

Modern Greek Poetry set to music: a cultural diplomat?

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Introduction

Historically, poetry and music are fraternal twins, since poetry was initially sung rather than recited¹. The American poet Wyn Cooper reminds us of their relationship: “Poetry began as something that went with music, words that were read to the accompaniment of the lyre (those Greeks!), thus the word “lyric”(Wyn Cooper 2000). The lyrical outcome of such an interaction has been developed and elaborated by great artists from Homer to L.v.Beethoven, G.Malher, A.Schoenberg and P.Boulez. For instance, Goethe’s or Schiller’s poems were set to music by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz and Wolf, while Gustav Malher transformed Friedrich’s Rückert words into songs. During the 19th century the vocal setting of poems in the form of a musical composition gradually ended up to the musical form of “lieds”².

In 1878, Antonín Dvořák completed his song cycle *3 Modern Greek Poems*, Op.50, through which he set to music three Greek folk poems that were translated in Czech by the Czech poet Vaclav Bolemir Nebesky in his poetic collection *Modern Greek Folk Songs* (published in 1864) and were among the chosen ones to be firstly presented in Dvořák’s first independent concert in Prague on 17 November 1878, where the composer actually introduced himself to the Czech audience both as a composer and conductor (Ondrej Supka 2013). Dvořák chose to present such a work on a sensitive, but crucial occurrence and even if he did not then realize the importance of his movement, he was walking on the later pavement of cultural diplomacy. By setting the *3 Modern Greek Poems* into music, he could be considered to be among the heralds of the intentions this essay wishes to achieve, giving us an initiatory example for our viewing angle towards the consciousness of the people (the ‘cultural literacy’ as we will call it), the interplay of the cultures and the fruitful dialogue among nations.

Conducted in a primary way of approach, the present announcement examines the Modern Greek Poetry set to music through the spectrum of cultural diplomacy. Being a field of recent scientific research, the principles of cultural diplomacy are here examined with due regard to contemporary Greek authors and some eloquent examples of their oeuvre that could advance the discussion over their practical contiguity, as a presumptive suggestion to the endeavors of the Greek side.

Section 1: Cultural diplomacy

1.1. An approach to its very substance

Cultural diplomacy reflects the way we implement diplomatic approaches through miscellaneous cultural activities by any means of cultural exchange and/or co-operation. According to Richard T. Arndt (2005) as cited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht (2009)³, diplomacy in general is the ability and dexterity to conduct relationships aiming to a success, while avoiding conflict. However, as he admits, diplomacy does not constitute an exclusive state-to-state possibility, where commissioned officials try to promote their government’s plan with a view to achieve a certain political effect. The non-governmental factors share the crucial role of ambassadors and agents of their country as well, since they form an integral part of cultural and emotional relations of the international arena. In other words, missionaries,

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¹ (Andrea Loselle 1993, 3)

² (*Ibid*, 5-6).

³ (Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht 2009, 4)

teachers, artists, scientists or scholars, absolved of any kind of political expedience, are also representatives of their country abroad, perhaps diplomats in their own way.

Cultural diplomacy constitutes a field of recent scientific interest, both theoretical and practical, which, apart from the practice of International Relations⁴, combines mainly disciplines coming from Humanities, such as Cultural Studies, History and, generally speaking, studies dealing with the ideological preservation of the Memory of a nation, the so-called Management of Culture (another new recently appearing scientific field). These interdisciplinary ramifications come as an obvious emanation from the multifold notion of Culture, which encompasses all human activities. In an effort to approach the definition of the versatile nature of the notion of cultural diplomacy, it seems incumbent at this point to clarify the turbid lines that differentiate cultural diplomacy from foreign cultural policy, public diplomacy, international cultural relations and propaganda.

To begin with, cultural diplomacy and foreign cultural policy, due to their being an integral part of the foreign policy of a country, are often used interchangeably, regardless of their very substance: the foreign cultural policy tends to determine the goals each time are set and the proper guidelines that should be followed in order for the international relations of a country to take place on a solid basis, while cultural diplomacy provides the means and methods for such achievements. Secondly, as Simon Mark accentuates⁵, cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations, although used synonymously, do not typify the same term, since not all international cultural relations necessitate governmental support, nor are they necessarily part of the foreign policy or diplomacy. By the same token, public diplomacy does not always imply involvement of the state's culture, while its fundamental purposes and audiences addressed to may also differ from the respective ones of cultural diplomacy, depending on the goals to be achieved⁶. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy and propaganda abstain from each other, due to their indented targets. Propaganda is usually used to depict practices negatively charged and often relates to manipulation, while cultural diplomacy aims to show a country's cultural achievements in all their brilliance and vitality⁷.

Given, thus, the high profile of cultural diplomacy, we could support that, in a more strictly defined way, cultural diplomacy represents the methodical and hierarchical use of the Culture of a country, while exercising its foreign policy⁸, which, on the one hand, aims to promote and propagate its cultural ideals, values and achievements abroad, whilst, on the other hand, the tightening of its relations with the other Cultures constitutes one of its principal goals in an effort of mutual understanding, reciprocal respect and democratic co-existence.

Each of these aforementioned suggestions makes an important contribution to our understanding of the width cultural diplomacy has, which has led Joseph Nye to characterize it as "soft power"⁹. Countries, noting the compelling nature of their foreign cultural policy, have already designated persons and institutions to commit themselves to the promotion of their Culture, but the content and extent of their mission is subject to several important prerequisites, such as their national regime, the international and domestic cultural policy they follow, the willingness or participation by their non-governmental agents and, without doubt, the latitude of acting into the host countries. Emmanuel Megalokonomos (ambassador emeritus of Greece) also underscores *the principle of cultural relativity*, which demonstrates how crucial is to respect any particularities of the host places without any superficial

⁴ (Simon Mark 2009, 2-5)

⁵ (*Ibid*, 8)

⁶ (E.Tzoumaka 2005, 12-17)

⁷ (Simon Mark 2009, 20-22 and George Christoyannis 2006, 45-47)

⁸ (Christos Yannaras 2001, 13-14)

⁹ Simon Mark 2009, 15)

estimation, since the cultural image of a state mirrors its own performance, its interests and reflexes to be directly adaptable on the new conditions¹⁰; thus the exercise of cultural diplomacy is rendered the most eloquent way to express the priorities of the foreign policy of a state and reflect, positively or negatively, to a great extent the national behavior¹¹.

On the other hand, in consideration of the non-governmental coefficients exercising cultural diplomacy through their oeuvre, we could howsoever mention the contribution of widely known and appreciated authors and intellectuals, who come forward with individual intentions and potent actions via which cultural diplomacy is exercised outside political expediency. Having as their sole purpose to disseminate their culture and contrary to political achievements, the efforts of the non-governmental interference could be considered to be a totally alternative, not to mention subversive, “political” proposal. Being aware of its limits and potential, this kind of cultural diplomacy could compose an excellent example of cultural promotion, since it will propound a new type of positively fighting globalization, having as its compass the intercultural dialogue across the globe rather than the impersonal jargon of political promises¹². Private initiatives have a broader autonomy than the authorized service, rendering the efforts even more persuasive for their neutral and selfless intentions, while they encompass the ability to challenge political statements and comportment. Of course, it goes without saying that the ideal lies in between the two aforementioned sides, where a counterbalance of public and private participation and/or funding exists and the efforts converge on the targets set by foreign cultural policy, as already noted.

For the purposes of the present essay, cultural diplomacy will be examined in the light of the last category with due regard to the Greek case, since, albeit France holds the primacy in cultural diplomatic practices, Greece was the first to introduce the ideal of cultural diplomacy through the Pan-Hellenic tradition of Olympic Games¹³. However, in order to be honest, Greece cannot anymore hide itself behind its glorious past; what counts most is its contemporary presence in the international arena, where, the insufficient and ineffective management of the Greek State towards its cultural infrastructure has been embarrassing throughout the years and set the principal causation to deal with such an issue hereto. Greece, although it does not represent a competitive political and/or financial player, still remains quite powerful to the field of culture and civilization, through which multiple benefits can arise¹⁴.

In Greece, well before the current financial crisis, state funds for its cultural sector had been in total discordance with its significance, with an almost everlasting tendency to be inversely proportional, making us wonder if it ever was (and still exists) a fervent longing to sap its cultural strength. However, notwithstanding what neglectfulness it suffers, it is firmly believed that cultural diplomacy has the potential to break down persistent national stereotypes and bring people together, given that cultural diplomacy can be exercised only by people that are able to distinguish what renders them special into the international arena and conduce hence to in their own way with a view of cultural interactions in the light of functional cultural proposals of universal repercussions¹⁵; besides, Greece due to its historical and geographical-geopolitical attributes can by right claim the role of a global cultural power and it is crucial, and of central concern therefore to establish and promote its long-standing cultural presence through the ‘intellectual’ and ‘humanistic’ aspects of cultural diplomacy. The ever memorable former Minister of Hellenic Culture, Melina Merkouri, asserted that

¹⁰ (Eleni Tzoumaka 2005, 114)

¹¹ (Simon Mark 2009, 29)

¹² (Eleni Tzoumaka 2005, 57 and Simon Mark 2009, 33-34)

¹³ (Patrick Hunt 2010, 3)

¹⁴ (Eleni Tzoumaka 2005, 70 and George Christoyannis 2006, 186-187)

¹⁵ (Christos Yannaras 2001, 32-33)

‘Culture is the heavy artillery of the Greek Politics’¹⁶; in the final analysis, according to Yannaras¹⁷, the international relations of a country, even its own historical survival of sovereign autonomy, depends to a great extent on its image outwards rather its impermanent activation (not to mention its passive rhetoric over its cultural particularity). Modern Greek ambassadors commit themselves towards this operative direction; what is missing is a tactically established planning by the decision makers and a conscious cultural literacy by Greeks in their entirety.

1.2. Multilateral cultural diplomacy: U.N.E.S.C.O. and the 150th anniversary for Cavafy’s birth

The United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization is the leading international organization dealing with the potentials of this soft power on a multilateral basis. As Katalin Bogyay points out (Katalin Bogyay 2012), UNESCO has identified the global ethical norms that shall reign over all its 195 Member States; however, when talking of cultural diplomacy, especially in a multilateral context, we should not concentrate our attention solely to the Western Civilization as the one and only historical factor that influenced its development; attitudes of peaceful and non-violent ways of resistance, infused of philosophical, social, cultural and/or political ideas come under the scope of cultural diplomacy, as well. Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr or J.S. Mbiti are some of such examples that shape and influence the ramifications cultural diplomacy may take. Of course, we could also add the musical contribution in this kind of soft power, as a special part of cultural interplay, since music is recognized as a vector of international peace and can indeed operate upon a global sensitization over cultural diversity as an always open channel of communication and respect between cultures.

Another significant contribution UNESCO offers to the field of international cultural diplomacy is the commemoration of historic events and anniversaries of eminent personalities around the world. Due to this initiative and UNESCO’s constant vigilance, its Member States and Associated Members have the opportunity to exercise soft power over crucial circumstances, spreading elements of their own culture across the globe. 2013 was dedicated, among others, to Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) and the 150th anniversary of his birth, recognizing the Hellenistic Universality of the Greek poet from Alexandria who left his indelible mark to the backbone of the Modern Greek Poetry¹⁸. If for Yannaras¹⁹ the ideal of cultural diplomacy lays on the distinct identity and the imperative need of self-determination by countries that resist to a global homogenization and alienation, Cavafy’s oeuvre embodies it and can have a direct repercussion to the very human psyche for quality of life, while it still retains elements of the different nature of the Hellenic personality among cultural traditions and as such it can lay the ground for a fruitful global dialogue, enhance communication and improve interaction and cooperation on reciprocally cultural support.

Concerning our perspective of approach, Cavafy is considered to be the foremost Greek poet that has been widely translated and set into music. Notwithstanding the opinion that music cannot endue his words, Professor Vassilis Lambropoulos and Dr Pantelis Polychronidis have concluded that Cavafy’s poems still include numerous possibilities for musical elaboration. It is estimated that they have already inspired about 50 Greek and 30 foreign composers to write music in many different styles (songs, symphonies, cantatas, opera, ballets, even cabaret), for various instruments (solos or electronic music), in 20 different languages (albeit the existed inconsistencies in the use of language) with diverse arrangements taking place, as far as their translation or paraphrase is concerned, their

¹⁶ (George Christoyannis 2006, 108)

¹⁷(Christos Yannaras 2001, 10, 114)

¹⁸ (George Christoyannis 2006, 201)

¹⁹ (Christos Yannaras 2001, 156-157)

orchestration, the combination of the poems or even the total absence of Cavafy's words. The Cavafic oeuvre represents the utmost tool if the Greek cultural diplomacy and its integrated proposal are to take place. Despite all difficulties Greece deals with, Greek Culture, with the encouraging support of UNESCO, had the opportunity to display one of its most conspicuous representatives throughout the world during 2013 and many pages could be written to note down or describe the events of this unique opportunity in such rough times. However, at this point, we could only underline for once more that "Cavafy" does not anymore constitute an isolated poet or a national symbol with limited breadth of capability or even an exceptional monument surrendered to its fate; on the contrary, it is still, and perhaps ever after, a multidimensional field of energy, action and inspiration, full of challenges and inflamed with reflection for any kind of creators: composers, musicians, arrangers, orchestrators, translators, philologists, historians, critics etc. As supported by Lambropoulos and Polychronidis, Cavafy is the author of the universal centrifugal Hellenism, which, after decades of its Greece-centralistic introversion, comes to the forefront and brings out how the dialogue among the Arts can serve as an excellent lesson of cultural literacy (Vassilis Lambropoulos and Pantelis Polychronidis 2012). Besides, Cavafy himself, instead of trying to become a Pan-Hellenic or even a universal literary cultural representative, insisted to be rather cosmopolitan and diasporic, intentionally denying being set into a purely collective whole: what concerned him the most was his very being of literary personality in the spectrum of artistic substance. His peculiar style is open to many interpretations and thus a further perusal may always occur both on its scientific comprehension and diplomatic efficiency (Vassilis Lambropoulos 2013). Perhaps, it is Cavafy's marginality, as noted by Vrasidas Karalis (2006 and 2012) that renders him an excellent example for cultural diplomacy, given that any such approach is directed by the desire to "search not for *the real Greek Cavafy*, but for the symbolic universe expressed by Cavafy in his poems".

Section 2: The Modern Greek Poetry set to music as a factor of Greek Cultural Diplomacy

In the recent past of the Greek history, there was a period, between the end of the Civil War and the imposition of the Junta of Colonels, which can demonstrate and depict very eloquently the potential and possibilities arising by the display of Greek Civilization across the globe. Without highly organized efforts whatsoever, but full of talent and inspiration and above all with a selfless and sincere dedication towards their homeland, the representatives of the Modern Greek Culture have gained an enviable acknowledgment worldwide. As Tzoumaka notes²⁰, in an effort to plan and organize cultural activities outside the national borders, the contemporary agents of Greek cultural diplomacy seem to forget this generation of great cultural ambassadors of Greece, who through their oeuvre managed to delineate its very substance: a remarkable blend of tradition and modernism between East and West that absorbs and incorporates miscellaneous elements of its peculiar surroundings and brings them forth with its own unique way; they reflected very vividly Miguel's Torga beliefs that the international is the local without borders and it is really a pity when pusillanimous perceptions often come to characterize their contribution by those involved in the cultural milieu nowadays²¹. The main target of contemporary Greek cultural diplomacy should find itself on the promotion and dissemination of Greek contribution during the 20th and 21st century in the fields of letters, art and science both on a regional and global level, while it also encompasses the great opportunity of establishing the cultural continuity of Greeks that exists both in empirical and scientific spheres, since the survival of the Greek Spirit throughout the years, could serve as a compass for the Hellenic self-determination and cultural literacy of the Greek

²⁰ (Eleni Tzoumaka 2005, 13)

²¹ (George Christoyannis 2006, 229)

people²²; shielding its unique nature does not appear as a matter of national boast, but chiefly as a channel of peaceful communication and co-existence with the other Cultures within the international cultural mosaic.

When cultural diplomacy is seen through the perspective of artistic contribution, the diplomatic context gets a ‘nonmaterial’ substance, approaching much more easily new audiences, while verifying its soft power dynamism. Since any kind of art deals with emotions and emotions involve social interaction, being constructed and reconstructed through the sharing of experiences, they could be argued to be much more effective than any political affiliation. J.C.E.Gienow-Hecht²³ chooses to describe these informal relations created in the political and cultural interaction through the term ‘emotional elective affinities’, as used by Max Weber: “a mutual favoring, attraction and even strengthening (which) is involved whenever ideal types coalesce in a relationship of elective affinity”. Music serves such emotional elective affinities and as Moos supported, it also provides the guarantees upon distinction among nations, since it has been shaped up to the optimum throughout the years, whilst it now allows us to keep open the window for both contemporary and future generations to “disclose the innermost folds of its character”, reflecting national differentiations²⁴. However, what is most welcome is the fact that art and more particularly music include the potential to provide a neutral platform for cultural exchange, which may transform cultural differences and unite people through emotions.

George Couroupos²⁵ takes our thought a little step further:

“[...] Music is the ultimate limit of poetry in its flight from the sphere of the conscious to that of the unconscious, through a rebaptism of the signifieds, achieved by the original combination of the words and their rhythms and sounds. For poetry, music is the ideal of absolute freedom. [...] Music owes much to poetry. And I am not speaking only of the folk song, of course, but of all vocal music that is based on poetry, directly or indirectly. Greek music, particularly from Matzaros to Kalomiris, and from Mitropoulos to Theodorakis, seems to have an ardent desire to be renewed through poetry, through the shared archaic womb that brought forth both forms, like Siamese twins. We should, however, avoid oversimplifications. The intention of the song-maker who sets a poem to music within the framework of a popular or vernacular tradition is not the same as that of a composer-intellectual who pits his wits against a work of poetry.”

Hence, if for Couroupos a work of art music seeks to yoke itself to poetry’s discourse in order to create a new musical entity that, in effect, both ‘transubstantiates’ the poem and advances musical thinking, it is a quite challenging idea to gropingly touch their diplomatic ramifications through some widely known examples that follow.

2.1. Three representative examples reflecting the Modern Greek contribution towards the world

2.1.1. The Great Erotic

The Great Erotic is a cycle of eleven songs for two voices, mixed chorus and twelve instruments (string and plucked ones), composed in 1972 between New York and Athens, which, literally speaking, does not entirely belong to the Modern Greek poetry set to music. However, it is chosen among others, due to its peculiar nature, since it includes a Greek traditional song and poems by Sappho, the biblical King Solomon, George Chortatsis, Dionyssios Solomos, Constantine Cavafy, George Sarantaris, Myrtilotissa, Pantelis Prevelakis, Odysseas Elytis and Nikos Gkatsos. Although the title may mislead us to believe that it

²² (*Ibid*, 70-71 and 206)

²³ (J.C.E.Gienow-Hecht 2009, 14,5 and 221)

²⁴ (*Ibid*, 165)

²⁵ (George Couroupos 2002, 3)

constitutes a purely erotic oeuvre and an anthem to love, Manos Hadjidakis himself has made it clear: *“Only a fool could imagine that you write such a work when you are in love. Such works, as the Great Erotic is, are written when you don’t bother whether you are in love or not. You have sorted your thoughts out and you feel free of reflecting”*. He also describes the deeper meaning of this work and gives an answer to the attack he faced for his ‘superficial’ behavior to release the Great Erotic in such an ‘inopportune time’ for Greece (i.e. during the Junta of Colonels): *“At that time, many people wondered why I turned back and made my Great Erotic during the dictatorship. I made it out of expediency when I realized what was missing from our place. It was not the slogan. It was the lack of the great human values, previously negated. And I was vindicated in retrospect, because the slogans elapsed, but the concepts and the value of the Great Erotic, whose songs were not just mere love songs but songs on love, remained. Nonetheless, I suffered the attack of several people then, who wondered what did he come to give us in '72 in the dictatorship? I gave you exactly what I saw was then missing. And the Great Erotic was just the bearer of the deeper human emotions that were about to be humiliated”* (George Hadjidakis 2002).

The musical bridges cannot be demolished, as far as there are people, who feel and have the need to sing for love, for life, for our fellow-man, each time the cruel image of History turns its page²⁶. With a fervent, throbbing and lasting passion, Hadjidakis transformed the contemporary Greek song and gave birth to something that could be called original Greek song. As an original Greek work both of poetic and musical elaboration, the *Great Erotic* comprises and reconciles the Greek tradition, the byzantine hymns and the Greek poetry within the framework of popular songs, but above all, Hadjidakis’s orchestration smoothly punctuates the elegance of words, while accentuating their meaning. His ingenuity managed to transform the poems into a concrete work of high artistic value and serve those universal values of humanity as they were depicted through this recursion to the relevant Greek poetic script²⁷. As Yannaras points out²⁸, the language is created, formulated and developed by people with certain needs: its expressive dynamism is not an outcome of randomness, an aleatoric result, neither a product of ideological standards (or racial superiority), but a tool to express the inner workings of their soul. For the Greek cultural diplomacy, the Greek linguistic legacy constitutes a comparative advantage of the Hellenism, which however seems rather enfeebled in its contemporary treatment. Still, *the Great Erotic* offers very generously a timeless journey to the Greek language, embellished with different musical styles. Perhaps, Manos’s Hadjidakis words may leave an indelible stamp on this perspective of consideration for his work: *“If I rest free, my Hellenic nationality would be a reality that I could not be able to deny, as far as it is interwoven with my language and my personal history. The only thing I can do is hoping to become a true for you, as well...”*²⁹.

2.1.2. The Ballad of Mauthausen

A very recent survey of the Special Eurobarometer 399 on cultural access and participation (published in November 2013) concluded that the European culture loses ground and efforts should be concentrated to bring it at the heart of people’s interest. A Europe detached from its cultural background will face more difficulties to establish its political integrity, since, according to Etienne Balibar, the invention of the form of a pluralistic state that exceed the contrast between the "national sovereignty" and the "continental hegemony"

²⁶ (George Stefanakis 2004, 9)

²⁷ (Nikos Grosdanis 2002, 18)

²⁸ (Christos Yannaras 2001, 76-77, 84, 88)

²⁹ (Lambros Liavas 2004, 175)

along with an open cultural process, where all the European nations can indiscriminately take part, are *sine qua non* elements³⁰.

Through the spectrum of cultural diplomacy, it has been already proposed a Pan-European campaign concerning the return of culture at the forefront of the European affairs, where Greece can play a pivotal role³¹. Based on the European Cultural Convention (1954), the article 128§1 of the Maastricht Treaty, the principle of subsidiarity and thus the principle of cultural equivalence that Greece has proposed during the negotiations of this article as well as on Ioannis's Kapodistrias vision of a united Europe that could establish global peace³², it is argued here that Europe has indeed common history and therefore common historical memories, especially in modern times that could lead to realization and sensitization over the common culture of the European edifice, which can unite people on an emotional level. Such a view could be seen through *the Ballad of Mauthausen* by Iakovos Kambanellis and Mikis Theodorakis.

This cycle of songs was composed in 1966, when Iakovos Kambanellis presented his songs at Mikis's Theodorakis home. The poems constitute an autobiographical chronicle, based on their writer's experiences, when he was a political prisoner for two and half years in the Nazi concentration camp in Austria during the Second World War. The composer, hearkening the elegiac character of Kambanellis's work, decided to underpin it by the timbre of the violoncello, the flute and the tambours, while the use of new and modern musical colors, as the electric guitar is, was perfectly supported by Maria's Farantouri voice, who actually made her debut with these songs. As Theodorakis admits, he set the poems to music, since, apart from his own experiences of imprisonment during the Italian and the German occupation, he realized that this was the only way to get close to young people and remind them of a time of history we should not forget. Even if at first sight, the songs of *Mauthausen* seem to be destined to reach people who had suffered from fascism and fought against it, their chief destination is to sensitize all people not to lose sight of the crime of the Nazis, as it is the only way for such things never to happen again; besides Theodorakis still commits himself to protect the younger generations from this danger and remains a leading example to follow³³. Kambanellis recounts events that do enliven the recent common European historical memory and can unite people through emotions, since this work is not only a condemnation to war and the violence or frenzy it implies, but also a hymn to love, which is able to flourish even in a nightmarish environment and keep alive the hope for life³⁴. It is noteworthy that in April 1995, in the *London Times Literary Supplement*, the review over an anthology of poems concerning the Bible and the Holocaust ("Modern Poems on the Bible" by D.Curson), the "Song of the Songs" of *the Ballad of Mauthausen* was the one of the two summital poems on the subject.

The Ballad of Mauthausen has already been presented in numerous concerts around the world. In Israel, it is considered to be equivalent to the national anthem, while the most moving performance was undoubtedly its global premiere inside the German concentration camp "Mauthausen" in 1988, attended by the then Chancellor of Austria Franz Vranitzky, having at his side Iakovos Kambanellis. The later concert was held in three languages: Maria Farantouri sang the original songs in Greek, Elinoar Moav in Jewish and Gisela May in German; it was attended by tens of thousands of people from all over Europe, honoring the memory of the 122,797 victims of Nazi atrocities (3,700 Greeks among them), who had left

³⁰ (Eleni Tzoumaka 2005, 96-97)

³¹ (*Ibid*, 35)

³² (George Christoyannis 2006, 154-155 and 200)

³³ (Yannis Flessas 1994, 11-12,23).

³⁴ (Andreas Brandes in Mikis Theodorakis 1997, 148-149)

their last breath in the crematoria of Mauthausen during WWII³⁵. In its current form, the songs are performed by Maria Farantouri (Greek), Elinoar Moav – Veniadis (Jewish) and Nandia Weiberg (English).

The Ballad of Mauthausen could serve the purposes of an original Greek cultural diplomatic proposal that shares a direct reference to the European affairs on the one side, underlying the principles on which Europe has been founded, while the questions this musical cycle treats have international repercussions in any case. As History shows its menace face for once again, the honest Greek contribution towards a friendly and peaceful world seems more than incumbent.

2.1.3. Axion Esti

In the end of 1959, Elytis brought out his monumental work *Axion Esti*, after a long absence from the poetic scene that demonstrates the travails he passed through in order to give birth to such a poetic composition. Mikis Theodorakis has begun to elaborate on this splendid poem since 1960 and after four years of incessant work, the first official presentation of the oratorio *Axion Esti* took place in 1964 at the Kotopouli Theater (“Rex”). This oratorio is written for a narrator, a chanter (a baritone), a popular singer, a mixed choir, a popular and a symphonic orchestra and constitutes an intersection point both in the Modern Greek Poetry and Music³⁶; it has been characterized as the Bible of the Hellenism, since it runs through the entire historical period of the Greek nation, from the genesis 'of this small, this great world!' up to the prophetic insight that stacked up during the dictatorship (1967-1974). Elytis writes that when he was in Paris and Greece suffered by the war, he felt the need for a prayer (in the form of an ecclesiastical liturgy) to protest against this injustice. And so the *Axion Esti* was born³⁷.

Theodorakis, through the musical setting of this poem, surprised the audience, since he managed to reconcile the purely popular song with the modern symphonic styles of popular music, trying not to betray the goal of the poet. In his writings and interviews, Theodorakis admits that he probably had two models in mind: the first was the Bach’s oratorios with the arias, recitatives and choral techniques. The other was the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, where the chanting of the priests, the reading of the Gospels and the chants of the right and left chanter rotate in dialogue; these three key elements in both cases guided his final option in orchestration, which had to be extended to the entire work so as not to lose its unity and especially not affect its poet’s intention³⁸.

Axion Esti seems to culminate the contribution of the Modern Greek Poetry set to Music towards the rest of the world; but how is this compatible to the principles of cultural diplomacy? According to Yannaras³⁹, the Orwellian world of nowadays can be rebutted by a strong inner need of self-determination, which will allow no space for cultural alienation; language represents one of the propelling cultural factors in order to implement such a vision. Rife with meanings, the richness of the Greek language is without doubt an unquestionable and fruitful cultural advantage, able to converse with other cultures, provided that its treatment refrains from any rhetoric boasting of the linguistic potentials it embodies; besides, any reference should be accompanied by recent evidence and no space for anachronistic attitudes should be left.

Axion Esti seems to summarize the very substance of Greek language both to its literary and musical form, while it also addresses questions that still penetrate Modern Greece: the

³⁵ (George Logothetis 2004, 92)

³⁶ (Yannis Flessas 1994, 21)

³⁷ (Odysseas Elytis 2000, 19-20)

³⁸ (Mikis Theodorakis 1997, 135)

³⁹ (Christos Yannaras 2001, 76 and 156-157)

question of national identity and the actual presence of popular tradition⁴⁰. These two key elements, existentially related to the Greek adventure over time, can naturally get together within Orthodoxy and the Byzantine tradition, which should be incorporated in the new dogma of an effective Greek cultural diplomacy. The Byzantine empire along with the Orthodox tradition have ingrained cultural roots with the Slavic world and are the communication channel with the rest people as they still set up a meaningful point of reference, when culture is in question; besides, Orthodoxy stands as an equal component of the European culture, since it incorporates principles and structures of the Greco-Roman tradition, while Russia and Diaspora meet their cultural soul mate thereto⁴¹.

Furthering these arguments, Simon Mark⁴² notices that cultural diplomacy is not exercised only through “targeting audiences in other countries with manifestations of the culture of the ‘sending’ state”, but it also fulfills its mission when reciprocal manifestations take place and help to advance both parties’ interests. Such an instance took place in Pretoria in 1998 in honor of Nelson Mandela, where *Axion Esti* demonstrated what high values reflects as a work.

Nelson Mandela, the great African leader and the staunch fighter for human rights and the liberation of the people, spent almost all his life in prison and became the symbol of liberty around the world. However, two Greeks marked forever his struggle: the first citizen of South Africa, the lawyer George Bizos and the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis. George Bizos gave great battles against the racist policy of "apartheid" and stood alongside Mandela at risk of his life, while Mikis Theodorakis, as Chairman of the Committee for the release of Mandela, fought in his own way through the concerts he gave in the countries he was visiting, inviting the international community to help the freedom of Greek and South African people. Soon after the political change and as a result of the excellent relations between Greece and South Africa, the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad, in cooperation with the Greek Embassy in Pretoria, organized two concerts with Mikis Theodorakis in November 1998. The presence of the composer and the presentation of the oratorio *Axion Esti* in Pretoria was an unforgettable experience for all those people who attended it. Particularly moving moments were offered by the choir of white and black faces singing, "all children of the same country" as Mikis Theodorakis called them after the concert⁴³.

As matter of course, *Axion Esti* seems to condense all aforementioned goals, principles and efforts cultural diplomacy should focus on. The sense of ‘Greekness’ it exudes together with the ideals for Struggle and Culture that penetrate the whole composition, can bring people together. Mikis Theodorakis encourages us to “let out the soul of our music to emerge intact, dressed with hoar-frost and dew [...] and sing the sorrows and hopes of Hellenism”⁴⁴. Let’s embrace the souls of people, committed to shield their uniqueness, we could add.

2.2. Translated Modern Greek Poetry set to music into other languages: dissemination of Modern Greek Culture and communion of shared experiences. Some examples.

The ‘sending’ country and the ‘receiver’ often have a reciprocal cultural interplay, where a very useful tool could also prove to be the translational process, with due regard to its expressive function, i.e. the way the sender perceives and treats the reality, the objects and phenomena of the world. When the sender addresses individual feelings and/or emotions, the expressive function is sub-divided into the so-called ‘emotive sub-function’. This function of translation is usually “sender-oriented” and based on a specific system of values, which may

⁴⁰ (George Bramos 1993, 12)

⁴¹ (Giagos Andreades in Eleni Tzoumaka 2005, 64)

⁴² (Simon Mark 2009, 11)

⁴³ (George Logothetis 2004, 201-204)

⁴⁴ (*Ibid*, 89)

be either common with the receiver's one or can be communicated to him even when he does not bid by the same attitude⁴⁵.

Modern Greek poetry set to music incorporates the “emotive sub-function”, since, as stated above, it combines the “emotional elective affinities” music conveys with the translational contribution towards the communion of same experiences that cross national boundaries. In other words, we could support that translation could serve as a branch of contemporary cultural diplomacy, able to outline the meanings of language, ideas and emotions that a foreign text includes, promoting thus the cultural interchange; on the other hand, the translated poetry set to music constitutes a powerful tool when cultural diplomatic efforts take place, since it lays a neutral platform for mutual understanding through emotions. In the section that follows two of the most representative examples of the Modern Greek Poetry set to music will be cited in an attempt to underline the way translation, and in some cases re-orchestration (both as types of derivative works), conduce to the field of cultural diplomacy.

2.2.1. “Αρνηση” – “Denial”, by George Seferis and Mikis Theodorakis

The poem “Αρνηση” – “Denial” belongs to George's Seferis first poetry collection entitled “Strofi” (“Turning Point”), which was published in 1931 (Katerina Sarri 2000). The poem is a part of the “Seashells, Clouds” section and is also known by its first verse “Στο περιγιάλι” – “On the secret seashore”. Mikis Theodorakis set this poem to music and included it in the song cycle *Epiphania*, which was composed in Paris in 1961. In 1968, when Theodorakis was arrested by the Junta of Colonels and was imprisoned in the Averoff prison, he composed the second, more enriched, version of this song cycle entitled *Epiphania-Averoff*. The third version of the cycle demands a baritone, a small chorus and an orchestra, as it was firstly performed at Odeon Herodes Atticus in Athens, on the 6th October 2007.

“Denial” is the anthem of resistance against any kind of oppression, as it was the dictatorship in Greece when it was released and banned. Its first version was brought out in Italian in 1970 in Edmonda's Aldini disc *Edmonda Aldini Canta Theodorakis – Canzoni in Esilio*, as “La Spiaggia”. In 1978, it appeared in German as “Zusammenleben” in Milva's disc *Von Tag Zu Tag - Lieder von Mikis Theodorakis* (lyrics in German: Thomas Woitkewitsch) and was released in Germany and Austria, while later, it reached Italy, Spain, and Venezuela under Italian lyrics (by Mara Cantoni) as “Sogno di Liberta”, when included in Milva's disc *La Mia Età* (1979), which in 1996 also reached Japan.

In France, it was included in Milva's disc *Le Livre De Mes Souvenirs / Les Quais Et La Gare De Berlin* (French lyrics by Claude Lemesle) and *Attends, la vie*, both released in 1980; the later one along with the *Star Gold Super* disc were also brought out in Germany, whilst in 1993, it was also translated into the Catalan language (“A la Platjia”) and appeared in Maria's del mar Bonet album *Canta Theodorakis – El – Las*.

However, before closing this brief presentation of that song on the field of cultural diplomacy⁴⁶, we could refer to two remarkable concerts that reflected the ideals this composition represents. The first one, not long before the fall of the Berlin Wall, was the open-air concert Theodorakis gave in 1987, in the Rosa Luxemburgplatz (in the East German part of the city) and the second one was held in the ancient theater of Delphi in 2001, where the English version of the song (“I've kept a hold on my life”), based on Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard publications, was heard as part of the concert. This concert took place on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and Theodorakis was honored for his efforts towards peace and human rights.

⁴⁵ (Christiane Nord 2006, 137)

⁴⁶ The citation of the discs in this section is not exhaustive.

Ossipov Russian Orchestra accompanied George Dalaras and the American jazz singer Jocelyn B. Smith who performed composer's songs.

2.2.2. “Τὴν πόρτα ανοίγω το βράδυ” – “I open the door at night”, by Tassos Leivaditis and Mikis Theodorakis

After the restoration of democracy in Greece, the so-called lettered Greek popular song slowly, but decisively, started to take another form thanks to the collaboration of Tassos Leivaditis and Mikis Theodorakis. As Vangelis Arnaoutakis (2012) notes, Leivaditis' short-lasting presence in the Greek song and the fact that in general he had not given but a few lyrics are inversely proportional to his remarkable contribution towards the progeniture of the Modern Greek lettered popular song. “Τὴν πόρτα ανοίγω το βράδυ” – “I open the door at night” is among the meritorious ones of his and was firstly included in the disc *Ta Lyrika* (“The Lyricals”, 1976).

The international adventure of the aforementioned song seems to begin with Arja's Saijonmaa disc *Arja's Saijonmaa Med Mikis Theodorakis – Det Är Tid Att Sjunga Sångar*, which was brought out in Sweden in 1977. The Swedish version of the song came as “Min Dörr Star Öppen”, while a year later, the German version of the song, “Die Macht der Gewohnheit” was sung by Milva in her aforementioned disc *Von Tag Zu Tag - Lieder von Mikis Theodorakis*.

In 1979, both its Finnish version as “Oveni On Avoin” by Arja's Saljonmaa (*Arja Sijonmaa Ja Mikis Theodorakis - Jokainen Arkiaamu*), as well as its Italian one, “La Mia Età” included in Milva's homonymous disc, appeared and traveled from Europe to Latin America and Japan, as stated above. In 1980, the French version of the song “Les trois temps de l'amour”, elaborated by Claude Lemesle, is found in Milva's disc *Attends, la vie*, which circulated in France and Germany.

However, apart from the further arrangements it has obtained throughout the years, a relatively recent translation and re-orchestration of the song attracts our attention. Dada Hoelz has made a precise translation in the German language and the song was comprised as “Ich öffne die Tür” in a compilation of Modern Greek songs entitled *Nur diese eine Schwalbe, Lieder von Mikis Theodorakis in Deutscher Sprache* (2002) by the Trio Quijote. As Asteris Koutoulas underscores (2002), it is noteworthy that the Trio Quijote has undertaken the task to promote through contemporary music styles the Modern Greek Poetry that Theodorakis has set into music, paying due respect both to poets' intentions and the commands of the Greek language they use. Their contribution can be summarized into two remarkable fields: the restoration of any misleading and/or misunderstanding the previous translations have provided and secondly, their arrangements tend to delineate more accurately the dramatic background some songs contain. The song “I open the door at night” pertains to such a category, since it cuddles every human, bereft of hope, who seeks for an emotional shelter to recount their pain.

Concluding remarks

In the present essay, Modern Greek poetry set to music has been very concisely presented through the spectrum of cultural diplomacy. Based on the established principles of recent scientific resources for cultural diplomacy, this paper tries to establish the role that Modern Greek poetry set to music plays in the international arena as far as its soft power is concerned. Having as a compass the recounted examples and the brief reference of some relevant case-studies, here is a different effort to find out how Greece can identify its contemporary presence and the real significance of its constantly unfolding civilization, through the potential of Modern Greek Art Ambassadors, their contribution and the practical reflection of their works worldwide that demonstrated how Modern Greek Poetry set to music can bridge existing differences, unite people through emotions and serve the universal ideals of democracy, freedom and diversity.

Thus, if an original proposal is to be made by the Greek side, it is here supported that it could be well-established on the messages the Modern Greek Poetry set to music transmit. However, one should not forget that in order to be ready for such a venture, cultural literacy by the entirety of the Greek people is more than urgent. Through the Modern Greek poetry set to music, either via the aforementioned examples or the amplitude that exists, Greeks can deeply realize their own uniqueness and pull arguments for their cultural continuity, without however any boasting for their glorious past. George Christoyannis⁴⁷ lays particular emphasis that the depreciation of other cultures is inconsistent with the principles of cultural diplomacy and Greece should pave the path towards a harmonious colloquy with them, having as a compass Ritsos's words:

“Because, my brother, we do not sing in order to separate ourselves from the world; we sing in order to unite the world”.

“Γιατί εμείς δεν τραγουδάμε για να ξεχωρίσουμε αδελφέ μου απ’τον κόσμο. Εμείς τραγουδάμε για να σμιζουμε τον κόσμο”

Yannis Ritsos, “And so my brother” (1974)

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⁴⁷ (George Christoyannis 2006, 227 and 230)

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