

# Norms and Translatorial Habitus

## In Angelos Vlahos' Greek Translation of *Hamlet*

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### Abstract

This paper aspires at engaging in the dialogue concerning the search for a translatorial sociology and the employment of Bourdieu's sociology in Translation Studies. Angelos Vlahos' (1838-1920) translation of *Hamlet* (1904) into Greek is used as a case study. The claims made are: (a) that the methodological tool which can effectively account for the translator's choices is not norms or even the translational habitus, but the translatorial habitus, i.e. the translator's personal habitus, (b) that habitus can better account for deviant translational practices than norms, and (c) that a micro-level analysis can and should supplement research on particular translators, as it can shed more light on their translational practice than a general sociological approach.

The first part of this paper presents some reservations concerning DTS and polysystems theories. The second part describes the literary, theatrical, and translation context within which the specific translation came into being. Furthermore, in this part Vlahos' ideological, political, aesthetic, poetological, linguistic, and translation principles are described, as well as his views on Shakespeare.

Finally, in the third and last part a micro-level analysis of the TT is made, in which specific translation choices are shown to have been influenced by Vlahos' personal habitus, mostly in contrast with the norms of the time. Special interest is placed on the translator's stance towards the language question, which has always had deep ideological and political roots in Greece. The issue of style is also of great importance here, encompassing facets such as versification, wordplay, and neologism.

### 1. Some reservations concerning DTS and polysystem theories

#### 1.1. Introduction

In the 1970s Even-Zohar developed his Polysystem Theory in an attempt to account for the evolution of literary systems in general thus paving the way for target-oriented, descriptive translation studies. By accounting for literature in a systemic framework, he raised it above the text level to look at it within its wider socio-cultural context and to study the whole spectrum of text production, distribution and reception.

With Toury's groundbreaking Descriptive Translation Studies, a whole new world opened for translation scholars as they were able to turn from prescriptive and evaluative concerns to the TT itself and the socio-cultural context surrounding it. Toury introduced the notion of norms to account for regularities of translation behavior within a specific socio-linguistic situation. He defined norms as "performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioral dimension" (1995:55). In a tripartite scheme, he positioned norms between rules and idiosyncrasies (Toury 1995:54) and elevated the translator to a decision-making agent.

In essence, the two theories of polysystems and norms are very well combined and have often been linked in theory and actual fieldwork. They are powerful analytical tools and research procedures to account for translations as processes and products. Instead of judging the end-product of translation and its "equivalence" with the original, the descriptivist is interested in the process of its making and its function within the target culture. Gentzler (1993:121) believes that "Even-Zohar's work is perhaps the most important to date in the field of translation theory".

During the recent past, attention has shifted towards the translator himself rather than the TTs. In Chesterman's (1998:201) words, one of the trends that have unfolded in TS is "a broadening of interest from translational studies (focusing on translations themselves) to translatorial studies (focusing on translators and their decisions)." Venuti's (1995) work on bringing the translator in the limelight and drawing him out of his age-old invisibility has been instrumental in this respect. The translator is also in the epicenter of Pym's (1998) preoccupation with translation history.

Most of this work has built on the framework of the DTS paradigm. Nevertheless, there has been a heated debate as to whether norms are the most appropriate theoretical concept to employ when tackling the issue of the translator's agency. Many a translator scholar has voiced their reservations ranging from the need to supplement norm and polysystem theory with concepts borrowed from other scientific fields such as sociology (Bourdieu), literary theory (Bakhtin), or psychology (the School of Frankfurt), to an outright rejection of norms as being totally inadequate.

## 1.2. *The limitations of structuralism*

More concretely, norm-based theories have generally been accused of the following:

### 1.2.1. *Overemphasis on the systemic dimension to the detriment of human agency*

Gentzler believes that Even-Zohar’s influence from Russian formalism is too strong (1993:122-23). He speaks of the “problem of Even-Zohar’s uncritical adoption of the Formalist framework” (1993:123). Even-Zohar himself acknowledged his formalist roots (Even-Zohar 1990:1 and *passim*). His key-notion of polysystem practically coincides with the notion of system at large. Thus his focus of interest is in systems rather than the human agents functioning within them. But, one would argue following Bourdieu’s critique to structuralism –the offshoot of formalism– that structures (or systems for that matter) do not exist outside their human agents. They only exist through human interaction.

### 1.2.2. *Overemphasis on stability and search for universals*

Even-Zohar and Toury’s theories are underwritten by a positivist quest for laws and universals. Again for Gentzler (1993:120-21), “the tendency to overgeneralize and establish universal laws is one of the most controversial parts of Even-Zohar’s theory”. Like all structuralists, he searches for the underlying rules and laws that govern the “deep structure” of the surface expression of language. Gentzler (1993:120-21) says that “in doing so, he raises the Formalist approach to a higher degree: his theory becomes a formalism of forms”. Toury also tends toward structuralism and “although on the surface he accepts the “fact” that all languages are different, he suggests that underlying that difference is a unified and universal structural form” (Gentzler 1993:133). Hence his proposal to compare TTs with this underlying form which he calls *tertium comparationis*. Pym attributes concepts of ‘order’ and ‘predictability’ to “a mind that very much wants our societies to make sense, to establish regularities, and to produce norms of one kind or another” (Pym in Schäffner ed. 1999:107).

### 1.2.3. *Positivistic worship of scientific objectivism*

Formalism was a theory that had its roots in the tradition of positivism, a trend that attempted to eradicate human subjectivity in the name of scientific neutrality. Science is thus understood as an objective function of structures interacting among themselves unbiased by human agency. Hermans speaks of “the positivistic slant informing much of Toury’s project

(Hermans 1999:57) and Genzler says that "He [Even-Zohar] purports to observe "objectively" the interplay of systems, to eliminate all bias, and to "rationally" describe and order literary phenomena. [...] Such total objectivity is of course impossible, especially given the nature of the subject matter" (Genzler 1993:123).

From the very minute that the questions are posited, there is already opinion, bias and the questioner's background that overshadow the whole effort. But then again, this is only natural and denying it is self-deceptive. I fully agree with Pym when he says that "[...] our descriptions of norms [...] are far from neutral. When we describe, we immediately participate. This means that as various social groups negotiate the norms of translation, we are not merely observers on the sidelines" (Pym in Schäffner ed. 1999:112). And he goes on to openly encourage the scientist's subjectivity.

#### *1.2.4. Static understanding of translation history*

Even-Zohar himself goes out of his way to point to the historical-dynamic dimensions of his system, which he tellingly calls *Dynamic Functionalism* (Even-Zohar 1990:1 and *passim*) attributing static, a-historical traits to the Saussurian trend of structuralism (ibid:2). Nevertheless, as Genzler (1993:133) has noted, Even-Zohar and Toury's need to find regularities of behavior runs counter to their dynamic, historical model. Furthermore, Hermans points out that "studies of this nature are not only ferociously abstract and depersonalized, they also run the risk of being ultimately deterministic. [...] the struggle is waged by competing norms and models rather than by individuals or collectives who stand to gain or lose something by the outcome. As a result, the processes of change and reversal become self-propelling and cyclical: the canonized centre does what it does, and when it is overrun a new centre repeats the pattern, as if the whole thing were on automatic pilot" (Hermans, 1999:118).

#### *1.2.5. Inability to deal with deviation from the norm*

One final problematic area that stems from all the above and which I would like to tackle here for the needs of this paper is the fact that whereas norm theory is an invaluable tool for gauging the literary output of a specific period, it is deficient when it comes to explaining deviant translation practices and translation choices that defy the norm. Translation history though –or any history for that matter– is rarely a smooth process of people abiding by the norms and laws of the time. There would be no evolution if that were the case. Therefore, by looking into deviant cases of translational practice, one might have a more interesting and

illuminating mapping of the norms and the conflicts that were at work at the time. In Pym's words:

When trying to locate a norm of some kind it is often enough to pick up traces of dissent or debate, or some degree of challenge to the norm. [...]. Several interesting things happen when we approach translation history in this way. Instead of compiling chronicles of stability (since that's what we find when we start looking for norms), we approach the history of change (which is, after all, what history is all about). Instead of risking an arbitrary selection of regularities or social groups, we can at least point to evidence that might help tie our descriptions to things actually at work within the historical objects. And instead of mapping norms onto just one social group or dominant ideology, we start to see them as the results of disagreements bridged by adaptation and compromise (Pym in Schäffner ed. 1999:111).

### *1.3. The quest for a sociology of translation*

Apart from the criticism that comes from outside the paradigm, many of the scholars working within it also feel it needs to be "nudged" towards more socio-cultural concerns. It is no coincidence that in the 1999 discussion on norms, Pym acknowledged that Toury and Hermans were "adjusting to critical theory with a sociological bent" (Pym in Schäffner ed. 1999:107).

Generally speaking, scholars from both sides have looked to Bourdieu's thought, in an attempt to inform DTS with a more sociologically minded impetus. Even Hermans, who believes in the "eminently 'social' [character of the] notion of norms", finds that the "elaboration of concepts derived from sociological theories like those of Luhmann or Bourdieu" may be "a promising and exciting prospect" (Hermans in Schäffner 1999:58). Actually as early as 1990, Even-Zohar himself praised Bourdieu for arriving at "many similar conclusions, in some areas superior, to my [Even-Zohar's] mind, to both the Russian Formalism and later developments (including my own)" (Even-Zohar 1990:3, 42 and *passim*).

One of the pioneering attempts to draw upon Bourdieu's sociology and specifically his notion of cultural capital was Andre Lefevre (Bassnett & Lefevre 1998). Nevertheless it was Simeoni's (1998) groundbreaking contribution, in which he employed Bourdieu's notion of habitus to account for the translators' submissiveness, which paved the way for similar attempts among translation theorists<sup>1</sup>. The discussion was enriched with contributions by

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the history of research in the sociology of translation cf. Gouanvic 2005:148-49.

theorists such as Hermans (1999), Lahire (2003), Sela-Sheffy (2005), Hanna (2005), Inghilleri (2003, 2005a, 2005b), and Gouanvic (2002, 2005). Their focus of interest lies mainly in the delimitation of the field of translation, the relation of the field of translation to other adjacent fields (such as literature, or in the case of interpretation, the judicial system, etc.), as well as how the translators' habitus can be accounted for.

The discussion has progressed to a point that allows Inguilleri (2005b:125) to speak of a paradigmatic shift within translation studies:

The increased attention to Bourdieu is indicative of a paradigmatic shift within the discipline, toward more sociologically- and anthropologically-informed approaches to the study of translation processes and products. Bourdieu's theoretical insights contribute a distinctive perspective in relation to the increasingly influential culturalist and globalist research paradigms within translation studies. The application of his theory to translation and interpreting research has also been considered more specifically as part of the re-evaluation of descriptive and polysystem approaches, offering a more powerful set of concepts than norms and conventions to describe socio-cultural constraints on acts of translation and their resulting products (Simeoni 1998, Hermans 1999, Gouanvic 2002).

#### *1.4. A brief presentation of some key notions in Bourdieu's sociology*

Among the most prominent concepts in Bourdieu's sociology are those of habitus, field, and capital.

*Fields* are historically constructed, specialized and relatively autonomous social areas of material or symbolic production. Fields have their own institutions and laws, as well as their own value systems. They are highly reminiscent of Even-Zohar's notion of polysystem, even though, to my understanding, in the case of field there is more focus on the element of conflict and struggle for the acquisition of power. The field is understood as the sum of intersecting and combating subjectivities. Under this light, one can perceive the norm as the outcome of this conflict. Even-Zohar's notion of primary vs. secondary opposition, i.e. that of innovativeness vs. conservatism in the repertoire (Even-Zohar 1990:21 and *passim*) is very close to Bourdieu's notion of field and contesting forces for primacy in it. Both can actually account for elements in the field (or Polysystem respectively) that defy the legitimacy of the normative center. It is interesting that Toury calls norms "intersubjective factors" (Toury 1995:54) thus reaching in essence the notion of habitus, which is eminently 'intersubjective'.

Individuals and groups that operate within these fields are bestowed with a specific *habitus*, which is a system of dispositions or *hexes* in Aristotle's terminology. These dispositions not only drive agents to think in certain ways, but most importantly they guide them to act in accordance to them. The habitus is the embodiment of the field to a degree that it becomes the agents' second nature. It gives the agents a 'feel for the game', a prism through which to perceive reality, a guideline on how to act and react in a way that is considered proper in each circumstance. It should be noted here that the habitus does not determine one's actions, but merely guides them. All this is not done in a conscious and deliberate manner. Rather, it is moulded through a long process of inculcation according to the agents' personal trajectories through institutions, such as their family and school, their class, as well as the position they hold within the particular field.

Finally, the agents functioning within each field always struggle to acquire, maintain, or redistribute some sort of *capital*, economic or symbolic, related to the specific field. According to Bourdieu, apart from the economic capital, there are different other kinds of capital, such as symbolic capital -the accumulation of prestige- and cultural capital -acquired education, culture, technical skills, etc. The positions the agent holds within a field are directly linked with the capital he owns in that field. In accordance with his habitus, the agent tends to reproduce the conditions that account for his position in the field, regardless of whether it is high or low.

At this point it should be understood that the above concepts are at all times interrelated in Bourdieu's thought. His sociology attempts to straddle the divide between the objective and the subjective, in other words the contrast between system and agency. It intersects between the individual and the social (Bourdieu, 1983, 1984). The individual action is the internalization of the social field and the social field is the objectification of the intersecting individual actions.

### *1.5. Norms and habitus as tools for looking into the translator's choices*

When dealing with actual translations, norms seem to be insufficient to account for translation choices. They are indispensable if one is to understand the context in which a translation came into being, they can also describe the position a particular translation had in the target culture, but cannot account for the motivations behind the translator's choices. Therefore, in my view they should be supplemented with the notion of habitus in order to achieve a more thorough outlook of the work of a particular translator. In Simeoni's (1998:33) words, "norms without a

habitus to instantiate them make no more sense than a habitus without norms. Incorporating conflict in one single construct attached to the person of the translator should also help us better understand the tension behind the individual choices during the decision process". The translator's awareness of the norms pertaining in a particular field is only one of the many considerations he tackles with while making his translation decisions. His/her whole personal trajectory has to be taken into consideration in order to find clues for the motivation behind his actions.

Furthermore norms cannot effectively account for cases of deviant translation practices. Norms are one of the factors that influence a translator's choices, but s/he can at all times decide to translate counter to them, as was the case with Angelos Vlahos, the translator I chose to use as an example. In the words of Gouanvic (2005:158):

Translation as a practice has little to do with conforming to norms through the deliberate use of specific strategies; in other words, it is not a question of consciously choosing from a panoply of available solutions. Norms do not explain the more or less subjective and random choices made by translators who are free to translate or not to translate, to follow or not to follow the original closely. If a translator imposes a rhythm upon the text, a lexicon or a syntax that does not originate in the source text and thus substitutes his or her voice for that of the author, this is essentially not a conscious strategic choice but an effect of his or her specific *habitus*, as acquired in the target literary field.

Simeoni (1998:7) agrees with Toury to the fact that translators abide by the norm and wonders as to the reasons:

What are the forces that make norms such powerful instruments of control as to have all agents, including those in a good position to change them, conform to their *diktat*? And if the (systemic) subsectors always prevail, what does this say of those who, faced with a plurality of possible decisions in the real time of practice, nearly always opt to go along with existing norms? Are translators just plain submissive?

His answer to the above rhetorical questions is the translators' *servitude volontaire*, a notion he comes up with employing Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a structuring mechanism (Simeoni 1998:23).

As much as I agree that most translators tend to abide by the prevailing norms of their time, I believe that the above overgeneralizations overlook very interesting cases of



translators who decided to stand up against the norms, in accordance with their habitus, regardless of the ensuing sanctions they might undergo. If all abided by the norms, innovations would never be introduced and genres would not evolve. There would be no resistant translation practices. Besides, these deviations being organizing, at times they prove to be felicitous and introduce innovations to the norm, or in Bourdieu's terminology apart from organized, the habitus can also be organizing. "The habitus is the true pivot around which systems of social order revolve. Without it, abiding by norms would remain a feat of magic" Simeoni (1998:24) says. Without it, contesting the norms and introducing novelty would also remain a feat of magic, I might add.

Inguilleri (2003:249-250) also disagrees with Simeoni's emphasis on "translators' ingrained subservience and passivity" and believes that "any real or perceived submission to norms must be viewed in the full context of its occurrence, for in translation/interpreting activity, *both* constancy and shifts in normative practices – at the macro-structural and local, interactional levels – can and do occur". Similarly, Sela-Sheffy (2005:5) also says that "[...] it would be misleading to conclude that (a) such an inferior status is equally formed in all cultural spaces and periods; and that (b) the subservient disposition it allegedly triggers applies equally to all individuals in this profession".

### *1.6. Personal and professional habitus*

In most of the literature on the sociology of translation, the interest is focused on delimiting the habitus of the translator in terms of the field of translation (cf. Simeoni 1998, Sela-Sheffy 2005). Sela-Sheffy (2005:9) suggests that "the study of a "habitus of translators", in the sense of shared socially acquired tendencies that constrain translators' action, should concentrate on a particular field of translation". Gouanvic (2002) and Hanna (2005) attempt to delimit such concrete fields of translated American science fiction in France and drama translations in Egypt respectively.

Nevertheless, apart from the professional habitus of each field, Bourdieu has outlined a personal one:

Simeoni (1998) is therefore right in underlining that the habitus is not merely about professional expertise, but also accounts for a whole model of a person. Again, this is an ambiguity inherited from Bourdieu's own discussion of habitus. At some points he talks about "the habitus of a field", while in other cases he speaks about the personal habitus in the sense

of a "class person". The former is composed of the shared tendencies, beliefs and skills, all of which precondition the natural operation of a specific field (e.g., the habitus of philologists<sup>2</sup>). The latter refers to a unifying set of mentally and physically incorporated schemes that coordinate the individual's behavior in all areas of life (e.g., Bourdieu 1986). Aware of this ambiguity, Simeoni suggests a distinction between a "social" ("generalized") habitus and a "professional" ("specialized") one, emphasizing that the correlation between these two levels of the habitus can never be taken for granted but must be examined in each particular case.<sup>3</sup>

What I wish to claim here is that, in my opinion, when looking into the translator's choices, from the selection of text down to the micro-level strategic choices in the process of actual translations, the translator's personal habitus should be taken into consideration, probably even more so than his/her professional one. In other words, the professional habitus can account for only part of the choices he makes, whereas other choices, especially those that tend to be seen as idiosyncratic stylistic preferences could be approached via his personal trajectory. Bourdieu has shown how matters of taste are not random, but can be traced to the agent's social trajectory. According to Gouanic (2005:158-59):

Bourdieu writes that "[t]he *habitus*, which is the generative principle of responses more or less well adapted to the demands of a certain field, is the product of an individual history, but also, through the formative experiences of earliest infancy, of the whole collective history of family and class" (1990:91). How, then, is the *habitus* of translation invested in the literary field? To clarify this, it is necessary to analyze the *habitus* of translators as it has actualized itself in the translation of specific works in a given epoch.

Furthermore, the above is much more critical when dealing with translation history, because at the turn of the century there was no such thing as a field of translation in Greece. There were no professional translators and translations were made mostly by writers, Vlahos being one of them. Therefore, translation choices were made under the influence of the translator's personal habitus, as well as the habitus pertaining in adjacent fields, such as those of literature and the theater in our case.

If one is to look into matters of style, language, the translator's preliminary norm, etc., strictly professional considerations would be of very little help, as wider ideological, cultural, linguistic issues come to play. Therefore, unless one looks into the whole spectrum that is

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<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980a. "Quelques propriétés des champs". *Questions de sociologie*. Paris : Edition de Minuit, 1980. 113-120.

<sup>3</sup> Sela-Sheffy 2005:14.

responsible for the makeup of the translator’s habitus, one would be at a loss as to how to interpret specific translational choices. There would be mere idiosyncratic variations of the same underlying principles. But Bourdieu (1984) has shown that even matters of taste are not innocent of social influences even though in a very subconscious way.

Inguilleri (2005b:142) appears skeptical and wishes to draw a “distinction from the culturalist paradigm which, though equally concerned with social relations of power, has maintained the literary text as its primary focus”. “But while there is a general acknowledgement that translation studies research has experienced a ‘cultural turn’ away from the dominance of linguistic and semiotic approaches (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999) and their bias towards text-based analyses, distinctly sociological approaches remain at the development stage. (Inguilleri 2005b:126)

Even though I agree with her on the necessity of sociologically-minded research, I cannot see why this cannot be supplemented with a closer look at the translator’s choices in the TT. This approach can shed light on microlevel choices which can also be revealing of the translator’s personal and professional trajectory. Once again, I agree with Gouanvic (2005:150) when he says that:

All these contributions to a sociology of translation have one thing in common. To the best of my knowledge, they nearly all (with the notable exception of Isabelle Kalinowski) reflect prevailing divisions between external and internal sociologies of the text, and they give exclusive attention to the analysis of external sociology to the detriment of internal sociology, sanctioning a division that is not justified.

## **2. Vlahos’ translation of *Hamlet* contextualized**

### *2.1. A case study*

In what follows, I will attempt to support the claims I have made by means of a case study. The theoretical scheme I will be using for the purposes of this paper is a combination of polysystems and norms to account for the context in which the TT came into being and Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* to shed light on the motivation behind the translator’s choices, sometimes despite the dominant norms of the time. I wish to show that the overriding factor

that influences the choices of the translator (A. Vlahos) from his initial and preliminary norms to the microlevel matricial and text-linguistic norms is his personal habitus.

In order to do so, a short account of the translator's life will be given within the surrounding historical, literary, and theatrical context of the time. I will attempt to place the translator and the TT within the polysystem and look at the sanctions enforced on its reception due to his flouting the norms. Finally, a microlevel analysis will attempt to single out patterns that might point to tentative conclusions about the motivation behind the translator's linguistic and stylistic choices and the extent to which they reflect his habitus.

The focus of interest of this paper is the translator himself and its goal is to describe the translator's behavior within the framework of its sociocultural and historical context. My analysis will be descriptive and explanatory. Prescriptive or evaluative comments are outside the paper's scope and interest.

Special emphasis shall be placed on the translator's stance towards the language question and the way it is reflected in his TT, as the issue of language has been a deeply ideological one in Greece during the past century and a half. Issues concerning the theatrical aspects of the text are beyond the scope of this paper.

*Hamlet* was chosen as a ST because of its tremendous load of cultural capital. In Alan Sinfield's words "Shakespeare is one of the places where ideology is made" (Dollimore and Sinfield 1985). *Hamlet* in particular has been translated into Greek at least 15 times during the past century and a half and each time it was inscribed by the different linguistic, stylistic, and translation choices of its translators. Looking into these translations proves to be a quite illuminating way of studying norms in a diachronic way.

## 2.2. *Vlahos' life, work and aesthetics*

Angelos Vlahos (1838-1920) belonged to the generation immediately following the War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire. He was born in a prominent Athenian family. Due to his bourgeois origin, he accumulated the greatest possible educational capital of the time. Apart from obtaining a PhD in Law in 1859, he mastered four languages: German, French, English, and Italian. After his studies in Greece, he continued his studies in Heidelberg and Berlin, Germany (1861-65). His tremendous education and his experience in Europe built him great symbolic capital, which enabled him to occupy numerous posts of authority in various administrations of diverse political affiliations, among which MP for Attica, Ambassador in Berlin, and Minister of Public Education. From these posts, he was able to influence not only

the political developments of the time, but first and foremost the cultural ones. He presided over many literary contests that actually set the norms for literature in Greece during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pressurizing in favor of neo-classicism.

Vlahos was a great theater fan. He fought for the formation of a national theatre. His motive was to cultivate his contemporaries and help in their struggle to form a national identity on a literary level. For quite some time he lobbied persistently for the foundation of a national playhouse. After the 1897 war, King George eventually decided to found a playhouse, the Royal Theater, in the vein of French burlesque, and in the very next year, Vlahos was appointed its first director, occupying yet another prestigious position.

But Vlachos was not just a politician; he was a writer, and a successful one at that. He was engaged in all kinds of literary genres: lyrical poetry, short stories, plays, memoirs, critical essays, scientific treatises, translations from German, English, French, and Italian poetry, novels, and histories. He wrote a huge number of articles for journals and newspapers. Many of his lyrics were set to music and became quite popular songs in his day. He even compiled schoolbooks and dictionaries.

His work as a translator was extensive. He translated mostly poetry and plays from four languages. Many of the comedies he translated or adapted were extremely popular and were played time and again by many Greek theatrical companies.

During his early years up to 1861, when he left for Germany, he was influenced by the dominant romantic poetics of the period. Nevertheless, by the time he came back in 1861, he denounced romanticism and gave himself to neo-classicism. That could be described as his acquired habitus. He also became interested in defining the elements that constitute "national" literature, a concern which preoccupied him throughout his life. In the Prologue to his collection *Orae* (*Hours*, December 1860), he unfolded his literary and aesthetic principles. He proposed the principle of *verisimilitude*, another clear sign of his neoclassicism. Instead of the romantic excess of imagination, the artist should "photographically" depict the reality around him.

### 2.3. Vlahos and the language question

Greece witnessed diglossia from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. It was a nation of two tongues; the *katharevousa* was a scholarly language purified from foreign influences and supposedly derived directly from the ancient Greek, whereas the *demotic* was the vernacular language actually spoken by the people. The language question turned into a

critical ideological point of controversy on the basis of which the whole nation was divided. The *katharevousa* was imposed as the language of the state and literature, especially for its "higher" forms, such as tragedy. On the other hand, the *demotic* strove to carve a position for itself, at least in literature. The gravity of the language question within the Greek ideological debates can become more evident by way of the events that came to be known as the "Evangelika" (1901) and "Orestika" (1903) incidents, both of which led to ideologically-based bloody clashes under the pretext of translations of the Holy Scriptures and ancient tragedy respectively into the demotic.

Eventually, after the turn of the century, a mixture of the purist with the demotic started being used. The demotic managed to become the norm in literature, especially in poetry and on the stage. As a matter of fact, in the case of drama, the spoken language tended to be dominant.

Despite the change of the norm in literary language though, Vlahos remained constant to purism all his life. His classical upbringing and his bourgeois background could not allow for any hesitation as concerns his classicist principles. In Bourdieu's (1983:83) words: "...what expresses itself through the linguistic habitus is the whole class habitus of which it is one dimension, which means in fact, the position that is occupied, synchronically and diachronically, in the social structure". Vlahos' linguistic habitus had been shaped irreversibly and he refused to change it in order to adapt to the norm. Bourdieu (1984:83) says that "...what expresses itself through the linguistic habitus is the whole class habitus of which it is one dimension, which means in fact, the position that is occupied, synchronically and diachronically, in the social structure". Of course, he was not ignorant of the demotic. Actually he did not rule it out altogether. He even wrote some verse in the demotic himself. As the true bourgeois and neoclassicist he was, though, he believed that the demotic should be reserved for "baser" genres, such as popular or lyrical songs, whereas the greater works, especially tragedy, could only be written in the *katharevousa*.

#### 2.4. *The literary, translation, and theatrical context*

By the time Vlahos translated *Hamlet* in 1904, the literary norm had radically changed. The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been characterized as the *Sturm und Drang* of Greece and this urge to uplift the nation was best expressed in the struggle for the demotic and educational renovation. It was only six years before the unfolding of the attempt at the

implementation of a new radically progressive educational system at school, which came to be known as the Educational Association, made by teaching scholars educated in Germany.

In literature, realism and naturalism persisted in prose, both in translations and in their Greek version of "ethography". In poetry the demoticists and Kostis Palamas had long been occupying the very center of the literary polysystem for at least twenty years. There was great interest and contact with the western world. The polysystems of European philosophy and literature highly influenced the polysystem of Greek literature. Philosophical trends such as Nietzscheism and Marxism had some very important followers in Greece. Symbolism also found its expression in Greek literature.

Despite being a royalist and due to his long contacts with western culture and education, especially the German ones, Vlahos believed in the need for Greece to be in close contact with the greatest works of European literature. Of course, Nietzsche and Marx, realism and naturalism were totally outside his scope of interest and he opted for canonical classical values such as Shakespeare, alongside his harmless vaudeville translations. His aim was to support the status quo and saw the classics as a means to that end.

At the same time, the demoticists also claimed rights on European literature. Many great European works were translated into Greek as the readership grew wider. Works by Shakespeare were translated by sworn demoticists, such as Nikos Poriotis and Kl. Kartheos. Their primary goal for translating Shakespeare was to use the great dramatist's cultural capital to prove the efficiency of the demotic in rendering great works of literature and expressing even the most delicate nuances of meaning.

In the midst of so turbulent times, vaudeville was the norm for the Greek stages, especially in the Royal Theater. There were also strong influences from the north, especially by Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hauptmann in more experimental stages like Hristomanos' *Nea Skini* (1901-1905). The language that dominated the stages tended to become the demotic in both types of theater though.

What is of interest to us here is that, despite the fact that the demotic had become the norm for the stage, Vlahos chose to keep writing and translating in the *katharevousa* as a result of his personal habitus. Even though he was aware of the new norm, he chose to translate in what he thought was the right language to render tragedy. As a result, he had to suffer the consequences of his choice as his translation was sanctioned. Even though Vlahos had been the first director of the Royal Theater, his translation of *Hamlet* was never staged. Contrarily, the play was staged in 1905, once in *Nea Skini* in Vikelas' translation, which was in a mild *katharevousa* and had dominated the Greek stages in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and once

probably in Pervanoglou's translation, which was an extreme archaic version, but was played by the group *Menandros* from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and constituted part of their repertoire. Vlahos' translation was absolutely marginalized. The fact that it was not staged could partly be attributed to the hostile disposition of his successor in the directorship of the Royal Theater, St. Stephanou, but mostly to its purist language and neoclassicist aesthetics at a time when the demotic tended to prevail on the stage making the text sound dated. His version was retrogressive in comparison to that of Vikelas' previous one. It was only Rotas' translation (1938) in the demotic that eventually managed to dethrone Vikelas' version and become the norm for the next half century or so.

Vlahos had been praised and prized at previous times; he had even been the norm-setter by presiding in literary competitions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But by the time he translated Shakespeare, he was completely outside the canon. Vlahos was unwilling -or unable- to adapt to the new poetics. He belonged irreversibly to the poetics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and remained a neoclassicist to the end of his days.

### *2.5. Vlahos' preliminary norm. Why did he translate Shakespeare?*

Vlahos' choice to translate Shakespeare could partly be attributed to his lifelong struggle to help shape a national identity, and more specifically a national theater. The Greek fledgling national theatre was in dire need of translations of great foreign works to consolidate its prestige. Even-Zohar's theory explaining the conditions under which translated literature can take a central position in the literary polysystem of a country can partly account for the case at hand:

It is clear that the very principles of selecting the works to be translated are determined by the situation governing the (home) polysystem: the texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role they may assume within the target literature. What then are the conditions which give rise to a situation of this kind? It seems to me that three major cases can be discerned, which are basically various manifestations of the same law: (a) when a polysystem has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a literature is "young," in the process of being established; (b) when a literature is either "peripheral" (within a large group of correlated literatures) or "weak," or both; and (c) when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Even-Zohar 1990:47.



The period during which Vlahos made his translations of Shakespeare can fall under the above descriptions. Greece was struggling to shape its national identity and find a niche among the other Western European nations. In this sense, it could be considered both “peripheral” and “not yet [having] been crystallized”. Vlahos’ translation may be viewed as a contribution in this direction. In the Prologue to his collection of five of Shakespeare’s plays, he overtly states his aim:

I have always understood that only the reading and viewing on stage of the indestructible classical masterpieces of the ancient and modern dramatic literature may positively cultivate the almost still barren dramatic land, to educate little by little, not only stage workers and writers, but also audiences mature enough to appreciate these works and finally to contribute, more than anything else in the formation of a national dramatic theater [...]. Having in mind the above and ardently desiring to contribute to any possible extent to the accomplishment of the great purpose, I have for a very long time attempted, whenever I spared the time, to give my literary contribution, to translate for the Greek stage established foreign dramatic works [...] (my translation in this as well as all the following passages by Vlahos).<sup>5</sup>

Venuti (1995:104-05) describes a similar tendency among the German romantics, who were definitely among Vlahos’ influences. According to Venuti, they translated the classics (Homer, Sophocles, Dante, and Shakespeare) aiming at improving their literature and “endowing it with cultural authority”.

Apart from his craving for the formation of a national theatre, Vlahos’ work was anyhow characterized by a strong tendency towards didacticism, which makes Shakespeare a natural choice for him to include in his canon. In his speech “On the Greek Dramatic Theater” at the literary association Parnassos (Vlahos/Βλάχος 1901), he spoke of the performance as a “lesson” much in the Aristotelian sense: “The spectator that has watched a fine theatrical performance gains its remembrance, and this remembrance is a lesson, his inculcation,” which is highly reminiscent of the notion of *katharsis* of the ancient tragedy. Once again his neoclassicism prevailed in his choice of paradigms to look up to. Vlahos, along with the other neoclassicists, considered tragedy to be the highest and best kind of poetry as such. Neoclassicists held a high regard for tradition and classical writers of which Shakespeare was definitely the very paradigm.

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<sup>5</sup> Prologue to a collection of five tragedies by Shakespeare in Vlahos’ translation entitled *Σακσπείρου αριστουργήματα*, p.6.

But why did Vlahos decide to retranslate a text that had already been translated four times before? Apart from creating cultural capital for Greece, he obviously wished to add to his own symbolic capital.

If the field is constructed through constant struggles for defining its capital, the habitus is what generates people's inclination for certain prestige-endowing forms of action (i.e. their "taste"). [...] For all its vagueness, this notion highlights two aspects of people's action: the unconscious nature of the choices they make and the correlation of these (interdependent) choices with social status.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, he was an acclaimed writer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but his star seemed to be setting by 1905. He had always been much more renowned as a writer than as a translator anyway. Shakespeare's classic works could rekindle his older fame. That is why he looked frowned upon the previous translators and claimed to have reinstated the original from misinterpretations. His intention was for the plays of the collection to be staged. In his Prologue, he also explicitly says that "[Shakespeare is] known enough from his translations" – even though he mentions none of them – but that "a more thorough acquaintance and a more precise understanding of him will be beneficial." Therefore, it seems as if he was criticizing his predecessors for not having rendered Shakespeare efficiently and his translation was aimed precisely at the reinstatement of Shakespeare's work. The detailed philological endnotes seem to bear witness of the scholarly nature of the translation, as the quotes from the original are addressed to people who could speak English quite fluently (a rare merit at the time, reserved only for the well-off and educated), but would rather read the play in Greek. Apart from the complete translation of *Hamlet*, there is evidence that he had also adapted the play for the stage, but this adaptation has unfortunately not been saved and there is no record of its ever being actually staged.

Being a man of the theater himself, Vlahos, unlike most of his predecessors, was interested in performability. He believed that special care should be given in writing in a language that could be fluently uttered on stage. "It is time the language of the stage become the true, natural, spoken Greek language, so that the actors may utter it freely, and the audience may listen to it without smirking or frowning." Despite the best of his intentions though, this was exactly the kind of reaction his text evoked by the time he translated *Hamlet*. Times had changed, and so had the spoken Greek language and theatrical norms.

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<sup>6</sup> Sela-Sheffy 2005:13.

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, Vlahos' stage adaptation of *Hamlet* has not been saved, as it would be extremely interesting to see the interventions he made to the text to make it playable, as well as his notion of performability.

His feelings toward Shakespeare were not totally unproblematic though. The Bard seemed to come into direct contrast with Vlahos' neoclassical aesthetics. This contradiction was most overtly expressed in his Prologue to the collection of Shakespeare's five tragedies. The following excerpt summarizes his views on Shakespeare and his work. After having acknowledged that "Shakespeare exceeds all the modern dramatic poets together and remains the uncontested and unchallenged paradigm of perfection to date,"<sup>7</sup> the sting comes at the end: "Nevertheless, this cannot also be said of the technical experience of the English dramatist, especially if this experience is measured according to the Aristotelian notions. Because he does not always keep the unities of place or time in his dramatic plays, and the most important unity of action is often loose and fragmented."<sup>8</sup> Thus Shakespeare was technically deficient according to Vlahos. He goes on to say that his local and historical data are many times inaccurate, his choice of dramatic means tasteless, the propriety of his speeches and situations unacceptably coarse, and his style complicated and obscure, unnatural and rhetorically inflated." Nevertheless, Shakespeare was too great to be overlooked, which is why Vlahos felt impelled to somehow accommodate the conflict by making up "excuses" for him. Thus he uses his own elitist views that stemmed from his bourgeois upbringing to attribute Shakespeare's "shortcomings" to the fact that during the Elizabethan period, Shakespeare's plays were attended by all social strata. Therefore -according to Vlahos- the poet was forced to lower his standards to address his uncultivated audiences and earn his living in the process. "The audience consisted of elements, that not only were not shocked, but were amused by bawdry, and thought highly of the elaborate and pretentious language uttered on stage". Elsewhere he calls Shakespeare "bawdry and morbid [...] in order to be liked by the multitude."<sup>9</sup> In short, Vlahos faced the same problems with Shakespeare that any consistent neoclassicist did before him: he was too complicated for them to fit into their canon.

The translation of 1904 was included in a collection along with four other plays by Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. It took him seven years to accomplish the translation of all five plays and in order to do so he went into some stunning

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<sup>7</sup> Prologue to *Σακεσπέιρον αριστουργήματα*, p.14.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Prologue to *Σακεσπέιρον αριστουργήματα*, p.13.

background research. In his endnotes, he quotes no less than twenty-two literary scholars. He also compares his decisions to the choices made by five other translators of *Hamlet* into three languages: Carcano into Italian, Reinach and Laroche into French, and Bodenstedt and Schlegel into German. He mentions Schroeder's scene adaptations for the German theatre, some of which he most probably had personally attended. Vlahos does not explicitly state anywhere in his collection which original he used as his ST. In a closer study of his translation, his choices seem to match more closely the text of the Folio, than any of the Quartos, but even that closeness is not consistently substantiated throughout. He may have used some annotated, contemporary edition, possibly Theobald's edition, which he quotes in his endnotes more than once. Most probably though, he must have had many STs on his desk while tackling Shakespeare. Furthermore, it is interesting enough that despite the fact that he has done so diligent background study prior to translating his ST, he makes no mention of any of the four pre-existing translations of *Hamlet*, as if he was unaware of them or -most probably- considered it below him to refer to "ignorant" Greek translators. The collection was supported by Grigorios Maraslis, the founder of the Maraslis library, but there is no evidence that the sponsor influenced the translation process or even the choice of source texts in any way. Out of the five plays in the collection, only his *Othello* was actually staged by the Royal Theatre in 1905.

## 2.6. Vlahos' initial norm

Vlahos formulated his views on translation as early as 1864, in the Prologue to his translation of Lamartine's verse and stayed constant with them throughout his life. He declared his translation principle, which constituted his initial norm: "The translator of a foreign lyrical poem into his mother tongue may choose between two systems of translation. The one that chooses the first of them attempts, if he can, to faithfully follow the foreign poet, in each line, each word if possible, [...]." He describes this method as "religious" and says that, due to his piety, this translator is forced to sacrifice the special color of his mother tongue, even the artistic value of the verse, without necessarily gaining in fidelity. He goes on to denounce this system in which content is sacrificed in favour of form. But at the same time, he denounced the other extreme, according to which the translator should embrace complete and boundless freedom, and what he called "debauchery" of translation.

I have therefore followed the middle way, staying faithful to the sense and free as to its formal expression, and having understood that only in this way can the translator render faithfully first of all the notions of his poetic and verse universe and at times, resorting to the scales, find the clear and unambiguous notion, which he [the original poet] had in mind before he submitted it to the necessities of formalization, which is what he [the translator] formulates freely according to his mother tongue.<sup>10</sup>

The above extract, which is the canon by which he translated throughout his life, is particularly reminiscent of Goethe’s respective words from his essay on Wieland in 1813:

... there are two maxims in translation: one requires that the author of a foreign nation be brought across to us in such a way that we can look on him as ours; the other requires that we should go across to what is foreign and adapt ourselves to its conditions, its use of language, its peculiarities. The advantages of both are sufficiently known to educated people through perfect examples. Our friend, who looked for the middle way in this, too, tried to reconcile both, but as a man of feeling and taste he preferred the first maxim when in doubt.<sup>11</sup>

The similarities are too striking to be coincidental. Of course, the German romantics declare their preference to foreignization, whereas Vlahos opts for a more domesticating approach. Unlike romanticism, which elevated the role of the original author’s creativity and underestimated that of the translator, neo-classicists recognized translating as a form of original writing. The translator should feel free to intervene in any way he believed necessary to bring the ST to the norms pertaining in the target culture. Nevertheless, their goals are common. They both aim at enriching their national literatures and languages by means of translations of great works of international literature.

In 1879, in his Prologue to his translation of Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise* for which he gained the prize in the Iconomios poetic competition, he reaffirms his previous positions:

[...] the only translation that is faithful and true and worthy of its name is the one that renders the soul and motion, the essence and the colour of the original, without submitting in a slavish manner to its form and word and rhythm, that has attempted to retain in the translation the live and untarnished notions of the original, so that it may thus convey to its Greek reader to the

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<sup>10</sup> Λαμαρτίνου ποιητικά μελέται, μεταφρασθείσαι κατ’ εκλογήν, εμμέτρως υπό Αγγέλου Σ. Βλάχου. Εν Αθήναις, εκ του τυπογραφείου Δ. Αθ. Μαυρομάτη. 1864. p. ζ’.

<sup>11</sup> Lefevere 1977:39.

extent possible the same impression which the reading of the original creates to the German reader.<sup>12</sup>

This might be understood as a forerunner of Eugene Nida’s *dynamic equivalence* by departing from its formal aspects to stay close to what he considers to be the TT’s unvaried core notions. Therefore, according to Vlahos’ declarations, his initial norm is to opt for acceptability instead of adequacy in Toury’s terms or domestication instead of foreignization in Venuti’s more politicized terminology.

### 3. A micro-level analysis of Vlahos’ operational norms

Defining one’s initial norm is one thing and translating according to it is quite another. The translator may decide to translate in a domesticating way, but when actually dealing with a real translation situation, the target text may develop a life of its own and turn out to have foreignizing traits. In what follows, we shall be looking into the target text on a microlevel in order to find to what extent Vlahos has been true to his intentions or not. My aim is to triangulate the paratextual findings discussed above in order to see how Vlahos’ personal habitus has influenced his actual translational choices.

#### 3.1 Matricial norms

Vlahos has kept very close to the layout of the source text. He has retained its structure throughout. There are no changes in the distribution or the segmentation of the text, with the exception of the fact that he tends to fragment longer sentences into shorter ones.

#### 3.2. Textual-linguistic norms

##### 3.2.1. The TT’s language type

Concerning the language of the target text, Vlahos employs the *katharevousa*, of course, in accordance with his class and his linguistic habitus. Despite his declared allegiance to “the middle way”, he uses a rather pompous form of *katharevousa* with many archaic words. In

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<sup>12</sup> Εφρ. Λέσιγγ, *Νάθαν ο Σοφός*, μετάφρασις Αγγέλου Βλάχου, βραβευθείσα εν τω Οικονομείω Αγώνι του 1879, Εν Αθήναις, εκ του τυπογραφείου Πέτρου Περρή, Επί της Πλατείας του Πανεπιστημίου, 1879, π.ς’-η’.

one instance (I.ii.96-97, King: “a heart unfortified” // «καρδίαν αθωράκιστον, ατλήμονα,», he even feels the urge to excuse himself in an endnote, saying that “I used the word “*ατλήμονα*”, despite the fact that it was more ancient than allowed for, as it was the only one capable of rendering the exact content of “impatient” at this point”.) for using an archaic type. At the same time, it is interesting how he also employs words and grammatical forms of the demotic. There are instances where he mixes demotic and *katharevousa* types in the same line:

**Table 1:** language types

Shakespeare	Vlahos
I.v.35, Ghost: “A serpent stung me”	μ’ <u>εδάγκασ</u> ’ <u>όφις</u>

In this instance, «εδάγκασε» is a demotic type, whereas «όφις» is *katharevousa*. Another interesting point is the fact that he feels the need to include some notions and expressions borrowed from tradition, most probably under the tremendous influence of Politis and his folklorists at the time. E.g. he renders “the funeral” (I.ii.180) as «της μακαρίας», which is a rural term for a “wake” of the deceased.

### 3.2.2. *Versification*

Vlahos’ translation of *Hamlet* is in verse. He renders Shakespeare’s text into Alexandrines, i.e. iambic hexameters. This was an old French meter, used in epic narrative, in tragedy and in higher comedy. Alexandrines were also common in the German literature of the Baroque period. But it was completely outside the Greek poetic norm. Vlahos selected this meter to match his neoclassical aesthetics. He obviously needed a classic meter that he considered fit for tragedy. The Alexandrine was a meter endowing dignity to his target text. Vlahos’ Alexandrines are unrhymed. He employs enjambment heavily, and not always successfully. He uses fill-ins to accommodate the meter and excessively employs elision, in accordance with the demands of the *katharevousa* norm in order to avoid hiatus.

Consistent with his attitude towards language levels and generic constraints, he renders Ophelia’s and the Gravedigger’s songs in the demotic, as he considers them to be more popular verse. Instead of Alexandrines, he uses the traditional 15-syllable verse of the demotic song, with the sole difference that he splits his lines in two lines of eight and seven syllables respectively.

### 3.2.3. Morpho-syntactic shifts

Like the neoclassicist he was, Vlahos is uneasy with repetition and doublets. He tends to intervene either by changing the same words for other synonymous ones, or eliminating the phrase altogether:

**Table 2:** elimination of repetition

Shakespeare	Vlahos
I.i.145-7, Barnardo: “’Tis here”.	Βερνάρδος: «Είπε αυτού;»
Horatio: “’Tis here”. <i>Exit Ghost</i> .	Οράτιος: «Ιδού το!»
Marcellus: “’Tis gone”.	Μάρκελλος: «Ανεχώρησε!» (=Is it there? – Behold! – It has left!)

In the above lines, the original gives out an eerie feeling and the reader can almost “see” the Ghost fading away. By substituting the repetition with synonyms, the Greek reader totally misses out that feeling and the phrases are reduced to an announcement that the Ghost has left.

The whole play is swarmed with duality both in form and in content. One form of expressing this duality formally is *hendiadys*, the expression of a single notion through two words, also known as doublets. This is a form of duplicating the sense rather than amplifying, but also affects the style of the play adding to it a sense of delay. Therefore, doubling is a crucial feature of Shakespeare in general and *Hamlet* in particular. Vlahos, being consistent to the neoclassic aesthetics of presenting notions in a straightforward, uncomplicated way, tends to eliminate them:

**Table 3:** elimination of doublets

Shakespeare	Vlahos
II.ii.107, Pol: “in her duty and obedience”	«κατά καθήκον της» (=as is her duty)



For the same reasons, he is intolerant to paradox as well:

**Table 4:** eliminating paradox

Shakespeare	Vlahos
II.ii.470-471, 1 <sup>st</sup> Player: “Then <u>senseless</u> Ilium,   Seeming to feel this blow”	Το κτύπημα εφάνη ότι ησθάνθ’ η Τροία (=It seems that Troy felt the blow)

In the original Ilium feels, even though it is “senseless”. This is not rendered in the TT. Obviously his neoclassic poetics do not allow for any such distortions of reality.

#### 3.2.4. Performability

The theatrical field had always been a great influence in the formation of Vlahos’ personal habitus. It seems that he always had the theatre in mind when translating. Therefore he broke the original’s sentences in order to make them shorter and more performable. It is interesting in this respect that he adds a great number of exclamation marks, probably for the same reasons that he adds the vocative “O!” in order to add prestige and solemnity to his text. He also added many ellipses that are absent in the original, giving it a hint of suggestiveness.

Finally, again as a result of his personal habitus, he adds his own stage directions. These directions are limited to explaining who the lines are addressed to when he feels there is a shift of address that needs clarification. Nevertheless, they show his personal concern about the theatrical dimension of the play.

#### 3.2.5. Figurative language, imagery, wordplay

Vlahos also had a distaste for all kinds of ambiguity, double articulation or wordplay. For him, it was preposterous for a great tragedy like *Hamlet* to contain so much punning. Delabastita (1993:253) gives an extensive account of the history of wordplay in Europe showing how it was totally against the neoclassical ideal of the three unities, and even the romantics did not show great enthusiasm about it. Throughout its existence, the pun had constantly been frowned upon. Nevertheless, Vlahos actually does his best to render wordplay whenever it is sufficiently signaled, or autosignaled in Delabastita’s terminology, and even feels the urge to apologize in footnotes at some instances for failing to do so.

### 3.2.6. *Calque, names, neologism*

Vlahos does not transfer calques, such as “cap-à-pie” (Horatio: I.ii.200) or “*Hic et ubique?*” (Hamlet: I.v.164). As concerns names, he Greekicizes all the names according to the norms pertaining for name formation at the time, e.g. “Klavthios” for Claudius, “Yertruthi” for Gertrude, etc.

On the other hand, Vlahos is surprisingly receptive to neologism. This might be seen as an echo of his involvement in building up dictionaries and introducing new concepts in a language that was still under formation. In his Prologue to his *Greek-French Dictionary* (1897), he presents his respective views:

We attempt to coin new words every day; and this is only natural, because the needs from our intellectual communion with the foreign nations are increasing daily, and the continuous import of ideas and objects from the West demands naming them.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, once again, his personal beliefs and politics find their expression in the way he translates. As it is, he comes up with a considerable number of neologisms of his own, either as compensation for the loss of the neologisms of the original, or as part of his own style.

### 3.2.7. *Register*

Vlahos’ style is dignified and elevated, but concise and avoids dramatic outbursts. He was versed in the court etiquette from his experience both in Greece and in Europe. Interestingly enough, he chooses to reproduce the royal plural, in a very foreignizing way, as there is no respective form in Greek.

Unsurprisingly, for the lower characters, such as the Gravedigger, he uses the demotic with popular expressions. What is actually surprising though, is the fact that he employs the singular in places where the plural would be the norm for Greek, such as when Polonius addresses the King and prince Hamlet. Even more unexpectedly, when Voltemand addresses Polonius. Furthermore, he uses expressions that lower the register throughout in exchanges with the royalty. This could possibly be attributed to his “middle way” in language or his need to bring the “natural, spoken Greek language” on stage even though the attempt was not very felicitous and sounded improper.

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<sup>13</sup> *Λεξικόν Ελληνογαλλικόν*, 1897.

### 3.2.8. *The mixing of genres*

As we saw above, Vlahos' neoclassical principles could not tolerate Shakespeare's mixing of genres. However, being a comedy writer himself, he had developed a flair for the comic which led him to render the comic scenes of the play, such as Polonius' rambling in II.ii.86-92, either by lowering the register or by employing popular expressions. Again his acquired habitus, formed through his experience in the theater, seems to have overridden even his declared neoclassical poetics.

### 3.2.9. *Propriety-decorum*

Another discrepancy between Shakespeare and the neo-classicist aesthetics is his abundance of bawdy language and "improper" behavior. Vlahos even went as far as denouncing Shakespeare's "indecent" in his Prologue, as we saw above. Nevertheless, his sense of allegiance to the original supersedes his neoclassic aesthetics, and in most cases he actually renders the "improprieties" of the original, but toning them down and using euphemism wherever possible.

From the above micro-level analysis, it becomes obvious that Vlahos' translational choices belonged to a previous, outdated norm and were affected mainly by his personal habitus. It seems that his acquired habitus sometimes overweighed even his personal poetics. His experience in the theater for example led him to render wordplay and humor against his neoclassical poetics.

## 4. Conclusion

I have attempted to prove that DTS being a systemic theory is insufficient in describing the motivation behind the translational choices. Norms constitute the context within which the translator produces his/her work and which s/he takes into consideration, but in the long run s/he may or may not decide to translate in accordance with them. What actually influences the translational choices in my opinion is the translator's personal habitus, the habitus of the fields involved, and the position he holds within them. Vlahos' personal habitus affected the way he translated. He translated the way he did because he believed that was the proper thing

to do or in Simeoni's words, that his "choices are the only valid ones, all others being either futile, distasteful or plain wrong".<sup>14</sup>

Due to his old age and the fact that by the time he translated *Hamlet*, his symbolic capital was waning, it seems that his habitus became destabilized. He lost his "feel for the game". He chose to stick to his initial habitus, i.e. the one that derived from his earlier stages of socialization. I have attempted to show how Vlahos' choices defied the dominant norms of his time, both as concerns the language he used and his poetics, which were considered dated by the time he translated *Hamlet*. "Indeed, Bourdieu has argued that primary social experiences have a disproportionate weight in the acquisition of habitus over time – that the formation of habitus is ordered chronologically and social agents will be drawn to experiences that allow them to feel 'at home' and able to take the world for granted."<sup>15</sup>

What is more, it seems that habitus is so deep-rooted and subconscious that it overrides the translator's declared intentions concerning the "correct" way of translating. A series of translation choices he opted for on the microlevel can only be scrutinized under the light of his habitus, after taking into consideration his whole personality, his life, experience, educational capital, literary influences, etc. His rendering of wordplay and bawdy language, his comic flair, and his free use of neologism run contrary to his neoclassicist declarations and can only be accounted for by means of his personal habitus.

On the other hand, norms can account for reception and are closely linked with the sanctions imposed on his work by the target culture. In our case, dominant norms, as expressed by the theatrical and publishing status quo sanctioned the translation condemning it never to be staged. In Vlahos' case, his symbolic capital was not sufficient to influence the norm. Three decades later though, Vassilis Rotas' translations of Shakespeare's works definitely set the norm for more than fifty years.

This does not mean that Vlahos' case is not interesting for us today. On the contrary it is a means to investigate the norm of the time and constitutes a small episode in the translation history of Greece. The hypothesis in question is worth testing on more data. It can be expanded to show the history of translation norms in Greece and to which extent each individual translator's habitus affects them. It might also help to give some insights in the translation process itself and the strategies each translator chooses to adopt, consciously or subconsciously, thus making us more aware of the motives underlying these choices.

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<sup>14</sup> Simeoni 1998:17-18.

<sup>15</sup> Inguilleri 2005a:160-61.

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