“Some people could accuse us of having copied from Foscolo’s Jacopo Ortis or from Goethe’s Werther, but, if you read these books, they witness in our favour” writes Panayotis Soutsos in the introduction of Leander, defending his novel. Nevertheless, we find passages where the author closely imitates those texts, endorsing the idea of a creative translation. This is however a provocation; he throws caution to the wind, challenging the reader to reveal his deceit and thereby match his own knowledge. Though Soutsos’s writing points to some specific models, he conceals his greatest influence, French literature. The more extended passages, adapted and embedded in his text, come from Lamartine’s poetry and Chateaubriand’s novels. Is this a voluntary or a subconscious failure to quote his source? To what extent can attentive reading affect the creative procedure? These questions lead us to the problem: how do Modern Greeks position themselves in respect to Europe? The Greek Enlightenment claims Ancient Greek culture back from Europe, integrating it into the Greek tradition. As Koraes points out, now is the time for Europeans to pay their debt, by transposing the culture they received to the Modern Greeks. In a way, the text reflects these ideas by appropriating discourse. Europe is the Other, cherished and detested. It is therefore present in absentia, haunting creation, emerging throughout the Greek text.

Keywords: intertextuality, symbolic landscape, Leander, creative translation, 19th century Greek novel

In 1834, Leander was the first novel published in the new born Greek state. In 1833 three other novels were written in Greek: Alexandros Soutsos’ The exile of 1831, Samuel Sheridan Wilson’s Pallekarion and Iakovos Pitzipios’ The orphan of Chios, but they were not published until 1835 (Pallekarion, The exile of 1831) or 1839 (The orphan of Chios), along with Paleologos’ Polypathis (Katsigianni, 1999). Pitzipios and Paleologos both claimed that they were the first to write an original Greek novel. In this way they contested Leander’s originality. Before going into an in-depth analysis of the novel Leander and exploring its sources, it is interesting to examine two questions: Who are these novelists and why did they decide to write novels at this precise time?
These writers came from well educated families in Constantinople or Chios, had studied abroad and travelled widely. Their aspirations to be the first to write a Greek novel and to associate themselves with great European writers and genres can be explained if we consider the reception of the genre in the big European metropolises. As Michel Raymond argues “the novel reached a public that neither theatre nor poetry had conquered” (Raimond 1981: 7). Through the power of its readers, the novel was able to, not only depict society, but also change it through its representation. In the 1830s the first translations of European novels (Raimond 1981: 60) became available to the public in Greece, calling for the creation of an equivalent national genre.

The claims by Pitzipios and Paleologos to the first truly genuine Greek novel imply the “unauthentic” nature of Leander. Soutsos defends his novel in advance in the prologue: “Some people could accuse us of having copied from Foscolo’s Jacopo Ortis or from Goethe’s Werther, but, if you read these books, they witness in our favour”¹. In reality though, these books prove him wrong:

“Oh moon, beloved star! Perhaps, at this very moment, you are making the eyes of my Theresa shine with one of your sweet rays of light, like the one with which you fill my soul” *Di Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis*

“Perhaps, at this very moment in Athens, Coralia’s eyes look at you, perhaps your rays of light caress her face. Sweet Moon! Spread your warmth to my fluttering heart.” *Leander*, Letter 37

“God knows how often I go to bed hoping to never wake up; and in the morning I open my eyes, I see the sun and I feel miserable” *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 15 November 1771 letter

“How the coming of the dawn makes miserable people tremble!”, *Leander*, Letter 33

These extracts of *Leander* are easily identifiable and can be seen as creative translations of the original texts, which the author invites his public to read as a means of proving his innocence! How should we interpret his audacity?

According to Béarnard Vouilloux (2005: 50), there are different types of inter-textual relationships. Citation, plagiarism and reminiscence are all forms of literality, which is an almost word-by-word transfer of linguistic material. In

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¹ The translation of all extracts is mine. For the original text see the first edition: Soutsos (1834); the recent editions with introductions and notes: Soutsos (1996a) / Soutsos (1996b) and the French translation: Soutsos (2002).
the first case, there is intentionality and attribution, i.e. recognizing and mentioning the author, whereas in the second, the reference to the source is concealed. In the third case, the transfer of linguistic material becomes unconscious, a remnant of the author’s own reading. Leander complicates matters further, as it combines attribution and literality. It does not cite its source in the narrative with diacritical marks (inverted commas, brackets or notes) but it does not conceal it either, as it mentions its model texts and writers in the prologue.

This raises the question of whether Soutsos consciously reproduces the narration models or not. Is this a case of “involuntary cultural memory” (Vouilloux, 2005: 49) or a hint at his own plagiarism directed at the literary insiders, enabling them to identify the paternity of Leander’s lines? The invitation to verify Soutsos’ claims, ironic or not, challenges a very reduced group of readers. Neither novel had been translated into Greek at that time. The last letters of Jacopo Ortis was translated in 1838, and Werther ten years later. So if anyone wanted to check the veracity of his claim, he had to read the books in the original or in the French or English translation. In this way, the author assumes the role of an educator. He introduces the Greek reader to European contemporary literature, either directly, by consulting the mentioned European works, or indirectly, by reading his own text, which contains traces of those European novels. In this way, the author of the romantic novel follows the school of the Greek Enlightenment: producing texts that mingle profit with pleasure, by delighting and instructing the reader at the same time. Horace’s model was reproduced by the intellectuals of the time, who thought that Greece could progress and develop a modern civilization by simply translating the literature of the more advanced European nations, who, in turn, were taught the ancient Greeks. This educational role was adopted by Λόγιος Ερμής (Erudite Hermes) (1811-1821) as his editor, Koraes, explains in a letter to Friedrich August Wolf (1818): “Our literary journal, entitled Logios Hermes, will have enabled you to judge the progress of my nation through the continuous translation of all kind of literature, and through the reports it gives about the present state of our schools” (Koraes, 1982: 69).

2. Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, lectorem delectando pariterque monendo. – He wins every hand who mingles profit with pleasure, by delighting and instructing the reader at the same time.
In the same vein, Constantin Kokkinakis writes in the prologue to the translation of Tartuffe in 1815: “It is through the agreeable and useful reading of such books that the people advances towards the apex of civilisation” 3.

Although Werther and Ortis provided the models for Leander, they were not its sole source of inspiration. The novels that most influenced its style and structure were Chateaubriand’s The Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem and René, while the expression of the feelings provoked by nature echo Lamartine’s poetry. Several lines of the text closely imitate the Itinerary, René’s wanderings or Lamartine’s meditations. But how can we explain the absence of any reference to Chateaubriand or Lamartine’s work, while Goethe and Foscolo are mentioned twice in the prologue as the masters of the novel that Soutsos wished to follow or as the witnesses to the originality of his work?

The answer lies partly in the controversy aroused by their writings, namely the Journey to the East, where the narrator expresses his disappointment with Modern Greek cities, and the Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem, which gives a gloomy picture of contemporary Greece and bleak prospects for its future. Soutsos admired the dexterity of Lamartine and Chateaubriand’s work and imitates their style in many parts of Leander. However, he could not mention their names directly, as in the case of Goethe or Foscolo, due to their unpopularity in Greece at that time. It is worth mentioning that the Itinerary was translated into Greek rather belatedly. Roidis translated it in 1860 and considered it necessary to include 1825’s Note on Greece, where Chateaubriand defends the Greek Revolution, in order to avoid any criticism 4. The ambiguity of Lamartine and Chateaubriand’s attitude towards the modern Greeks is the reason why we do not encounter their names in Leander, but their work has a profound effect on the structure of the novel. The failure to mention their names in the prologue could equally be seen as a conscious admission of their presence in the text. French literature was the best known literature in Greece at that time and if Soutsos consciously appropriated parts of it, he did not want to give away any hints to his readers.

Let us now examine how and in which parts of the novel Soutsos appropriates the discourse of French writers.

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3. «Με την ηδονικήν άμα και ωφέλιμον ανάγνωσιν τοιούτων βιβλίων προβαίνει καὶ ο λαός εἰς τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ τὸν κολοφώνα [...] », Kokkinakis (1815: 28)

4. For the translator’s introduction see Roidis (2005: 1-7).
Leander goes to Athens and from there begins wandering around Greece. Leander’s trip to Athens is a trip to the heart of the myth. The narration clearly indicates that the hero has a pre-constructed image of Athens when he enters the city. He sees Athens with the eyes of a well-educated man, who is impressed not by the real image of the city but by its history, etched into its ancient ruins. Athens was, at that time, a poor, small city ravaged by war. But Leander sees the city in its ancient glory, choosing to describe only its ancient parts, the remnants of a remote past.

The narration legitimises Leander’s discourse by promoting the personal experience of a “Greek”, concealing the fact that this discourse depends on knowledge, constructed under European domination. The hero sees Athens through the eyes of the West and paints a Greek landscape based on European travel writing. Athens functions as a symbolic space and not as a real, concrete place. Leander looks with awe at the sun illuminating an idealised nature from the same place that the narrator of the Itinerary admires the dawn:

“From the top of the Pnyx, Coralia, we are going to see the sun rise between the Penteli and Hymettus mountains.” Leander

“From the top of the Acropolis I saw the sun rising between the two peaks of the Hymettus mountain.” Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem

and then praises the sun with the awe of Lamartine’s verses:

“Oh sun of Greece, you that generously replenishes the Greeks with you rays full of genius! Accept my gratitude and shine down on this land, my beloved land, days of power, days of glory and days of liberty.” (Letter 15)

“Oh sun! [...] the whole universe accepts you as king and men kneel to worship you A god in your flaming rays who penetrates my heart and warms it” Méditations poétiques

Whereas Lamartine praises Nature, Leander nationalises it: he speaks about the Sun of Greece. The landscape becomes an ethno-scape, by infiltrating national memories into it.

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5. On the images of Athens see Politis (1993: 71-80)

6. Edward Said draws attention to the legitimisation of narratives granting a separate status to the experience of certain groups (social or racial). He notes that it leads to a polarisation that blocks knowledge and understanding (Said, 1993, 35-49).
The landscape that Leander creates is a “mythistorema”, an inherently artificial identity, which is the product of an effort to link the ancient past with the modern revolutionary figures, comparing, for example, Leonidas with Karaiskakakis. The discrepancies in the landscape are homogenised by an over-emphasised interest in nature, as the sole eternal value that links past, present and future in a present inaccessible to spacio-temporality.

Leander tries to present the memories that spring from different places as spontaneous. In reality, he undertakes to erase or confirm other narratives, and more prominently Chateaubriand’s *Itinerary*. If, as Pratt thinks, travel writing is an “obsessive need of the metropolis to present and re-present its peripheries” (Pratt, 1992: 6), Soutsos’ text continually tries to respond to these narratives in order to confirm the attachment of Greek territory to Europe. Every time that Chateaubriand questions the continuity between ancient and modern Greeks, Soutsos responds by integrating memories from the 1820s to the remains of the ancient landscape, as a constant fight to dispel any doubts. The hero’s wanderings, far from being a simple way to soothe his love wounds, is a way both to remember, by reminding the West that Greece is a part of it, and to forget, by denying its oriental heritage.

Adhering to nature is a way of abandoning historicity. The hero reveals his incapacity to face up to reality very early in the narrative:

In Greece the only intellectual faculty that finds a way to develop is memory, and the only sense through which it can achieve this is sight: looking up at the marvellous sky and down at the equally marvellous nature. (Letter 3)

Leander sees nature through the sky, through an idealised lens that can only focus on the past. These wanderings try to appropriate space, marking the borders and integrating it into a state, under a Western monarch who was going to confirm its inclusion in the European community. But symbolic space is juxtaposed in the narrative to specific places, undermining the holistic role of nature. Whereas the territories of the Greek state are described through historical events, Constantinople appears in the narrative as a personal experience: Coralia’s last visit to Leander’s family house and its garden.

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7. On the use of the terms “space” and “place” see Mitchell (2002: 7-11), especially p.9: "Space has connotations of abstraction and geometry, while place resonates with particularity and qualitative density." and p.11: “an imaginary landscape is woven into the fabric of real places and symbolic spaces.”
This kind of narrative “lapsus” undermines his effort to create a cohesive narrative. The specific long extract imitates very closely Chateaubriand’s René. It is the most obvious part of the other in the text. Although Soutsos’ narrative is directly inspired by European romantic literature, such as Werther, Ortis or Lamartine’s poetry, it is in this letter that Soutsos borrows a whole scene from René to describe Leander’s family home in Constantinople and his childhood:

Leaving Byzantium I passed by your paternal house [...] I looked at its windows; some were shuttered, some broken. I entered the room where you were born; [...] on the porches, once sonorous, nothing was heard but the sound of my footsteps and on the golden ceilings a spider spun its web. Covering my watery eyes with a handkerchief, I stepped out to your father’s vineyard. Leander, Letter 14

I reached the chateau via the long avenue of fir-trees; I crossed the deserted courtyards on foot; I stopped to look at the shuttered or half-broken windows, the thistles growing at the foot of the walls, the leaves littering the doorsteps, and the solitary porch where I had so often seen my father standing among his faithful servants. The steps were already covered with moss; yellow wallflowers grew between their cracked and uneven stones. [...] Covering my eyes for a moment with my handkerchief, I stepped beneath my ancestral roof. I traversed echoing apartments where nothing was heard but the sound of my footsteps. The rooms were barely illuminated by the feeble light that penetrated the closed shutters: I visited that in which my mother had yielded her life while bringing me into the world, that to which my father used to retreat, that in which I slept in my cradle, and finally that in which friendship received my first vows in a sister’s arms. All the rooms were in disarray, and spiders spun their webs over the abandoned debris. I rushed precipitously from the place; I hurried away without daring to turn my head. René

I will choose to stay in a convent located by a solitary sea shore. I will hear the murmur of the waves and I will recall the good times of our youth. Companion of my childhood, shall I see you no more? I was a child and you a baby when I rocked you in your cradle; later on in our childhood we fell asleep on the same bed... Oh if only the one grave would reunite us some day! Leander

I am leaving for the convent of ... That institution, built by the sea shore, suits the state of my soul. At night, in the depths of my cell, I will hear the murmur of the waves bathing the convent walls; [...] Kind companion of my childhood, shall I see you no more? Scarcely older than you I rocked you in your cradle; we
often fell asleep together. Oh, if only the one grave would reunite us some day!

René

This act of extended imitation could be read as the author’s incapability of exposing the trauma of separation by integrating the discourse of others to narrate the self. Leander describes places that have no other symbolic meaning to him than the meaning given by ancient texts and European travellers. He is retracing the route of European travelogues to bear witness to the continuous presence of Greeks, in places where he never lived. For him, the territories of the Greek State are known only as a symbolic space created by other narratives, from ancient Greek texts to romantic journeys.

The narrative tries to find an identity, as the hero tries to link the pieces of his own. But the experiment implemented by Soutsos and indicated by Koraes has some cracks. “Metakenosis”9 was the safest way for the intelligentsia to create a solid culture and a national identity, demanding that enlightened Europe give Greece what it was owed: the privileges of ancient knowledge and culture. The narrative is marked by this spirit, but promoting imitation as a virtue for progress obstructs creativity.

Leander tries to find his voice by citing ancient Greek poetry and borrowing from Europe’s finest forms of writing. The narrative ignores the personal elements that could help produce and develop an interesting prose. Leander, who seems to be in the first denial stage of a grieving process, never describes Constantinople. He completely blocks out this important part of his life. The artificial division between Europe and Orient helps the hero to suppress painful memories but the trauma resurges as the coherence of the narrative is severely undermined by the insertion of other discourses, or of the discourse of the Other10, serving as a reminder that a story of the self is left to be written.

Thus Leander’s narrative may be regarded as a nation’s narrative, seeking to appropriate the identities of others and hide behind them instead of as-


9. For the term see Papaderos (1962).

10. I refer to the Lacanian distinction between other and Other. If the other is the reflection and the projection of the Ego, the Other is the locus in which speech is constituted. Discourses are produced by subjects but the Other is the place of all discourses, beyond inter-subjectivity. The unconscious is the discourse of the Other. See, indicatively, Lacan (1966, 1981, 2001, 2006); Chaitin (1996, especially ch. 5: Desire and Culture: transference and the Other, 150-194); Lander (2006).
assuming his own history and elaborating a new image of the self, after a process of self-evaluation and criticism.
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