Chapter 5

The Transfer and Appropriations of the Beat Generation in Greece

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Abstract

The chapter examines the ways that the poetry of the Beat Generation was transferred to Greece and its function within the Greek cultural and political framework. The visits of Beat poets in Greece, as early as 1959, led to the formation of a limited circle of avantgarde artists who were interested in their subversive cultural identity, practices and poetry. Beat poems were published in avant-garde magazines (both in English and in Greek translation), most of which thematised the Beats' experience of Greece. Greek poets drew on beat writing, associating it with surrealism. The 1967 dictatorship and the international political activity of members of the Beat Generation such as Allen Ginsberg enabled the Greek wider public to read the Beats in a more political perspective. After the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, the Beats remained a symbol of underground culture and functioned differently for different artistic and political groups.

The Beginnings of the Greek Beat Phenomenon

In Greece the reception of the Beat Generation was gradual and can be broken into three stages, depending on the channels and the elements of their life and work that were appropriated. Initially, the presence of representatives of the American Beat Generation in the early 1960s was the main conduit for the introduction

of texts through small literary magazines. During the military dictatorship (1967–1974) the movement was politicised and channelled to a wider public through underground periodicals. Beginning in the mid-1970s, it was adopted in different ways by various groups of artists and the public. Although post-war Greek society was very different from the post-war optimism of 1950s in the United States, the subversive elements of the Beat Generation were received positively.

In Greece, World War ii was followed by a Civil War between the Left and the Right (1946–1949), which can be described as the first warm incident of the Cold War, ending in the defeat of the Left. Although not all the supporters of the Left were communists, in a polarised political climate the Communist Party was outlawed in 1946, its supporters and sympathisers were persecuted for decades and society was ruled by an alliance of "nation-minded" politicians, the Church and the armed forces. Nevertheless, in constitutional terms Greece was a democracy and was closely dependent on its Western Allies both financially and militarily (Mazower 2000; Panourgia 2009; Zachariou 2009). The early 1960s was a period of economic growth and relative political stability, during which demands for civil rights and political freedom became more outspoken. The backlash of political violence by the shadow state mechanisms culminated in a military dictatorship (1967–1974), which was backed by the Unites States. The transition to democracy in 1974, the abolition of the monarchy and the legalisation of the Communist Party signalled a period of expectations of deep political and social change. Over the next three decades Greece experienced the longest period of political and financial stability in its history. (Miller 2009: 25–33, 68–75, 111–170, 207–209; Clogg 2013: 144–168).

During the 1950s, the presence of American armed forces in Greece became a means of dissemination for American pop culture to a small part of the population, namely, the political and economic elites. After the radicalisation of youth during World War ii and the Civil

War, in the 1950s the behaviour of the younger generation was closely monitored and controlled, moral panic was a frequent phenomenon, as was the case in other countries, and the influence of foreign youth cultures was curbed (Katsapis 2007: 141–152; Avdela 2005: 31).

Culture was one of the very few areas where the Left could exercise any influence, creating its own narrative of national history and the traumatic 1940s and emphasising the experiences silenced by the Right. So the Left created its own literary canon, based on realism and historical references, while the modernists of the 1930s gradually became an established group of writers, shaping a national modernism. This movement focused on the mythical method, the reworking of tradition and the expression of the indigenous Greek essence, encompassing all historical periods from antiquity onwards (Tziovas 1997: 2).[1]

In the late 1950s a small circle of bohemians from Athens, artists and youngsters formed around "Simos the Existentialist" (Simos Tsapnidis, 1919–1999), a tent maker and amateur actor whose shack hosted their

[1] The most prominent poets of this group, George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis, are the two Greek Nobel prize laureates (1963 and 1979). This suggests that the national modernism they shaped was well received in the West and expressed the dual cultural identity of Greece according to the Western horizon of expectations (Lambropoulos 1988: 10–12). Modern Greek culture is in a double bind regarding its relation to the classical past and the West. Greece gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1832, under the protection of the Great Powers of the period (Great Britain, France and Russia) and shaped a national identity that emphasised its continuity from classical Greece. Striving to prove to the West that it was the cradle of the Western civilisation, it was simultaneously threatened by the Western gaze, which recognises Eastern elements and tradition as a form of exoticism with ambivalent significations. (Herzfeld 2005: 18–22, 46, 51, 134–135. Calotychos 2003: 157–159, 166–175). National modernism aimed to reconcile this duality, by aestheticising its antinomies.

parties and happenings. This group challenged the strictly defined limits of accepted behaviour, thus triggering a reaction by the police. Tsapnidis's shack was closed down by court order and he himself left Greece for France (Christakis 2011: 37–38; Koutroubousis 2007: 165).

In the deeply divided political and cultural environment of the times, these youngsters used humour and foreign pop culture to subvert social norms. Although the activity of this group did not involve literary or artistic expression in the conventional sense, it is considered a cultural precursor of the underground and Beat movement in Greece, because through its cultural and artistic practices it shaped a subversive artistic identity (Mitras 1975: 1). One prominent member of the group was the young Panos Koutroubousis (b. 1937), who later became an artist and writer.

In the 1960s, foreign culture and especially youth culture – music, dance, cinema and fashion – was channelled to a wider social strata and perceived as a desirable aspect of modernisation. Nevertheless, in popular Greek films of the period the generation gap regarding the reception of foreign trends was a constant source of comedy (Kornetis 2013: 16–19). In the literary field, the two contrasting canons of the Right and the Left began tentatively to converge, due to the relaxing of the Socialist Realist canon after 1958 and the attempt of certain intellectuals of the Left to include modernism (national or not) into the Left canon (Papanikolaou 2007: 89; Kotzia: 279–287, 304–307). In this framework, there was space for a small group of avant-garde artists and writers to re-introduce elements of historical avant-gardes along with features of the neo-avant-garde, Beat culture and underground culture, mainly through the magazine *Πάλι* (Pali, Again; Valaoritis 1997: 26–28).

Channels for the Introduction of the Beat Generation

The principal instrument for the introduction of the Beat Generation was the physical presence of a number of its members in Greece from 1959 onwards. Their most important Greek connection was the poet Nanos Valaoritis (b.1921). He had lived in France and the United States during the 1940s and 1950s and met Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs during his stay in Paris in the mid-1950s through the surrealist poet and art critic Nicolas Calas, who lived in the United States (Valaoritis 2009: 12–13).

When the Beat writers left Tangiers in the late 1950s, a group of them arrived in Athens, in transit to various countries, and others came from Paris in the early 1960s. For instance, Sinclair Beiles, Conrad Rooks, Gregory Corso, Harold Norse, Ted Joans, Bill Barker, Alan Ansem, Philip Lamantia, John Esam and Daniel Richter all lived in Greece for various periods in the early to mid-1960s (Dass 2010: 44; Morgan 2015: 89). Allen Ginsberg arrived in Athens in 1961, meeting Nanos Valaoritis, Amy Mims and Spyros Meimaris (b. 1942), a young poet who had lived in San Francisco, where he had met Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Meimaris 1993: 9–10; Christakis [s.d.]; Meimaris 2013: 29; Dass 2010: 44–47; Mims 2005: 68–74; Mims 2007: 104–108).[2]

Valaoritis helped the Beat poets with the practicalities of their stay and introduced them to the established Greek modernists, who were rather reserved towards them, due to their bohemian way of life (Christakis 2011: 21–23; Valaoritis 1997: 41–42). In any case, Greek modernists, such as Seferis, were closer

[2] In the early 1960s Meimaris lived in Beirut, Tangiers and Paris, where he met William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Peter Orlovsky and Sinclair Beiles. His first poems where written in English. He started writing in Greek in the early 1970s (Meimaris 2013: 29).

to high modernism (especially T.S. Eliot) than to 1920s surrealism, while others, such as Elytis or Nikos Gatsos, experimented with surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s but distanced themselves from avant-garde cultural practices (Stabakis 2008: 131, 162).[3]

The Beat poets were better received by younger, more experimental writers and artists such as Panos Koutroubousis, Dimitris Poulikakos (b. 1942) – a writer and later rock musician – and Leonidas Christakis (1928–2009). The last of these, a gallerist and writer, was introduced to them by Valaoritis and gradually became the main channel of the introduction of the Beat Generation to a wider public over the course of the next two decades, through translations in his small magazines.[4]

The Beats' presence was documented by the *Life* photographer James Burke in the October 1959 issue of *Life*, in which Gregory Corso, Nanos Valaoritis and Conrad Rooks and his wife Zina Rachevsky are pictured on the Acropolis and at Rachevsky's Athens home. Some of the Beat poets, such as Harold Norse and Bill Barker, also spent time on the island of Hydra, where they joined an already existing foreign artist community, whose members included Leonard Cohen, who at the time was a poet and writer and owned a house there, Caresse Crosby, and George Johnston and his wife, Charmian Clift. Their presence was again documented by Burke in the August 1961 issue of *Life* (Mims 2007:

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[3] The historical avant-garde movements were partly introduced into the Greek cultural field in the 1930s, with emphasis on form rather than politics. Surrealism was the most developed movement, represented by Nikolas Calas, Andreas Embiricos (in poetry) and Nikos Engonopoulos (in poetry and painting) (Stabakis 2008: 2–4; Hamalidi, Nikolopoulou and Walldén: 2011: 425–426).

[4] Christakis was the editor of the small magazines *Κούρος* (Kouros, 1959, 1971–1972, 1974), *Το άλλο στην Τέχνη* (The different in Art, 1963), *Panderma* (1972–1973, 1974–77), and *Ιδεοδρόμιο* (Ideodrome, 1978–1989). These magazines were financed by Christakis and appeared irregularly.

108–115).

Greek writers became aware of Beat writing through books, such as the Olympia Press editions, and foreign magazines, such as *The Evergreen Review,* which could be found in specialist Athens bookshops. Nevertheless, the Beat poets' presence played an important role in the reception of their work and way of life among those who already had a receptive horizon of expectations (Koutroubousis 2007: 166, 171).

The Reception of the Beats in the 1960s: Adopting Beat Cultural Practices

Artists such as Koutroubousis, Poulikakos and Christakis identified with the Beat way of life and writing, as they came to know it through the presence of Beat poets in Greece. The Beats constructed a subversive cultural identity through their lifestyle, since, as explained by Thomas Newhouse, they were more interested in the process rather than the final product of artistic creation, in "generating a heightened participation in reality, not a reflection of the real" (2000: 13). Their subversive performative identity has been associated by Robert Holton with "apolitical dissent based on alienation as a personal or psychological condition," especially in the 1950s (2001: 14).

Such apolitical dissent allowed these Greek artists, who had already adopted a performative subversive identity, to distance themselves from the strongly polarised Greek politics of the 1960s. In their later texts both Christakis and, to a lesser extent, Koutroubousis defined themselves as "beatniks," adopting a beatnik lifestyle, attitude towards society and approach to writing. They were attracted by the attack on post-war affluence and hypocrisy, the subversion of the

expectations of society, the individual search for freedom, the use of drugs as a consciousness-heightening method, and the spontaneity and fluidity of the Beats' writing, which they associated with liberation from the rules of post-war modernism and realism. It is indicative that in his 1995 interview, Koutroubousis says that he did not discuss literature with Ginsberg when they met in 1961 through Meimaris (while Valaoritis probably did); he describes instead his initiation into marijuana-use by Ginsberg. In the same interview, he refers to the "beatnik era," as a way of life which he adopted (Koutroubousis 2007: 165–166). The emphasis on life praxis rather than art or the identification of life and art is also a characteristic of the Beats (Wilson 1999: 13; Lee 2010: 791).

Happenings, drawing on the Dada legacy, were a new phenomenon flourishing in American and European art circles at the time (Berghaus 1995). American Beat writers living in Greece and their Greek counterparts regarded happenings as a way of attacking parochial Greek culture. Indeed, the first "happening" in Athens took place in a café in 1963, organised by Poulikakos and Koutroubousis, where texts by William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac were read aloud (Koutroubousis 1975; Koutroubousis 2007: 167; Trousas 2016). Its reception at the time was very limited and mainly negative, as Koutroubousis noted twelve years later. Nevertheless, this event is considered a turning point for the development of the Greek "underground scene" (Mitras 1975).

Whereas for the American Beats, freedom was movement in space to places untouched by Western civilisation (such as Tangiers, Mexico and Greece itself), Greek "beatniks" sought freedom from the limitations of Greek society in Western metropolises, such as London and Paris. Koutroubousis moved to Paris in 1963 and then to London in 1964, returning to Greece a year later, after being deported. Poulikakos also moved to London in 1964, but returned in 1967 to attend a Rolling Stones concert in Athens, just days before the Dictatorship

(Koutroubousis 2007: 172; Cresswell 1993; Gair and Georganta 2012: 220).

Thus, the initial reception of the Beats in Greece focused more on their way of life. Those Greek artists who were already challenging the limitations of Greek society through their work regarded the Beat Generation as a model for cultural and artistic practice. Nevertheless, this emphasis deterred the established modernist writers and the literary magazines they influenced (such as *Εποχές* [Epochs]) from responding positively to Beat writings. The magazines published by the initial purveyors, such as Valaoritis and Christakis, played the most crucial role in the reception of the Beats, addressing a limited public.

The Magazines of the 1960s: The Beat Experience of Greece as a Channel for Beat Writing

The interaction between American Beats and Greek artists and writers can be traced through the first publications of Beat poetry (in English or in Greek translation) in the avant-garde magazines that appeared in Athens in the 1960s: *Το άλλο στην Τέχνη* (To allo stin techni, The Different in Art, 1963), the two issues of the magazine *Residu* (1965, in English), the editor of which was Daniel Richter, and more regularly, *Pali* (1964–1966). Many of these texts portray the Beats' experience of Greece, such as the coexistence of the classical past with the present, or their drifting in a pre-modern space while seeking a spiritual experience (Corso 2003: 213; Gair and Georganta 2012: 220; Mims 2005: 69). Reference to the Beats' presence in Greece also occurs in other magazines, such as *Κριτήριο* (Kritirio, Criterion) and *Καινούργια Εποχή* (Kainourgia Epochi, New Era), both in 1965. In the Greek magazines of the period, the members of the Beat Generation are not always clearly differentiated from other Western artists living in Greece and adopting an unconventional

artistic identity.

The first Beat poems appeared in Christakis's magazine, *To allo stin techni*, in 1963. Described by the editor as surrealistic, the magazine brought together artists and writers from different movements close to the avant-garde and aimed to widen the horizons of its readers by provoking them (Christakis s.d. – 1963; Valaoritis s.d. – 1963[5]). The magazine was not dated, its pages were not numbered, and foreign texts were not translated – and were thus addressed to a limited readership. Only two issues appeared. In the second issue there is an advertisement for the magazine *Pali.* In 1971, Christakis revealed that each issue sold just 90 copies (1971: 1).

In these two issues, the presence of the Beat poets living in Greece is noticeable: they include an extract from Conrad Rooks's collection of poems, *Chappaqua or the Invocation of Bran,* published in Athens,[6] and his poem "Chère Selima," referring to his relationship with his wife Zina Rachevski and his experience with drugs in mythological terms.

> […] Zina
> has devoured us all, possessed bitch astride
> a Dionysian cow of sacred white
> Bacchae
> Bacchae
> I have slept with Agave, a murderer I
> but she will eat her son, causing wine to flow
> from barren rock
> a little rest tucked away from Amfetimin [sic]

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5 "A magazine belonging to a new genre, the main target of which is, as the editor explained to me, to mentally overexcite the reader through a series of texts, photos and interesting documents, drawn from all areas of daily life or from elsewhere." French in the original.

6 According to the Library of Congress catalogue of copyright entries, *Chappaqua* was published in 1963 as a self-financed edition in 150 numbered copies. The poem draws on Rooks's experiences with drugs and his attempt to be detoxified. Rooks directed a movie in 1966 with the same title and a similar subject.

tortures
herion [sic] nights
broken bottles and tobacco chinked teeth
I leave now on a Metro for Srinigar flying high
above this world
to that witches' realm, my sacrifice complete
On what blood will Zina-Zina-Zina feed growing
immense a monster
Strong on the bones piled high of lovers' bliss
an angel of black
death, no one could save me Bill nor Sunamou nor
crippled Jacques
just bare me boys across the river styx [sic]
all of you
I leave behind to worship the white goddess
kissing
a twisted mouth of evil your soul to perish
from her spell
I die, I die… breaking her serpent lips on the rocks
of time.

Rooks s.d. – 1963b[7]

Zina is presented here in mythological terms, as a deadly female sexual force who destroys men, including her son. The poem is dated "Athens – October 29, 1963, Greece." During his stay in Athens, Conrad Rooks also wrote the "Manifesto for an Athenian Happening – American style" (Christakis 2011: 30–31).

The magazine also contains two poems from Bill Barker's collection *Sunamou*. The poem "Athens again" is characteristic of Beat experience of modern-day Athens.

up Aeolian street
follet wind leads sucking feet
where

[7] The typos concerning amphetamine and heroin may not be by chance, but a strategy to avoid legal consequences for the poet or the editor.

iron shutters break the peace
where
dangling absences on hooks
are the ghost loves that cannot haunt
where snake sockets exclaim the silence
of picked bulbs
where the furies wait in bedroom suites
up aeolian street

Barker s.d.

The poem brings together ancient features of the Athens urban landscape (such as "Aeolian street"), mythological references (the Furies, Aeolus) and aspects of modern life (such as the radio: "snake sockets exclaim the silence of picked bulbs") and the sense of the poet's alienation. Nevertheless, the poetic subject is not totally detached, as the poem emphasises a feeling of guilt.

In the same issue Ted Joans published a self-presentation that draws on avant-garde manifestos. The aim of his presence in Greece is to:

> bring a bit of U.S. culture – unofficially. To bring a "Happening." To wake up the dull intellectuals and to disturb the non-creators. To make something exciting "Happen." To help the young creators of Greece to create a "Happening." To run the "squares" crazy by surrealist methods of organised delirium. To completely destroy every phoney preoccupation that stands in the way of total love. To rebuild the Acropolis with ideas concerned with action. To encourage Greeks to buy some African rhinoceroses and afro-American paintings.
>
> Joans s.d.

Thus, the American Beat poets experienced Greece within its double cultural bind (Herzfeld 2005: 59, 130). On one hand, they viewed its modern reality through its

classical past.[8] On the other, the element of tradition that made the country the pre-modern space that allowed their free movement and personal freedom, by the same token made it a parochial cultural and social environment, which they aimed to alter through their presence, cultural identity and practices. In this respect they adopted a typical paradoxical Western view of Greece, and, moreover, it was this view that their Greek counterparts expected.

Greek artists, such as Christakis and especially Valaoritis, closely associated Beat writing with European avant-garde movements and, above all, surrealism. The grouping together of the Beats and the European avant-garde in Greek literary magazines (*To allo stin techni* and *Pali*) shows how the 1920s movements shaped the horizon of expectations of Greek artists. Reciprocally, the reception of the Beats in Greece happened at a time when they were most interested in the European avant-gardes. In any case, the reception of the Beats detoured through Paris, both literally and metaphorically.

The first issue of *Residu* was published in Athens in the spring of 1965 and included work by the many American Beat poets who had lived there for shorter or longer periods, along with their Athenian link, Nanos Valaoritis (Dass 2010: 44–47; Valaoritis 1997: 211).[9]

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[8] Gregory Corso in his poem "Some Greek writings" accurately captures that anxiety of the past: "In a way / the Greeks today / don't like the Acropolis / because / it hovers over them / as though mockingly / as though imprisoning them / in a you-can't-do-better-than-me / abyss / No matter whichever way / they look / that mark of history / is impossible to miss" (Corso 1989: 112).

[9] The issue included texts and artistic works by Harold Norse ("Take a Chance in the Void," "Parapoem," "Green Ballets"), Allen Ginsberg ("On the Roof," "Seabattle of Salamis Took Place off Perama"), George Andrews ("Live rock"), Charles Henri Ford ("Some spare parts", a collage featuring Allen Ginsberg), Philip Lamantia ("Mumbles"), Ron Zimardi ("Statements," "2/3 Blue Largo Anthracite," "Mentage"), Olivia De Hauleville ("Bali"), Mary Wilson ("Mandalic Form"), Nanos Valaoritis ("Captions for Story

The most prominent example was Allen Ginsberg's poem "Seabattle of Salamis Took Place off Perama," which creates an interplay between the atmosphere of the present-day Athens working-class neighbourhood, American pop culture and the classical past:

> Negro voices scream back 1000 years striped pants pink shirts patent
>
> leather shoes on their lean dog feet
>
> exaggerated sneakers green pullovers, long hair, hips & eyes!
>
> They're jumping & joying this minute over the bones of Persian sailors—
>
> Echoes of Harlem in Athens! Hail to your weeping eyes New York!
>
> Hail to the noise wherever the jukebox is on TOO LOUD,
>
> The Muses are loose in the world again with their big black voice bazooky blues,
>
> Muses with bongo guitars electric flutes on microphones Cha Cha Cha
>
> Ginsberg 2006: 296, extract

The magazine *Pali*, published by Nanos Valaoritis, played a crucial role in moving avant-garde and Beat writing and ideas beyond the artistic cafés to a younger audience, interested in foreign trends that went beyond realism and national modernism (Arseniou 1997; Stabakis 2008: 271–281). *To allo stin techni* can be viewed as a forerunner of *Pali*, but it was addressed to a more limited audience and adopted a more provocative tone. *Pali* was a hybrid avant-garde magazine that aimed to establish avant-garde practice within the Greek literary field, following, therefore, the field rules,

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in Pictures"), Daniel Richter ("Works"), Ruth Krauss ("Three Poem Plays"), Ellie Synadinou ("Remembrance from Syros"), Alexander Ragtime Man ("Three Poems"), Kay Johnson ("From 'lsd 748'"), Peter Stevens ("The Experiment") and Sheldon Cholst ("Notes on the Use of Hashish").

specifically the autonomy of literature (Bourdieu 1992: 131–133, 141–167). It brought together surrealist poets from the Generation of the 1930s, such as Nicolas Calas and Andreas Embiricos, with younger writers, such as Mando Aravandinou, who focussed on experimental textuality, and writers and artists, such as Koutroubousis, Poulikakos and Christakis, who drew on the Beats, surrealism and genres like science fiction that were regarded negatively by the literary establishment (Arseniou 2003: 199, 202; Stabakis 2008: 273–276). The coexistence of these tendencies was not always unproblematic; some established modernist poets were suspicious of the bohemian lifestyle of certain contributors (Valaoritis 1997: 42).

The magazine sought to reintroduce the historical avant-gardes along with the current developments, since the historical movements functioned only partially in 1930s Greece. It also aimed at overcoming the duality of the modernist and the realist canon. It wanted to connect the aesthetic to the political through a personal liberation of the spirit. In a turbulent political period, *Pali* avoided taking political positions, because political commitment was associated with the Left.[10]

Pali regularly published translations of Beat and surrealistic poetry, creating a genealogy of counter-rationalism from Europe, North America and South America ranging from nineteenth-century symbolism to optical poems.[11] Many of the translated texts were

[10] The debate on the political position *Pali* should adopt during the royal *coup d'état* in 1965 was heated. Nicolas Calas and Costas Tachtsis thought that the magazine should take a political stance at this critical moment, whereas Valaoritis was reluctant to involve the magazine in the polarised politics of the time (N.B. [Valaoritis] 1965: 77–78; Valaoritis 1997: 125; Tachtsis 1975.).

[11] In no. 1 (1964) the translated t exts are: Harold Norse, "Now" (tr.Valaoritis), Aldous Huxley, "The doors of perception" (tr. Poulikakos), Comte de Lautréamont, "Les chants de Maldoror" (tr. Poulikakos), Ted Joans, "The truth" (tr. Poulikakos), Virginia Woolf, "For the common reader" (tr. Aravantinou), Octavio Paz, "The sun stone" (tr. Giorgos

written by poets residing in Athens such as Harold Norse, Ted Joans, Philip Lamantia, Charles Henri Ford, John Esam and Bill Barker, indicating the importance of their role as purveyors of contemporary trends.[12]

Most of the translations of Beat poetry in *Pali* are by Poulikakos, with contributions by Valaoritis, Meimaris and Koutroubousis as well. Translation was a way of studying Beat writing for these writers and poets.

In an editorial note, Valaoritis refers to Poulikakos, Koutroubousis, Eva Mylona (b. 1938) and Tasos Denegris (1934–2009) as writers who belong to the "anti-realist school," while in a later issue Christakis is described as "a colourful, multi-faced personality of the avant-garde" (Valaoritis 1964; Valaoritis 1966). Although *Pali,* as an avant-garde magazine, aimed at the

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Makris). In no. 2–3 (1964): Claude Simon, "The recording" (excerpt from *Le Palace*, tr. Aravantinou), Allen Ginsberg, "America" (tr. Poulikakos), Jorge Luis Borges, "The Two Who Dreamed" (tr. Valaoritis), Philip Lamantia, "This World's Beauty" (tr. Valaoritis), Alain Jouffroy, "Un rêve plus long que la nuit" (tr. Valaoritis), Dylan Thomas, "Love in the asylum" (tr. Tachtsis), Jean Tardieu, "Complainte de l'homme exigeant" (tr. Valaoritis), Charles Henri Ford, "Optical poem," J. L. Bedouin, "Introduction à la poésie surréaliste" (tr. Tachtsis), Tristan Tzara, "A lecture on Dada" (tr. Nikos Stergiou) . In no. 4 (Summer 1965): André Breton, "Le Chateau étoilé" (tr. Takis Papatsonis), Leon Trotsky, "Futurism" (tr. Tachtsis), Samuel Beckett, "L'innomable" (tr. Nikos Stangos), Jorge Semprun, "Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*" (No. 4 was edited by Tachtsis, who was not a fan of Beat writing, see Valaoritis, 1997: 170–176, 213–214). No. 5 (Nov. 1965): André Breton, "Le Chateau étoilé" (tr. Papatsonis), Octavio Paz, "Salamandra" (tr. Valaoritis), Allen Ginsberg, "The Magic Psalm" (tr. Meimaris), Arrabal, "La Communion solennelle" (tr. Poulikakos), Joan Miró, "I work as a gardener," Leon Trotsky, "Futurism." In No. 6 (Dec. 1966): Joyce Mansour, "Déchirure*s*" (tr. Valaoritis), John Esam, "Orpheus and Eurydice" (extract, tr. Koutroubousis), Bill Barker, "Dark," "Video lupum" (translator not indicated), Andre Breton, "Union Libre" (tr. Valaoritis).

[12] The American Beat poets may have been unaware of the extent of their influence. Koutroubousis writes somewhat ironically that the Beats in Athens and Hydra ignored *Pali* and the translations of their poems in Greek (Koutroubousis 1975).

merging of art with life praxis through the liberation of the individual from the constraints of society, it avoided challenging the autonomy of the institution of literature. Thus, Valaoritis avoided linking these Greek writers with the Beats, because he believed that they were closer to them in their way of life than in their writing. The term "Beat" is exclusively used in *Pali* to refer to members of the American Beat Generation, such as Allen Ginsberg and Philip Lamantia (Valaoritis 1964b). In a 1997 text, Valaoritis characterises Greek writers who identify themselves as Beat as "bohemians who call themselves Beats," thus attempting to differentiate their way of life from their writing (1997: 42–43).

In fact, writers such as Poulikakos and Koutroubousis drew on the tradition of European and Greek surrealism, the neo-avant-gardes, the Beats and science-fiction. They use the surrealistic subversion of logic through incongruity and irrationality and popular genres (science-fiction, horror, Greek folk tales) to create the unexpected, as in Koutroubousis "Ο εφευρέτης Μπέννεττ" (Bennett the Inventor, Koutroubousis 1964):

> […]. The traveler is now aware of what awaits him but makes no attempt to resist. The steamer NIKOLAOS FUFOTOS has only just left behind the endless sandy expanse and one can discern the first suburban villas of the town. A vague clamor is heard, like a cry emerging from millions of mouths and spreading everywhere: "… Gone … Forgotten." Without any warning, the wind launches a severe attack. The steamer is tossed on the crests of the waves. Cerebral disturbances and vibrations traverse the firmament. The whirlwind carries off the hat of the traveler, who always remains resting on his armchair, staring straight ahead. Immediately, parts of his rich and now freed hair are ejected and lost, swept away by the wailing wind, carrying along with them portions of the skull's skin, and often even of the skull itself. His

> beautiful moustache is noisily uprooted and eliminated. The part of the skull covering the brain has now been completely detached, and the vibrating folds of the encephalus appear, phosphorescent and naked. The traveler's left eye and two of his incisors are extracted. Immediately afterward, the violent tempest seizes and carries off into the horizon the ears, the nostrils, the right eye, the remainder of the denture, and the luggage of the traveler, in that order. Upon the central and highest sail of the steamboat is seated the Stork of Twilight.
>
> Transl. Nikos Stabakis; in Stabakis 2008: 319–320

The beatific and visionary element of Beat writing is not found in the work of these Greek writers; the worlds created in these Greek poems and short prose texts are dystopian, and, moreover, the subjective and confessional tone is not present in the texts of this period. Unlike the Beat Generation, the Greek "beatniks" of the 1960s do not present their subversive identity in their work, but they did explore alternative worlds (Stabakis 2008: 274–276).

Although the erotic element exists in the writing of this generation of Greek beatniks in the sexual couplings of horrific creatures, it is mediated through futuristic imagery and by the omission of any references that would contravene the obscenity laws. The same applies for the publication of extracts from *Ό Μέγας Ἀνατολικός* (The Great Eastern), the erotic novel by Andreas Embiricos (1901–1975) in *Pali*. There are no references to homosexual eroticism in *Pali,* unlike in the work of the Beats, although Costas Tachtsis in his modernist short stories thematises the shaping of a fragmented homosexual self, challenging the sexual and social norms of the era (Tachtsis 1964; Robinson 1997; Papanikolaou 2009: 181–189). Although translated texts published in *Pali*, such as "America" by Allen Ginsberg, include strong language not used in Greek

literary discourse at the time, there were no legal consequences.

In 1965, two small, more mainstream literary magazines, *Kritirio* and *Kainourgia Epochi*, published articles, respectively, on the Beats and the foreign artistic community in Hydra (Poulikakos 1965; K.E. 1965). These texts indicated that the public was gradually becoming aware of the Beat Generation, due to the presence of certain representative members in Greece and to the publication *Pali*.

Kritirio was a student magazine more open to theory and new artistic movements. The article on the Beats was written by Poulikakos, their main translator at the time. It is addressed to a wider, but still intellectual, public. Poulikakos presents both the way of life and the writing of the Beats, placing the emphasis on the former – their travels, their appearance, their alternative communities and their ideology – rather than the latter. He relates them to surrealism and existentialism and emphasises the role of magazines, such as *City Lights Journal* and *Yugen*, and the influence of the Beat Generation which "changed in three-four years the form of international literature" and the way of thinking in the United States. Poulikakos presents the techniques they used and their ambivalence: "humour, free thinking, kindness, vice, destruction (not usually), romanticism, a general aversion to the condition of the people" (Poulikakos 1965: 45).

The article in *Kainourgia Epochi* does not link writers and poets with the Beats or other artistic movements but instead treats all foreign artists uniformly. It emphasises the lack of communication between the artistic community of Hydra and Greek intellectuals, noting that their way of life and appearance differentiate the former. Nevertheless, the introductory notes on every writer focus exclusively on his or her literary work and the poems chosen are texts drawing on the Greek experience, landscape or classical tradition, such as "Classic Frieze in a Garage" by Harold Norse, silencing the possible homosexual overtones of

the poem. In this respect, the poems chosen by the magazine reflect the Greek cultural predicament. The Beats are thus regarded as the Occidental Other, whose view on the Self defines it in the framework of the country's cultural double bind.

Thus, the Beats in the 1960s were received in Greece mostly through their physical presence and as models for a countercultural way of life, by a small group of artists and writers who had already adopted a subversive identity. Although the intellectual circles of Athens were aware of their presence and their work, they focused on the Beats' bohemian way of life and the performance of their dissident identity. The reception was more positive when the Beats viewed Greek reality through the classical heritage, as shown by the choice of texts in *Kainourgia Epochi*. The reception was limited and was defined by the Greek intellectuals' interest in the historical avant-gardes. This limited reception was to change in the late 1960s, due to the dictatorship in Greece and the link of the Beats to the counterculture.

The Radicalisation of Beat in Greece under the Dictatorship (1967–1974)

Following the coup of April 1967, Koutroubousis, Valaoritis and most of the *Pali* contributors moved abroad, as did the majority of the Beat poets living in Greece. For those Greek artists around *Pali* who had hitherto distanced themselves from politics because they did not want to be associated with *engagée* literature and its realistic aesthetics, the dictatorship, with its pre-emptive censorship, was an ugly awakening.

Those who stayed in Greece, notably Christakis, attempted to reach a wider audience, a younger generation, who were disappointed by the Communist Left and were influenced by the New Left, the 1968 uprisings around the world and the counterculture (Roszac 1968: 58–64; Zolov 2008: 65; Kornetis 2013: 169–181). News of these movements reached Greece

despite the pre-emptive censorship of the press, mainly through rock music, cinema and the foreign press. Their reverberation can be traced in the underground magazines of the period, which circulated irregularly and became a means of resistance through literary and political discourses and avant-garde artistic practices. They were underground in two senses: they were under constant threat from the Colonels' censorship and they adopted countercultural social and artistic practices, drawing on pop culture and the avant-garde, thus shaping a political attitude.[13] The most prominent among them were those edited by Christakis – *Κούρος* (Kouros, 1971–1972, 1974), *Panderma* (1972–1973, 1974–1977) and *Ιδεοδρόμιο* (Ideodromio, Ideodrome, 1978–1989).

These magazines aimed to unite art and life praxis, thereby undermining the autonomy of literature. Literature was only one subversive cultural practice among others. Thus, Christakis in his magazines republished texts without their writers' permission, calling into question the idea of the writer as the source of meaning. In terms of layout, the republishing policy made the magazines a textual and typographical collage, in a period when collage had political signification (Hamalidi, Nikolopoulou, Walldén 2011: 433–434). Moreover, *Panderma* closely followed the layout of Carl Laszlo's *Panderma*.[14] The traditional hierarchies of the literary field were questioned in many ways: for example, the editor confessed that he did not have any criteria for the choice of the literary texts, and the presentation of the writers included their star sign and

[13] *Λωτός* (Lotus, 1968–1971) and *Πράξις* (Praxis, 1972) by Costis Triantafyllou (b. 1950) with theoretical texts and avant-garde art, *Τραμ* (Tram), with experimental literature (Thessaloniki 1971–1972), *Ροή* (Flow, underground comics magazine, 1973) by Ilias Politis (1953–2016).

[14] Lazlo's magazine with its connection to the avant-garde and the Beats, its collage aesthetic from the late 1950s and its political attitude functioned as a model for Christakis.

the countercultural practices they adopted.

These magazines regularly published texts by writers belonging to the Beat Generation, especially Ginsberg and Burroughs. The decision to do so pointed to a change in criteria. The magazines did not publish the work of poets the editors knew; nor did they rely on personal contact to get in touch with foreign trends but had an overview of the Beats' work. Moreover, they tended to publish both literary and non-literary texts by the Beats, for example, guidelines on political activism or drug use (Burroughs 1972; Ginsberg 1972; Ginsberg s.d. – 1973?; Ferlinghetti s.d. – 1973?).

At a time when members of the Beat Generation had become international cultural icons for the youth movement of the late 1960s, Ginsberg and Bur-roughs emerged as the channels between Beat and counterculture, politicising the "apolitical dissent" of the 1950s (Roszac 1968: 56–66). Their texts overcame the limitations of literary discourse and their political activities gained international media coverage. They were thus appropriate channels for a more political reading of the Beats under the dictatorship. New translators of Beat poetry emerged during this period, such as Kostas Theophilopoulos (1946– 2014), Ioulia Rallidi and Jenny Mastoraki (b. 1949). Poulikakos became a rock musician after 1967 and stopped translating literary texts.

In challenging the autonomy of the literary field, the underground magazines of the period published literary texts by young and unknown writers. These writers drew on the Beats' everyday language, their confessional and subjective tone and their subversive cultural practices. Some of the contributors to these magazines went on to become members of the "Generation of the 1970s." According to Karen Van Dyck, the poets of this generation were ambivalent towards American culture, since the United States had orchestrated the dictatorship in Greece and promoted

consumerism, but at the same time they were attracted to American counterculture.[15] In this ambivalent context, Beat writers were read more politically. The influence of the Beats and Ginsberg in particular was recognised as early as 1973 (Anagnostaki 1973: 177; Van Dyck 1998: 71–82; Gair and Georganta 2012: 221; Malli 2017; cf. Huyssen 1986: 142).

Spyros Meimaris was a poet precociously influenced by the Beats. He knew them personally from an early age, he shared their way of life in the 1960s and he helped introduce their work in Greece through his translations. However, he began publishing his own Greek poems late, in 1971 (Meimaris 1971: 30–32; Meimaris 2013: 29). In his lyrical introduction to Meimaris's poems, Tasos Falireas (1940–2000) referred to his affiliations with the Beat poets, and emphasised the identification of life and art in Meimaris's work, which subverts literary and social conventions.

> a young Greek poet who writes as he speaks […] death to ethographia[16] – death to poetry with tormented souls and fat bellies – the provinces do not exist – Christmas, the bells and rock do exist – you, Spyro, you speak as you write […] why should you write as you speak, why should you travel – who gave you the right to imagine – and who gave them the right not to imagine – they do not realise the

[15] This phenomenon appears in other countries caught in the epicentres of the Cold War, such as Japan (Yoshimi 2003).

[16] Ηθογραφία (Ethographia) was a late nineteenth-century movement in Modern Greek literature, characterised by "the detailed depiction of a small, more or less contemporary community in its physical setting." This "folkloric realism" was also very vivid during the early twentieth century and is ideologically connected to the effort of creating a national literature with indigenous subject matter (Beaton 1996: 73; Tziovas 1989)

existence of Burroughs – they sleep – they sleep.

Falireas 1971

Among Meimaris's poems published in *Kouros* there is one on his experimentation with drugs:

Bummer
I was the tragic case
the slave with the *bum-trips*[17]
fallen down in the dirt
but God does not scare me
I have seen happiness face to face
countless times.

I was afraid for a while
the tempest of the soul
its raving song in my dull, muffled ears
the flight upwards
the outline of our friend in the dim light
the darkness lurking at the door
the blue light from the balcony across the road
is the soul of the divine moment
which blesses the place
cuddles us in its warm intact hug
kisses us gently on our sugar forehead
adorned with midnight jasmine

Muse, muse, you took flesh
today in front of my eyes under the light of the
white curtain – the new Sunday
clenched to the axis of my soul
I pray for Gifts – for godsent needs
and for enchanting music in the
dream of the tender soul.

[17] Bum-trip: a bad drug experience. The italicised words are in English in the original Greek text.

Meimaris 1971: 31

Drugs are at once a means to a heightened state of consciousness, creativity and beatitude and a threatening source of negative experiences. The use of English terms in the poem subverts the conventions of literary language and also makes the connection to drug use more ambiguous to the reader. This practice could also be a strategy to avoid legal consequences. In a recent interview Meimaris acknowledged the influence of Ginsberg and his confessional tone on his early poetry (Meimaris 2013: 28).

The poem "Evening blues for George Makris" (original title in English) plays with the imagery of a man who has just jumped from a rooftop and contemplates his imminent death:

Evening blues for George Makris

Taking the wind in my mortal cheek
next to the gutter where the night stream flows
I found the night angel who led my rotten steps
far from the lairs of pain to respite for a while
until the nonexistence of light in the past –
I see through red eyes the ages of humanity –
the rooms of time unfolding, the terrible torment in the mind
filled with unseen misery – full of unseen beauty, ascending on
the hot rocks, I tremble like a leaf, I am
a sinful body next to other naked and
    shadowy barefoot bodies behind their dreamy
    and impenetrable windows –
Cries from the depths of my soul which you look for incessantly,
dragging with you my dreadful carcass which honestly needs
    the reposal of the chest which
    surely exists in the dark cloud of my sick
    imagination

Afraid, limp, lame, a bat trapped in two
window blinds, I write the words of my bloodthirsty
heart on the dark road that was my lot –
I salute everyone and I am bored of everyone next to their Chinese
opiate lamps for another
even more nonexistent night drawing in (it's three
o'clock and I, weirdo and loopy, I scramble my skin, still not finding a dream able to
fit my madness).
One more shot entrancement on the threshold of sleep I pray for
to all of you gods and demons tonight
on my nightfall incessantly planting my tongue
in the cheap concrete. (1972)

Meimaris 1975

The confessional tone in the poem can be attributed both to Meimaris and to Makris, an influential contributor to *Pali* who committed suicide in 1968, jumping off the top of his block of flats some months after the Colonels seized power.[18] The associative, long phrasing draws on Kerouac and Ginsberg. Meimaris chooses not to refer to the politics of Makris's suicide but explores his feelings and the spiritual aspect of death (cf. Mikelli 2016: 5).

In the framework of the political reading of the Beats under the dictatorship, Meimaris's poems, which explored his personal predicament, seemed somewhat out of place. Although he was recognised as a Beat poet, especially by the writers around Christakis, his poems had a limited reception. The references to drugs and the emphasis on the personal limited his reception to writers associated with the underground magazines.

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18 Many of his friends attributed his decision to the political climate. Meimaris and Alexis Akrithakis published a collection of texts (in English) and drawings in his memory (Meimaris 1971; Makris 1986: 500–540.)

Moreover, the fact the he was totally cut off from the Greek literary tradition, and saw the European modernists and *Pali* as his precursors, further limited his reception (Malli 2017: 917).

Lefteris Poulios (b. 1944), a poet of the same age as Meimaris, is the most characteristic example of the political reception of Beat poetry and especially Ginsberg by the poets of the 1970s generation. The confessional tone, the vernacular language, the mixture of highbrow and lowbrow, the identification of life and art through the invasion of ready-mades and of everyday experiences in poetic language are elements that can be associated with the Beats. Poulios published his first collections of poems in 1969 and 1973. A 1973 special issue of *Boundary 2* on Greece included two of his poems translated into English, suggesting the positive reception of his work (Germanakos 1973: 507–518).[19]

The following poem plays with the subversion of the Greek poetic tradition, as Ginsberg did with Walt Whitman in "Supermarket in California" and draws on Ginsberg's imagery of the poet who wanders in urban space:

An American Bar in Athens

Among the wandering, hurried, idiotic faces
on the street, I see you tonight Kosti Palama
promenading back and forth through my
drunken disillusionment
looking for a whore, a friend, a resurrection
while I hold your book in my hand.
What shop windows, what a moon! […]
I understand your thoughts, Kosti Palama, mindless
old *bon-vivant*, as you enter the bar
making eyes at the whores and sipping

19 "At a trolley stop" and "American Bar in Athens," translated by William V. Spanos, Philip Ramp and Katerina Angelaki-Rooke. Papanikolaou 2005: 132–136.

a double whiskey.
I follow you through fogs of cigarette smoke
and giggles about my long hair. […]
Kosti Palama, old wind bag, prodigal root,
what was the "Greekness" you were
preaching about with hell fire and brimstone
on the summit of hope
when night suddenly flashed out
like a knife from its sheath? […]
Watch out for my madness old man,
if the fancy takes me I'll kill you.

Transl. Philip Ramp and Katerina Angelaki-Rooke;
in Germanakos 1973: 517–518

Poulios uses the offensive language of the Beats, the references to popular and commodity culture, and a number of English words (such as "bar," "whiskey," written with Greek characters), to subvert the Greekness and consumerism promoted by the dictatorship (Van Dyck 1998: 77; Gair and Georganta 2012: 225–228). The elements of American culture, whether poetry or consumer goods, are given new meaning by Poulios within a discourse of dissent. Poulios, unlike the poets of the previous generation, draws also on the beatific and visionary element of Beat poetry, but without the religious dimension found in Ginsberg (Malli 2002: 128, 180–184). At the same time, he stakes a claim to the Greek literary tradition by challenging Kostis Palamas, the central figure of the 1880s writers who expressed national aspirations (Malli 2016: 113–119).

Meimaris and Poulios offer two versions of Beat writing in Greek. Both poets explored the visionary and beatific aspect of the Beats, linking madness with illumination and drawing on associative writing and the use of everyday language. While Meimaris emphasised the sense of the drifter cut off from society, Poulios brought this Greek Beat writing closer to the Greek tradition and political circumstances. He thus created a politicised form of Beat writing which was better

received by readers more accustomed to the national literary tradition (Malli 2017: 918).

The Re-Establishment of the Literary Field and the Conflicting Reception of Beat Writings

The political reception of the Beats and their connection to the counterculture enabled them to reach a wider and more youthful readership, which was also interested in the New Left and underground art. The interest in Beat writers was reflected in the publication of books of translated Beat poetry and prose, immediately after the restoration of democracy in July 1974 and throughout the 1970s and 1980s. After 1974, literary periodicals published translations and special issues on the Beats, but the emphasis shifted in the following years to editions in book form. The 1980s saw numerous translations and anthologies of Beat writers (Ginsberg 1974; Corso 1975; Romvos 1976; Kerouac 1979; Burroughs 1975; Ginsberg 1975; Berlis 1975; Ginsberg 1978).

Nevertheless, a group of writers who appeared in Christakis's underground magazines under the dictatorship drew on the countercultural aspect of the Beat Generation and projected themselves as Greek Beats. In a period of antagonisms and re-evaluations within the cultural field towards the end of the dictatorship and during the transition to democracy (1972–1977), this group linked their Beat identity to autonomous politics and underground cultural and artistic practices. Thus, in the early 1970s, Beat became even more political for certain social groups.

These writers were openly antagonistic to writers such as Lefteris Poulios who drew on Beat writing but did not necessarily combine it with a counter-cultural and anti-establishment political identity. In 1973 the established critic Yorgos Savvidis wrote a positive review of Poulios's second collection of poems, quoting

the lines: “My handicapped generation, look at me / your degradation as in a mirror.” The writers and critics around Christakis attacked Savvidis in a discussion published in *Panderma*, claiming to protect Poulios. Nevertheless, they suggested that he plagiarised Ginsberg and that he was not representative of his generation, since he was not subversive enough. This misreading of Poulios shows that for these artists Beat signified the union of art and life and that it should function both within and outside the literary field (Savvidis 1973; Christakis, Trikolas, Iatropoulos s.d.; Malli 2016: 99–102.)

After the political transition to democracy in 1974, many artists, writers and intellectuals expected that the profound social change would facilitate the integration of life and art. There was widespread interest in theoretical texts on politics, art and literature, and recent international developments in theory were presented in the magazines. In this framework, experimental movements that were interpreted politically in the underground magazines during the dictatorship, such as surrealism and the Beats, were now presented in more academic and theoretical terms. Accordingly, the autonomy of the literary field was re-established and the avant-garde and the Beat Generation were presented as literary movements.

In this context, the art magazine *Σήμα* (Sima, Signal), which aimed to unite all the tendencies of the avant-garde (in the manner of *Pali*), produced a special issue on the Greek underground in September 1975.[20] This special issue aimed to introduce the Greek underground to a wider public, re-contextualising it and introducing it to the literary field. On the other hand, the issue was indicative of the public’s interest in the avant-garde and the Beats. Texts by Beat writers were included in the issue (Sinclair Beiles, William S. Burroughs, Jack

[20] *Sima* reprinted *Pali* in book form. The rare issues of *Pali* were sought after in the early 1970s by the youth of the period. By this reprinting *Sima* presented itself as a continuation of *Pali* (Arseniou 2003: 113)

Kerouac) alongside texts by Greek writers drawing on Beat, science-fiction and underground writing (such as Koutroubousis, Poulikakos, Meimaris, Denegris, Falireas, Maria Mitsora [b. 1946], Thanasis Svoronos [b. 1954]).

The contributors aimed to provoke the public at large, subverting the magazine's aspiration to transfer the underground scene "above ground." The materiality and the low and countercultural aspect of the underground and the Beats undermined the theoretical discourse and self-referentiality of the avant-garde and the autonomy of the literary field. The most characteristic example is the collective text "Το τέλειο έγκλημα" (The perfect crime), which consists of two parts: a theoretical part, on the danger of the assimilation of the underground by capitalism and an attack on realism, and a second realistic part, describing experiences connected to the use of drugs (Theofilopoulos, Vassilakos, Manousakis 1975). The collective authorship and the contradictions in the text subvert the concept of the writer as a source of meaning (Lee 2010: 794; Wilson 1999: 13).

In the same issue, Falireas, in a parody of academic writing, attacks Jenny Mastoraki for her translation of Sinclair Beiles and her introductory note, criticising the political reception of the Beats by the traditional Left. Falireas is presented as the translator of the text, but no author is listed (1975a: 10).

The attack on Poulios in 1973 and Mastoraki in 1975 suggests that the group of writers who emerged in Christiakis's magazines viewed themselves as the defenders of the Beat movement, both in terms of writing and in terms of their countercultural artistic identity. Both Mastoraki and Poulios were among the poets translated in the *Boundary 2* special issue, rendering them suspects of assimilation by the American political and cultural system to the eyes of the

underground writers.[21] They were therefore not subversive enough to assume a Beat identity or even to write about Beat poets.

The special issue on the underground triggered debates and conflicts regarding the definition of the term, its relation to the avant-garde and counterculture, and the risk of assimilation. The artists grouped around *Panderma* and *Kouros* opposed those of the *Sima* editorial team (Papadakis 1975; Christakis 1975; Christakis 1976; Gaitanos 1976: 8). The issue also provoked a wider scandal. The editors and certain contributors were persecuted on the basis of the indecency laws. Elsewhere, in 1972, the editors of the literary magazine *Τραμ* (Tram) were sentenced to six months imprisonment for the publication of Ilias Petropoulos's text "Σώμα" (Body), which included the word "vagina." Judicial censorship of literature continued even after the end of the dictatorship.

The *Sima* trial in 1977 was triggered by Falireas's text "Και το τραίνο έτρεχε όλη νύχτα" (And the train kept-a rollin' all night long), which referred to underage homosexual relationships (partly translated in Mikelli 2016: 6). Many writers, professors and intellectuals defended the specificity and autonomy of literary discourse, and the right of underground and Beat writers to use registers that draw on low thematics. The terms "underground" and "Beat" were used in English to designate this particular group of writers by a number of literature professors during the trial and were published in widely circulated daily newspapers (Falireas 1975b: 10; Kathimerini 1977; Holst 1977).

The accused were acquitted in a celebratory

[21] In 1972 Christakis published the names of the recipients of the Ford Foundation Scholarship, which included many respected members of the literary establishment and of the Left. This accentuated suspicions concerning the assimilation of intellectuals by the establishment (Christakis 1972).

atmosphere and the court's decision was considered a break from the dictatorship's censorship practices (Sima 1977: 1–4).[22] In this case, the symbolic capital of literature overcame the legal restrictions. The autonomy of literature was deployed to defend a discourse claiming to identify art and life praxis. The beatniks, defined as such by the judicial and media discourses pertaining to the trial, continued to revolve around the underground magazines, such as *Ideodromio*, where their texts coexisted with anarchic political texts and comics.

Sima, on the other hand, took a mainstream turn in 1978. This was a symptom of the failure of the mid-1970s avant-garde to change society through art. The shift towards political literature and the revival of realism and historical references, despite the countervailing reactions, showed that the expectations of radical social and artistic change had not been fulfilled. Greek society took a conservative turn in the late 1970s, following international trends. In political terms, the socialist government of 1981 paved the way for the emergence of social strata that had hitherto been excluded from power; in cultural terms, populism made the Greek beatniks a minority addressing the limited readership of fanzines (Papanikolaou 2005: 143). Although translations of the Beats multiplied in the 1980s when the Beats were established internationally as countercultural and lifestyle icons, Greek beatniks occasioned very few editions in book form and only came to be accepted by a wider public at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

To conclude, the Beat Generation was introduced in Greece through the presence of its representatives more

[22] Nevertheless, cases of judicial censorship still existed in the 1970s and 1980s in Greece, usually for blasphemy (Petsini and Christopoulos 2016).

as a model of artistic practices and identity than as a literary movement. The literary magazines of the period played a crucial role, but the reception of Beat culture and art remained limited to artistic circles. In literary terms, the Beats were received through surrealism and the avant-garde movements. The 1967 dictatorship and the political activity of members of the Beat Generation, such as Ginsberg, enabled the Greek public to read the Beats in a more political perspective. During the dictatorship the Beats functioned beyond the literary field through underground magazines, which emphasised the political and countercultural character of their texts. In that context, the Beats, and especially Ginsberg, influenced a whole generation of poets who were subsequently criticised for this influence (Maronitis 1987: 242–243; Malli 2002: 74). The American Beats were widely read and, after the transition to democracy in 1974, many translations appeared in magazines and in book form.

During that period, the Beat phenomenon functioned differently for different groups. For contributors to the underground magazines, the Beats functioned politically, and were associated with autonomous political ideas and political action or with the expression of dissent in everyday practice. For the wider public, the Beats represented a countercultural way of life or a literary movement. In a period when the literary field was taken over by realism and literature that referred to historical experience, the avant-garde and Beat Generation was gradually confined to a specialised public.

The work of writers connected to the Beats began to be read and studied in the twenty-first century. Free press weeklies, such as *Athens Voice* and *Lifo*, published articles and interviews focussing on the alternative Beat way of life. An art exhibition of the underground artists of the 1970s was put on in 2012 (Moutsopoulos 2012). The documentary *Voices from the Underground* was released in 2013. The internet enabled these alternative artists to escape the confines set by the literary and

editorial establishment. Today, in a time of political and financial crisis for Greece, all the choices made during the transition from dictatorship to democracy are being called into question and the society constructed thereupon is being strongly criticised. (Antoniou, Kornetis et. al 2017: 297–299) The beatniks of mid-1970s, who adopted political dissent in their writing and way of life, thus now enjoy a new afterlife.

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