integrated into city life, and they formed small communities with their own rules and ethics of mutual assistance. It was in the environment of these neighbourhoods that the theatre of Karaghiozis reached the height of its popularity (Kiourtsakis 1983: 85-97). When the small neighbourhoods disappeared during the 1960s and were replaced by the blocks of flats of modern Greek cities – when, that is, modern Greek society acquired a mass character – Karaghiozis fell into decline. By this time, cinema (and later television) had become the favourite form of popular entertainment.

Nowadays, Karaghiozis performances are mainly addressed to children. Because of its appeal to children, many schoolteachers use it as an educational tool in the classroom or in school activities.

Repertoire

Traditional Karaghiozis plays can be divided into two major categories: the comedies and the 'heroics'. The plots of the comedies are structured around the adventures of the stock characters. Karaghiozis satirizes all social values, sparing only God and homeland. The themes of those plays are related to family and

social life (marriage, debts, poverty, money, scientific discoveries, and professions), love affairs, public events (elections for example), detective stories, the power game, tricks to obtain food, etc.

The ‘heroics’ are tales based on fictional or real-life stories set in times under Ottoman rule or the exploits of Modern Greeks during the War of National Independence in 1821-1828. Karaghiozis emerges here as a helper and assistant of an important national hero. Most of his comic colleagues, however, have no place in the heroic context of the performances and, except for Hadjiavatis and Barba Giorgos, they scarcely appear. This category of play was extremely popular during the genre’s heyday but receded after the fall of the Junta in the 1970s. Nowadays patriotic plays are rarely performed.

Apart from these two main categories, the Karaghiozis repertoire includes many dramatic plays, such as melodramas, murder stories, court-dramas, vampire thrillers, and fairy tales (*Genovefa*, *The Shipwreck of Poor Maria*, *The Vampire*, *the Patricide*, etc).

The Aesthetics of Greek Shadow Theatre

Walter Puchner opens his brief study ‘The Magic of Shadow. Small Guide to Karaghiozis’ by observing that ‘Shadow theatre is one of the most charming splendors of Eastern magic; it is the only form of theatre that has come to Greece from the East and not from the West, as did all the others with all the enigmatic charm of Eastern fatalism and coarse salt of Aristophanic humor’. In Eastern and Ottoman shadow theatre, the ‘main idea of the spectacle, its art and technique is philosophical: humble human existence is a shadow, a shadow in the light of divinities, a shadowy reflection of the luminous entity of supreme beings, a colourful dream and toy in the hands of gods and children, a representation of life on the white screen, in front of the eyes of the same people, who see themselves in the paper and hide figures’ (Puchner 2015: 511). However, Modern Greek shadow theatre has not retained the metaphysical associations of its Eastern ancestor. The eerie atmosphere that shadow creates is still a significant part of the

spectacle but its content has become rather too worldly.

Concerning the structure of the Karaghiozis performance, its fundamental elements are: (a) the shadow (b) the two-dimensional puppets (*figures*) and their specific gamut of movements, and (c) *logos*, that is, speech.

More specifically, the shadow of the figure is projected on a carefully stretched cotton screen, or *berdés* ('curtain' in Turkish). The length of the screen may vary from two to six meters, and the height from eighty centimetres to two meters, depending on the historical period or the conditions of the performance. It stands about eighty centimetres above the floor. In the early years of its history, the light that illuminated the screen was produced by candles, oil lamps, or acetylene. Nowadays the most common source of light is a series of incandescent lightbulbs bolted along the upper and bottom battens that hold the screen.

The peculiarity of Karaghiozis technique is that the lightbulbs are placed between the player and the figure [plate 3]. The player manipulates the flat puppets either by himself or with the help of his assistant/s. He has to hold the figures tangent to the screen and standing on the bottom of it while he moves them. At the same time, he must keep them facing each other when they are talking. The basic rule of the figures' always touching the bottom of the screen is not observed in the case of supernatural or mythological flying figures. These figures do not speak but produce weird cries or hissing. Even they, however, have to abide by the rule of being against the screen.

By 1930, the figures were made of perforated or carved cardboard and seldom of zinc, which projected a black shadow [plate 1]. In the 1920s cow leather and occasionally plastic gelatine were also introduced. Both materials were transparent and colourfully painted [plate 3]. After the Second World War gelatine and PVC became a quite common material. Other materials may be used as well but only for decorative puppets, since they do not project the appropriate shadow on the illuminated screen. The

figures have at least one joint and some have more, depending on the traits of the character they represent. The player manipulates them with a special handle (*sousta*)², which enables him to turn the puppets around 180 degrees³.

However important the visual aspect may be in Karaghiozis shadow theatre, the *logos*/speech of the karaghiozopaichtis lies at the heart of the performance. Completely hidden behind the screen, he animates all the figures, quickly and deftly switching the pitch and timbre of his voice. This ability is expressed by the special term *allaxofonia*, which literally means “change of voice”. Speech is, in our opinion, the distinctive trait of Modern Greek shadow theatre. Already in the comedies of the Ottoman shadow theatre, speech was the basis of the performance. As J. McCormick and B. Pratasik have remarked, the ‘later twentieth-century emphasis on puppetry as a visual medium easily obscures the fact that the voice is a central element of traditional dramatic puppet theatre. Showmen communicated with their audiences through language and even today older people still remember phrases heard on the puppet stage in their youth. Whether working directly from a script, repeating a text that had been passed down orally, or simply improvising to a scenario, the puppeteer was first and foremost concerned with passing on a story’ (McCormick – Pratasik 1998: 151-152).

Karaghiozis theatre, in its prime, was a traditional oral form of theatre and the elements of speech and voice were crucial to the performance. This means that the plays remained largely unwritten and were transmitted from the older Karaghiozis player (the master) to the younger by word of mouth, during the years of apprenticeship. The Karaghiozis theatre is a world ‘rooted in an

² A photograph of *sousta* is placed on the online collection of Greek shadow theatre at the British Museum. Retrieved 5/6/2018 from: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=830399001&objectId=3291147&partId=1

³ For more information on the construction of the figures, the settings and the screen, see Gudas 1986: 167-175.

oral tradition with conventions of composition and transmission of texts which differ significantly from those of written literature'. It was created 'at the moment of performance when the composer and performer become a single creative entity, the composition comes into being through the inspiration of a performer interacting with his audience' (Myrsiades 1980: 109). Karaghiozopaichtes remembered the outline of the plot and some stereotyped dialogues or scenes. What they did was to improvise on the given material in accordance with the place, the time and the audience of the specific performance (Hatzakis 2003: 18).

Related to the attribute of orality was the *collectivity* of creation in traditional Greek shadow theatre, at least until the 1950s. Copyright was not an issue. Whatever a Karaghiozis player invented, provided that it was successful with the audience, was passed down to the common tradition of the guild and could be used by everybody. In this way, as time passed, a great number of plots, stories, stereotypical scenes, dialogues, jokes, puns, songs, formula-like phrases, and characters were generated. A player could use any of this common-to-everybody material in order to build up a particular performance and could easily substitute one piece of material for another. We could say that each performance was an 'assortment' of various elements derived from the common pool of traditional material and tied together by the canvas of a story (Sifakis 2015: 273-80). The main structural elements in the syntagmatic order of the plot may have remained more or less the same, but in the paradigmatic order, karaghiozopaichtes could alternatively use various components from the tradition, provided that they were of the same kind (song for song, dialogue for dialogue, etc.), and appropriate to the specific context.

Consequently, any new performance was different from any other performance of the same play. The overall 'meaning' may have been the same but each performance was a new composition. From this point of view, even the play itself was transformed into a different one. The play was continuously recreated (Kiourtsakis

1983: 53-54). The shadow-theatre player Sotiris Spatharis has stated in his memoirs: ‘Many people ask me if I read the plays I perform in advance. Neither I nor any other karaghiozopaichtis reads. We know the performances by heart as storytellers know fairy tales (Spatharis 1992: 220)⁴.

The supremacy of orality in Karaghiozis is evidenced by the success of the plays recorded on sound discs during the inter-war period in the USA, and after the Second World War in Greece. The absence of image and figures did not hinder their effectiveness. The publication of Karaghiozis plays in leaflets (of dubious authorship) after 1924 was also immensely popular. In both cases *logos*, either oral or written, was the primary medium of transcribing the performances⁵.

Modern Tendencies in the Shadow Theatre of Greece

Over the last thirty years, shadow theatre has undergone considerable changes in Greece. The younger generation of players and some scholars are exploring new theories, practices, and trends regarding the mediums of expression. Some prefer to create new characters and performances, remaining as close to tradition as possible (i.e. Michalis Hatzakis). Another section of artists suggests that the shadow theatre of Karaghiozis should be used as ancillary to other forms of theatre (i.e. Thodoros Grammatas and Ilias Karellas) (Agrafiotis 2010: 6). Finally, some groups explore the potentialities of shadow independently of Karaghiozis, following the modern trends of international shadow theatre, and combining shadow, human bodies, media, and objects (group PeTheA in Patras)⁶. In the latter, speech and voice are not necessarily primary elements of the performance.

⁴ The issues of orality and tradition are discussed by Grigoris Sifakis 2015, and Walter Puchner 1985: 14-16. See also, Hadjipantazis 1984, and Myrsiades 1985.

⁵ Apart from the sound recordings and the leaflets, Karaghiozis plays were also published in comics.

⁶ See the webpage of the group. Accessed on 5/7/2018 <http://paithea.weebly.com/piomicroniotaomicroniota-epsilon943mualphasigmatauepsilon.html>

The Stock Characters of Traditional Karaghiozis. Their Voice and Language

As in *commedia dell'arte*, the majority of Karaghiozis comic performances are built on a range of stock characters. These characters are represented by the stereotypical two-dimensional figures. Each character/figure has some identifiable traits of design, voice, and movement. However, the figures of each player may convey a more personal style. The dimensions of the figures for professional use vary from a few centimetres for small objects or animals, to ninety centimetres for tall characters (mostly of the heroic type). In the sixty or seventy years of the existence of Karaghiozis as a traditional form of theatre, its artists created dozens of new characters. However, only about twelve of them survived through time⁷.

Karaghiozis is a grotesque character. He is bold, hunchbacked, his right arm is always depicted long, his clothes are ragged and patched, and his feet are always bare. He is the poor or outcast Greek city dweller. He lives in a dilapidated hut (*paranga*) with his wife Aglaia and his sons. He has a voracious appetite and violent manner. When he cannot find food he goes to bed. He is extremely cynical and belongs to the trickster types of popular culture. He uses mischievous and crude methods to feed his family (mainly stealing). As a character he has a lot of similarities with other types of puppet theatre (the English Punch, the French Guignol, the Italian Faggiolino, the German Kasperl, and the Spanish Christovita), and with some *janni* (servants) of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, especially Pulcinella.

His companion on the *berdés* is **Hadjiavatis** (the Turkish counterpart is *Hacivat*). Sometimes he cooperates in business with Karaghiozis but he is usually the victim of Karaghiozis's tricks. He

⁷ Online collection of Greek shadow theatre puppets at the British Museum. Accessed on 5/7/2018 http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=Greek+shadow+theatre

often ends up entangled in Karaghiozis's schemes. He has a tendency to flatter the powerful, and is sometimes depicted as compliant and docile towards the occupying and dominant establishment, in contrast to Karaghiozis. He often uses learned phrases but is not very educated.

Karaghiozis may have one or three kids, **Kollitiri** or **Kollitiria**. Some versions give their names as (from younger to older) Kollitiri, Kopritis (a name for street dogs) and Birikokos. The oldest is clever and speaks as a good schoolboy should. Kopritis is halfwit and speaks like a halfwit kid. The youngest causes much laughter by imitating a toddler's way of talking. They are miniature versions of their father.

Karaghiozis's wife is often called **Aglaia**. She is usually unseen but her characteristically nagging voice is to be heard coming from inside Karaghiozis's hut.

Barba Giorgos [Uncle George] is a crude villager from the mountains in comedies and a brave warrior in the heroic plays. He is depicted as a shepherd or cowherd from Roumeli – a region of Western Greece – and is uncontaminated by urban trends. He is always depicted as broad-built and strong, in traditional kilted costume. Even though he believes his nephew to be a crook, he always helps him out. He is the one who beats all the national enemies with his stick. He speaks the vernacular of his place of origin.

Sior Dionysios or Nionios is an Italianate gentleman from the island of Zante, of dubious aristocratic ancestry. He sings serenades [*cantades*] and speaks the rhythmic dialect of his island.

Stavrakas' puppet is the only one with a long independent arm, like Karaghiozis. He represents the "mangas", the harbour culture prevalent in Piraeus, and speaks its peculiar slang. Although he tries to bully the others, Karaghiozis usually teases him.

Morfonios ['handsome young man'] is the mother's boy. He is very ugly with a huge head and an extremely large nose; however, he considers himself to be handsome and keeps falling in love. He often exclaims a sound like "whit!" and speaks through his nose.

The Jew is one of the less-known characters. He is usually rich and stingy, and speaks a peculiar language which is a mixture of Spanish, Greek and Hebrew. He sometimes utters the words in a rapid fashion, repeating some words endlessly. His puppet has an extra joint on the neck which enables it to swing in a funny way.

The Vizier, also called Pasha, is the commanding figure of the occupying side and lives in the Seraglio. He usually sets off the beginning of each new tale, by announcing trials, deeds, tests, desires or needs, etc. in which Karaghiozis usually decides to become involved. He speaks slowly, stressing the words, and uses words from *katharevousa*, the purist Greek language spoken by learned people until the early 1970s.

The Vizier or Pasha usually has a beautiful daughter, **Veziropoula**. She may often behave obediently but she is usually quite naughty. She has more than one way of causing trouble, sometimes for good, opposing her despotic father, or for bad in dislike of Karaghiozis.

Velighekas is the Albanian guard of the Seraglio. He is the executive arm of the Pasha, always on the lookout for Karaghiozis, and never misses the chance to give him a good beating. Usually gets beaten by Barba Giorgos.

The entrance of most of the stock figures was announced by musical leitmotifs recognisable to the spectators. Barba Giorgos was accompanied by folk songs, Nionos with music from his native island, Stavrakas with *rebetica* (urban folk music), and so on.

Many more special figures appear, especially in dramatic and heroic performances, from which most of the stock characters tend to vanish. National heroes from the War of Independence, bandits, old men, sexy young ladies, Alexander the Great, sorcerers, serpents, devils, angels, cars, airplanes, animals, skeletons and so on.

The Speech and Voice of the Shadow-Theatre Player

The Karaghiozis player, as he speaks for all the figures, must have a versatile voice, easily adjusted to the special 'personality'

and mode of speech of each character. His skill par excellence is *allaxofonia*, the instantaneous and proper change of voice from one character to another. Without it the rhythm of the performance is broken. While comic plays demand more versatility in the change of voice, dramatic plays require a more histrionic talent by the player, who has to convincingly express the mood of a character in the specific context of each situation⁸.

The speech of each character is, in a way, an extension of its movement. A figure has to move when it “talks” in order to be more lively, and also to prevent any confusion as to who is talking.

Many karaghiozopaichtes do not simply speak for the characters but actually play them behind the berdés, experiencing the emotions of the puppets in their own bodies. Yet the spectator, standing in front of the screen, can apprehend those emotions only by listening to the voice, since the face of a puppet remains static, like a mask. Let us read an account of Antonis Mollas’ acting style. Mollas was a karaghiozopaichtis who performed in Athens during the first half of the 20th century. The description is provided by the novelist Stratis Doukas:

‘In every movement and in every expression of his, one can watch the types [figures] coming to life, and the events he represents parading in front of their eyes. Each movement of the figure corresponds to infinite movements of Mollas [...]. [Let’s] imagine the instances when two puppets talk almost simultaneously, each having its own character and voice. Whatever grimace Mollas cannot represent through the figure, one can see it on his face, in his imaginative efforts to move the figures. An entire treasury of expressions made by the body, the feet, the hands, the eyes, and by every fibre of his being at its most intense. This treasury of expressions tries to be passionately channelled into the figures to

⁸ The typical scenery of hut-seraglio necessitates outdoor action. Even dialogues of very private nature are exchanged in the public space. As a result, indoor scenes are very short and, in these rare cases, the dialogues are spoken offstage.

animate them' (Doukas 1932).

Another *karaghiozopaichtis*, Dimitris Meimaroglou, asserts that in the interval between two battles during the Second World War, he gave a whole forty-minute performance without figures in front of the troops, causing roars of laughter by the despondent soldiers (Meimaroglou 1965: 270).

Karaghiozopaichtes even have to imitate female voices. The difficulty a man has in giving a womanly tone to his voice is probably one reason for the limited number of female characters in the performances.

Rom Goudas argues that a player should be able 'to use his voice in at least six different tones: a voice like that of good deacon of the church for the heroic figures of [the War of Independence]; "katharevousa" spoken in a solemn form of voice by the Pasha or Vizier; a pleasingly flattering, yet wretched voice for Hadjiavatis; for guards and mercenaries, such as Velighekas, a plain, sharp, hoarse voice, filtered through with foreign speech patterns; a shrill, high-pitched, trembling voice for women; a powerful, real voice like that of a hawker, for *Karaghiozis*, which is on the verge of complaint and dreadful-sounding but which at the same time maintains a serious tone expressed in good taste; and finally, a high-pitched voice with a slight nasal twang and a speech defect for the figure of *Kollitiri*' (Gudas 1986: 129-130).

Goudas has neglected to mention another specific trait of the player's voice. Traditionally, the larynx was used by some *Karaghiozopaichtes*, especially in the region of the Peloponnese, to give their voice a special harsh timbre. The specific term used for this kind of modified voice is *laringofoni* (voice from the larynx). Apart from *laringofoni*, *Karaghiozis* players may practise freer ways of speaking in their imitation of the figures' proper voice. They may use their ordinary voice slightly modified through the oral cavity. Finally, they may mix techniques, by combining both the larynx (on a lesser level) and the oral cavity. Altogether, Michalis Hatzakis has discerned fifteen different types of voice in *Karaghiozis*

(Hatzakis 1998: 138-39).

Moreover, a shadow-theatre player should achieve the adroitness to imitate the vernacular of various parts of Greece corresponding to the origin of each character: the slang of the Piraeus underworld, the katharevousa language spoken by the learned, even the peculiar language of the Jew (Caïmi 1935: 140), the vernacular of Roumeli, in which the unstressed high vowels of the words are typically deleted, and the vernacular of Zante, with its rhythmic articulation and Italian words. In some cases, he may even have to imitate the Cretan vernacular, when he uses the less frequent figure of Manoussos. The karaghiozopaichtis Giannis Roulias (1872-1905), from Amfilohia, was particularly successful in speaking for Barba Giorgos, since both he and the fictional hero originated from the same region. In fact, Roulias, probably in collaboration with the karaghiozopaichtis Dimitrios Sardounis or Mimaros, was the inventor of Barba Giorgos.

The importance of voice in Karaghiozis performance is vividly expressed in the short story *The Bitter-Sweet Art*, published in 1917 by Yannis Vlachoyannis. It is based on the life of Yannis Roulias (called Foulías in the story), and takes place in an unnamed city in Greece. A dilemma arises when the bohemian Foulías, on his way to give a performance, discovers that his shadow figures have been stolen. In the story, the assistants of master Roulias are three urchins. They have nicknames which in rough translation mean ‘Bloomers’ for Vrakakos, ‘Mucus’ for Tsiblis, and ‘Rags’ for Apoforis. Their ages range from about eleven to sixteen, Tsiblis being the youngest and Vrakakos the oldest (Vlachoyannis 1986: 20-21).

Apoforis, who is the thief of the figures, had won ‘the confidence of Foulías (which was the best reward that he could ever have wished for), and earned the right to enter the shack and work there. Then, not only did the entire mystery of the theater reveal itself to him, but he learned many other things as well. His prestige grew among the other children, who looked to him for anything which had to do with the mysteries, the secrets, the performing

skills, and the laws and ways of the little theater. For there was nothing that his mind did not note down, remembering it exactly and for always. He could describe perfectly the skilful handling of the figures, the speeches of every hero, the rules, the techniques, and all the mysterious secrets of the art. No one among the rest of the children could match him in miming the voice of Karaghiozis. He knew that this was the most difficult thing to do, and preached this to his little followers who stood about him gaping. “If you can’t do Karaghiozis’s voice, you’re wasting your time,” he would say, imitating the voice of Foulías. He even criticized other Karaghiozis-players, for he had also visited their theaters. Of all the entertainers he had seen, however, he decided to love and devote himself to Foulías. He even began to teach the other small fry about him:

“No one can do Karaghiozis as good as Foulías. Even if they all got together, they couldn’t beat Foulías at doing Barba Yorgos. When it comes to Sior Dionysios though, Floras is tops. He’s also good at doing Kefallonitis and Korfiatis; no one can rate with him in this! Anyway, who needs all those figures when you’re good at doing Karaghiozis, Barba Yorgos, and Dervenaghas!” (Vlachoyannis 1986: 51-52)

A little later, Rouliás discovers the place Apoforis is hiding and with Tsiblis listens to him, unseen, to speak for Karaghiozis figures:

“The natural skill which Apoforis had displayed while performing these scenes made Tsiblis look at the master in speechless admiration.

“Do you hear him, boy? Don’t you see what a great kid he is? See that you become like him, wretch!”

“He’s performing with stolen figures!” said Tsiblis out of jealousy.

“Don’t you, get it, you reject? He’s playing, that is practicing, by talking to himself: What would he be doing with figures? Go up to the window and have a look. Talk to him, and you’ll see if he’s got any figures! I’ll stake my head on it he hasn’t!” (Vlachoyannis 1986: 69-70).

Rhythm and Talent

In the performance of modern Greek shadow theatre, every

element (voice, movement, *allaxofonia*, jokes, etc.) becomes part of an unbroken structure through the unifying quality of rhythm. Rhythm is shared by dramatic theatre as well (Stanislavsky 2008: 465-506). The sense of rhythm and the adherence to its indeterminate laws should be understood as a kind of empirical knowledge, which is orally transmitted from one generation to the next, from the master to the apprentice. In the process of apprenticeship, karaghiozopaichtes unconsciously internalize this knowledge, and, when they become independent players, they readily apply it on their own performances. Rhythm and personal talent are the unaccountable factors that determine the success and the individual style of a performance (Mollas 2002: 207-8). It is through them that a player has the opportunity to leave his own personal mark on an otherwise collective form of art.

The karaghiozopaichtis and musician Kostas Karampalis explains the talent of a successful player as follows: ‘To know how to imitate a thousand voices and dialects, to have an extreme agility in your hands, to design figures, to improvise the play while performing it, to play without the help of a prompter, in a word, to be a poet and a technician at the same time, this is our art’ (Caïmi 1935: 30)⁹.

Types of Performance

Taking as our criterion the crucial role of voice and speech, we could classify the performances of Modern Greek shadow theatre into two types:

(1) Performances of *logos* which are either comic or dramatic. Comic speech and witticisms in the comic performances, and solemn speech in the heroics and dramas outweigh the other elements of the performance.

(2) Performances of rhythmic movement, in which movement

⁹ ‘Savoir imiter mille voix et dialectes : posséder des mains d’une agilité extrême : dessiner les pantins : concevoir la pièce sur la scène même, et la jouer, sans l’aide d’un souffleur, être en un mot, poète et technicien a la fois, voilà notre art’.

overshadows speech and voice for evidently pedagogical purposes. Rhythmic movement is a more appropriate medium for the players to address children who are not fully capable of comprehending the more sophisticated witticisms of Karaghiozis (Agrafiotis 2017: 166-67).

Though the role of the voice is crucial in any type of performance, there are scenes in which the characters neither talk nor sing. The attention is drawn to the spectacle itself, and the shadow-theatre player has to be extremely dexterous in using his hands. Julio Caïmi, describing the art of Greek shadow theatre in 1935, has cited fourteen typical scenes of this type: dances, fights (between an angel and the devil, or a horseman and a dragon, or a hero and a beast, or between armed heroes, or between unarmed heroes), battles, battleships, explosions, etc. (Caïmi 1935: 126-127).

Visual and Aural Humour¹⁰

The comic material of Karaghiozis performances can be distinguished into two groups: (a) the visual, and (b) the aural.

a) The visual humour mostly derives from the absurd design of some figures. They are intentionally constructed as caricatures in order to cause laughter at their mere appearance. Such are the cases of Karaghiozis himself with his hunchback and bare feet, the long-nosed Morfonios, the swinging Jew, and the less-used figure of Peponias (a fat military officer of the Seraglio). A similar comic effect is created by the transformation of the stock characters into animals in the classic play of *The Haunted Tree*, or by the incongruous costumes Karaghiozis puts on when he undertakes a new profession (the hole-ridden top hat, the tailcoat with bare feet, etc.).

Another visual comic effect comes from slapping and beating. Hadjiavatis is beaten by Karaghiozis, who in turn is beaten by

¹⁰ In this chapter, unless specified, the information is derived from the book by Agrafiotis 2017: 126-28. See also the relevant approach to verbal and non-verbal quips in Turkish shadow theatre in And 1979: 47-48, 65-67.

Velighekas, and all of them ‘taste’ Barba Giorgos’s thrashing. Technically speaking, beating becomes more realistic with the aid of sound. Karaghiozopaichtes use a gadget whose sound intensifies the effect.

b) The aural humour of Karaghiozis theatre may derive from the sounds that are produced by gadgets, or by speech and voice. The aural humour of the second category is (i) either purely verbal, or (ii) arises from the meaning of the speech.

(i) The verbal humour is caused by the distortion of the words, by the utterance of invented words, mostly by Karaghiozis himself, by the intentional or unintentional misapprehension of a word with a double meaning, and by the wordplay with homonyms. A similar effect is produced when Karaghiozis ridicules European words or deforms Greek words to be heard as French or German (Damianakos 1986: 149-52).

It is worth citing here a dialogue that Linda Myrsiades has adapted to English, which makes evident the absurdity of the comic dialogues in Karaghiozis performance. In the cited passage Hadjiavatis is trying to teach Karaghiozis the art of the public herald:

Hatziavatis: “Hear ye.”

Karaghiozis: “We heard.”

Hatziavatis: Not “We heard.” “Hear ye.”

Karaghiozis: “Oh come on, it’s the same thing.”

Hatziavatis: “Her ye.”

Karaghiozis: Damn you! “Hear ye.”

Hatziavatis: “We heard.” Dammit, say it any way you like. Why should I bust my brain to fill yours?

Karaghiozis: That’s what I say. Continue.

Hatziavatis: “Beys”

Karaghiozis: “Lazy days”

Hatziavatis: “Agas”

Karaghiozis: “Asparagus”

Hatziavatis: “Pashas”

Karaghiozis: “Dolmas”

Hatziavatis: “Dervishes”

Karaghiozis: “Beverages”

Hatziavatis: “Chinese”

Karaghiozis: “Chick peas”

Hatziavatis: “Englishmen, Frenchmen, Russians”

Karaghiozis: “Pheasants, mud hens, and groschen” (Myrsiades 1980: 117).

Verbal humour may also arise from the misunderstandings caused by the regional vernaculars that most characters speak. A typical pun is that on the word ‘kouradi’, which in the Cretan idiom means ‘sheep’ and in the standard language means ‘turd’.

ii) The humour that depends on the content relates more to a character’s thoughts than the way words are articulated. This kind of humour requires the spectator’s concentration and mental alertness.

According to Stathis Damianakos, comic meaning may be produced by creating bipolar contradictions (such as wealth/theft, law/lawlessness, work/laziness, morality/amorality, order/disorder, knowledge/ignorance, seriousness/superficiality, rationalization/irrationality, etc.), by devaluating objects with symbolic value, or by disrespecting established values (such as honesty, education, marriage, etc.) In the play *A Little of Everything* [or *The Engagement of Karaghiozis*]¹¹ the Bey invites so many suitors for his daughter that it is as if he is auctioning her off (Damianakos 1986: 146-152).

In Giannes Kontos’ play *Karaghiozis and the Three Grooms* Karaghiozis eventually wins the claimed bride and receives his father-in-law’s blessing. Karaghiozis takes the opportunity to make some puns ridiculing the pre-nuptial ceremony and marriage itself:

Bey: Bow, that I may bless you.

Karaghiozis: Bend, you little trickster.

Bey: My children, may you live and grow old.

Karaghiozis: That we may turn back and babble.

Bey: May the earth you touch turn gold.

Karaghiozis: May the gold we touch turn to gunpowder.

Bey: May you live like domesticated pigeons.

¹¹ Antonis Mollas’ version of the play has been translated by R. Gudas (Gudas 1986: 177-253).

Karaghiozis: May we feed on each other like crows.

Bey: With healthy offspring.

Karaghiozis: With healthy devils and the reading of Solomon's straw-bags. Forward now, let's go celebrate.'

(Adapted by L. Myrsiades, in Myrsiades 1980: 116).

Most of the puns, jokes, word-plays, and comic dialogues belong to the common oral tradition of the guild, and are repeated from a performance to another. This tradition has proved 'stronger and a more viable force than individual or local movements and influences' (Myrsiades 1980: 118).

Speech and Voice in Dramatic and Heroic Performances

In the process of Hellenization in the late 19th century, Karaghiozis shadow theatre lost most of the ithyphallic attributes of its ancestor. Though it did not completely drop the carnivalesque atmosphere, it partly converged with mainstream culture. The point of convergence was the patriotic ideology of the period. The lower social strata, that is the patrons of the spectacle, had enthusiastically adopted the irredentist dreams of the newly formed Greek state. Therefore, Karaghiozis had to adjust itself to the ideological preoccupations of its spectators in order to remain popular. Alongside the comic tradition, Karaghiozis also developed performances with a serious content. Gradually, other dramatic plays were added to the patriotic plays. In the new repertoire there was place neither for the comic stock characters nor for their fashion of speaking. Only the presence of the Karaghiozis figure retained some of its comical identity (Myrsiades 1988: 37-40; Hadjipantazis 1994: 124-126).

Apart from the figures of Barba Giorgos, the Pasha, Velighekas and Hadjiavatis, the latter making only short appearances in performances, the inhabitants of the heroics and the dramas were unique to each play. Though stereotypical in their construction, they represented different historical or fictional persons. Their speech

unavoidably accorded with the atmosphere of the plot, departing from the comic identity of the genre. The tone of voice became serious and solemn, occasionally reaching pomposity.

In the culmination of the patriotic mood, the solemn prosaic mode of speech was heightened by nationalist poems recited by the heroes. The kleft Katsandonis, for example, incites his men to heroic deeds, urging them to swear on God and the Cross:

Let us all swear upon Holy Faith and upon the
Cross,
I fight for my country and for my religion.
Let us swear with our life's breath upon the Cross
either our nation will be glorious again as once
before
or we will fall to earth filled with honor's bullets
(Myrsiades 1988: 73).

Because many serious plays were adaptations of popular novels, the language of the educated invaded the world of shadow theatre. The heroes and the figures of authority spoke a comprehensible version of katharevousa, alternating it with words from the demotic vernacular (Hadjipantazis 1994: 125-126). It imparted to them an aura of superiority and distanced them from common people. History was elevated to a mythical sphere (Papageorgiou 2018: 742-43). However, as Kostas Biris has noted, the speech in katharevousa often created unintentional comic effects (to the hears of the educated part of the audience) because most karaghiozopaichtes were illiterate and, consequently, could not adequately speak the formal language of the learned (Biris 1952: 1377).

In conclusion, the supremacy of speech and voice was manifest in traditional Greek Theatre. Heroic or comic, the content of the play was mostly articulated through the medium of language. The shadow-theatre player, hidden behind the berdés, used a wide range of linguistic signs to animate the two-dimensional *figures* and to narrate the story. Apart from speech and voice, his only auxiliaries were the restricted movements of the puppets and the music that

accompanied some of them, the fixed scenery, the light that was produced by a series of plain bulbs or candles and, finally, the magic of shadow, whether black-and-white or coloured.

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