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Women of the Word: Translation and Political Activism in the Age of Revolutions

Abstract: At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the age-old system of empires was beginning to crumble. People were trying to reimagine the political space, and geographies in Europe were shifting. In this intellectual landscape of upheaval, translation served as a powerful tool enabling vocabularies and ideas of revolution to travel from context to context. Translating texts into one's language was a scholarly activity permitted for women and it was frequently used by female writers as a space where they could unfold their ideas and influence their contemporaries. Although there has lately been a renewed interest in translators and translation, these aspects are still undervalued as a source by historians of knowledge and ideas due to a misconception that translation lacks originality. Yet, the expressive and intercultural potential of the translated word and the insights that paratexts surrounding translations have to offer tell an exciting story – a story of cultural mediation also existing outside the textual world and providing the promise of political participation, even under the dark shadow of gender power relations.

Keywords: translation history, women translators, age of revolutions

In April 1820, just a few months before the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, the translation of a French book on the manners of young women was published in Greek. It was Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's *Conseils à ma fille,* translated by twenty-year-old Evanthia Kairi (1799–1866).[1] The first book to be printed by the newly acquired press of the Kydonies (Ayvalik) academy would be remarkably successful. In the introduction, a text eight pages long in which the translator proclaimed with modesty that she was not worthy of having her work published, there was also a brief, but telling comment: "…I am in complete ignorance about the writer and how he is regarded in his own nation…"[2] She then went on to indicate that she was not particularly interested in either the writer or the original text. She had

1 Jean Nicolas Bouilly, *Συμβουλαί Προς Τη Θυγατέρα Μου Σύγγραμμα Ύπο I.N. Βουΐλλου Μεταφρασθέν Εκ Του Γαλλικού Ύπο Ε.Ν. Της Εξ Άνδρου*, trans. Ευανθία Καΐρη (Kydonies: Τυπογραφεὶῳ τῆς τῶν Κυδωνιῶν Σχολῆς, 1820); Interfaces/fonds anciens Lyon, "Jean-NicolasBouilly, un auteur à succès pour la jeunesse," Billet, *Interfaces. Livres anciens de l'Université de Lyon* (blog), accessed December 29, 2022, https://bibulyon.hypotheses.org/5231.

2 Bouilly, *Συμβουλαί*, 6.

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published this translation as a pretext, as a way to reach Greek women in the Ottoman Empire and present them with a message: they should educate themselves. The entire "civilized world" was watching them, waiting to see if they could stand as tall as their ancestors. Their duty to their nation, Kairi continued, did not consist of reading this book by a European writer, but of getting acquainted with the important women of Ancient Greece and their accomplishments. She was too young and inexperienced to talk about this at length, she concluded, but she was using this translation to send a message to her readers. This tongue-in-cheek admission that the original text was just a foil for its translator's ambitious goals was hidden among her own proclamations that she would have never dared to publish anything herself were it not for the great men in her life. Kairi was careful to follow the rules of propriety most of the time, thus securing for herself the space to write her own thoughts about the Greek nation, its past and future, and the role of women in it.

This is but one example of how educated women in early nineteenth-century South-East Europe used translations as a vehicle to participate in the political debates of their turbulent times. It is also an indication of how, by examining translations and translators, we may gain a richer, more nuanced understanding of the intellectual worlds of the past. Translations have for a long time been viewed as a lesser type of text, plagued by the notion that they lack originality and thus merit less attention from intellectual historians and historians of knowledge.[3] However, the last thirty years have witnessed a renewed interest in translations and their history. Works such as those of Fania Oz-Salzberg have shown how translations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served as the infrastructure through which ideas and vocabularies were circulated.[4]

To take this a step further, the story of Evanthia Kairi's translation, along with the other stories of female translators, shows us the need to "[h]umanize translation history," as the translation studies scholar Anthony Pym has so eloquently put it.[5] The effort to humanize translation history is not a strict methodological choice. Rather, it constitutes a commitment to ask questions about the people – the trans-

3 On the ramifications of ideas of originality on intellectual history and women's history, see Berenice A. Carroll, "The Politics of 'Originality': Women and the Class System of the Intellect," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 2 (1990): 136–163.

4 Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

5 Anthony Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," *Hermes: Journal of Language and Communication in Business* 22, no. 42 (2009): 24–48; Bergantino, Andrea. "Translation History, Translators' Stories: Literary Translator Studies." Perspectives, 2022, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2022.2059298.

lators – and not only the texts they produced. Instead of comparing the translated text to its source to identify differences and similarities between two clearly delineated languages and cultures, we ask biographical questions regarding the translators and seek their voices in their linguistic choices and the translation's paratexts (introductions, footnotes). As Pym notes, this "mode of questions may lead to unforeseen answers," mainly as it focuses on an intercultural space rather than a space defined by national historiographies and gender hierarchies.[6]

In this article, I explore how translation as a gendered literary activity gave women access to forms of political participation, even though it also reinforced nineteenth-century notions regarding women being lesser intellectuals. Carefully hidden behind this misconception that they were only good enough to be translators, that they were not important scholars, and that they did not have a say in political matters, women were able to express their revolutionary ideas without having to pay a high price for doing so. They became "literary activists" continuously negotiating the line between female modesty and public engagement. [7] I use the term "literary activists," which is more of a descriptive term than a normative one, as I believe that it highlights two main characteristics regarding the experience and intention of female translators. First, that this kind of activism was literary, meaning it was not linked to political or philosophical texts. Second, that it aimed to achieve political public engagement even if this was sometimes not clearly stated. Women used translations as a gateway to scholarly networks, used paratexts to boldly introduce their thoughts to the public, and gained access to the performative aspects of language at a time when the political and cultural boundaries of Europe were being redrawn.

A continuously growing body of historiography has discussed the importance of translation in Southern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[8]

6 Pym, "Humanizing," 43.

7 To my knowledge, the term "literary activists" when referring to these specific actors was first used by Yanni Kotsonis in the introduction to the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* special issue on the Greek Revolution, vol. 39, no. 1. The importance of "modesty" is ever-present when women writers are involved. See, for example, Susan Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), 86.

8 Vicky Patsiou, "Μεταφραστικές δοκιμές και προϋποθέσεις στα όρια του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού," *The Gleaner* 19 (1993): 210–234, https://doi.org/10.12681/er.267; Fania Oz-Salzberger, "The Enlightenment in Translation: Regional and European Aspects," *European Review of History/Revue Européenne d' Histoire* 13, no. 3 (2006): 385–409; Stefanie Stockhorst, ed., *Cultural Transfer through Translation: The Circulation of Enlightened Thought in Europe by Means of Translation* (New York: Rodopi, 2010); Dimitris Tziovas, *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2017); Anna Tabaki, *Ιστορία και θεω-*

Complex mechanisms in terms of relocating and adapting political ideas and vocabularies were at work. As revolutionaries were busy creating the ideological substratum of the new worlds they were imagining, these female literary activists constructed a scholarly experience of revolution. However, the expansion of translation activities not only occurred in early nineteenth-century Southern Europe. Nor was the gendered aspect of these activities limited to this area. The fervent translation activities offered a privileged platform for female scholars all across Europe.[9] It was considered an occupation that did not clash with feminine virtue as the translator represented herself as the conduit of someone else's assertions and maintained a demeanor of humility. This allowed women to publish and, in some cases, even receive remuneration for their intellectual labor. In other words, it was a significant factor with regard to fashioning women's intellectual personas, while also contributing to expanding their professional and political prospects.

I have chosen five women who published translated texts, focusing on those whose texts and lives offer us the most eloquent examples of how women weaved in and out of the discourses of femininity, erudition, and nationhood.[10] Not all of them are presented equally. For some, we have more information and access to personal documents such as journals, memoirs, and correspondence. For others, we rely solely on their own introductions, which thereby gain more significance by serving as a window to the lives of their writers.

ρία της μετάφρασης. 18ος αιώνας. Ο Διαφωτισμός [History and theory of translation. 18th century. The Enlightenment. (Athens: Kaligrafos, 2018).

9 Susanne Stark, "Women and Translation in the Nineteenth Century," *New Comparison: A Journal of Comparative and General Literary Studies* 15 (1993): 33–44; Luise von Flotow, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism"* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997); Rachel Lynn Williams, *Women Translators in Nineteenth-Century France: Genre, Gender, and Literary Creativity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2010), , accessed 31 May, 2023, https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/catalog/10483; Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt, Paul Gibbard, and Karen Green, ed., *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women: Virtue and Citizenship* (London: Routledge, 2016), 3; Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316084496.

10 With the exception of Maria Petrettini, the women presented in this article have been present in the historiography of nineteenth-century female writers in Greece. Recently, Vasiliki Misiou published a book on female translators in nineteenth-century Greece. Unfortunately, this book was published after this article was finalized, which means that its insights and conclusions are not included. See Vasiliki Misiou, *The Renaissance of Women Translators in 19th-Century Greece* (New York: Routledge, 2023), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003178279.

Literary Spaces of Freedom: Introductions to Translations

Introductions to published translations also represent a space where we can see the significance of women being able to get published. In most instances, we find introductions where, after the authoress has customarily purported her modesty, she herself makes bold claims regarding political and social issues. In the introduction to her translation of Goldoni's "La vedova scaltra" in Greek, Mitio Sakellariou (1789–1863) printed her father's letter of approval for the publication.[11] He stated that he had agreed to let his daughter publish this, "even though it was a comedy," only because she pledged that her next translation would be a more useful classical work promoting morality.[12] Sakellariou said that her father was right in his assessment and instruction. Yet, she then went on to extol comedy as a genre and stress its importance in discussions on morality, ultimately arguing for a position opposite to that of her father. All we know about Sakellariou comes from this introduction to her translation. She was a member of the up-and-coming Greco-Ottoman bourgeoisie and the daughter of a doctor. Women of higher classes were even bolder and sometimes were able to skip the fake modesty section. In her introduction to Gabriel Bonnot de Mably's *Entretiens de Phocion* (1819), the ar-

11 Carlo Goldoni, *Η Πατρική Αγάπη ή η Ευγνώμων Δούλη και η Πανούργος Χήρα. Κωμωδίαι του κυρίου Καρόλου Γολδώνη εκ του Ιταλικού μεταφρασθείσαι παρά Μητιούς Σακελλαρίου* [Paternal Love or the Grateful Servant and the Devious Widow. Comedies by mister Carlo Goldoni translated from Italian by Mitio Sakellariou], trans. Sakellariou Mitio (Vienna: Ioannou Sneier, 1818). For more on Mitio Sakellariou, see Walter Puchner, *Γυναικεία δραματουργία στα χρόνια της Επανάστασης: Μητιώ Σακελλαρίου, Ελισάβετ Μουτζάν-Μαρτινέγκου, Ευανθία Καΐρη: χειραφέτηση και αλληλεγγύη των γυναικών στο εθνικοδιδακτικό και επανστατικό δράμα* [Women's dramaturgy in the years of the Revolution: Mitio Sakellariou, Elisavet Mudzan-Martinengou, Evanthia Kairi: women's liberation and solidarity in national and revolutionary plays] (Athens: Kardamitsa, 2001); Eirini Rizaki, *Οι 'γράφουσες Ελληνίδες΄: σημειώσεις για την γυναικεία λογιοσύνη του 19ου αιώνα* [The "writing Greeks": Notes on female scholarship of the nineteenth century] (Athens: Katarti, 2007); Sofia Denissi, *Ανιχνεύοντας την αόρατη γραφή: γυναίκες και γραφή στα χρόνια του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού- Ρομαντισμού* [Tracing the "invisible ink": Women and writing in the years of the Neohellenic Enlightenment-Romanticism] (Athens: Nefeli, 2014); Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "The Enlightenment and Womanhood: Cultural Change and the Politics of Exclusion," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1, no. 1 (1983): 39–61.

12 Goldoni, *Η Πατρική*, 2.

istocrat Aikaterini Soutzou-Valeta (1795–1837) stated that she had translated and published this work to "mitigate men's bragging on political matters."[13]

In a very practical sense, working with translations allowed women to acquire the identity of a scholar. On the Ionian island of Zante, Elisavet Mudzan-Martinengou (1801–1832) wrote her autobiography, focusing on how she educated herself and how she had tried to avoid getting married.[14] Her goal in life was to become an intellectual, something she never achieved. Her father insisted on her marrying a man many years her senior and she died in childbirth without ever seeing her writings getting published. In her autobiographical text, she deployed translations from Italian, Latin, and Ancient Greek into Modern Greek as proof of her erudition. For her, the fact that she could move texts from one language to another was proof that she was a true scholar, regardless of her sex. Even though this is a story where knowledge did not prove to be a refuge from structures of oppression, it is telling of how a woman found a way to give herself agency through the practice of translation.

A different, more successful, case was that of Maria Petrettini from Corfu.[15] Born into one of the Greek aristocratic families of the Ionian Islands, she was given good home education. But when she wanted to continue her education in Italy, just like her brother, she was refused. Petrettini decided to translate and write historical works in Italian. If Greek language and literature had no place for a female scholar, then she would try a different place. Her scholarly work in Italian was what enabled her to get away from her island and live the majority of her life in Venice, pursuing her literary interests. She wrote her own works on women's literary history and translated Mary Wortley Montague's *Turkish Embassy Letters.*[16] She was able to fashion herself as a woman with two homelands.

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13 Gabriel Bonnot De Mably, *Διάλογοι Φωκίωνος Ότι Οικειότατον Το Ηθικόν Προς Το Πολιτικόν Υπό Μαβλή Μεταφρασθέντες Δε Υπό Της Νεάνιδος Αικατερίνης Σούτζης* (Εν Ιασσίω: Θεοδώρου Νέγρη, 1819).

14 The autobiography was published much later, censored by her son Elisavetios Martinegos, *Η Μήτηρ Μου. Αυτοβιογραφία Της Κυρίας Ελισάβετ Μουτζάν-Μαρτινέγκου. Εκδιδομένη Υπό Του Υιού Αυτής Ελισαβετίου Μαρτινέγκου Μετά Διαφόρων Αυτού Ποιήσεων* [My mother. An autobiography of Mrs Mudzan-Martinegou. Published by her son Elisavetios Martinegos with some of his poems] (Athens: Korinni, 1881).

15 For some information on Maria Petrettini, see Mara Nardo, "Maria e Spiridione Petrettini" (Padova: Università di Padova, 2013); Elisavet Papalexopoulou, "Trans-Adriatic Enlightenments: Maria Petrettini's Italian Translation of the 'Turkish Embassy Letter'," in *Gender and Cultural Mediation in the Long Eighteenth Century: Women Across Borders*, ed. Mónica Bolufer, Carolina Blutrach, and Laura Guinot (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

16 Maria Petrettini, *Sulla educazione femminile scritto postumo di Maria Petrettini* (Padova: Company' tipi di A. Bianchi, 1856); Mary Wortley Montagu, *Lettere di lady Maria Wortley Montague* …

"Venice," she said in one of her introductions, "I can call my second homeland, because of the time I have spent here and the literary friends who helped me regain my sanity."[17] On the other hand, she still signed all her literary works and translations as "Maria Petrettini, the Corfiot." She had acquired the freedom to self-determination through the networks she had built as a scholar and her choice to translate into a language other than her native one. She could choose to belong to two literary traditions: one Greek, the other Italian.

Maria Petrettini's story as a translator and scholar with two homelands is an example of how some thinkers dealt with rupture and dislocation in South-Eastern Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[18] Petrettini was born in the Venetian republic, grew up in the French Empire, lived as a young adult in the Septinsular Republic – under Ottoman and Russian protection – and then in a protectorate of the British Empire.[19] All of this without ever leaving Corfu. When she was finally able to leave and pursue a literary career in Venice, she found more political and social stability as an émigré than she had in her place of origin. This experience of constant mobility was not an exception. This was a time of revolution and disruptions as empires redrew their borders. Nation states were emerging as a new type of political and cultural frame of reference. Women who worked as translators, adapting texts as they moved from one culture to another in a world of ever-shifting social and political contexts, often made decisions that shaped these very contexts.

Translation and Nation State Formation

Linguistic and cultural choices made by translators carried more weight at a time of nation state formation. In most of the cases examined here when the target was Modern Greek, a language that did not yet have an official form, many questions needed to be answered regarding morphological and grammatical features. Male scholars were engaged in endless debates on the "Greek language question," the relationship of the new language to Ancient Greek and to the Italian and Ottoman

durante i suoi primi viaggi in Europa, Asia ed Africa, tr. da M. Petrettini (Corfu: Nella tipografia del governo, 1838); Flavius Philostratus and Maria Petrettini, *Alcune immagini di Filostrato tradotte dal greco da Maria Petrettini corcirese* (Treviso: per Francesco Andreola, 1825).

17 Maria Petrettini, *Vita Di Cassandra Fedele* (Venezia: Stamperia Pinelli, 1814), 6.

18 Konstantina Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: Stammering the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

19 Anthony Hirst and Patrick Sammon, *The Ionian Islands: Aspects of Their History and Culture* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

Turkish words it had acquired.[20] These were relentless debates between those who favored a "cleaner" ancient-like language supported by the Greek Orthodox Church and those who believed that Modern Greek should be the language spoken by Greek peasants. The latter would in many cases lose their careers and be forced to rearrange their lives due to their position. Meanwhile, female scholars who were not allowed to theorize on the subject were producing translations in a version of Modern Greek that was accessible to the less-educated Christian Ottoman population. They "cleaned" this version from words they considered being too foreign – using rather arbitrary criteria. In effect, they chose what would be later known as the "middle road" and maintained their position without ever being subjected to the rage of the linguistic debates of the time. After all, most of them addressed a readership of women who were expected to exhibit a lower linguistic level.

Choosing and translating a text from Greek into another language could also have significant political implications. The aristocrat Roxandra Stourdza (1786–1844) explained this in her introduction to her translation of an obituary for the Greek Patriarch Gregorios V from Greek into French.[21] The patriarch had been executed by the Ottoman Porte in June 1821 in its reprisals for the uprising of the Greek populations.[22] His body had been secretly carried to be buried in Odessa where there was a large Greek merchant community. The obituary written and delivered by an Orthodox priest-scholar was translated into Italian, German, and French by Stourdza. This was part of her effort to raise awareness among Europe-

20 The "language question" permeated political debates in modern Greece until the mid-1970s. Its implications ran deep and defined a progressive and conservative side for 150 years. Indicatively, see Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Peter Mackridge, "Katharevousa (c. 1800–1974): An Obituary for an Official Language," in *Background to Contemporary Greece I*, ed. Marion Sarafis and Martin Eve (London: The Merlin Press, 1990), 23–52; Gunar Hering, *Η διαμάχη για τη γραπτή νεοελληνική γλώσσα: Σύντομη ιστορία του γλωσσικού ζητήματος* [The controversy on the written modern Greek language: A short history of the Greek language question] (Herakleion: Cretan University Press, 2020).

21 On Roxandra Stourdza and her diplomatic work during the Congress of Vienna and the Greek Revolution, see Stella Ghervas, "Le réseau épistolaire d'Alexandre et Roxandre Stourdza: une médiation triangulaire entre Occident, Russie et Sud-Est européen," *Revue des etudes sud-est européennes* 51, no. 1–4 (2013): 291–320; Stella Ghervas, "A 'Goodwill Ambassador' in the Post-Napoleonic Era," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London: Routledge, 2015), 151–166. There are no works on her translation and literary activities.

22 Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe*, 1st ed. (London: Allen Lane, 2021), 33–34.

an courts and gain sympathy for the revolting Christian populations.[23] However, Stourdza saw another important function of this translation. She hoped that the translated text would "arouse general interest, not only from a moral and religious point of view but also as the product of a barely formed language."[24] She understood that, by using a language as the original text for a translation, she could bring this language into existence for the rest of the world. The historical study of translation sometimes presupposes rigidity. We try to understand how and why a text was prepared to move from one cultural/national context to another, but we often fall into the trap of supposing that these contexts themselves are immutable. Yet, women like Stourdza were conscious of the performativity of translation. They were conscious of the fact that it could also shape frames of reference both for the original source text and the target text. In this case, this could offer the political legitimacy required for constructing a national language.

Using language to legitimize the claims for a nation's existence as an autonomous entity was only one of a number of tools available to translators. Another was to explore the idea of the nation's space and territory. As some scholars were formulating the language they were translating to and from, others started delineating the location of its supposed origin. If there was such a thing as Modern Greece, where was it?

In 1816, a young woman from Wallachia, Aikaterini Rasti, undertook the seemingly unassuming task of translating a children's game into Greek. This was Étienne de Jouy's *Jeu des cartes géographiques,* a deck of cards with descriptions of all the different countries in the world, accompanied by a map.[25] The game promoted new forms of geographical knowledge and new conceptions of space, not only emphasizing the geomorphologic or climatic characteristics of countries, but also the achievements of each civilization. Rasti's choice to translate this

23 Konstantinos Oikonomos, *Discours pronocé en grec, a Odessa, le 29 juin 1821 pour les funérailles du Patriarche Grégoire, par Constantin, prêtre Grec, économe et prédicateur de la Maison du Patriarche. Traduit par Mme *** Grecque,* trans. Roxandra Stourdza Edling (Paris: Imprimerie de A. Bobée, 1821).

24 Konstantinos Papoulidis, *Τρία Ἀνέκδοτα Γράμματα Τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου Οἰκονόμου Τοῦ Ἐξ Οἰκονόμων Στή Ρωξάνδρα Καί Στόν Ἀλέξανδρο Στούρτζα* [Three unpublished letters by Konstantions Oikonomos to Roxandra and Alexandre Stourdza] (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Instituition of Pateric Texts, 1979), 8.

25 Étienne de Jouy, *Jeu de Cartes Geographique, Orné de Figures Gravées Avec Soin et Représentant Le Différens Peuples de La Terre Dans Le Costume Particulier à Chacun d'eux; Destiné à l'instruction et à l'amusement de La Jeunésse de Deux Sexes* (Paris: Nicolie, Libraire, 1805); Etienne de Jouy, *Χαρτοπαίγνιον Γεωγραφικόν, Συγγραφέν Μεν Γαλλιστί Υπό Ε. Ζουΐ, Μεταφρασθέν Δε Εις Την Καθομιλουμένην Των Γραικών Γλώσσα Υπό Αικατερίνης Ραστή* [Geographical cardgame, written in French by E. Jouy translated in the everyday Greek language by Aikaterini Rasti] (Vienna, 1816).

game was much more radical than it may appear at first glance. In 1791, the appearance of a geographical book called *Modern Geography* caused great controversy, precisely because it tried to link countries to their cultural, political, and religious institutions. This resulted in the authors' careers as clerics being ruined.[26] The Orthodox Church did not look favorably upon geographical works departing from the Aristotelian model.[27]

On top of choosing a radical topic carefully disguised in the form of a children's game, Rasti made fundamental changes to the text itself. In her introduction, she pointed out the importance of learning geography for young people and explained that she had decided to translate the game to assist in the education of Greek girls and boys. She also explained that she had made some changes to correct "a few mistakes and misconceptions of the writer" and that she had replaced the first card, France, with that of her own homeland.[28] This was five years before the outbreak of the Greek Revolution. The developments that would lead to the creation of an independent Greek state were still far off in the future.

What was the homeland of a person understanding herself to be Greek at that time? For Rasti, it was what she called "European Turkey," which included the following regions: Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Old Greece, the Peloponnese, Epirus, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia, and Bogdania; in other words, the Christian Orthodox parts of the Ottoman Empire. In 1798, the idea that this region could be an autonomous political entity and the publication of a map presenting it that way was one of the things that led to the arrest and execution of the revolutionary Rigas Ferraios (1757–1798).[29] But Rasti, a young woman who was using the translation of an innocent children's game as "a way to improve [her own] knowledge of the French language," did not cause any such commotion, even if she did propose the existence of an autonomous territory within the Ottoman Empire. Her gender and her choice to work in a genre considered inherently apolitical allowed her to engage with radical ideas without paying the price for doing so.

26 Daniil Philippidis and Grigorios Constandas, *Γεωγραφία Νεωτερική ερανισθείσα από διαφόρους συγγραφείς* [Novel Geography gleaned from various writers] (Vienna: Thomas Trattnern, 1791).
27 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), Ch. 3.
28 Jouy, *Χαρτοπαίγνιον*, 4.
29 Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. 1: National Ideologies and Language Policies*, Balkan Studies Library 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 128.

Conclusions

Translation is often considered by historians as a movement of texts, vocabularies, and, hence, ideas.[30] In this article, however, I propose a focus on translation as part of scholars' experiences and political intentions. I argue that examining the motivations and material circumstances of translators results in more complex narratives. Following Anthony Pym's ideas on *humanizing translation history*, I examine the lives and work of women translators who self-identified as Greek at the beginning of the nineteenth century, focusing on how their translated texts fit into their own lives and goals of self-determination. In doing so, I show how people, otherwise marginalized due to their gender, could negotiate the tumultuous times they were living in to gain a voice and some elements of power.

Do we as historians have something broader to gain by focusing on the people who translated texts? We can avoid the binaries of source and target language and focus more on the negotiation between the two sides. We are no longer looking into two different textual forms, but into the mind laboratory of a person trying to negotiate the existence of an intercultural space. Thus, following translators, we are able to write about a past that was not just the predecessor of a monolingual present. We have access to the fluidity of contexts, languages, and canons. We can write a type of history that "retains the virtue of the local" but also categories of analysis broader than a single country.[31] The further study of translators allows us to "examine knowledge as an activity occurring in time and space," to use the words of James Secord.[32] Focusing on translators opens up a universe of exciting questions on knowledge and ideas of the past.

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30 For an overview of methodological problems caused by a narrow understanding of translation studies and translation history, see Michaela Wolf, "Introduction: The Emergence of a Sociology of Translation," in *Benjamins Translation Library*, ed. Michaela Wolf and Alexandra Fukari, vol. 74 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 1–36, https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.74.01wol.

31 James A. Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* 95, no. 4 (December 2004): 668, https://doi.org/10.1086/430657.

32 Secord, "Knowledge."

a forthcoming chapter on Maria Petrettini in the edited volume *Gender and Cultural Mediation in the Long Eighteenth Century: Women Across Borders.*